The voice of Further Education and Sixth Form College Libraries and Learning Resource Services

CoLRiC

Council for Learning Resources in Colleges

IMPACT

Issue #2 January 2024

Inside this issue

Editorial

Welcome to the winter edition of CoLRiC Impact, our second issue for the 2023/2024 academic year. We'd like to wish you all a peaceful, healthy and successful new year and look forward to working with you over the next twelve months.

Many of the articles are interlinked: the impact of artificial intelligence on education and the huge importance of the wider skills agenda around literacy, numeracy, digital savvy and employability, for example.

Our MediaWatch feature provides a compelling overview of news stories, research projects and developments across the education and library sectors that we hope is of interest and relevance to you all. We're keen to initiate lively debate on the CoLRiC discussion forum and encourage you to suggest topics for future publications and online lunchtime seminars.

2023, our 30th anniversary year, was a remarkable success, with three bumper issues of CoLRiC Impact and five popular free member seminars. In late November 2023, CoLRiC hosted 'The Reading Agency - Reading is Power.' The presenters were Emma Braithwaite, The Reading Agency's Head of Skills and Engagement and Kelly Baker, The Reading Agency's Programme Officer for Adult Reading. They provided an overview of the reach and impact of the Agency's work, highlighting its provision for reading and wellbeing support for young people and adults. The delegate discussions were impressive, generating questions and comments on the power of reading and strategies for engaging students, building relationships and helping to bolster confidence. We're publishing excerpts from the session discussions in this issue and invite you to share your thoughts with us.

In October 2023 Sue Attewell, Head of AI and co-design at Jisc's National Centre for AI, presented a seminar: 'Artificial Intelligence: the impact on education.' She has generously contributed further advice on generative AI tools and how to use them in this issue.

Phil Bradley, Internet consultant, trainer and speaker, has also chosen has favourite AI tools based on 'a year's worth of experience, testing and playing.' He provides practical advice and tips to help get you started on your AI journey, or to improve your productivity and creativity if you've already started on the road to an AI-enhanced future.

In 'Libraries Unwired' we report back on a recent CILIP digital transformation event. Many of the themes that arose during the day have relevance to the FE sector: AI, the future of library tech, open source solutions, digital rights, social media, gamification, good data management and agile training and CPD to embrace them all. We're keen to hear your views on all of these issues.

> **'I'm delighted to see CoLRiC's development and expansion. It's such a positive organisation and has moved on enormously'**
> **Jeff Cooper, CoLRiC founder**

Kathryn Ashby - Library and Digital Resources Manager, Hills Road Sixth Form College - was delighted when her team received a Highly Commended trophy for the 2023 CoLRiC Innovative Practice award. She reflects on their successful team project 'Enhancing library engagement: a successful outreach initiative.'

> 'As a result of the Covid pandemic and remote learning, our library saw a significant decline in the use of both print and digital resources. As a more normal education delivery resumed, we wanted to re-engage students with the resources and services on offer and help them to see the value of them.'

Kathryn articulates the approaches taken to revive a flagging student cohort and provides invaluable lessons learned that you can all integrate into your digital literacy and information skills programmes.

We have lots of news, a call to volunteer to join the CoLRiC team alongside informative contributions from our valued sponsors who unveil new products, developments and services.

The CoLRiC 30th anniversary year ended on a high note with an uplifting message from our founder Jeff Cooper. 'I'm delighted to see CoLRiC's development and expansion. It's such a positive organisation and has moved on enormously.'

Thanks for your support over 2023, and here's to a brighter new year.

CoLRiC News

The CoLRiC team would like to wish you all the best for 2024 and we look forward to working with you over the next twelve months.

2023 had a special relevance as we celebrated our 30th anniversary, and what a year it turned out to be! We hosted five of our popular online lunchtime seminars and published three bumper issues of CoLRiC Impact.

> 'I read CoLRiC Impact cover to cover and the last edition was thought provoking and really interesting.'

> 'The CoLRiC community has been a great source of ideas and support.'

All our seminars were recorded and are available to members on CoLRiC's unlisted YouTube channel, listed here with hyperlinks for your convenience. The feedback has been enthusiastic and positive, and we look forward to scheduling many more.

- ➤ [Embedding catch-up provision in teaching and learning](#) - the presenter was Mirna Peach, Head of Library Services, Leyton Sixth Form College

- ➤ [Knowing our place: reflections on thirty (ish) years with FE and libraries](#) - the presenter was Lis Parcell, Subject Specialist: teaching, learning and assessment and FE Library/LRC community facilitator at Jisc

- ➤ [Cyber security: safeguarding our colleges from cyber threats is a matter of education](#) - the presenter was Sharon Archer, Head of Adult Education at Kirklees College

- ➤ [Artificial Intelligence: the impact on education](#) - the presenter was Sue Attewell, Head of AI and Codesign at Jisc

- ➤ [The Reading Agency: Reading is Power](#) - the presenters were Emma Braithwaite, The Reading Agency's Head of Skills and Engagement and Kelly Baker, The Reading Agency's Programme Officer for Adult Reading.

Do you want to suggest a topic?

We'd love to hear your ideas for future seminars. We want to ensure that the programme is relevant to your needs, so please email us with any ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.

Suggestions for future seminars include:

- ➤ Free, open access learning resources versus subscription content: pros and cons

- ➤ Financial planning and budgetary management to inform library resource acquisition

- ➤ Strategies for numeracy support.

Reading is Power – a call for your tips and suggestions

In late November 2023, CoLRiC hosted 'The Reading Agency - Reading is Power' with Emma and Kelly. The seminar provided an overview of the reach and impact of The Reading Agency's work, highlighting its provision for reading and wellbeing support for young people and adults. It generated considerable delegate debate, questions and comments. The session initiated a partnership between CoLRiC and the Agency which we look forward to building. We'd love to hear more from you all on suggestions for supporting the wider literacy agenda this year and beyond. The feedback on the seminar was brilliant.

'Thank you very much for an excellent, insightful session.'

'Thank you very much, this has been really interesting.'

'A brilliant session! Thanks to all involved.'

'Thanks so much everyone this has been really helpful. So grateful to attend.'

There was discussion on the power of reading and its impact on writing; that it doesn't matter what you read - just as long as you read. Maintaining a dialogue with students about reading and reading preferences also builds relationships and help to bolster confidence. Gender specific challenges were raised, alongside strategies for engaging students. Print, e-books and audio books. A classic novel, comic or a recipe. They all have a part to play in the wider literacy landscape.

Here are some examples of chats and questions raised during the event:

'We find the Quick Reads are great for our ESOL and English students. Could there possibly be more large print editions as some of our learners often ask for them?'

'The Reading Agency has lovely pages featuring the covers of the titles, but is there a page which has all the ISBNs listed? As a college library it would be easier to search the titles by using a list of ISBNs rather than looking title by title. I apologise if there is one and I have missed it.'

'Would like to see dyslexia friendly Quick Reads.'

'I find a lot of first-time and ESOL writers find free creative platforms like Wattpad a great way to improve their reading/writing skills and meet beta readers.'

'Breaking down barriers is important, just because someone thinks fanfiction or short-form stories aren't as "good" as long form classics shouldn't put people off reading them. It all builds confidence!'

'Do you think there may be too much emphasis on reading "a book"? Is there sometimes a stigma attached to audiobooks and graphic novels?'

'All types of reading materials and audio books are great. I sometimes "share" something with a student - could be a poem related to their course or an article written by one of their lecturers or a chapter/section from a book. It can be quite hard work but, even if they don't end up reading something, the conversation has been had. I think nothing is off-limits and I have found that most students appreciate someone actually talking to them and asking about their interests. A lot of groundwork often needs to happen to develop confidence before many will even take up a text themselves.'

'A lot of students comment on how scary a "book" is and I think they see a book as the only option for reading, but we often point out that reading a comic, magazine, or a recipe or football results is still classed as reading.'

'At our college we have a big gap in the usage figures for boys and girls and we are trying to change this and get more of our male students to read.'

