Strategic Implications of AI Futures for Research Libraries: Workshop Report

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Executive Summary

Research libraries are navigating one of the most consequential periods of technological change in their history. Generative AI is no longer a discrete tool category; it is embedded in discovery systems, publishing platforms, research workflows, and enterprise software, reshaping the economics of knowledge access, the governance burden of privacy and security, and the workforce capabilities required to operate responsibly at scale. At the same time, the trajectory of AI development remains deeply uncertain: questions of market structure, regulatory enforceability, trust in scholarship, and institutional capacity will determine which futures become possible.

To support strategic planning under these conditions, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) convened the Strategic Implications Workshop, Futurescape Libraries: Mapping Possibilities for Tomorrow's Information Hubs, on December 7–8, 2024, in Washington, DC. Facilitated by Keith Webster, Helen and Henry Posner, Jr. Dean of University Libraries at Carnegie Mellon University, the workshop used the ARL/CNI 2035 Scenarios: AI-Influenced Futures in the Research Environment[1] as a structured framework, not to forecast a single future, but to stress-test library strategies across multiple plausible futures.

Participants worked across four divergent 2035 scenarios to surface strategic vulnerabilities, identify near-term decision points, and develop an agenda that remains sound across multiple futures:

[1] *ARL/CNI AI Scenarios: AI-Influenced Futures* (Washington, DC, and West Chester, PA: Association of Research Libraries, Coalition for Networked Information, and Stratus Inc., June 2024), https://doi.org/10.29242/report.aiscenarios2024.

- Democratized and Socially Integrated AI
- Consumer-Oriented AI
- Laissez-Faire AI
- Autonomous AI

The resulting robust strategies, valid across all four scenarios, are organized into six thematic areas: Workforce Development and Organizational Culture; Collections, Technology and Infrastructure; AI Literacy and Critical Skills; Ethics and Values-Based Positioning; Campus Partnership and Institutional Integration; and Collective Action, Advocacy and Partnerships.

Across all scenarios, several near-term priorities emerged with particular urgency for library leaders:

- **Invest in workforce now.** AI literacy programs, flexible position descriptions, and safe opportunities for staff experimentation are foundational regardless of which AI future materializes. Waiting for the landscape to stabilize before upskilling is a strategic risk.
- **Leverage unique collections.** Research libraries hold assets—special collections, digitized archives, curated corpora—that commercial AI systems cannot replicate. Using these to responsibly train or inform local AI models and developing AI-first approaches to metadata and collection management represents a distinctive institutional opportunity.
- **Lead on governance and ethics.** Establishing AI governance frameworks, ethics boards, and evaluation processes for bias is not only an institutional responsibility, it is a competitive differentiator. Libraries are positioned to lead campus-wide conversations on responsible AI use, data privacy, and informed consent in ways few other units can.

- **Build and deepen partnerships.** Forging cross-campus collaborations with AI researchers, integrating libraries into institutional AI strategies, and strengthening collective action across the library community on copyright, licensing, and shared standards are essential to maintaining library influence and relevance.

Since the December 2024 workshop, the environment has continued to shift quickly. Generative AI is now embedded across everyday productivity tools and increasingly inside library vendor platforms, while early agentic workflow automation is moving AI from "assistance" to "action," raising immediate governance requirements for authorization, auditability, containment, and quality control. At the same time, de-globalization, tightening guidance on AI disclosure in grant development and peer review, escalating copyright and licensing conflict, budget constraints, and operational signals such as bot-driven outages and the shift from "search" to "answers" are narrowing the margin for experimentation and making workforce readiness, governed use of distinctive collections, and deeper campus and cross-library coordination the most durable levers for library leaders.

The two original axes **Societal Adaptation to AI** and **Intentionality in AI Process and Design** continue to hold up as the most discriminating uncertainties for divergent futures, even as the uncertainty has become more operational and sharply contested in practice. In the current context, signals increasingly suggest drift toward less intentionality in widely deployed systems (weaker guardrails and accountability by default), even as countervailing efforts (human-centered design coalitions and ethics-forward actors) press in the opposite direction.

A year later, libraries have made the most consistent progress in building internal capacity by expanding staff training and

professional development and beginning to align roles and services with emerging AI expectations. Momentum is also emerging around positioning distinctive collections for AI-era use and securing footholds in campus governance and guidance efforts. At the same time, several critical elements remain underdeveloped: translating principles into operational controls for vendor-embedded AI, implementing provenance and IP compliance in everyday workflows, and establishing authorization and audit mechanisms as agentic AI begins to take actions across systems. Priorities have shifted toward governing the AI already embedded in enterprise and library platforms. At the same time, external requirements are tightening, making embedding disclosure expectations into research and teaching workflows increasingly urgent.

These findings confirm that the window for proactive positioning is open but narrowing. Research libraries that treat AI governance, workforce development, and collection strategy as integrated priorities will be best positioned to lead their institutions through an uncertain but consequential decade and to shape what research libraries become by 2035.

Introduction & Context

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategic Implications Workshop (December 2024) used the ARL / CNI 2035 Scenarios: AI-Influenced Futures in the Research Environment as a structured basis for examining how artificial intelligence and machine learning could reshape the research, knowledge, and learning ecosystem. (The authors of this report contributed to the "AI-Influenced Futures…" scenarios and participated in the AI Strategic Implications Workshop.) Participants worked across the scenario set of plausible futures to surface implications for library roles, operating models, governance, and capacity, and to apply an AI risk mitigation lens to near-term decisions. Following the workshop, a toolkit was

developed to guide other groups that want to run similar workshops with the scenario set.[2]

Scenario planning is a tool to help leaders translate rapid, high-uncertainty developments into near-term strategic actions and longer-term institutional positioning. By December 2024, Generative AI was no longer a discrete tool category. It was increasingly embedded in discovery systems, publishing platforms, research workflows, learning environments, and enterprise software procurement. This shift was already changing the economics of knowledge access, the governance burden associated with privacy and security, expectations for transparency and provenance, and the workforce capabilities required to operate responsibly at scale.

The scenario report that anchored the workshop provides a disciplined framework for thinking beyond incremental planning. Rather than assuming a single "most likely" trajectory for AI, the report describes several plausible futures that differ in the forces that matter most to research libraries: market structure and vendor power, regulatory and legal enforceability, trust conditions in scholarship and teaching, institutional capacity, and the degree to which AI becomes infrastructural to research and learning. The purpose of the December 2024 workshop was to use these scenarios as a structured "wind tunnel" to test current priorities, surface strategic vulnerabilities, and identify actions that remain sound across the four plausible futures.

Introduction to the AI Scenarios & Strategic Planning

Scenario planning is a strategic tool for situations where change is nonlinear, interacting forces matter as much as individual trends,

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[2] Keith Webster, *Futurescape Libraries AI Toolkit* (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries and Coalition for Networked Information, September 2025), https://www.arl.org/futurescape-libraries-toolkit/.

and “most likely” forecasts can be misleading. Scenarios are not predictions. They are plausible, internally consistent worlds that differ in ways that matter strategically.

Scenario work is most useful when it produces:

- **No-regrets actions**: steps that reduce risk or increase readiness across all futures
- **Strategic bets**: moves that pay off strongly in some futures and require explicit governance and resourcing
- **Minimum risk floors**: baseline controls that protect institutional legitimacy, trust, and critical assets
- **Monitoring logic**: what to watch so leaders can adapt as conditions change

A practical stance in scenario planning is to privilege plausibility over probability. The future is unlikely to match any single scenario exactly; it more often combines elements of multiple plausible futures. Scenarios work when they broaden the aperture of what leaders consider possible and actionable.

How the Scenarios Were Developed

The ARL / CNI 2035 Scenarios: AI-Influenced Futures in the Research Environment were developed through a consultative process that combined data-gathering with structured engagement across the research library and higher education ecosystem. The work began by clarifying the central strategic focus: how to enable the full potential of AI in the research and knowledge ecosystem while sustaining public mission requirements such as responsible use, integrity and provenance, inclusive and equitable practice, and durable value for research and learning.

Stakeholder input was gathered through a mix of focus groups, workshops, and interviews, and used to identify critical

uncertainties and to build four divergent futures with a 2035 end state. Each scenario was developed with a narrative description of the world, current drivers and trends that could plausibly signal movement toward that world, and strategic questions intended to help libraries and their partners translate the scenario into local implications for governance, operations, and investment.

Workshop Setup

The ARL Strategic Implications Workshop, Futurescape Libraries: Mapping Possibilities for Tomorrow's Information Hubs, took place on December 7–8, 2024, in Washington, DC, and was facilitated by Keith Webster, Helen and Henry Posner, Jr. Dean of University Libraries at Carnegie Mellon University. This Strategic Implications Workshop was designed as an applied scenario-planning convening that moved deliberately from present-day evidence to future-oriented decision support. Using the ARL/CNI 2035 AI Scenario Set, the format helped research library leaders test assumptions, surface uncertainties, and translate plausible futures into concrete strategic options, investment priorities, and near-term actions.

The workshop began with structured prework intended to load the room with real signals and decision needs. This prework ensured the session did not start from abstractions; it started from what leaders were already seeing, tracking, and needing to decide.

The live program was intentionally staged in two parts across the weekend. The first session (Saturday afternoon) functioned as a horizon-scanning and forecasting module. The second session (Sunday) shifted from futures exploration to strategy formation. With shared understanding of current capabilities, participants reviewed the ARL/CNI 2035 AI Scenario Set. They used the scenario worlds as a disciplined lens for stress-testing assumptions about

operating models, legitimacy, and power in the research and knowledge ecosystem.

From there, the workshop moved into scenario-based strategy development. Small-group work translated each scenario world into implications and then into actionable options. This phase explicitly incorporated structured analytical tools to keep the work decision-relevant: SWOT analysis and an investment-portfolio approach to clarify what should be funded or built across time horizons and risk profiles. The aim was not to select a single right future, but to identify strategies that would hold up across multiple plausible scenarios. The strategies were synthesized by the facilitator and each group ranked the priority for their future scenario world to create a list of ranked robust strategies for libraries to consider for implementation.

To ensure the output was not purely conceptual, the workshop added a practicality filter, rating each proposed action on a two dimensional matrix: potential impact and difficulty of execution. This exercise helped participants distinguish between actions most worth pursuing and those that, while appealing in theory, would be harder to sustain in practice.

As a next step, participants reorganized into four new groups, focused on core areas of research library work: information discovery and access; research support and knowledge creation; user engagement and learning; and operational efficiency and strategy. Informed by the robust strategies developed through the scenario exercise, each group assessed where the most significant opportunities and gaps lay and proposed strategic actions within their assigned area, followed by identification of “five bold steps” for their area.

The success of the workshop has generated a coherent chain from evidence (drivers and signals), to plausible intermediate conditions

(five-year forecasting), to scenario-grounded strategic options, and finally to prioritized actions.

Starting Assumptions

Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to respond to four prompts on their perceptions of key drivers, signals of change, and the strategic implications for the future of libraries amid technological, educational, economic, and cultural shifts. The responses were used to frame the initial discussions for using scenario planning as a tool and to ignite curiosity and shared issues going into the work. The participants provided a broad range of responses.

Drivers of Change Impacting Libraries

Libraries face profound transformation driven by technological evolution, particularly AI's replacement of traditional search and discovery with conversational interfaces that offer further personalization, reification of existing beliefs, and from systems tailored to individual preferences from easily available sources, as well as the automation of core functions like cataloging and systematic reviews. Economic pressures compound these challenges, with many institutions facing flat or reduced budgets, leading to workforce reductions and the concern that only well-resourced institutions can afford skilled personnel and expensive AI infrastructure.

Shifts in higher education, including declining enrollment in traditional four-year programs, concentration at flagship institutions, and precipitous drops in public trust, threaten libraries' traditional funding models and relevance. Cultural and political dynamics, including rising authoritarianism, attacks on intellectual freedom and diversity, equity, and inclusion values, and de-globalization trends reducing international collaboration,

fundamentally challenge libraries' core missions. Additional pressures include demographic changes in student populations, evolving intellectual property frameworks for AI-generated content, generational shifts in the workforce requiring new tech-savvy talent, climate change impacts on operations, and escalating cybersecurity risks that threaten user privacy and institutional security.

