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# The AI Opportunity: Why Students Want Librarians in Their Workflows

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Development Manager, Technology from Sage

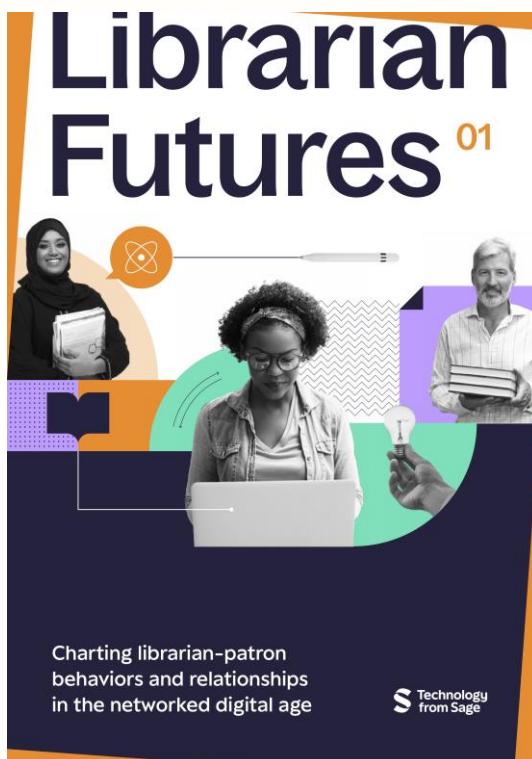


# Librarian Futures

Our mission is to help redefine and amplify the power of the academic library to advance teaching, learning and research.

In our Librarian Futures series, we explore modern day librarian-patron relationships. We share this research openly to inform and empower librarians, who are at the heart of every university.

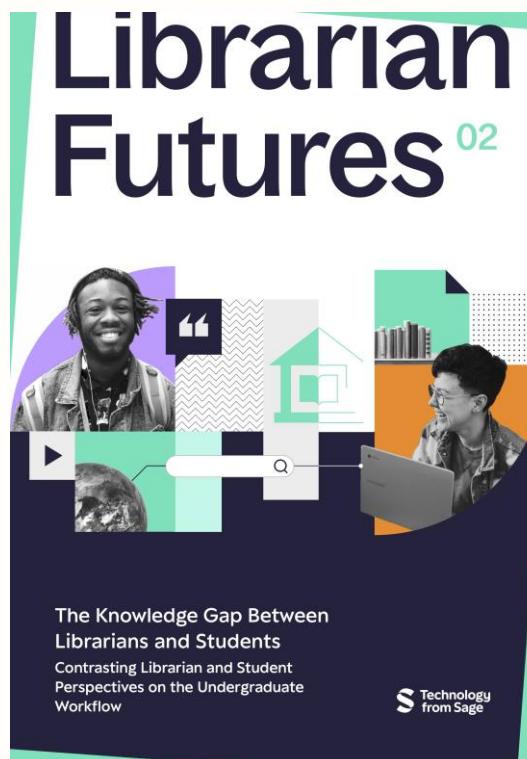
## Librarian Futures <sup>01</sup>



Charting librarian-patron behaviors and relationships in the networked digital age

**S** Technology from Sage

## Librarian Futures <sup>02</sup>



The Knowledge Gap Between Librarians and Students  
Contrasting Librarian and Student Perspectives on the Undergraduate Workflow

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## Librarian Futures <sup>03</sup>



The Librarian Skills Landscape  
Insights from over 2,000 academic library professionals on actionable strategies for skills and career development

**APEX**  
AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE  
WINNER

**S** Technology from Sage

# Librarian Futures Part I



**Charting librarian-patron behaviors and relationships in the networked digital age.**

- The library 'in the life of the user'
- Survey of 4,000 librarians and patrons across 1,500 institutions
- Contributions from Springshare, scite, OCLC and other Lean Library partners

Download the report here:

→ [www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers](http://www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers)

## Librarian Futures Part II



## The Knowledge Gap Between Librarians and Students

- Contrasting librarian and student perspectives on the undergraduate workflow
- Survey of 600 students, seeking to better understand student perspectives on the university experience

Download the report here:

→ [www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers](http://www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers)

# Librarian Futures Part III



## The Librarian Skills Landscape

- Insights from over 2,000 academic library professionals on actionable strategies
- In partnership with Skilltype
- Explores the emerging skills required to fulfil a library's mission and meet the needs of today's library patrons.

