AI and the UK library profession: Survey results

A report for CILIP

CILIP The library and information association

AI and the UK library profession: Survey results

This report is published by CILIP: the library and information association.

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About CILIP

CILIP is the UK library and information association. We are the only chartered body in the world dedicated to uniting, supporting and advocating for information professionals and librarians – the people who help the world make better decisions. Our membership is open to everyone working in libraries, information or knowledge management, data science and analytics or a related professional role. We work with employers, learning providers and suppliers across the library and information sector in the UK and internationally to develop talent, promote innovation, encourage workforce diversity and ultimately to secure the long-term future of our profession.

Published in August 2025.

Not convinced yet: research with the UK library profession about AI

Foreword

As with any big technological or other change, with AI we're all at different points on a learning journey – as individuals and organisations. Some of us still have our hands over our ears hoping it goes away, while others have already developed sophisticated approaches to use AI or are actively involved in developing cutting-edge generative AI.

Wherever you and your employer find yourself on this spectrum, this report should be a useful snapshot of how the library and information profession is currently using this much discussed and rapidly developing technology, and how we're feeling about it.

As a general-purpose technology, AI may well revolutionise many aspects of our lives, but perhaps not in the ways we're currently told. As ethical professionals our duty is to engage with it and test it, in order to help our service users, colleagues and teams make the most of its opportunities, while helping lead them away from its risks. CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB) has been developed with AI in mind, providing a structure that shows where AI fits in information professionals' toolkit. And our advocacy work is pushing for AI to be more transparent and to follow UK laws.

From the printing press to digitisation and the internet, we've played a lead role helping our communities adapt to new technologies, and we'll do so again with AI.

Louis Coiffait-Gunn
CEO, CILIP

Executive summary

The purpose of the study was to discover uses and attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence among UK librarians and information professionals.

A survey was distributed between November and December 2024.

It received 162 valid responses from UK information professionals. 49 (30.2%) of respondents were based in HE, 32 (19.8%) based in health and 32 in public libraries (19.8%). 111 (68.5%) respondents were female.

This report contains a summary of the quantitative data using descriptive statistics, and extensive quotation from responses to open questions. Given the response numbers it was not possible to demonstrate statistically significant differences in the data.

105 (65%) said they were using AI in their work. A wide range of uses were described. ChatGPT and Copilot are the most used AI. AI was seen to make work easier or save time.

55 (34%) of respondents said that their library did have a policy relating to AI and another 41 (25%) had one under development.

The main applications of AI by respondents' libraries were "fostering AI (and data) literacy for users" (58, 36%) and "using generative AI to support tasks such as drafting documents" 41 (25%). Other uses such as chatbots or in knowledge discovery were much less evident. Only 10 respondents from HE reported that their library was not involved in any AI applications; but 19 (59%) from health 22 (69%) from public libraries did not acknowledge any uses.

48 (62%) of respondents saw "process efficiencies" as an opportunity to develop library AI service offerings. 66 (41%) saw "data skills to support AI" and 59 (36%) thought "AI and copyright, intellectual property and licensing" were opportunities.

148 (91%) saw a barrier to using AI in concerns around "ethics such as bias, transparency, intelligibility, legality, confidentiality & privacy". Cost, environmental impact and lack of librarian technical skills were also seen as barriers by around half of all respondents.

Short courses were the type of support most in demand. The main roles envisaged for CILIP were in offering training, use cases, resources and guidelines.

35 (38%) of the respondents who answered about government action wanted it to regulate AI.

Significance of the results

AI is primarily seen through the lens of generative AI. Other forms of AI may have a significant impact on library services but are only being developed in a few institutions.

Respondents as individuals were engaging in much creative and critical exploration of the use of generative AI to perform tasks. Uses reflected a time saving view, less a transformative view, where AI might offer a step change in what is done.

Most institutions have an AI policy or are developing one, although these may be institutional rather than library specific. Yet it is an exploratory stage, "early days" for most uses of AI by libraries.

The commonest activity that there is in the area of AI literacy, is training users to understand AI as an aspect of information literacy, rather than direct uses on AI services.

Librarians have many concerns about AI; indeed ethical concerns are nearly universal. Worries about the accuracy and reliability of outputs are also a central, recurrent concern. Because most applications are making use of AI platforms (like generative AI) which are outside direct control of the library there is a cautious response to AI.

Resource and expertise limitations also seem to be inhibiting take up of AI. But there does appear to be some activity around use of AI for chatbots and knowledge discovery. Follow up research could usefully explore these cases of useful applications.

While data is too limited to say for certain, there were some indications of differences across sectors.

It may be significant that fears about job displacement among librarians did not appear frequently in comments. There was no direct question in the survey about this but it did not appear as an issue in open text questions.

The overall posture of the profession seems to be cautious, perhaps even defensive, principally because of the ethics and lack of accuracy in generative AI. The question remaining to debate is how to best present this as an effective stance given the apparent benefits of generative AI from the user perspective.

Table of contents

Contents

Context for the survey

In the UK, as in many other countries, AI has become an important public and policy concern. Successive UK governments have identified AI as a priority for national development, none more so than the current Labour government.

There are also high-level AI strategies from bodies such as academic research funders (UKRI) and the NHS that set out sector hopes and expectations. Jisc has done considerable work in relation to AI's use in both research and teaching. There are variable predictions about AI's impact on the economy and employment patterns, but it seems likely to be significant (Jung and Deskian, 2024).

At the same time, AI is also deeply controversial. There are global concerns around issues such as privacy, safety and security, transparency and accountability, loss of human control and agency, as well as the impacts on social sustainability, environmental impacts, job displacement, and wider social justice concerns. Critics such as Crawford (2021) have characterised the AI industry as essentially exploitative and extractive. In this context a wide range of organisations internationally have attempted to clarify the risks of AI and define principles for ethical, responsible AI (e.g. Jobin, Lenca & Vayena, 2019; Corrêa et al., 2023; and Slattery et al., 2024).

The arrival of generative AI with the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT in November 2022, has greatly accelerated interest and concerns around AI, particularly across the educational sector. At least on the surface, generative AI offers a positive information experience, allowing searches to be conducted in natural language, through an interactive process, and giving a coherent and configurable answer to the user's question, not just a list of relevant resources. Generative AI platforms have multiple uses, for text, images and code, reflecting the aspiration of companies such as OpenAI to produce "general" rather than "narrow" AI. The functionality of generative AI, such as summarisation, has proliferated across search engines, new entrants to the search space, and platforms subscribed to by libraries (Baytas and Ruediger, 2024). A recent study of UK university students showed it was being used pervasively for a wide range of study tasks, pointing to significant changes in information behaviour (Freeman, 2025).

