Libraries at the Frontline of Equitable AI Literacy

Learnings from the Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience (MILSR) project, also known as

SUPERCHARGED BY AI

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

Implementing partners: the **Tactical Technology Collective** & Politecnico Di Milano's **Density Design Lab**

*Funded by the **European Media and Information Fund (EMIF)***

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Introduction

The Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience (MILSR) project strengthened the resilience of many European libraries and their communities by equipping them with skills, tools and resources to navigate modern information landscapes shaped by the existence of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The project ran under the name ***'Supercharged by AI'*** exhibition (and workshops), taking place across 10 European countries through 18 months between December 2023 and May 2025 and was led by a consortium of partners including: IFLA, the Tactical Technology Collective and Politecnico Di Milano's Density Design Lab. It was funded by the European Media and Information Fund (EMIF) of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

While the project is framed around MIL, its core themes relate to the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and therefore to AI literacy. As AI is now deeply embedded in the creation and dissemination of information, digital threats are evolving, so understanding AI's role in shaping new information environments is essential for any modern approach to media literacy.

The MILSR was guided by three objectives (project phases):

Objective 1)

Development of impactful resources for MIL capacity-building informed by state-of-the-art academic research and participatory co-development methods, combining didactic and design methodologies for public education focused on:
a) AI, synthetic media and information automation
b) Online harassment
c) Scams
d) Online radicalisation

Objective 2)

Combine new and existing resources from previous similar projects through exchanges with librarians to adapt and translate them creating unique and diverse forms of engagement suitable for both librarians and learners to showcase, interact with and talk about different aspects of AI literacy with a high potential to attract and engage users for a sustainable impact.

Objective 3)

Embed effective media literacy engagement resources, facilitation tools and methods in existing pan-European library event plans to reach at least 10 European countries through national or regional library associations and their members achieving both scalability and sustainability by creating MIL champions across European cities.

The project was implemented in the following countries: Estonia, Italy, Romania, Ukraine, Croatia, Czech Republic, Spain, Greece, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

Democratizing AI literacy with the help of libraries

Artificial Intelligence has been in use for decades. While some historians trace the appearance of this concept to the 1930s when the scientist Alan Turing created the theoretical basis for AI, its true emergence developed in the 1950s with Turing's published work on *'Computer Machinery and Intelligence'*[1]. New experiments followed Turing's work such as the Lisp language developed by John McCarthy which became the most popular programming language used in AI research in the 50s or *'Eliza'* the first chatbot ever developed by the MIT in 1966[2], and many more.

While in the past, AI use was mostly tied to scientific and academic communities. Its use and development has grown exponentially since the launch of generative AI models such as ChatGPT, DALL-E and others. The rapid widespread use of AI has brought notable benefits, however it has also revealed significant vulnerabilities and challenges, both in the regulatory and social landscapes, and it has shown, in particular the problems that arise with civil society's lack of understanding on how this technology functions. This has underscored an urgent need for comprehensive education on AI.

To talk about AI-related education is to talk about AI literacy.
In this report we use the definition of AI literacy as conceived in the recently adopted European Union Artificial Intelligence Act[3], which describes it as a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that allow people to take their respective rights and obligations when it comes to the use of Artificial Intelligence. Particularly to make an informed deployment of AI systems, as well as to gain awareness about the opportunities and risks of AI and possible harm it may cause.

The MILSR was conceived having this landscape and current challenges in mind, as a direct response that acknowledges not only the urgent need for global coordinated AI literacy efforts, but also that recognizes how libraries are ideally positioned to lead these efforts.
While the project was conducted within a European context (hence the reference to frameworks like the EU AI Act); IFLA acknowledges that some, if not most of the challenges observed and reported by the implementing libraries are also replicating in other parts of the world, with devastating consequences particularly for lower-income economies and places most affected by the digital divide. It has become evident that integrating AI systems into this new phase of the digital transformation will not come without shortcomings.

In response to these considerations, and as stated in the project objective number three, the project's content and materials were designed to be scalable, sustainable and easily adaptable to different contexts. A central ambition extending beyond the

closure of the project is to ensure its continued relevance as a living initiative, with the potential for the exhibition and workshops to be implemented in other countries and regions that also have significant demand for this type of knowledge.

F1. Students gathered at the Zagreb City Library to learn about the Supercharged by AI themes

Moreover, the observed need to scale up this type of access, aligns closely with challenges identified in international guiding documents related to AI such as the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI[4] that states that AI technologies can bring important benefits, however they can also amplify asymmetric access to information, including the digital and civic literacy deficits that limit de public's ability to engage in topics related to AI. In a similar way, the United Nations Global Digital Compact and Pact for the Future state their commitment by 2030 to design and roll out media and information literacy curricula including AI skills to ensure that all users have the knowledge to safely and critically interact with content and with information providers and to enhance resilience against the harmful impacts of misinformation and disinformation[5].

These global commitments reflect the urgence to find actors that are capable of working at a local level and that can lead inclusive, coordinated AI literacy efforts. Just as it happened with digital literacy many years ago, libraries are now standing out in terms of AI skills building due to their large global infrastructure which offers the trust, adaptability and infrastructure that the global AI literacy agenda demands.

Their global widespread presence in urban, rural and remote areas, offers safe and neutral spaces (often free and public) to individuals where they can engage in both formal and informal education.

While AI literacy is not a new topic, it can certainly be met with resistance, particularly from individuals who suffer from a lack of digital access or services and for groups who may be excluded from formal educational or political spaces. However, libraries' status as trusted anchor community institutions often represent a doorway for these groups to access new or unfamiliar topics. Similarly, the access they offer to free Internet, resources, devices and trainings such as digital skills programs, make them a natural frontline for equitable AI literacy initiatives.
In addition to that, many librarians are engaged in AI-adjacent fields (e.g. privacy, data literacy, information ethics, etc.) which allows them to act as skilled facilitators of AI literacy, not only teaching the public but also curating relevant tools and resources.
All of the above underscores what makes libraries truly unique in this field, which is their proven ability to translate global AI literacy goals into locally relevant solutions.

As the digital divide continues to widen both between and within countries[6], the urgency of ensuring that AI literacy efforts are not only inclusive but also ethical and locally responsive has never been greater. As many other actors and institutions, libraries are already integrating AI use into their daily work from using it to support metadata creation for library materials to teaching library users how to adopt generative AI responsibly, as well as other AI systems and applications.

Further capacitating library staff and leveraging their already existent knowledge to empower communities with AI-related knowledge, brings us closer to fulfilling the vision of a human-centered knowledge society where everyone feels included regardless of their background.

Ultimately, and as AI continues to reshape societies worldwide; building future and more just, informed, peaceful and resilient societies will depend on ensuring that the benefits of this technology are distributed fairly, equitably and that people understand how to demand accountability from their creators and regulators.
Libraries are key to making this vision a reality.

Libraries behind the scenes

Engagement highlights and observations from the exhibitions and workshops

One of the main objectives of the project was to understand not only how the resources and activities improved the knowledge of the library users and attendees of the workshops but also to get a deeper insight on how prepared the libraries felt to deliver on the topics covered by the exhibition and what they observed during their interactions with the participants.
To accomplish this, a survey was developed for monitoring and evaluation purposes and it was distributed among all the participants. The survey was also translated into all the local languages of the participating countries to make it easily accessible.
This document was composed by two parts; the first part assessed the readiness of the library staff to set up the exhibition after the training received from the project partners/consortia and it also evaluated how this training contributed to building their already existent knowledge on AI related themes. The second part of the survey focused on collecting the observations that arose from the interactions between library staff and library users.

