ALA CORE VALUES & AI: Let's Delve* Into This!

A Poster Presentation by Jessica Melissa Iwamasa & Halley Shea Cloud | Inspired by a zine by Thomas Vose (2024)

The American Library Association's Core Values of Librarianship articulate the profession's principles and highest aspirations. They guide and unite library workers.

While there are many positive uses for AI, we wanted to take a step back and look at the ways that this technology can actually work against our core values.

Access

Core Value: *Create systems that ensure people can freely access information needed for learning, growth and empowerment regardless of technology, format or delivery methods.*

AI is deciding what info we see & how, adding another layer of protection & potential falsification.

- What is retrieved depends on **algorithms**, often whose decision-making process is a "black box".
- LLMs are designed to predict logical language patterns, **not produce correct results**.
- AI tech is **controlled by some of the wealthiest men on earth**: *Grok: Elon Musk $480b-1st richest, Gemini: Larry Page $230b-4th, Meta: Mark Zuckerberg $213b-6th, Co-Pilot: Steve Ballmer $150b-9th, Amazon: Jeff Bezos $250b-3rd, ChatGPT: Sam Altman $2.2b*
- AI is being integrated into every aspect of our technological life. **Opting out becomes more and more difficult**.

So What Can We Do....

- Many libraries and information centers are already doing the first part: Educating people on what AI is, how it works, and methods of navigating it!
- Continued education and leading discussions on the impacts of AI and the consequences of it need to be encouraged. AI-Refusal doesn't mean not talking about it!
- When you can - consider opting out of AI usage!

Further Reading

go.hawaii.edu/mEQ

References

go.hawaii.edu/MEm

* Hern, A. (2024, April 16). *TechScape: How cheap, outsourced labour in Africa is shaping AI English*. The Guardian.

Sustainability

Core Value: *By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.*

The energy resources used by data centers, which power the processing abilities of AI technology, is staggering.

- In 2023, Google reported consuming over **6 billion gallons of water** just to cool all its data centers. (Civil Beat, 2025)
- Latest reports show that **4.4% of all the energy in the US** now goes toward data centers. (O'Donnell & Crownhart, 2025)
- Trump's AI Action Plan calls for **expediting permitting by reducing regulations** imposed by the Clean Air Act & Clean Water Act. (Chow, 2025)
- Expected to continue trending towards **dirtier forms of energy** to fill immediate needs. (O'Donnell & Crownhart, 2025)

Equity

Core Value: *Recognize and address systemic barriers, biases, and inequalities to create inclusive library environments that are accessible, welcoming and beneficial to all.*

AI is trained on data that reflects the biases and inequalities in our society. And it can exacerbate them.

- "Machines on their own are not racist, but if we give them biased data or algorithms, **their decisions will amplify discrimination**." (Lawrence, 2023)
- After an update to xAI's system prompt, **Grok started calling itself 'MechaHitler'** before being shut down. (NPR, 2025)
- AI companies are choosing data center locations "as sacrifice zones, **creating public harm for private gain that disproportionately affects minority health** in the name of technological innovation." (Marrinan, 2025)

Intellectual Freedom

Core Value: *Create systems that ensure people can freely access information needed for learning, growth and empowerment regardless of technology, format or delivery methods.*

AI is limited by the data that's used to train it. The ownership of these systems creates a layer of control and censorship of what kinds of information we see.

- Lack of algorithmic transparency is the main issue when it comes to AI. Accessibility to information that provides context to AI training is often intentionally poor. (Rodrigues, 2020)
- "Internal communications revealed that **at least three authors** of an AI Ethics-related paper, including Gebru and Mitchell were told to **refrain from casting Google's technologies in a negative light.**" (Ebell et al., 2021)
- AI-ethicists continue to report their findings aren't published due to not being "in line with high-quality peer review" after working with non-corporate researchers. (Ebell et al., 2021)

Public Good

Core Value: *Create systems that ensure people can freely access information needed for learning, growth and empowerment regardless of technology, format or delivery methods.*

Vose questions, if we can trust private companies, such as Google and OpenAI (creators of ChatGPT), to put public good before the benefits of shareholders. It often comes at a cost.

- Educational Integrity
  - Reducing mental load is beneficial for making space for more engagement with learning, but it **can leave gaps for richer engagement**. (Stadler et al., 2024)
- Human Neglect in AI Training
  - Kenyan workers for Samasource, an "ethical AI" company, were contracted to be Data Labelers for ChatGPT in November 2022 and paid **$1.32 - $2 USD per hour.** (Perrigo, 2023)
  - ChatGPT isn't the only AI model using Data Labelers.