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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – COMPETITOR OR PARTNER? THE FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY INSTITUTION

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Abstract. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has profoundly reshaped contemporary knowledge ecosystems, transforming how information is accessed, processed, and internalized. As algorithmic systems increasingly mediate learning and information retrieval, traditional reading practices and library-centered knowledge cultures appear to be diminishing. This study critically examines whether artificial intelligence constitutes a disruptive replacement or a complementary force for library institutions. Through analytical and philosophical reflection, the paper argues that while AI enhances efficiency, personalization, and accessibility, it lacks the cultural depth, epistemological responsibility, and ethical mediation inherent to libraries. Consequently, the future sustainability of libraries depends not on resisting AI, but on integrating it as an intellectual partner that reinforces libraries' role as guardians of critical thinking, cultural memory, and knowledge integrity in the digital age.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, libraries, knowledge society, digital transformation, epistemology.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is fundamentally reshaping the way contemporary society perceives and engages with knowledge. Information is no longer regarded primarily as the outcome of extensive inquiry and intellectual reflection; instead, it is increasingly perceived as an immediate algorithmic response. While this transformation has significantly facilitated access to information, it has also raised concerns about the gradual decline of such intellectual skills as deep reading, analytical thinking, and reflective understanding.

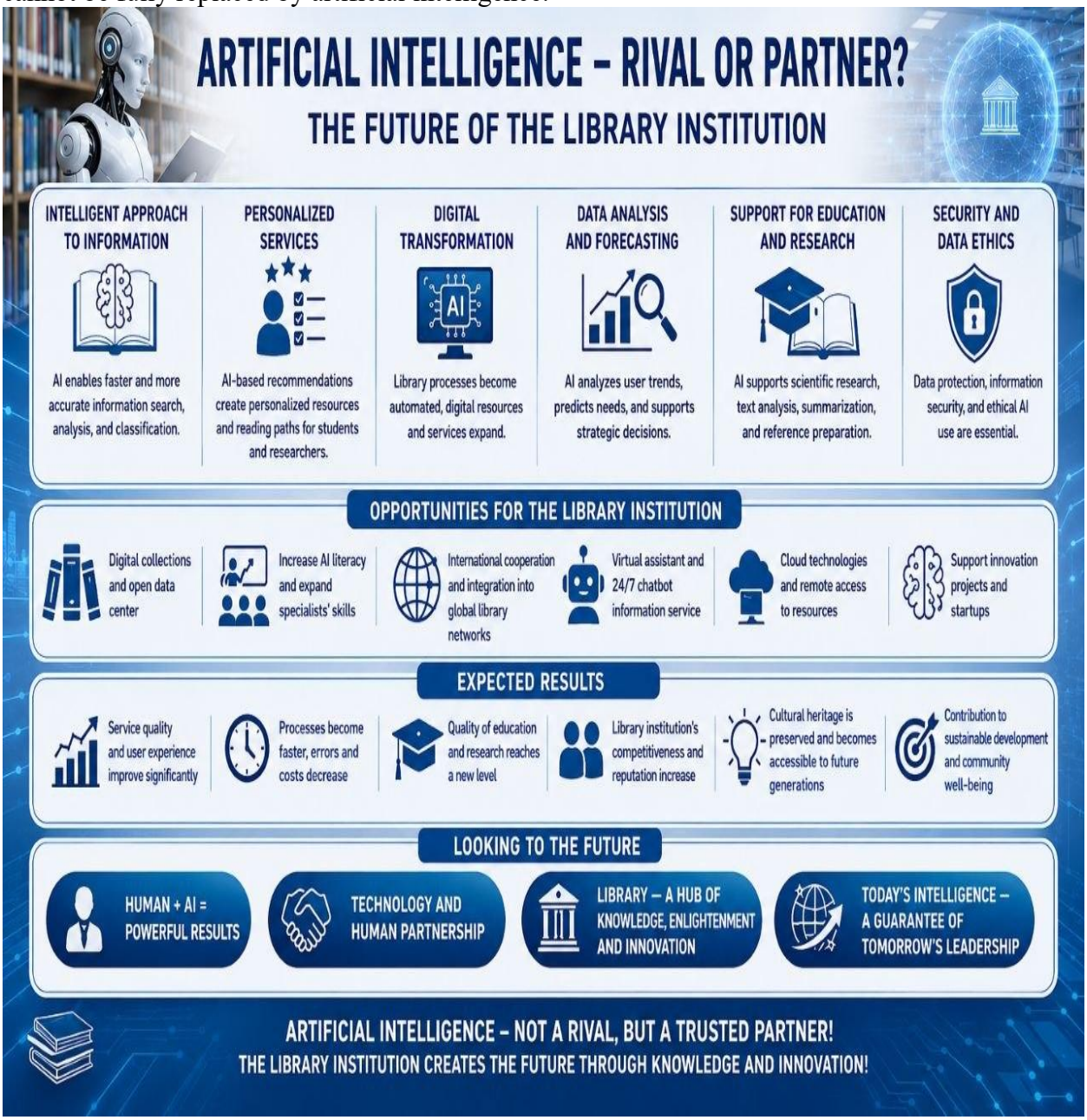
Historically, libraries have served as the intellectual foundation of society. Their role has extended beyond the collection and preservation of knowledge to include its organization, interpretation, and transmission across generations within broader cultural contexts. In the digital age, however, the institution of the library has entered a new stage of reconsidering its epistemological and social significance in the context of artificial intelligence.

