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The rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools has drawn attention to a multitude of complex ethical issues in AI use, necessitating further steps toward a multidisciplinary AI literacy education framework and more robust guidelines for addressing the challenges faced by the library profession and society at large. In an attempt to contribute to the development of such guidelines, this article draws on the example of selected learning activities of a graduate-level library science course taught at a regional university. The article then discusses AI literacy through community engagement concept that provides a structure to integrate AI literacy into LIS education and professional practice of librarianship.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools has drawn attention to a multitude of complex ethical issues in AI use, necessitating further steps toward a multidisciplinary AI literacy education framework and more robust guidelines for addressing the challenges faced by the library profession and society at large. In an attempt to contribute to the development of such guidelines, this article draws on the example of selected learning activities of a graduate-level library science course taught at a regional university. The article then discusses AI literacy through community engagement concept that provides a structure to integrate AI literacy into LIS education and professional practice of librarianship.

Keywords: Community-Based Learning, AI Ethics, AI Literacy, LIS Education, Librarianship

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the information landscape has undergone a significant and ongoing transformation driven by many forces, including rapid technological progress, shifting global trends in economic development and information and communication technologies, and evolving societal expectations (Bitso & Raju, 2015). Libraries and information professionals find themselves during this dynamic environment, as they must adjust to a changing field that features such developments as the open movement, participatory culture, and the data revolution, to name just a few (Corrall, 2023). The implication of these changes that characterize the contemporary knowledge society is the need for greater intergenerational collaboration and innovative approaches to managing data, information, and knowledge, whether this knowledge is humanly produced or generated with the help of emergent artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

The wide-scale adoption of these tools represents an area where new developments in the information universe have been particularly apparent, which has predictably brought significant ethical concerns to the forefront of the discourse in the field (Cox, 2022; Huang et al., 2021). Among the most concerning issues that demand immediate attention, scholars consistently mention privacy violations, algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, as well as accountability in AI systems design (Floridi, 2024; Hoffmann et al., 2018). It may arguably be beneficial for libraries to adopt AI technologies, to a certain degree, with an eye on enhancing user experiences and ease of information processing. However, these advancements appear to be alarming to many in the

scholarly circles due to the limitations they pose to freedom of expression and the opacity of decision-making processes (Luca et al., 2022).

In conjunction with all these concerns, Tait & Pierson (2022) further discuss the importance of integrating AI ethics into higher education, specifically into Library and Information Science (LIS) curricula, to prepare future information professionals to address these complexities effectively.

How can this be achieved, in practical terms? This article advocates for a comprehensive approach to AI ethics education, with an emphasis on critical thinking and learning activities that encourage students to evaluate the societal impacts of AI, while fostering a deeper understanding of its implications for social justice, equity, and fairness (Borenstein & Howard, 2021). As AI continues to redefine the boundaries of the information landscape, this article posits that LIS education must prioritize preparing professionals to critically evaluate, responsibly implement, and ethically manage AI technologies in their practice (Huang et al., 2021; Tait & Pierson, 2022).

Adopting these approaches under the umbrella of AI literacy often presents a challenge to librarians and library leaders. In the context of this article, AI literacy is understood as ability to understand, evaluate, and responsibly use AI technologies, including the development of critical thinking skills needed to assess the ethical implications of AI use (Kajiwara & Kawabata, 2024). To understand AI ethics, this article will adopt the definition put forth by Lambrecht & Moreno (2024) who refer to AI ethics as a set of moral principles and guidelines that govern the development, deployment, and use of AI technologies.

This article seeks to elaborate on how education and research in the field of LIS must evolve to better equip library professionals with the skills and competencies they need to assume emerging roles and provide forward-thinking services (Greer et al., 2013; Sonnenwald, 2013). The latter is particularly critical today because libraries are increasingly called upon to function as community and educational hubs, a role that is hardly possible without fully embracing the dual mission of providing access to information resources while at the same time meeting diverse social needs of the populations libraries serve (Rosa & Storey, 2016). This article contributes to our understanding of what should constitute a more holistic approach to reimagining both LIS education and practice by exploring the benefits of integrating community-based learning as a strategy for teaching AI ethics and using it in everyday library work.

