

Woonsocket Harris Public Library Use of Artificial Intelligence Policy

The Woonsocket Harris Public Library seeks to establish clear guidelines for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for library business. AI technologies have the potential to enhance services, streamline operations, and improve user experience. However, they also present ethical, privacy, and security concerns that must be addressed responsibly. This policy outlines the principles and procedures governing the use of AI by library staff to ensure its ethical and effective implementation. The use of any AI or system will follow the guidelines and already established policies of the Woonsocket Harris Public Library. All AI applications and its uses will comply with current laws and regulations relevant to library operations at both state and federal levels.

Ethical Principles

1. **Privacy Protection:** Protecting patron privacy is paramount. AI systems must adhere to all applicable privacy laws and regulations. Data collection and usage must be transparent, and patron consent must be obtained whenever personal data is involved.
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** The library staff should understand how AI systems work and their potential impacts on patrons. Staff members are accountable for the outcomes of their AI use.
3. **Equity and Accessibility:** AI applications deployed in the library must prioritize equity and accessibility, ensuring that all patrons have equal access to services and resources regardless of their background or abilities. Additionally, efforts should be made to identify and mitigate bias in AI systems to ensure fair and unbiased service delivery. AI provides text-to-speech capabilities and other assistive features to help patrons with disabilities access library materials and services more easily.

Assessment and Approval

Prior to implementing any AI technology, library staff must conduct a thorough assessment of its ethical implications, privacy considerations, and potential impacts on patrons. Approval from the library administration is required before proceeding with the implementation for any new application of AI technology to library services.

Training

Staff members utilizing AI systems must undergo appropriate training on ethical AI practices, privacy protection, and bias mitigation before proceeding. Staff may use AI to create personalized learning plans for patrons, helping them develop skills in areas such as literacy, technology, and research.

Permissible Uses of AI

1. Information Retrieval: AI technologies may be used to assist patrons in retrieving information from library catalogs, databases, and digital collections, improving search accuracy and efficiency and freeing up librarian time to focus on higher-value patron services.
2. User Assistance and Support: AI-powered chatbots or virtual assistants may be deployed to provide patrons with assistance and support, answering common queries and directing patrons to appropriate resources.
3. Content Recommendation: AI algorithms may be employed to personalize content recommendations for patrons based on their preferences, enhancing the user experience by suggesting new books and authors.
4. Communication: Staff may use AI to assist with the creation of content for informational or marketing purposes. All such content must be reviewed for accuracy and reliability and comply with the library's brand and marketing guidelines. Staff are expected to utilize AI tools with integrity, honesty, and respect for individual rights and privacy. Staff should include proper attribution of AI-generated work, proper vetting of the AI tool's output, and utilize mechanisms for fact-checking and quality assurance with awareness of copyright considerations.
5. Data Analysis: AI tools may be utilized to analyze library usage data, such as circulation statistics and patron demographics, to inform decision-making and improve services. AI uses predictive analytics to forecast demand, identify outdated materials, and optimize the collection to better meet user needs.
6. Enhance Digital Archives: Algorithms can digitize and preserve fragile documents, ensuring their long-term accessibility.

Prohibited Uses of AI

1. Surveillance: AI technologies shall not be used for surveillance purposes within the library premises, including facial recognition or tracking patron behavior without their explicit consent.
2. Discriminatory Practices: AI systems shall not be used to discriminate against patrons based on factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.
3. Unauthorized Data Collection: Any AI system that collects patron data must adhere to the library's data protection policies. Data must be securely stored, and access should be restricted to authorized personnel only. AI applications shall not collect patron data without explicit consent, and such data shall not be used for purposes other than those specified at the time of collection.