Download the report here:

→ [www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers](http://www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers)

# Librarian Futures Part IV



## Librarian Leadership on the AI Frontier

We have surveyed approximately 1,000 students and 300 librarians to provide an in-depth insight into AI use, perceptions of AI in higher education, and the impacts that AI has had on student productivity.

### Key findings include...

- Student confidence in using AI is generally high – higher even than librarian confidence
- Most students have used AI in some capacity – but few have paid for access
- Librarian and student enthusiasm for adopting AI tools is very mixed – suggesting a looming gap in practice
- Most students regularly feel overwhelmed with their academic work – with effects on their physical and mental health

Download the report here:

→ [www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers](http://www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers)

# Evolving Student Habits

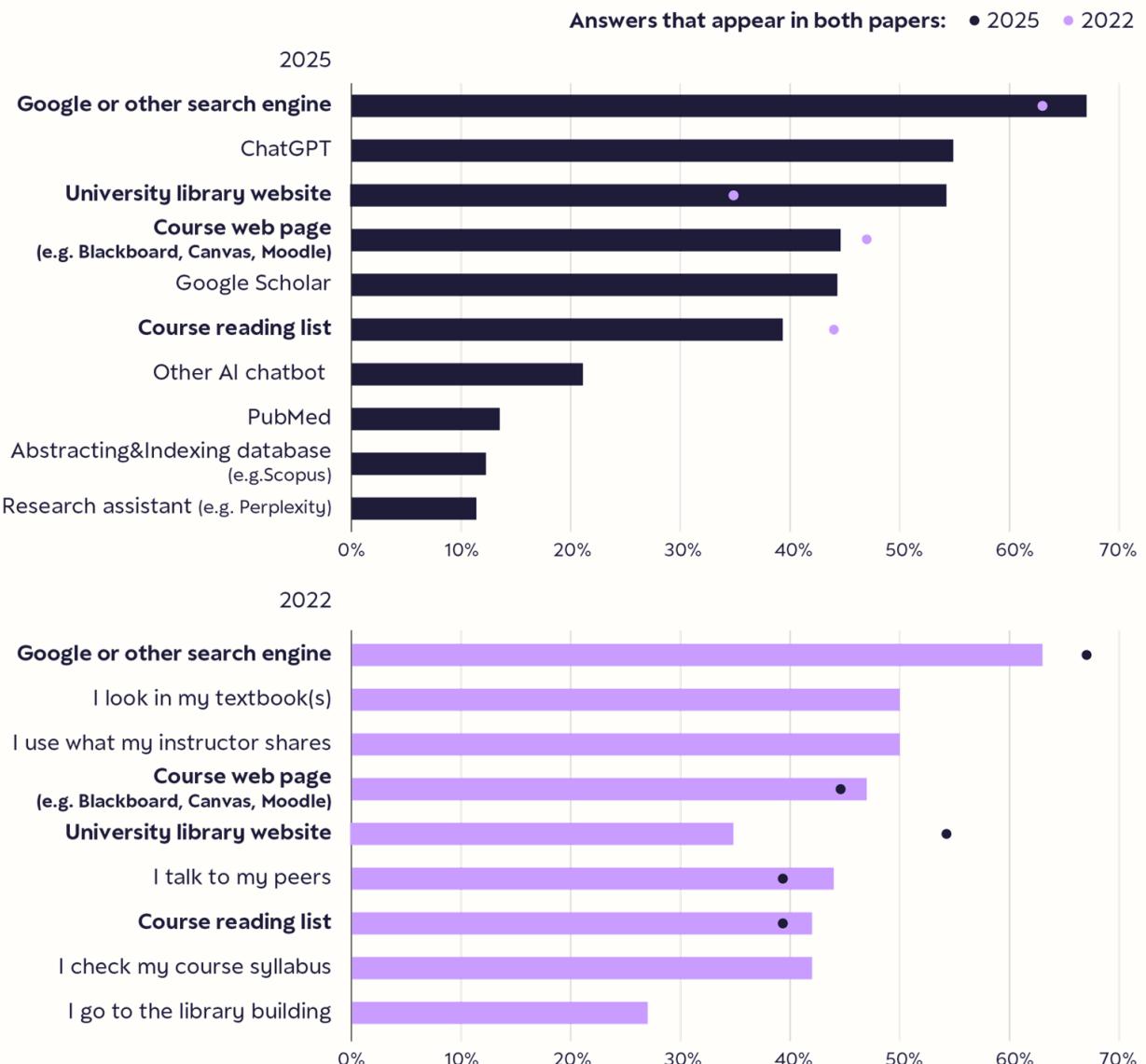


## Patrons are using AI...

- 55% using ChatGPT
- 21% using “Other AI chatbot”
- 11% using “research assistant (e.g. Perplexity, Elicit)”