However, generative AI raises many of the same ethical issues as previous manifestations of AI, especially around data privacy, acknowledgement for content used as training data, environmental sustainability, and equitable access. Critically, from an information perspective, services like ChatGPT often give inaccurate answers, hallucinate references and contain systematic discriminatory biases. This creates an imperative to raise AI literacy as a dimension of information literacy and to deploy technologies such as RAG which appear to raise the reliability of answers. In the information sector organisations such as Association of Research Libraries (2024) have sought to define

appropriate principles for responsible use of AI in the library sector, drawing on the enduring ethical principles of the profession.

If we take a long-term perspective on the multiple manifestations of AI, there are many possible ways AI could affect library work (Cox, 2021; Hervieux and Wheatley, 2022; Cox, 2023; Balnaves et al. 2024; Cox and Mazumdar, 2023):

- **Use in library services**
  - Describing content or generating metadata
  - Library chatbots of various types, such as to answer reference queries
  - Automation of backend systems
  - Generating predictions from library use data
  - Generative AI in office tasks (such as minutes of meetings, drafting documents etc)
  - Robots: from guides or shelving through to complex Automatic Storage and Retrieval Systems
- **Library expert input to wider institutional uses of AI**
  - Chatbots
  - Providing data scientist communities data services such as for discovery, description, copyright advice and preservation
  - Promoting data, algorithmic and AI literacies
    - Including support to institutional selection of AI tools/guidance on permitted tools

Much of the existing literature focuses on case studies of applications of AI in specific contexts, chiefly for knowledge discovery. There has also been a lot of work around defining AI literacy both from outside the library world (Long and Magerko, 2020; UNESCO, 2024a, b) and within, in professionals' Libguides as well as in research papers (Ridley, M. and Pawlick-Potts, 2021; Hervieux and Wheatley, 2024).

Given the range of roles of information professionals in AI it is important to understand professional readiness. There have been a number of previous surveys of information professionals to discover their knowledge and perception of AI, such as: Huang (2022), Lund et al. (2020), Lo (2024), Lo and Vitale (2024) and Clarivate (2024). These offer many useful insights, but several appeared before ChatGPT and most have significant geographical and sectoral limitations. For example, Lo's studies are confined to US and Canada, and to academic librarians. To date a study across the UK profession is lacking.

The recent Clarivate study (2024) appears to have the widest geographical coverage. It suggests that most respondents see AI as the top tech priority and with potential to advance library missions in such areas as student learning, research excellence and content discoverability. But there were significant perceived barriers, both organisational and ethical. The report identified issues around expertise, budget restraints, misinformation and resistance to change, in addition to concerns about privacy, security, academic integrity, copyright/IP infringement and bias. The survey also suggested that there are significant sector differences.

In this context it was thought that an up-to-date survey to capture a picture of current activity and perspectives across information sectors in the UK would be timely. CILIP has a strong proven commitment to leading the profession to grasp the opportunities created by Artificial Intelligence and to minimise its evident risks. As early as 2020 CILIP commissioned a report on "The impact of AI, machine learning, automation and robotics on the information profession" (Cox, 2021). The report provided evidence of the important roles that information professionals play in using AI to increase access to knowledge and in supporting information users to understand how AI shapes their information experiences. The report also fed into an important update to the PKSB, anticipating the need for professionals to upgrade their skills. Building on this foundation, for the last three years CILIP's AI Hub (**https://www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=AI**) has curated dozens of resources and news for members, helping them keep up with what is a very fast moving field. The work of the hub has charted how the arrival of generative AI, especially ChatGPT and CoPilot has accelerated the diffusion of AI into all our daily information lives. The topic has also been extensively explored in *Information Professional* and CILIP's events such as *Rewired*.

The survey was distributed at the end of 2024. This places it about two years after the launch of ChatGPT and in the subsequent period of rapid development of generative AI. A more detailed methods note is contained in appendix 1.

Objectives of the study

Research Questions for the study were:

- How are information professionals using AI in their work?
- How are libraries and information services responding to AI in policies and use?
- What barriers to the use of AI do information professionals perceive?
- What forms of support, including from CILIP, and government action do they wish for?

Results

Respondents

There were 162 valid responses. Of these 111 were CILIP members (70%).

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents from the different information sectors. Given the low numbers of respondents for some sectors we only differentiate in this report between HE, health and public libraries.

Table 1: Respondents by library sector

HE	49	30%
Health	32	20%
Public Library	32	20%
FE	13	8%
School	11	7%
Other	7	4%
National	4	3%
Government	4	3%
Charity	3	2%
Legal	4	3%
Professional	2	1%
Research	1	1%
Total	**162**	

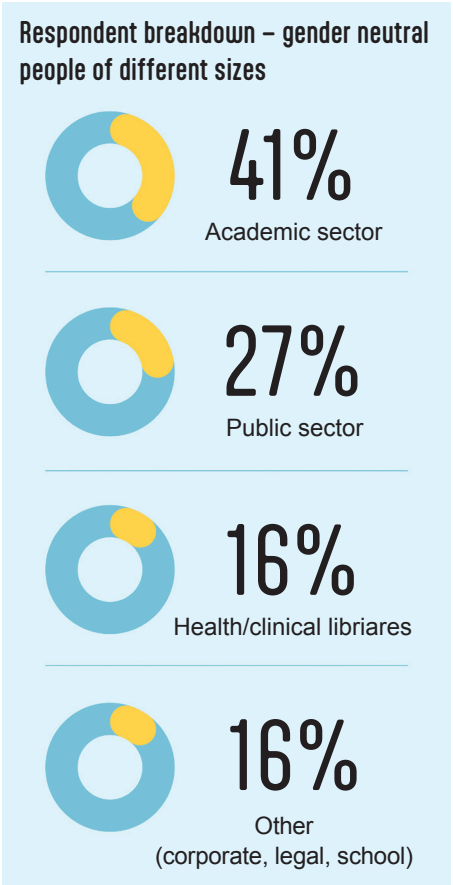
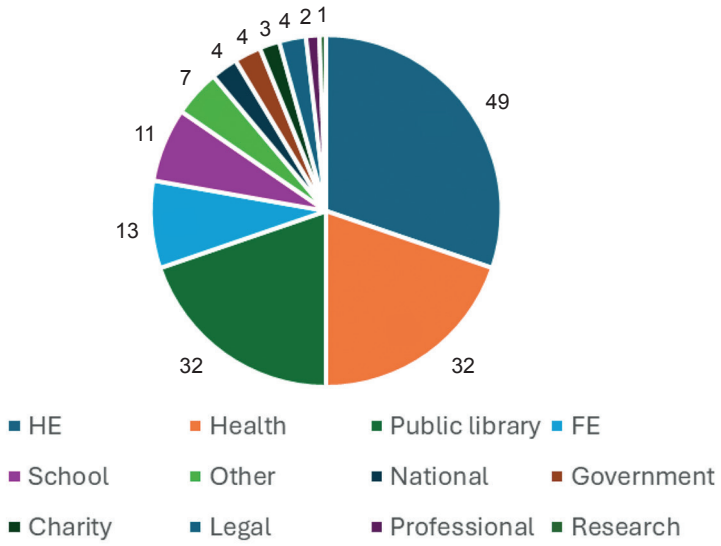


