

Bridging the gap: an AI community of practice

Association of College & Research Libraries



Location

United States



Target group

Under-resourced
early-career librarians



Budget

\$37,000
(2025)



SDGs

SDG 10
(target 10.2)

Synopsis

Supports librarians to strengthen AI knowledge and skills, launching a sustainable community of practice and expanding AI leadership capacity across institutions.

Program description

In 2025, the partnership with the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) piloted Bridging the Gap: an AI Community of Practice, a professional development initiative designed to build AI literacy among underrepresented, early-career librarians.

Through a “train-the-trainer” model, the program equipped participants with practical skills, ethical frameworks and leadership tools to implement and share AI knowledge within their libraries. The program combined in-person learning, ongoing virtual engagement and open educational resource development to ensure sustained impact. Ultimately, it builds a growing network of librarians prepared to navigate and shape the responsible use of AI in academic settings.

Participants committed to developing a plan to implement AI literacy programs at their institutions to ensure their communities benefit from the training. After attending the program, they were able to: integrate AI literacy into instruction, host workshops for students and faculty, create guidelines and learning materials, and help their campuses move from abstract debate to concrete practices.



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Goals

- Build AI literacy among under-resourced early-career librarians.
- Create a sustainable AI-focused community of practice.
- Enable participants to serve as trainers and knowledge multipliers within their institutions and professional networks.

Activities and milestones

- Selected 11 early-career librarians from under-resourced institutions across North America through a competitive application process which required endorsement from a library director or university librarian, ensuring institutional support. The team prioritized candidates who demonstrated a clear plan to share their learning with their library community.
- The cohort represented a diverse range of institutions, including: DeSales University, East Texas A&M University, Filipino Librarians Association – UAE, Fort Lewis College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Nevada State University, Northern Kentucky University, Oglethorpe University, Southwest Minnesota State University, Wartburg College, United States International University Africa.
- Delivered a one-day intensive, in-person workshop on June 26, 2025, during the ALA Annual Conference in Philadelphia.
- Trainers included members of the ACRL AI Competencies Task Force, with expertise in AI literacy, academic library services, and professional development. Dr. Emily Singley, Elsevier's Vice President, Global Library Relations and Partnerships, joined as a facilitator.
- Provided expert-led sessions on key content areas:
 - AI and Academic Librarianship: Training on how AI tools can be used to support academic research and library services.
 - AI Ethics and Best Practices: Ensuring that participants are equipped to handle ethical considerations when integrating AI into their work.
 - Community Building and Train the Trainer Model: Supporting participants to disseminate AI literacy within their institutions.
- Launched a series of three follow-up webinars and virtual meet-ups (September 2025, November 2025, and February 2026) to reinforce learning and sustain peer exchange.
- Initiated development of Open Educational Resources (OER) and digital materials to support broader dissemination of AI literacy tools.

“This pilot reinforced a clear takeaway: targeted support and a strong peer network can help under-resourced teams move quickly from learning to local impact.”

Dr. Leo Lo

Immediate Past-President, Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)

