

Adoption, Attitudes, and Apprehensions: A Survey of Librarians on GenAI

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Abstract. Rapid advances in AI and language technologies are already reshaping how individuals search for and interact with information. As discussions about AI replacing human jobs intensify across professions, libraries too are facing questions about AI’s role in their work. This paper reports on a survey of librarians exploring their experiences and attitudes toward adopting GenAI. Results suggest that participants currently use GenAI primarily for simple, text-based tasks. They perceive its greatest potential in technologically oriented activities; however, many librarians still feel insufficiently trained to fully trust or exploit its benefits. Respondents consistently emphasize that the empathetic and relational aspects of librarianship remain uniquely human and irreplaceable. These findings highlight the need for closer collaboration between library practitioners and AI developers to design tools that enhance, rather than replace, human expertise and values in library work.

Keywords: Library Practice, Information Behaviour, Generative AI Adoption, AI Literacy, Trustworthy AI, Human-AI Interaction

1 Introduction

Libraries play a vital role in society that extends beyond providing access to printed materials, increasingly serving as gateways to digital content and online resources [28,12]. To keep pace with these changes, librarians must engage in continuous professional development. Technological innovation is a disrupting force in whatever field it appears in, often shaking the job landscape dramatically. Generative AI (GenAI) has had a pronounced effect on many different forms of knowledge work already [25], with many studies looking at how work has changed and is continuing to change [26,16,4]. Of particular note is the practice of library science and librarianship, as many of the “complex” tasks may be seen to be co-opted by generative systems (e.g., research [30]). Even more nuanced is the effect that such systems may have in low-resource domains, where the promise of GenAI may be far from reality, but the pressure to materialize any possible benefit from GenAI is persistent.

We explored the intersection of these two topics by conducting a survey among Slovenian librarians. As Slovene is a low-resource language, it relies on its similarities to other Slavic languages to benefit from their wider popularity, but there is on-going work to produce Slovene capable language models [13,21]. Accordingly, understanding how librarians view their role during this transition, both in their own professional development and in supporting library users, is a crucial question, especially when their efforts may be hampered by system limitations (i.e., language support) or lack of formal training.

In this work, we present an initial analysis of how Slovenian librarians view the increasing prevalence of GenAI in their professional lives. Namely, how their lives have been affected and what benefits, if any, they can see in further incorporation of GenAI in libraries and the practice of library science. We ground these insights with a brief overview of advancements made that benefit libraries and librarians as well as reports on how librarianship might evolve. We close with a discussion of our results, and reflect on how librarians can be supported by the community in navigating changes and utilizing these new technologies.

2 Libraries and Technology

Technology developments have had a profound impact on the practice of librarianship, from digitization of print media [17] and metadata enhancement [2] to OCR correction [7,11], multilingual access [20], and hybrid indexing of physical collections [22]. These efforts largely target library users rather than the librarians themselves. Meanwhile, as digital libraries continue to grow [3], there is ongoing debate over how physical libraries should adapt their spaces [29,18], balancing the presence of physical media [8] against ease of digital access for different users [1]. With the spread of generative technologies, early reports suggest librarians may be able to offer more tailored services as tedious tasks are automated or augmented [27,23]. This paper examines how practicing Slovenian librarians assess changes induced by GenAI for their day-to-day tasks, and whether issues arise from working in a low-resource language. We expand on international studies of AI adoption in Section 5.

3 Methodology

We used 1ka.si, an established Slovenian online survey platform to conduct our study. As our subjects are Slovenian, the survey was presented in Slovene and any reported data is translated to English. The survey consisted of three sections:

1. **Career demographics:** Detailing the respondent’s current role, length of tenure, and job related responsibilities derived from the Slovenian Librarianship Act [24] (e.g., cataloging, reference work – see Figure 1).
2. **GenAI Influences:** 10 questions that sought to tease out how much experience they have with generative systems (personally and professionally), the impact it has had on their roles, and areas where they would (not) like to see GenAI have (additional) impact.

