Another darn crossroads
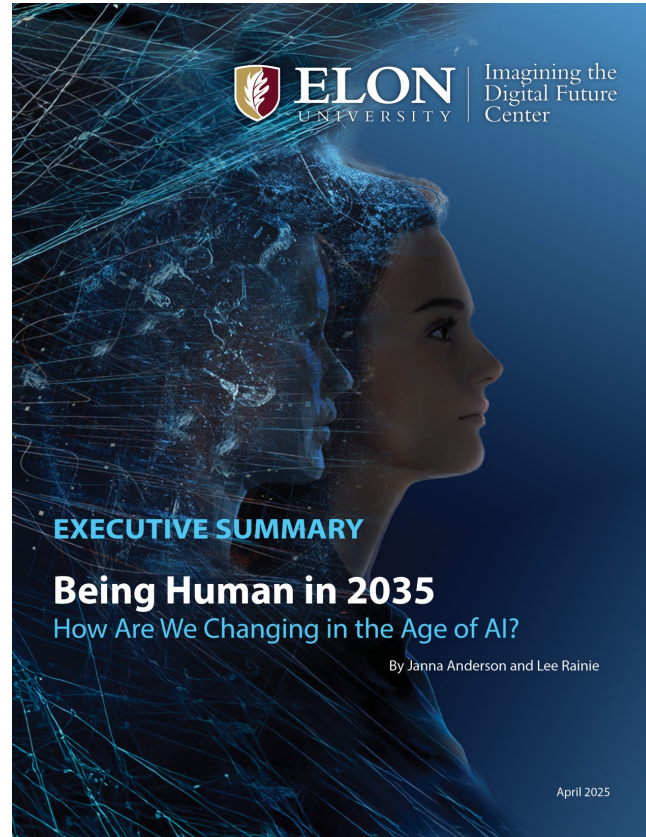## How libraries can function in the emerging world of generative AI

Imagining THE Digital Future CENTER

Lee Rainie
NEFLIN
4.25.25

ELON UNIVERSITY

https://imaginingthedigitalfuture.org/reports-and-publications/being-human-in-2035/

Report from the AI frontline

Report from the AI frontline

Report from the AI frontline

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkAaFcLrP7k

Memory Lane ....

Pew Internet
Pew Internet & American Life Project

The Next Library
The keys to the future once you answer 7 questions

Lee Rainie - @lrainie

Director

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project

Presented to: NEFLIN
June 19, 2013

The big questions

1. What's the future of knowledge?
2. What's the future of reference expertise?
3. What's the future of public technology?
4. What's the future of learning spaces?
5. What's the future of community anchor institutions?

6. Where do you fit on the dashboard?

ALA's "Confronting the Future"

Totally physical ⟶ Totally virtual
(facilities and media)   (facilities and media)

Individual focus ⟶ Community focus

Collection library ⟶ Creation library
(physical and virtual)   (social, maker space)

Portal ⟶ Archive

Everything for ⟶ Specialized niche
everyone
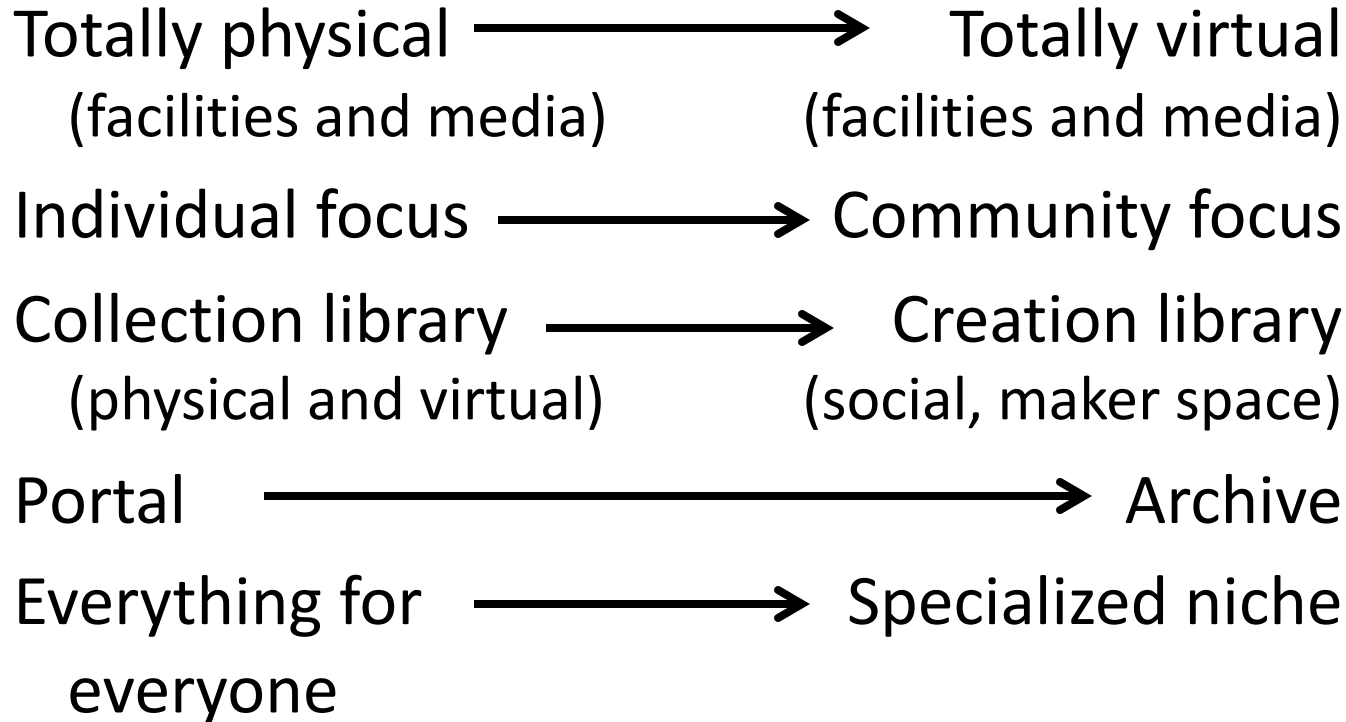
The big questions

