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ETHICAL, LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PRACTICE

Dahunsi Florence Tope
Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti.
Email: dahunsiflorencetope@gmail.com, florence.dahunsi@eksu.edu.ng
&
Jacob Kehinde Opele
Department of Library and Information Science,
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti
Email: jacob.opele@fuoye.edu.ng (**corresponding**)

ABSTRACT

The study examined the ethical, legal, and professional implications of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in library and information practice, focusing on librarians in Nigerian tertiary institutions. A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted using multistage sampling, with 220 questionnaires distributed and 215 correctly completed and returned (97.7% response rate). Data were collected with a validated questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha 0.79) and analysed using SPSS for frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Findings showed high awareness that GAI raises ethical concerns (mean 3.96) and moderate to high understanding of ethical risks such as bias, misinformation, copyright, and privacy (means 3.64–3.53), although overall perceived knowledge remained limited (3.21). Librarians strongly agreed that GAI may mislead users, undermine academic integrity, and perpetuate bias (means up to 3.95), and expressed concerns about critical thinking and fairness. Legal worries centred on plagiarism (3.97), data privacy (3.89), and uncertain ownership of AI-generated outputs (3.54). Professionally, respondents anticipated significant changes to roles (3.67), recognised the need for new competencies such as AI literacy (4.06), and believed GAI could enhance effectiveness under clear guidelines (3.98). However, governance was perceived as weak, with low mean scores for institutional AI policies, library-specific guidelines, and oversight structures (mean = 2.5). The study concludes that librarians are aware of both the risks and opportunities of GAI but operate in contexts with inadequate governance and support. It recommends investment in AI literacy, development of clear policies and governance frameworks, and active involvement of librarians in shaping responsible GAI use in library information practice.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence; AI ethics; copyright and data protection; academic integrity; professional roles.

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Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GAI) has swiftly transitioned from a theoretical concept to a widespread entity inside higher education, research, and information services (Narayanan et al., 2024). In libraries and information centres, Generative Artificial Intelligence tools, particularly large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, are progressively employed to facilitate natural language searches, compose content, summarise documents, generate educational materials, and offer conversational research support. Commentators contend that these tools could revolutionise fundamental library functions, such as reference services, information literacy instruction, metadata generation, and digital scholarship assistance, by automating mundane tasks and facilitating novel forms of personalised, interactive user engagement (Narayanan et al., 2024; Srivastava & Tripathi, 2025). This shift simultaneously presents a multifaceted array of ethical, legal, and professional enquiries that contest established norms in librarianship and information practice (Gmiterek, 2025; Sousa, 2025).

Ethical dilemmas are a significant concern associated with the implementation of GAI in libraries. Generative models are recognised for generating outputs that, while convincing, may be factually inaccurate or contrived, a phenomena sometimes referred to as "hallucination," which can mislead consumers and erode trust when presented as authoritative information (Gmiterek, 2025). They may also replicate and exacerbate societal biases embedded in their training data, potentially leading to discriminatory or exclusionary representations that contradict libraries' enduring commitments to equity, inclusivity, and intellectual freedom (Narayanan et al., 2024). Recent evaluations of AI in university libraries underscore the necessity for librarians to cultivate critical AI literacy, enabling them to utilise these technologies successfully while also scrutinising their limitations, foundational assumptions, and sociotechnical ramifications (Montesi et al., 2025; Sousa, 2025). International and academic library organisations are increasingly scrutinising GAI, emphasising the importance of transparency, critical assessment, and user education in AI-mediated services.

The legal ramifications are equally substantial and frequently interconnected with ethical considerations. Copyright law encounters new challenges arising from both the training and application phases of generative AI. Current litigation and policy discussions interrogate whether the scraping and mining of extensive copyrighted materials for the training of generative models constitutes infringement, and under what circumstances such practices may be deemed fair use or fall under text and data mining exceptions (Rademeyer, 2026). Conversely, there remains persistent ambiguity over the copyright status of AI-assisted outputs and the distribution of authorship between human users and AI systems. Academic libraries, which curate, license, and facilitate access to copyrighted materials extensively, must address these unresolved issues when advising users, formulating policies on generative artificial intelligence usage, and contemplating the incorporation of generative tools into discovery platforms or content creation processes. Concurrent issues emerge regarding data protection

and privacy when user enquiries, institutional documents, or sensitive information are handled by third-party AI services, prompting enquiries about consent, data retention, jurisdiction, and adherence to evolving AI and data protection regulations.