## ... and more traditional resources

- 67% use Google
- 54% use library site
- 45% use VLE
- 44% use Google Scholar



## One fifth of students **begin** research with AI

- 18% begin with ChatGPT
- 3% begin with some other AI tool

## Use of Google as a starting point has **not** declined

- Chosen by 38% students in 2022...
- ... and 37% of students in 2025

# Student confidence in their abilities is high

Identifying a good research question or assignment topic



Searching effectively for relevant resources



Working in a digital environment



Finding good information



Getting access to resources



Reading academic literature



Understanding data charts and tables



Referencing and citing academic works



Thinking critically about the subject



Writing at a university level



Using AI in your research process



■ Not at all confident ▨ Not so confident ▨ Somewhat confident ▨ Very confident ▨ Extremely confident

## How confident would you feel advising students on the following subjects?

	Not at all confident	Not so confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
<b>Identifying a good research question or assignment topic (n=266)</b>	0%	7%	23%	40%	30%
<b>Searching effectively for relevant resources (n=265)</b>	1%	2%	15%	36%	47%
<b>Working in a digital environment (n=266)</b>	0%	3%	18%	44%	35%
<b>Finding good information (n=263)</b>	0%	3%	7%	37%	53%
<b>Getting access to resources (n=266)</b>	0%	1%	6%	37%	55%
<b>Reading academic literature (n=266)</b>	0%	3%	21%	45%	31%
<b>Understanding data charts and tables (n=265)</b>	0%	12%	37%	35%	15%
<b>Referencing and citing academic works (n=264)</b>	1%	4%	12%	36%	48%
<b>Thinking critically about the subject (n=266)</b>	0%	2%	20%	46%	31%
<b>Writing at a university level (n=266)</b>	1%	7%	29%	39%	25%
<b>Using AI in your research process (n=266)</b>	3%	21%	45%	22%	9%

## Who, if anyone, helped you grow in each of the following areas?

	My peers	My teachers	Librarians
Identifying a good research question or assignment topic	25%	59%	11%
Searching effectively for relevant resources	24%	52%	19%
Working in a digital environment	31%	37%	11%
Finding good information	27%	51%	20%
Getting access to resources	25%	55%	28%
Reading academic literature	22%	53%	15%
Understanding data charts and tables	25%	58%	9%
Referencing and citing academic works	23%	58%	19%
Thinking critically about the subject	27%	54%	9%
Writing at a university level	20%	61%	14%
Using AI in your research process	32%	23%	8%