Signals Indicating Change in Libraries

Emerging technologies are reshaping how users interact with information, as AI-powered chatbots replace static web pages and tools like Perplexity transform literature reviews. At the same time, Google's search dominance faces challenges from new discovery platforms. Research practices are fundamentally evolving through AI-informed research notebooks, virtual CloudLabs, and tools that blur traditional notions of authorship, raising critical questions about the authority and integrity of scholarly outputs deposited in libraries. Accessibility advances through AI, including real-time translation, audio transformations, and adaptive interfaces, expand collection reach while creating new opportunities for inclusion and knowledge production. However, these advances occur against a backdrop of growing distrust in science, deepfake technologies requiring digital forensics expertise to address deepfakes, and political dynamics threatening institutional credibility.

Strategic shifts are evident in users selecting and training personalized AI systems, universities making substantial AI infrastructure investments, union movements exploring job protections against AI displacement, and libraries repositioning themselves as providers of AI literacy, digital equity education, and ethical policy guidance rather than traditional information stewards.

Strategic Questions for Libraries' Future

Libraries must grapple with fundamental questions about financial sustainability, particularly whether institutions can afford necessary transformations and how smaller libraries will compete in an AI-enhanced environment while avoiding "vaporware" investments. Critical workforce questions emerge around future hiring needs, the continuing relevance of MLIS degrees, and how to support current workers while preparing for dramatically different future roles. Technology integration challenges include determining relationships with IT units, deciding whether to build AI models or focus on assembling training corpora, and integrating collections into AI-driven environments without losing relevance. Profound ethical and policy questions arise in distinguishing equity issues from underlying technological trends, determining libraries' roles in state and federal AI regulation, and balancing human creativity and environmental stewardship with technological advancement.

Libraries must also confront existential questions about identity: Are they participants in shaping the AI-driven future, or collateral damage? How do they redefine their role in the knowledge economy? Should they create "walled gardens" to reclaim control? What responsibilities do higher education institutions have in shaping AI development, and how can library leaders help staff adapt to continuous change while using scenario planning to guide adaptive decision-making?

Decisions Libraries Must Make Soon

Immediate decisions center on AI adoption, including which aspects to integrate into services, when to activate vendor AI features, how much to invest in in-house development versus commercial solutions, and how to provide staff with safe experimentation opportunities. Resource allocation requires urgent choices about

hiring AI talent, upskilling existing staff, balancing open source versus proprietary technologies, making data storage investments, and reallocating financial and human resources toward future-focused initiatives while collaborating meaningfully with IT departments pursuing major AI infrastructure investments. Partnership decisions involve strengthening internal collaborations with campus units, evaluating external industry partnerships, and identifying opportunities for collective non-commercial initiatives, building on lessons from open access and open source community technology.

Governance and strategic vision demand leadership in establishing AI policies, oversight committees, and ethical frameworks while reassessing libraries' roles in information ethics and equity. Ultimately, libraries must collectively determine what the profession should own, whether to focus on training data or model building, and how to position themselves to remain relevant and influential through scenario-planning frameworks that support actionable decision-making during this transformative period.

Scenarios Overview[3]

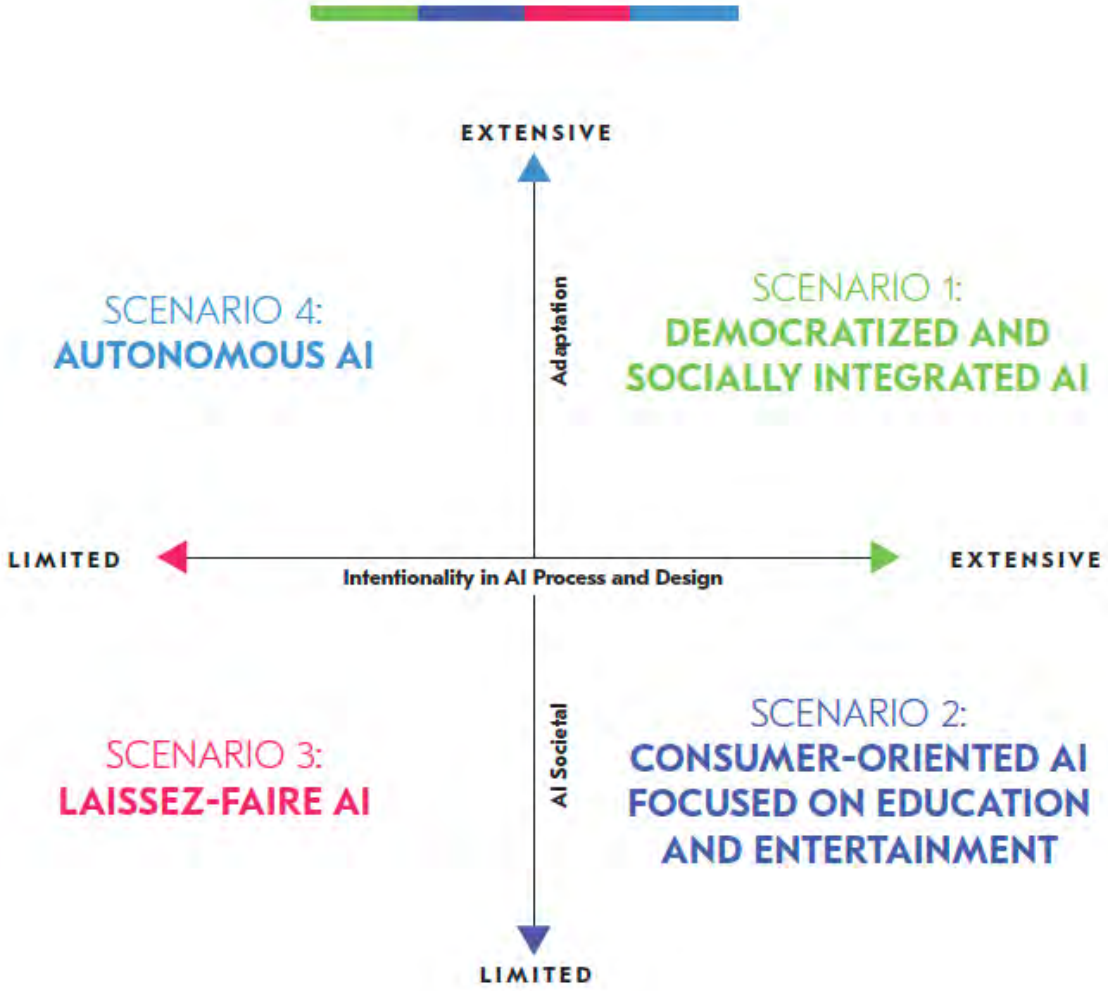

Figure 1: ARL/CNI 2035 Scenario Set

This set of scenarios is framed by two critical uncertainties:

Societal Intentionality of AI Process and Design—Will process and design be anticipative of societal needs and aspirations or will it be limited? The choice of intentionality here was to move beyond reactivity (proactive versus reactive) into effectiveness and attention to responsible and anticipative process and design around AI.

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[3] The "Scenario Overview" section of the report is directly copied from the *ARL/CNI AI Scenarios: AI-Influenced Futures,* pages 5–7.

Societal Adaptation of AI—Will adaptation of AI by society be extensive or limited? Adaptation in this context includes level of adoption as well as ability to adapt and respond to the everchanging society.

The two critical uncertainties frame four divergent scenarios:

Scenario 1—Democratized and Socially Integrated AI is a world in which an extraordinary convergence of advances in human-computer interfaces and AI technologies create an unprecedented integration of human and computational capabilities that flourish with increasingly open knowledge access. AI integrates with humans seamlessly, responsibly, and safely transforming research, knowledge development, collaboration, and communication.

Scenario 2—Consumer-Oriented AI Focused on Education and Entertainment is a world in which AI's impact on the research and knowledge ecosystem is relatively low with the primary AI advances and impact being seen in consumer applications that are readily profitable, relatively uncontroversial, and lower-barrier applications. Tech giants drive innovation in the interaction of individuals with each other and around real, virtual, and hybrid worlds that leverage AI to create enhanced environments and experiences.

Scenario 3—Laissez-Faire AI is a world of missed opportunities, bad decisions, and fecklessness, punctuated by a somewhat haphazard assortment of commercial or other kinds of successes. The excitement and hype around AI and the belief that AI will be the solution to the world's most difficult problems results in an overzealous and hasty adoption of AI in both consumer life and professional applications. AI applications incorporating egregious bias or dysfunction were deployed, leading to predictably bad outcomes, loss of trust, poorly thought out regulation; the overall environment is also vulnerable to deliberate manipulation and

introduction of misinformation by bad actors both foreign and domestic.

Scenario 4—Autonomous AI is a world in which AI is becoming an increasingly independent partner and collaborator in research and learning, leveraging the expanding open resources and data, and also exploiting the scarcity and high cost of human resources. Knowledge advances rapidly well beyond the research advances possible by humans. Society has adapted to a world enhanced by AI in all aspects of life and experience and in the process has knowingly and unknowingly given up increasing agency to AI.

Finding Direction Among Uncertainty: Robust Strategies

In scenario planning, robust strategies are those that remain credible and value-generating across a range of plausible futures, rather than depending on a single forecast or preferred trajectory. Practically, they translate the scenario set's key uncertainties into an integrated portfolio of actions that are future-resilient (effective under different conditions), risk-aware (explicitly protecting trust, compliance, equity, and institutional reputation), and capacity-building (strengthening governance, workforce capabilities, data/technology foundations, and partnerships). Robust strategies also emphasize adaptability by establishing decision triggers, monitoring signals, and modular investments that allow an institution to recalibrate as conditions evolve, so that leadership can act thoughtfully amid ambiguity while preserving strategic options.

To develop these strategies, workshop groups first worked within their assigned scenario, generating strategies specific to that future. These were produced through a series of structured activities centered on how libraries could respond now to prepare for that specific future, including what we can leverage and what is

worrisome, and how to better position libraries to thrive in that world. (See Appendix for scenario-specific strategies.)

The workshop facilitator then synthesized themes across all four scenarios, and participants applied a practicality filter by rating each strategy on an impact/effort matrix. On impact, most actions scored above 3.5 on a 5-point scale, defined as "average impact," and none scored below 2, suggesting broad confidence in the practical value of the strategies identified. A consistent pattern also emerged: the highest-impact actions tended to require the most effort, confirming that transformative work in this area will not come without meaningful investment. The top strategies with the highest impact were (numbers reference items in the "Robust Strategies" section below):

- Establish an organizational mindset focused on agency, adaptability, and the design of future-ready solutions. (1.3)
- Forge cross-campus partnerships with AI researchers and technologists. (5.1)
- Lead conversations on fair use, copyright, and licensing agreements that prioritize the needs of higher education and researchers. (6.1)
- Integrate libraries into institutional AI strategies; lead campus conversations on ethical AI use, informed consent, and data privacy. (5.2)

A few strategies also emerged as high impact and lower effort with strong returns on limited investment and natural starting points for implementation:

- Use AI to enhance accessibility and interaction with special collections and digitized archives. (2.3)
- Strengthen collaborations across libraries, corporate entities, and governments to develop shared standards and ethical AI applications. (6.2)

- Invest in workforce development through AI literacy programs, staff upskilling, and pilot AI-integrated tools into select operations based on position readiness. (1.1)

Following the impact/effort rating, each group voted to rank the remaining strategies by importance for their scenario's future. Strategies that rose to the top across multiple scenarios were identified as robust and priorities worth pursuing regardless of which future unfolds. For this report, the authors organized these shared, high-priority strategies into six thematic areas for ease of reference, drawing on group discussions to add context and suggested timelines for implementation. Within each theme, strategies are ordered by level of convergence across scenarios, with those prioritized most consistently across all four futures appearing first.

Robust Strategies

1. Workforce Development & Organizational Culture

1.1. Strategy: Invest in workforce development through AI literacy programs, staff upskilling, and pilot AI-integrated tools into select operations based on position readiness.