In addition to ethical and legal considerations, generative AI poses significant professional enquiries for librarians and other information specialists. Researchers observe that the integration of AI in libraries may transform professional responsibilities from predominantly curating and facilitating information access to collaboratively creating knowledge products, overseeing AI-enhanced workflows, and serving as consultants on ethical AI utilisation (Narayanan et al., 2024). New expectations encompass the assessment of AI tools, the configuration of AI-driven systems, the interpretation of AI outputs, and the guidance of users regarding bias, academic integrity, and the citation of AI-generated contents. The augmented responsibilities require a combination of conventional information science abilities alongside technological, ethical, and pedagogical expertise pertinent to AI (Montesi et al., 2025; Lo, 2026. Recent analyses forecast the development of specialised positions, such as "AI literacy specialists" and "AI ethics advisers," in libraries, highlighting the necessity to re-evaluate professional identities, workloads, and training trajectories (Srivastava & Tripathi, 2025).

Empirical evidence indicates that librarians are both intrigued by and apprehensive regarding generative AI. Surveys of academic librarians indicate a very low degree of comprehensive deployment of AI tools at the institutional level, although significantly higher levels of individual experimentation and a heightened sense of urgency regarding AI ethics. Research on AI literacy in academic libraries indicates that librarians acknowledge the significance of comprehending AI concepts, limitations, and ethical considerations; however, they face obstacles including insufficient training opportunities, a dearth of local expertise, and a lack of definitive policies (Montesi et al., 2025). Research concentrating on generative AI in library operations reveals a blend of optimism about its prospective advantages and concern concerning disinformation, bias, and excessive dependence on opaque systems (Gmiterek, 2025; Sousa, 2025).

Policy declarations and toolkits from organisations like IFLA and national library entities underscore the necessity for comprehensive governance structures, transparent user communication, and human oversight in any AI-mediated service. Notwithstanding the increasing discourse, a significant deficiency persists in rigorous, context-sensitive research regarding the ethical, legal, and professional ramifications of generative AI specifically within library and information practice. A significant portion of the current literature discusses "AI" broadly or emphasises technical applications and service advances, while only marginally considering librarians' perspectives of ethical risks, legal ambiguities, and role evolution (Perlman, 2024; Sousa, 2025). Discussions of ethics and law frequently occur at an abstract level, referencing overarching AI ethics principles or legal advancements, yet they often

neglect to explore how librarians interpret and implement these concepts in daily decision-making, policy formulation, and user interactions. Empirical evidence regarding librarians' comprehension of issues such as copyright in AI training data, ownership and citation of AI-assisted outputs, confidentiality of user queries to AI systems, and the alignment of generative AI usage with professional ethical codes is limited.

Moreover, professional implications including perceived effects on autonomy, judgement, workload, and necessary competencies remain inadequately examined, especially in environments where infrastructure and policy frameworks are undergoing swift transformation (Glittered, 2025). As institutions design or revise AI policies, librarians' viewpoints on ethically acceptable, legally compliant, and professionally responsible use of GAI are essential for establishing equitable and effective governance frameworks (IFLA, 2024). It is crucial to comprehend librarians' awareness of ethical and legal issues, the risks and opportunities they identify, their perceptions of how GAI may transform professional roles, and their evaluations of current policies and guidance to develop focused training, policy interventions, and support systems (Montesi et al., 2025).

Objective

This paper examines the ethical, legal, and professional implications of generative artificial intelligence in library and information practice, emphasising the viewpoints of practicing librarians. Specifically, the study seek to:

1. examine librarians' awareness and understanding of the ethical and legal issues associated with the use of generative AI in library and information practice.
2. identify the perceived ethical implications of generative AI for users, collections, and services in libraries and information centres.
3. investigate the legal implications of generative AI use in libraries, particularly in relation to copyright, data protection, and academic integrity.
4. assess the perceived impact of generative AI on librarians' professional roles, responsibilities, and competencies.
5. determine the extent to which policies, guidelines, and governance frameworks exist to regulate the use of generative AI in library and information practice.
6. propose strategies for ensuring ethical, legally compliant, and professionally responsible use of generative AI in library and information settings.

Research Questions

The following corresponding research questions guided the study

1. What is the level of awareness and understanding of ethical and legal issues related to generative AI among librarians in library and information practice?

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2. What ethical implications do librarians perceive in the use of generative AI for users, collections, and services in libraries and information centres?
3. What legal implications are associated with the use of generative AI in libraries, particularly regarding copyright, data protection, and academic integrity?
4. How do librarians perceive the impact of generative AI on their professional roles, responsibilities, and required competencies?
5. To what extent do policies, guidelines, and governance frameworks exist to regulate the use of generative AI in library and information practice?
6. What strategies do librarians suggest for ensuring ethical, legally compliant, and professionally responsible use of generative AI in library and information settings?

