



AI Readiness in Academic Libraries: Usage Patterns, Barriers, and Training Needs at the University of Ruhuna

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Within the dynamic global scenario, though library operations are being revolutionized through Artificial Intelligence (AI), its acceptance by library staff remains varied. This study aimed to evaluate the awareness, usage patterns, barriers to adoption, and training interests among library staff at the University of Ruhuna. An online survey was administered to 50 staff members, including academic, non-academic, and administrative staff, representing multiple levels of experience. According to the survey results, 66% of staff reported being familiar with AI tools, but only 10% had received formal training, revealing an 86% training gap. Despite this limited training, 60% currently use AI tools, mainly for translation services (68% of users), ChatGPT (52%), and grammar checkers (34%). Additionally, 64% of users reported using them regularly (daily or weekly). The benefits reported by staff included increased productivity, work accuracy, and significant time savings. The main barriers to using and adopting AI tools were lack of formal training on AI, limited awareness of available AI tools, and insufficient technical skills. Moreover, results indicated that interest in training is high, with 86% showing strong interest in receiving training and 90% preferring hands-on workshops. Regarding future library services, staff rated AI as very important (78%) or important (18%). However, self-assessed understanding of AI remained low, with 68% rating themselves at or below moderate proficiency. The results indicated a negative relationship between experience and AI understanding, showing that senior staff, particularly those with over 20 years of experience, had the lowest comprehension score of 1.9 out of 5. Therefore, it is recommended that structured training sessions be offered, including peer learning sessions, development of customized AI tools for library applications, and clear timelines for addressing skills gaps.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Artificial intelligence, Library services, Staff training, Technology adoption, Professional development