Figure 1: Respondents by library sector



The gender distribution of respondents reflects that librarianship is a female majority profession, with 111 (69%) female and 38 (24%) male respondents, with a further 13 identifying as non-binary, trans or preferring not to say.

The age distribution shows only a small number of respondents in the younger age group, a significant gap given the relative exposure of young people to AI.

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents

18-24	3	2%
25-34	27	17%
35-44	42	26%
45-54	51	32%
55-64	33	20%
65 or over	6	4%
Total	**162**	

Balancing innovation and risk

65%

65% of respondents saw significant opportunities to improve efficiency and access.

57%

But 57% voiced concerns about ethics, bias, and job displacement.

Use of AI

Of all respondents 105 (65%) said they were using AI in their work, while 57 (35%) said they were not.

Of those using AI 32 (20%) said they only used AI integrated into other software and 34 (21%) said they used it only in standalone software. 39 (24%) said they used both.

As table 3 shows ChatGPT and Copilot are the most used AI. Other AI in use included alternatives to ChatGPT such as Gemini, image generation tools (e.g. Canva) and some of the research tools that incorporate AI such as Elicit.

Table 3: AI in use

ChatGPT	57	
Copilot	53	
Claude	20	
Gemini	18	
Canva	18	
Elicit	14	
Perplexity	12	
Gamma	7	
Consensus	5	
Research rabbit	4	
Adobe	3	
Keenious	3	
Dall-e	3	
Bing	2	
Scite	2	
Grammerly	1	
Midjourney	1	
Craiyon	1	

In terms of age, the 25-34 age group were the most likely not to be using AI (14/33, 42%).

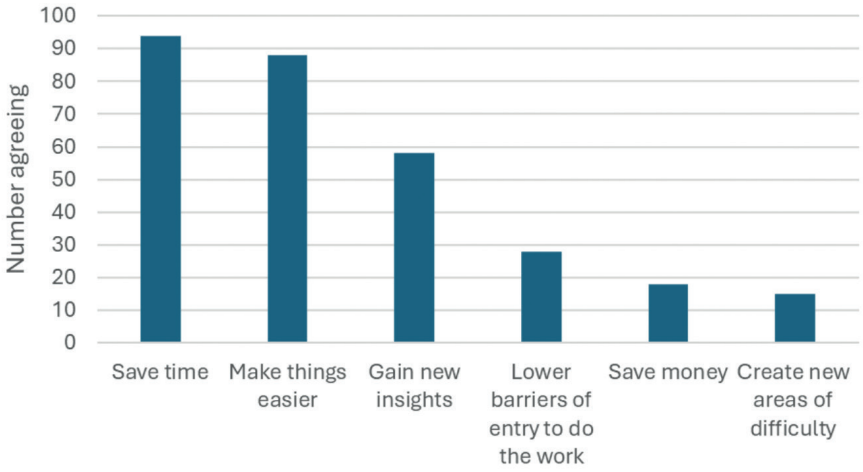
Non-use appeared to be evenly spread across sectors. In terms of age, the 25-34 age group were the most likely not to be using AI (14/33, 42%). So it was not, as one might have expected, that age had an inverse relation to use. 42 (38%) of all females in the survey were non-users; only 8 males (21%). However, this apparent difference was not statistically significant.

Respondents were asked to characterize the impacts of using AI if they had ever used it. 48 said they have never used it in their work. Answers (presented in Table 4) chiefly pointed to saving time or making things easier, but far less to saving money or lowering requirements to do the work. This points to AI being perceived primarily to be for efficiency gain. But half of users did say that AI gave them new insights which arguably suggests a more transformative type of impact.

Table 4: Impacts of using AI in work (N=114)

Save time	94	83%
Make things easier	88	77%
Gain new insights	58	51%
Lower barriers of entry to do the work	28	25%
Save money	18	16%
Create new areas of difficulty	15	13%

Figure 2: Impacts of using AI in work (N=114)



The free text responses describing positive and negative impacts of uses of AI give a rich sense of the range of uses of generative AI as personal productivity tools, such as for:

- Gaining an overview of a topic
- Planning searches
- Rewriting/ changing the tone/ shortening messages and other texts
- Creating presentations
- Making meeting notes
- Summarising documents
- Generating ideas, including for events
- Coding tasks, writing macros, creating excel formulae
- Troubleshooting systems

As a general purpose technology individuals were excited about using AI for a wide range of tasks:

> *Shortening/rewriting messages for students and staff; creating minutes, summarising documents. (FE)*
>
> *Light-touch use of Co-pilot to suggest summaries of documents and starting points for papers/presentations. (National)*
>
> *I have personally used AI to help me generate documents and come up with ideas for events. (Public library)*

This could be both professional and general office tasks:

> *Using AI as a tool to generate terms for search strategies and locate synonyms. Used AI to generate images for presentations and displays. (HE)*
>
> *I've used AI to generate synonyms for a literature search. This has been successful as it has given me more niche suggestions which helped form a search strategy. (Health)*
>
> *AI tools used are very useful when, for example, summarising case law or highlighting the latest news to draw your attention to particular areas of research. Also with FAQs, an AI chat bot could utilise keywords and identify FAQs that could be relevant thus saving time for library staff. If answers aren't covered, then emails can be generated to library team members. On a negative point, it comes down to credibility of responses at times and so there needs to be human input at the start and end of exercises. (HE)*