'I've found some engagement with young male readers with reading celebrity style non-fiction (like some of our sports icons books), and more "mature" style graphic novels. We have so much more to choose from now than just Superman strips and Garfield. Because the topics are mature or directly related to an interest (e.g. football) it can get them started.'

'I think (auto)biographies get overlooked.'

'There's also the option of having subtitles on TV programmes, films etc. My daughter has picked up the context of some quite advanced vocabulary through following subtitles.'

'Good quality webcomics are also an option these days. And interactive flash-style comics. There are dedicated comic and manga providers that make the panels screen-friendly and can provide narration.'

'Rick Riordan put a full disclaimer on his website saying how terrible the movies of his books are. Like the movie? Read the book, it's even better! Hate the movie? Read the book, it's probably better!'

'I think a lot of people forget that they are reading articles via social media etc every day.'

'A lot of the students at our college say they just don't have time to do reading for "relaxing" anymore - there is so much pressure on their studies.'

CoLRiC Awards 2023

In April 2023 we announced the call for nominations for our annual national awards. As part of our celebratory 30th anniversary celebrations we wanted to showcase 'creativity, value and impact' with submissions that demonstrated the quality, excellence and organisational impact of library and learning resource service provision on the teaching, learning and student experience. All nominations were reviewed, scored and shortlisted by a judging panel comprising an external library and information services expert and members of CoLRiC's Executive Committee.

For the first time in CoLRiC's history there was a double award win for Bradford College's Learning Resources Team. The winner of its prestigious Jeff Cooper Inspirational Information Professional of the Year Award for 2023 was Lakshmi Banner, Library Services Team Leader at Bradford College. The winner of the Innovative Practice Award for 2023 was Bradford College Library for its 'The Art of Problem Solving' initiative, designed to develop skills to demystify maths and build resilience.

Both awards were presented during a staff award ceremony at Christmas ('Winter Conference') so the whole college saw the library team receive the accolades. Tim Lupton (Head of Department for Learning Development and Innovation, including libraries) was present with Sarah Cooper, Director of People Services.

Lakshmi Banner of Bradford College celebrates winning the 2023 CoLRiC Jeff Cooper Award. She is pictured with Tim Lupton (Head of Department for Learning Development and Innovation) – including libraries, and Sarah Cooper, Director of People Services.

In recognition of its 'Library Re-engagement' initiative reconnecting students with the value and power of the library and its physical and digital resources, Hills Road Sixth Form College was also awarded Highly Commended for the Innovative Practice Award, 2023 and announced the news with well-deserved enthusiasm on their webpages.

Congratulations once again to everybody involved.

It's time to prepare to submit nominations for 2024!

Partnerships and dialogue with students, teaching and support staff are essential to develop and deliver relevant, flexible and dynamic student services. We want to encourage you all to showcase your creativity, enthusiasm and proactivity in the delivery of library and learning resource services by starting to prepare your award nominations for 2024!

Trending topics on CoLRiC's discussion forum

Members continue to be active on the forum. It's a great place to ask a question, elicit feedback, share ideas or concerns or simply to reach out to your peers.

Recent topics provide a snapshot of your everyday priorities, considerations and concerns:

➢ Audio book platforms

➢ Support for 14–15-year-old cohorts

➢ FAQ handouts for students

➢ E-books and e-journals

➢ Academic skills support.

Don't forget that you can use the CoLRiC discussion forum to publish job vacancies. It can be an invaluable tool to support your HR and recruitment activities.

It's hosted by JiscMail. To access it you must register for an account with them. Registration is free and employees at any member College can join and are advised to use their work - *ac.uk* - email address.

Do we have all your recommended local email contacts?

We're keen to ensure that we engage with members on a regular basis and are continually updating our contact database. Are there additional colleagues that you'd like us to add to our records? A deputy head of service, or a campus manager? Please let us know.

Access to member only content on the CoLRiC website

Everybody in your team will require a personal CoLRiC password to access content, most notably current and previous issues of our e-newsletter CoLRiC Impact and the document repository. If you have not received an email from us inviting you to create your own password, then please email us for further advice and information. We will create an account for you and email you with further instructions.

CoLRiC Executive Committee is recruiting new members and volunteers

Exciting opportunities have arisen for you or your colleagues to contribute to the future of CoLRiC.

CoLRiC is keen to expand its Executive Committee (EC) as its resource and service portfolio develops to embrace an increasingly diverse and challenging Further Education/ Sixth Form College environment. We are looking for committee colleagues and volunteers keen to contribute strategically and operationally in specific EC roles or to lead or support projects on a task finish basis.

This is a major professional development opportunity to:

➢ Support CoLRiC's senior committee officers, shadowing and learning from our Chair and Treasurer, for example

➢ Contribute to the strategic and operational planning of FE and SFC library and learning resource services

➢ Boost your CV

➢ Network with and learn from colleagues from a diverse range of backgrounds and organisations

➢ Manage or contribute to projects

➢ Raise your professional profile and that of your organisation across the national library and learning resource community

➢ Work collaboratively with colleagues committed to the development of quality assurance standards, championing value, impact, exemplary practice and innovation.

CoLRiC members from any background - from senior staff or early career professionals keen for the development opportunities that committee working can offer – are encouraged to apply.

The EC works collaboratively, agreeing responsibilities, roles and tasks, working in teams to deliver agreed targets and outcomes. It is supported by an administration team and meets via Zoom approximately three/four times a year.

Benefits of CoLRiC EC membership and volunteering

If you don't want to commit to a formal committee role, we would be delighted to co-opt information professionals who might want to contribute to some of our current projects without necessarily attending formal EC meetings.

These include:

- Creative input into our CPD/online seminar programme, commissioning speakers and topics of interest to the membership

- Digital service development, including web content creation and management using the WordPress platform. The CoLRiC website is our key public facing resource for publicity and member recruitment

- Writing, proof reading and editing publications including our e-newsletter CoLRiC Impact, press releases and reports

- Repository management and development, helping shape a key member resource and collection of exemplar documents and resources shared by the community

- Peer Accreditation Scheme: PAS is CoLRiC's flagship service, helping evidence value and impact through rigorous self-assessment and quality assurance. This role would be ideal for a senior manager with a strategic focus

- Social media: contribute content and ideas to support the expansion and development of our social media portfolio.

Interested? Here's what to do next. Please contact us with an expression of interest.

Email: colric@colric.org.uk Tel: 07879 667347. A member of the CoLRiC Executive Committee will contact you to discuss further.

Postscript

The CoLRiC 30th anniversary year ended on a high note with a message from our founder Jeff Cooper. We've reproduced it here. Thanks for your support over 2023, and here's to a peaceful, brighter new year.

'I'm astonished at the amazing projects that CoLRiC has become involved in, and really delighted to see its development and expansion. It's such a positive organisation and has moved on enormously (I'm pleased to see that AI is accepted as one of the most important ways forward). It's wonderful to see how CoLRiC has developed from a "simple" pressure group to an organisation that is central to the development of learning resources services. A 40-page newsletter, full of very interesting articles and information, is extraordinary. I hope its future is secure, and that college administrators and principals see its importance.'

Celebrating
1993 - 2023
30 Years
CoLRiC
Council for Learning Resources in Colleges

#AmplifyFE: Jisc helps college staff unlock the power of AI to improve the learner experience

Sue Attewell, Head of AI and Co-design, Jisc's National Centre for AI

In October 2023 Sue Attewell, Head of AI and co-design at Jisc's National Centre for AI, presented one of our popular lunchtime member seminars: 'Artificial Intelligence: the impact on education.' You can catch up with the video on CoLRiC's unlisted YouTube channel here.

Sue has generously contributed further advice on generative AI tools and how to use them, originally published on the AmplifyFE blog. We are reproducing her post here, with her kind permission .

The Amplify FE community works to connect and amplify communities of practice for digital learning, teaching and assessment in vocational education. It's open to librarians and learning resource practitioners, teachers, lecturers, learning technologists, and other staff working in further education who are interested in AmplifyFE's aims.

These days, college staff face a new challenge: embrace AI and its potential to improve efficiency or ignore it and risk being left behind.