Getting access to resources  
**28%**



Finding good information  
**20%**



Referencing and citing academic works  
**19%**



Searching effectively for relevant resources  
**19%**



Reading academic literature  
**15%**



Writing at a university level  
**14%**



Identifying a good research question  
**11%**



Working in a digital environment  
**11%**



Thinking critically about the subject  
**9%**



Understanding data charts and tables  
**9%**



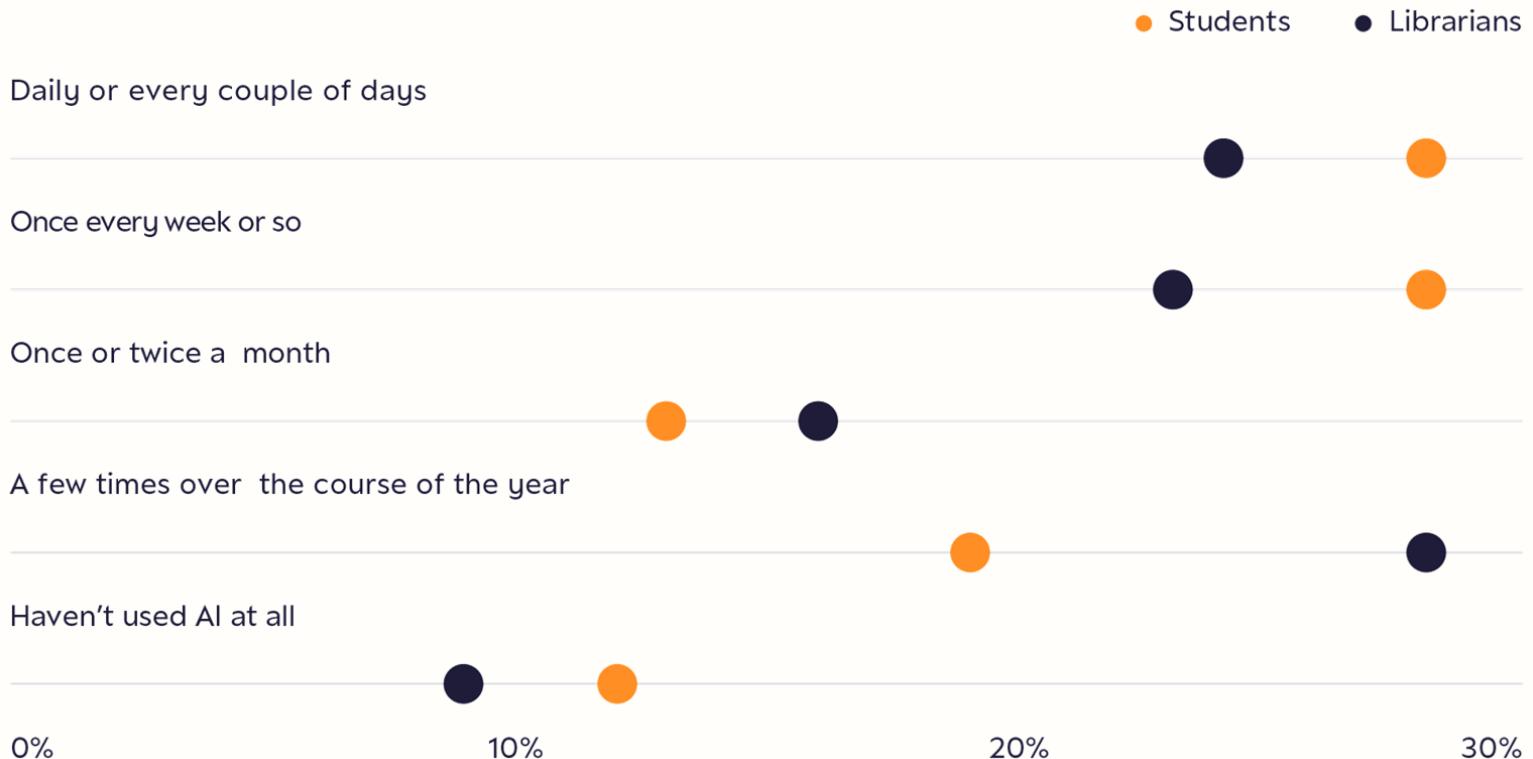
Using AI in your research process  
**8%**



# Use of AI



# How often have you used AI to help with your work during the past year?



Which of the following AI tools have you used to help with academic work during this academic year? (Select all that apply) (n=898)

ChatGPT	65%
Writing assistants (e.g. Grammarly AI, QuillBot)	37%
Other chatbots (e.g. Claude, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot)	23%
I have not used AI applications to help with academic work during this academic year.	16%
Image Generators (e.g. DALLE, Copilot Designer, Canva AI Images)	14%
Research assistants (e.g. Elicit, Perplexity)	10%
Tutors (e.g. Teacher AI, TalkPal, TutorAI)	10%
Accessibility tools (e.g. Otter.AI, Speechify)	10%
Other (please specify)	1%

