Canadian Association of Research Libraries Statement on Libraries and Student AI Literacy

AI literacy is the ability to understand, use, and think critically about AI technologies and their impact on society, ethics, and everyday life.[1]

Comprehensive AI literacy is vital to student success. It is key to shaping students' ability to think critically, evaluate information, and determine which uses of AI are appropriate across the academic workflow—from early-stage brainstorming to literature searching, source analysis, and writing. As AI tools become embedded in scholarly practice—and everyday life—learners at all levels need clear guidance on the ethical implications of their use, including academic integrity, privacy, and the increasingly complex questions of ownership and authorship in AI-mediated work. Academic libraries advance students' learning and success by ensuring equitable, ready access to the knowledge and resources they need to thrive – and as AI becomes further integrated into academic work, libraries are the natural campus leaders to guide and support AI literacy for today's students.

The time to ramp up our efforts is now. A recent global study from the University of Melbourne showed Canadians fall short in AI literacy, ranking 44th out of 47 surveyed countries; moreover, the study indicated Canadians lack confidence in their abilities to use AI tools effectively.[2] These competencies are no longer optional; they are essential, and libraries are uniquely equipped to teach them. Libraries already possess the pedagogical frameworks to build literacy skills effectively. Grounded in decades of leadership in information, digital, and copyright literacies, libraries are best positioned to drive the AI literacy efforts now required on campus in the wake of generative AI's rapid growth. Moreover, as the Government of Canada advances the implementation of Canada's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy: AI for All, the

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[1] Lo, L. (2025). AI Literacy: A Guide for Academic Libraries. *College & Research Libraries News, 86(3)*, 120. https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.86.3.120

[2] Potts, T. (2026). *AI and Democracy: Navigating Trust, Truth and Technology in Policymaking*. Evidence for Democracy. https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/AI_Democracy_Report_E4D.pdf

academic library community's demonstrated leadership in AI literacy positions libraries as indispensable partners in achieving the Strategy's ambitions.

The skills to critically evaluate AI technologies build directly on existing library strengths. Through our teaching and learning activities, libraries capably equip students to interrogate information—examining provenance, power, purpose, and voice. In an AI-driven landscape, this know-how is more important than ever. Understanding bias and context in information, data sources and training algorithms, as well as how AI systems process information, shape online experiences, and draw on personal data, must be foundational competencies for every learner.

Meeting the university community's most forward-looking information needs falls well within our scope. Libraries have consistently stepped up to guide the adoption of emerging technologies and new forms of knowledge discovery. From the rise of internet search engines and the transition to electronic journals, to the emergence of Wikipedia and proliferation of web content, to the rise of mis- and dis-information associated with social media, libraries have steadily supported students in navigating the potential and the pitfalls of new tools and technologies. Supporting our communities to learn to choose and use technologies effectively, reflexively, and ethically isn't new for us; it is germane to our mission.

Moving forward, libraries will continue to deliver high-quality teaching and learning instruction, model responsible use, and prepare students to engage with AI in ways that are thoughtful, transparent, and academically sound. As trusted, discipline-agnostic partners at the heart of our campuses, libraries bring the necessary expertise and pedagogical know-how to lead AI literacy efforts. Our leadership in this space is critical to preparing our students for an academic and professional world markedly transformed by AI.

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The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) provides leadership for Canada's research library community. The Association includes 29 major academic libraries and three federal and parliamentary libraries, and aims to foster a robust and sustainable Canadian research ecosystem.