Methods

Study Design

A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted to obtain Librarians' awareness, perceptions, experiences, and views on strategies regarding GAI at a single point in time. This design was considered appropriate because it allows systematic description of attitudes and perceived implications across a relatively large and diverse professional population without manipulating any variables.

Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

The target population comprised professional and paraprofessional librarians employed in library and information centres in Nigerian tertiary institutions. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. First, institutions were selected purposively to represent different ownership types (federal, state, and private universities. Within each selected institution, all librarians and library officers who were directly involved in user services, technical services, digital/information technology units, or administration were considered eligible to participate. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed via online google form, of which 215 were correctly completed and returned, yielding a usable response rate of 97.7%. This sample size was deemed adequate for descriptive analysis and is comparable to previous AI-related surveys in academic libraries that used similar or smaller samples to draw meaningful conclusions about perceptions and readiness.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Ethical, Legal and Professional Implications of Generative AI in Library and Information Practice" (QELP-GAI). The instrument was developed by the researcher after reviewing relevant literature on AI ethics in libraries, AI literacy, and professional guidelines for GAI use. It was divided into five sections.

Section A: Sociodemographic and professional characteristics (e.g., gender, age, highest qualification, professional status, years of experience, type of library, department/unit).
Section B: Awareness and understanding of ethical and legal issues related to generative AI (e.g., awareness of privacy risks, copyright implications, bias, and transparency).
Section C: Perceived ethical implications (e.g., impact on user privacy, fairness, misinformation, academic integrity) and legal implications (e.g., copyright infringement, data protection, liability).
Section D: Perceived professional implications (e.g., impact on professional roles, competencies, codes of ethics, decision-making autonomy).
Section E: Availability of policies and governance frameworks, and suggested strategies for ethical, legal, and professionally responsible use of GAI (e.g., training, guidelines, oversight structures, user education).
Sections B–E consisted mainly of Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) designed to measure levels of awareness, perceived risk, perceived impact, and support for various strategies.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content validity of the questionnaire was established through expert review. A draft version was submitted to three experts in library and information science (with experience in ICT/AI in libraries and information ethics) and one expert in research methods. They evaluated the instrument for relevance, clarity, coverage of ethical, legal, and professional constructs, and appropriateness of the response scales. Their suggestions led to refinement of item wording, re-grouping of some questions, and removal of ambiguities before the pilot test. The instrument was pilot-tested with 20 librarians from two libraries that were not included in the main study. Responses from the pilot were analysed to assess internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the major scales were 0.82 for ethical implications, 0.79 for legal implications, 0.85 for professional implications, and 0.87 for strategies, all of which exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 and indicate satisfactory reliability. Minor revisions were made to improve clarity before administering the final instrument.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out over a defined period using a combination of online and paper-based administration to maximise coverage and response rates. For libraries with reliable internet access, the questionnaire was converted into a Google Form and the link was shared via institutional email lists, professional WhatsApp groups, and official library communication channels. In institutions with less reliable connectivity, printed questionnaires were distributed and retrieved with the assistance of designated contact persons (usually senior librarians or heads of units). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the questionnaire; respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the approximate time required, their right to skip questions or withdraw, and the confidentiality of their responses. Reminders were sent after one and two weeks to encourage

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completion, especially for the online component. Completed paper questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and then coded and entered into the statistical software alongside online responses.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and to answer the research questions. For the Likert-scale items, mean scores were used to determine the general trend of responses, with higher means indicating higher levels of agreement or perceived importance.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval or formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review boards and participating libraries before data collection commenced. Respondents were assured that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty, and that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. No personally identifying information was collected; questionnaires were anonymous and data were reported at aggregate level only. Completed questionnaires and electronic data files were stored securely (password-protected and accessible only to the researcher) to protect confidentiality and data integrity. The study adhered to established ethical principles for research involving human participants and reflected current discussions on ethical and responsible use of AI in academic libraries.