Or technical tasks:

> *I use AI tools primarily at the moment to trouble-shoot issues with IT systems, e.g. Microsoft Bookings, LibCal events management, Topdesk Enquiry Management System, Canvas VLE, and get step by step instructions rather than asking colleagues or logging with our IT support. (HE)*

Some were experimenting with a wide range of different generative AI services:

> *I have used Copilot or Chatgpt for ideas generation, workshop ideas and general help and advice. I have used Elicit to help students with their research practices, to make research simpler. I use the integrated Canva options to make life simpler and give me ideas. (FE)*

A few referred to using AI primarily for raising their own skills or as earning to support others:

> *I use these tools for my awareness, not specific pieces of work with a measurable impact in time or money etc. (HE)*
>
> *Teach the public and staff about AI in workshops. (Public library)*

Time saving was often mentioned as the benefit:

> *Quarterly reporting completed in 5 minutes, saving hours; troubleshooting coding queries; summarising papers; to bounce ideas off; checking language is appropriate for audience in communications. (Public library)*
>
> *Creating presentation slides in just 2 minutes rather than spending hours on a ppt template. With tweaking, this took a total of 20 minutes to perfect. Finding Excel formulas for complicated transactions. Pulling together a list of themes for library improvements following user survey. Creation of promotional materials. Writing strategies. (Health)*

But AI could sometimes create extra work:

> *I use it to create presentations. Sometimes it simplifies it and gives me ideas other times it is harder to unpick what it creates and I would have saved more time if I had just done it myself. I like to create lesson plans that create examples of how it can be used in schools. Without ChatGPT this would have been very difficult for me. I like how it can explain something I have not fully understood. I am selective when I use it. (School)*
>
> *Sometimes AI can make tasks easier, e.g. spellchecking and suggested text. However some AI makes the task more complicated, e.g. using AI to take minutes at a meeting – without intelligent human intervention, the AI generated minutes can miss or misinterpret some important points and the minutes end up far too long and complicated. An experienced human would generally do a better job of taking concise minutes. (HE)*

The critical and ambivalent feelings about the use of the AI were often apparent in responses:

> ***Positive –** I'll often throw a query at AI if I'm encountering a new concept or idea... to get an overview before then delving deeper with more traditional methods. **Positive –** AI LLMs can be real time savers in structuring a presentation / talk / paper, though I wouldn't always trust its depth of content. **Positive –** AI image generation is quicker then searching for a suitable image with appropriate usage rights for presentations. **Negatives –** huge inaccuracies at times e.g. I used combination of ChatGPT and Gemini to create a staff Christmas quiz last year – some of the suggested correct answers were wildly, inaccurate. More seriously, I have seen inaccurate info on multiple occasions when using for more 'serious' purposes, often when you are working to a higher level of detail or more 'niche' subject area. **Negatives –** We have had ILL requests for material that doesn't exists & that are clearly hallucinatory references. **Negatives –** we have received job applications where text used was clearly AI generated – those have often really not been good in terms of surfacing the information about a candidate we want to see. (HE)*
>
> *As a neurodiverse person I really appreciate how it can jumpstart my thoughts on a topic. I appreciate though the concerns for bias and downright misinformation it can create – so I really limit what I do with AI. (Other)*

Purely negative evaluations were a bit rarer, but there were some:

> *Tasks which call for awareness and ability to handle academic literature are not made easier by the GenAI tools I've tried at present. (Charity)*
>
> *Not reliable, need to teach junior members to use it carefully (Other)*
>
> *Contradiction – it can be easier and save time, but you need an extra set of copy editing skills and increased criticality to make sure that quality and accuracy is not compromised. (HE)*
>
> *I have no interest in burning down rainforest because I'm scared of writing my own emails. (HE)*

Policy

Figure 3: Policy on AI (N=162)

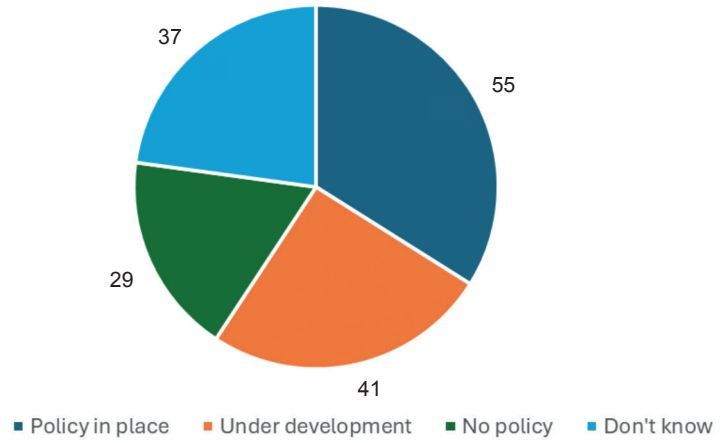


Table 5: Policy development by sector (N=162)

	Yes	Under development	No	Don't know	Total
Charity / not-for-profit	1	1	1		3
Further Education	7	2	2	2	13
Government / Civil Service	3	1			4
Health	3	8	12	9	32
Higher Education	26	12	3	8	49
Legal	3	1			4

National library	2	2			4
Other	2	2		3	7
Professional Services including consultancy		1	1		2
Public libraries	3	10	6	13	32
Research (non-HE)				1	1
School	5	1	4	1	11
Grand Total	**55**	**41**	**29**	**37**	**162**

Overall 55 (34%) of respondents said that their library did have a policy relating to AI. Another 41 (25%) had one under development. 29 (18%) said they had no policy; 37 (23%) said they did not know.

The overall pattern disguises some potential sector variability: 53% of HE libraries had a policy and another 25% were developing one. In contrast, among public libraries and health only 9% had a policy. Some policies were under development in these sectors (public libraries – 31%; health – 25%). In the public library sector there were many "don't knows" (13, 43%). In the health sector more "nos" (12, 38%). These patterns should be treated with some caution because the number of answers prevents applying a statistical test of significance.

