

Still Meeting Our Needs: A Study of Users' Perceptions of Public Libraries in an Era of Generative AI

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing discussion on the relevance of libraries in the Generative AI era, where large language models are taking over the information space, and the role of libraries is affected in meeting the users' needs (Khan, 2024). This study explores the public perspective on the relevance of public libraries in the Generative AI era using sentimental analysis (quantitative approach) and thematic analysis (qualitative approach). The data was collected from Reddit, 1282 cleaned, stemmed, and used for the analysis. Sentimental analysis was adopted to understand the public positive, negative, and neutral sentiments about the usefulness of public libraries amidst proliferation of Generative AI technologies. The findings from most comments indicated positive sentiments, attitudes, and opinions, showing that more believe that public libraries are still relevant, and a few stated that it is irrelevant in the Generative AI era. Thematic analysis of the frequency comments revealed that public libraries still provide core services, health and counseling assistance, recreational commons, and financial literacy to users. Besides contributing to artificial intelligence literature on public libraries, the findings of this study will inform the preparation of pre-service librarians interested in public librarianship as they take courses and begin their professional journey as public library practitioners. Universities and colleges that train librarians for public library roles would also be impacted and guided through this study's findings to make informed decisions on the skill set expected of public librarians in the Generative AI era as they train them for public library service roles.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Public library; Artificial intelligence; Information services.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Public libraries; Artificial intelligence; Large language models; Library users.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2025.2075>

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540091.2024.2353630>