Timeline	Action Items
1–3 months	Map routine operational and administrative tasks across divisions and assess AI readiness of each
3–6 months	Develop a core AI/technology competency framework with tiered training pathways by role
6–12 months	Identify 2–5 "low-hanging fruit" workflow automations (e.g., note-taking, copy-

Timeline	Action Items
	cataloging, transcription, project management) to pilot immediately
Year 2	• Comprehensive training program operational and workforce model reviewed against library's strategic goals • Assess AI pilots and evaluate which to pursue as sustainable, scalable solutions • Identify 2–5 additional AI pilots

1.2. **Strategy:** Create flexible position descriptions, evolve staffing models to align with emerging needs, and recruit AI-savvy professionals.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Draft updated or new position descriptions for AI-integrated roles • Evaluate all position descriptions to identify where tool-specific responsibilities can be expanded to accommodate new and evolving technologies • Transition roles where skills align with new AI-integrated responsibilities
6–12 months	Evaluate staffing models and organizational structures

Timeline	Action Items
As funding is available	Recruit for new positions with new AI-integrated expertise and expectations from the start

1.3. Establish an organizational mindset focused on agency, adaptability, and the design of future-ready solutions.

Timeline	Action Items
1–3 months	• Explicitly define time and give permission for AI-tool experimentation • Create a community of practice • Identify training programs for employees
3–6 months	• Hold a forum where individuals share how they have experimented with or used AI in their work • Coordinate calls/interactions with peer libraries to learn from each other
6–12 months	Integrate goals related to AI for next year's individual annual performance reviews

2. Collections, Technology & Infrastructure

2.1. **Strategy:** Leverage collections to train AI, prioritizing consent, cultural authority, provenance, and controlled use

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Review any agreements with third-party companies and organizations that have digitized materials from your collections, and understand the agreements for training AI models • Identify collections that should NOT be used for training AI due to cultural and social obligations or contractual agreements • Identify a set of initial collections that could especially enhance the corpus of knowledge for AI training
6–12 months	• Seek broad range of values-based potential partnerships to leverage unique collections as training materials for AI • Evaluate if a retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) model or agent with a specific AI task/goal aligns with the initial set of collections

2.2. **Strategy:** Develop new approaches to collection management and metadata with an "AI-first" mindset

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Review any agreements with third-party companies and organizations where metadata is shared

Timeline	Action Items
	• Consider CC-0 license for library-created metadata where appropriate • Develop an AI review framework for subscription license terms
6–12 months	• Coordinate with peers and design a framework for metadata creation and remediation using AI technologies to support workflow and analysis • Review metadata standards and ensure provenance, attribution, and contextual use information are present when appropriate • Review open content and consider removing content that should not be available for AI to scrape and integrate into learning/training models

2.3. **Strategy:** Use AI to enhance accessibility and interaction with special collections and digitized archives.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	Identify an AI tool and collection (or subset) to test for automated transcriptions, captions, handwriting identification, or image analysis
6–12 months	Assess the piloted tool and consider for full workflow integration

3. AI Literacy & Critical Skills

3.1. Strategy: Create dynamic, updated information and AI literacy programs tailored to address biases, misinformation, and ethical concerns.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Document and publish updated AI literacy resources in an openly accessible format • Update or create new learning modules or curriculum specifically addressing AI-tool use, citation of AI outputs, and research documentation • Create a bias evaluation framework and accompanying prompt toolkit
6–12 months	• Establish a partnership with the university writing center and academic departments to co-design AI-era learning outcomes • Review existing teaching materials and curriculum and update for relevant AI-tool integrations, AI-ethics discussions, and AI-usage guidelines
Year 2	Iterate with new technologies advancements, feedback, and reflection

3.2. Strategy: Equip users with the skills to navigate a complex AI-driven information landscape while maintaining trust in libraries as reliable sources.

Timeline	Action Items
Year 1	• Develop a modular AI literacy curriculum for multiple audiences (students, faculty, staff, and researchers) that aligns with existing campus resources • Convene a cross-functional AI literacy task force including librarians, faculty, teaching and learning units, and student affairs staff
Year 2	Launch a "library as AI quality evaluator" service offering assessments of tools for specific research use cases

4. Ethics & Values-Based Positioning

4.1. Strategy: Support researchers and educators by offering guidance on AI ethics, data management, and rights retention.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Document and publish updated AI guidance resources in an openly accessible format • Update or create new learning modules and workshops specifically addressing ethics, data management, copyright, and data privacy in AI environments
6–12 months	Establish a partnership with the office of research and/or the teaching and learning

Timeline	Action Items
	unit to integrate into the Responsible Conduct of Research resources and training

4.2. **Strategy:** Ensure AI tools and services uphold the library's core values.

Timeline	Action Items
1–3 months	• Develop a library AI-ethics statement aligned with institutional values and ALA principles • Review the AI tools available at your campus • Identify and review AI tools automatically integrated into primary library databases and discovery systems
3–6 months	• Create an equity review checklist for all new AI services or tool implementations • Advocate for vendor contract language about AI that reflects library values
6–12 months	Identify AI tools to pilot for user discovery in databases and discovery systems
Year 2	• Engage students and researchers in at least one co-design or feedback process related to AI services

Timeline	Action Items
	• Publish an annual transparency report on library AI-tool use, data practices, and equity outcomes

5. Campus Partnership & Institutional Integration

5.1. Strategy: Forge cross-campus partnerships with AI researchers and technologists.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Develop a campus AI partnership strategy, identifying key offices, committees, and faculty for engagement • Identify key lead AI researchers and technologists on campus and use data management and digital storage as an entry to potential AI-related collaborations

5.2. Strategy: Integrate libraries into institutional AI strategies; lead campus conversations on ethical AI use, informed consent, and data privacy.

Timeline	Action Items
Year 1	• Secure a library seat on the campus AI-ethics board or AI governance committee • Position library staff as embedded partners in AI-related campus initiatives

Timeline	Action Items
Year 2	• Lead campus initiative communication efforts through reports and/or presentations on ethical use of AI, informed consent, and data privacy • Integrate library analytics with university student success and research impact data

6. Collective Action, Advocacy & Partnerships

6.1. Strategy: Lead conversations on fair use, copyright, and licensing agreements that prioritize the needs of higher education and researchers.

Timeline	Action Items
1–6 months	• Develop shared talking points for government and policy groups on relevant AI legislation and impacts for libraries, education, and research • Create/use shared template contract language for AI-related provisions
6–12 months	• Engage in federal and state policy conversations about AI regulation and academic fair use • Evaluate library services broadly for copyright trends and guidance as a result of generative AI

6.2. **Strategy:** Strengthen collaborations across libraries, corporate entities, and governments to develop shared standards and ethical AI applications.

Timeline	Action Items
Year 1	• Participate actively in national and international coalitions focused on AI and academic rights (CNI, ARL, or relevant coalitions focused on AI and academic rights) • Create local understanding and use of shared professional frameworks for using AI, such as the ARL "Research Libraries Guiding Principles for Artificial Intelligence"[4]
Year 2	Develop shared standards defined as priorities by collaboratives

[4] "Research Libraries Guiding Principles for Artificial Intelligence," Association of Research Libraries, April 2024, https://doi.org/10.29242/principles.ai2024.

Figure 2. Robust Strategies for AI-driven Libraries

Five Bold Steps: Ignite Strategic Momentum Across the Organization

The robust strategies described above provide a durable foundation for cross-scenario decision-making under uncertainty. Informed by

this foundation, the workshop transitioned to define "bold steps" to ignite strategic momentum and transformation within the specific operational areas that define research library work. As a next step workshop participants reorganized into four new groups, each focused on a core area defined by the facilitator:

- information discovery and access
- research support and knowledge creation
- user engagement and learning
- operational efficiency

Informed by the robust strategies developed through the scenario exercise, each group identified where the most significant opportunities and gaps lay and proposed strategic actions within their assigned area. The groups then identified five bold steps for research libraries to take for their assigned area of operations. The resulting recommendations, summarized in Table 1, are followed by a cross-cutting synthesis of what these steps reveal when read as a collective agenda.

Table 1. Five Bold Steps for Research Libraries by Operational Area

Operational Area	Bold Steps
Information Discovery and Access	• Collaborate with standards organizations (NISO, NIST) to develop AI-compatible metadata, interoperability, and discovery standards that keep library infrastructure relevant and vendor-neutral. • Develop and advance a proactive library AI agenda for federal policy.

Operational	Bold Steps
	• Build collaborative, cross-institutional services to create trusted, curated corpora for AI training and retrieval, prioritizing quality, provenance, and ethical sourcing. • Develop shared best practices and model contract language for negotiating licensed content agreements that explicitly address AI ingestion, training use, and output rights. • Create and disseminate toolkits and assessment frameworks that help users evaluate AI tools critically, positioning libraries as trusted guides in an increasingly opaque information environment.
Research Support and Knowledge Creation	• Dedicate at least 20% of new FTE recruitment to professionals with AI expertise, including data science, machine learning literacy, and AI ethics. • Build digital forensics services and capabilities to authenticate sources, detect AI-generated or manipulated content, and support research integrity in an environment of increasing synthetic media. • Require open access publication, where the library has control of scholarly and creative outputs, which may include library-published materials and/or library employees' works.

Operational	Bold Steps
	• Library leaders actively articulate and champion a collaborative vision for AI in service of the public good. • Invest in open, shared infrastructure to build auditable and verifiable corpora and large language models grounded in library collections; license catalog metadata as CC0 to enable ethical, fully open machine reading and reuse.
User Engagement and Learning	• Build a compelling, evidence-based case for libraries' distinctive role in an AI-driven information environment, articulating what libraries uniquely offer that AI services cannot replicate, including human judgment, ethical curation, and institutional accountability. • Create participatory structures, advisory groups, community feedback mechanisms, and co-design processes, that give library users and communities genuine agency in shaping how AI tools and services are adopted and governed. • Develop funding narratives and grant strategies that explicitly connect AI investment requests to mission-driven outcomes.

Operational	Bold Steps
	• Actively communicate libraries' position of trust—through marketing, public programming, and institutional messaging—as a distinctive asset in an AI landscape where source credibility, data provenance, and algorithmic transparency are increasingly contested. • Embed environmental sustainability as explicit evaluation criteria in AI adoption decisions, including assessment of energy consumption, vendor dependency, and long-term costs.
Operational Efficiency and Strategy	• Establish a shared institutional narrative: develop a system-wide statement of AI intent and a revised mission statement that clearly articulates the academic library's evolving role, giving staff, administrators, and stakeholders a common framework for decision-making in an AI-transformed environment. • Operationalize ethical AI guidelines: establish explicit criteria governing if, how, and under what conditions library content may be provided for LLM training; create a standing responsible AI team with authority to evaluate tools, flag risks, and advise on procurement.

Operational	Bold Steps
	• Invest in a technology-literate workforce: implement structured, role-differentiated AI training programs for all library employees from foundational AI literacy for all staff to advanced technical training for those in data, systems, and research support roles • Identify and capture operational efficiencies: set a concrete. two-year goal to apply AI to metadata creation and management workflows; reinvest the resulting savings and staff capacity in enhanced discovery tools and user-facing services; conduct a systematic review to sunset legacy systems that no longer align with the library's AI-era mission. • Develop a collaborative, equity-centered AI library agent: pursue a national-scale program to design and deploy an AI research assistant, potentially modeled on or partnered with initiatives like HathiTrust, built on open, auditable infrastructure with equity and ethics embedded in its design from the outset, not retrofitted.

Synthesis: What the Bold Steps Tell Us

Read individually, the five bold steps from each group represent concrete actions within a defined operational domain. Read together, they reveal a coherent institutional agenda, one that is more ambitious and more integrated than any single group's work alone suggests. They form the foundation of what this report describes as the Pillars of an AI-Ready Library (Figure 1).