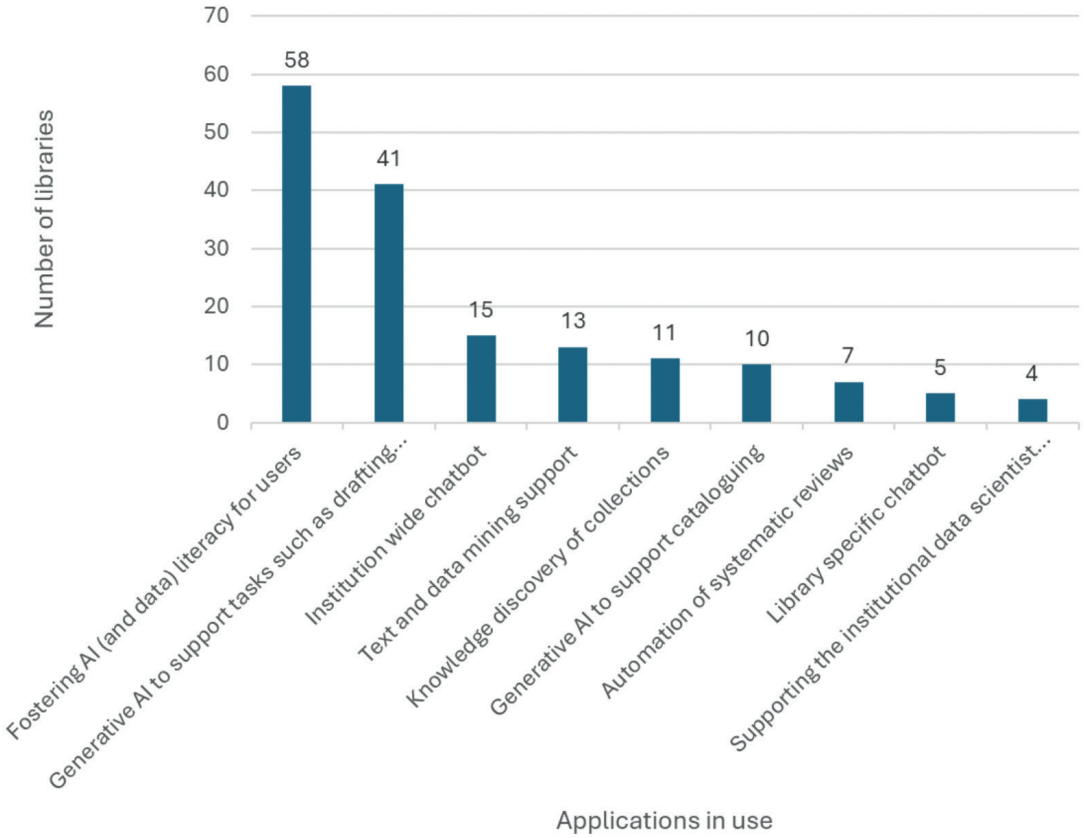
Library use of AI

Respondents were asked whether their library was involved in a number of types of application of AI (Table 6).

Table 6: Proportion of all respondent libraries involved in AI applications (N=162)

Fostering AI (and data) literacy for users	58	36%
Generative AI to support tasks such as drafting documents	41	25%
Institution wide chatbot	15	9%
Text and data mining support	13	8%
Knowledge discovery of collections	11	7%
Generative AI to support cataloguing	10	6%
Automation of systematic reviews	7	4%
Library specific chatbot	5	3%
Supporting the institutional data scientist community	4	3%

Figure 4: Respondent libraries involved in AI applications



As one might expect AI literacy is a major area of activity in a third of libraries. Use of generative AI for professional tasks such as drafting documents was also mentioned by around a quarter of respondents.

There were some chatbots in use but mostly libraries were contributing to institutional not a library specific chatbot.

Taking into account that HE is the most active sector in using AI, Table 7 indicates the make-up of "yes" answers from HE and the contribution of other sectors. Again this data should be treated with some caution because the numbers are too low to test for statistical significance.

Table 7: Proportion of AI applications occurring in academic library sector

	HE sector "yes"	Proportion of all yes from HE	Other sectors with strong yes response
Fostering AI (& data) literacy for users	31	53%	FE 7 (12%)
Generative AI to support tasks such as drafting documents	12	29%	Health 11 (27%) public libraries 6 (14%)

Institution wide chatbot	8	53%	FE 3 (20%)
Text and data mining support	5	39%	National libraries 2 (15%)
Knowledge discovery of collections	6	55%	
Generative AI to support cataloguing	6	60%	School 2 (20%)
Automation of systematic reviews	4	57%	Health 2 (28.6%)
Library specific chatbot	2	40%	1 each FE, Gov, Health (20%)
Supporting the institutional data scientist community	1	25%	2 National libraries (50%)

Uses across the sector

1. Public libraries: AI is primarily used for enquiry support and reader recommendations.
2. Academic libraries: Common uses include cataloguing and metadata, research discovery, and teaching support.
3. Health libraries: AI supports literature searching, summarising evidence, and clinical decision support.

Table 7 suggests some variability by sector in the take up of library applications of AI such as for chatbots and systematic reviewing, but as already noted should be treated with caution because of the response levels.

An open text question following this revealed a lot of "early days" type exploratory activity but only a limited sense of proven, concrete AI applications in use. Answers demonstrated a range of experimentation but with a recurrent emphasis that it was "early days":

> *I think the chatbots are in development but not ready yet. (HE)*
>
> *So far, AI developments are too blunt to help with specialist tasks (such as classification or rare/niche books cataloguing) and the efficiency promises (i.e. to catalogue more everyday materials on the fly) could be solved much more cheaply and efficiently with open access licencing for metadata. Creating 100s of slightly different UK institutional records for the same contemporary publication will generate future problems for institutions and aggregators that the sharing of 1 record does not. (HE)*
>
> *We have switched on [ANON AI tool built in LMS] recently. It is likely that this will be switched off following feedback – further testing and development of guidance is required. (HE)*
>
> *Text and data mining support – we are receiving queries and will start a piece of work to develop a suite of guidance. (HE)*

> *Senior management are experimenting with using AI to help with drafting documents. Very early stages. (Public library)*
>
> *ANON Council is trialling Copilot which myself and a few colleagues have. I hope that we will have more integration in the future. (Public library)*
>
> *We do not use AI directly as part of our daily roles, but we do use it for research and exploration of AI use itself, to better inform colleagues and users. (Health)*
>
> *Pilot project testing out a range of automation tools to identify and describe content in moving image files. Partner in various research projects involving AI tools (e.g. [ANON]). (National)*
>
> *It is very early days but we are looking at ways to support AI literacy for our students. I have been invited to join the college AI working group (new in post so not sure how much has been done already). (FE)*

A few respondents expressed a clear idea of what was being done and this reflected a wide range of type of response.