The increasingly prevalent question of whether "artificial intelligence will eventually replace libraries" is, in essence, not merely technological but also philosophical and cultural. This question is closely related to fundamental issues concerning the nature of knowledge, the processes through which knowledge is created and interpreted, and the responsible application of knowledge within society. Artificial intelligence can process and generate information, but it does not comprehend knowledge in the human sense; libraries, by contrast, contribute to the formation of knowledge within the framework of social consciousness, cultural memory, and intellectual heritage.

International experience demonstrates that libraries in developed countries increasingly perceive artificial intelligence not as a competitor but as a tool for institutional development and transformation. Major libraries in the United States, such as the New York Public Library and the Boston Public Library, have implemented AI-based cataloguing and recommendation systems to facilitate and accelerate users' access to information. At the same time, the intellectual role of librarians remains essential in the interpretation, evaluation, and contextualization of scholarly and informational resources.

In Europe, particularly in the university libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, artificial intelligence has technically simplified the process of working with scholarly resources. Automated indexing and search mechanisms enable researchers to identify academic materials more quickly; however, the evaluation of their scholarly value remains dependent on human judgment and intellectual reasoning. This situation clearly demonstrates the intellectual boundary between artificial intelligence and human cognition.

In Asian countries, particularly Singapore and South Korea, libraries are placing increasing emphasis on creating digital and interactive environments through the use of artificial intelligence. Virtual libraries and remote knowledge platforms have contributed to democratizing access to information. Nevertheless, these experiences also demonstrate that human consultation, communication, and intellectual guidance cannot be fully replaced by artificial intelligence.



Interpreting the relationship between artificial intelligence and libraries as a form of competition represents an overly simplistic approach. From a technological perspective, artificial intelligence enables the rapid processing and delivery of information; however, it does not fully encompass the contextual, historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions of knowledge. A library, by contrast, is an institutional environment that enables knowledge to be understood within its broader cultural and social context. In this sense, artificial intelligence should not be viewed as a substitute for the library, but rather as a partner that provides epistemological and technological support for its activities. AI accelerates access to knowledge, while the responsibility for interpreting knowledge and assessing its broader social implications remains with humans and library institutions. Consequently, collaboration between artificial intelligence and libraries is emerging as a key mechanism for maintaining intellectual balance in the contemporary knowledge society.

Artificial intelligence is not intended to replace the library as an institution; rather, it serves to accelerate its transformation. Libraries can preserve their relevance in the digital age only by integrating artificial intelligence in a conscious, critical, and strategic manner. The library of the future will be an intellectual institution in which algorithmic efficiency and human reasoning are harmoniously integrated, enabling knowledge to be delivered not only rapidly but also responsibly, critically, and within its appropriate cultural and social context.

Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro‘yxati.

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