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Teaching Artificial Intelligence without Teaching Computer Science

Why AI Literacy Matters


Artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude are becoming part of everyday life. Patrons and students alike are already using them for research, writing, and problem-solving. Libraries can play an important role in helping people understand how to use these tools thoughtfully and responsibly.

AI in Everyday Life

- Voice assistants (Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant)
- Recommendation systems (Netflix, Spotify, Amazon)
- Navigation apps and route suggestions
- Writing and research tools

How AI Works (In Simple Terms)

- AI predicts the next word based on patterns in language.
- It is trained on very large amounts of text from books, websites, and articles.
- It recognizes patterns but does not truly understand meaning.
- It generates responses based on probability — what is statistically likely to come next.



What AI Is (and Isn't)

- AI is a tool — not an authority.
- AI can produce polished and confident answers.
- AI can also be incorrect or biased.
- AI responses should always be verified using reliable sources.

The Key Challenge

AI often sounds authoritative even when it is wrong. That is why information literacy skills are more important than ever.

Why Librarians Are Well Positioned to Teach AI Literacy

- Evaluating information
- Recognizing bias
- Verifying sources
- Using technology responsibly
- Asking better research questions

What AI Literacy Looks Like in Libraries

- Question AI-generated information
- Fact-check AI responses
- Recognize bias in AI outputs
- Use AI as a starting point, not the final answer
- Think critically about when to use AI and when not to



Simple Program Outline for Libraries

- Introduction to AI tools
- Discussion about how AI works and its limitations
- Live demonstration of an AI tool
- Interactive activity
- Discussion and questions

Activities Libraries Can Use

- **Fact-Check the Bot:** Show an AI response and ask participants to verify the information using trusted sources.
- **Spot the Hallucination:** Provide an AI-generated paragraph containing an incorrect fact and ask learners to identify what needs verification.
- **Prompt Makeover:** Compare a vague prompt with a more specific one and discuss how the output changes.
- **AI vs. Human Writing:** Compare a human-written paragraph with an AI-generated one and discuss tone, accuracy, and bias.

Key Takeaway

AI literacy is not about teaching computer science. It is about helping people question information, evaluate sources, and think critically.

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