Training was often central here:

> *AI awareness now built into Information Literacy, Academic Practice & Researcher education teaching we undertake We also provide an AI information hub web-page for our users. We are experimenting with potential to utilise AI for Cataloguing Implementing a number of AI discovery tools to aid discovery of our collections ([ANON] embedded) Involved in very early conversations at institutional level about an institution-wide chatbot. (HE)*
>
> *Fostering AI (and data) literacy for staff Generating "copyright free" images for presentations. (Public library)*
>
> *We are doing short courses about AI and issues to do with copyright and ethics. (Government)*

Inputs to chatbots was mentioned:

> *Library staff are involved in writing [ANON] enquiry management system Knowledge Items which feed into the institutional Chatbot. Library is evaluating [ANON AI tool built in LMS]. Library has been proactive in developing student-facing guidance and working across institution to revise academic integrity policy and discuss issues relating to learning and teaching. (HE)*

Use of AI in search services or to answer enquiries:

> *We do use text mining for search development, priority screening and have also used classifiers for screening, such as an RCT classifier and also a custom classifier that we developed for a specific topic in EPPI reviewer. These have saved time for screening but are not used as standard. (Health)*
>
> *Also we had a complaint about a lot of our study papers were too male orientated, so we used AI to identify the gender language used within papers so that reviews could be made. (HE)*

Those respondents who said none of the above activities were happening in their library are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Totals for non-activity/by sector

Charity / not-for-profit	3	100%
Further Education	4	31%
Government / Civil Service	0	0%
Health	19	59%
Higher Education	10	20%
Legal	1	25%
National library	0	0%
Other	4	57%
Professional Services including consultancy	2	100%
Public libraries	22	69%
Research (non-HE)	0	0%
School	8	73%
Total	**73**	**45%**

Another question asked about potential areas of opportunity to develop library services (Table 9). Process efficiencies was the most cited area, followed by data skills and copyright.

Table 9: Opportunities to develop the library service AI offering

AI and Information ownership and accountability	40	25%
AI and algorithmic literacy	53	33%
AI and copyright, intellectual property and licensing	59	36%
AI governance	28	17%
AI policy	53	33%
Business intelligence	30	19%
Data skills to support AI	66	41%

Decision support	35	22%
Ethics	51	32%
Process efficiencies	68	42%
Unsure	34	21%
Other	10	6%

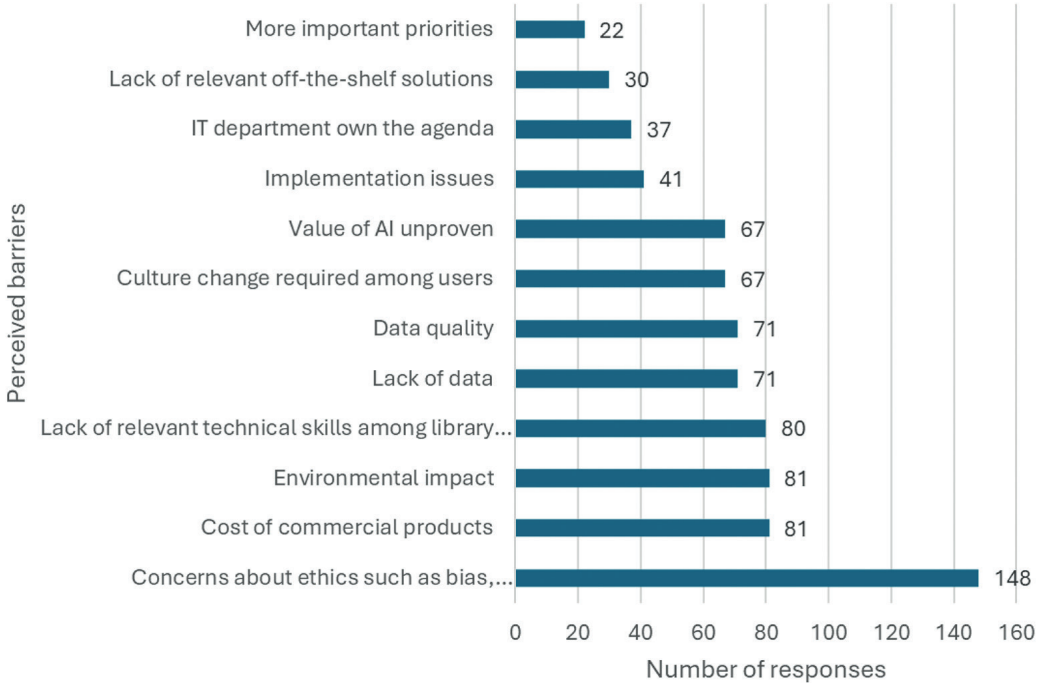
Barriers

The survey also asked respondents about what they considered were significant barriers to AI. The responses are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Significant barriers to using AI

Concerns about ethics such as bias, transparency, intelligibility, legality, confidentiality & privacy	148	91%
Cost of commercial products	81	50%
Environmental impact	81	50%
Lack of relevant technical skills among library staff	80	49%
Lack of data	71	44%
Data quality	71	44%
Culture change required among users	67	41%
Value of AI unproven	67	41%
Implementation issues	41	25%
IT department own the agenda	37	23%
Lack of relevant off-the-shelf solutions	30	19%
More important priorities	22	14%

Figure 5: Barriers to AI (N=162)



It seems that the ethical issues around AI are an almost universal concern. AI's environmental impact was also a concern for half respondents.

Cost, data issues and the cost of commercial products are also important concerns. A significant proportion of respondents continue to see the value of AI as unproven.

Less of a concern were implementation issues, perhaps because in most cases uses were of generative AI (as external services) not library supported applications.