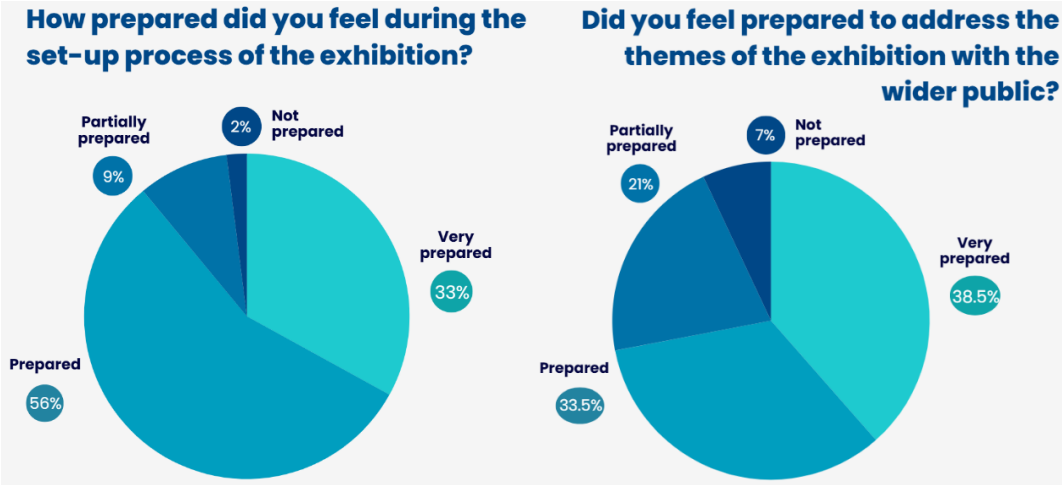
The collection of these results was led by IFLA and this section of the report reveals its main findings.

- ➔ 63 exhibitions: The original target was 5 exhibitions per country, however the Italian, Greek and Romanian networks ran 16, 6 and 6 respectively (exceeding the original 50 event target).
- ➔ 31,146 visitors: On average, as reported by the library networks focal points.
- ➔ 26 workshops: The delivery of the workshops was optional, but these were developed by demand from the libraries to complement the exhibition resources. The amount of participants in the workshops ranged between 25 and 58 participants per session. Totaling to an average of 658 participants from all countries.

While the library respondents of the surveys had diverse backgrounds, most of them are librarians and/or information professionals, academics, university professors or individuals coordinating university libraries. Personal data was anonymized for the privacy of the respondents so no specific age groups were reported but most of them are adults between the ages of 31 and 60.

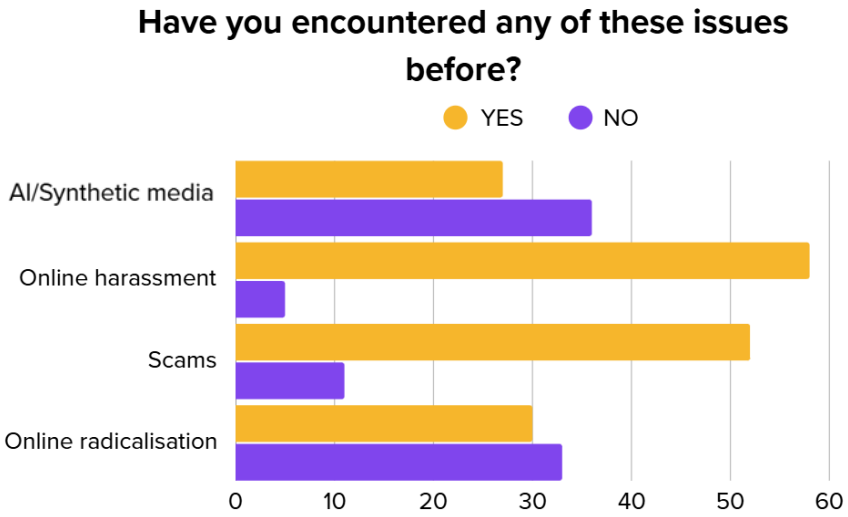
The first questions assessed the level of preparedness that librarians felt after going through the onboarding and training process.

The majority claimed feeling sufficiently prepared for the set-up and printing process; some of the people who answered the questionnaire had previous experience setting up similar interventions so they felt very prepared to print and install the posters and materials.



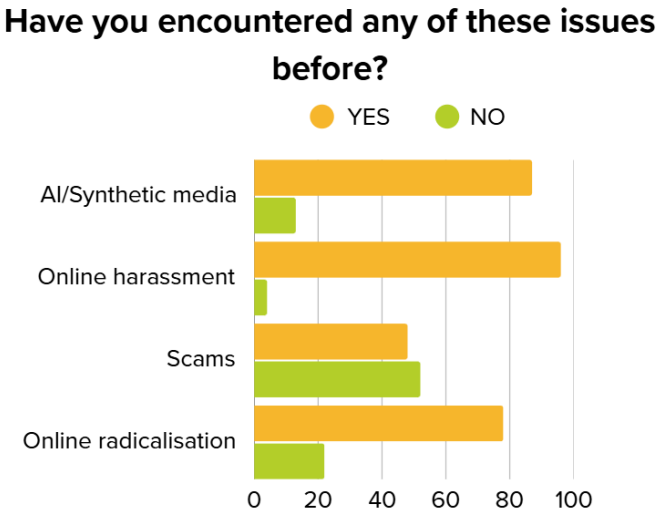
F2. Extracted from the survey results and answered by the library facilitators and focal points

When asked about the themes addressed by the exhibition, a big majority claimed to feel very prepared to deliver as they had previous knowledge in these topics. Most of the survey respondents mentioned the resources were a good complement for their own knowledge and/or for previous training they had received at their libraries. In contrast, 21% felt partially prepared as they had some previous knowledge but felt that the amount of new information they received was substantial. Only 7% claimed they felt unprepared to address the themes. The main reasons being: 1) first time encountering the topics and 2) lack of time to prepare and pair up with other library activities.



F3. Library respondents when asked about the themes addressed by the resources (63 being the highest value as there were 63 individual replies, one per library event)

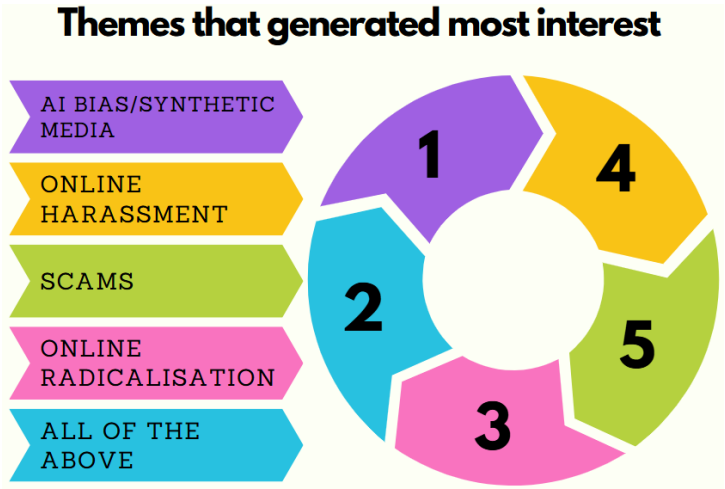
When prompted about their personal experiences with each of the themes addressed by the exhibition, most of the library respondents reported high familiarity with the themes of online harassment and online scams, nearly 90% of the implementers mentioned having encountered these issues themselves or having been victims of scams and harassment. An interesting observation is that while most of the library staff reported using generative AI in their daily activities (whether for personal or professional use), many also mentioned being feeling unsure on whether they can report or not that they have encountered synthetic media as they are not sure that they are able to distinguish between real and synthetic content.



F4. Library respondents when asked about their interactions with participants via the exhibition and workshops (ranging from 0 to100% of attendees/workshop participants)

In their interactions with the participants, mainly via the workshops (corresponding to the second part of the survey), the library staff reported obtaining vastly different answers from the library users when prompted with the same question. The majority of the attendees and participants were teenagers (13-18 years old) and young adults (19-30).

