Library Services in a digital age: Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Research Assistant in Library Services: The University of Johannesburg Experience

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Section 2: Abstract Text

Libraries have long been a source of knowledge, serving as a gateway where individuals can acquire and expand their knowledge. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly progressed, transforming numerous industries, with libraries being one of them. As such, libraries are incorporating smart technologies into their operations to stay current and maintain their relevance in the face of rapidly evolving times. Libraries can benefit from AI automation, with librarians playing a key role in instructing patrons on the appropriate usage of AI as a research tool, ultimately elevating the user experience and user empowerment. This paper aims to explore current trends in library AI applications, with a brief focus on the University of Johannesburg (UJ). As part of the library's generative AI and research initiatives, UJ has adopted various research tools and other generative AI tools in its information literacy programmes. These efforts aim to enhance students' research capabilities, foster critical thinking, and equip them with essential digital skills. In addition, AI as a tool can be used to improve information literacy education by providing a personalized learning experience, automating the evaluation of sources, and facilitating access to a wide range of resources. Despite its benefits, the integration of AI in libraries, raises critical ethical and practical concerns. Issues surrounding privacy, plagiarism, data security, and the protection of personal information must be addressed to maintain trust and uphold academic integrity. This paper will examine these opportunities and challenges, highlighting best practices for utilizing AI in academic libraries while maintaining ethical and professional standards.