7. What's the franchise vs. what's the commodity …

… in the Age of Generative AI?

Half of American adults use AI large language models such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot or Claude

% of U.S. adults who ever use (AI) large language models

All adults	52%
Men	52%
Women	53%
White	47%
Black	57%
Hispanic	66%
Ages 18-29	77%
30-49	61%
50-64	42%
65+	28%

Household income

<$50,000	53%
$50K-$99,999	48%
$100K +	57%

Employment

Full-time	62%
Part-time	55%
Not working	41%
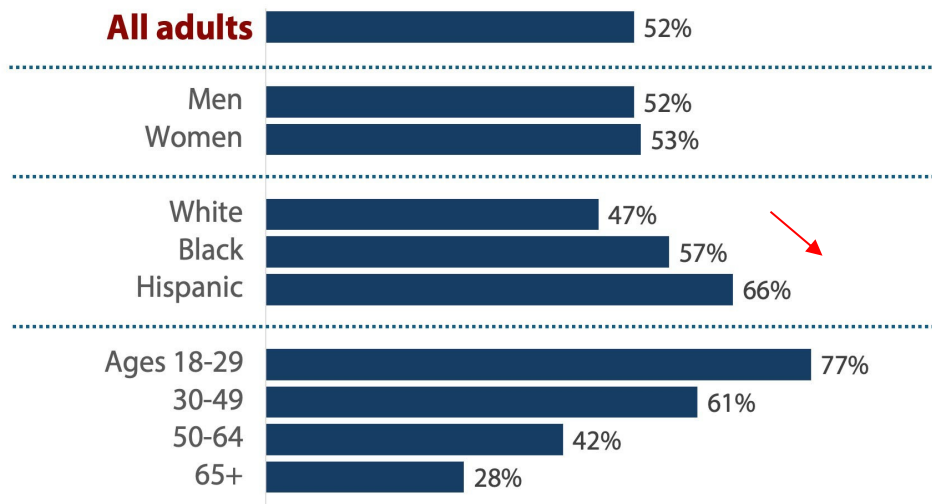
Educational attainment