An overwhelming majority reported having personal experiences particularly with synthetic media and online harassment, and reported them as issues they tend to encounter on their daily lives.



F5. Based on library respondents observations via the exhibition activities and workshops

Based on the library observations, the topic that generated most interest among the participants was the theme of AI bias/synthetic media. While the other topics sparked debate and curiosity among the participants, they reported more interest on this particular one as they perceived it as content that offered them an educational basis to better understand the other three. Many individuals reported a good level of understanding on the existence of online scams and the concepts of online harassment and radicalization but also admitted being unaware of how these may be linked and/or amplified by AI.

Library staff was also asked to report on overall perceived successes and challenges they experienced while running this intervention:

Successes

- Incentive for deeper reflection – Although the level of awareness on the topics varied greatly among participants, library staff reported that many, if not most individuals admitted they lacked sufficient knowledge on the topic before the training and understood the need for developing critical thinking skills on AI related themes. Understanding associated risks and negative impacts gave them a significant incentive to reflect on this.

- Insight into new technological concepts and lesser known aspects of AI – It provided new awareness on concepts, definitions and overall understanding on the functioning of diverse AI powered platforms, both for library staff and library users.

- Exhibition and content matching current information/media landscape – In many countries, librarians mentioned that the exhibition was timely as it arrived at a moment of heightened global discourse and media coverage of news related to artificial intelligence. Some of the workshop facilitators stated that this made the content seem immediately relevant for many participants as AI is already part of their daily lives. This initiative offered an accessible way for them to better understand news or media content that was still unclear to them.

- Kickstarted internal processes – In many cases the intervention opened space for library staff to discuss these themes internally. Its content served as an informal training and conversation starter to plan more specialized trainings or to develop internal policies for AI use within the library or university premises.

- Strengthened technical capacity for AI integration in library services – The majority of the exhibition and workshop content focused on the social and ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence, however the discussions revealed a

clear need to supplement these conversations with technical training. Most of the library staff engaged in the implementation of the project, expressed a desire to better understand emerging terminology and the underlying mechanisms of AI systems, particularly in areas directly relevant to library services.

- Senior attendees expressed high interest – While the amount of senior people who attended the event was less that the amount of adults or youth, the libraries who have older adults (60+) as part of their target group reported them as very interested an engaged since they have fewer opportunities to explore these topics in detail. Many of them shared personal experiences where they were affected by these phenomena, more likely by synthetic media and scams. Their interactions with the library staff proved the great importance of including them in these types of conversations.

- Sparked local collaborations and partnerships – The exhibition and workshops were in certain cases an opportunity for the library to invite other local actors like organizations, other libraries, local government and many others. In some cases this represented the start of a long-term formal collaboration. These alliances often helped libraries strengthen their collective advocacy efforts on inclusive and ethical AI information practices.

- Opened formal and informal avenues of discussion – As previously mentioned, in some cases the intervention led to further training or other forms of capacity building, but in some cases it also led to the creation of informal student discussion groups or intergenerational groups where people could share their experiences in the library context. This was particularly useful for parents and guardians who wish to continue cultivating a culture of AI related critical thinking with their children at home.

Challenges

- Explaining new technological concepts – It was challenging to explain certain topics in a simple way as there are many technology and AI-related concepts embedded in the literature. While this was not a full impediment for the learning process, the implementation did require competent mediation and trained facilitators that felt comfortable enough with the information and materials.

- Teenagers overwhelmed by numerous AI safety warnings – The many uses and risks of AI are a trending topic, which has increased the necessity to address the topic of safety, particularly with youth as they tend to spend many hours online.

Many teenagers and young adults had already received workshops, trainings or talks on this topic, which has made some of them skeptical to the severity of the damage that AI use may cause. Facilitators perceived this as a challenge which made it harder to engage some of them in conversations or follow-up actions.

- Generational divide in perceptions of AI – Younger participants often expressed enthusiasm for AI's convenience and novelty, sometimes overlooking potential risks and ethical concerns. In contrast, seniors and older adults were skeptical about AI use, and sometimes considered it easier to limit their knowledge about it which unfortunately can make them more vulnerable in turn.

- Fear around political topics that intersect with AI use – While the MILSR resources are not inherently political, many of its themes intersect with daily life and politics. Themes like synthetic media, stereotyping, AI amplification of bias and others, have a direct link with how we engage socially and politically which made some of the participants feel hesitant to engage in these topics. The most common reasons were due to lack of information, mistrust in the political landscape and fear of being targeted for their beliefs or identity (e.g. LGBTQIA+, religious beliefs, indigenous background, etc.)

> *"One of the youth groups said that the issue of amplified influence in politics did not affect them because they could not vote yet. I think what is really happening is that many young people do not trust the current political landscape, they consider it to be bad and therefore they display a negative attitude towards this issue" – Biblioteca Paterna del Campo, Spain*

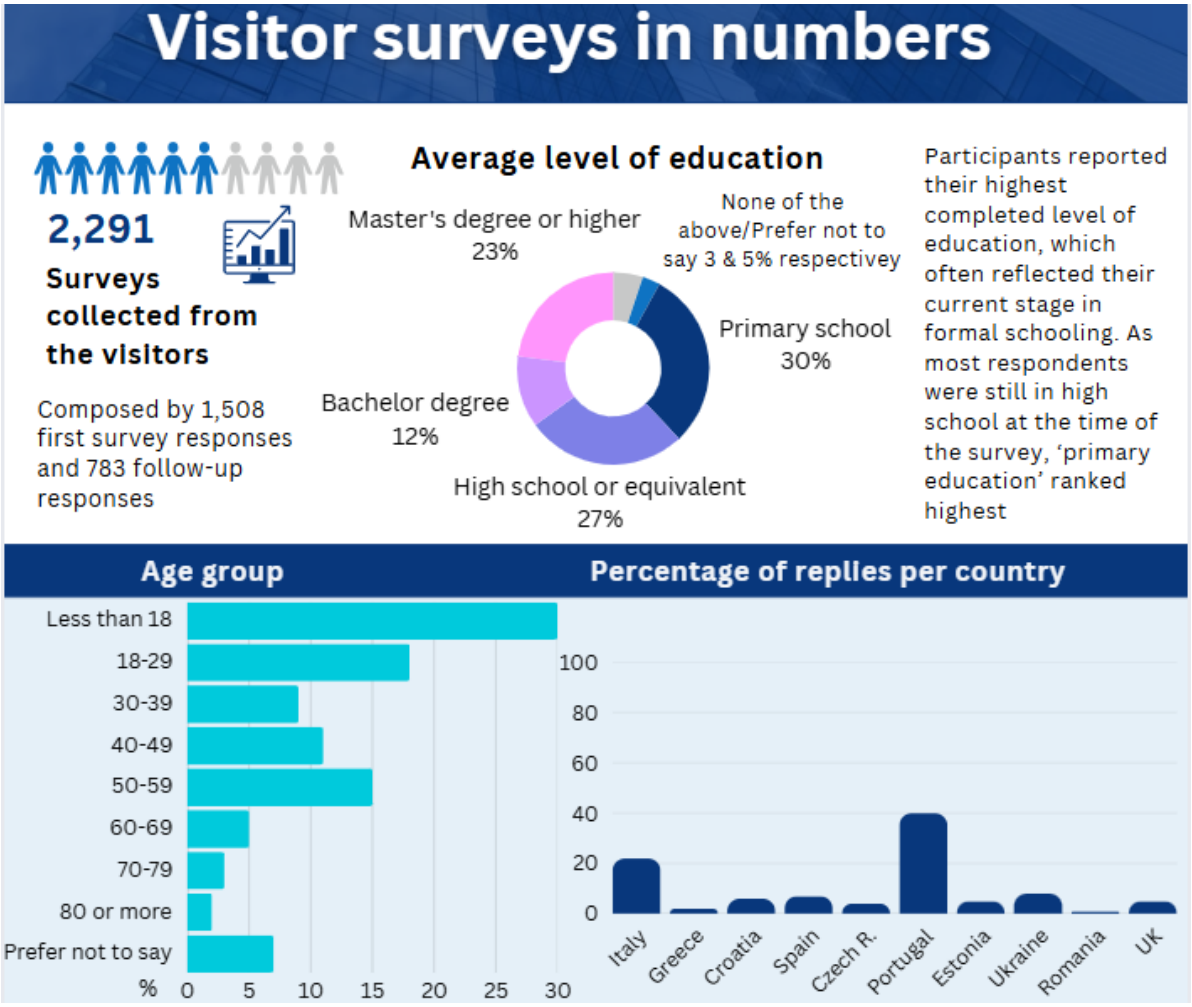
- Limited awareness of the online-offline connection – Some participants see a division between the online and the "real" world. Not all of them see an immediate connection between, for instance, AI-based algorithms, increasingly biased media and political polarization. This disconnect is likely due to the "invisible" nature of algorithmic processes and functioning of AI models.

