Twenty-Six Months in the Life of Library and Learning Services: Two responses to generative artificial intelligence

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Abstract

Since 2022 and the launch of ChatGPT, Leeds Beckett Library have explored different ways to utilise the new technology. Consideration was needed in the face of new challenges brought by AI, necessitating clear guidance and training. Equally, AI presented opportunities to transform existing patterns of working. This paper discusses Leeds Beckett library's approach through the lens of two projects: as an approach to addressing copyright and AI and in the creation and enhancement of our online content. Together they represent the cautiously optimistic approach towards AI which the library adopted as a whole.

Key words:

Artificial Intelligence, Copyright, Prompt Engineering, AI

Introduction

With the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022, discussions around the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential opportunities to transform and improve our lives have been at the forefront of almost all areas of life. For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the acceleration of generative AI has resulted in a variety of reactions and divergent opinions on their use in education and research. Optimistically, these tools provide the promise of transforming research and learning through the streamlining of administrative tasks and potential of increased discoverability of research resources. However, these potential gains by widespread adoption of these tools need to be weighed against the challenges to traditional cornerstones of academic practices, including academic and research integrity, information literacy, pedagogy, intellectual property, and data security, alongside pressures of continuing decreasing budgets.

HEIs have attempted to mitigate for these challenges through their adoption of policies and production of guidance around acceptable use of generative AI by staff and students in several ways, from outright prohibition to widespread endorsement in all areas of teaching, learning and research (McDonald et al., 2025). Leeds Beckett University has responded with a pragmatic but cautious approach to these challenges, generally allowing for use by students in generating ideas, enhancing understanding, and in seeking guidance for enhancing writing, provided these are used ethically and responsibly and use is acknowledged (Leeds Beckett University, 2024). In addition, the University's AI acceptable use policy provides further guidance for staff about the use of generative AI for business processes such as research, data analysis, and communications, provided that organisational standards to protect data confidentiality and integrity are upheld (Leeds Beckett University, 2025). These principles and policies continue to be revised and developed in tandem with wider sector, governmental and technological guidance and approaches.

Library and Learning Services at Leeds Beckett has been approaching the challenges and opportunities presented by generative AI in a variety of ways. In addition to guidance produced for students and researchers related to responsible use of generative AI, we have been experimenting with how we can use these tools to improve our Service. This paper briefly outlines two approaches to AI use Leeds Beckett Library's work; first, by describing the guidance we provide around artificial intelligence and copyright and intellectual property and second, as a means by which we have experimented with AI to enhance our public facing communications.

Copyright and Artificial Intelligence

Initially, Leeds Beckett's approach towards artificial intelligence use was focused on the impact on academic integrity. Due to the accelerated pace of tools adopting generative AI, our early interim guidance, released in April 2023, was concentrated mainly on acceptable use in assessed work. By late 2023, with AI becoming an increasing mainstay of the academic toolkit, a broader approach was needed. Specifically, previous institutional dialogue had centred primarily on outputs: whether that be the reliability of material produced by AI or the dangers of unlabelled AI-generated work being submitted for assignments, although couched in the need to respect data privacy and in line with research ethics. When it comes to copyright concerns, considering what is inputted into a large language model is crucial.

Under current laws, training a large language model is not covered under any copyright exceptions. That means that any copyrighted material should only be incorporated with the consent of the copyright holder. That is in part the responsibility of the artificial intelligence companies. Equally, some responsibility falls upon users. Most AI companies state that user inputs will become part of the large language model, training it to respond to future queries better. As per their terms and conditions, it is up to users to ensure that copyrighted content isn't being fed into the model through these inputs. The problem gets worse when considering GDPR. As per standard GDPR guidelines, individuals have the right to know what use their sensitive personal data is being put to and to have the ability to remove it at any time. It is generally hard to remove content from an LLM's training set and challenging to see what use any data within that training set is being put to.

To combat these issues, the Leeds Beckett Library Copyright Advice team drafted a guide to artificial intelligence and copyright. The aim was to make sure that academics were fully informed about the risks in using AI, whilst giving them the tools to still utilise the technology. Academics were advised not to put copyrighted content into artificial intelligence platforms which scrape inputs for training. Instead, they should consider using platforms which allow you to opt out of having your data collected and enable those settings. Similarly, they should not put sensitive personal information in inputs: that data being shared with a large language model would be a GDPR breach. The guide sits on the copyright webpage alongside other guides on specific copyright uses. All copyright induction sessions geared towards PhD students embarking upon their thesis contain a slide covering AI, the best practice for using it and the need to list any AI use as part of their ethics declaration.

Alongside raising awareness of the most ethical approach to inputs, Leeds Beckett as an institution has been examining technical solutions to the problem. The institution has a Microsoft CoPilot subscription which is set up as a controlled environment, so inputs are not stored. The Library is also exploring the capabilities of software such as Keenious, which uses the Unpaywall repository of open access journal articles to search for key topics and synthesise between papers. AI itself as a technology is agnostic, neither wholly good nor bad. By encouraging good practice and advising on the risks, the library can equip staff and students to best take advantage of the opportunities it presents.