INTEGRATING AI INTO LIBRARY EDUCATION AND PRACTICE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The integration of AI into the LIS educational context is associated with several complex ethical challenges that must be addressed to ensure positive educational outcomes, as well as responsible and equitable future professional practice. Besides the obvious privacy and security issues with personally identifiable information that arise during data collection, other key ethical considerations specific to the interpretation of the role of AI in library professions include potential amplification of social inequities and biases (Huang et al., 2021) and the need for transparency and accountability in AI systems (Weber, 2020; Holmes et al., 2021). This is why Weber (2020) states that robust conceptual ethical frameworks are needed to address these issues, along with specific guidelines that would lead to fairness, inclusivity, and equity in AI applications. Akgun & Greenhow (2021) echo these claims when they elaborate on the specifics of incorporating ethics-

focused training into AI curricula to prepare future professionals for the challenges of implementing these technologies.

Current AI ethics education has at times been described as somewhat exclusionary, which may lead to a failure to engage students in multiple ways of learning and knowing (Usher & Barak, 2024). Furthermore, despite efforts to integrate ethics into education, AI ethics remains underrepresented in curricula (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Contrary to these general trends in the broader higher education realm, the LIS profession, with its strong roots in addressing issues related to equity, access, and ethical information use, is uniquely positioned to lead these critical discussions (Hoffmann et al., 2018). Due to the profound impact of AI on the current educational practices, researchers and practitioners in LIS feel compelled to engage much deeper with these ethical considerations to ensure that AI technologies are designed and deployed by contemporary libraries for the common good, i.e., to benefit all learners while promoting educated decision-making and responsible use.

What can help the profession to address the complex ethical issues surrounding AI is a multidisciplinary approach that the field is beginning to embrace. Pierson (2023) examines the value of combining ethics education with cultural competency education in LIS curricular design to help students navigate the evolving landscape of AI in libraries. As Pierson's work demonstrates, expanding the course content beyond the boundaries of just one discipline may be an effective way to expose students to more diverse and personally meaningful learning activities, including readings, group discussions, and ethical thought experiments, to foster critical reflection on real-world issues like privacy, AI bias, and data ethics. Notable in this regard is an assertion put forth by Albright (2010) regarding crossing disciplinary boundaries in AI ethics education. Albright (2010) acknowledges that, while expanding boundaries may challenge disciplinary identity, incorporating multiple perspectives has the promise to become the defining core of LIS in the near future (Albright, 2010).

LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Library—community relationship is a large part of this future that we tend to call the Information Age (Zurinski et al., 2013). Black & Muddiman (1997) observed that the relationship between libraries and communities is complex, influenced by changing societal needs and expectations. By now, this relationship has grown into a partnership, above all else, guided by the need to adapt to new challenges while maintaining a core mission of connecting people with information and resources, regardless of the format (Zurinski et al., 2013; Willingham, 2008). It is a well-established fact that, having evolved into vital hubs for information access, learning, and civic engagement, libraries play a prominent role in building and strengthening communities today (Scott, 2011; Senville, 2009).

The COVID-19 global pandemic and the recent period of sociopolitical turmoil serve as solemn reminders of library significance for promoting social inclusion, equity, and community resilience, particularly in times of crisis (Lee, 2024). Moreover, with community life in disarray and people's well-being in danger, libraries are essential for restoring order and public confidence in the future. Arguably, libraries are in a prime position to do so due to their capacity to act as civic agents, fostering democratic discourse and problem-solving (Willingham, 2008).