- Difficult experiences/Youth reticent to share struggles with adults – While personal stories enriched the discussions, there were instances when participants, particularly young ones, shared difficult stories about coming in contact with online predators or inadvertently engaging in illicit activities as a result of their use of AI platforms. Other individuals were very hesitant to share stories for fear of being judged or simply for fear of exposure.

A glimpse into visitors learning experiences on AI

A second component of the evaluation process were the visitor surveys collected via a QR code embedded in the exhibition materials and led by Density Design Lab.

Understanding the visitors experiences via the exhibition was crucial to complement the information collected via the library surveys. It is important to emphasize that these results encompass uniquely what the visitors reported themselves and that this data collection process was composed by pre (baseline) and post (follow-up) exhibition questionnaires to assess the learning potential of the materials through visitor experiences.



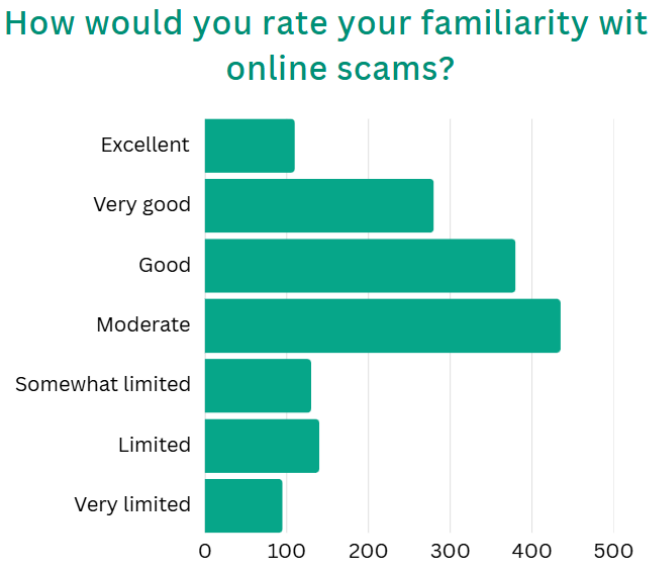
F6. Visitor surveys overview

While not all visitors answered the follow-up surveys and the amounts of responses varied per country, the information obtained and the reactions observed via the workshops also served as a point of comparison for the learning experiences of the participants.

Pre-assessment

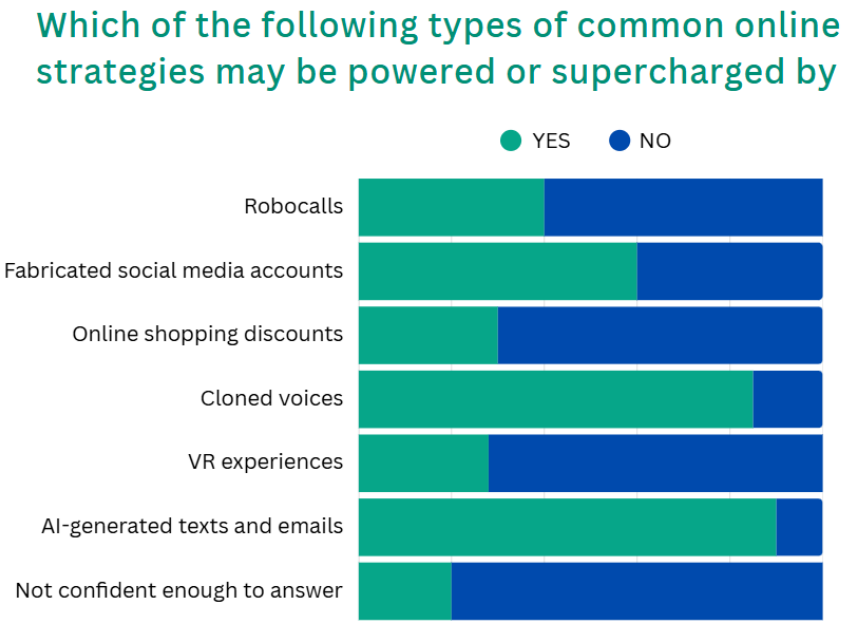
The first part of the questionnaire assessed the participant's baseline knowledge on the themes of online scams, online harassment and text-to-image AI models.
Besides being asked about their familiarity on each of these topics, participants were asked certain questions per each theme/category to evaluate their understanding.

Online scams



F7. Online scam familiarity (based on a maximum of 500 responses as item-level response rates varied)

Most participants indicated their level of familiarity with online scams to be moderate or good. After that, they were asked whether they believed certain scams could be amplified or 'supercharged' by AI.



F8. Common online scam strategies

The results showed that a big majority of participants thought that only fabricated social media accounts, cloned voices and AI-generated texts and emails could be amplified by AI. Many individuals saw little to no connection between the rest of the options and the use of artificial intelligence. A small percentage of the participants claimed they did not feel confident enough to answer the questions.

Online harassment

The majority of participants indicated they had either moderate or good knowledge of online harassment practices, mainly due to own experiences.

F9. Online harassment familiarity

They were asked if they believed that online harassment:

A. Is tied only to digital activity (one may avoid being harassed if the devices are turned off)
B. Can occur while playing video games
C. Is mainly perpetrated by strangers
D. Is only related to the sexual sphere
E. Can only occur on social media
F. Can be perpetrated by family members

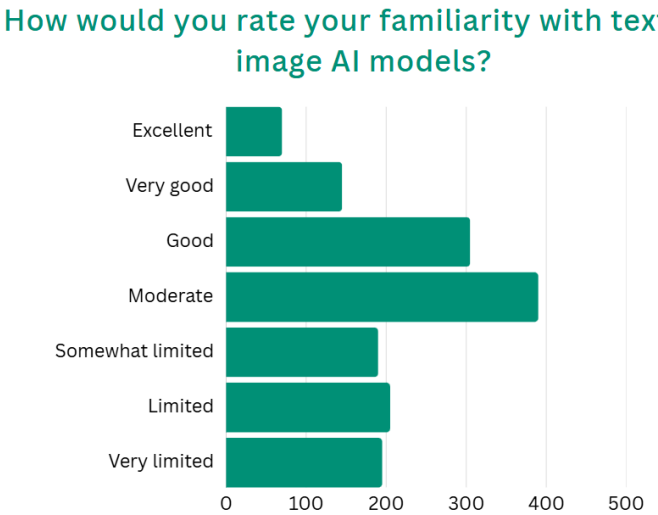
F10. Beliefs on online harassment

While the respondents rated themselves to be less knowledgeable in this theme compared to the theme of online scams. Most of the respondents answered the questions correctly and therefore understood that it is possible to be harassed even when their devices are turned off, while playing video games and on social media.