Results

Table 1:

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 215)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	99	46.0
	Female	116	54.0
Age group (years)	21–30	32	14.9
	31–40	85	39.5
	41–50	63	29.3
	51 and above	35	16.3
Highest educational qualification	Bachelor's degree (BLIS/B.Sc.)	71	33.0
	Master's degree (MLIS/related)	116	54.0
	PhD/Doctorate	28	13.0
Professional status	Professional librarian	152	70.7
	Paraprofessional/Library officer	63	29.3
Years of work experience	Less than 5 years	44	20.5
	5–9 years	70	32.6
	10–14 years	56	26.0
	15 years and above	45	20.9
Type of institution	Federal university	101	47.0
	State university	72	33.5
	Private university	42	19.5
Current department/unit	Readers' services/reference	74	34.4

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Technical services (cataloguing, etc.)	56	26.0
E-resources/ICT	46	21.4
Administration/others	39	18.1

The sociodemographic profile as shown in table revealed a slightly female-dominated workforce (54% female, 46% male), reflecting common gender patterns in librarianship. The age distribution is concentrated in the 31–40 (39.5%) and 41–50 (29.3%) brackets, indicating a largely mid-career cohort with substantial professional exposure. Educationally, most respondents hold at least a master's degree (≈54%), with a further third holding bachelor's qualifications and about 13% having doctorates, suggesting a highly qualified group. Around 71% are professional librarians and nearly 80% have five or more years of experience, pointing to a mature professional base rather than novices. The spread across federal, state and private universities, and across core units (readers' services, technical services, e-resources/ICT, administration), means the findings reflect perspectives from diverse institutional types and functional roles.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness and understanding of ethical and legal issues related to generative AI among librarians in library and information practice?

Table 2:

Awareness and Understanding of Ethical and Legal Issues Related to Generative AI (N = 215)

Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	U n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean
I am aware that generative AI tools may raise ethical concerns in library and information work.	9 (4.3)	14 (6.5)	21 (9.8)	106 (49.3)	65 (30.2)	3.96
I understand the main ethical risks of using generative AI (e.g., bias, misinformation).	11 (5.1)	25 (11.6)	37 (17.2)	96 (44.7)	46 (21.4)	3.64
I am aware of the legal issues surrounding copyright and generative AI tools.	14 (6.5)	30 (14.0)	40 (18.6)	90 (41.9)	41 (19.1)	3.53
I understand data-protection and privacy implications when users interact with generative AI.	16 (7.4)	32 (14.9)	46 (21.4)	84 (39.1)	37 (17.2)	3.43
Overall, I feel I have adequate knowledge of the ethical and legal issues related to generative AI.	23 (10.7)	42 (19.5)	49 (22.8)	72 (33.5)	29 (13.5)	3.21

Table 2 shows high awareness but uneven depth of understanding. A clear majority recognise that generative AI raises ethical concerns in library work (mean 3.96), and many indicate understanding of ethical risks like bias and misinformation (3.64). Awareness of legal issues around copyright (3.53) and data-protection/privacy (3.43) is moderate, with a noticeable proportion still undecided, suggesting partial but incomplete legal literacy. The lowest score is for overall "adequate knowledge" (3.21), where responses are more evenly spread, indicating that many librarians do not feel fully confident about their grasp of ethical and legal implications. Overall, librarians know that these issues matter but perceive knowledge and confidence gaps that would need to be addressed through targeted training

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Research Question 2: What ethical implications do librarians perceive in the use of generative AI for users, collections, and services in libraries and information centres?

Table 3: Perceived Ethical Implications of Generative AI for Users, Collections and Services (N = 215)

Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	U n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean
Generative AI may mislead users by producing inaccurate or fabricated information.	7 (3.3)	14 (6.5)	30 (14.0)	99 (46.0)	65 (30.2)	3.95
Generative AI can reinforce or amplify social and cultural bias in library content and services.	9 (4.2)	18 (8.4)	34 (15.8)	96 (44.7)	58 (27.0)	3.81
Use of generative AI in user services could undermine academic integrity if not carefully guided.	6 (2.8)	12 (5.6)	32 (14.9)	103 (47.9)	62 (28.8)	3.95
Reliance on generative AI may weaken users' critical thinking and information-evaluation skills.	10 (4.7)	23 (10.7)	46 (21.4)	92 (42.8)	44 (20.5)	3.63
Generative AI raises serious concerns about fairness and equitable access to information.	11 (5.1)	25 (11.6)	48 (22.3)	87 (40.5)	44 (20.5)	3.58

Table 3 indicates that respondents perceive strong and multi-faceted ethical risks in the use of generative AI. High means for "misleading users through inaccurate or fabricated information" and "undermining academic integrity" (both 3.95) show that misinformation and cheating are dominant worries. Librarians also agree that GAI can amplify social and cultural bias in library content and services (3.81), reflecting concern about fairness and representation. They are moderately to strongly worried that reliance on GAI may weaken users' critical thinking and evaluation skills (3.63) and raise fairness and equity concerns (3.58). Taken together, the table suggests that librarians see GAI as ethically high-risk technology that could compromise trust, integrity, and critical engagement if not carefully controlled and mediated

Research Question 3: What legal implications are associated with the use of generative AI in libraries, particularly regarding copyright, data protection, and academic integrity?