3. **General Demographics:** An optional set of questions to collect the usual set of demographic data. This also allowed respondents to provide an email address if they were willing for follow-up.

The survey was conducted in September 2025 using snowball sampling through the authors’ associated network within Slovenia’s libraries. It was also published in Slovenian librarians’ Facebook groups. The survey was reviewed and conducted online in accordance with the institution’s established ethics review policies. No remuneration was offered to respondents. Written responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using an inductive thematic coding approach. The authors familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading to identify recurring keywords and concepts, which served as preliminary codes. Through iterative refinement, similar codes were grouped into broader thematic categories and their definitions were solidified. Both researchers independently reviewed and then discussed the coding structure and themes. This process yielded ten themes for leisure and six themes for professional use.

3.1 Participant Information

In total 88 individuals responded to the survey. Out of those, 39 are public librarians, 28 are school librarians, 9 are university librarians, 4 are national librarians, and 8 are special librarians. 45 respondents had been in their role for over ten years, 18 for under two years, 16 for three to five years, and 9 for six to ten years. Figure 1 provides an overview of the responsibilities that respondents indicated were part of their everyday job. We also note that most respondents rated their GenAI knowledge as bad (24) to average (35) and only 15 with good or better knowledge. All respondents had at least high school education, with 20 having a Bachelor’s and 14 having a Master’s degree. Of those that chose to respond, most were generally older, with 20 being between 36 to 50 years old, 13 being older than 51 years, and 9 being aged 26 to 35.

4 Results

The majority of respondents interacted with generative technologies using Slovene (i.e., 65 respondents). Of those, 16 use an equal mix of English and Slovene. In contrast, only 7 use English predominantly and no respondent indicated solely using English. The general breakdown of language follows what one might expect given that English is a common second language for Slovenians, especially younger individuals [10]. Accordingly, while English may operate as a fall-back, there is a clear need for supporting Slovene use with generative systems.

4.1 GenAI Use for Leisure vs Work

Figure 2 shows that respondents generally use generative technology at similar rates professionally and personally. While there are differences in frequency and

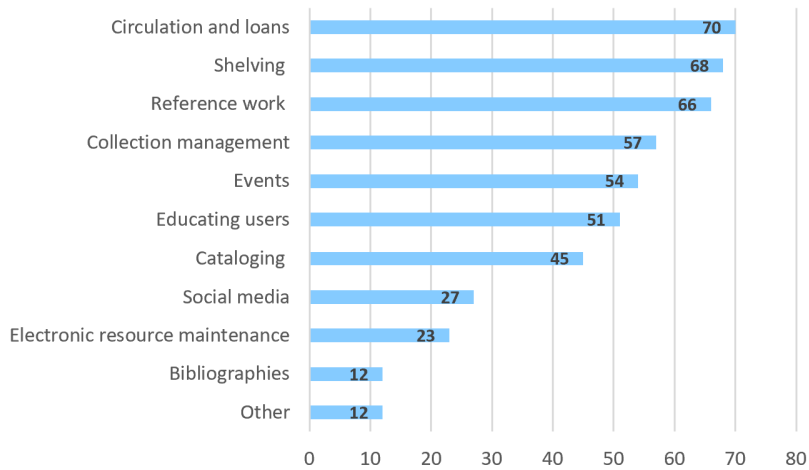


Fig. 1: Day-to-day work tasks being performed by respondents. Other includes tasks such as administration, local history, and assorted project management.

a small uptick in lack of use professionally, usage is what one might expect given that respondent familiarity with GenAI was reported as bad to average.

In these initial questions, participants were not provided with any prompts and were encouraged to freely articulate their ideas in an open-ended manner. For personal use, respondents reported using GenAI tools as creative writing aids in day-to-day tasks, such as writing birthday cards. There was a consistent trend for individuals to report using GenAI tools over typical search engines for recommendations (e.g., travel, recipes). Several respondents indicated that they would consult GenAI around health related questions. More generally, GenAI tools were used to find “fun facts” and help with understanding longer content.