# How is AI being used?

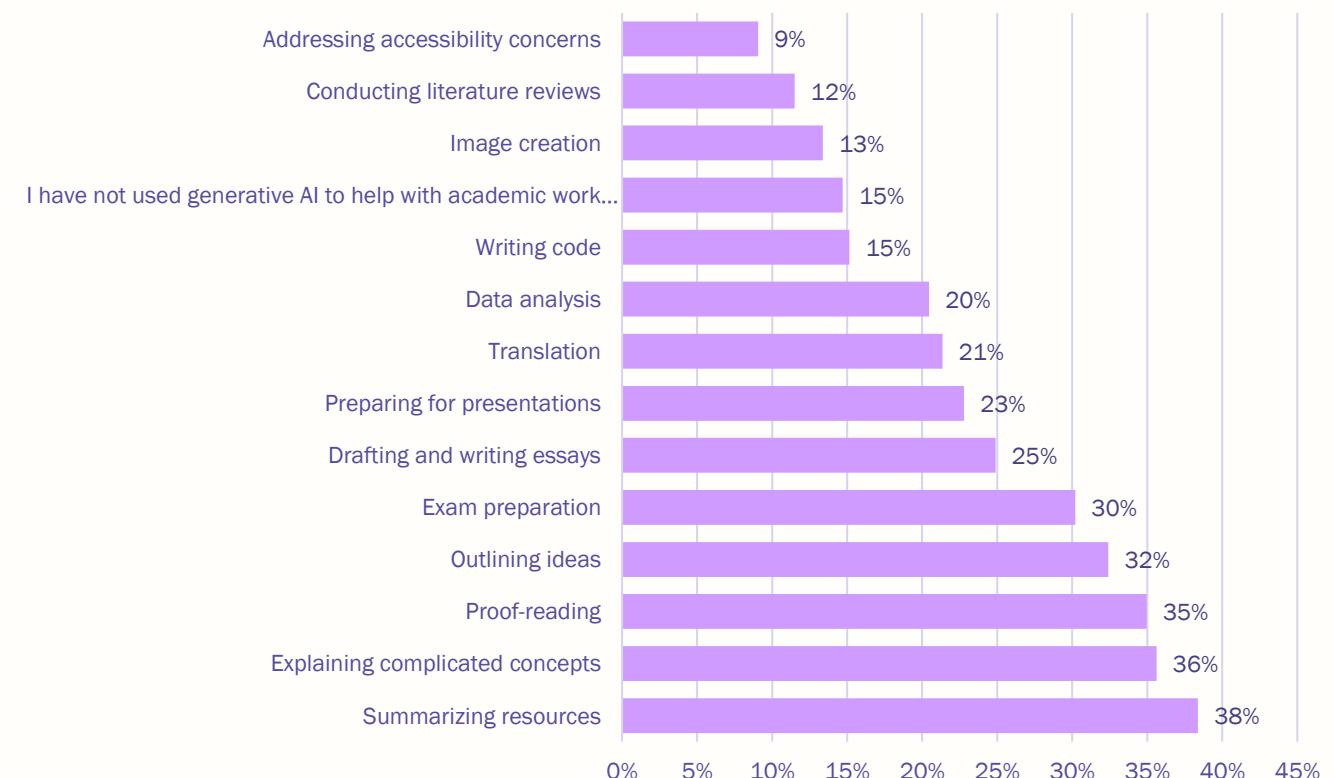


Student (n=912) and librarian (n=235) responses to the question: How have you used generative AI to help with academic work during this academic year?



# How have you used generative AI to help with academic work during this academic year? (Select all that apply) (n=904)

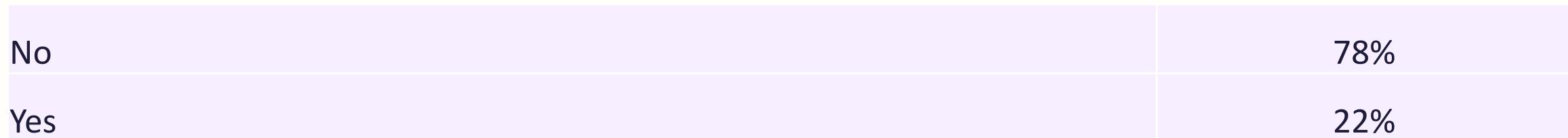
Summarizing resources	38%
Explaining complicated concepts	36%
Proof-reading	35%
Outlining ideas	32%
Exam preparation	30%
Drafting and writing essays	25%
Preparing for presentations	23%
Translation	21%
Data analysis	20%
Writing code	15%
I have not used generative AI to help with academic work during this academic year.	15%
Image creation	13%
Conducting literature reviews	12%
Addressing accessibility concerns	9%
Other (please specify)	2%