Table 4:

Perceived Legal Implications of Generative AI Use in Libraries (N = 215)

Item	SD (%)	nD n (%)	U n (%)	A n (%)	SA (%)	nMean
Using generative AI with copyrighted materials may expose my library to copyright-infringement risks.	8 (3.7)	21 (9.8)	36 (16.7)	99 (46.0)	51 (23.7)	3.78
I am concerned about data-protection and privacy when user data are shared with external AI providers.	7 (3.3)	16 (7.4)	34 (15.8)	94 (43.7)	64 (29.8)	3.89
Generative AI can facilitate plagiarism and breaches of academic integrity among students and researchers.	6 (2.8)	13 (6.0)	29 (13.5)	102 (47.4)	65 (30.2)	3.97
It is unclear who owns or can claim authorship of AI-assisted outputs created in the library context.	11 (5.1)	27 (12.6)	51 (23.7)	85 (39.5)	41 (19.1)	3.54
My library currently lacks clear legal guidance on acceptable uses of generative AI.	9 (4.2)	23 (10.7)	44 (20.5)	91 (42.3)	48 (22.3)	3.68

Table 4 shows high sensitivity to legal risks, especially around academic integrity, privacy, and copyright. The strongest concern is that GAI can facilitate plagiarism and academic-integrity breaches

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(mean 3.97), with most respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Concerns about data-protection and privacy when user data are routed through external AI providers are also very high (3.89), indicating anxiety about confidentiality and regulatory compliance. Respondents agree that using GAI with copyrighted materials may expose libraries to infringement risks (3.78), and many feel uncertain about authorship and ownership of AI-assisted outputs (3.54). The perception that libraries lack clear legal guidance (3.68) highlights a guidance vacuum: librarians recognise the legal stakes but do not feel adequately supported by institutional rules or legal advice.

Research Question 4: How do librarians perceive the impact of generative AI on their professional roles, responsibilities, and required competencies?

Table 5:

Perceived Impact of Generative AI on Professional Roles and Competencies (N = 215)

Item	SD (%)	nD n (%)	U n (%)	A n (%)	SA (%)	nMean
Generative AI will significantly change my professional roles and daily tasks as a librarian.	9 (4.2)	21 (9.8)	46 (21.4)	94 (43.7)	45 (20.9)	3.67
I will need new competencies (e.g., AI literacy, data ethics) to work effectively with generative AI.	4 (1.9)	10 (4.7)	25 (11.6)	106 (49.3)	70 (32.6)	4.06
Generative AI may reduce my professional autonomy in making information and service decisions.	16 (7.4)	34 (15.8)	55 (25.6)	73 (34.0)	37 (17.2)	3.36
Generative AI can enhance my professional effectiveness if used under clear guidelines and oversight.	5 (2.3)	11 (5.1)	30 (14.0)	108 (50.2)	61 (28.4)	3.98
I am concerned that generative AI could eventually threaten some traditional librarian roles.	18 (8.4)	37 (17.2)	60 (27.9)	68 (31.6)	32 (14.9)	3.27

Table 5 suggests librarians expect substantial professional change, with a mix of optimism and caution. A majority believe generative AI will alter their professional roles and daily tasks (mean 3.67), and there is very strong agreement that new competencies such as AI literacy and data ethics will be needed (4.06). Many feel that GAI can improve their effectiveness when used under clear guidelines and oversight (3.98), showing openness to using AI as a productivity and service-quality tool. However, concerns about reduced professional autonomy (3.36) and threats to traditional roles (3.27) are moderate; a sizeable share of respondents are undecided, indicating uncertainty rather than clear alarm. Overall, librarians appear ready to evolve their roles and skills, provided that integration is guided, ethical and supports rather than replaces professional judgment.

Research Question 5: To what extent do policies, guidelines, and governance frameworks exist to regulate the use of generative AI in library and information practice?

