

Miriam Rigby, assisted by ChatGPT

Artificial imaginings

ChatGPT envisions its future in academic libraries

Miriam: Many essays have been written recently about ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) and its impact on higher education, not least of which is a review of the technology in *C&RL News* in March 2023.¹ But how many have asked ChatGPT what it has to say on the matter? I set out to learn what ChatGPT thought it could contribute to academic libraries.²

ChatGPT: Hi there, I'm ChatGPT! As a language model, I wrote a fun essay on using ChatGPT in academic libraries. I generated the text using my natural language processing skills, which let me create text that sounds like a real person wrote it. It's like magic! I used my programming and training to come up with the essay, and I'd love to answer any questions you have.

The way ChatGPT sees it

“Academic librarians, get ready to meet your new colleague: ChatGPT, the chatty artificial intelligence (AI) that can generate human-like responses to a wide variety of text-based prompts. ChatGPT might not be able to fetch you a cup of coffee, but it can help you revolutionize your services and better support your users!

Picture this: it's finals week, and a student walks up to the reference desk, visibly stressed and sleep-deprived. They need help finding scholarly articles about the effects of caffeine on the human brain. You're ready to dive in and provide them with the resources they need, but there's a long line of other students waiting behind them. That's where ChatGPT comes in. You type in the query, and in a matter of seconds, ChatGPT provides a list of relevant articles and even suggests some search terms to refine the search. The student gets what they need, and you can move on to the next person in line.

Or how about this: you're in charge of creating online tutorials to help students and faculty develop their research skills. You know that many of your users struggle with citation formatting, so you decide to create a tutorial on that topic. But you want to make it fun and engaging, so you enlist ChatGPT to help. You input the most common citation formatting questions, and ChatGPT generates witty and relatable responses that make the tutorial feel like a conversation with a friend rather than a lecture. You even add a quiz at the end, and ChatGPT provides instant feedback on each answer. Your users love it!

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And let's not forget about accessibility. You're passionate about making your library resources available to all users, regardless of their disabilities. But you know that some users with visual or cognitive impairments might struggle with traditional library search interfaces. ChatGPT to the rescue! You create a chatbot that users can access via a screen reader or a simplified interface. Users can input text-based queries, and ChatGPT generates audio responses that describe the relevant resources in a clear and concise way. No more frustrating interfaces or inaccessible resources!

Of course, there are potential challenges and limitations to using ChatGPT in academic libraries. Biases in the model's responses are a concern, as are the potential for ChatGPT to replace human librarians altogether. Academic librarians must therefore be thoughtful and strategic in how they use ChatGPT, ensuring that the technology is used to supplement, rather than replace, human services. They must also be transparent with users about how the technology is being used, and ensure that it aligns with their mission to support users' information needs.

In conclusion, ChatGPT is a fun and promising technology that academic librarians can use to enhance their services and better support their users. By using it creatively and strategically, academic librarians can help ensure that this emerging technology is used to its fullest potential in service of their users. So why not give it a try? You might be surprised by how much ChatGPT can do!"

Miriam: Thanks, ChatGPT! Of course, it's worth noting that ChatGPT makes things up—it's a language model, not facts-focused.³ There are other tools that may be better at some aspects of research and writing—for instance, Elicit (<https://elicit.org/>) is an interesting AI option for finding actual research articles (with its own limitations as well). So, take ChatGPT's suggestions with a grain of salt and use your evaluation skills before launching too many pilot projects or asking it to write more articles. ✍️

Notes

1. Christopher Cox and Elias Tzoc, "ChatGPT: Implications for academic libraries," *College & Research Libraries News* 84, no. 3 (2023): 99, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.84.3.99>.

2. For this exercise, I used ChatGPT May 3 Version (Free Research Preview). See "ChatGPT—Release Notes," OpenAI, May 2023, <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6825453-chatgpt-release-notes>. My prompts for the main essay were "Please outline the ways in which academic librarians might experiment with ChatGPT," and "Could you re-write that essay with fun examples, and mention 'academic librarians'?" My prompts for ChatGPT's introductory statement were "Please write a 50 word statement explaining how you, chatgpt wrote the fun essay on using chatgpt in academic libraries," "rewrite this in a friendly, chatty tone," and finally, "rewrite that about half the length, and introduce yourself at the beginning."

3. See Hussam Alkaissi and Samy I. McFarlane, "Artificial Hallucinations in ChatGPT: Implications in Scientific Writing," *Cureus*, February 19, 2023 <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.35179>.