

Section 1: Contribution Details

No.	Contribution	Detail
2	Authors Name(s)	Neesha Ramsumar
4	Title of Submission:	AI In Our Libraries: Transforming Knowledge, Access and Innovation
5	Sub-Theme(s) of Submission:	AI and libraries in the Southern Africa region;
6	Keywords of Submission:	AI-Powered Automation, Smart Libraries, Robotic Assistance, Digital Innovation, Future-Ready Access

Section 2: Abstract Text

Libraries have long been central to knowledge preservation, serving as hubs for research, education, and community engagement. Traditionally providing physical access to books, they are now evolving with technological advancements. Among the most transformative innovations, AI is reshaping library operations, improving efficiency, and enhancing user experiences.

AI streamlines routine tasks such as cataloguing, sorting, and reshelfing, allowing staff to focus on more meaningful activities. AI-driven recommendations analyse user reading histories to suggest relevant materials, while natural language processing powers chatbots and voice assistants for research support.

AI also enhances physical library operations through robotics. Systems like AURORA manage inventory and shelving, ensuring efficient organization. Additionally, robots assist individuals with disabilities, improving accessibility and ensuring materials are easier to retrieve.

To thrive in this era, libraries must adopt intelligent resource management systems that employ AI for intuitive processing, streamlining operations, and anticipating user needs. The Open Access revolution further expands knowledge availability, ensuring even the latest research is widely accessible.

However, integrating AI comes with challenges. Privacy concerns arise as AI collects user data, necessitating strict protection policies. Automation may lead to job displacement, requiring reskilling efforts. Additionally, biases in AI algorithms must be addressed to ensure equitable access to information. The role of librarians is shifting from custodians of physical collections to digital guides navigating expansive information ecosystems.

Addressing the digital divide is also essential to ensure fair access to AI-powered resources. Despite these challenges, AI presents vast opportunities. It can optimize knowledge retrieval, enhance research methodologies, and transform libraries into dynamic innovation hubs. By embracing AI, libraries will not only remain relevant but will thrive as essential pillars of knowledge in the digital age.

Our presentation will look at how libraries can and are evolving into users of AI and robotics and how these technologies can assist in optimizing operations, improving accessibility, and enhancing the overall user experience.