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AWRI

AI can give you an answer – your librarian gives you the *right* one

In recent months, the AWRI's John Fornachon Memorial Library has received an increasing number of requests for information that has been discovered, or sometimes created or “hallucinated”, by artificial intelligence (AI). Library and Information Services Coordinator Rosanne Dunne advises being cautious when using AI for research and provides a simple method for critically evaluating the quality of the information you rely on.

We are all enjoying the impact AI is having on our ability to save time, especially when dealing with large amounts of information. AI can improve and assist with learning, searching and research, but in a workplace where your decision-making has real-world consequences, it is important to understand the limitations of AI and to ensure you have the appropriate problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to use AI effectively.

What are the limitations of AI?

Not all information is accessible to AI. In fact, it is often blind to the most valuable peer-reviewed information, including copyrighted publications locked

behind paywalls, magazines requiring subscriptions, or sources within secondary platforms in the “deep web”. Most free AI only skims the surface of publicly available search engine results, while specialised commercial AI tools for research only search abstracts or are limited to the content owned by the specific publishers who are collaborating with, and benefiting from, that particular AI tool. In many cases, this provides sufficient information to lead to a satisfactory answer, but sometimes the missing information is unfortunately the critical piece you need.

Some people think that information from AI is verified or more trustworthy because it has summarised information

from multiple sources. However, it is important to understand that when asking a highly specific question, the data available to AI may be insufficient. This leads AI to fill gaps using probabilistic and predictive modelling to essentially guess the answer you want to see, rather than deliver the accuracy you need. This is where the wording of your prompt might bias the result, or you may experience incorrect or “hallucinated” output presented with a misleading level of confidence. In a recent example seen at the AWRI library, an AI overview gave clear and believable advice about agrochemical timing that was baseless and had potential for disastrous consequences.

Will AI fall victim to enshittification?

There are already more AI-generated articles than human-written articles on the internet (Paredes *et al.* 2025), and alarmingly, AI-written “slop” accepted by AI reviewers is now infiltrating peer-reviewed journals too, threatening the credibility of research, the peer-review process, and the open-access policies that AI itself relies on (Lund *et al.* 2023). Some regulations have already come into force in response; however, if the quality of the data AI draws upon continues to decrease, the chance of a “hallucination” or inappropriate answer increases.

With most of the best AI tools becoming commercialised, some are already questioning whether AI is on the path to enshittification - the inevitable collapse in quality that comes after a platform moves from being user-focused to profit-focused (Ryan 2024). In late 2025, Google began deeply integrating sponsored results (advertisements) into its AI summaries. It seems unlikely that AI will be a short-lived phenomenon, but the importance of users having strong critical thinking skills to assess potential commercial biases is increasing.

This is a concern because people often blindly trust AI. A 2025 Pew Research Center report revealed that while 58% of Google searches produce an AI summary, only 1% of users actually click the source links to verify the information (Chapekis & Lieb 2025).

Could AI breach your privacy?

Remember to be cautious about the information you share with AI. Unlike the AWRI’s library and helpdesk teams, who are subject to confidentiality agreements, AI tools often have unknown or ever-changing policies on how the questions you ask may be saved or reused as training data. If you don’t want your customers to know about the problem you are experiencing, it may be unwise to share sensitive information with AI. That’s where the AWRI’s helpdesk team can help!

What is the future of libraries and AI?

When researching an important topic, it’s a good idea to consult a library catalogue because the specialised, expensive,

and hard-to-access resources are often invisible to AI. Fortunately, enhanced search experiences and AI-generated summaries are evolving within library catalogues and platforms.

Librarians are trained information science professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the evolution of AI. Right now, librarians are modifying the programming behind library databases to create a dependable and consistent framework that AI can use to accurately verify information. Librarians are also at the table in discussions on new regulations and adjustments to copyright law that will impact the reliability of AI into the future.

How should I evaluate information generated by AI?

You might already be familiar with the CRAAP evaluation tool designed to help assess the reliability and credibility of information sources. This version of the checklist is tailored for assessing information obtained online through AI.



Currency

- Most generative AI tools are not browsing the internet live; they will only be current up to their last training date. Ask the AI tool when its knowledge cutoff is, and consider whether the age of the data being used matters for your task.

Remember to be cautious about the information you share with AI.

- Use AI tools that provide references, and cross-check whether the information the AI used to create the response is up to date. A lot of information found online has been revised or updated without the original source being removed, and AI won’t necessarily know whether older sources are still appropriate.

Relevance

- Check help files and the AI tool’s website to try to find out where the training data came from, and whether it is limited to specific sources or publishers. Has the AI creator openly identified what the gaps are in the data being searched? With models and legal guidelines changing rapidly, has the training dataset changed since the last time you checked?
- Check whether the sources the AI used are relevant to your question. Does the source provided actually say what the AI claimed it did? Was the original source intended for a different audience, with the meaning taken out of context?
- The response you get from AI depends on the questions you ask, which can be problematic if you are not already familiar with the topic. Think about whether you need to revise the prompts to get better relevance.

Authority

- AI tools are never going to be a trusted authority. Choose AI

tools that disclose the sources of information in the output and always check where the information came from originally.

- Question whether the author of the original source was qualified or experienced in the appropriate field.

Accuracy

- AI responses should always be verified, as the references quoted to support the output are frequently inaccurate or made up. Click the links provided and search the page to ensure it really does say what the AI claimed. If you can't get a copy of the full-text easily online, request a copy from your library.
- Assess whether the original information source seems credible. Did the author use references and show supporting evidence? Was the information peer-reviewed? Does the language seem unbiased?
- When accuracy is critical, verify the information from a third source. If you can't find material that backs up the claim, ask your librarian to help with a literature search.

Purpose

- Think carefully about why the information exists. Consider what the main aim or purpose of the AI tool is. Is it built specifically for research, designed to save time, or intended to make money? Is the AI predicting the answer you want instead of locating the information you need?
- Check the original source and question why it was published online. Anyone can put information online - did the author make their intentions clear and come across as objective, unbiased and impartial? Can you identify whether the information is a verifiable fact, an opinion, a sales pitch, content for entertainment, or propaganda designed to promote a specific view?

In the world of questionable (and even fake) sources, and algorithms designed to reinforce confirmation bias and increase profits over ethics, it's easy to fall into the traps and false sense of security that AI offers. Whilst AI can give you an answer, your librarian gives you the right one.

Not only can you access fully verified, peer-reviewed sources for free, we can also source resources that may not be locally available through our international library network. Meanwhile, we are here to support you with information and media literacy so that you have the skills to find, evaluate and apply information effectively.

Australian grapegrowers and winemakers can access the online library at www.awri.com.au/library, and can access all library services free of charge. Most resources held in the AWRI's John Fornachon Memorial Library are also publicly available – contact the librarian at infoservices@awri.com.au to discuss your next project.

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