Education is one of the fastest growing areas when it comes to the use of AI, but many teachers are still understandably anxious about adopting the technology. Keeping up with its rapid advances is difficult, and balancing its use with academic integrity is increasingly complex.

Image Credit: Cash Macanaya @unsplash.com
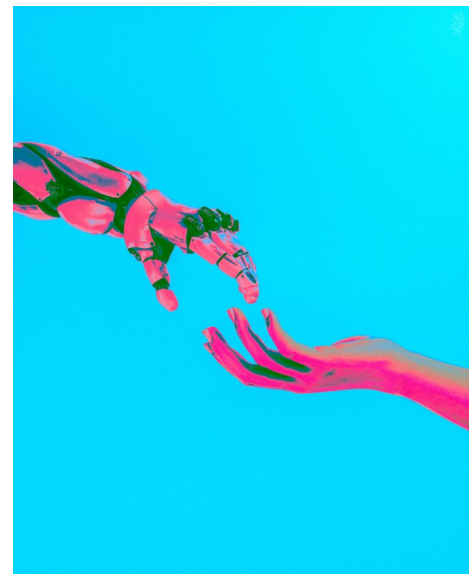
Jisc's national centre for AI can help

Since it was set up in 2021, Jisc's National Centre for AI in tertiary education (NCAI) has been helping members unlock the power of AI in order to deliver a fantastic educational experience to every learner.

We believe that giving college staff a basic understanding of how it works enables them to lean into the technology with confidence and use it to their best advantage.

Not all FE providers are at the same place on their journey to understanding and adopting AI-based tools however, so the first priority must be to address the knowledge gaps. As AI experts, my team and I are uniquely placed to work together with colleges to help them understand and leverage the benefits of AI as part of wider digital strategies.

AI will transform teaching and learning

The reality is that we will be using AI in further education: avoiding it is impossible and banning its use is not an option, since its capabilities are already built into software that we all use every day.

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT certainly have a place in further education. Teaching is full of tasks that lend themselves to automation – and that's what AI does best. Creating learning materials, designing courses, assisting with lesson planning: AI tools can do all these things quickly and without friction.

They can provide new ways to learn – for example, by suggesting ideas on how to start a piece of writing – and are often good at simplifying complex text. And teaching learners how to fact-check what they get out of them is always a valuable exercise.

They can also help assess how students are learning, suggest triggers to incentivise learners, and identify individuals who might be struggling. In addition, they have a vital role to play in both making learning more accessible for those with disabilities and addressing digital poverty.

Leaning into AI technology

Jisc's NCAI provides a range of resources – reports and primers, online courses, webinars and pilot projects – to give a solid grounding to colleges considering their approach to AI.

A good starting point is Jisc's Generative AI primer which is updated quarterly to provide the very latest information on generative AI technology and tools, and their implications for education.

Jisc's AI maturity model makes it easier for institutions to understand where they are, where they want to get to, and what sort of activities might be needed in order to progress towards effective AI implementation.

The newly published AI in tertiary education 2023 report gives an overview of what AI can do for member organisations, where it can add the most value, and what to consider in order to implement it ethically, while A pathway towards responsible, ethical AI is designed to help navigate these complex issues with confidence. Jisc also provides a free mini MOOC to help members explore AI and ethics.

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In addition, the NCAI regularly runs pilots with colleges, enabling staff to test the efficacy of new tools like TeacherMatic and AnyWyse while increasing their own familiarity with generative AI.

#AMPLIFYFE

Leveraging the power of the AI community

Empowering communities is a vital strand of the Jisc strategy for 2022-25, and Jisc's NCAI has set up an AI community group where members can share best practice, learn more about AI and its uses in education, and connect with each other to find common solutions to shared problems. Facilitated by Jisc, the community is open to all members who are interested in the applications of AI in education.

FE practitioners can get involved by:

➢ Joining Jisc's AI community and coming along to our monthly community sessions

➢ Joining our JiscMail forum to engage with the NCAI, receive updates on publications and events, keep in touch with the community and share your experiences around the uses of AI

➢ Taking one of our AI training courses

➢ Voting in Jisc's community champion programme.

Laying the right foundations for AI use

Once the right foundations have been laid, AI can start delivering on its promise to transform the teaching and learning experience by alleviating the burden of administrative tasks for staff and providing personalised learning for students.

And FE colleges will be ready to take advantage of new AI applications as they emerge – which they will undoubtedly do.

Editorial note

Recent posts on the AI forum include some additional resources of interest.

Debunking Myths and Harnessing Solutions: Navigating generative AI in Education – 'There's a lot of myths, misconceptions, and misunderstandings around generative AI. In this blog post, we will aim to debunk some of the common myths surrounding generative AI in education, looking into the difficulties and restrictions. '

How to Guide: GPTs – 'Following on from OpenAIs latest announcement introducing GPTS, custom versions of ChatGPT that allow you to combine skills, instructions, and knowledge to perform most tasks that you could want, within the limitations of a large language model. Our blog talks you through the process.'

The AI avalanche – and top tips to survive it
Phil Bradley, Internet consultant, trainer and speaker

It's now been a little over a year since ChatGPT 3.5 was unleashed on a largely unsuspecting world. In 2023 the number of tools and apps that utilise AI has increased dramatically. I use a web directory called Futurepedia to keep up to date with all the new tools that are being announced. A year ago, this tool listed about 200 tools that were either AI based, or which had AI as a major component in them. Today there are over 5,000 tools in over 50 different categories.

You can view them all on Futurepedia. In 2023 I spent a lot of time exploring new tools, revisiting older ones to review new updates and enhancements, and teaching people how best to use them. In this article I have chosen my favourite tools based on a year's worth of experience, testing and playing.

Chatbots

A chatbot is an artificial intelligence (AI) program designed to simulate human conversation. It uses natural language processing (NLP) to understand and respond to user queries in a conversational manner. Chatbots can be used for various purposes, including customer service, information retrieval, and entertainment. Some of the ones that you will in all likelihood have heard of are ChatGPT, Claude and Bard. These are AI assistants that use chatbot technology to provide users with information and assistance. ChatGPT is an AI assistant developed by OpenAI that uses GPT architecture to generate responses that are similar to human-like conversations. Claude, developed by Anthropic, is an AI assistant that uses a unique 'constitution' to ensure ethical behaviour and self-improvement. Bard, developed by Google, is an AI assistant that offers built-in web browsing and integration with Google Suite.

For information professionals, chatbots can be used to provide quick and efficient access to information. They can be used to answer frequently asked questions, provide recommendations, and assist with research. Chatbots can also be used to automate routine tasks, freeing up time for information professionals to focus on more complex tasks.

You should try out all three of the products mentioned – while they all work in similar ways, they have their own advantages and disadvantages. If I had to suggest one of the three above the others, I would go for ChatGPT – and specifically the professional version at a cost of approximately £20 per month. That gets you instant always-on access and the ability to use the plugin technology which means you can use the chatbot in conjunction with other tools to search the live internet, search academic databases, create images, summarise and interrogate documents and more. If you are going to be using AI a lot in your job, paying for the extra functionality is just an obvious step to take.

AI based search

There are now dozens of search engines that use AI to give you results. They will search the live web and will provide you with a summary answer to your query, rather than just a list of URLs that you have to manually visit yourself. The straightforward suggestion here is to use Bing in the guise of the Microsoft Copilot. It's completely free, utilises OpenAI (which produced ChatGPT) and works in conjunction with Microsoft's Bing search engine. It's by far and away the easiest way to dip your toe into the water of AI search.

Content creation

You can use AI tools to create content for you – the chatbots will do this of course, but you might want to look at a variety of different products as well. If you want to produce an academic article then Academic Help is a good place to start. There's a freemium version to start you off. Obviously, I wouldn't suggest that you simply take anything that it produces and just use it – but it's a good place to begin a first draft.

If you're looking for a tool to create presentations my advice would be to start with Gamma because this produces really attractive presentations which can be edited within the app, you can change the design and theme, add your own content or images and more. Alternatively, just tell the tool what you want to create a presentation on, and it will do the job in a few seconds – literally.