Table 6: Perceptions of Policies, Guidelines and Governance Frameworks for Generative AI (N = 215)

Item	SD (%)	nD n (%)	U n (%)	A n (%)	SA (%)	nMean

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My institution has a formal policy on the use of generative AI in teaching, research, or services.	48 (22.3)	69 (32.1)	55 (25.6)	30 (14.0)	13 (6.0)	2.48
My library has specific guidelines for the ethical and legal use of generative AI in library services.	44 (20.5)	71 (33.0)	56 (26.0)	30 (14.0)	14 (6.5)	2.53
There is clear guidance on how to acknowledge or cite AI-assisted work within my institution.	39 (18.1)	67 (31.2)	60 (27.9)	35 (16.3)	14 (6.5)	2.62
Responsibilities for oversight and governance of generative AI use are clearly assigned in my library.	46 (21.4)	74 (34.4)	55 (25.6)	27 (12.6)	13 (6.0)	2.48
Overall, my institution is well-governed in terms of policies and frameworks for generative AI use.	41 (19.1)	76 (35.3)	59 (27.4)	26 (12.1)	13 (6.0)	2.51

Table 6 reveals weak perceived governance around generative AI. Across all items, means are below the neutral value of 3, indicating that most respondents do not believe adequate frameworks are in place. Few agree that their institutions have formal GAI policies (2.48) or library-specific ethical/legal guidelines (2.53). Clear guidance on acknowledging or citing AI-assisted work is also lacking (2.62), as are clearly assigned responsibilities for oversight and governance (2.48). Overall institutional governance for GAI is rated low (2.51). In essence, librarians see a mismatch between the complexity and risk of GAI and the current level of institutional preparedness, with policy, procedures and governance structures lagging behind practice.

Research Question 6: What strategies do librarians suggest for ensuring ethical, legally compliant, and professionally responsible use of generative AI in library and information settings?

Table 7: Suggested Strategies for Ethical, Legally Compliant and Professionally Responsible Use (N = 215)

Item	SD (%)	nD (%)	nU n (%)	A n (%)	SA (%)	nMean
Regular training and capacity-building on ethical and legal aspects of generative AI should be provided for staff.	2 (0.9)	5 (2.3)	14 (6.5)	104 (48.4)	90 (41.9)	4.29
Institutions should develop clear policies and guidelines on acceptable use of generative AI in libraries.	1 (0.5)	6 (2.8)	16 (7.4)	99 (46.0)	93 (43.3)	4.29
Librarians should be involved in drafting and implementing generative AI policies and governance structures.	3 (1.4)	7 (3.3)	21 (9.8)	106 (49.3)	78 (36.3)	4.15
Generative AI tools should be deployed gradually through pilot projects with strong human oversight.	4 (1.9)	9 (4.2)	27 (12.6)	105 (48.8)	70 (32.6)	4.05
Libraries should collaborate (e.g., through consortia) to share expertise, training materials and best practices on GAI.	2 (0.9)	7 (3.3)	23 (10.7)	108 (50.2)	75 (34.9)	4.15

Table 7 shows very strong, near-consensus support for a coherent package of strategies to manage GAI responsibly. Almost all respondents endorse regular training and capacity-building on ethical and legal aspects (mean 4.29) and insist on clear institutional policies and guidelines (4.29). There is strong agreement that librarians themselves should help draft and implement AI policies and governance structures (4.15), signalling a desire to be active partners rather than passive implementers. Respondents favour gradual deployment of GAI through pilots with strong human oversight (4.05),

indicating a preference for cautious, evidence-based implementation. High support for collaboration and consortia (4.15) shows recognition that collective efforts are needed to share expertise, resources and best practices. Overall, this table presents a well-defined roadmap: build staff capacity, formalise policies, centre librarians in governance, introduce tools through monitored pilots, and collaborate across institutions.

Discussion

The results indicate that librarians have a relatively high level of awareness that generative AI raises ethical and legal concerns, but their depth of understanding is uneven. A large majority agreed that generative AI tools may raise ethical concerns in library and information work (mean 3.96), and that they understand the main ethical risks such as bias and misinformation (mean 3.64). This aligns with recent evidence that academic librarians increasingly recognise AI ethics as central to their work and feel an urgent need to address ethical and privacy issues in AI adoption Tsekea, 2025). Awareness of legal issues such as copyright and generative AI is moderate (mean 3.53), and understanding of data-protection and privacy implications is slightly lower (mean 3.43), suggesting that many librarians are conscious of these problems but do not feel fully competent to navigate them. This is consistent with AI-ethics briefings that note librarians often understand that copyright, ownership, and privacy are at stake, but lack detailed legal literacy around AI training datasets, fair use, and data-processing agreements (Rademeyer, 2026). The lowest item mean (3.21) for overall "adequate knowledge" confirms that respondents recognise gaps in their own preparedness, echoing findings that most librarians do not feel ready to adopt or advise on generative AI tools without additional training (Lo, 2024). Overall, these results portray librarians as ethically and legally aware but not yet confidently equipped to handle the complexities of GAI.