Creating and improving web content

A practical application of generative AI at Leeds Beckett University has been the testing of AI tools to create content for the library website, as well as improving pre-existing content. Establishing a broad view of AI across the institution enabled library staff to utilise AI for both text and image generation, channelling creativity into tasks whilst remaining pragmatic. Approaching prompt-to-text generation in the first instance, library staff sought to test the effectiveness of AI tools to edit pre-existing text featured on a library webpage ('Critical Thinking'), with the overall goal of reducing the word count. Due to the text on this page being of Leeds Beckett authorship, as well as containing non-sensitive, informative content, those involved were able to proceed with confidence in the ethical nature of the experiment.

This task involved entering the original webpage text into two AI platforms, ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude (Anthropic) and using prompts to improve the content, as well as making it more concise. Two AI platforms were used initially, as this would highlight any major disparities between models and their

outputs. However, for consistency, Claude was eventually retired, with ChatGPT taking central focus. For further continuity, and to build confidence in prompt engineering, Dave Birss' CREATE framework (2023) was employed as a prompt writing technique. This framework uses the CREATE acronym (Anyacho, 2023): Character (assigning a specific role to the AI, such as copywriter), Request (asking for a particular task to be carried out by the AI), Examples (guiding the direction of the output through examples for the AI to follow), Adjustments (being aware that further edits may need to be made by the user after the initial output), Type (the format the output should be in, for example a table), and Extras (additional elements users can add to their prompt to enhance it, such as asking the AI tool to confirm what it understands from the prompt it's been given). The CREATE framework granted staff direction in their prompts, as well as ensuring speedy reconstruction of the content that ChatGPT produced, identifying and replacing specific words deemed aggressive or not in line with the tone of the website, for example 'arsenal' and 'packs a punch' (OpenAI ChatGPT, 2023).

In order to shift focus onto the word count, the 'Adjustments' (Anyacho, 2023) step within the CREATE framework was utilised, altering the section of the prompt that initially requested '500 words or less' (Mann, 2023), producing a word count of over 700 (perhaps due to connotation of choice attached to the word 'or'). The reworded prompt instructed ChatGPT to 'write it in 500 words' (2023), a more direct request which resulted in a word count of 531. Additional steps taken in the prompt engineering process illustrate the creativity enacted by Leeds Beckett University, whilst working within a set of rules that sought to steer this creativity rather than stifle it. This work carried out in the field of prompt to text generation was a crucial first step for the library, as the caution displayed at this level set the tone for future testing, including trials of the aforementioned research recommendation software, Keenious, as well as horizon scanning of other up-and-coming AI tools that might improve user engagement, such as Google NotebookLM.

Whilst planning for a library website refurbishment in 2024, a second experiment was carried out, this time testing the use of AI to generate imagery of a library study space that could be used as a website banner. As with text generation, Leeds Beckett took an innovative yet prudent approach, opting for the use of Adobe Firefly in this instance, since the images used to train the AI are not restricted by copyright (such as stock images owned by Adobe, and those already in the public domain). This second experiment enabled staff to use prompt engineering techniques established in the first phase of testing, but with a focus on visual descriptors rather than voice. Through base level prompt engineering, some initial images were produced, but in order to tailor these to a style more fitting of Leeds Beckett University, the decision was made to use ChatGPT itself as a prompt engineer, both as a timesaving technique and, as with the first experiment, a way of working within a model that channels creativity through a set of parameters. Once several prompts had been cultivated in ChatGPT and entered into Firefly, staff once again used the adjustment step from Birss' CREATE framework to alter the colour of the image, tailoring it to the university's signature purple by adding the descriptor 'soft purple lighting' (Mann, 2024) to the prompt.

The results of both experiments were shared at a number of internal events, such as the university's Library Website Group, and the Leeds Beckett Library Conference (2024), but also externally, at a CILIP Webinar, and the Academic Libraries North Conference (2024). This illustrates the university's readiness to engage in conversation with other stakeholders regarding generative AI, sharing their goals, processes, and successes, as well as the difficulties posed by copyright, ethics, and the changing landscape of technology in the UK, as well as just the Higher Education sector.

Next steps

Over the past two years, Leeds Beckett University has taken a largely pragmatic and cautious approach to the use of generative artificial intelligence tools in Library and Learning Services. Alongside a small group of colleagues from across the university, we have been participating in a very small-scale pilot of Microsoft's Copilot-enhanced apps assist with our work and continue to experiment with other freely available generative AI assisted software. Colleagues in Library Academic Support also continue to provide in-classroom teaching and learning materials around using generative AI responsibly in research and study. Ultimately, we see these tools as what they are; tools; and like all technology, we should think about the task we are trying to accomplish and

select the correct tool accordingly. This methodology, stemming in part from the university's own set of institutional values, will serve to help us navigate the next phase of growth for generative AI.

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