Summarising tools

If you routinely have to go through long documents to get a specific piece of information you could just use ChatGPT and upload the document, or you could use a tool like Humata. You can upload a pdf document (less than 20 pages) and ask it to summarise the paper in say 50 or 200 words or you can ask it specific questions about the content and get instant answers.

Alternatively, if you're going to be spending time watching a long YouTube video you could utilise a tool such as You-TLDR which can do that for you. There are limitations with the free version but for less than $10 a month you can generate summaries for any YouTube video up to five hours long and generate 100 hours of summaries every month.

Video creation

If you want to create videos you've needed a particular set of skills in the past, but this is really not necessary today. You can use a tool like Synthesia to create your avatar and Eleven Labs to create a voice – or adapt your own. You could also use Heygen and upload your own picture and get it to animate it, with your own voice or another of your choosing.

Furthermore, you can use the same tool to translate your videos into other languages, and it will make a fair attempt at using your own voice and lip synching into the language you've chosen.

Image creation

If you want to create images you have an almost limitless selection of tools. I use DALL-E as provided by ChatGPT for a lot of my images, but you could use the Microsoft Designer or another favourite of mine, NightCafe.

Image created by DALL-E using ChatGPT 4

Summary

This doesn't even begin to give you an overview of what tools are available, so I'd encourage you to explore for yourself – Futurepedia as previously mentioned is going to be a really good place to start. Just try out as many tools as you can, have fun and explore. Some of them are priced, others give you freemium options and others again are entirely free. The more you explore, the better you will be positioned to advise colleagues in your organisation and be the go-to person for AI, which is never a bad thing.
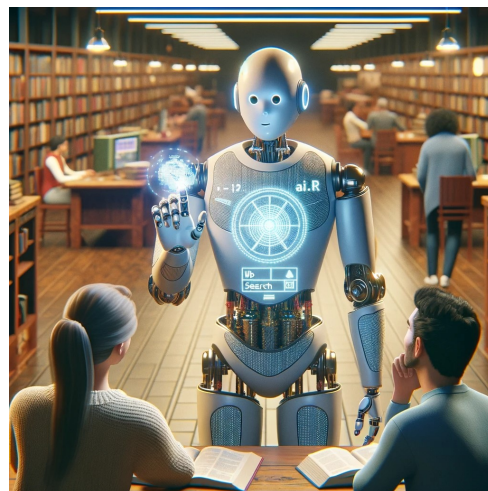
Phil Bradley is an internet and AI expert - and a librarian. He is a past President of CILIP. His focus is on harnessing the potential of AI and the internet to enhance library services and user experiences.

Leading industry experts LapSafe® at Bett 2024

Bett UK is the world's biggest EdTech event, held annually at the international exhibition and convention centre, ExCel London. Each year thousands of educators and innovators join forces to network, share ideas, and discover new products.

The latest event occurred between the 24th – 26th of January 2024, where LapSafe®, the UK's leading experts in storage and charging solutions and self-service Smart Lockers, attended for its 24th year.

LapSafe® showcased its award-winning range of storage and charging solutions; consisting of self-service smart lockers, trolleys, and cabinets, which are designed to loan fully charged devices or assets to students 24/7 without staff interaction, as well as supporting students who opt to 'bring your own device' (BYOD).

Investments in education technology are one of the hottest topics within the sector as it has been proven that providing flexible learning with accessible devices can significantly enhance student learning and help bridge the digital divide. With thousands of schools and academies already using LapSafe®'s storage and charging solutions, LapSafe® is proud to be the preferred supplier of Smart Lockers within the education sector; to date over 80% of UK universities are using its Diplomat™ Pro Smart Lockers, with UK colleges closely following behind.

Denise Crouch, Head of Marketing at LapSafe® said,

> *'We are always excited to showcase our Smart Locker range at the show and we never stay still. The show is an opportunity to speak to our existing customers as well as meet potential future customers. Gaining feedback and knowledge in this way helps us to develop our products ensuring that they continue to work well within the education sector to make everyday life easier in the classroom.'*

At the heart of LapSafe®'s Smart Locker range, sits ONARKEN® their innovative cloud-based platform that is highly reliable, secure, and fully customisable to ensure workflows meet the needs of its customers. ONARKEN® can offer an array of self-service and smart solutions to suit individual requirements, such as loaning assets, drop off and collect, IT break/fix, and hot lockers.

For a seamless launch into campuses, ONARKEN® also boasts full integration with various software platforms, including Freshservice®, Smarthub, Paxton, and many more.

For businesses that don't require smart lockers, LapSafe® have an extensive range of storage and charging solutions from mobile trolleys and desk units to wall cabinets and standalone lockers. A wide variety of locking solutions are available from simple keyed locks to sophisticated intelligent electronic locks.

'Every year we like to bring something new to the show and this year is no exception. We will be pleased to launch our "Envoy" Rapid Deployment Locker; up to thirty-two devices can be rapidly deployed by simply scanning an ID card at the universal reader. MIFARE®, barcode and QR code are all supported in one easy-to-use reader. When authorised, a locker bay will open, and inside a charged device will be deployed. Designed to make life easier for staff to manage and offers students easy access to fully charged devices.' - Denise Crouch, Head of Marketing at LapSafe®.

For more information about Bett UK: bettshow.com

Find out more about LapSafe®: www.LapSafe.com

New Smart Locker elevating education technology

Industry-leading experts in Smart Lockers and Storage and Charging Solutions, LapSafe® launches a new Smart Locker

As the demand for easily accessible devices continues to be a hot topic within the education sector, LapSafe®'s newest Smart Locker, Envoy™, is designed to rapidly deploy devices without staff interaction, which in return saves time in the classroom.

We're in a digital world, that requires our educational facilities to keep up with technology as it continuously evolves. It has been proven that providing students with accessible devices can significantly enhance learning and help bridge the digital divide, with that said, the process needs to be seamless and fast in order not to compromise learning time. The new Envoy® Smart Locker is designed to support just that.

Up to 32 charged devices can each be rapidly deployed by scanning an ID at the easy-to-use reader. Once authorised, a locker bay will open to a charged device ready for use. When the user has finished with the device, they simply place it back on charge in the Smart Locker, ready for the next user. This fast, self-service process is efficient and pragmatic.

Sales and Marketing Manager, Denise Crouch said, '*We wanted to design a Smart Locker that provides a perfect entry into the world of self-service for IT equipment. The Envoy™ is built on the foundation of our larger, more advanced Smart Locker, Diplomat™ Pro. However, the Envoy is a more cost-effective solution for entities which do not require all the intelligent features that our Diplomat™ Pro holds.*'

Included in the new Envoy™ Smart Locker is ONARKEN®, a cloud-based management software, designed to support LapSafe®'s Smart Locker range; this software allows Envoy™ to provide full audit trails and usage reporting, helping organisations make more informed decisions on device management.

LapSafe®'s Smart Lockers can now be found in over 80% of UK universities, with UK colleges closely following behind. With those impressive statistics supporting Envoy®, there will certainly be a buzz around the new Smart Locker.

LapSafe® launched Envoy® and showcased its full range at Bett 2024, the world's biggest EdTech event, at ExCel London on 24th – 26th January 2024.

LapSafe®'s products are designed in-house, and they are proud to manufacture in Britain as well as support local businesses.

