

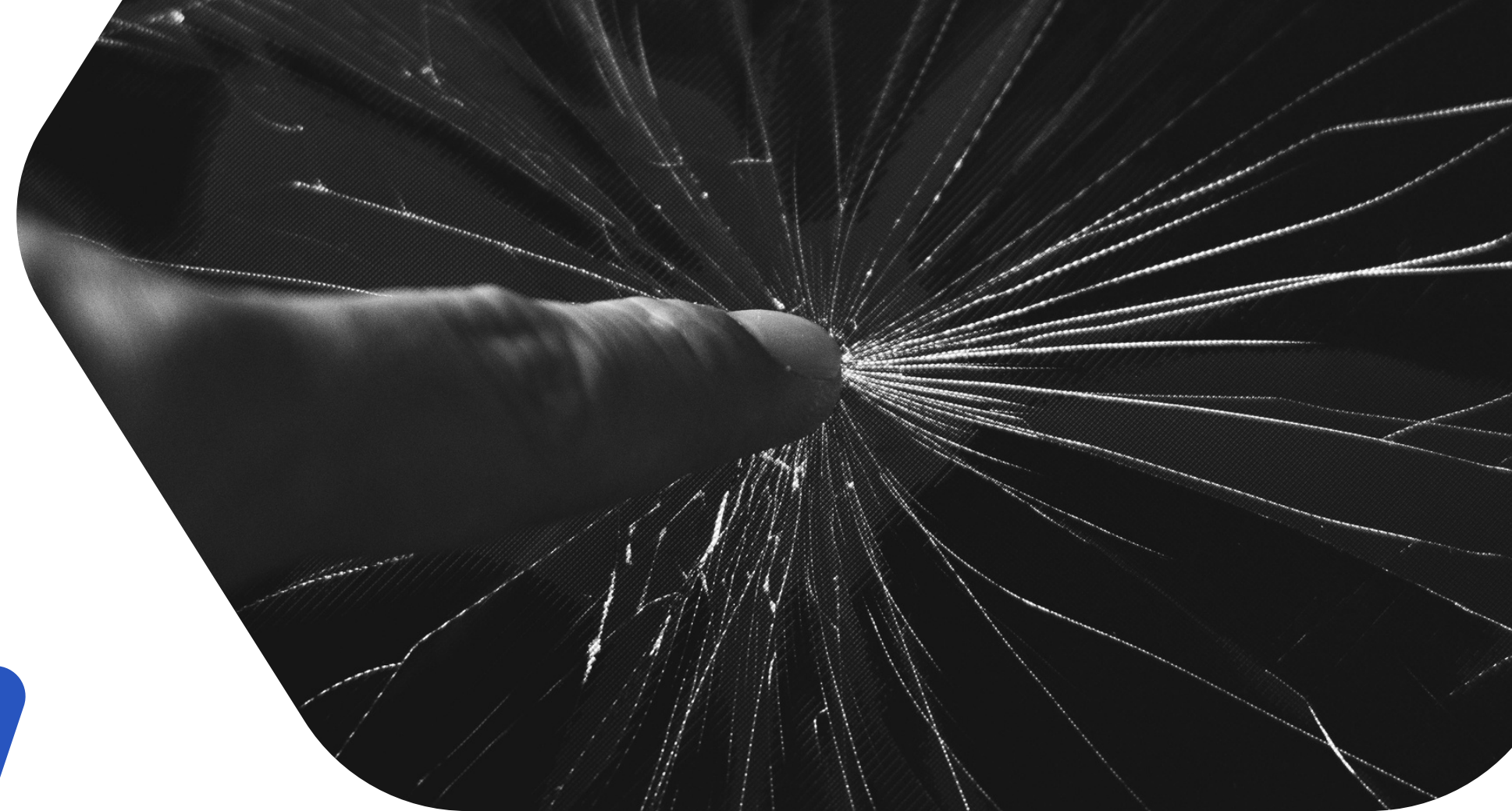
Ethics Over Optics: Reimagining Peer Review Reform for Lasting Change

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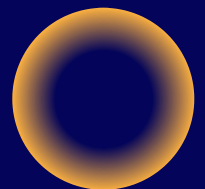
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The Fragile State of Trust



Retractions on the rise



Opaque processes



AI proliferation



Reviewer fatigue & inequities

“Peer review is not broken — but trust in it is fragile.”

Ethics Over Optics



Lasting trust in peer review comes not from how reforms look, but from how ethically they are built.

Ethics

- Fairness
- Equity
- Accountability
- Recognition

Optics

- Review badges
- Dashboards
- AI workflows
- Performative openness

Transparency $\neq$ Ethics



Harsh Exposure

Full disclosure can discourage candid reviews and harm authors or reviewers.



Accountability Gap

Transparency without ethical checks does not ensure fairness.



Bias Risks

Openness of names or comments may amplify bias instead of reducing it.