A large component of work usage of GenAI was reported to be around helping respondents with writing tasks; in particular, there were several examples of using it to help formulate lesson plans and quizzes that were then cooperatively refined and assessed for accuracy. Moreover, there was a consistent trend of using generative tools to help refine and rephrase letters, emails, and proposals to different parties to improve messaging and intent. Despite the easy access to translation services, there was also a thread of using GenAI for translating text. There was also an example of looking for works of specific authors that had been translated to Slovene. Some respondents also reported using GenAI to help find sources and conduct literature searches that would have required multiple different search sessions to identify (e.g., average prices). They also reported summarizing longer articles for easier consumption.

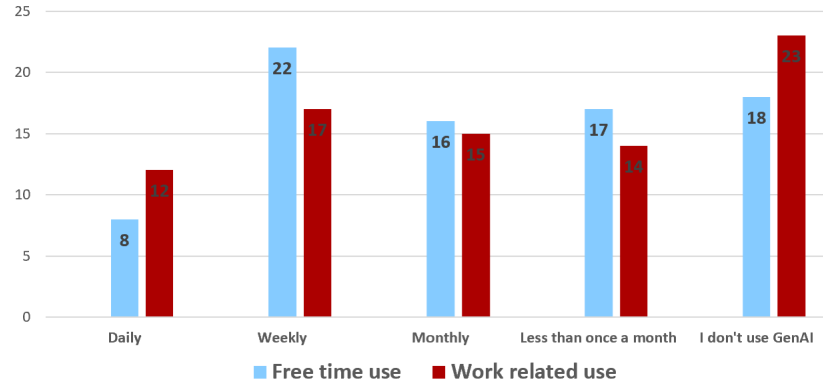


Fig. 2: Frequency of participants' GenAI use for personal and work purposes.

4.2 GenAI and Work Tasks

From the pre-defined set of work tasks (Figure 1), we asked participants to indicate for which tasks they believed GenAI could help (Table 1) and, if possible, to provide a brief example. The following are a synthesis of the major themes:

Circulation and loans: Participants expressed that loan processes could be automated using GenAI and specific triggers. Additionally, there was a suggestion for book recommendations based upon the collection availability (e.g., that could be loaned today).

Reference work: A common theme is to use GenAI to power interactions (either via chatbot or with a librarian mediator) to help library users identify relevant books, especially when existing metadata is poor. There were also several responses on using GenAI to help users navigate library resources or prepare resources in advance (e.g., based on prior reading habits of library users).

Collection management: Participants expressed a consistent desire to automate book deprecation in conjunction with other sources (e.g., COBISS³). They wanted to be able to find new books as well as best suppliers for them.

Events: Respondents expressed desire to use GenAI to help with the more creative aspects of event planning (e.g., speeches, logos, posters, advertising). There was also an expressed desire to help with scheduling and organization.

Educating users: GenAI was seen as good for creating new presentations and lessons, especially when it could provide a fresh take on existing content. Some respondents note that GenAI could expand ideas and help generate materials.

Cataloging: Participants viewed GenAI as being able to help with determining keywords, topics and classifications. Using GenAI to aid in the creation and filling in of templates and forms was described.

³ National library information system including cooperative online catalog www.cobiss.si.

Social media: GenAI was seen to be good for generating appropriate content that would maximize reach to the target audience (e.g., good keyword/hashtag recommendation) and could appropriately summarize text for each platform.

Electronic resource maintenance: GenAI could be used as an administrative aid in overseeing processes and managing metadata. It could also be an “easy and fast” alternative for troubleshooting due to resource limitations.

Bibliographies: Responses indicated that GenAI would be good for organizing and generating keywords and metadata.

Other: These responses generally reflected aid in the performance of other day-to-day tasks through assistive technologies (e.g., local history studies) that the participants did not find a fit for elsewhere.

