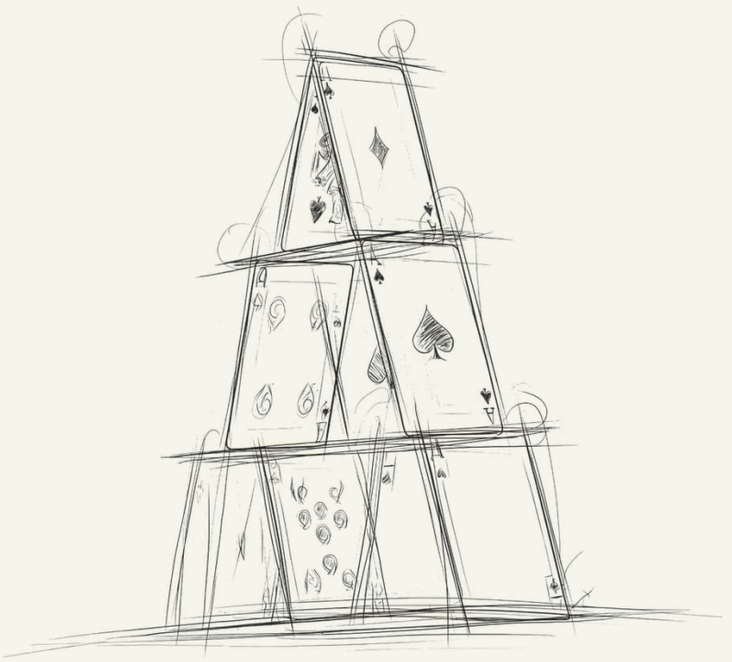
Operations

Content debt

The future work created by publishing content without planning to maintain, reuse or retire it.



Content debt

Operations

Content debt is the work an organisation stores up for itself by publishing without planning to maintain, reuse or retire what it publishes. Outdated pages, duplicated facts, inaccessible PDFs and orphaned microsites all count. Some is a sensible shortcut, like launching a page before the model is perfect, but like any loan it charges interest in repeated work, confused readers and lost trust.

Why it matters for content

Content debt shows up as repeated work, often somewhere else in the organisation. Readers find the wrong version, support teams explain confusing guidance and editors make the same change in twenty places. A debt register makes it manageable: “Opening hours are typed into 40 branch pages instead of pulled from the branch database. Every change takes two days and pages disagree.”

How AI changes the picture

AI can read an entire estate in hours, picking out duplicates, outdated references and contradictory claims, and draft the routine fixes. It can also pile up debt by making production cheap, since every generated page carries its own maintenance obligation. One outdated fact in a source can surface in thousands of answers to people who never see the page it came from.