Likewise they knew that this type of harassment is not only related to the sexual sphere and it can be perpetrated by anyone regardless of their profile. Conversely, a big majority answered the last question wrong, stating that they believed that online harassment was unlikely to be perpetrated by family members.

Text-to-image AI models

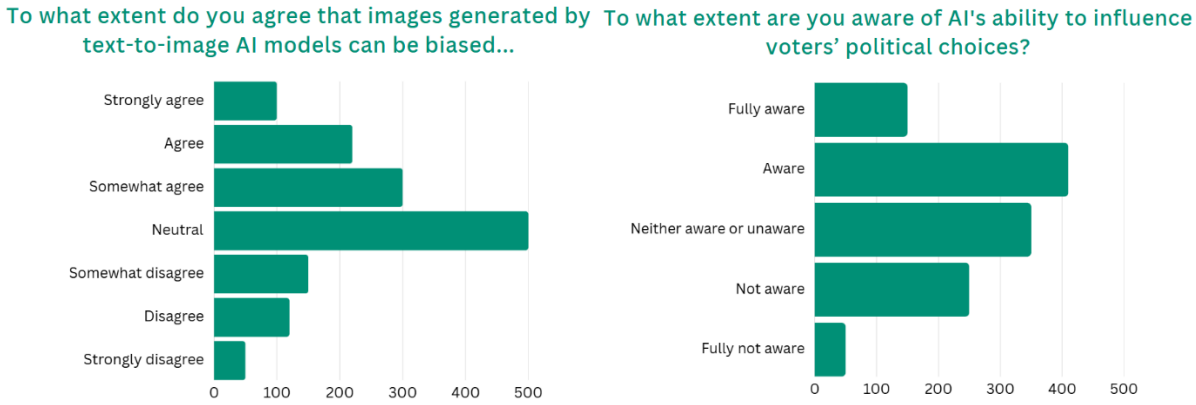
Just as with the online harassment topic, most participants rated their initial knowledge from moderate to good, however 27% of the respondents initially rated their knowledge as limited to very limited in this topic.



F11. Familiarity with text-to-image AI models

They were asked to what extent:

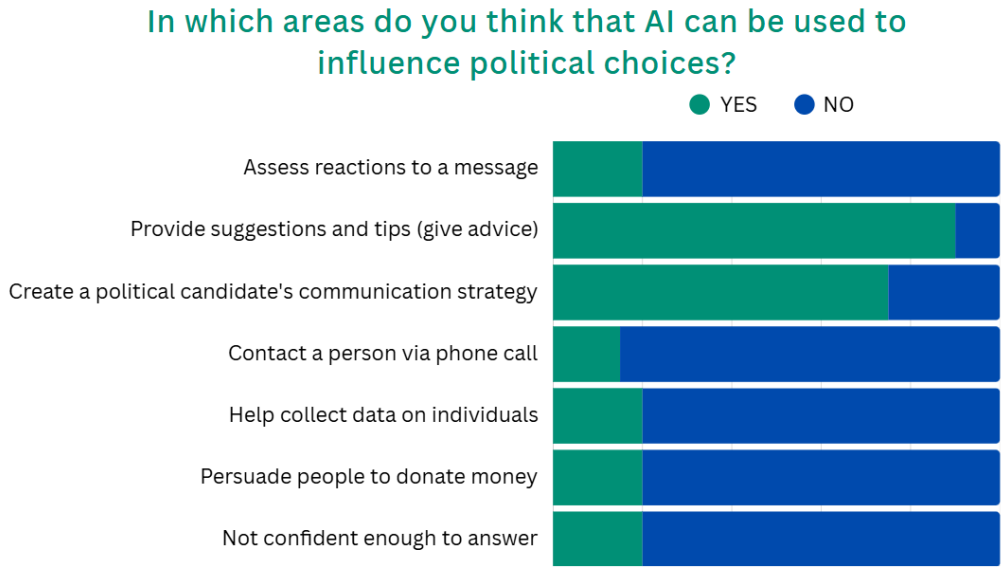
A. They agreed that images generated by text-to-image AI models can be biased
B. Where they aware of AI's ability to influence voter's political choices



F12. Text-to-image AI models and AI's ability to influence voter's choices

They were also asked in which areas they thought AI can be used to influence political choices:

C. Assess reactions to a message
D. Provide suggestions and tips (give advice)
E. Create a political candidate's communication strategy
F. Contact a person via phone call
G. Help collect data on individuals
H. Persuade people to donate money



F13. Areas of influence

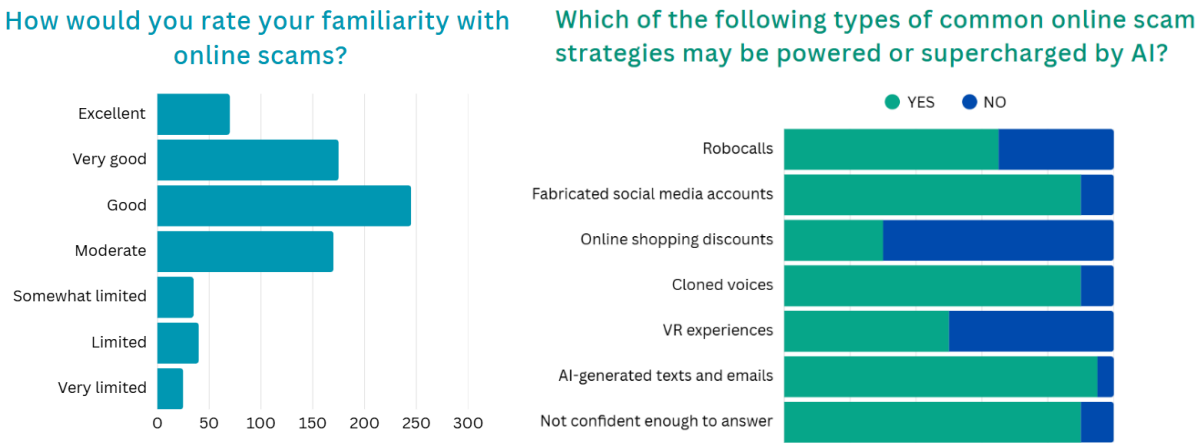
A big majority of the respondents mentioned feeling neutral about the possibility of text-to-image AI models being biased, meaning while they are not completely against this statement they also do not believe that the models are necessarily biased.

When asked about the ability of AI to influence voter's political choices most respondents showed awareness on this, although there was also a certain level of neutrality with 32% of the respondents indicated neither awareness or unawareness on this issue. A total 28% of the participants claimed to be either unaware or fully unaware of this possibility.

Even though most individuals rated their knowledge of these topics as sufficient, many believed that AI can only be used to influence political choices in limited ways, specifically, by offering suggestions/tips (advice) and by supporting the communication strategies of political candidates. In contrast, when it came to more sensitive applications such as collecting data on individuals or persuading people to donate money, the majority of respondents considered these uses of AI to be more unlikely.