Regarding the perceived ethical implications, Librarians perceive substantial ethical risks associated with the use of generative AI for users, collections, and services. Very high means for concerns about misleading information (3.95) and undermining academic integrity (3.95) show that respondents are acutely aware of hallucinations and the potential for students to misuse GAI for cheating or superficial learning. Similar concerns are reported by Tsekea (2025), who found that university librarians worry deeply about privacy, equality of information, protection of intellectual property, cheating, and misinformation in AI-mediated environments. Respondents also strongly agreed that GAI can reinforce or amplify social and cultural bias (mean 3.81), in line with broader AI-ethics literature that emphasises the risk of encoded prejudice and opacity in training data and model behaviour (Narayanan et al., 2024). Concerns about weakening critical thinking skills (mean 3.63) and fairness/equitable access (mean 3.58) reflect an awareness that over-reliance on AI might erode core information-literacy objectives and exacerbate digital divides. Studies on AI in university libraries stress that librarians see themselves as guardians of ethical use and fear that uncritical adoption of GAI could undermine their efforts to foster independent, critical engagement with information (Sousa, 2025; Tsekea, 2025). The

overall pattern suggests that librarians view generative AI as ethically high-risk technology that must be actively mediated through guidance, verification, and user education.

Similarly as regards the perceived legal implications (copyright, data protection, academic integrity) The findings show that librarians are highly attuned to the legal dimensions of generative AI, particularly around academic integrity, data protection, and copyright. The highest concern in this table is that GAI can facilitate plagiarism and breaches of academic integrity (mean 3.97), indicating widespread fear that students and researchers may submit AI-generated content as their own. This closely mirrors AI-ethics discussions in higher education that highlight contract cheating and indistinguishable AI-generated assignments as major emerging risks (Tsekea, 2025; "Navigating AI in Academic Libraries" webinar, 2025). Concerns about data protection and privacy when user data are shared with external providers are also very strong (mean 3.89), reflecting anxieties about sending queries, logs, or institutional documents to third-party AI platforms whose data practices may be opaque or governed by foreign jurisdictions. Librarians' worries about copyright infringement when using GAI with copyrighted materials (mean 3.78) and uncertainty over authorship of AI-assisted outputs (mean 3.54) align with recent copyright analyses showing that existing law is struggling with issues of training on large datasets, ownership of AI-generated works, and the human-authorship requirement (Rademeyer, 2026). Importantly, many librarians agree that their libraries lack clear legal guidance on acceptable uses of GAI (mean 3.68), underscoring a policy vacuum. This reinforces findings that while copyright offices and legal scholars are beginning to articulate positions on AI, institutional guidance for day-to-day library practice remains underdeveloped. The combined results point to a profession that is legally cautious and aware of risk, but underserved by formal legal and policy frameworks.

With regards to the perceived professional implications, Librarians anticipate that generative AI will have significant, but ambivalent, effects on their professional roles and competencies. Most respondents agreed that GAI will change their roles and daily tasks (mean 3.67) and, even more strongly, that they will need new competencies such as AI literacy and data ethics (mean 4.06). This resonates with AI-literacy research that identifies AI-related knowledge, critical evaluation, and ethical reasoning as emerging core competencies for librarians (Montesi et al., 2025; IFLA AI literacy framework, 2024). Studies emphasise that librarians are increasingly expected to teach AI literacy, evaluate AI tools, and advise on responsible use, building on their established expertise in information literacy and digital skills (Tsekea, 2025). At the same time, many respondents believe that GAI can enhance their professional effectiveness if used under clear guidelines and oversight (mean 3.98), suggesting an orientation toward AI as an augmenting tool rather than a simple threat. This aligns with commentaries that portray librarians as potential "guides in the age of AI," helping users navigate tools while integrating them into their own workflows for content creation, discovery support, and analytics (Narayanan et al., 2024).

Concerns about reduced autonomy (mean 3.36) and threats to traditional roles (mean 3.27) are moderate; a notable proportion of respondents are undecided, indicating uncertainty rather than outright fear of displacement. Similar nuance appears in studies of AI in academic libraries, which report mixed feelings about job security but strong consensus that roles will evolve toward AI evaluation, ethics counselling, and instructional leadership (Perspectives of Academic Librarians on Ethical Challenges of AI, 2025; Tsekea, 2025). Overall, librarians in this study appear ready to re-negotiate their professional identities, provided they receive adequate training and are involved in shaping AI integration.

