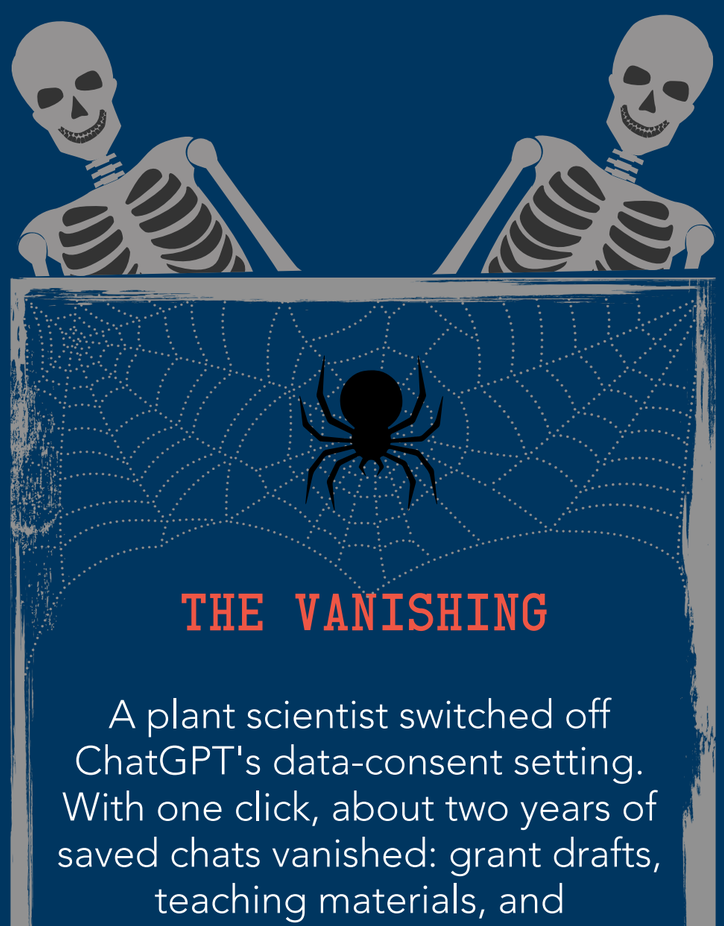
AI Horror Tales from the Research Crypt

Gather round, fellow researchers. AI has become a valuable research companion, and it's here to stay. But even good companions can lead you astray. What follows is no fiction: this issue features three true AI horror tales that made the news, of vanished work, phantom sources, and a creature that crept past peer review. Read them by candlelight, and take away the lesson each one teaches about using AI in research, so you won't be the one haunted next.

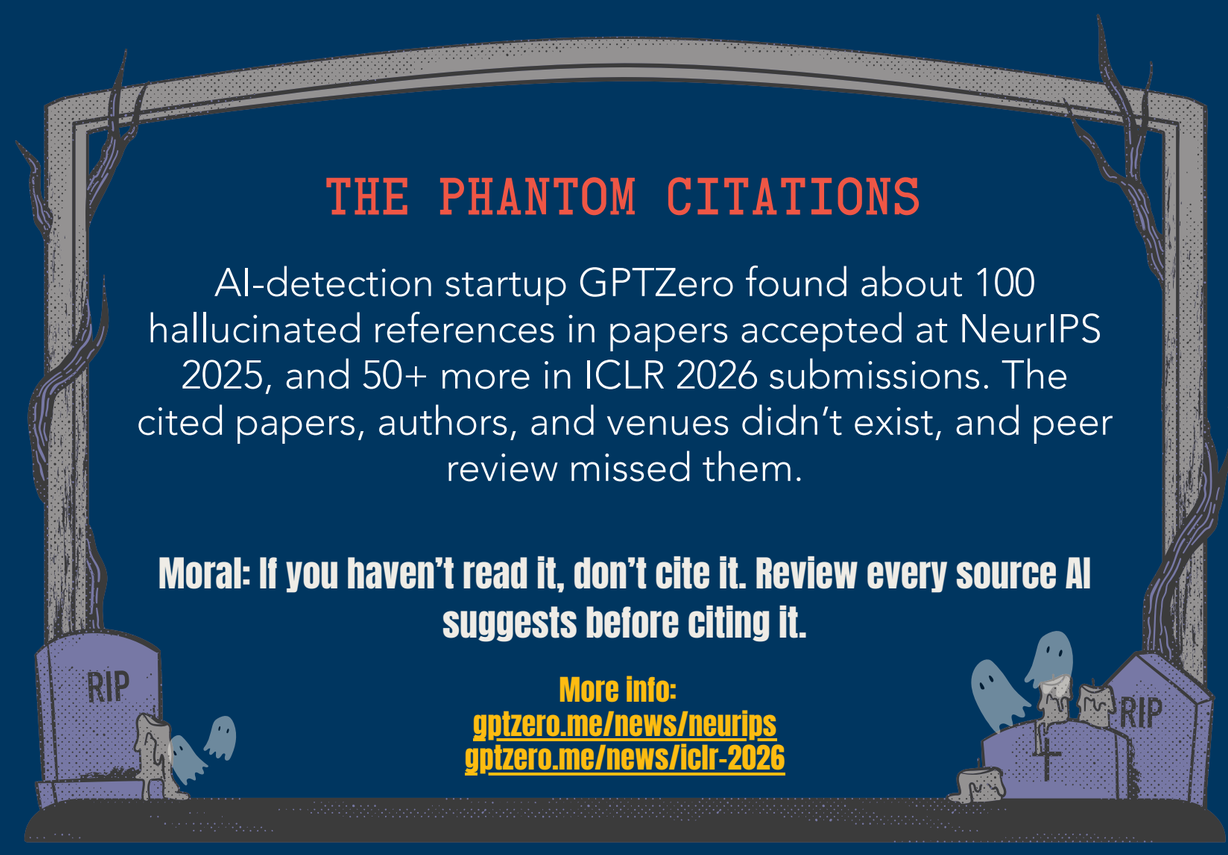


THE VANISHING

A plant scientist switched off ChatGPT's data-consent setting. With one click, about two years of saved chats vanished: grant drafts, teaching materials, and manuscript work. There was no local backup, and OpenAI could not recover it.

Moral: A chatbot's history is not an archive.

More info:
www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-04064-7



THE PHANTOM CITATIONS

AI-detection startup GPTZero found about 100 hallucinated references in papers accepted at NeurIPS 2025, and 50+ more in ICLR 2026 submissions. The cited papers, authors, and venues didn't exist, and peer review missed them.

Moral: If you haven't read it, don't cite it. Review every source AI suggests before citing it.

More info:
gptzero.me/news/neurips
gptzero.me/news/iclr-2026

THE FRANKENRAT

A peer-reviewed paper published in the prestigious journal Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology was retracted for including AI-generated figures of an anatomically impossible rat with labels in gibberish.

Moral: Authors and reviewers should carefully verify AI outputs, including images.

More info:
doi.org/10.3389/fcell.2024.1386861



TIPS & TRICKS

- Verify everything: check every reference, figure, and fact against the source.
- Keep your own records: back up your prompts, outputs, and drafts outside the chatbot.
- Disclose your use: acknowledge which AI tools you used and how, following your publisher's and institution's requirements.

Before using AI, we encourage researchers to review the University of California's AI Principles for guidance on ethical, responsible use.

UC SANTA BARBARA
Library

Contact Us
rds@library.ucsb.edu

www.library.ucsb.edu