VLeBooks Collections
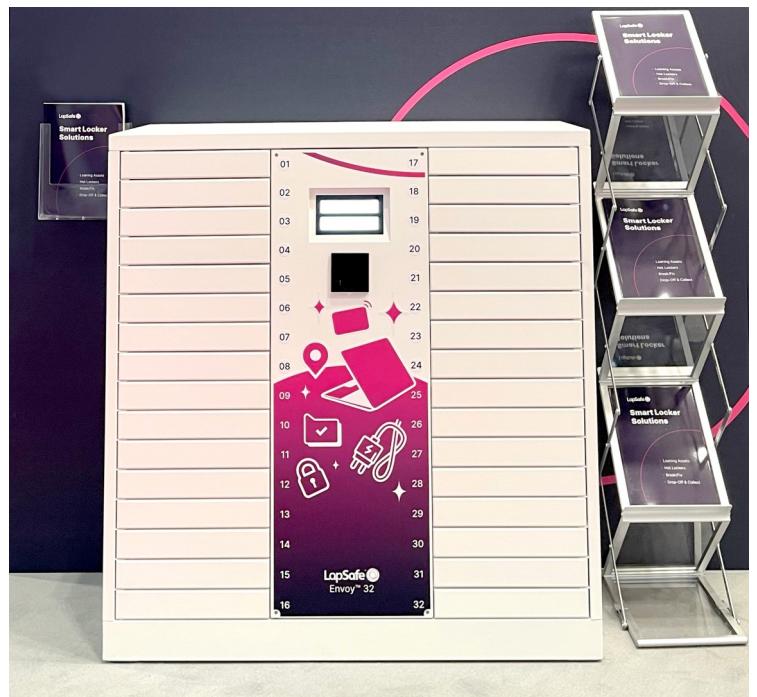
Thoughtfully curated VLeBook collections

15 collections across multiple fields of research and learning

Stock up your Library with 100's of eBooks for less

- ☑ **Separate Pdf's for each collection with full content list**

- ☑ **Marc records for each collection can be made available upon request**

- ☑ **Already owned content within the collection will potentially allow a discount**

- ☑ **Collections are available to order with a nominated 13-digit ISBN via the Browns website and any other workflow you use**

- ☑ **Using the 'Library Lists' functionality within VLeBooks, collections can be grouped and the Library List URL can be shared**

- ☑ **Majority of collections will give you a licence for unlimited users for 365 days.**

Gale in Context – inspire learners to be achievers

Welcome to *Gale in Context*, where we take your resources and turn them into effective teaching tools. Here's how to make the most of what you currently have:

- ➢ **Research Excellence**: Explore a vast range of scholarly materials from several fields. Improve the calibre and depth of your assignments and research projects by using peer-reviewed publications and scholarly magazines

- ➢ **Multimedia Learning**: Incorporate a variety of audio, visual, and video content to make learning more engaging. Make studying more engaging by incorporating many senses into lectures and reading materials

- ➢ **Critical Thinking & Analysis**: To hone critical thinking, examine various points of view. To create well-rounded arguments and deeper understandings, access extensive knowledge

- ➢ **Relevance & Current Events**: Make connections between abstract ideas and actual trends and occurrences. Keep up to date with current affairs and news stories, maintaining classroom dialogues

- ➢ **Organising Conversations**: Use well-chosen materials to spark conversations. Use articles, case studies, and multimedia materials to help students participate in intelligent discussions and vigorous arguments

- ➢ **Assistance for Teachers**: Enhance instructional materials by adding a wealth of information. Make lectures better, ensure students write better assignments better, and create engaging coursework with ease.

Keep in mind that *Gale In Context* is more than simply a repository of data; it's your doorway to promoting critical thinking, engaged learning, and knowledgeable engagement both inside and outside of your academic community. Engage them and provide them the tools they need to succeed!

For more information on *Gale in Context* read our brochure.

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A library system that gets your message across

Introducing 'Focus Feed'

These days a library system should do much more than just search the catalogue and circulate stock. Increasingly, the role of the library is under scrutiny and so it is vital that the system helps promote the profile of the library as prominently as possible.

Focus Feed is a widget on the landing page of our new Look4 interface that puts anything you wish to promote right in front of users, from the start.

Use Focus Feed to post links to resources, such as video tutorials, posters for events, information literacy programmes, pdfs, podcasts, health and well-being sites, reading lists, information about submissions and standards and anything else you can think of.

It can take seconds to create a post. Just upload a promotional photograph or image, type in some accompanying text and any links to external materials and then set an expiry date, when it will be removed, in the calendar. Focus Feed will take care of the rest and keep the feed moving and relevant. You can also make some posts 'sticky', so that they rank higher and remain prominent at, or near, the top. Such posts might include mental health and well-being resources, which can be relevant at any time, or 'Getting started' items that introduce the interface and remain prominent in the first part of the academic year.

All this, and a stunning new search interface, make Heritage Cirqa a great choice for you and your college library in 2024.

Look4

START HERE — Use our introductory videos, or link to your own, to get your users up and running quickly

Style guides — Provide style guides or standards templates, specific to your college or generally relevant

Mental health and well-being. Signpost important resources and contact details, or link to in-house chat facilities, to encourage contact when it's needed.

How do I... — Create targeted 'How do I?' resources for information literacy, or link to some of the many short training videos we have created for your users

Inductions: let your users know when you are running new introductions and how they can join in

...and so many more possibilities

Connect, Exchange and Learn - learning with our customers

PTFS Europe has been working with open source library software since 2007. We develop our products and services with the goal of making open source technology easy; to help and enable library users and ultimately to free libraries to do the things they do best.

The products we work with include Aspen, Metabase and Koha LMS. Our hosting, integrations, development knowledge and excellent support gives our customers reassurance and confidence in joining the innovative and constantly evolving open source global community.

Customer Day

PTFS Europe hosts regular Customer Days and other events throughout the year. These events are invaluable as they provide us with the opportunity to share new information and ideas, have face-to-face conversations with our customers and to offer the space and time for our customers to network with, and learn from, each other.

Our most recent Customer Day was held at Friends House in London in November 2023. The programme was designed to offer a range of content, including updates from PTFS Europe, a roadmap of future developments, case studies from customers, taster training sessions, a collaborative knowledge cafe and plenty of networking time.

Presentations

There were a series of presentations given by PTFS Europe staff and customers which can all be viewed through our YouTube channel.

Knowledge Cafe

A big part of the day was gathering opinions, wishlist items and sharing good practice in a Knowledge Cafe. Six tables were set out with a topic for discussion and a table 'reporter', and delegates were invited to sit at every table and share their ideas. Delegates were asked to move to their next table at timed intervals. The topics for discussion ranged from general trends in the library sector, wishlists for future system developments and integrations, how to measure the impact of the library service and how to provide an optimum support service. Knowledge cafes are high-energy (and sometimes noisy) events, and the room was buzzing with conversations and note-taking.

After the event, we circulated a Padlet to our customers which summarised these discussions and we invited people to vote and comment on them.

Data analysis

We are still collating responses but there are some clear trends coming through.

User groups

Our customers would like to see the formation of user groups, suggestions included these groups be organised by sector, regional, topic or modules such as acquisitions, New to Koha, Aspen and Metabase. It would appear that regional groups are the most sought after form of user group with a 70% vote.

Platform for user groups

Which platform to use for these groups to connect was varied between Teams, Slack, email, in person and Zoom / G Meet etc. In Person was least desired and Zoom / G Meet etc most sought for at 80% of the vote.

Purposes of user groups

The top five preferred purposes of the user groups were to offer mutual support for issues, demonstrate service customisations to each other, discuss shared developments, pool together for training and the ability to observe without input.

Developments wishlist

The top five developments our customers want to see for Koha are; the ability to schedule automated reports, easy marking of new or highlighted items, a graphical interface where system administrators can schedule their own tasks, the ability to share lists and display list sorting.

A bustling room of library professionals at the Customer Day

Proving impact

The top five things our customers think will help them to prove their impact are; a curated reports area developed by PTFS Europe, checkout history by age of stock or class range, cost per use (of electronic resources / items), subject demand: to focus spending and predicting trends based on historical data.

Issues services are facing

Of all the issues library services across all sectors are facing, our customers identified the top five as; funding, proving worth and impact, discoverability, time issues, accessibility and AI and tech developments.

PTFS Europe's academic customers

PTFS Europe works with many schools, colleges and universities, providing (customised) open source library software solutions. Our managed solutions are constantly evolving and improving, they work excellently with other software and therefore help future proof your library service. It's great value too with no extra costs for updates or new modules. You can read more about the work we do on our website - or contact our Business Development Manager Sam Goldsmith.