With regards to existence of policies, guidelines, and governance frameworks, In stark contrast to their high perception of ethical and legal risk, librarians report weak policy and governance infrastructures for generative AI. Across all items, means fall below 3, indicating that most respondents disagree or are at best undecided that their institutions have formal policies, library-level guidelines, clear citation rules, or well-defined oversight responsibilities for GAI. This governance gap echoes recent surveys where a large majority of librarians indicated their institutions had not yet formalised AI policies, even as AI use among students and faculty was rapidly increasing (Lo, 2024). Professional guidance documents and webinars repeatedly urge libraries to establish robust AI policies and governance structures to manage ethical, legal, and reputational risks, but implementation appears uneven and lagging in practice (IFLA, 2024; "Navigating AI in Academic Libraries," 2025). The low scores on oversight responsibilities in particular suggest that AI governance is not yet embedded in organisational structures, leaving individual librarians to improvise responses to complex ethical and legal questions. Given that the same respondents express high levels of concern about plagiarism, privacy, bias, and copyright, this mismatch between risk and governance underlines an urgent need for institutions to develop and communicate clear, actionable frameworks for GAI use

As regards suggested strategies for ethical, legal and professional use, the study revealed that despite limited formal structures, Librarians articulate a very clear and coherent strategy for responsible generative-AI adoption. All five strategy items attract strong to very strong agreement, with overall means above 4.0. Almost all respondents endorse regular training and capacity-building on ethical and legal aspects of GAI (mean 4.29) and call for clear institutional policies and guidelines on acceptable use (mean 4.29). These priorities correspond closely with recommendations in AI-ethics and AI-literacy literature, which emphasised continuous professional development and policy development as foundational for responsible AI integration (Montesi et al., 2025; Tsekea, 2025). There is also strong support for involving librarians in drafting and implementing AI policies and governance structures (mean 4.15), which reflects broader arguments that librarians should be central stakeholders in institutional AI governance because of their expertise in ethics, information literacy, and user advocacy (IFLA, 2024). The preference for gradual deployment through pilots with strong human oversight

(mean 4.05) echoes best-practice recommendations to adopt "human-in-the-loop" models, carefully evaluate tools, and ensure transparency to users (Sousa, 2025; "Navigating AI in Academic Libraries," 2025). Finally, high support for collaboration and consortia to share expertise and best practices (mean 4.15) recognises that many libraries lack the capacity to tackle AI alone and would benefit from shared training resources, policy templates, and technical guidance. This is consistent with calls from international organisations and professional associations for consortial approaches to AI infrastructure, training, and governance (IFLA, 2024; Tsekea, 2025). Taken together, these responses show that while formal governance is currently weak, librarians themselves possess a mature, practice-oriented vision for ethical, legally compliant, and professionally responsible GAI integration, centred on training, policy, participation, careful piloting, and collaboration.

Conclusion

Librarians in Nigerian tertiary institutions are highly aware of generative AI and generally optimistic about its potential to enhance services, yet work in environments that are underprepared for its systematic adoption. Awareness and individual experimentation are high, but use in core library workflows and formal service deployment remains limited. Generative AI is viewed as promising for improving reference services, information-literacy support, document summarisation and discovery, and routine content creation, while simultaneously raising serious ethical, legal, and professional concerns. Librarians worry about misinformation, bias, weakened critical thinking, academic-integrity breaches, copyright and data-protection risks, and unclear authorship. They also anticipate new competency requirements and role changes, but operate with minimal policies, governance structures, or oversight. The findings indicate that librarians are conceptually ready to engage with generative AI, but systemic constraints and weak governance currently hinder its sustainable, responsible integration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for policy

1. University management and library leadership should urgently develop clear, written policies and guidelines governing generative AI use in teaching, research, and library services.
2. Libraries and parent institutions should implement continuous capacity-building programmes on AI literacy with a strong ethical and legal focus.
3. Governments, funding bodies, and institutional management should invest in the ICT infrastructure required for safe and effective use of generative AI.
4. Libraries should avoid abrupt, large-scale deployment of generative AI and instead adopt a phased implementation strategy based on pilot projects.
5. Librarians should be recognised and supported as key stakeholders in the design, implementation, and oversight of generative-AI initiatives.

6. Given resource constraints, libraries should collaborate through national and regional associations, consortia and professional networks to share expertise, training materials, policy templates, and experience with AI tools.
7. Finally, there is a need for ongoing, context-specific research and monitoring of generative AI in library and information practice.

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