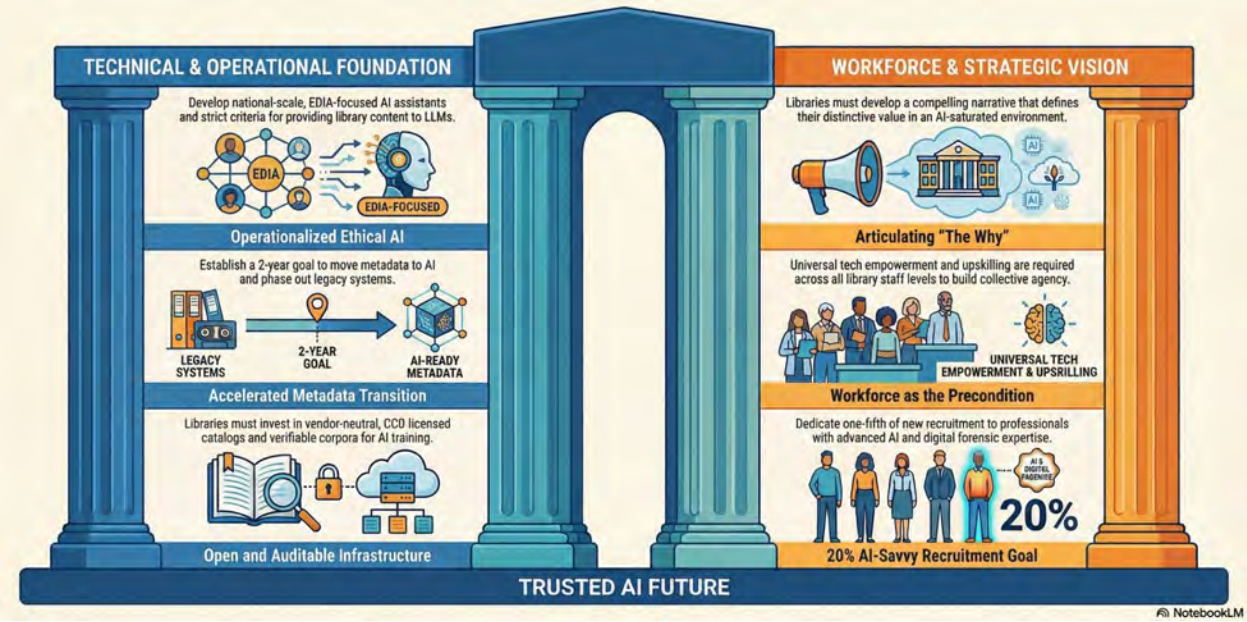

Figure 3. Pillars of an AI-Ready Library

The "why" remains the most underdeveloped and most important piece. This reflects a genuine gap in the profession. Libraries have robust capacity to describe *what* they do and *how* they do it. They have less developed language for articulating *why* those things matter in an AI-saturated environment where the what and how are rapidly shifting. The bold steps suggest that closing this gap and building a compelling, evidence-based case for libraries' distinctive value in the AI era is the strategic work that makes all the other bold steps possible.

Libraries must simultaneously claim authority and build the infrastructure to back it up. Across all four groups, there is a consistent assertion that libraries should not wait to be invited into AI conversations at the institutional, national, or policy level. Groups called for proactive federal policy engagement, collaborative standard-setting with NISO and NIST, library leaders stepping forward with a shared vision for AI for public good, and system-wide statements of institutional intent. At the same time, these aspirations are paired throughout with the unglamorous infrastructure work that makes authority credible: auditable corpora, CC0-licensed catalogs, responsible AI teams, digital forensics capacity, and two-year metadata transition goals. *The message is consistent—libraries cannot lead on trust without being able to demonstrate it technically*.

Workforce is the throughline. Every group, regardless of operational focus, surfaced workforce as a constraint and an opportunity. Information Discovery called for toolkits that require trained practitioners to deploy. Research Support called for dedicating 20% of new recruitment to AI-savvy professionals. User Engagement called for building collective agency. Operational Efficiency called for tech empowerment and upskilling across all library employees. No single group treated the workforce as someone else's problem. This convergence suggests that workforce investment is not one strategy among many; it is the precondition for all the others.

Open and collaborative infrastructure is a strategic bet, not just a value statement. Multiple groups independently converged on the importance of shared, open, vendor-neutral infrastructure: collaborative trusted corpora, CC0 catalog licensing, a national-scale ethically built AI assistant, and partnerships to build complementary LLMs for ethics and equity. This is notable because it represents a departure from the majority of the library community's historical

tendency to pursue interoperability aspirationally while accepting proprietary lock-in in practice. The bold steps suggest participants believe this moment requires libraries to build, or co-build, infrastructure they actually control, not just advocate for access to infrastructure others control.

Ethics and equity are operational commitments, not positioning statements. Rather than appearing as a stand-alone thematic area, ethics and equity are embedded throughout the operational steps as design requirements. The Operational Efficiency group called explicitly for an EDIA-centered AI assistant and criteria governing how library content is provided to LLM training. The Research Support group called for auditable, verifiable corpora. The Information Discovery group called for trusted guides rather than merely convenient ones. This distribution of ethical commitments across operational areas, rather than their concentration in a single "ethics" bucket, reflects a more mature approach, and one that is harder to deprioritize when budgets tighten.

Reflections A Year Later

The resilience of scenario planning is that it consistently asks drivers and signals to be re-examined and to inform actions in response to environmental cues. Since it has been over a year since the December workshop, the report authors have provided a cursory review in our current context.

Drivers January 2025—February 2026

Technology

- Generative AI tools integrated into almost all office productivity tools[5]

[5] Microsoft, "Microsoft 365 Copilot," accessed March 17, 2026, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365-copilot, and Google, "Google Workspace: Gemini in Google Drive," https://workspace.google.com/products/drive/ai/.

- Generative AI tools are integrated into many library databases and discovery systems[6]
- Agentic AI and workflow automation—move from chat to agents that take actions across tools and systems raising new governance needs (authorization, auditability, containment, quality control)[7]

Geopolitical & Policy

- De-globalization has created geopolitical boundaries on the AI research environment [8]
- OBBBA and threat to states with AI legislation[9]—eventually removed[10]
- US and Canadian guidance on AI use in grant proposal development and peer review tightens expectations for disclosure, confidentiality, and accountability—changing proposal workflows and institutional support needs[11].

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[6] Matt Enis, "Highly Recommended: Latest Advances in Discovery at Libraries, *Library Journal*, June 9, 2025, https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/highly-recommended-latest-advances-in-discovery-at-libraries.

[7] "Let 2026 Be the Year the World Comes Together for AI Safety," editorial, *Nature*, December 29, 2025, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-04106-0.

[8] Alexandra Alper, "China Has Not Yet Received Any Nvidia H200 Chips, US Official Says," Reuters, February 24, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-has-not-yet-received-any-nvidia-h200-chips-us-official-said-2026-02-24/; Arendse Huld, "China Clarifies Cross-Border Data Transfer Rules: Key Takeaways from Official Q&A (I)," *China Briefing*, April 18, 2025, https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-clarifies-cross-border-data-transfer-rules-official-qa/.

[9] Alonzo Martinez, "Congressional Budget Bill Could Override State AI Laws," *Forbes*, June 13, 2025, https://www.forbes.com/sites/alonzomartinez/2025/06/13/congressional-budget-bill-could-override-state-ai-laws/.

[10] Team AI Regulation, "Senate Passes OBBBA Without AI Moratorium, Preserving State Authority," *AI-Regulation.com*, July 4, 2025, https://ai-regulation.com/senate-removes-ai-moratorium-obbba-2025/.

[11] "The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Development and Review of Research Proposals," Science.gc.ca, Government of Canada, July 28, 2025, https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/interagency-research-funding/policies-and-guidelines/use-generative-artificial-intelligence-development-and-review-research-proposals; "Supporting Fairness and Originality in NIH Research Applications" (NOT-OD-25-132), US National Institutes of Health, July 17, 2025, https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-25-132.html.

- Copyright and Intellectual Property conflict—escalating litigation and emerging licensing norms change what content can be used, how provenance must be tracked, and how "knowledge access" gets priced[12]

Higher Education

- Negative impacts on higher education budgets in the U.S. and Canada[13]
- Political pressures, demographic impact on enrollment, public trust, and AI leading to a critical juncture for higher education[14]

Social Impacts

- Environmental impact and concern about local AI data centers[15]
- Continued rapid adoption of AI tools and widening digital divide[16]

Signals January 2025—February 2026

Technology

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[12] Blake Brittain, "Perplexity Asks Court to Trim New York Times Copyright Case," Reuters, March 2, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/perplexity-asks-court-trim-new-york-times-copyright-case-2026-03-02/.

[13] Patrick Jack, "Universities Count the Cost, One Year into Trump's Second Term," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 23, 2026, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2026/01/23/us-universities-count-cost-after-one-year-trump; Jonathan Malloy, "Canada's Universities Are in Crisis as Money Gets Tighter," *The Globe and Mail*, January 14, 2026, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-canadas-universities-are-in-crisis-as-money-gets-tighter/.

[14] Ricardo Tomás, "Higher Ed Is at a Turning Point. 11 Scholars Predict What's Next," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 27, 2026, https://www.chronicle.com/article/higher-ed-is-at-a-turning-point-11-scholars-predict-whats-next.

[15] Monica Sanders, "AI's Data Center Boom Is Testing Power Grids and Local Communities," *Forbes*, February 12, 2026, https://www.forbes.com/sites/monicasanders/2026/02/12/the-data-center-boom-is-testing-power-grids-and-local-communities/.

[16] Microsoft AI Economy Institute, *Global AI Adoption in 2025: A Widening Digital Divide* (Microsoft, January 2026), https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/corporate-responsibility/topics/AI-Economy-Institute/reports/Global-AI-Adoption-2025/.

- Lack of guardrails in Grok allows for antisemitism spouting and pornographic content[17]
- Open Source AI-based literature review tool[18]
- Student information access transition from search to answers[19]
- Northeastern University Library experiment coupling the library catalog with an AI agent[20]
- Library website and repository crashes from AI bot crawls[21]

Geopolitical & Policy

- US Pentagon demands Anthropic open their AI tools for unrestricted military use without guardrails[22]

Higher Education

- Rise of university-specific GPT tools[23]
- Google AI research co-scientist[24]

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[17] Kelvin Chan, "Musk's Grok Chatbot Faces EU Privacy Investigation over Sexualized Deepfake Images," PBS News, February 17, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/musks-grok-chatbot-faces-eu-privacy-investigation-over-sexualized-deepfake-images.

[18] Elizabeth Gibney, "Open-Source AI Tool Beats Giant LLMs in Literature Reviews—and Gets Citations Right," *Nature*, February 4, 2026, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-00347-9.

[19] Leo S. Lo, "The CARE Approach for Academic Librarians: From Search First to Answer First with Generative AI," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 52, no. 1 (2026): 103186, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2025.103186.

[20] Dan Cohen, "AI and Libraries, Archives, and Museums, Loosely Coupled," *Humane Ingenuity*, August 18, 2025, https://newsletter.dancohen.org/archive/ai-and-libraries-archives-and-museums-loosely-coupled/.

[21] Matt Enis, "AI Bots Swarm Library, Cultural Heritage Sites, Causing Slowdowns and Crashes," *Library Journal*, July 21, 2025, https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/ai-bots-swarm-library-cultural-heritage-sites-causing-slowdowns-and-crashes.

[22] Matt O'Brien, Konstantin Toropin, and David Klepper, "Hegseth Warns Anthropic to Let the Military Use the Company's AI Tech as It Sees Fit, AP Sources Say," *The Associated Press*, February 24, 2026, https://apnews.com/article/anthropic-military-ai-hegseth-department-of-defense-f05674f7195051ab843e5087d12c8cf8.

[23] Calvin Hennick, "How Three Universities Developed Their Chatbots," *EdTech Magazine*, May 13, 2025, https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2025/05/how-three-universities-developed-their-chatbots.

[24] Juraj Gottweis and Vivek Natarajan, "Accelerating Scientific Breakthroughs with an AI Co-Scientist," *Google Research* (blog), February 19, 2025, https://research.google/blog/accelerating-scientific-breakthroughs-with-an-ai-co-scientist/.

- AI tools are selling doing coursework and being everywhere the student needs to be online[25]
- Growth of no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech spaces in libraries[26]

Social Impacts

- AI-tool adoption gender gaps[27]
- HumanityAI's philanthropically backed effort to develop and design AI tools by people for people[28]

Workforce

- Training programs and webinars for library professional development working with AI[29]
- AI refusal in libraries[30]

Critical Uncertainties a Year Later

A year after publication, the original critical uncertainties—AI Societal Adaptation and Intentionality in AI Process and Design—remain the most discriminating axes, but the research environment

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[25] Macy Meyer, "Einstein AI Tool Doesn't Just Help With Homework. It Takes Over Your Role as a Student," *CNET*, February 26, 2026, https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/companion-einstein-ai-tool/.

[26] Kathy Irwin, "Give Yourself a Break! How to Balance Screen Time with Real-Life Stress Busters," Central Michigan University Libraries (blog), December 2, 2025, https://www.cmich.edu/blog/university-libraries/2025/12/02/give-yourself-a-break%21-how-to-balance-screen-time-with-real-life-stress-busters; library-hosted "Unplugged" workshops in library lounges: "West Virginia University Calendar: Wise Library," accessed March 17, 2026, https://cal.wvu.edu/wise_library_455.

[27] Alison Coleman, "The AI Gender Gap: Here's What It Will Take to Close It," *Forbes*, June 18, 2025, https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisoncoleman/2025/06/18/the-ai-gender-gap-heres-what-it-will-take-to-close-it/.

[28] Humanity AI, accessed March 17, 2026, https://humanityai.ai/.