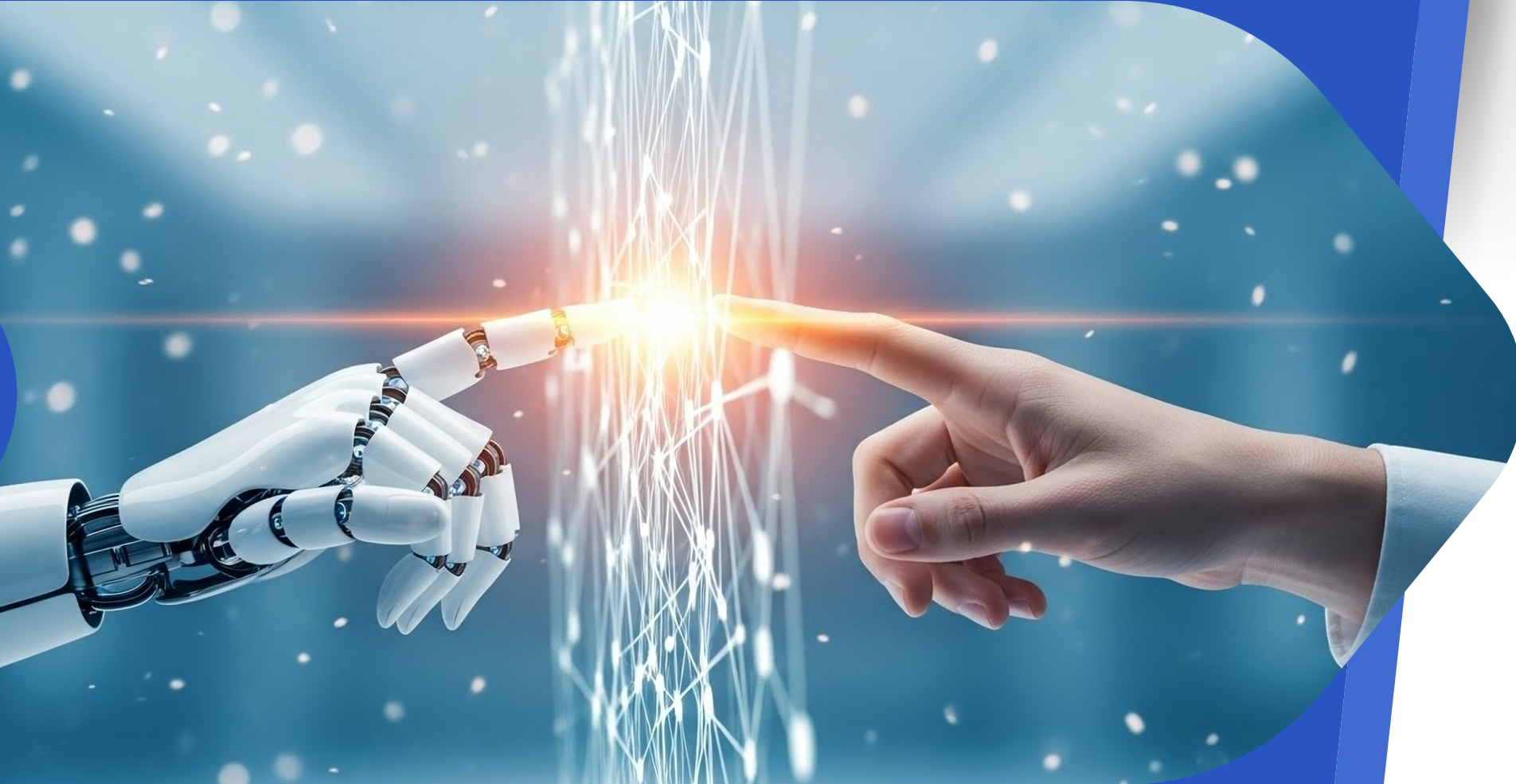


Calibrated Openness

We need balanced transparency that builds trust without causing harm.



AI Disclosure Dilemma



What disclosure gives us:

- Acknowledges AI role in review
- Increases visibility of tools used

What disclosure misses:

- No measure of fairness or bias
- No safeguard against over-reliance
- No framework for accountability

“Simply saying ‘AI was used’ does not answer: was it used ethically?”



Global Inequities in Peer Review



Unequal Workload

The burden of peer review falls heavily on reviewers in North America and Europe, while other regions remain underutilized.



Global South Underrepresentation

Researchers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are often excluded due to lack of access, networks, or recognition.



Early-Career Voices Overlooked

Younger researchers are eager to contribute but are rarely trusted or systematically included in peer review.



Recognition Gaps

Contribution to peer review is undervalued in many systems, reinforcing inequities and discouraging participation.



Strategies for Building Trust

**Widen the circle:**

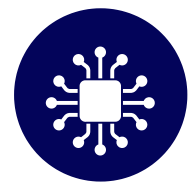
Include diverse and underrepresented reviewers.

**Value the invisible:**

Give fair credit beyond token recognition.

**Guide the machines:**

Use AI with limits, audits, and human oversight.

**Teach and uphold:**

Build reviewer skills and enforce accountability.

Trust grows through ethics, not optics.

From Reform to Integrity



- Badges aren't enough — integrity must be embedded.
- Fairness, equity, and accountability can't be optional.
- True reform goes deeper than dashboards and labels.

“Integrity cannot be an afterthought.”



Ethics Over Optics



**“In this Fragile
Moment for
Science, let’s
Embed Ethics at the
Heart of Peer
Review Reform.”**



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Thank You

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