Post-assessment

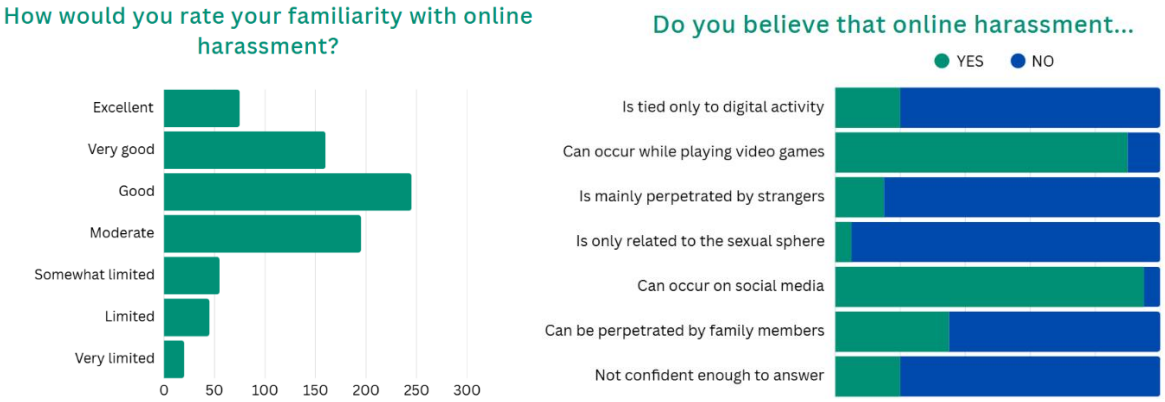
Online scams



F14. Online scams familiarity and common strategies (based on a maximum of 300 responses as item-level response rates varied)

The follow up questionnaire showed improvement with the theme of online scams as people claimed to feel more confident and familiar with it after the exhibition. The resources also helped them identify more instances in which online scam strategies may be influenced and amplified by AI.

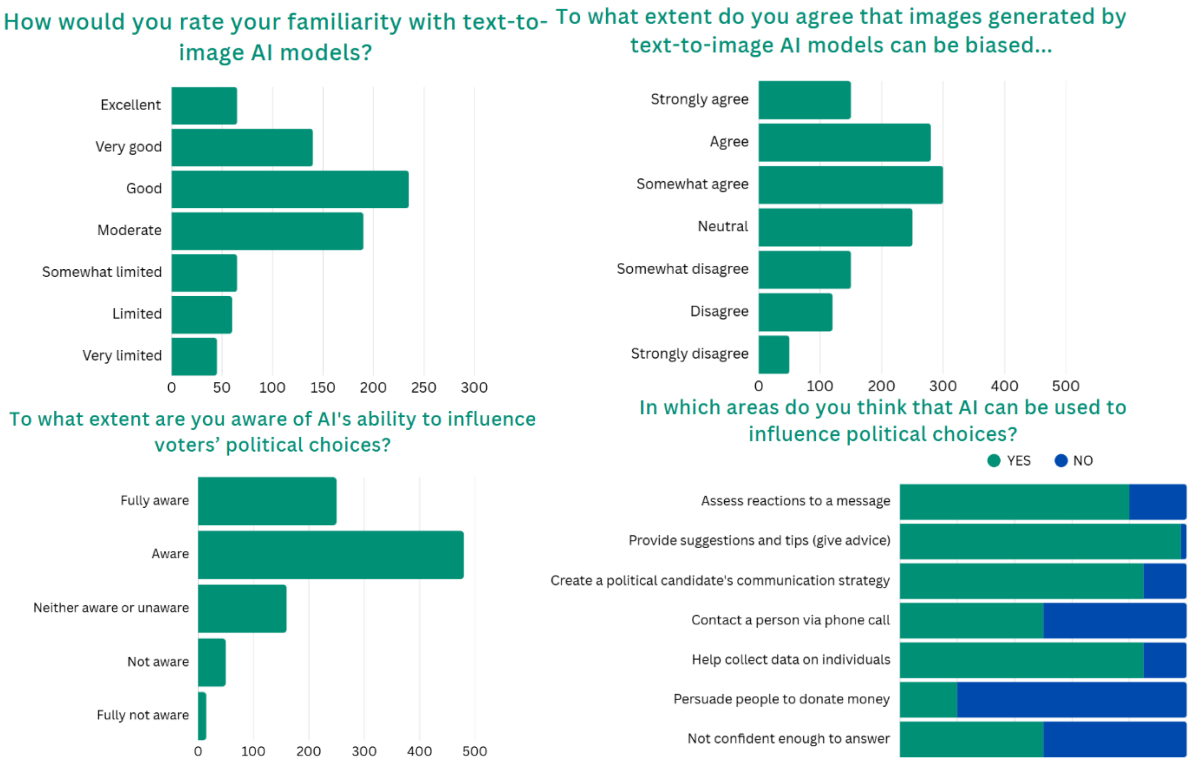
Online harassment



F15. Online harassment familiarity and statements

Both follow-up graphs pertaining to the theme of online harassment showed results that closely mirrored those of the pre-assessment. Interestingly, some participants reported feeling less confident with the topic after engaging with the materials. This likely reflects a recognition that they had previously misunderstood or answered some statements incorrectly. On the positive side, a greater number of participants understood that online harassment is not limited to interactions with strangers and that family members can also be responsible for such behavior.

Text-to-image AI models



F16. Text-to-image and political choices post assessments (based on a maximum of 300 and 500 responses depending on the question as item-level response rates varied)

When assessing the follow-up responses on the theme of text to image AI models; less people felt they had limited knowledge on this topic and more felt confident enough to answer that their familiarity with it had become good enough.
Notably, a higher number of respondents agreed that these models can exhibit bias, while fewer disagreed with this statement. However, a significant portion remained neutral, suggesting that some participants may not have fully considered this possibility or perhaps saw it as a theme worth exploring in more detail.

It was encouraging to see a big increase in participants' awareness of AI's potential to influence political decision-making, which is a theme that had received much lower scores in the pre-assessment. A large majority demonstrated a better understanding of the risks and consequences associated with AI use in political context.
Among all the themes explored, this category appeared to have the most significant impact on participants' perspectives.

Comparative reflections on library-visitor perspectives and global realities

The comparison of the library and visitor results showed that most librarians already had previous knowledge of the topics, however, while they had diverse knowledge levels, most of them reported their knowledge to be limited to the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and other similar generative AI platforms.
There is of course an evident difference between the library surveys and the visitor ones as the average age range difference is an important factor (most librarians who replied are adults between 30-60 and a big majority of the visitor survey respondents were high schoolers and young adults).

The questions asked to librarians and to visitors were similar but not identical, however, certain patterns were identified, for example, online harassment was not the topic that either group felt most confident talking about, however it was the most familiar to them as nearly everyone had experienced it personally to different extents. This shows online harassment appears to be pervasive regardless of group age, at least within these communities. Facilitators also reported that young women felt particularly affected by this problem.
This information aligns with facts provided by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights which revealed that 73% of women in the European Union have experienced online abuse[7].

F17. Students from the Velika Gorica University of Applied Sciences

As indicated above, senior attendees (60+) expressed great interest on the topics and the feedback obtained from them revealed that at least in the participant countries, there are not enough AI literacy initiatives targeting this age group. These participants reported feeling that their necessities are often overlooked despite being also greatly affected by AI risks and biases and stressed that this is impacting their life quality. They are also the age group that is most affected by online scams and admitted experiencing great difficulty at distinguishing between synthetic and non-synthetic media.
In 2024, the Fortune magazine reported tracking an estimate loss of about $28 billion a

year[8] for elderly US citizens to scams. Today more and more services take place online and this is creating a hazard to be addressed for all citizens and seniors in particular.

The theme of text-to-image AI models also revealed that many of the respondents who are adults above 40 are familiar with this technology but do not use it frequently, while teenagers felt very familiar and comfortable with the use of these tools both for personal and academic use.

An interactive element was also added to the exhibition to introduce and reflect on this theme, this element was a book that meant to show the bias and stereotypes that were produced after the model was prompted with the task of depicting families from each of the participant countries/libraries. While some participants identified themselves with these images, many of them did not feel this was an accurate representation of their appearance or identity and some individuals found the images offensive.
This exercise showcased how the models used to generate these images reproduced and amplified normative assumptions of the looks and behaviors of different cultural groups and how this shaped the perception of others.
The book also sparked reflection on the growing use of these types of models and how this may lead to increased hostility, discrimination and violence towards certain individuals, groups of people and communities.