[29] Yulia Sevryugina and Helen Bischoff, "Harnessing AI as a Collaborative Partner for Ethical Research and Writing," webinar, *Choice*, February 26, 2026, https://www.choice360.org/webinars/harnessing-ai-as-a-collaborative-partner-for-ethical-research-writing/.

[30] Violet Fox, "AI Refusal in Libraries: A Starter Guide," *ACRLog*, June 11, 2025, https://acrlog.org/2025/06/11/ai-refusal-in-libraries-a-starter-guide/.

is now being shaped by a denser set of reinforcing drivers and sharper signals.

AI adoption is accelerating and stratifying simultaneously. Both trends carry direct implications for research libraries. Generative AI has moved decisively from experimental to infrastructural; it is now embedded in mainstream office productivity suites, integrated into library databases and discovery systems, and increasingly present in the learning management and research workflow tools that faculty and students use daily. This shift places new pressure on libraries' core functions of source evaluation, critical literacy instruction, and collection integrity, because the seams between trusted library content and AI-generated synthesis are becoming invisible to most users.

At the same time, adoption is not uniform. The digital divide is widening along multiple axes. Globally, AI adoption in the Global North is growing at nearly twice the rate of the Global South, compounding existing inequities in access to knowledge infrastructure. Within institutions, documented adoption gaps by gender show that women are measurably less likely to use generative AI tools than their male counterparts, a disparity that, left unaddressed, risks reproducing familiar patterns of technological exclusion in a new form. For research libraries committed to equitable access to information, this is a direct threat to mission.

The intentionality axis has become the most actively contested dimension of AI development. On one side, widely deployed tools demonstrate what limited intentionality produces in practice: weak guardrails, harmful outputs, and design choices that prioritize scale over accountability. On the other, a growing set of countervailing actors, including AI company leaders publicly defending ethical guardrails, philanthropy-backed coalitions such as HumanityAI, and

the open source research community, are advancing an alternative model of human-centered design. That contest is being further pressured by national security actors, particularly in the United States, where demands for unrestricted military access to AI systems have made guardrails a geopolitical flashpoint, not merely a technical or ethical preference.

Taken together, the signals from 2025 suggest movement toward less intentional AI design in the tools most libraries and users will actually encounter. This makes Scenario 3 (Laissez-Faire AI) and Scenario 4 (Autonomous AI) the more likely near-term reference points for planning purposes, not because the alternative is impossible, but because the institutional and regulatory conditions that would sustain it are not yet in place. This assessment is necessarily US- and Canada-focused. International regulatory frameworks, particularly in the EU, may impose stronger intentionality requirements that shift the global trajectory, and libraries operating in those contexts should weight the scenarios accordingly.

Strategic Actions a Year Later

This scan of actions a year later relies primarily on publicly discoverable information (library websites, news posts, LibGuides, project pages, and other outward-facing documentation). This approach systematically under-detects many of the activities that matter most in practice, especially the operational and governance work that tends to remain internal.

Several of the strategies in this framework are inherently back-of-house (and therefore unlikely to be publicly documented in a consistent way), including: workflow mapping and readiness assessments; staff experimentation policies and “sandbox” access; vendor feature inventories and disable/enable decisions; contract

review language; cybersecurity controls for bot mitigation; internal model/tool evaluation rubrics; and performance-management integration. In many cases, libraries also have good reasons not to publish details (e.g., contracts sensitivity, security risk, legal exposure, reputational considerations, or unfinished pilots).

As a result, "not listed here" should not be interpreted as "no activity underway." Based on field knowledge, we know some of these efforts are occurring but are surfaced through peer networks, conference presentations, member-only forums, listservs, and other closed professional communities rather than through institutional websites. The information in this section, therefore, provides a view of public-facing activity and communicated practices, often by institutions with well-staffed marketing and communication teams. It should be read as a lower bound on overall adoption and maturity across research libraries, with particular undercounting in internal operations.

1. Workforce Development & Organizational Culture

Structured staff training, communities of practice, and new AI-focused roles are now the most visible workforce activities across research libraries, which is a meaningful shift from exploratory conversations to institutionalized programming. The creation of dedicated AI leadership positions signals that some institutions are moving beyond ad hoc responses toward sustained organizational change. ACRL's AI Competencies for Academic Library Workers (October 2025)[31] and Leo Lo's "AI Literacy for All: a Universal

[31] "AI Competencies for Academic Library Workers," Association of College & Research Libraries, October 2025, https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ai.

Framework"[32] now provide a shared baseline for role definition, training design, and annual goal setting.

In practice:

- **University of North Carolina Libraries**—Publishes recurring skills-oriented generative AI (Gen AI) workshops paired with a workforce readiness self-assessment, documenting both programming and individual development pathways. (Robust strategy: 1.1)
- **Stony Brook University Libraries**—Created a Director of AI position, described as among the first of its kind in libraries nationwide, to lead strategic AI integration across the organization. (Robust strategy: 1.2)
- **Carnegie Mellon University Libraries**—AIR (AI in Research) Program offers training workshops, a tool assessment framework, and a community of practice, explicitly framed as capacity-building rather than one-time training. (Robust strategy: 1.3)

Still needed: Understanding of how AI has been piloted in operations and impacted existing position duties; knowledge about position description AI language, annual goals, and assessment.

2. Collections, Technology & Infrastructure

Research libraries are most visibly active in: making collections and metadata available for AI-related reuse and piloting AI tools to improve access to special collections. The range of maturity is wide, from Harvard Library's formally structured public domain corpus to single-institution transcription pilots, but the direction is consistent: libraries are moving from describing collections as AI-relevant

[32] Leo S. Lo, "AI Literacy for All: A Universal Framework," preprint, University of New Mexico, 2025, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ulls_fsp/213/.

assets to actually building the infrastructure to make them more accessible and usable by machines. Governance of vendor-embedded AI features remains the least developed area, despite being the most immediate operational reality for most libraries.

In practice:

- **Harvard Library**—Released a Public Domain Corpus of approximately one million digitized public domain books explicitly designed to support LLM training, paired with use policies and access-by-request protocols that balance openness with responsible reuse. (Robust strategy: 2.1)
- **Cornell University Library—**Published an "Open Bibliographic Metadata" primer for supporting sharing metadata with license guidance and consideration of fields and/or records to share.[33] (Robust strategy: 2.2)
- **Princeton University Library**—Staff projects explore how LLMs can enhance cataloging workflows for non-Roman scripts, including generating extended content notes and automating romanization—documenting both the potential and the current limitations of AI-assisted cataloging.[34] (Robust strategy: 2.3)
- **Rutgers University Libraries**—By 2025, formally reviews AI software before installation and evaluates multiple tools for special collections use cases, illustrating how governance infrastructure can mature alongside piloting activity. [35] (Robust strategy: 2.3)

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[33] Simeon Warner and Jason Kovari, "Open Bibliographic Metadata—A Primer," Cornell University Library, Cornell eCommons, January 30, 2025, https://hdl.handle.net/1813/116675.

[34] Princeton University Library, "PUL Staff Plan Programming with Humanities Council Flash Grants," Princeton University Library, May 29, 2024, https://library.princeton.edu/about/library-news/2024/pul-staff-plan-programming-humanities-council-flash-grants.

[35] Sonia Yaco et al., "What Can AI Do with Special Collections?" *The American Archivist*, April 14, 2025, https://doi.org/10.7282/00000516.

Still needed: Explicit decision frameworks for excluding sensitive or culturally obligated collections from AI use, and systematic review of legacy digitization contracts that may not have anticipated AI ingestion.

3. AI Literacy and Critical Skills

AI literacy programming has become one of the most active and visible areas of library work, with a clear and encouraging shift toward pairing tool instruction with critical evaluation, citation practice, and ethical use. Badging programs and structured frameworks are beginning to move AI literacy from one-off workshops toward sustained, credentialed competency development. The challenge now is scaling programming that was designed for early adopters to reach the broader campus population, including those who are skeptical, underconfident, or underserved by existing formats.

In practice:

- **Yale Library**—Publishes AI-related research guides covering privacy, citation, and tool evaluation, and has developed an AI Literacy Framework for Teaching and Learning that positions the library as an institutional resource rather than a reactive support function.[36] (Robust strategy 3.1)
- **Concordia University Library**—Positions AI literacy as a direct extension of its information literacy mission, providing a single campus entry point for AI guidance and directing users to a university-wide AI Resources Hub for broader institutional context.[37] (Robust strategy 3.2)

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[36] "Yale Library Publishes New AI-Related Guides for Researchers," Yale Library, July 11, 2025, https://library.yale.edu/news/yale-library-publishes-new-ai-related-guides-researchers.

[37] Leslie Goldstein, "Concordia Launches Learning Modules to Guide Students in Responsible AI Use," Concordia University, December 15,

- **Toronto Metropolitan University Libraries**—Launched an AI Fluency badging program focused on research workflows—information seeking, verification, citation—responding to strong student and faculty demand for practical, research-oriented AI guidance.[38] (Robust strategy 3.2)

Still needed: Programming explicitly designed to reach and build confidence among underrepresented adopters, including documented gender and career-stage adoption gaps, rather than defaulting to formats that attract the already-engaged.

4. Ethics & Values-Based Positioning

Three governance domains are emerging most consistently in strong public examples: explicit values statements for AI use, copyright and licensing guidance covering both vendor constraints and author agreements, and documented review processes for tools and datasets. The most mature institutions are moving beyond publishing values statements toward operationalizing them by establishing review processes, training staff on licensing implications, and creating publicly accountable commitments to human oversight.

In practice:

2025, https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/main/stories/2025/12/15/concordia-launches-learning-modules-to-guide-students-in-responsible-ai-use.html.

[38] "TMU Libraries' Launch AI Fluency Badging Workshops to Help Students Strengthen Their Ability to Transparently Use AI," Toronto Metropolitan University Libraries, November 5, 2025, https://library.torontomu.ca/blog/2025/11/tmu-libraries-launch-ai-fluency-badging-workshops-to-help-students-strengthen-their-ability-to-transparently-use-ai/.

- **Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries**—Documented the intersection of open access, author rights, and AI licensing constraints, helping researchers understand that openly accessible scholarship is not necessarily freely reusable for AI-assisted work.[39] (Robust strategy 4.1)
- **Colorado State University Libraries**—Advocated for change in a publisher subscription contract's AI language by publishing a public guest column and engaging the university community and peer libraries in national advocacy efforts, resulting in revised contract terms.[40] (Robust strategy 4.2)
- **Montana State University Libraries**—Developed *Viewfinder*, a values-driven toolkit designed to help librarians, researchers, and archivists thoughtfully evaluate whether and how to adopt AI tools in ways aligned with their institutional values.[41] (Robust strategy 4.2)
- **Stony Brook University Libraries**—Published a transparent public statement committing to human oversight ("no human, no AI"), privacy protections, and the ability to pilot and sunset AI tools—and explicitly acknowledges that many subscribed tools now include AI features that arrived without procurement decisions.[42] (Robust strategy 4.2)

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[39] Kathleen DeLaurenti, "Open Access Publishing and AI: Considerations for Authors," Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries, October 22, 2025, https://www.library.jhu.edu/news/2025/10/open-access-publishing-and-ai-considerations-for-authors/.

[40] Karen Estlund, "When Publishers' Fear of AI Prohibits Basic Uses," *Colorado State University SOURCE*, October 24, 2025, https://source.colostate.edu/guest-column-when-publishers-fear-of-ai-prohibits-basic-uses/.

[41] Anne Cantrell, "Montana State University Library Offers New Tool to Help Libraries with AI Use," Montana State University, February 23, 2026, https://www.montana.edu/news/25130/montana-state-university-library-offers-new-tool-to-help-libraries-with-ai-use.

[42] "Artificial Intelligence Use at Stony Brook University Libraries," v. 1.4, Stony Brook University Libraries, December 3, 2025, https://library.stonybrook.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ArtificialIntelligenceUseatStonyBrookUniversi.html.

Still needed: Operational guidance on provenance tracking as AI ingestion of library-licensed and library-held content escalates—values statements exist, but most libraries lack the workflow-level tools to implement them in practice.

5. Campus Partnership & Institutional Integration

The clearest examples of campus integration are libraries embedded in provost, IT, and teaching-center collaborations—and those that have become the institutional home for governed AI environments that faculty and students use as campus defaults. The pattern that distinguishes the strongest examples is not that libraries are doing AI work, but that they are positioned as conveners and co-designers rather than downstream support providers. Libraries that have established this positioning before the institutional AI conversation was settled are significantly better placed than those still seeking a seat at the table.

