MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

October 7, 2025

Dear Finance and Personnel Committee of the Common Council,

The Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) is a highly trusted community institution and holds to Core Values of Librarianship including intellectual freedom and privacy, access, sustainability, and working for the public good[1]. MPL recognizes the opportunities and responsibilities to support staff and the public with emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) with ethical considerations, such as data and information literacy and sustainability. MPL has maintained a measured approach to AI integration given our role as a reliable and trusted information institution and within the confines of fiscal capacity.

MPL is integrating AI into staff training, existing infrastructure, and public learning opportunities. MPL staff have been pursuing training in AI with over 80% of staff completing ITMD's administered AI Infosec training. Following industry trends, existing vendors of MPL IT infrastructure have started incorporating AI, though service improvements and operational efficiencies remain to be seen. Product costs will likely continue to rise as typical with vendor innovation and institutional cost savings remain unknown. MPL continues to be a hub of learning focused on supporting Milwaukee with 21st century skills and abilities, including AI, through programming and online learning databases.

Staff Training:

- Over 80% of MPL staff completed AI Infosec Training; Goal of 100% by end of 2025
- GovAI: MPL staff piloting completed GovAI Trainings
- Additional Trainings Attended by MPL Staff:
    - Library 2.025 - AI and Libraries: Literacy, Ethics, and Responsible Use
    - AI Fluency for Everyday Impact: Mindstone AI Skills Training from EBSCO Learning
    - Artificial Intelligence Workshop (MATC/UWM)
    - Navigating Artificial Intelligence Through a Public Librarian's Lens
    - "AI and Libraries: Literacy, Ethics, and Responsible Use" Online Mini-Conference
    - "Unlocking the Future: AI Innovations in Libraries" Virtual Conference

Current Integration:

- Microsoft Office:
    - In the early phases of integration, the impacts for service improvements and operation efficiencies remain unclear. Teams meeting recordings and transcription using AI has shown some value for meetings that should be part of the public record.
- Adobe Creative Cloud:
    - The AI integration is intended to streamline graphic design creation, enhancements, and modifications. MPL is testing the capabilities and has not found significant workflow improvements or enhanced design that aligns with MPL's expected quality.
- HPE Aruba Central:

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[1] https://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues

- AI Insights is a feature in the MPL's network-infrastructure management platform that leverages machine learning to provide insights on overall network monitoring and performance, continuing to offer MPL IT an at-a-glance solution for troubleshooting.
- GovAI (Pilot):
  - GovAI seeks to balance machine learning integration for government organizations and mitigation of inherent data risk of open AI learning models. GovAI has proven accurate, efficient, and successful in controlled data analysis with a moderate data set, developing executive summaries from original sources, training frameworks, and data consolidation. Like all large language models, it has opportunities for improvement in accuracy, mathematical calculations, coding, large data set capacity, source citation, and selection of authoritative sources.

Public Skill-Building:

- MPL staff is offering training for the public on AI, including specific AI tools and digital literacy (e.g. ChatGPT Unlocked!).
- MPL patrons as a member of the Milwaukee County Federated Library System have access to Udemy and Gale Courses, two online learning databases that include AI courses.

This fall MPL expanded access to a few additional staff members for further exploration of effective, efficient, and accurate application of the tool within key administrative roles. If funded, MPL will continue expansion of GovAI accounts through a consistent framework of staff training and thoughtful and ethical implementation in pursuit of operational and service efficiencies. MPL will connect with other public libraries on approaches to AI integration[2]. The most effective AI tools emerging within organizations, including libraries, are built within a controlled data ecosystem and customized solutions require a significant financial and energy investment.

MPL is exploring additional public training to support the community's ability to understand AI's benefits, challenges, and application. This may include pursuing partnerships on AI and considerations of ethical application, data accuracy, and environmental impacts.

MPL maintains a commitment to data privacy, information accuracy, copyright, intellectual property, bias mitigation, and alignment with emerging AI policies and practices guiding responsible use. MPL staff adhere to the City's Generative AI Policy and review and apply library and academic practices for responsible AI innovation. MPL will continue to hold staff to the level of standards of information professionals when implementing AI. MPL is also considering the social connection public health crisis and the ways MPL is a connector agency and the impacts that AI can have on this critical area of community well-being. MPL, as a City leader in green initiatives, is also considering questions of environmental impact and sustainability in considering AI integrations.

Public Libraries have maintained relevancy and value within continually evolving technology, as was seen in the internet boon, and information professionals have a key role in navigating the increasing complexity of the information landscape[3]. MPL will continue to be a City Department that pursues technological innovation for operational and service opportunities while balancing fiscal responsibility and data and information literacy.

Sincerely,

Joan R. Johnson

Joan Johnson, City Librarian, Milwaukee Public Library

[2] https://www.npr.org/2025/08/11/nx-s1-5471614/boston-public-library-harvard-ai
[3] https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2024/03/01/the-world-of-ai/