The reflections from this exercise closely mirrored other patterns identified in recent empirical research on public perceptions of AI generated images. For instance, a report published by the Stanford Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence department reflected similar results when prompting models such as DALL-E and Stable Diffusion to provide images of people from certain ethnic identities, occupations or with specific traits.
The study showed that the attempts to explicitly steer the model to produce less stereotypical images were largely unsuccessful and the model could not disentangle ideas of poverty from blackness or ideas of terrorism from Middle Eastern identity, among many others.[9]

This also connects us to the broader discussion on AI's potential role in shaping political outcomes. As more than 60 countries held elections in 2024, this phenomena gave rise to many discussions via the workshops. The post-assessment part of the survey showed significant improvement reducing the amount of participants that claimed to be unaware or fully unaware of this risk. However, a significant amount still considered it very improbable to receive calls from AI that simulate human conversations and even less possible to be coerced into donating money.

This shows a mismatch of perceptions as the use of synthetized voices is on the rise, making us recall situations like the deepfake audio spread during the past Slovakian elections mimicking the voice of the Progressive Slovakia political party leader Michal Šimečka describing a scheme to rig the vote[10].

Stories like the above are not isolated and have become increasingly common, and while it is true that stronger safeguards should be put in place to avoid these incidents, many issues can also be mitigated by improving people's ability to recognize and understand deceptive practices.

In this regard, the MILSR/Supercharged by AI initiative proved to be successful in building a strong foundation of reflection and understanding in the targeted communities. The pre and post assessments showed that participants left with a stronger ability to understand AI biases, recognize harmful practices and critically evaluate digital content.

Some of the library staff and workshop participants reported back on the *'data detox kit'* that was handed to them after their participation and mentioned how the interactive nature of the material and the fact that they could take it home encouraged them to share this information with their friends, family members and colleagues.

Overall the project results showed that libraries and information professionals are well equipped to offer grassroots education and to build the civic resilience of communities when it comes to AI literacy.

Building on what we have learned

Certain considerations emerge from the above. It is evident that, although there is a wide range of stakeholders that are actively engaged in AI literacy work, library networks are and will continue to be central actors in advancing AI literacy.
They offer a pathway to accelerate progress in ways that are equitable, rights-based and attentive to the needs of vulnerable, unconnected and underserved populations who are at the risk of being excluded from acquiring this knowledge.

However certain key questions remain: ***How do we ensure that these types of initiatives achieve maximum impact and visibility?, How do we promote cross-sectoral collaborations on AI literacy between librarians and other stakeholders?*** and ***How do we measure and demonstrate the societal value of library-led AI literacy initiatives, particularly in terms of equity, digital inclusion and community empowerment?***

Drawing from the MILSR results, this section presents some recommendations aimed at strengthening the capacity of libraries to lead in this field. It also underlines concrete suggestions for other actors and the international community who want to leverage the strengths of library networks for the design and implementation of joint initiatives.

For Librarians and Information Professionals

➔ Position libraries as one of the most equitable global delivery channels for AI literacy

The project results reaffirmed that the global library network is one of the most equitable and widespread global channels to deliver on AI literacy. This represents a strategic advantage for libraries to actively leverage when disseminating the impact of their initiatives. A big part of this value lies in their global infrastructure and expertise and in their role as inclusive community institutions that serve all demographics and are not limited to narrow target groups or populations.
At the same time, AI literacy remains a top agenda priority for most governments, companies, universities and institutions. This year, a report surveying over 500 leaders in the US and the UK to explore the future of data and AI literacy, noted that 77% of the respondents saw *'a foundational understanding of AI concepts'* as the most essential skill to have for today's workforce.[11]

As AI adoption accelerates, closing the AI skills gap is no longer optional, it will be necessary to remain competitive in tomorrow's job market and to enable meaningful participation in society.

Libraries can strengthen their position by showcasing their potential to coordinate efforts across countries/regions and reach large amounts of people in a relatively short

amount of time. This means that, they can effectively contribute to AI literacy efforts not only by building the capacity of their own staff and their communities, but also by making an argument on how their impact is systemic and promotes things beyond literacy, including inclusive economic growth, public trust, civic participation and the improvement of public service delivery.

➔ Collect, monitor and document relevant data

Libraries are uniquely positioned to collect information not only on current AI literacy levels of the communities they serve but also on their thematic needs. The MILSR helped some library networks explore their needs and challenges, which allowed them to think of the opportunities they have to draw benefits from AI use within their premises.
Library networks and associations may harness this potential to collaborate with local governments, organizations or other stakeholders to capacitate people in a way that is needs-based ensuring that what they learn is relevant for their daily lives.
Initiatives that gather data on community AI literacy practices and thematic needs in an ethical way are increasingly valuable and these insights may be of critical use to other individuals in the library network and to external stakeholders that may wish to gain better understanding of their communities.

➔ Highlight the quality and cost-effective value of the network

Adding AI literacy initiatives to existing library services may (in some cases) have a low marginal cost but high social return, especially when reaching underserved areas.
As reported by the World Bank[12], the lack of infrastructure and accessibility is still identified as the main impediment to connectivity and therefore to effective widespread AI literacy efforts. While certain organizations and networks may be geographically limited or have narrow mandates, libraries often offer consistent and scalable delivery of AI skills.
This should not be interpreted as a reason to withhold funding from libraries, on the contrary, libraries may present this as an argument for sustained investment emphasizing that such support enables them to maintain their inclusive reach and also to evolve into AI literacy hubs without overburdening their staff and resources. This is particularly important in communities where alternative educational or capacity building institutions are limited or entirely absent.

➔ Emphasize the value of democratizing access to AI-related digital public goods with the help of libraries

Libraries have long served as gateways to open educational resources, open source software, research, public data and many other tools that can be considered as digital public goods.
Today, their collections are exponentially growing and accumulating AI related content and resources which have been curated by library staff. The availability and distribution

of these resources via the libraries will help deliver on AI literacy goals by ensuring that the benefits of their learning are not confined to a privileged few.

Libraries may continue to curate and promote AI resources and to disseminate the advantages of democratizing their use. Additionally, they can make these resources more discoverable and accessible to diverse audiences, track how communities engage with them and co-develop other inclusive AI literacy initiatives with partners and stakeholders.

➔ Prioritize outcome-based AI literacy learning objectives vs. skill-based

The interactions reported by the library staff and facilitators involved on the MILSR proved that outcome-based learning was more useful for attendees as it helped them better understand the real world implications and applications of AI use.

For instance, when addressing the 'AI/Synthetic media' theme the interactive component of the exhibition and particularly the conversations that took place via the workshops, allowed attendees to critically evaluate AI-generated content and recognize bias or manipulation of information in the digital environment.

The research process proved that teaching technical concepts like *'AI bias'* or *'algorithmic discrimination'* may not be enough, as this information is more easily absorbed when it is accompanied by tangible outcomes, whether these are for individual or community benefit. While skill-based training may help deliver a higher volume of technical information, outcome-based practices may help prioritize relevance and applicability ensuring that what is learned can be used meaningfully in the future.

For example, some students used what they learned to create informative brochures for their peers and family and some of the library staff who attended the workshops decided to use its content as a basis to organize other trainings to develop internal policies. Rediscussing the MILSR resources for other purposes solidified the knowledge and allowed people to explore adjacent topics.

➔ Use AI literacy projects to kickstart internal processes to develop policies on AI use within library premises

As reported via the library surveys, the implementation of the project often led to internal talks for further resource development. Beyond creating institutional awareness and competence, it was discovered that the MILSR and other similar literacy initiatives often became a pillar for other type of research and evidence-based policy development.
To build on this momentum, libraries may document and share the outcomes of their literacy initiatives to obtain community feedback, observe possible patterns and identify emerging needs.