In other words, libraries are central to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with fostering democratic and civic engagement within the communities they serve. For these reasons, community-based learning (CBL) can be seen as an effective approach for teaching both the theoretical underpinnings of AI ethics and practical applications of AI literacy in library professions. In library and information science research, CBL has been discussed as an educational approach that integrates classroom instruction with meaningful community engagement, i.e., collaboration between students, educators, and community partners to address real-world issues (Poole et al., 2022). True to the multidisciplinary nature of the field discussed above, this approach transcends traditional service-learning models and can be enhanced by tapping into other disciplines; for example, incorporating the principles of data science and design thinking (Poole et al., 2022). Other research (Dow et al., 2015; Walther, 2016) also points out the effectiveness of case-based learning and problem-based learning for teaching information ethics and ethical decision-making in LIS.

AI ethics education is crucial for future information professionals who are admittedly keen on reflecting on AI's impact and embracing their new and heightened responsibilities (Borenstein & Howard, 2021). The Community Engagement Model in LIS education, a prime example of CBL, has demonstrated positive outcomes for both students and community partners, providing practical experience in real-world settings (Mehra & Robinson, 2009). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the integration of AI in LIS education raises complex ethical issues, necessitating further steps toward a multidisciplinary framework and more robust guidelines for addressing the profession and society at large (Holmes et al., 2021).

AI LITERACY THROUGH COMMUNITY LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

In an attempt to contribute to the development of such guidelines, this article draws on the example of selected learning activities of a graduate-level library science course taught at an ALA-accredited program in a regional university. The article then discusses the AI literacy through community engagement concept that provides a structure to integrate AI literacy into LIS education and professional practice. The course that was used to inform our analysis of the concept focuses on addressing the diverse information needs of disciplines such as the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. It aims to equip students with the theoretical foundations and practical skills necessary to navigate the complexities of academic librarianship and respond to the evolving demands of higher education.

The course is designed to highlight the integral role of libraries in supporting research, teaching, and learning within higher education. Students are expected to develop a nuanced understanding of how the changing landscape of higher education shapes the missions and operations of academic libraries, as well as examine significant trends and challenges faced by these libraries and the communities they serve. Students explore critical operational areas, such as information literacy instruction, research assistance, scholarly communication, collection management, and governance. Special attention is given to understanding how technological advancements and shifting user expectations influence contemporary library services.

These learning objectives align with the broader graduate program goal of developing creative problem-solvers who provide proactive and client-centered library services. The course

also reflects the entire spectrum of the professional values and competencies outlined by the American Library Association (ALA).

The content of the course is arranged in a weekly modular format, which allows the instructor to achieve a structured progression from foundational concepts to more specialized topics throughout the semester, which results in a better connection between theoretical knowledge and its practical applications. A wide variety of strategies are typically employed to ensure active, participatory learning and meaningful student engagement. The course specifically seeks to develop in students a critical and reflective mind, a goal that is achieved through regular online discussions and other means to stay involved in dialogue with peers.

One of the foundational learning activities students are asked to complete in the course involves writing a position paper that critically examines a specific aspect of librarianship. This assignment is key for developing student skills necessary to engage with scholarly literature, analyze the current trends and issues facing the profession, and articulate well-informed perspectives regarding those influences.

Finally, the course culminates in the instruction demo assignment which is one of the most collaborative activities students undertake. The instruction demo project provides ample opportunities for teamwork and peer-to-peer learning, a proven strategy for fostering a sense of a learning community among the participants. A core assignment of the course, the instruction demo project takes several weeks to complete. Initially, students are divided into groups and asked to identify and explore various issues impacting the university community. With the approval of the instructor, the literature students select for their position paper assignments may serve as the theoretical foundation for the instruction demo assignment as well.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The topics selected by students for their position paper and instructional demo assignments were gathered and analyzed from the two most recent iterations of the course offered to 11 students in summer 2023 and to 20 students in summer 2024. The choice of student topics reflects the growing interest in AI ethics and its implications for librarianship, as well as the diversity of perspectives students tend to bring to the assignment. For the position paper assignment, the data came from the final papers submitted by students, while for the instructional demo assignment, the data were derived from project proposals and final presentations by student groups.

