

AI Demystified Through Public Libraries: Teaching Patrons the Basics



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After today, you will be able to answer:

- What is information literacy?
- What is AI?
- Why should librarians take a lead role?
- Why is introducing AI in your library important?
- What is your role as a library trustee?
- What is the role of a library regarding AI?
- What policies do you need?

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What is "information literacy"?

- The ability to define an information need, to gather appropriate data or information, to select and organize it into useful knowledge
- Questioning what you see, hear, and read



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Information Problems on the Internet:

- Factually incorrect webpages
- Information delivered as black or white (no shades of gray)
- False information is spread quickly
- It's hard to knock down rumors
- AI now "creating" information



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What is AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI) enables computers to simulate human learning and thinking



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Computer Learning

- AI (LLMs) first "learn" based on information provided by professionals training them
 - Computers take data, identify patterns, and make decisions without directions for each task

AI can ace a medical diagnosis but can't count the letters in "strawberry."



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Prompt Engineering

- AI continues to learn from the user
- User designs prompts (instructions) to query AI tool for information
- User must know how to phrase queries to maximize the effectiveness of AI tools



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It provides information based on what you feed it and what it learned in the past

Example: "We are applying for Congressionally Directed Spending through Senator Jeanne Shaheen's office. This will be to fund our Outdoor Community Project. I would like your help answering individual questions. I am uploading an unsuccessful application we submitted last year and you have our project information..."

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AI is not a substitute for human thinking

"...after looking this whole conversation over, I realize I want to add that this project is unique for a library. Few libraries in the country have developed their outdoor spaces in this way and we hope this project will be a model for others. We have recently learned that outdoor space use can be vital for continued programming. Additionally, studies in other fields show how valuable the outdoors is for learning and health. UCLA's "Placemaking for an Aging Population Study" was particularly valuable to me for learning about need. Is there a place in our application that can reflect these thoughts?"

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Why should librarians take a leading role?

Librarians focus on information in all its forms

- Print literacy
- Digital literacy
- and now... AI literacy



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Why is this important?

- AI is already embedded in daily life and is evolving quickly
- Patrons are using AI tools, often without guidance
- Many librarians are intimidated or feel they don't have the time to learn about AI. (They need your support.)



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Your role as a library trustee

- Understand AI
 - Learn the basics
 - Keep abreast of the news
- Support your librarians as information specialists
- Be able to promote librarian expertise to your public
- Encourage and provide money for professional development related to this issue
- Create policy about AI for staff and patrons

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Kingston's four part AI series

1. AI Demystified
2. Understanding Deep fakes
3. Use in Everyday Life
4. Cultural Implications of AI Use



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AI Demystified (Part 1)

AI is just the next step for computers!

- Use of all AI tools is based on information literacy
 - This is a part of critical thinking
- Questioning what you see, hear, and read



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AI Demystified (Part 1)

Other parts of the presentation

- How the internet works
 - Webcrawlers, Meta data, algorithms, etc.
- How is AI different from just "Googling"?
- Prompt engineering
- Hallucinations



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Understanding Deepfakes (Part 2)

Deepfakes are audio, videos, or images that look like the real thing but are actually fake.

Deepfakes purposely misrepresent in order to mislead the public.

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Types of Deepfakes

- Face swap
- Lip syncing and video overlay
- AI voice cloning without visuals
- Fully body re-enactment
- Imitate writing style
- Recorded or real-time
- Artificial character

Software is readily available to accomplish all of this



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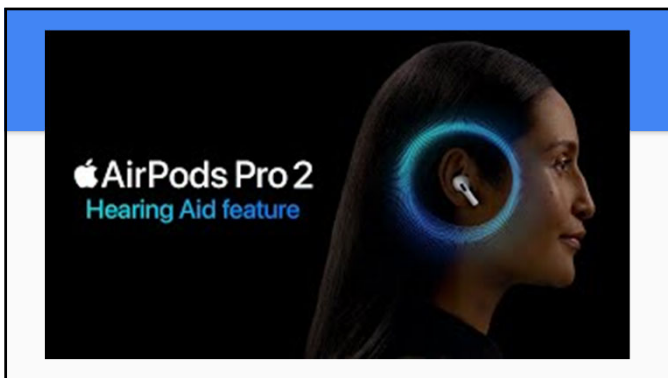
Use in Everyday Life (Part 3)

There are many great AI integrated items entering our lives

- Medical uses
- Language translations
- Smart home devices
- Wearables
- Robots



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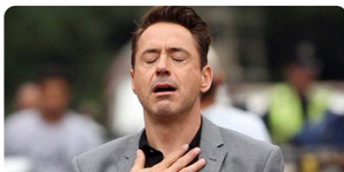
Cultural implications (Part 4)

- A new kind of education needed - few schools teaching this leads to:
 - Misinformation that can't be debunked
 - Information illiteracy and passivity thrives
 - Work is streamlined, but losing jobs because workers not prepared
 - Losing our edge?
- Creativity impacted
- Violence / war
- Environmental consequences etc.
- Next steps? A very different world is coming our way

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Example of cultural implications

when it's been three months and chatGPT hasn't replaced your job



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The role of the library

- Raising awareness of all these issues
- Teaching information literacy
- Making the technology available
- Leading the way by using the technology



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Elements of AI Policy for the Public

- Explain how the library is aiming for transparency & ethical use
- Outline how AI is used to enhance library service & improve user experience (Information retrieval; Cataloging; Training and education; Promotional materials)
- Emphasize a promise to maintain privacy and integrity of information
- Note staff expertise
- Add to your collection development policy
 - Does your library purchase materials created by AI?
 - Is AI helping your librarians choose materials?

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Elements of AI Staff Policy

Describe how staff might use AI:

- Workflow
- Information retrieval
- Cataloging
- Policy and procedure creation
- Grant writing
- Training and education
- Marketing
- Statistics
- Collection Development



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Elements of AI Staff Policy (slide 2)

Describe opportunities, restrictions, warnings:

- Professional development
- Permissible tools
- Setting up accounts
- Security of systems
- Privacy
- Validation



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Recommended Resources

Concord Public Library. AI Amendment to Collection Development Policy. 2026.

Kingston Community Library. AI Patron Policy & AI Staff Policy. 2026.

Enis, Matt. "Setting AI Policy." Library Journal. (February 9, 2026.)

<https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/setting-ai-policy>

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