➔ Complement technical training with ethical and social dimensions (and VV)

Do not underestimate the importance of complementing technical training with social/ethics discussions (and vice versa). Technical training provides foundational understanding but in some cases it might be insufficient to foster critical thinking on the broader consequences of AI use.

Many libraries participating in the MILSR reported receiving previous technical training in some of the topics addressed by the exhibition and workshops but lacked contextual examples to fully identify these phenomena. For instance, some participants could define algorithmic bias in abstract terms but struggled to identify it in practice.
This highlights the need for libraries to contextualize technical trainings and pair them up with other discussions that use real world examples.

➔ Address AI literacy beyond generative tools

While it is true that generative AI has turned into the widest used AI application, this is just a piece of the broader AI landscape. Libraries need to reaffirm their knowledge in ways that are most relevant to them which often involve the sole use of generative AI, however expanding knowledge on non-generative AI systems can help further empower not only librarians but also communities to advocate for transparency and engage with AI in more critical terms. Exploring AI generative tools in isolation can be short-sighted. Partnering with experts in adjacent fields proved to be very useful for some of the MILSR participating libraries that collaborated with NGOs, data scientists amongst other groups to add depth to the knowledge disseminated via the project.

➔ Demonstrate value through practice

As AI use expands and continues to transform industries, the demand for public education around its use is also growing rapidly. In response, governments, private sector organizations and other actors are increasing investment in initiatives that support the rollout of digital strategies and responsible AI adoption.
Via projects like the MILSR, libraries may demonstrate their capacity to deliver in this area. Building a portfolio of successful initiatives can be crucial to establish strategic partnerships and access potential grants or other types of funding.

Libraries can use this to their advantage to signal themselves as eligible grantees or partners, not only in library-related fields but also in areas that are seen as “traditionally” outside their scope.

➔ Develop sustainable and scalable models

One of biggest values of the MILSR project beyond the knowledge acquisition was the potential for the content and materials to be scalable and sustainable.
While the core resources were the same for all countries, the consortia partners emphasized the importance of contextualizing the knowledge via the ToT (Training of Trainer) sessions and the onboarding.

Although the resources were designed in a European context, the stories contained in the posters and materials were designed to be broadly relatable, making them easily adaptable to other cultural and local realities.

This universality has enabled libraries in other parts of the world to replicate and implement the content effectively. In a similar way, the MILSR continues to expand today beyond its initial scope even after its formal conclusion, reaching new countries and communities.

For the International Community

➔ Partner with libraries to uphold information integrity in the AI age

As AI continues to reshape our information ecosystem in unpredictable ways, mis/dis-information and other harmful practices that are adjacent to the use of AI are eroding trust in media and institutions.

When we think of library led-AI literacy, we think of projects that target the library staff and their communities just as it happened with the MILSR. While this is essential, libraries' mandate on AI literacy has also the potential to expand and engage broader stakeholders such as governments, the private sector and others to contribute with valuable insights on information integrity and ethics to play in the design and use of AI systems, platform policies and more.

Libraries are well placed to support policy and capacity building efforts of national/local governments due to their deep understanding of information ecosystems and their frequent advocacy for inclusive, high-quality training data. Library staff should not only be perceived as facilitators and educators, but also as strategic partners in shaping ethical and socially responsible AI.

Non-library stakeholders may reach out to libraries and library associations to collaborate with them in the strengthening of regulatory and normative frameworks and to work together on developing protective measures for youth, journalists and other targeted groups.

➔ Decolonize AI literacy by rooting it in local knowledge

AI literacy initiatives should be contextual and grounded in the realities, language and knowledge systems of local populations. Libraries are a powerful platform for actors who want to achieve this by delivering education that fits the local needs and that serves everyone, including low-income, indigenous and other vulnerable communities. International actors may partner with libraries to deploy community-driven approaches to AI literacy that ensure data sovereignty and that are human-centered. The unique global reach of libraries may be helpful to develop ethical safeguards and to remove barriers for people to access technologies, including underserved populations and communities in rural and remote areas.

➔ Use libraries as a launchpad for inclusive AI governance

Just as with the example above, libraries have a proven ability to build bridges between global AI literacy standards and local needs.
Actors who are looking to advance policy and research to develop responsible AI, may partner with their local library networks to strengthen national competitiveness and use libraries' reach to support participatory processes and hold citizen consultations, discussions or promote other forms of participatory governance via the library space. Additionally, libraries have a strong track-record of serving as effective platforms that can pilot and scale projects.

➔ Democratize access to AI tools through libraries

Democratizing AI literacy comes hand in hand with improving access to AI tools and platforms for a wide range of users beyond AI and machine learning experts[13]. In order to ensure that these tools are available to everyone; companies, governments and other stakeholders may offer free or subsidized licenses to AI tools for library users which could be distributed via libraries. Public-private partnerships in this context may also enable libraries to act as trusted intermediaries between technology providers and civil society to guarantee inclusivity throughout similar processes.

➔ Integrate libraries into national and international AI policy frameworks

Governments and other actors should encourage representation of library associations in multi-stakeholder AI processes, such as advisory committees, discussions on ethics, data governance dialogues and many others. Library representatives should also be taken into account during the development of ethical AI standards.
Including libraries in this process is a good way of ensuring that these frameworks reflect public interests beyond economic priorities.

➔ Prepare a workforce and soon to be workforce

As AI systems continue to be developed and more organizations, institutions and other actors slowly integrate AI use into their daily operations; it is becoming not only common for employers to want to train their staff but also for guiding documents such as the EU AI Act to demand that providers and deployers take measures to ensure, to their best extent, a sufficient level of AI literacy of their staff and other persons dealing with the operation and use of AI systems on their behalf.[14]
The enforcement of these measures will require multi-stakeholder cooperation and libraries can be powerful allies to deliver on these objectives.

➔ Fast-track the green and digital transitions with the help of libraries

There is an increasing concern about how to make the global digital transformation more energy efficient and overall more sustainable. The relationship between both is

complex and several actors are currently studying it. This has become a priority for digital agendas adopted in principle by the EU but it is becoming more and more popular in other parts of the world.

Beyond investing in green technologies and optimizing digital infrastructure, an important aspect to make this a reality is to increase the societal commitment to the need to change to achieve the transitions. If this is to be done in an inclusive way, it cannot be enforced top-down.[15]
Libraries already do climate research and engage in sustainability and climate related activities, and can help governments and other actors to ensure the benefits of this transition are shared equally.

A final word

The examples outlined above represent common and practical entry points to this subject based on the MILSR results. However, there are many other ways in which libraries can contribute to equitable AI literacy goals and in which external actors can collaborate with them on the use, development and deployment of AI technologies. The above recommendations are meant to serve as a foundation to start thinking towards other inclusive initiatives.

The project outcomes evidenced that the core objective of initiatives like the MILSR should extend beyond simply achieving AI literacy targets and should be intentional and therefore focus on meaningful outcome-based learning that empowers individuals to navigate the evolving AI landscape, whether via foundational level knowledge or through more advanced technical skills development.

AI literacy is no longer an optional skill to develop, but rather must be recognized as a cultural and civic right.

While AI literacy resources should include an overview of advantages and opportunities of AI use, it is also essential to acknowledge the risks associated with its use, which should be part of any responsibly developed AI literacy curricula or program.
Although this project was implemented across Europe due to the nature of its funding, IFLA and the project consortium have actively worked together to make the translated materials available for libraries who would like to replicate this initiative.
Beyond the initial implementing libraries/countries, the project has already reached other regions such as Ivory Coast, Bolivia, Ireland and Colombia and continues to expand globally.

While the exhibition materials were designed for physical display (making digital interaction more challenging), IFLA is currently exploring options to make these resources openly accessible to everyone. In the present, the resources are available free of charge upon request, hoping that more libraries everywhere can benefit from this initiative.

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