# Paying for AI

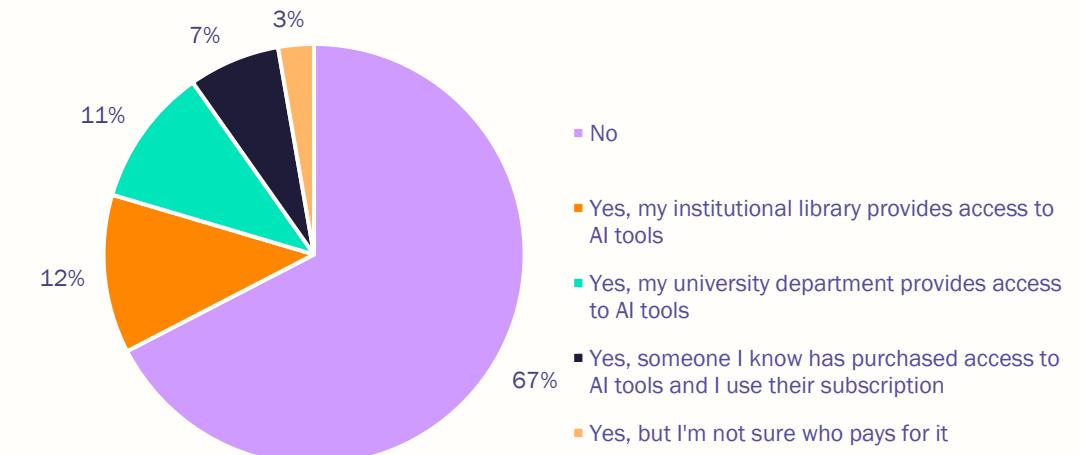


Have you personally purchased access to any AI tools to help with academic work during this academic year? (n=907)



Have you had access to any AI tools purchased on your behalf to help with academic work during this academic year? (n=911)

No	67%
Yes, my institutional library provides access to AI tools	12%
Yes, my university department provides access to AI tools	11%
Yes, someone I know has purchased access to AI tools and I use their subscription	7%
Yes, but I'm not sure who pays for it	3%



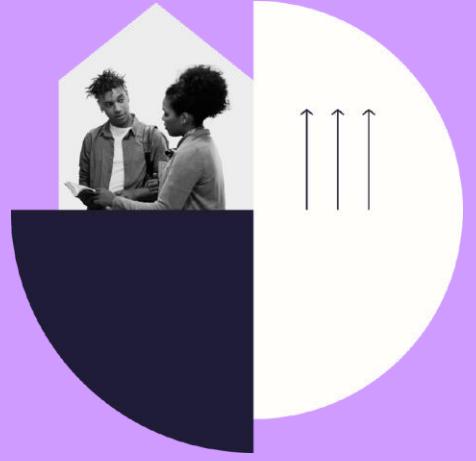
## We asked librarians...

Who, if anyone, should pay for access to AI assistants...

School/ department/ college	57%
Learning technology departments	31%
No one should pay for access to AI assistants	31%
Library	20%
The student	15%
Lab groups	4%

- Use of “free” AI means students are beholden to larger AI companies with no recourse or safeguards
- With the expertise in library procurement available in the academic library, librarians must have a seat at the table to review privacy, bias, and environmental impact concerns
- The library does not need to shoulder the cost of AI alone - fundamentally reshape your budget, securing buy-in and necessity for doing so

# Perceptions of AI

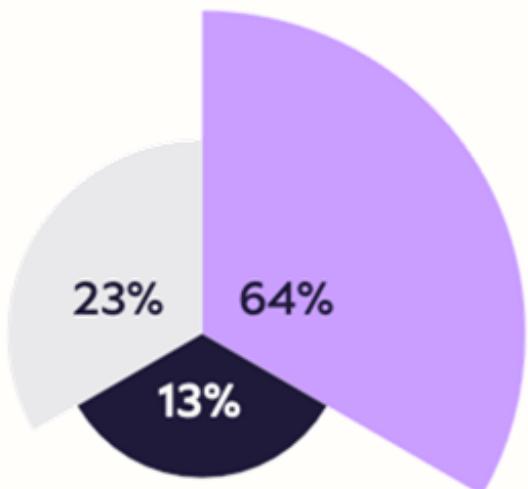


## Choose which of the following statements best describes your personal feelings on AI (n=906)

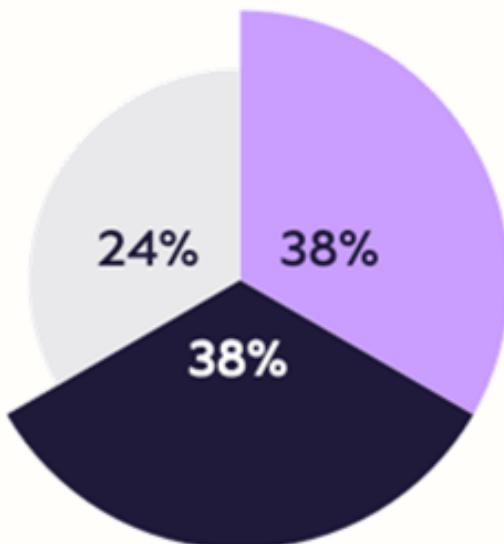
I am anxious and uneasy about using AI in my academic work	22%
I am cautious and careful about using AI in my academic work	45%
I have no strong feelings about using AI in my academic work	13%
I am quite comfortable using AI in my academic work	13%
I feel confident and positive about using AI in my academic work	8%