Three things everyone should know about Open Access content

As more academic journals embrace open access publishing models in response to shifting requirements for funders, open access content is playing an increasingly significant role in modern research.

This trend started in Europe with funding bodies within the EU and the UK pushing for all publicly funded research to be made available on an open access basis.

Making research results freely and openly accessible has the potential to transform teaching and learning by removing the barriers to knowledge. However, there are still many misperceptions about open access content and its use. Here are three things that everyone should know about this important topic.

1. Open access content is just as authoritative as content from subscription-based journals

Open access journals are subject to the same peer review process and publishing standards that apply to those produced under a subscription-based model, so there should be no question about the quality and reliability of open access content.

In fact, as government and other funding agencies update their policies to require publicly funded research findings to be made openly accessible, open access content will comprise an increasingly larger percentage of scholarship.

2. Just because it's "open" doesn't mean this content is easily discoverable

The fact that it's open access leads one to assume that the content is easy to find, but that isn't necessarily the case.

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) maintains an extensive index of open access journals from around the world. However, an analysis from SirsiDynix reveals that the content available from these sources makes up only 16 percent of all open access content worldwide.

"*The vast majority of open access content is published in hybrid journals, transformative publications, non-DOAJ open journals, and other sources,*" explains Rick Branham, Vice President of Academic and Content Solutions for CloudSource, a new SirsiDynix platform. "*However, most discovery platforms will not expose OA articles from hybrid journals and other types of OA resources unless the library subscribes to these journals,*" Branham adds.

Without an easy way to aggregate all of this content in one place, students and lecturers would have to look in many different places to find openly accessible materials, in a world dominated by Google like searching adding roadblocks to finding information is only likely to steer users away from the Library/LRC and towards potentially non-peer-reviewed content on the wider web.

3. Colleges are actually paying for a significant amount of open-access content

With a growing number of funding bodies requiring open access publishing for the research they fund, many journals now publish a mix of open access and subscription-based content. In some cases, the percentage of open access content that a source such as Springer Nature publishes exceeds 50 percent.

This means that the content collected in most subscription databases contains a healthy percentage of open access articles along with proprietary content.

Collection analysis conducted with a number of academic institutions both in the UK and the US revealed that more than half the content in the subscription databases that the libraries were subscribing to consisted of open access articles.

How CloudSource Can Help

CloudSource is a new content and discovery platform that enables libraries to change their whole approach to managing electronic resources.
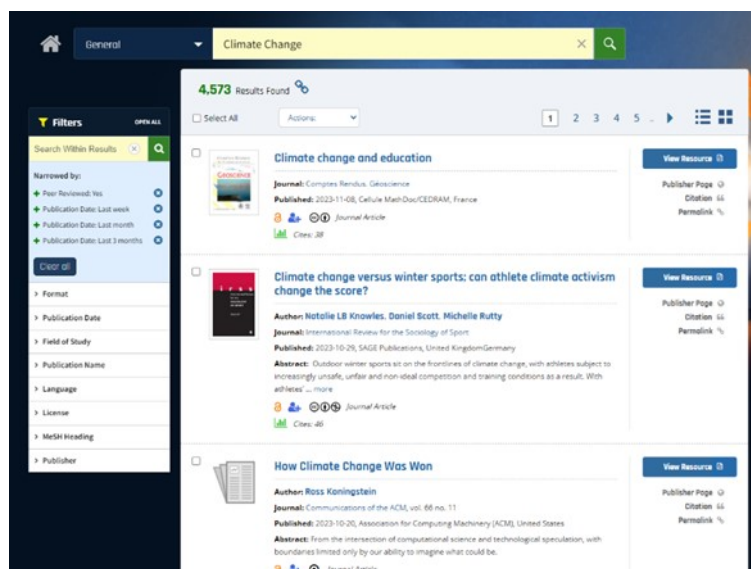
CloudSource OA aggregates more than 60 million open access research articles and open education resources from hundreds of thousands of journals, ebooks, and electronic textbooks, pulling them together into a single, comprehensive index that makes it easy for users to find and access the full text of open content sources.

"*We're flipping discovery on its head by putting open content first,*" Branham says.

When a user searches for a particular source, the platform looks to see if there's an open access version or if the library already offers this source through an existing database subscription.

Often when a student is doing research, they're not looking for one particular source, Branham says. Instead, they're looking for general information about a topic, and the information they can find through open sources is sufficient for their needs. By using CloudSource to make millions of open access materials easily discoverable, libraries can save money by eliminating the use of high-cost subscription databases.

To find out more about CloudSource OA; request a free analysis of your current subscriptions to see how much of your content is actually available for free; or find out about how SirsiDynix can help you make the move towards Open Access content then please visit:

https://www.cloudsource.net/ or contact the UK sales team at uk-sales@sirsidynix.com

SirsiDynix®

Libraries Rewired

Gary Horrocks, CoLRiC

In November 2023 CILIP, the library and information association, hosted a digital transformation event 'Libraries Rewired' in London. Several themes arose from the event that we'd like to share with you. They're all relevant to the further education sector, and we're keen to know which ones you'd like to learn more about, so that we can continue to plan our seminar and publications programme for 2024.

A key issue threaded throughout the day was that the library and information services profession (LIS) is not at the forefront of developments and needs proactively to set the agenda for the future, not respond to it.

Artificial Intelligence

We were not prepared for AI and are still grappling with the implications of generative tools. AI continues to be a topic of interest, but also anxiety. In an inspiring keynote presentation - 'Suffering an AI change' - Bill Thompson, technology writer and Head of Public Value Research at BBC R&D argued that 'artificial intelligence' would be better defined as 'computational rationalisation', and that 'intelligence' is a nebulous concept.

AI, he argued, sits in a much wider IT and information landscape. 'AI is not a separate thing, but another layer added to the computational infrastructure that runs the modern world. Not just generative AI but a whole range of software-defined capabilities that will approach or surpass human-level skills in a wide range of cognitive tasks.'

He compared the current situation to fifteen years or so ago, when Dr Google threatened to dethrone GPs. We're just entering another stage of technological development, the next chapter in the liberation of access to information. We can either embrace or resent it. Our role is to explain it, demystify it and make it understandable. 'Are libraries equipped for this new set of resources to access and curate? The information ecosystem, like many beaches, is being polluted. How do you operate in a dirty sea of disinformation? Are AI outputs admissible in your collections?'

Library tech – future directions

Ken Chad, Ken Chad Consulting, presented on the rapidly developing technical infrastructure in libraries driven by advancements in digital technology, changing user needs and evolving library missions. Aside from specific library tech, generic resources like Microsoft Copilot will have a profound impact on working practices and user behaviour.

Data

The LIS community needs to do more to manage, interpret and communicate data. It is crucial to be 'data informed' in so many areas, including metrics (good and bad), advocacy, evidencing performance, value, impact and statistics.

Kate Lomax argued that qualitative data was equally important. Impact stories, collecting and sharing case studies from library users, user research/user experience (UX) and creating a culture of 'good data' sharing best practice, knowledge and skills.

Open source solutions

Collaboration with other sectors, developing networks and resource sharing are fundamental. Open systems could embrace resource sharing, shared collections and shared software development. [CoLRiC sponsor PTFS Europe has been working with open source library software since 2007. Look out for an article in this issue of Impact.]

CPD

The library and information profession needs to build agile professional development programmes that can adapt to a rapidly changing environment. AI, data management and open source technology are key training requirements, for example.

Digital rights

Ben White, Knowledge Rights 21, focused his attention on e-books, e-lending and e-licensing, close to the heart of many FE librarians. Prohibitive pricing, bundling reducing choice and unstable access are making it difficult to undertake collection development.

Social media

The potential demise of Twitter/X is seeing the rise of multiple alternatives including Threads, Mastodon and Bluesky. LinkedIn is increasingly important, and libraries really need to begin to consider migration options.

Gamification

Ash Green, Library Systems Technician at Goldsmiths University Library, presented on the immense benefits of 'Gaming the Library' - using game-making tools like Inklewriter, Squiffy, Bitsy, Twine and Pocketcode. Many are no-coding or programming required, web based and free to use. The benefits to libraries are immense. They:

- ➢ Generate interest in collections in new ways
- ➢ Build new audiences
- ➢ Highlight that a library is more than books
- ➢ Promote literacy
- ➢ Reduce barriers of accessing libraries.

