

Letter from the Guest Editor

Peter Musser

As guest editor, it is my pleasure to welcome you to a special issue of *ITAL* covering the intersection of libraries and artificial intelligence (AI).

In the summer of 2023, I volunteered to chair ALA Core's Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in Libraries Interest Group. A few months earlier I had stepped into the role of head of library services for a nonprofit organization whose flagship offering was a digital library of open educational materials. As an early-career librarian I was both excited and more than a little nervous, which brought me back to ALA to see what resources were available. ALA Core, with its tagline of "Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures," seemed like a natural fit for where I was headed.

Around the same time, generative AI had been making waves as chatbots powered by large language models seemed to spring fully formed from the domain of high-level computer scientists and into public consciousness. AI's *image* generating capability had its moment in the sun a year or two before: people expected that image-generating models could create plausible images based on a user's text, but visual artefacts like extra fingers, uncanny facial features, and inscrutable text regularly broke the illusion. In November of 2022, however, people were taken aback by the responses they would receive when interacting with OpenAI's ChatGPT. With conversational, context-aware, and confident responses, it was harder to see (or easier to look past, depending on how one frames them) the flaws and inaccuracies in the chatbot's responses.

Given the central role that knowledge synthesis and sharing play in education spaces, I was once again (or, perhaps, still) nervous and excited to imagine what lay ahead and how generative AI might work its way into people's everyday lives, for better or worse. Given librarians' dual roles as trusted experts in understanding and satisfying information needs, and interfaces between their communities and technology, I knew that I had my work cut out for me. When I again went looking for resources to help me fill my knowledge gaps, ALA Core's AI & ML Interest Group was one of the resources I found. In short order I became a member, then co-chair, and shortly thereafter my co-chair and I were invited to be guest editors for this special edition of *ITAL*.

A year has passed since then, and what a privilege it has been to see our profession lean into understanding the AI boom we are experiencing, even as the technology itself seems to advance weekly. At ALA's 2024 Annual Conference alone, 12 presented sessions and 22 poster sessions covered the intersection of librarianship and AI/ML. In fact, the first session of the conference discussing AI hit maximum occupancy before it started, and two I facilitated were filled to capacity—even after one of them was moved to a larger room to double its capacity. Attendees from libraries of all sizes and types brought wide-ranging questions, concerns, and their own experiences, which they shared generously with others.

Likewise, our call for abstracts in September 2023 for a special issue of *ITAL* that focused on AI elicited 21 submissions from 51 authors. Unfortunately, we could not accept all of them for consideration but were nonetheless impressed by the breadth of proposals. Exploring new technologies, engaging with one's peers and communities, and submitting one's findings for publication can be daunting, but it was obvious that many were willing to rise to the task. While each of the five articles in this issue has undergone formal peer review, their publication marks the beginning of a second evaluation by a much larger jury. I am hopeful that my colleagues—you, reader—will find something within these pages that resonates personally, inspiring deeper thought and engagement.

If this is the case, I would like to highlight some ways that one can contribute to the ongoing discussions around AI and ML within and around our profession. *ITAL* welcomes authors to submit their manuscripts be considered for publication in future issues on a rolling basis; more information can be found [here](#). In addition to *ITAL*, ALA Core also sponsors the publication of two other journals with different scopes: [Library Leadership & Management \(LL&M\)](#) and [Library Resources & Technical Services \(LRTS\)](#). For those interested in engaging with AI and libraries in a community setting, ALA Core's [AI & ML in Libraries Interest Group](#) always has space for new members and the ideas, questions, and challenges they bring. As I enter my second year as chair, making the interest group more engaging for its members is top of mind for me – please do reach out with ideas and suggestions!

Finally, many thanks are in order. Above all, *ITAL*'s regular editorial team, Ken Varnum and Marisha C. Kelly, have been extremely generous in sharing their time and expertise. I am indebted to you both and have accordingly added myself to the peer review roster in perpetuity. I'd also like to thank the following, without whom this issue could not have taken shape:

- Joy DuBose, the co-chair of the AI & ML in Libraries interest group for the 2023-2024 term, for helping to get the special issue underway;
- the members of *ITAL*'s editorial board for the opportunity to serve as guest editor for this extremely timely topic;
- our peer reviewers and copyeditors, who were generous with their time in helping the authors featured in this issue to clarify and present their ideas and work in the best light;
- all who took the time to prepare and submit abstracts for this special issue.

In this Issue

Peer-reviewed articles in this special issue are listed here:

- [“Responsible AI Practice in Libraries and Archives: A Review of the Literature”](#) by Sara Mannheimer, Natalie Bond, Scott W. H. Young, Hannah Scates Kettler, Addison Marcus, Sally K. Slipper, Jason A. Clark, Yasmeen Shorish, Doralyn Rossmann, and Bonnie Sheehey. The authors explore the existing literature to identify and summarize trends in how libraries have (or have not) considered AI's ethical implications.
- [“It Takes a Village: A Distributed Training Model for AI-based Chatbots”](#) by Beth Twomey, Annie Johnson, and Colleen Estes, discusses the steps taken at their institution to develop and implement a library chatbot powered by a large language model, as well as lessons learned.
- [“‘Gimme Some Truth’ AI Music and Implications for Copyright and Cataloging”](#) by Adam Eric Berkowitz, details modern developments in AI-assisted music creation, and the resultant challenges that these surface regarding copyright and cataloging work.
- [“Adapting Machine Translation Engines to the Needs of Cultural Heritage Metadata”](#) by Konstantinos Chatzitheodorou, Eirini Kaldeli, Antoine Isaac, Paolo Scalia, Carmen Grau Lacal, and M^aÁngeles García Escrivá provides an overview of the process used to hone general-use machine translation engines to improve their outputs when translating cultural heritage metadata in the Europeana repository from one language to another.
- [“Exploring the Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on Higher Education Students' Utilization of Library Resources: A Critical Examination”](#) by Lynsey Meakin applies the Technological Acceptance Model to higher education students' perceptions and adoption of tools using generative AI models.

We also have, in keeping with the theme for this issue, the first of our new “ITAL &” column series and our regular “Public Libraries Leading the Way” column:

- **Public Libraries Leading the Way:** [“Activating *Our Intelligence: A Common-Sense Approach to Artificial Intelligence*”](#) by Dorothy Stoltz
- **ITAL &:** [“The Jack in the Black Box: Teaching College Students to Use ChatGPT Critically”](#) by Shu Wan

Peter J. Musser, Guest Editor
pmusser@gmail.com