Initial categorization of data involved grouping the topics selected by students into broad thematic categories. As a result, the following broad thematic categories were identified: the initial categories included: AI and Academic Integrity, AI and information literacy, AI and personalized learning, AI and misinformation, and non-AI topics. The data were further refined to ensure consistency and accuracy of the results by reviewing student submissions to confirm that each topic was correctly categorized. For example, a position paper focusing on the ethical use of ChatGPT in academic writing was categorized under AI Ethics, and so was an instructional demo focusing on algorithmic bias in library catalog systems.

In addition to the quantitative analysis that was conducted to determine the frequency of each theme, qualitative analysis was performed to gain deeper insights into the students' perspectives and the implications of their chosen topics. This involved reviewing student

reflections on their position papers and instructional demos to understand their motivations for choosing specific topics and their perspectives on the ethical challenges of AI.

In light of the current educational climate, it is no surprise that the issues students consistently choose as the focus of their projects pertain to ethical use of AI in academic research. As mentioned above, the position paper assignment is a cornerstone of the course, and one of its goals is to foster critical thinking and scholarly engagement among students. In this assignment, students are tasked with selecting a specific aspect of librarianship and critically examining it through a well-researched position paper.

This data on student position papers presented in Table 1 below reflects the growing interest in AI ethics, its implications for librarianship, and the diversity of perspectives students bring to the assignment. Students have explored a wide range of AI-related topics, from the ethical use of AI tools in academic writing to the implications of AI for information literacy instruction and reference services. This diversity highlights the multifaceted nature of AI's impact on librarianship and the need for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing these challenges.

For example, one student explored the ethical implications of using AI-powered tools like ChatGPT in academic writing, focusing on issues of authorship, plagiarism, and the potential erosion of critical thinking skills. Another student examined the role of AI in academic library services, particularly in the context of personalized recommendations and the potential for reinforcing existing biases in resource access.

It is interesting to note that new themes also emerged, such as the role of AI in combating misinformation and the ethical considerations of AI-driven personalized learning systems. Another noteworthy trend pertains to the rise in academic integrity concerns. In Summer 2024, 25% of students (5 out of 20) chose to explore the challenges and opportunities related to AI and academic integrity. This reflects the growing concern among students about the impact of AI on academic honesty, plagiarism, and the role of libraries in addressing these issues. Additionally, ethical considerations in AI-driven personalized learning systems were explored by 15% of students in Summer 2024. These topics underscore the ongoing concerns about fairness, transparency, and equity in AI applications within libraries.

Overall, these data not only demonstrate students' ability to engage with complex ethical issues but also highlight their growing awareness of the societal and professional implications of AI in academic settings. The dominance of topics related to AI in academic writing and academic integrity is an indication of the need for LIS programs to provide students with the tools and frameworks necessary to address these challenges in their future professional practice.

With regard to the instructional demo assignment, students in the course are divided into several groups to determine a possible topic for their demo and obtain approval of the instructor. Once the exact subject matter of the instructional demo is established, students work with their group members to design and deliver a mock teaching session, in which they are required to demonstrate the knowledge of the subject matter and expertise in information literacy and teaching methodologies. Prior to delivering their finished learning products, students are also required to identify an appropriate segment of the community in question, thereby piloting their instruction demo session in real-life context and further engaging in observation and intellectual discourse on the subject matter.

Table 1***Position Paper Assignment***

Academic Term	Number of Students	Topics Selected	Frequency of AI-Related Topics
Summer 2023	11	- Ethical use of AI tools in academic writing (e.g., ChatGPT)	5 (45%)
		- Algorithmic bias in library catalog systems	3 (27%)
		- AI and the future of information literacy instruction	1 (9%)
		- Privacy concerns in AI-driven data collection	1 (9%)
		- Other topics (open access and digital preservation)	1 (9%)
Summer 2024	20	- Ethical use of AI tools in academic writing (e.g., ChatGPT)	10 (50%)
		- AI and academic integrity: Challenges and opportunities	5 (25%)
		- Ethical considerations in AI-driven personalized learning systems	3 (15%)
		- The role of AI in combating misinformation in academic libraries	1 (5%)
		- AI and the future of collection development in academic libraries	1 (5%)