Task	Can Help	Cannot Help
Circulation and loans	14	17
Shelving	0	17
Reference work	28	14
Collection management	18	11
Events	31	11
Educating users	25	11
Cataloging	26	12
Social media	35	5
Electronic resource maintenance	12	9
Bibliographies	12	12
Other	9	1

Table 1: Counts for how respondents felt GenAI technologies can either help or not with the previously defined work tasks. Other corresponds to freeform responses discussed in the main body of the article.

Participants were then asked to reflect on how GenAI might not be the most helpful for librarians and their work tasks (Table 1). As we expected that there would likely be repetition if we solicited individual examples (e.g., potential repetition around GenAI inaccuracy/hallucination), we opted to have them provide a single response as their rationale. Interestingly, one of the most common remarks was that AI cannot help at all with the physical/real-world tasks that a librarian does, whether this is shelving books or preparing books for inter-library loan. This was further elaborated on in the context of hosting events or in the day-to-day interactions that permeate a library.

While some respondents highlighted a lack of trust in GenAI, the most vocal comments were that GenAI cannot replicate the human-to-human interaction and the value in that interaction. They emphasized that the human element of these interactions – the warmth, the empathy, and interpersonal connection – was critical to supporting library users and ensuring that their needs are met. GenAI was acknowledged as a valuable assistive tool but respondents consistently affirmed that librarians remain irreplaceable.

4.3 GenAI Advantages and Drawbacks

Having had a chance to formulate thoughts on how GenAI can or cannot help with work tasks, we then asked participants to provide any comments on how they generally view the use of generative technologies and the practice of library science, with a particular focus on advantages and drawbacks.

Respondents viewed the main advantages of generative AI in the saving of time and effort, increasing efficiency, and supporting creativity. They emphasized that AI can automate repetitive administrative tasks (e.g., preparing reports, summaries, inventories, and correspondence), which would allow librarians to focus on more meaningful or fulfilling aspects of their work. Many noted that AI provides quicker access to information than traditional searching, helps with drafting and refining written texts, and offers new ideas and perspectives for programs, lessons, or exhibitions with the caveat that interactions would need to be carefully managed (e.g., prompt writing, fact checking).

In their view, respondents saw inaccuracy and data privacy as the main concerns. Many mentioned that GenAI can produce false or misleading information, including fabricated book titles, which creates extra verification work on their part and reflects observations in other professional work [6]. They warned against blind trust and over-reliance, emphasizing the need for critical thinking and invaluable librarian expertise. Some expressed concern about loss of creativity, originality and ability to think deeply for problem solving, which reflects more broad concerns in the literature [14,9,15].

4.4 Final Thoughts from Librarians

The final question allowed participants to provide any other information that they would like to tell us on this topic. Across the 20 respondents to this question, there was a consistent view that education about GenAI was needed for librarians to adequately prepare them for its use within library settings, but also in advising library patrons in how to navigate the complex issues around generative tools (e.g., hallucination, legal concerns). Several respondents highlighted their own lack of knowledge and a desire to learn more about GenAI. The responses highlighted the continued awareness that GenAI users should apply critical thinking when interpreting and using results from such systems.

5 Discussion

Our findings echo Tai and Ghosh’s review, which identified recommendation, retrieval, and metadata work as the principal AI application areas in libraries [27], with our respondents independently identifying the same categories. Like the knowledge workers surveyed by Lee et al. [16] and Chatterji et al. [4], Slovenian librarians concentrated their use on writing and summarization tasks. Regarding everyday tasks, the librarians highlighted the efficiency gains from single-turn

GenAI interactions as opposed to multi-step searches, which reinforces the insights from Liu et al. [19]. Additionally, our respondents highlighted the necessity and effort involved in the verification of outputs. In contrast to Pence [23], respondents indicated that their willingness to adopt GenAI is contingent on sufficient training and on preserving librarian mediation. These differences in adoption contrast with a multi-year study of GenAI adoption by faculty and staff at a U.S.-based research institution [5] which saw 90% of its respondents intentionally using AI technologies and may reflect institutional factors, language context, and general education availability.