There are also significant benefits to users:

- ➢ Discovering and interacting with collections in new ways
- ➢ Providing opportunities to be creative
- ➢ Developing skills like game making, storytelling, art
- ➢ Meeting others with similar interests.

Conclusions

Ken Chad quoted the science-fiction writer, William Gibson 'The future is already here - it's just unevenly distributed.' A key challenge will be to ensure consistency in all these areas across all LIS sectors, including FE.

Librarians are not great at articulating value. We need to build our advocacy capability and value proposition; engaging, collaborating, Integrating. CoLRiC is here to help you do that.

Digital scholarship, training and CPD are fundamental to the future of the LIS profession. Bill Thompson declared that the best way to predict the future is to create it. 'Let's seize the means of computational rationality.'

Enhancing library engagement: a successful outreach initiative

Kathryn Ashby, Library and Digital Resources Manager, Hills Road Sixth Form College, 2023 CoLRiC Innovative Practice Award Highly Commended team

As a result of the COVID pandemic and remote learning, our library saw a significant decline in the use of both print and digital resources. As a more normal education delivery resumed, we wanted to reengage students with the resources and services on offer and help them to see the value of them.

Despite digital learning being embedded across the curriculum post-pandemic and the promotion of a newly launched Library Portal (designed and developed by the Library team), engagement with Library resources remained stubbornly low.

The project

Mindful that these cohorts had experienced significant disruption to their studies and therefore limited engagement with their own school libraries, we knew we needed to carry out some outreach work with students in a systemic way.

The opportunity to implement a strategic initiative targeting the Year 12 cohort was presented with the Introduction of Bring your Device (BYOD) in September 2022 and via the Extended Project Qualification (EP), a compulsory part of the Year 12 study programme. The Library and EP teams together devised an hour-long induction session which was delivered to fifty-eight groups in the Library by two members of the Library team across two weeks in October 2022.

The session offered an overview of the range of physical and digital resources available to students as part of their studies and comprised:

- An overview of different paper and electronic resources available, including electronic journals, books, and media banks

- How to search the electronic resources successfully

- How to search the hard copy materials successfully via the online Library catalogue

- Time to browse the virtual/physical resources with support from Library and EP staff.

- Different types of research and how to evaluate their relevance, authority and quality

- Time to browse the virtual/physical resources with support from Library and EP staff.

Measuring success revealed a doubling of Year 12 library users and a 10% increase in the average number of items borrowed per user during the Autumn Term of 2022 compared with the same cohort the previous year. Unique users continued to rise throughout the academic year, ending with a 42% increase year-on-year and a 34% rise in non-textbook borrowing. Early indications show that this cohort are continuing to use the Library in Year 13 with a 25% increase in unique users in the first half term.

We are now exceeding our pre-pandemic levels of physical resource use by a small margin, but when we take into account how much of our provision has moved online in the last couple of years this represents a huge gain.

The winning formula

Reflection on the initiative's success identified key factors in achieving these results and this would be our checklist for anyone considering embarking on such a project:

- Purposeful: the focus on EP rather than a generic induction gave us a gateway as a means of introducing students to our complete offer

- Targeted: a homework task was set by the EP team to use Library sources (physical or digital) for initial research

- Active: students were physically in the Library space, familiarising themselves for future visits. The session was interactive; students were required to log onto the portal and explore the catalogue and resources. They were asked to explore the library space, take books off shelves and browse for ideas. Whilst a classroom-based session would have been easier logistically, it would not have had the same impact and buzz

- Timely: this took place three to four weeks into term, so students were not overwhelmed with information and had started to find their feet

- Inclusive: an opportunity to engage across the entire cohort including potentially reluctant library users, and those who may be too shy or nervous to ask for help

- Friendly: the session gave us opportunities to fully interact with the students, for them to get to know us, use our knowledge and skills, and to appreciate the level of support and advice we could provide

- Mindful: throughout the sessions we acknowledged and affirmed why they might not see a Library as relevant in the digital age. We reviewed the broad range of resources they might use as part of their research and demonstrated that we understood the challenges they faced setting out on an open ended, independent research project, whilst emphasising the importance and benefits of using high quality academic materials.

The Library portal

Integral to the initiative's success was the Library Portal, developed in SharePoint by the Library team. Acting as a single access point, it streamlined user access, showcased the breadth of our resources, and provided an attractive visual interface that adapts dynamically on a smartphone.

The portal not only facilitated the EP sessions but also had other benefits:

- Reduced access issues for digital resources and familiarised students with the concept of single sign in

- Allowed us to use the 'News' functionality as our main means of communication for important information, events, promotions or blogs, shared via email with visual thumbnail links. We are able to monitor page views to evaluate engagement

- Improved self-management of student library accounts; reservations, renewals etc with an associated reduction in overdue items.

Next steps

We delivered the programme again this year, tweaking the provision by incorporating references to ChatGPT/AI-generated material emphasising the need to reflect and question sources, encouraging academic curiosity.

We also rapidly became aware that this cohort were not as creative, resilient or determined as previous year groups in their search for information. If a search of the materials did not elicit any results, there was an assumption that those materials did not exist. [e.g. a search for 'death penalty' in the library catalogue returned nothing, but 'capital punishment' did].

We are reluctant to attribute this all to the interruptions to education due to Covid, but instead suspect it is more to do with how 'clever' search engines such as Google have become, providing almost instant gratification, and how lacking some academic search tools are in comparison. There has been more emphasis this year on coaching students on the fine art of getting the best out of resources.

We have seen a similar level of physical Library use with the Year 12s this year to last year (so far), but of course we are not satisfied with that! We will strive to continue to come up with new and inventive ways to promote the relevance, importance and joy of Libraries.

CoLRiC MediaWatch

An especially compiled and edited overview of November and December 2023 news stories, research projects and developments from across the education and library sectors that are of relevance to our members.

Skills are very much on the news agenda, with lots of useful publications and reports for you to reference.

Image Credit: Tim Mossholder @unsplash.com

Skills map

Pearson recently published a Skills Outlook: Skills Map looking at nine regions in England. It provides:

> *'Vital insight into the immediate needs of the modern workforce, to help employers and employees stay relevant and adaptable for the long term. We know that regional workforces are facing significant technological change, and localised insights can help us to navigate this. We explored which jobs are expanding and declining across different sectors. We also looked at the current skills in demand from employers, as well as those growing in importance. What we found is that, while there is certainly change ahead, automation does not necessarily mean fewer jobs – it means different jobs.'*

Advanced British Standard consultation

Before Christmas parents, teachers, students and employers were invited to share their views on the development and design of the new post-16 qualification the Advanced British Standard (ABS) which will eventually replace A-levels and T-levels.

> *'It comes after the Prime Minister announced that students in England will typically study five subjects rather than three under the major reforms. Under the shake-up – which is expected to take a decade to fulfil – 16 to 19-year-olds would take a larger number of subjects at both "major" and "minor" level.'*

In a previous CoLRiC MediaWatch column we reported on Rishi Sunak's assertion that all pupils would study some form of English and mathematics until the age of 18. We're interested to hear your views on this consultation, how it may impact on library and learning resource services, most notably literacy and numeracy initiatives across FE.

Employer Skills Survey

The government recently published the report from its commissioned Employer Skills Survey for 2022 showing employers are experiencing 'a notable increase in skills challenges' with hard to fill vacancies.

> *'The Employer Skills Survey (ESS) is a key source of intelligence for understanding the skills challenges faced by employers, both within their existing workforce and when recruiting. The survey gives insights into how they respond to these challenges through investment in training and workforce development. Over 72,000 UK employers participated in the 2022 wave.'*

Interestingly, listed with the technical and practical skills difficult to obtain from applicants are digital competence (computer literacy, advanced or specialist IT), numeracy and literacy. People and personal skills: 'softer', less tangible traits were also referenced.