There were some sector differences in perceptions of barriers:

- HE respondents were more likely to cite: cost, environmental impact
- Public libraries cited: technical skills of library staff, culture change required of users, IT owning the agenda
- Health cited: IT own the agenda

Open text comments reinforced these concerns. There were also a few mentions of other issues not offered in the closed question, such as job displacement, cybersecurity, and equity of access. Environmental impact and other ethical concerns, such as privacy, also came out strongly as a barrier:

> *I work at a university with clear sustainability and copyright policies. AI is hugely environmentally costly, with data suggesting the equivalent of one bottle of water is used per Chat GPT query. As such, I don't see how AI solutions can be ethically used alongside our library's commitment to*

sustainability. Additionally, some AI models have been shown to use data from published academic work without crediting it. Again, how can we, as librarians, use this technology in good conscience, knowing it has been developed without compensating those whose data it is using for profit. (HE)

The HUGE environmental impact of AI isn't spoken about enough and is a real threat to the planet – if Libraries want to continue to be Green Libraries and to care about the planet, AI is something that shouldn't be used in the service! Example: If one in 10 working Americans (about 16 million people) write a single 100-word email with ChatGPT weekly for a year, the AI will require 435,235,476 litres of water. (Public library)

Can't use AI to do things that would be potentially useful like summarising meeting notes due to confidentiality issues. (HE)

The use of AI to diminish workers' rights. I am mostly concerned about the environmental impact and the misconception that AI is unbiased. (Health)

Accuracy of AI outputs was mentioned frequently as a key issue:

> *GenAI is useful for creating text that follows certain conventions for presenting information. But due to its nature, it can never be relied upon to present true and accurate information, and therefore the increasing creation and spread of AI-generated text is actively damaging to the cause of accurate and useful information, especially online. AI is actively destroying the online knowledge base and rendering it impossible to find genuine information. As a librarian, AI is working in opposition to the goals of my profession. (HE)*

> *Lack of accuracy when using generative AI to help with things like bibliographies – it just makes things up. (School)*

Quotes elaborated on the library skills gaps:

> *As AI is being tested and used in small ways at the moment it is not clear that the public library sector has the skills and capacity to deliver on AI developments. (public library)*

> *The largest barrier is knowledge. There are not enough people within the library world with enough knowledge to train others. We need leaders in AI to step up and support everyone else. (School)*

> *Libraries are likely to need to collaborate with others to have sufficient volume and quality of data, for example to train a useful library chatbot. Gaining the skills to be confident to work with commercial suppliers to: manage the concerns listed here, co-develop relevant products. Gaining the confidence and influencing skills as a profession to shape the agenda, work with IT and other stakeholders. (HE)*

Lack of resources, be that time or money were often cited as a barrier:

> *We mostly don't have access to premium AI models due to cost and lack of institutional support. (HE)*

> *Most public libraries would need additional support with technologies as budgets are under threat and staff capacity is increasingly limited. (Public library)*

Major barrier is that we don't have the resources to provide equitable access. I've also ended up basically taking on responsibility for AI skills development (users and staff) just because I have a strong interest even though it's really a role on its own and often too much on top of my day job. We have a hiring freeze and can't create a post for it. (HE)

I added time as the main barrier. Some of the other barriers could be overcome easily with time. We're a small library. We don't have time to play around with these new tools. They are numerous and the scope of their functionality unknown to us. We also don't have the time out of work to practice using these new tools – with family and home-life commitments. Off the shelf solutions are needed rapidly to ensure all staff can participate and are not left out. The language around AI is mystifying for some (even within this survey). (Health)

Our Library service is currently facing restructure due to financial pressures. [ANON]. Resourcing is an issue and budget very tight with essential spend only. Library recommendations for development ideas currently take second place to the overall organisational digital transformation team plans. At present mainly revenue collection services in the authority are being digitised and AI applications considered. AI solutions for purely library related matters are not. IT support within the organisation is currently under pressure and very limited for library services. (Public library)

Switching from an ordinary Lexis or Practical Law subscription to one using AI assisted searching would increase the cost considerably. When the value of this is unproven an everyone is happy with the products as they are it is difficult to argue the need to pay more. (Legal)

Lack of wider policy or policy blockers were mentioned as an issue:

Our organisation has just banned AI temporarily until they publish a policy following a recent potential exposure of patient data to AI. I've tried using it for cataloguing purposes, but wasn't impressed. The free versions of AI products often don't provide enough depth for how we'd really like to use it (e.g. Elicit for evidence searching) – we need to investigate purchasing licences to make full use of it, but this is difficult with finances so tight in the NHS at the moment. (Health)

Blocked pages/sites by our IT department (Health)

Our IT department block access to various websites which don't meet criteria for education IT policy therefore staff and students unable to access and use certain sites which may be of use Although some staff are using AI and have awareness others aren't so confident Having mentioned AI in teaching sessions some students aren't really aware of it on a deeper level, so may need to introduce appropriately pitched AI literacy sessions to support them in the everchanging landscape. (Other)

Concerns over the impact on assessment, a lack of institution wide guidance and a general reluctance to change means not as much work is happening around AI as it should be. (HE)

Lack of proven use cases was also mentioned:

> *In the areas where I work, I haven't yet seen anything game changing from AI. I think it will come, but it's not here yet. (HE)*
>
> *There is also a job to do to explain the uses and potential benefits of AI for services and citizens. We also need to face the reality that AI should not be used in a solutions approach and only if/when it is needed or adds value. (public library)*

A few items that were not in the closed question were mentioned:

> *Library users' distrust; staff afraid of being replaced. (Public library)*
>
> *Cyber security is likely to increase.. jobs will go.. already lots of automation mean that human input has been considerably reduced. Is AI going to accelerate that? (HE)*
>
> *Access to devices on which to access AI. I work in a school in a deprived inner city area. There are laptops in the library that are very slow and there are pupils who do not have access to technology at home. (School)*

Support wanted

Table 11: Preferences for training/ resources

Short courses / webinars	129	80%
AI ethics training	103	64%
Written resources and training materials	98	61%
Webinars from relevant speakers	88	54%
A community of practice	81	50%
Institutional policy frameworks	69	43%
Posters / infographics for your library	62	38%
Long courses / qualifications	48	30%

All sectors emphasised the value of short courses and webinars, including specifically on the ethics of AI. The level of demand from HE was less than other sectors.

HE placed AI ethics (33/49, 67%) and institutional policy frameworks (27/49, 55%) second and third respectively. Respondents in the health sector wanted written resources (23/32, 72%) and a community of practice (21/32, 66%). Those in public libraries wanted AI ethics training (24/32, 75%) and written resources (20/32, 63%).

Actions from CILIP

An open-ended question asked respondents what actions they would like CILIP to take in relation to AI. 94 (58%) gave an answer to a free text question.

From those who did answer, there were a wide range of suggestions. Some of the more common ones were:

- Training – 30 (32% of all respondents giving an answer)
- Use cases and resources on use – 24 (26%), plus creating discussion forums (5, 5%)
- Guidelines, including specifically ethics guidance – 23 (25%)
- Advocacy with the government – 6 (6%)
- Action around public literacy – 5 (5%)
- A few mentioned specifically not hyping the technology (7, 7%)

Suggestions mentioned by just one or two respondents were: help on policy writing, action on careers/ jobs, horizon scanning, research.