As the data presented in Table 2 below shows, one observable trend related to the instructional demo assignment concerns the prevalence of AI ethics-related themes. In both Summer 2023 and Summer 2024, the majority of student groups chose topics related to AI ethics for their instructional demos. In Summer 2023, 67% of groups (2 out of 3) focused on the ethical use of AI tools in academic research, particularly tools like ChatGPT. This trend continued in Summer 2024, with 60% of groups (3 out of 5) selecting similar topics.

Algorithmic bias in personalized learning, along with academic integrity and the use of AI, was another theme that emerged in the analysis of student instructional demos. In Summer 2023, one student group (33%) chose to explore algorithmic bias in library catalog systems, while in Summer 2024, another group of four students (20%) focused on ethical considerations in AI-driven personalized learning systems. Furthermore, in Summer 2024, one group of students (20%) chose to focus specifically on AI and academic integrity, with the emphasis on the challenges and opportunities presented by AI tools in maintaining academic honesty.

Table 2***Instructional Demo Assignment***

Academic Term	Number of Groups	Number of Students per Group	Topics Selected	Frequency of AI-Related Topics
Summer 2023	3	3-4 students per group	- Ethical use of AI tools in academic research (e.g., ChatGPT)	2 (67%)
			- Algorithmic bias in library catalog systems	1 (33%)
Summer 2024	5	4 students per group	- Ethical use of AI tools in academic research (e.g., ChatGPT)	3 (60%)
			- AI and academic integrity: Challenges and opportunities	1 (20%)
			- Ethical considerations in AI-driven personalized learning systems	1 (20%)

Overall, the instructional demo assignment helped create a balanced combination of theory and practice, reinforcing the skills of critical thinking and collaborative learning around AI literacy, an emergent area of research and professional practice in LIS.

Also, this assignment proved to be an effective tool for engaging students in community-based learning. To illustrate, many of the graduate students enrolled in this course hold professional positions in various community organizations and library settings. It should be noted that they used their professional experience as an opportunity to engage with community groups and partners to pilot their projects before submitting the final learning product.

For example, two out of three student groups who completed this assignment in summer 2023 selected an academic library as their pilot partner, while the other group selected a local public library. In summer 2024 the trend to choose diverse pilot partners continued, with two groups selecting to work with an academic library, one selecting a public library, and two groups selecting community organizations whose work revolves around marginalized communities, bridging the digital divide, digital literacy, and equity of access to information.

Thus, this course and its core assignments, the position paper and instruction demo project, illustrate several important principles on which the AI literacy through community engagement concept rests. These principles can be defined as community partnership, ethical reflection, and applied cross-disciplinary learning. We believe that engaging in reflective scholarly and information use practices paves the way for students to gain a more in-depth understanding of AI-related ethical issues covered in the literature review above, including but not limited to, user privacy, accountability, and transparency in decision-making regarding AI-generated content.

We also posit that, to effectively connect theory to practical dilemmas encountered in professional contexts, the community-based AI engagement component must be present in student

learning. Bridging the inevitable gap between theory and practice is best done through partnering with the community and diverse populations. Expanding this idea beyond the boundaries of the academic community *per se*, one must consider the historical role of libraries as community anchors and hubs for equity and inclusion. Arguably, this presents an ideal setting for designing and offering various AI education initiatives, particularly those involving underserved or marginalized library communities. Thus, we conclude that, as they enter the professional circles, current LIS students need AI education in order to be prepared to capitalize on these opportunities and ultimately make a positive impact on the lives of those they serve.

Another conclusion that can be drawn at this juncture is that AI's impact on education and virtually every other sphere of human existence has been profound and complex. One way to combat this complexity and the inevitable concerns it brings about is to pursue multidisciplinary knowledge integration into AI literacy. The scope of LIS as a field of knowledge has already been significantly broadened, so it now includes cogent areas, such as data science, design thinking, and human psychology and culture.