In practice:

- **Brown University Library's** Center for Digital Scholarship is running an in-progress "Experiments in AI & Digital Scholarship" initiative that documents small, collaborative projects with Brown researchers exploring how new AI methods can be applied in digital scholarship and digital humanities.[43] (Robust strategy 5.1)

[43] "Experiments in Artificial Intelligence & Digital Scholarship," Brown University Library, Center for Digital Scholarship, accessed March 17, 2026, https://cds.lib.brown.edu/cds-project/experiments-artificial-intelligence-digital-scholarship.

- **Colorado State University System**—A university system-wide task force co-chaired by the deans of libraries, bringing together faculty, technologists, and subject experts to design AI pilots supporting teaching and learning, research, productivity, communities of practice, and innovation.[44] (Robust strategy 5.1)
- **Oregon State University Libraries**—Launched a new university "AI Literacy Center" in partnership with the Center for Teaching and Learning focused on critical and thoughtful approaches to learning to and using Generative AI.[45] (Robust strategies 3.1 and 5.2)
- **Queen's University Library**—Launched a two-year, multi-institutional Generative AI in Teaching research project in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and Student Academic Success Services, positioning the library as institutional sponsor and lead researcher rather than support unit.[46] (Robust strategy 5.2)

Still needed: Models for libraries at institutions where the AI conversation is already centralized in IT or a provost's office; most partnership examples assume the library had early access to the table, which is not universally the case.

6. Collective Action, Advocacy & Partnerships

Association-level work is providing the shared values frameworks, policy artifacts, and advocacy infrastructure that individual libraries are beginning to adapt into local practice. The most effective pattern

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[44] "AI Task Force Announced at IT Event Exploring Technology's Impact," *Colorado State University SOURCE*, April 8, 2024, https://source.colostate.edu/ai-task-force-announced-at-it-event-exploring-technologys-impact/.

[45] "AI Literacy Center," Oregon State University Libraries and Oregon State University Center for Teaching and Learning, accessed March 17, 2026, https://ailiteracycenter.oregonstate.edu/.

[46] "Generative AI in Teaching Project," Queen's University Library, August 6, 2025, https://library.queensu.ca/about/news/generative-ai-teaching-project.

is a two-tier model: national associations producing reusable frameworks and formal policy positions, and individual institutions translating those into operational guidance for their specific research and learning communities. The gap between association-level advocacy and institutional implementation remains significant; libraries that are actively localizing national frameworks are the exception rather than the rule, and it is hard to find publicly available examples of operationalized guidance.

In practice:

- **UC Berkeley, Yale, and University of Arizona Libraries**—Independently developed operational guidance on AI and text and data mining with licensed resources, illustrating how association-level advocacy translates into researcher-facing practice at the institutional level.[47] (Robust strategy 6.1)
- **Library Copyright Alliance**—Produced updated statements on copyright and generative AI and filed formal government comments arguing against contractual restrictions that abridge fair use rights, giving libraries shared advocacy language for vendor negotiations.[48] (Robust strategy 6.1)
- **SPARC**—Organized a webcast featuring speakers discussing strategies libraries have used to negotiate, weaken, or remove AI restriction clauses in vendor contracts, followed by Q&A and open discussion.[49] (Robust strategy 6.1)

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[47] Timothy Vollmer, "Before You Scrape and Before You Train...," *UC Berkeley Library Update*, September 2, 2025, https://update.lib.berkeley.edu/2025/09/02/before-you-scrape-and-before-you-train/; "Policies Governing E-Resources Access and Use," Yale Library, accessed March 17, 2026, https://library.yale.edu/about-us/about/library-policies/policies-governing-e-resources-access-and-use; "Use Library Resources for TDM, LLMs, and AI," University of Arizona Libraries, accessed March 17, 2026, https://lib.arizona.edu/research/plan/tdm-llm.

[48] "Statement on Copyright and Generative Artificial Intelligence," Library Copyright Alliance, October 2025, https://www.librarycopyrightalliance.org/documents/principles/copyright-ai/statement-on-copyright-and-generative-artificial-intelligence/.

[49] "Addressing Vendor AI Restrictions," member community call, SPARC, March 18, 2026.

- **ARL and Library Copyright Alliance**—Produced negotiation-oriented guidance and formal comments to the US government arguing against contractual restrictions that abridge fair use rights for AI-related research, providing member libraries with collective advocacy infrastructure.[50] (Robust strategies 6.1 and 6.2)

Still needed: Efforts in member organizations are fairly siloed and not widespread; robust consortial and membership organization efforts across different membership organizations and coalition building among them; additionally, an understanding of individual libraries are bolstering involvement in shared collaborations to support this transformational change for the library profession or are pulling back due to budget pressures; and lastly how individual libraries are using and operationalizing shared professional frameworks.

New and Expanded Strategies 2025–2026

The robust strategies identified through the December 2024 workshop were designed to hold across multiple plausible futures, and a year later, they do. Scenario planning derives its value, however, not from producing a fixed agenda but from returning to evidence as conditions evolve. The drivers and signals of 2025–2026 have sharpened several priorities that were nascent at the time of the workshop and surfaced new operational realities the original strategy set did not fully anticipate, including the acceleration of agentic AI into library systems, tightening federal policy on AI disclosure in research, escalating intellectual property conflict, the operational strain of AI bot scraping on open infrastructure, and

[50] Katherine Klosek and Marjory Blumenthal, "Revisiting the Library Copyright Alliance Statement on AI and Copyright," *ARL Views* blog, Association of Research Libraries, December 10, 2025, https://www.arl.org/blog/revisiting-the-library-copyright-alliance-statement-on-ai-and-copyright/; Rachael Samberg and David Hansen, "Restricting Innovation: How Publisher Contracts Undermine Scholarly AI Research," Authors Alliance, December 6, 2024, https://www.authorsalliance.org/2024/12/06/restricting-innovation-how-publisher-contracts-undermine-scholarly-ai-research/.

growing evidence that equity and sustainability must function as design requirements rather than aspirational values.

The strategies below extend rather than replace the robust strategies, and are organized within the existing six thematic areas to maintain coherence with the full framework. Where a strategy is genuinely new it is marked as "new strategy;" where it expands the scope of an existing strategy in response to changed conditions, that relationship is noted.

1. Workforce Development & Organizational Culture

1.4. **New Strategy:** Develop library governance frameworks for agentic AI use, including authorization policies, auditability requirements, and containment protocols that define what library systems and data agents may access, modify, or act upon without human review.

1.5. **New Strategy:** Develop explicit AI limitation and refusal policies that affirm limiting or declining AI use in culturally sensitive collections, interactions with vulnerable populations, and contexts where human judgment is non-negotiable as sound professional practice, while establishing that wholesale refusal to engage with AI tools as part of one's professional role is inconsistent with the responsibilities of and an information-based profession and library work in the current environment. The profession's obligation is not uncritical adoption, but informed, principled, and accountable engagement.

1.6. **New Strategy:** Integrate assessment responsibilities across organizational roles and build an AI-era services assessment model that demonstrates library value through outcomes and trust. Establish an assessment

framework that can credibly demonstrate the library's value when AI changes how users learn, write, search, and seek help. In an AI-saturated environment, success cannot be inferred from clicks or attendance alone. Libraries need a new evidence model that measures what public services uniquely deliver: improved research and learning outcomes, trusted guidance, responsible tool use, and equitable access to capabilities and expertise.

2. Collections, Technology & Infrastructure

2.2. **Strategy Expanded Scope and Next Steps:** Build AI-ready collections and research data infrastructure by embedding computational readiness into ongoing collection management processes and decisions. Prioritize and prepare library-held content and library-supported research data for computational use—including digitized texts, images, audiovisual materials, datasets, and contextual documentation—through rights review, provenance capture, structured packaging, and governed access models that create clear pathways to institutional compute environments supporting responsible retrieval and analysis.

2.4. **New Strategy:** Treat "vendor AI features" as a governed surface, not a default benefit. Make an explicit inventory of AI add-ons in discovery layers and subscribed databases, require preview/testing, and establish opt-out criteria (functionality, privacy telemetry, bias risks).

2.5. **New Strategy:** Coordinate a collective library and cultural heritage response to AI training data bot scraping, including shared technical standards, advocacy for responsible crawling practices by AI developers, and engagement with standards bodies to establish norms that

protect open access infrastructure without requiring libraries to abandon openness as a default posture.

3. AI Literacy and Critical Skills

3.2. **Strategy Next Steps:** Scale "library as evaluator" service patterns using repeatable frameworks. The Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Tool Assessment Framework model, combined with literacy workshops and community-of-practice mechanisms, points toward a sustainable way to help faculty/students and internal staff select tools responsibly—especially as "search shifts to answers" and agentic automation grows.

4. Ethics & Values-Based Positioning

4.2. **Strategy Next Steps:** Define the services, collections, and user interactions where AI use is inappropriate or prohibited—*including sensitive collections, vulnerable populations*—and communicate these policies transparently to users and institutional stakeholders.

4.2. **Strategy Expanded Scope Incorporating Bold Steps:** Potentially include environmental impact assessment—energy consumption, water use, and carbon footprint—as a standard evaluation criterion in AI tool and infrastructure procurement decisions, and incorporate these considerations into library AI governance frameworks.

5. Campus Partnership & Institutional Integration

5.3. **New strategy**: Develop and maintain authoritative guidance on funder/journal AI disclosure requirements and embed it into grant support and researcher workflows (research admin, IRB, ORA/OSP, Graduate

School, journals support), positioning the library as a compliance-enabling partner for AI-assisted scholarship.

5.4. **New strategy:** AI-enabled research integrity support embedded with RCR/Graduate School. Embed library expertise into Responsible Conduct of Research, graduate training, and departmental onboarding to operationalize: AI disclosure norms, provenance documentation, citation of AI contributions, and integrity checks as "standard lab practice."

6. Collective Action, Advocacy & Partnerships

6.3. **New strategy:** Develop a joint advocacy agenda positioning public-interest AI infrastructure (e.g., open evaluation benchmarks, shared corpora, and equitable compute access) as essential research infrastructure—especially under de-globalization and budget compression—so research libraries are not structurally forced into tech-oligarchy dependency.

7. NEW: Facilities and Space Planning

7.1. **New strategy:** Redesign library spaces and programming for both AI-enabled scholarship and low/no-tech. Develop a purposeful mix of high-tech AI Studios (staffed, workshop-ready environments for guided experimentation, tool evaluation, and AI-supported workflows) and low/no-tech focus spaces (quiet, no-device zones that protect deep work and learning), positioning the library as both the campus venue for responsible AI practice and a refuge from always-on digital saturation.

Conclusion: Planning Ahead in Uncertain Times

The December 2024 workshop began with a deliberately uncomfortable premise: with AI as a disruptor of the future of our profession and unknown impacts but with the guidance from scenario planning to find strategy in the unknown. A year later, the stakes have risen. The signals and drivers of 2025 confirm that the research library environment is not stabilizing; it is stratifying. Institutions with resources, leadership clarity, and established partnerships are moving quickly while others are denying to participate with AI and that will be difficult to reverse. At the same time, the year-later scan offers genuine cause for confidence: workforce programming is becoming institutionalized, collections are being prepared for AI-era reuse, libraries are earning seats at campus AI governance tables, and association-level advocacy is producing shared frameworks that individual libraries are beginning to localize. The profession is moving, unevenly, but unmistakably, in the direction the workshop pointed.

What the scan also makes clear is that the hardest work has not yet been done. Governance of vendor-embedded AI features remains underdeveloped. Provenance tracking and IP compliance are advocated for but not yet operationalized. Agentic AI is arriving in library systems without the authorization frameworks to govern it. And the persuasive case for libraries' distinctive value in an AI-saturated environment, the "why" that the workshop's User Engagement group identified as the most underdeveloped and most important piece, remains largely unmade at the institutional and public level. The robust strategies in this report were designed to hold across multiple futures, and they do. Workforce investment, open and collaborative infrastructure, ethics embedded as operational commitment, campus partnership built before the institutional AI conversation is settled; these priorities are no less

valid for having been identified before the 2025 signals arrived. If anything, the year-later evidence makes them more urgent.