## We asked students...

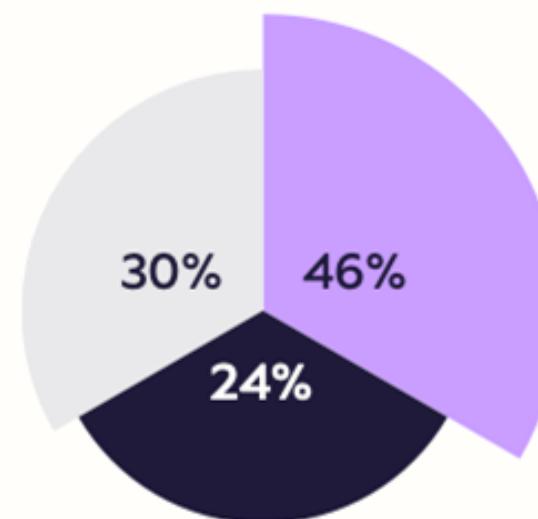
Does your institution have an AI policy?



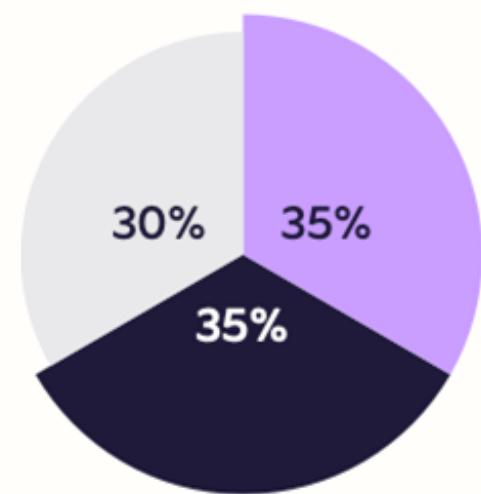
Are students permitted to use AI in academic work?



Are students required to cite AI if they use it in academic work?



Has your institution pre-approved specific AI tools for students to use in their academic work?



- Yes
- No
- Not sure

## We asked students...

**I would be more confident that an AI product is aligned with my institution's AI policy if it was recommended and approved by...**