Actions from the UK Government

An open text question asked what actions respondents would like to see from the Government in relation to AI. 92 respondents (57%) posted an answer.

The commonest answer was regulation in general (35, 38% of all respondents who gave any answer) or specific action related to copyright (21, 23%) or data protection (6, 7%) or general guidance (22, 24%). 9 (10%) mentioned action around environmental impact and 5 (5%) misinformation. A few respondents mentioned a stance on public skills (10, 11%).

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Appendix 1: Method note

The survey was opened on November 1st 2024 and closed December 13th 2024.

It was circulated on CILIP's AI Hub and through professional forums.

Analysis of answers was using descriptive statistics. Much of the text from the open text questions is supplied verbatim in appendixes to give the reader a flavour of respondents' answers. In other cases the data was analysed manually using content analysis employing categories emerging from the data.

Limitations of the study

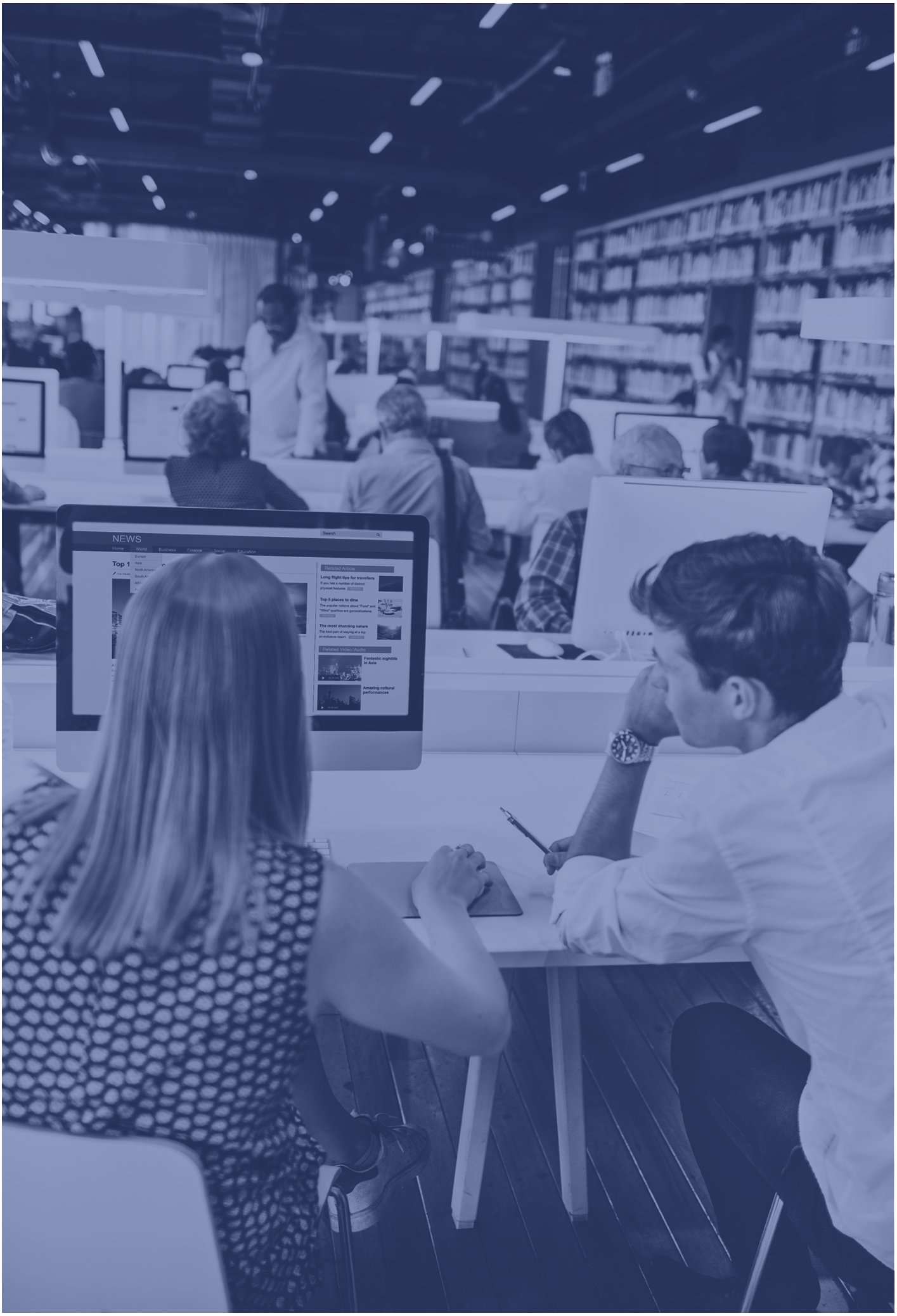
Although 164 is a good response for a survey, it represents only a small fraction of a large profession. The respondents are essentially a convenience sample, not a stratified random sample so any results should be treated with caution. There is always an issue of potential non-response bias with a survey, in other words the danger is that those who do respond do not accurately represent all those who could respond. However, that said, in this case there was a good mix of positive and negative experiences, high use and low use, so it seems reasonable to say it represents a good snapshot of library usage in the UK at the end of 2024. Respondents were generous in supplying long written responses in the open questions, so the qualitative data is rich.

The response was too small to identify statistically significant differences by sector, although there are suggestions of differences between HE, health and public libraries where there are higher levels of response.

The number of participants from younger age (18-24) groups was rather low (see Table 2 p. 9), so it under-represents those who may be most engaged with AI.

Questions posed both individual and institutional responses. So an early question "do you use AI for your work?" was interpreted to be about individual use by the respondent, whereas the wording of question "Is your library involved in any of the following AI applications?" emphasised library engagement. It cannot be assumed that participants were in a position to comment in a fully informed way about the use of AI in their organisation.

A final issue for the survey is the difficultly of defining AI. For example, many would argue that features of traditional google search such as recommendation are often AI driven. AI overviews are now provided in most google searches. So it might be deemed surprising that a significant proportion of participants said they did not or even have never used AI. However, from the answers it is clear that AI is mostly interpreted in terms of using generative AI reflecting the dominance of that technology in public imagination.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