

The AI Moment in Libraries: What It Means for Our Profession

This November 11, 2025 panel brought together Beth Patin (moderator), Leo Lo, David Lankes, Sanda Erdelez, and Jeff Saltz to explore how libraries can navigate AI implementation while staying true to core values of access, privacy, and service to all communities. We had over 300 people attend; This is an AI-summary of the chat.

Notable Items from the chat

Geographic/Institutional Impact:

- International: Argentina, Canada, England, and India
- US States/Regions: New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Hawaii, Oklahoma, Delaware, Vermont, Tennessee, Florida, Indiana, Oregon, California, Texas, Virginia, DC, and more.
- Institution types: R1 universities, community colleges, public libraries, iSchools, special libraries (IMF)
- Notable Clusters:
 - Multiple University of Washington MLIS students/alum
 - Strong LIS representation (Syracuse, Simmons, Oklahoma, Dominica, SJSU, Queens, etc.)

Questions Organized Thematically

- **Trust, Community & Professional Identity**
 - How to reconcile libraries being highly trusted institutions with increasing attacks (book bans, censorship)?
 - Is there a source for the high level of trust in libraries today?
- **Environmental & Ethical Concerns**
 - How do you communicate to students the environmental and human cost of AI (Memphis, Musk's data center)? What ethical AI standards are being taught?
 - Resources for learning about AI's environmental impact? How to weigh sustainability with engagement/implementation?
 - Whose knowledge gets encoded in AI systems used by libraries?
- **Workforce Development & LIS Education**
 - How to address "AI anxiety" among library workers, students, faculty, staff, humans?
 - Why do academic libraries prefer candidates from CS rather than LIS graduates for AI Librarian positions?
 - How should LIS programs prepare students for AI-integrated library work?
 - What skills become more/less important?

- How are curricula maintaining awareness of social, political, economic contexts and not getting lost in technocracy
- **Practical Implementation & Policy**
 - Recommendations for making progress with many stakeholders in campus-wide AI adoption? How to gather information, communicate progress, build environments for experimentation?
 - What jobs will AI replace in libraries? Are institutions providing equitable access to AI tools?
 - Any links to newly developed AI policies for libraries?
 - How are libraries navigating vendor limitations (can't use AI to summarize database materials, only open access)? How to share this with stakeholders?
- **User Services & Pedagogy**
 - Advice on starting conversations with younger patrons about AI not being 100% perfect (kids using ChatGPT for book recs that don't exist)?
 - What does a university library doing AI literacy well look like? Will students engage? Will plagiarism plummet?
- **Critical Thinking & Information Literacy**
 - Perspectives on belief persistence literature and how it applies to AI/critical thinking? Arts/humanities approaches beyond rational education approaches?
- **Vendor Relations & Infrastructure**
 - What are you seeing that you're excited or concerned about with library vendors leveraging AI?
 - Comments on UNCCH iSchool rebrand to "School of AI"?
- **Alliances & Advocacy**
 - Examples of whom libraries can form alliances with outside librarianship to influence trends?

Resources Shared

Trust & Libraries

- Urban Libraries Council white paper:
https://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/ULC_White-Papers_LIBRARIES-TRUST-AND-SOCIAL-CAPITAL.pdf
- Lankes study on trust:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01616846.2025.2494479#abstract>

AI Competencies & Literacy

- ACRL AI Competencies for Academic Library Workers:
<https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ai>
- Catherine Savini workshop on AI literacy:
<https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/career-advice/teaching/2025/07/16/we-cant-ban-generative-ai-we-can-friction-fix-it-opinion>
- AI literacy education example: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2025.a968491>

- Mazel on GenAI and information privilege: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lib.2025.a961197>

Critical Perspectives on Technology

- Andrea Baer on narrative of inevitability:
 - <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2025.a961189>
 - <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2025/ai-feeling-rules/>
- Blood in the Machine (Luddites): <https://www.bloodinthemachine.com/>
- Brian Merchant's book: <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/brian-merchant/blood-in-the-machine/9780316487740/>
- Cory Doctorow's "Enshittification"
- Worldcat link on Luddites: <https://search.worldcat.org/title/1111628277>

Information Seeking Behavior

- DILL & JANKE on information seeking in The Big Lebowski: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00874.x>
- Belief persistence research: doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09526-z

Podcasts, Columns, and Ongoing Resources

- Libraries Lead! podcast: <https://librarieslead.buzzsprout.com/>
- Recent episode on AI Competencies: <https://librarieslead.buzzsprout.com/1767376/episodes/18063385>
- Libraries Lead! Library Journal column: <https://librarieslead.libraryjournal.com/>
- Lankes' latest book: <https://davidlankes.org/new-librarianship/13901-2/>

Experts to Follow

- Ted Underwood: <https://ischool.illinois.edu/people/ted-underwood>
- Anne Alombert (French scholar on AI and digital technology)

Other Resources

- Woodhull Foundation on censorship/AI: <https://www.woodhullfoundation.org/program-archives/censorship-ai-and-the-intersection-of-sexual-freedom/>
- Heather McGhee's "The Sum of Us" (on collective vs. individual burdens)

Chat Vibe Summary

The vibe was ELECTRIC. This was a deeply engaged, intellectually hungry community having a genuine conversation about issues that matter. Key characteristics:

Enthusiasm & Gratitude:

- People were thrilled to be there ("This is INCREDIBLE," "what a way to spend an hour with 300 colleagues")
- Constant thanking of panelists and Beth
- Multiple requests for this to become a regular series
- Heavy use of heart emojis and reactions throughout

Collaborative Knowledge-Building:

- Participants actively shared resources with each other
- People built on each other's comments ("Yes!" "Well said")
- Real-time professional networking (UW students connecting, people sharing email addresses)
- Resource sharing accelerated throughout—everyone wanted to contribute

Critical but Constructive:

- Strong agreement on resisting technodeterminism
- Enthusiasm for "middle ground" approaches
- Appreciation for historical context (Luddites as ethical resistance, not anti-technology)
- Emphasis on values-driven decision making

Professional Solidarity:

- Recognition of shared challenges across institution types
- Questions reflected real anxieties ("AI anxiety," workforce concerns, policy needs)
- Sense of libraries/librarians as necessary counterbalance to tech industry
- Pride in professional values (access, privacy, equity)

Notable Moments:

- "Leaving my career in IT in part because of the danger to society posed by AI"
- Multiple standing ovations (via emoji) for "resist technodeterminism"
- Excited recognition when panelists named specific resources
- Comment about needing AI to summarize the chat got laughs at the end

Bottom line: This wasn't just people passively watching—it was a community gathering to think together about existential professional questions. The energy suggested people are hungry for exactly this kind of thoughtful, critical, values-centered conversation about AI.