My library



Academic staff



Other students



■ Strongly disagree

☒ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☒ Agree

■ Strongly agree

**“...when librarians speak,  
students trust them.”**

# Research obstacles

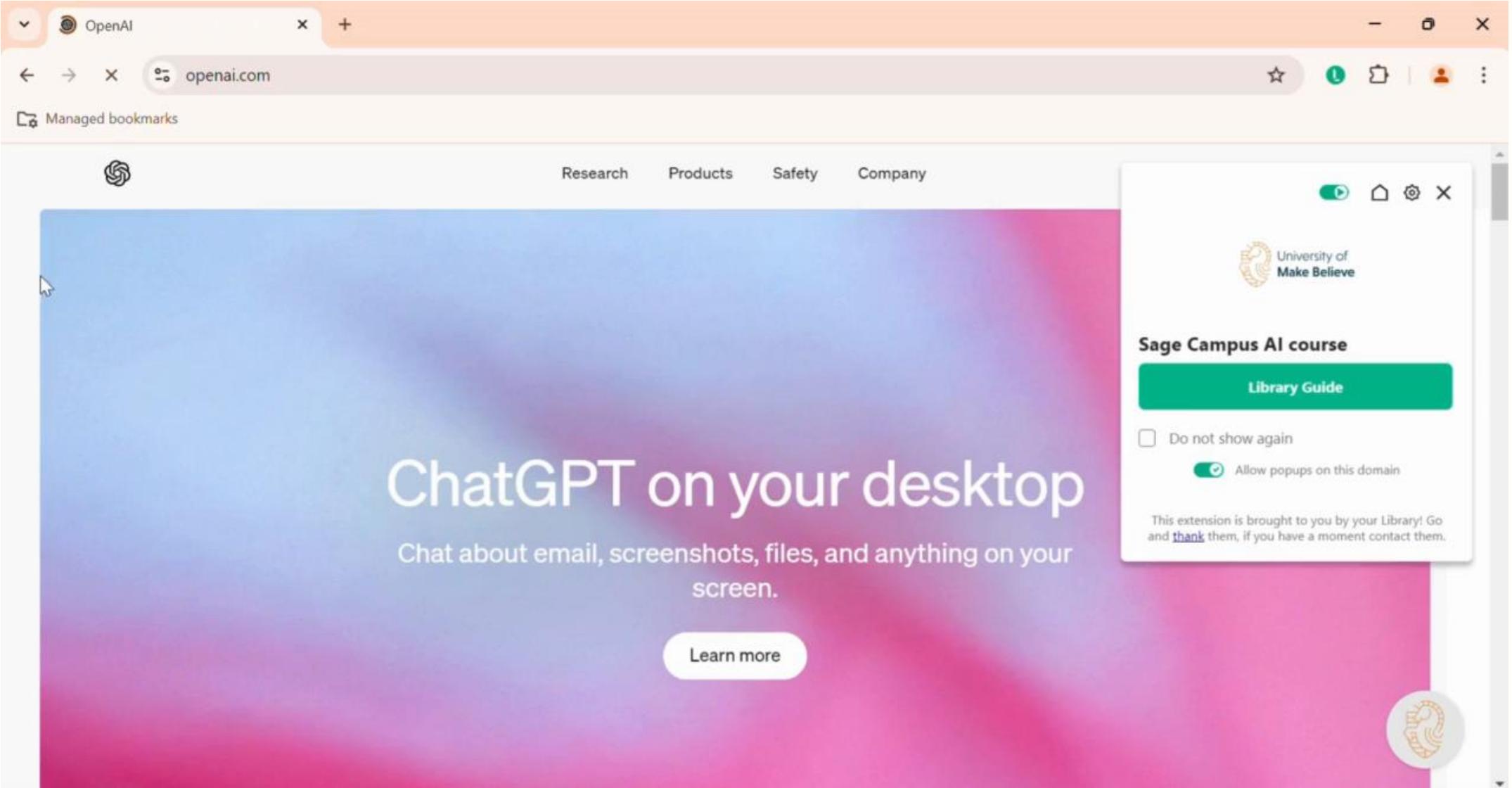


## We asked librarians...

How confident would you feel advising students on the following subjects?

	Not at all or not so confident	Somewhat confident	Very or extremely confident
<b>Using AI in your research process (n=266)</b>	24%	45%	31%
<b>Searching effectively for relevant resources (n=265)</b>	3%	15%	83%
<b>Working in a digital environment (n=266)</b>	3%	18%	79%
<b>Finding good information (n=263)</b>	3%	7%	90%
<b>Reading academic literature (n=266)</b>	3%	21%	76%
<b>Thinking critically about the subject (n=266)</b>	2%	20%	77%

**“...Librarian expertise in information literacy and critical thinking can be recontextualised for the AI age, empowering librarians to meet these new challenges...”**



The image shows a web browser window with the OpenAI website loaded at [openai.com](https://openai.com). The main content features a large, colorful gradient background with the text "ChatGPT on your desktop" and "Chat about email, screenshots, files, and anything on your screen." Below this is a "Learn more" button. At the top of the page are navigation links for Research, Products, Safety, and Company. A sidebar on the right contains links for Managed bookmarks, University of Make Believe, Sage Campus AI course, and a Library Guide button. A pop-up window from "University of Make Believe" is overlaid on the page, containing a "Sage Campus AI course" section with a "Library Guide" button, a "Do not show again" checkbox, and an "Allow popups on this domain" checkbox. A note at the bottom of the pop-up says, "This extension is brought to you by your Library! Go and [thank](#) them, if you have a moment contact them." A small circular icon with a logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the browser window.

Librarian Futures Part IV is out now!



#LibrarianFutures

The image shows the front cover of the 'Librarian Futures 04' whitepaper. The title 'Librarian Futures' is in large, bold, dark blue letters, with '04' in a smaller blue circle to the right. Below the title is a photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, smiling and working on a laptop. To his right, a person's hands are shown holding a smartphone. In the top right corner, there is a circular portrait of a woman. The background features abstract shapes like circles and lines in light blue, orange, and teal. At the bottom, the text reads: 'Librarian Leadership on the AI Frontier' and 'What can student and librarian perspectives on the role of AI in higher education tell us about librarian leadership in this new frontier?'. The 'Technology from Sage' logo is in the bottom right corner.

[www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers](http://www.technologyfromsage.com/whitepapers)