Slovenian librarians have indicated that GenAI can aid in performing more mundane or tedious work tasks that take their focus and attention from more fulfilling aspects of their jobs. Such aspects revolve around more straightforward tasks (e.g., proofreading, ideation, translation), but they acknowledge that GenAI has the potential to help with automating existing processes and improving metadata creation and curation. Respondents noted that their lack of knowledge around generative technologies limits their use of it. We note that some of these processes (e.g., metadata improvements) might be facilitated with existing insights [2,22,20] that are not strictly GenAI-based.⁴ Accordingly, there is further work to determine whether solutions to librarians’ problems already exist or whether generative technologies are a good fit (e.g., agentic workflows).

Our participants also reported that GenAI should be adopted carefully and with a considered approach, possibly with mediation provided by a librarian. In doing so, librarians could then help mitigate potential drawbacks from use of these technologies by less experienced or knowledgeable users (e.g., students not realizing they were recommended non-existent books).⁵ The other benefit to a guided approach is continuing the high-quality and personal interaction that the librarians felt indicated a positive experience with the library.

Despite our expectation that some respondents might express frustration when using generative tools in Slovene, we did not find any particular issues with language support. However, this may have been expressed in other ways that were not apparent (e.g., had we focused on how the interactions with such systems occurred). Moreover, given that many participants reported using these tools for more creative tasks, they may not have encountered issues. Accordingly, if adoption were to increase, it is possible that we would see more issues arise. Additionally, respondents demonstrated critical thinking values, expressed ethical concerns, and stated a desire for the safe use of artificial intelligence. They are open to adapt to this new era, but before doing so, librarians desire additional education on this topic.

⁴ It is also important to note that GenAI may be perceived as a “lower cost” alternative to existing software that a library does not have the budget to cover. This is an avenue worth exploring in follow-up interviews.

⁵ This particular issue was raised several times in responses.

5.1 Limitations and Future Work

This study was conducted primarily as an exploratory effort to better understand where and how additional research should be conducted. Accordingly, the use of snowball sampling and the nature of using professional networks meant that the data skewed more towards an older demographic and with an emphasis on public and school libraries. Furthermore, our respondents generally had relatively little GenAI experience, but it is not clear that this can be easily remediated if it is a pervasive problem among Slovenian librarians. Accordingly, the insights provided by this study have a narrower focus and may not generalize to other library systems (e.g., those with more funding available to support technological adoption) or to younger librarians who may be more technically proficient.

Future work will focus on addressing some of these limitations (e.g., by targeting younger librarians specifically as our sample was too small to support reliable analysis). Another avenue for future research would be to extend the task taxonomy beyond the categories defined in the Slovenian Librarianship Act in order to better capture the expanding role of librarians - particularly in scientific and research libraries, where activities such as copyright and APC support, research data and software deposition, and repository management are increasingly important. Moreover, narrowing down our library type would facilitate interviewing library clients to better understand what they wish to get out of libraries in a post-GenAI world. While focusing on the practice of librarianship in Slovenia may limit the generalizability of these and future results, we will continue to investigate how Slovenian librarians can be supported as this work has the potential to have an impact on a less studied subgroup of librarians.

6 Conclusions

We have presented a preliminary analysis of a survey of 88 Slovenian librarians on their views of the interaction between GenAI and their work practices. We observed that respondents do see a benefit to using generative technologies, but that these uses are limited to automating processes and reducing time spent on mundane activities. Due to a lack of knowledge about GenAI and concerns surrounding the ethics and accuracy of GenAI, most respondents were concerned about widespread adoption of GenAI due to potential inaccuracies and highlighted its use as an assistive aid. This was particularly poignant as participants felt that librarians played a key part in ensuring a personal interaction with the library that would be hard for robotized systems to replicate. We hope our research contributes to bridging the gap between AI technological development and its practical use among library professionals. Moving forward, we aim to foster collaboration between the library community and IR and LLM researchers to support the development of safe, effective, and user-centered tools.

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