It all starts with skills

The Department for Education has kicked off its Skills for Life campaign 'It all starts with skills' inviting young people, adults and businesses to 'make the most of their potential by engaging in a range of government skills and technical education offers.'

'Whether they're growing a business, switching careers or just starting out, "It all starts with skills" aims to motivate people to explore their options, make informed choices, and gain the skills and qualifications they need to progress. Ultimately giving businesses the skilled workforce they need for the economy to thrive.'

Once again, one of the key priorities for upskilling is English, maths and digital skills.

Together we transform

The Education & Training Foundation has published its strategy '[Together we transform](#).' It sets out plans to 'support everyone working in the sector by championing the vital role of educators and leaders in transforming the lives of learners aged 14 and over.'

'The new strategy places sector voices at its heart and reflects the feedback and input from an extensive listening exercise involving sector organisations and teachers, trainers and leaders from across the further education (FE) and skills sector.'

Its four strategic goals are:

> ➢ Drive professionalism
>
> ➢ Improve teaching and learning
>
> ➢ Champion inclusion
>
> ➢ Enable sector change.

'The world of education is undergoing unprecedented change with the shift to hybrid and flexible learning, the growth in use of artificial intelligence in learning and business settings, changes in assessment as well as the rising mental health challenge. We believe that the key to high quality learning experiences for learners is to support educators and leaders to excel. By providing the very best professional development and training opportunities we are supporting educators to transform the lives of learners aged 14 and over.'

'We want everyone within FE and skills to feel included and that they belong. This calls for inclusive spaces and learning environments that enable all learners to thrive. Embedding inclusive practice into our work, and championing inclusion across the sector and through society will open up opportunities for social mobility and ensure that our workforce and the curriculum reflect the learners and communities our sector serves.'

FE News Collective

[FE News](#) has reported on its first [Collective](#), 'bringing together the thoughts and views from leading players in education and skills in a collaborative mode to focus on key issues.' Its specific focus is on AI and investment in skills for the future across the FE sector.

'It gives us a unique and timely opportunity to look at the impact of AI on the future of skills and work, investing in the sector of the future and exploring progression in FE.'

AoC Annual Conference

Skills Minister Rob Halfon delivered a speech at the [Association of Colleges](#)' Annual Conference 2023 issuing a rally cry and praise to the FE sector, highlighting future skills provision as a key challenge.

'The Association of Colleges is an important voice for further education, and a key contributor to the work of the department. After a year in-post as Skills Minister, I'm delighted to be speaking today on how we are continuing to move skills to the centre of education. FE colleges are places of social and economic capital, and I am proud to be their champion in government. I believe FE colleges are a key pillar of the Ladder of Opportunity, enabling people of all backgrounds to gain sought-after skills and good jobs.'

Core skills in a fast-moving market

In November Edge published a [Skills Bulletin](#) emphasising 'the importance of helping young people develop the core skills needed to operate in a fast-moving market.'

'The economic competitiveness and quality of jobs required to meet national priorities in education are low. The UK faces a severe teacher recruitment crisis, with a 93% increase in teaching vacancies in 2022-23. Real-term declines in teacher and further education (FE) college staff pay, persistently high workloads, and new remote work trends have made teaching less attractive relative to other graduate professions. Changes to the labour market towards 2035 will increasingly require the education system to provide young people with higher level communication, collaboration, creative problem solving, and comprehension skills.'

OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovations

OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovations has published its second volume on [AI and the Future of Skills](#), focusing on 'Methods for Evaluating AI Capabilities.'

'As artificial intelligence (AI) expands its scope of applications across society, understanding its impact becomes increasingly critical. The OECD's AI and the Future of Skills (AIFS) project is developing a comprehensive framework for regularly measuring AI capabilities and comparing them to human skills. The resulting AI indicators should help policymakers anticipate AI's impacts on education and work.'

Beyond Ofsted

Ofsted remains in the news, with the [Beyond Ofsted](#) Inquiry indicating that it is not fit for purpose and that its inspection system should be overhauled as it's 'created a culture of fear' across the sector.

It has called for 'transformational change' and indicated it found Ofsted as 'having a detrimental impact on schools which some perceive as toxic.' It's headed up by Lord Knight who says: 'The evidence is clear. Ofsted has lost the trust of the teaching profession, and increasingly of parents. Our recommendations are designed to restore trust and address the intensification of leader and teacher workload, while reforming a system which is ineffective in its role of school improvement.'

One interesting recommendation is the introduction of self-evaluation with practical, supportive guidance on self-improvement, not the current single word judgement system.

Apparently, many teachers agree that Ofsted is not a 'reliable and trusted arbiter of standards.' A poll, commissioned by the Beyond Ofsted inquiry, found that nearly two in three (62%) teachers did not think the outcome of their most recent inspection accurately reflected their school.

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health continues to be a major issue of concern across the education sector, with a recent survey reporting that more than a third of senior school managers in England have required support for mental health or wellbeing issues over the last year.

> *'Ofsted pressures were the factor which had the greatest impact on mental health, according to a poll by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT). Paul Whiteman, the union's general secretary, warned leaders could be forced out of teaching unless action is taken. "These dire findings paint a really bleak picture of the unacceptable toll school leadership is taking on our members and their mental health and wellbeing. Parents and carers will no doubt be equally alarmed that school leaders are being left seeking support with their mental health, feeling worried, stressed and unvalued, struggling to sleep, and considering quitting the profession." A Department for Education (DfE) spokeswoman said: "We recognise the extraordinary service that headteachers, teachers and other school staff provide and are taking action to reduce the pressures on them where we can."'*

The Independent newspaper also reported that 'more students feel comfortable sharing a mental health condition or disability when applying to higher education.'

> *'The number of students in the UK accepted on to a university or college course who declared a disability or mental health condition in their Ucas application has increased to a record high, according to the university admissions service. It comes after Ucas introduced new questions and improved the collection of information about individual needs, such as a disability and mental health condition, in its admissions process.'*

Reading print improves comprehension

In the light of our recent Reading Agency seminar and discussions about engaging students with reading for pleasure, it was interesting to see this news item. 'Reading print texts improves comprehension more than reading digital materials does, according to a new study.'

> *'Researchers at the University of Valencia analysed more than two dozen studies on reading comprehension published between 2000 and 2022, which assessed nearly 470,000 participants. Their findings suggest that print reading over a long period of time could boost comprehension skills by six to eight times more than digital reading does. The "reading mindset" for digital texts also tends to be more shallow than that for printed materials, with scanning being more common.*

This can mean the reader "doesn't fully get immersed in the narration, or doesn't fully capture the complex relations in an informative text". The study, published in the Review of Educational Research, also found that while there is a negative relationship between digital reading and comprehension for primary school students, the relationship turns positive for secondary school and undergraduate students.'

AI challenges to information literacy

Look out for an excellent article on AI and information literacy published in Information Today Europe.

Writing for CoLRiC Impact – FAQs and guidelines

I am interested in writing for CoLRiC Impact – what should I do?

CoLRiC welcomes the submission of articles by all members. If you have an idea for an article, please send an e-mail to the Admin team with a short outline/description of your proposed article.

I've never written an article before – can you help?

Writing an article can be daunting but we've created a template that can help you get started and ensure you have included all the information required. The Admin team will send you the template via email.

How many words should I write?

As an e-newsletter, articles published in CoLRiC Impact can be of any length. As a rough guideline, an article of 750-1000 words will become 2-4 pages of CoLRiC Impact, depending on the number of images used.

What happens after I submit an article?

Your article will be reviewed and copyedited. If we have any queries or suggestions, we will get back to you within a week of submission. We will also proofread your article before it is published in CoLRiC Impact.

What happens when my article is published?

Key lessons from your article, including quotes, will be included in the editorial of the issue, and will also be shared on our JiscMail discussion forum, our Twitter feed and our LinkedIn group.

Publication schedule for CoLRiC Impact 2023-2024 academic year

Issue number	Submission deadline	Publication date
3	Friday 14th March 2024	Mid-April
4	Friday 14th June 2024	Early July