The question this report leaves with library leaders is not whether to act; the signals are unambiguous on that point. The question is whether to act with the ambition the moment requires. The five bold steps that emerged from the workshop called for libraries to dedicate significant recruitment capacity to AI expertise, build nationally scaled open infrastructure, lead federal policy conversations, and make the case for their own indispensability in terms that go beyond what libraries have traditionally been willing to claim. These strategies are a calibrated response to a moment in which the institutions that will define the knowledge infrastructure of the next decade are being chosen. Research libraries have both the standing and the obligation to be among them—not because the future is certain, but because the cost of waiting for certainty is too high.

Appendix

Current Library Capabilities in Scenarios

Before moving into strategies for each scenario, workshop participants articulated individually, then in their scenario groups, how current research libraries are positioned to leverage current capabilities and what worrisome gaps exist. The following table synthesizes information across the scenarios, noting where the topic came up for discussion. If a scenario isn't listed for a topic, it may still be relevant but wasn't explicitly discussed. The items are sorted in the tables by the highest convergence.

Table 2. Capabilities to Leverage

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
AI & digital literacy leadership—Libraries as central hubs for AI literacy education, upskilling staff, and expanding information literacy to include AI literacy	1, 2, 3, 4
Ethical credibility and trustworthiness—Serving as a trusted, neutral evaluator of ethical, privacy, and misinformation issues; social good mindset as organizational focus	1, 2, 3, 4
Advocacy and policy influence—Using organizations like ARL to scale library voices; championing open AI, data rights, and research integrity at institutional and national levels	1, 3, 4

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
Collaboration and consortial models—Working with peer libraries, adjacent institutions (museums, science centers), local governments, and campus units (central IT, faculty) to avoid redundancy and advance shared goals	1, 2, 4
Breaking vendor/publisher dependency—Opportunities to shift business models, develop ethical shared infrastructure as alternatives to commercial platforms	1, 2
Research partnership and embedded expertise—Deepening the library's role as a true collaborator in the research enterprise; domain knowledge informing curation of local/disciplinary language models; metadata and data curation expertise as core AI infrastructure	1, 4
Existing collections and infrastructure—Leveraging digitized/digital collections, distinctive/unique materials (archives, oral histories, special collections), and licensed content	2, 3
Human-centered value—Providing human caring, community, and connection as a distinctive differentiator in an AI-saturated landscape; librarian-as-collaborator at human scale	2, 4

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
Values in design—GLAM/cultural heritage professionals contributing to AI system design and coding to embed library values into the technology itself	4
AI experimentation and sandboxing—Positioning the library as a center for AI experimentation with trusted access to information as a central feature	4

Table 3. Worrisome Gaps

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
Workforce transformation challenges—Difficulty upskilling/reskilling staff at scale; loss of subject expertise already underway; change management is a persistent organizational challenge	1, 2, 3, 4
Equity and digital divide—Uneven access to advanced AI tools across disciplines, institutions, and society; some libraries are unable to keep pace with rapid advancement	1, 2, 3
Risk of disintermediation—Librarians' direct roles in research consultation, instruction, and reference may be replaced by AI agents/assistants; risk of being cut out of mediation roles	2, 3, 4

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
Funding limitations—Limited revenue-generation mechanisms make it difficult to meet high service expectations or fund AI infrastructure and tool access	1, 2
Maintaining public trust amid unsolvable ethical dilemmas—Even in well-designed AI environments, ethical challenges remain; sustaining public trust is an ongoing concern	1, 3
Privacy and governance gaps—Limited ability to influence AI governance, misinformation, or development in ways that serve academic interests	2, 4
Organizational culture and reactive posture—Tendency toward provincialism, late-dawning awareness of political/corporate dynamics, and resistance to change alongside tradition-holding; evolving quietly vs. structural conservatism	3, 4
Commercial tool risks—Consumer/commercial AI tools may lack the privacy, security, authentication, and depth needed for higher education; faculty may push for use regardless	2
Insufficient AI/technical staff capacity—In-house AI expertise is currently inadequate; computational resources for technical leadership are largely out of reach	4

Theme	Supporting Scenarios
Obsolescence of current job functions—Many existing library roles may disappear; technical services, cataloging, and back-office models risk becoming archaic and perceived as irrelevant	4
Domain expertise definition—Difficulty determining what constitutes domain expertise when AI can generate plausible-seeming information, and how to verify system accuracy	4

Scenario-Specific Strategies

The following strategies use the "A" prefix for "appendix" to distinguish them from the robust strategies in the main report.

A1. Workforce Development & Organizational Culture

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A1.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Hire more AI and technical staff	Create positions for AI specialists, data scientists, and machine language (ML) engineers; develop competitive compensation for technical talent; build career pathways for technical roles; and consider shared positions across institutions to leverage specialized expertise.
A1.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Develop improved position descriptions for AI-relevant skills	Collaborate across libraries on modern position description templates; include AI-relevant skills and competencies; update regularly as AI capabilities evolve; share successful models via professional organizations.
A1.3	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Transform newly vacant positions for strategic purposes	Assess each vacancy for alignment with AI-era needs; redesign positions to add value in a democratized AI environment; consider eliminating outdated roles and creating new ones; build flexibility into all position descriptions.
A1.4	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Transform traditional liaison model for the AI era	Redefine liaison competencies to include AI literacy and support; develop expertise in how AI is used across disciplines; create partnerships with faculty on AI in teaching and research; build capacity to support interdisciplinary AI projects.
A1.5	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Evolve staffing models for an AI-integrated environment	Shift liaison roles from disciplinary expertise to AI-enhanced research partnership; develop new positions focused on AI-tool integration; create flexible job descriptions allowing rapid evolution; hire for technical skills alongside traditional library competencies.
A1.6	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Build a constantly updated, highly skilled workforce	Create a continuous learning culture with dedicated time for skill development; provide access to premium AI tools for staff experimentation; develop internal peer-learning communities; support attendance at diverse conferences; and hire for adaptability and learning capacity.
A1.7	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Shift from an ideal-focused to an action-focused organizational mindset	Embrace scenario planning and futures thinking methodologies; develop more clinical, action-based approaches; channel passion for ideals into effective advocacy and concrete actions; invest in formal change management capacity; create psychological safety for experimentation.
A1.8	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Overcome burnout and AI skepticism in the field	Provide concrete demonstrations of AI value; foster collaborative efforts that show benefits beyond wealthy institutions; set realistic expectations for AI capabilities and limitations; address legitimate concerns while preventing paralysis.
A1.9	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Invest in AI-specialized technical talent	Hire software engineers with AI expertise; create positions for AI/ML engineers at the institutional or consortium level; develop library-aligned nonprofit organizations focused on AI tools; partner with i-Schools to reshape curriculum for AI-ready practitioners.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A1.10	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Upskill existing workforce in AI literacy and partnership	Mandatory AI literacy training for all library personnel; specialized training in prompt engineering, AI evaluation, and ethical AI use; research methods training to position librarians as true research collaborators; change management support.
A1.11	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Rethink liaison and support models	Move beyond the traditional liaison model to AI-integrated research support; evaluate which traditional roles can be eliminated vs. transformed; develop new career pathways that emphasize information expertise in an AI context; and create flexible staffing models.

A2. Collections, Technology & Infrastructure

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A2.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Emphasize distinctive collections and capabilities as a competitive advantage	Highlight special collections, archives, and unique content; develop AI applications specifically for distinctive materials; market rare and unique resources to broader audiences; create partnerships leveraging distinctive library capabilities.
A2.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Build partnerships and support technical infrastructure	Invest in computational infrastructure for library AI applications; create data repositories and curation services for AI research; develop APIs and integration points for AI tools; build technical capacity through hiring and training.
A2.3	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Excel in data curation methods and expertise	Adapt metadata expertise as AI training data curation; develop quality assurance methods for AI datasets; create curated collections tailored to AI applications; provide data cleaning, normalization, and enrichment services.
A2.4	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Influence institutional AI-tool selection	Participate actively in institutional AI governance committees; develop expertise in comparing commercial AI tools for academic contexts; pilot consumer products before institutional adoption; and create evaluation frameworks that emphasize privacy, security, and depth.
A2.5	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Provide access to medium-cost commercial tools and disciplinary LLMs	License tools library that meets quality standards; prioritize tools serving specific disciplinary needs; focus on tools that complement deep research capabilities; negotiate educational pricing that protects user privacy.
A2.6	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Negotiate with commercial players for distinctive collection access	Develop strong negotiating positions by leveraging unique content value; create partnerships that allow libraries to retain control; resist deals that merely extract library content for commercial gain; prioritize terms that serve academic interests.
A2.7	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Leverage distinctive materials not of interest to the commercial sector	Increase digitization of distinctive collections; develop AI applications specifically for archival and special materials; create curated datasets from distinctive collections for research use; use uniqueness as a competitive advantage.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A2.8	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Deploy translation and foreign-language AI tools	Use real-time translation tools to expand collection accessibility; leverage AI to make foreign-language materials more accessible; deploy AI for multilingual discovery and access.
A2.9	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Develop rigorous AI-tool vetting and access program	Develop rigorous vetting criteria for AI tools and platforms; negotiate bulk licensing to ensure equitable campus access; create a"seal of approval" program for AI tools that meet ethical standards; provide access to premium AI capabilities for students from all economic backgrounds.
A2.10	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Develop a principled approach to AI training data	Establish ethical frameworks for content contributions to AI training; negotiate with publishers regarding AI training rights; prioritize open access content for AI applications; create guidelines on which content should/should not be made available for AI training.
A2.11	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Reimagine metadata and organization for an AI-first environment	Transform back-office operations to embrace AI-native information organization; conduct ROI analysis of current cataloging overhead; develop AI-enhanced metadata creation workflows; shift from human-scale to machine-scale information organization.
A2.12	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Rethink library IT infrastructure for AI integration	Comprehensive review of systems and subscriptions for AI compatibility; audit current systems for AI integration potential; identify tools that AI capabilities will directly replace; develop 'kill switch' protocols and air gaps for critical systems.

A3. AI Literacy & Critical Skills

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A3.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Expand AI literacy as a core library mission	Develop a comprehensive AI literacy framework with multiple dimensions; create programming for diverse audiences; integrate AI literacy into all instruction and consultation; build evaluation mechanisms; position the library as a campus hub for AI literacy education.
A3.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Extend AI literacy beyond the campus to the general public	Build reputation as trusted community resource for AI education; develop public programs on AI literacy and responsible use; create partnerships with K-12 schools and community organizations; market expertise beyond traditional research library audiences.
A3.3	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Enhance digital literacy education with a comprehensive AI focus	Integrate AI literacy across all information literacy instruction; teach critical evaluation of AI-generated content; develop prompt engineering skills in students; address misinformation and bias; partner with faculty development offices for educator training.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A3.4	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Offer distinctive educational value through human caring and community	Emphasize what humans do better than AI in educational contexts; create spaces for human collaboration and interdisciplinary interaction; develop peer-learning communities; provide empathetic research support; and position librarians as caring mentors.
A3.5	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Develop a comprehensive, continually updated AI literacy program	Create an adaptive curriculum that keeps pace with the chaotic AI landscape; establish a dedicated team for curriculum development; develop teaching focused on unpacking provenance, identifying bias, and critical evaluation; and integrate AI literacy into existing information literacy programs.
A3.6	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Focus on teaching critical thinking vs. providing definitive answers	Emphasize critical thinking skills for navigating a biased information landscape; develop workshops on identifying AI bias and misinformation; create guides for evaluating AI-generated content; teach prompt engineering; emphasize privacy and data security.
A3.7	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	AI as a partner in literacy and skill building	Integrate AI literacy across all information and data literacy instruction, and how to use AI tools as an integral method; partner with AI to create the content; teach how to converse with and be skeptical of AI as one would a research partner.

A4. Ethics & Values-Based Positioning

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A4.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Establish the library as an ethical authority for AI on campus and beyond	Develop comprehensive ethical frameworks for AI evaluation and use; create publicly accessible evaluations of AI tools that emphasize ethics and privacy; advocate for ethical AI policies at the institutional level; and proactively call out ethical concerns.
A4.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Demonstrate trustworthiness through transparency	Be transparent about library use of AI in operations and services; publish principles guiding library AI adoption; share decision-making processes for AI integration; and acknowledge limitations and uncertainties in AI capabilities.
A4.3	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Create ethical frameworks and best practices for broader adoption	Convene ethics working groups with diverse stakeholders; develop case studies and ethical decision frameworks; create implementation guides for responsible AI use; share frameworks broadly for adoption by others.
A4.4	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Champion access for under-resourced communities and institutions	Advocate for institutional funding dedicated to equitable AI access; partner with community colleges and under-resourced institutions; develop shared infrastructure models distributing costs; actively work to bridge the digital divide in AI access.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A4.5	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Leverage deep values commitment as differentiator	Articulate clear values framework for AI adoption and use; use values to guide difficult decisions about tool adoption; call out biases and ethical issues while still engaging with AI tools; position library as an ethical alternative in a profit-driven landscape.
A4.6	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Maintain focus on social good amid commercial pressures	Regularly assess alignment between activities and core mission; make explicit choices about which commercial partnerships to pursue; develop criteria for when to reject tools/partnerships despite pressure.
A4.7	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Promote human-centered values in AI development	Place librarians and GLAM professionals in AI development roles; encourage library staff to acquire coding/engineering skills; partner with computer science programs to embed library values in AI design; advocate for humans in the loop; create a "kill switch" for critical systems.