Recognizing the complexity of AI's impact, multidisciplinary knowledge integration should certainly be on the radar of educators and practitioners alike as a strategy that broadens the scope of LIS education to incorporate fields like data science, design thinking, or human psychology and cultural competency. Collaborative workshops and cross-disciplinary projects appear to have a clear edge over "traditional" lecture-based instructor-led classroom learning in terms of introducing learners to diverse perspectives and teaching them to develop library products and services that are current and reflective of diverse societal needs.

Finally, this article postulates that there is no better way to learn all the intricacies and pitfalls of AI-driven information practices in the modern world than through community-based learning. A forward-thinking approach to AI literacy in library professions, community-based, experiential learning enables students to pursue hands-on real-life opportunities to navigate various ethical challenges that carry deep meaning not only in the classroom but also for the community. As the information age marches on, such opportunities, along with peer feedback, are invaluable for sustained intellectual growth that is bound to result in increased professional expertise and impact on the end information user.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The tenets outlined in this article provide much food for thought that can also be regarded as implications for future LIS research and practice in the field. The questions that may warrant further exploration are wide-ranging and, in large part, revolve around the significance of the ongoing AI explosion for library leadership and management. What exactly does cultivating ethical leadership in AI adoption entail? What burden does it present for the library technical infrastructure, policymaking processes, personnel, and other resources? If ethical reflection and decision making with regard to AI use is now the staple of library work, how does it impact existing library culture? Is the impact going to be different for academic, public, and special libraries? This list of questions can go on and on. Some of these questions are alarming but they are also quite intriguing to investigate because the future of mankind, as far as it is possible to envision, seems to be informed—if not driven—by AI.

For educators, integrating AI ethics education into LIS curricula is a challenging proposition that necessitates a comprehensive and nuanced approach rooted in synthesizing sound theoretical foundations, teaching the requisite practical competencies, and community-oriented student engagement. What the study detailed above brings to the foreground is the need for a more robust framework for addressing critical issues, such as algorithmic bias, transparency, and data privacy, to name a few. Such a framework can result from more sustained efforts to incorporate AI ethics into core LIS coursework, complemented by specialized electives that target academic, public, special libraries, community information organizations, and nonprofits.

Cultivating students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to evaluate the complexity of societal implications of AI technologies is no easy task either. Interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly with fields such as computer science, psychology, or social work, holds much promise as a path forward, particularly in terms of its potential to offer diverse perspectives that enrich the ongoing discourse around AI ethics. As the example discussed in this study illustrates, community-based learning (CBL) initiatives that may be instituted through partnerships with libraries or community agencies, afford students invaluable opportunities to confront real-world ethical challenges and work on plausible case-specific solutions. The implementation of reflective practices, including journaling and facilitated student group discussions and presentations, may be viewed as an effective mechanism to foster deeper comprehension of ethical principles. Overall, by equipping students with leadership skills in ethical AI advocacy, LIS programs can prepare future information professionals who are well-positioned to champion transparency and fairness in AI applications. This scaffolded instructional approach is needed today if the goal is to empower LIS graduates to navigate the ethical complexities of AI and promote its responsible implementation within the profession and broader communities.

CONCLUSION

This article unveils the potential of community-based learning to serve as an effective educational approach for teaching AI ethics in library professions. The concept of AI literacy through community engagement is also discussed that can be implemented both in the classroom and in the field by those working with library patrons. The article demonstrates how the gap between theory and practice in AI literacy education can be further reduced through varied pedagogical strategies aimed to foster ethical reflection, community partnerships, and cross-disciplinary knowledge integration. Such a holistic approach to AI education is seen as advantageous for students learning to navigate the ethical challenges posed by artificial intelligence, including privacy, algorithmic bias, and accountability. As libraries of the future solidify their position as social and educational hubs for learning, equity, and civic engagement, greater reliance on community-based learning will help foster a generation of library professionals prepared to make a positive impact on their service communities and beyond.

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