A5. Campus Partnership & Institutional Integration

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A5.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Align with the institution's AI initiatives and goals	Participate in university-level AI planning and governance; develop library AI strategies aligned with institutional priorities; demonstrate library value for institutional AI goals; integrate library expertise into campus AI initiatives.
A5.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Support the research enterprise comprehensively	Provide research data management for AI projects; support researchers using AI in their methodologies; facilitate access to AI tools and computational resources; consult on research integrity in AI-mediated research.
A5.3	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Create cross-campus partnerships for AI integration	Partner with IT, academic affairs, student services, and research offices; join institutional AI governance and strategy groups; collaborate on faculty development and pedagogical innovation; share costs and expertise across campus units.
A5.4	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Shape pedagogy and evaluation changes with faculty	Partner with centers for teaching excellence on AI in pedagogy; study changes to learning styles and evaluation techniques; help develop policies addressing AI in student work; research the effectiveness of AI tools for different learning outcomes.
A5.5	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Forge strong relationships with faculty governance	Work through faculty senates to maintain academic rigor; develop policies preserving degree value in AI-enhanced education; advocate for standards that ensure depth over surface learning; collaborate on academic integrity policies for the AI era.
A5.6	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Embed librarians in digital scholarship and AI research groups	Shape development of AI in research and digital collections; embed librarians in research groups developing AI applications; collaborate on digital humanities and computational research projects; partner on grant proposals.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A5.7	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Broaden perspectives by working together in campus partnerships	Embrace collective action and broaden perspectives for future implications by expanding partnerships on campuses and across institutions.
A5.8	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Integrate into the campus research ecosystem	Provide a collaborative, campus-wide research support model that is integrated into the campus research ecosystem.

A6. Collective Action, Advocacy & Partnerships

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A6.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Utilize library collaborative culture for efficiency and effectiveness	Share AI-tool evaluations and implementations across institutions; develop collective AI literacy resources and curricula; coordinate on vendor negotiations and licensing; create shared infrastructure for common needs; pool expertise for specialized projects.
A6.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Amplify voices through professional organizations like ARL	Coordinate advocacy through library associations; develop collective positions on AI policy issues; share best practices and resources via associations; create national and international initiatives for democratized AI.
A6.3	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Work vigorously with local and state governments	Partner with municipal and state governments on AI initiatives; provide expertise for local AI policy development; support community AI literacy and access; position the library as a trusted public resource beyond the institution.
A6.4	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Lead policy and advocacy work, ensuring information access	Participate in AI policy development at all levels of government; advocate for policies that support democratized AI access; develop model policies for AI use in research and education; work with regulators on standards that protect the public interest.
A6.5	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Play a key role in responsible AI frameworks and governance	Develop and promote responsible AI practices; create accountability mechanisms for AI systems; advocate for transparency and explainability requirements; support diverse participation in AI governance.
A6.6	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Support unfettered access to information in AI policy	Resist overreach in AI content restrictions; advocate for fair use and exceptions in AI training contexts; ensure AI systems do not create new barriers to information access; promote open access and open science principles.
A6.7	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Create a stronger cross-institutional vision for AI in academia	Develop shared principles for AI applications serving academic interests; coordinate licensing negotiations for greater bargaining power; share evaluation frameworks and vendor assessments; create collective alternatives to purely commercial solutions.
A6.8	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Engage with provincial/national research and higher education bodies	Participate in national AI in education initiatives; contribute to policy development at the governmental level; share expertise with accrediting and regulatory bodies; and represent library perspectives in national conversations.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A6.9	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Expand collaboration beyond the library sector	Develop standards for appropriate AI use in collaboration with industry; create partnerships ensuring broad access to commercial AI tools; work with government agencies at all levels on AI policy and implementation.
A6.10	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Leverage library consortia for collective power	Coordinate consortium-level licensing of AI tools; share costs of AI expertise across institutions; develop shared platforms for AI-tool vetting and recommendations; create a collective advocacy voice on AI policy issues.
A6.11	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Advance fair use and copyright decisions supporting equity	Help researchers understand and retain their rights in the AI context; develop AI-specific copyright guidance and workshops; create license agreement templates that favor higher education interests; and collaborate across institutions on licensing negotiations.
A6.12	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Advocate for open AI, open access, open source, and open data	Advocate for Open AI, rights and ownership over data and research reports created by AI and humans to be open, and ensure library data is not controlled by a small number of companies

A.7. Innovation & Research

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A.7.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Dare to lead and experiment—create a culture of innovation	Reallocate resources from lower-value to higher-impact activities; de-emphasize some traditional functions to invest in AI initiatives; accept that some stakeholders will be displeased by changes; celebrate experimentation and learning from failures; develop tolerance for ambiguity.
A.7.2	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Leverage the library as an AI pilot tool tester	Enhance the library's role as an early adopter and pilot test AI tools and technologies; provide assessments that align with broader library and university learning, teaching, and research goals.
A.7.3	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Recognize and invest in collective innovation	Formalize and support informal innovation; create innovation labs or pilot programs with dedicated resources; establish rapid-prototyping processes for testing new AI applications; develop mechanisms to scale successful pilots quickly.
A.7.4	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Develop systematic environmental scanning beyond the library domain	Assign staff to monitor specific sectors (tech, education, healthcare, etc.); subscribe to industry intelligence services covering AI; participate in cross-sector convenings; create internal knowledge-sharing mechanisms for scan findings.
A.7.5	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Brand AI research work around critical societal needs	Focus on high-priority domains (healthcare, business development, civic engagement); develop AI applications and services targeted to these areas; use success stories to build library identity; partner with academic departments in these priority areas.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A.7.6	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Advocate for federal investment in public AI research infrastructure	Push for National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR) and similar fundamental research initiatives; join coalitions advocating for public AI research infrastructure; work with professional associations to lobby Congress; document how lack of public AI infrastructure limits academic research.
A.7.7	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Leverage technical expertise for AI solutions	Drive the institution's approach to AI by leveraging local, in-house technical expertise to build new AI tools and license vendor solutions; invest in technology staffing with AI expertise; create opportunities for AI sandboxes and experimentation.

A8. Identity & Value Proposition

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A8.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	Continue to focus on users and community needs	Maintain a user-centered approach in all AI initiatives; involve users in AI service design and evaluation; maintain high-touch personalized services where most valuable; respond to evolving user expectations in an AI-saturated environment.
A8.2	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	Bridge the gap between edutainment and educational attainment	Help users navigate from consumer AI tools to rigorous research methods; develop pathways from popular AI tools to serious scholarship; create completion programs; and offer hybrid learning experiences that combine AI efficiency with human depth.
A8.3	Scenario 3: Laissez-Faire AI	Forward-thinking marketing of library value	Develop clear messaging about the library as a trusted provider in an unregulated market; create a communication strategy reaching beyond current library users; address PR challenges in connecting with those who do not know they need library services.
A8.4	Scenario 4; Autonomous AI	Shift to knowledge-authenticity-centered mission	Establish libraries as hubs for advancing, preserving, enhancing, and promoting human-generated knowledge; develop content-labeling systems to distinguish human vs. AI-generated content; build trust frameworks that emphasize human expertise.
A8.5	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	Champion libraries as critical research infrastructure	Embrace core values within the research enterprise with less attachment to traditional library roles; conduct organizational assessment of which current functions remain essential; identify new roles aligned with AI-enhanced workflows.

A9. Service Models & User Experience

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A9.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	**Highly automate internal library processes**	Leverage AI for efficiency gains in operations; implement AI tools for cataloging, metadata creation, and collection analysis; use AI for routine patron services; automate reporting, assessment, and administrative tasks.
A9.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	**Reinvest automation efficiencies in user-facing services**	Calculate time/cost savings from automation; develop enhanced services leveraging freed resources; increase capacity for consultation, instruction, and partnership; focus on services that require human judgment and relationships.
A9.3	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	**Reinvest AI efficiencies in high-touch human interaction**	Identify processes that can be automated or AI-enhanced; redirect staff time from routine tasks to high-touch services; expand research consultation and embedded librarian programs; create more opportunities for human caring and attention.
A9.4	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	**Develop AI-to-AI interaction capabilities**	Create library AI assistants that can interact with researcher AI assistants; pilot AI-mediated reference services; develop APIs and integration points for standard research AI tools; establish protocols for AI-assisted customer support.
A9.5	Scenario 4: Autonomous AI	**Position the library as the center for RAG experimentation**	Leverage Retrieval-Augmented Generation opportunities with curated, high-quality content; develop specialized LLMs for specific domains; create AI sandboxes with curated library content; establish data preparation and metadata enrichment services for AI applications.

A10. Financial Sustainability & Business Models

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A10.1	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	**Develop diverse funding strategies for expanded AI services**	Make a case to institutions for investment aligned with the AI strategy; explore grant funding for AI literacy initiatives; consider fee-based services for external organizations; develop donor strategies aligned with the AI democratization mission.
A10.2	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	**Negotiate from a position of strength with vendors and publishers**	Develop library-owned AI infrastructure and platforms; create entrepreneurial models where others depend on library resources; leverage library data and content as valuable assets; negotiate proactively rather than reactively.
A10.3	Scenario 1: Democratized & Socially Integrated AI	**Continuously advocate locally for library expertise and value**	Demonstrate expertise in data analysis, ethics, literacy, and licensing; show understanding of end-user needs; quantify library contributions to institutional AI goals; build champions among university leadership and faculty.
A10.4	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	**Create flexible budgeting for AI research and integration**	Transform budget structures to enable rapid response; establish an innovation fund with flexible spending authority; develop ROI frameworks for evaluating AI investments; shift from purchase-based to license-and-subscription models.

#	Scenario	Strategy Title	Description / Tactics
A10.5	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	**Develop revenue-generating partnerships leveraging library content**	Partner with educational entertainment platforms; develop competing, ethical alternatives to commercial services; license specialized content for AI training with appropriate protections; create certificate offerings; position the library as a brokering agent.
A10.6	Scenario 2: Consumer-Oriented AI	**Break the cycle of dependence on traditional vendors**	Leverage library data and content as valuable commodities; develop library-owned infrastructure and platforms; create new business models for library services; pool resources across institutions for competitive offerings.

Strategic Implications Workshop, Futurescape Libraries: Mapping Possibilities for Tomorrow's Information Hubs

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Center
555 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC, 20001

Agenda

Saturday 7 December, 2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Time	Session
2.00pm	Introductions/orientation
2.10pm	Collective sense-making—groups—icebreaker
2.30pm	What we see today Drivers and signals of change—groups
3.30pm	What we anticipate in five years Forecasting—groups
4.15pm	What we imagine in ten years Developing our preferred future—groups and individual

Sunday 8 December, 8:30 a.m. –4:00 p.m.

Time	Session
9.00am	Preliminary surfacing

Time	Session
	Group discussion on unknowns, possibilities, provocations
10.00am	Review of ARL/CNI scenarios
10.30am	Break
10.45am	Scenario-based development of options and strategies Group work including SWOT analysis and investment portfolio
12.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	Mapping impacts and difficulties Groups to consider what's most worth doing, and how much effort would be involved.
2.15pm	Stakeholder mapping Groups consider implications for their users/stakeholders
3.00pm	Break
3.15pm	Five bold steps Group exercise to consider immediate priorities
4.00pm	CLOSE

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AI Tools Used in the Construction of this Report

- *Claude Sonnet (versions 4.5 and 4.6)* for initial summaries of workshop materials for review and editing, initial data table generation and formatting for scenario-specific strategies, initial drafts of the executive summary and conclusion, and an editorial and copyediting review of the final draft.
- *Grammarly AI* for clarity and grammar
- *ChatGPT 5.2* for alternative phrasing suggestions
- *NotebookLM* (Gemini) for infographics