High school or less	48%
Some college	51%
College degree	58%

Parent of minor	61%
Not a parent	50%

People use large language models for a variety of activities, starting with personal, informal
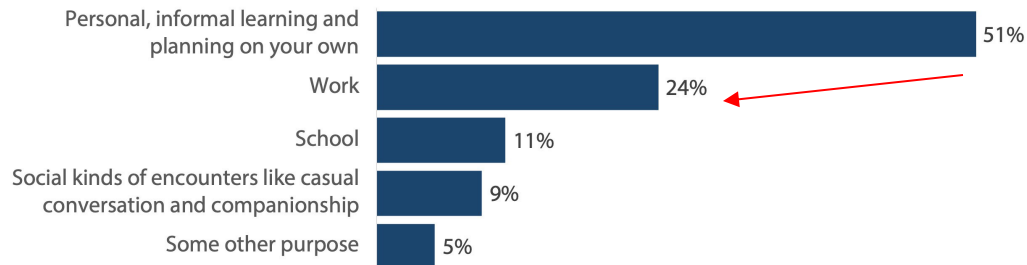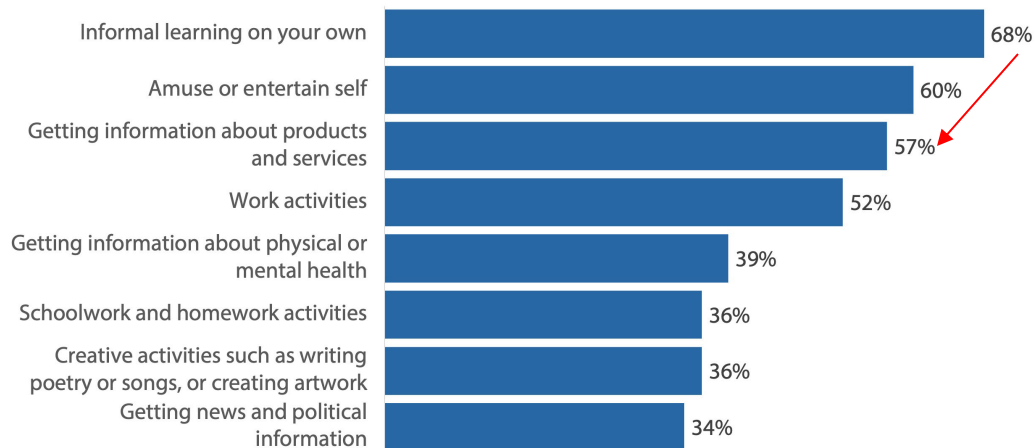
*% of AI large language model users who say this is the **main purpose** they use LLMs*

Activity	%
Personal, informal learning and planning on your own	51%
Work	24%
School	11%
Social kinds of encounters like casual conversation and companionship	9%
Some other purpose	5%

*% of AI large language model users who **ever use** LLMs for these activities*

Activity	%
Informal learning on your own	68%
Amuse or entertain self	60%
Getting information about products and services	57%
Work activities	52%
Getting information about physical or mental health	39%
Schoolwork and homework activities	36%
Creative activities such as writing poetry or songs, or creating artwork	36%
Getting news and political information	34%

Source: Elon University Imagining the Digital Future Center survey conducted Jan. 21-23, 2025

People use AI large language models for these tasks

% of AI large language model users ever use LLMs for these tasks

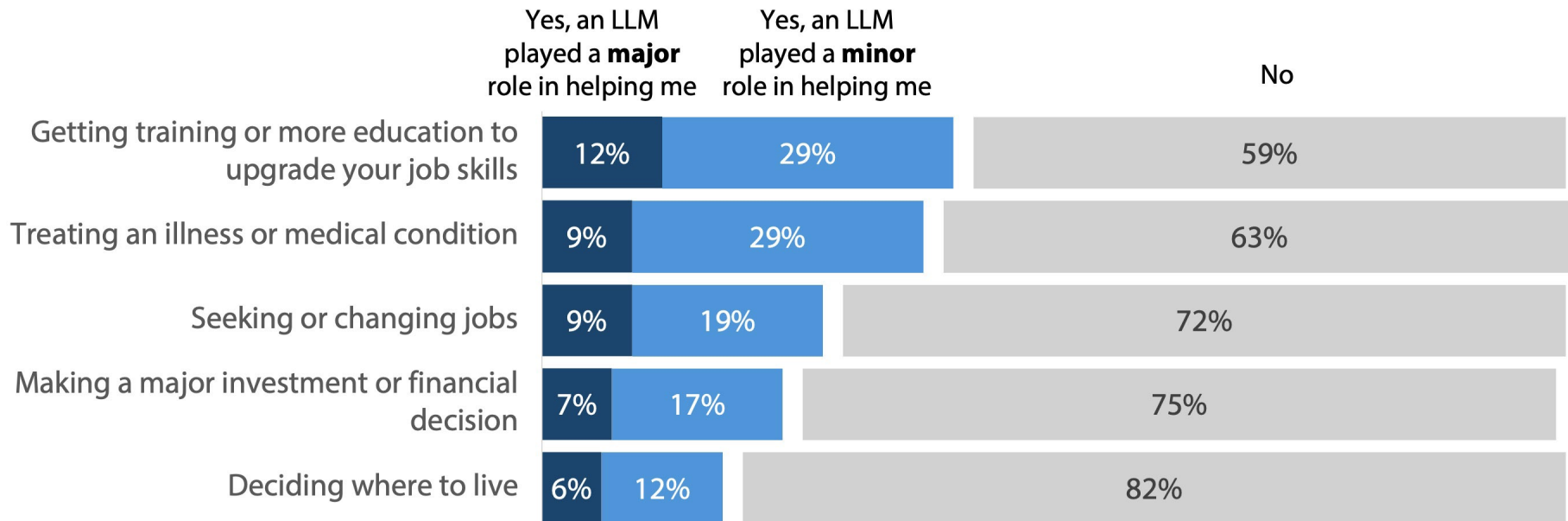| Task	%
Searching to find facts quickly, like a search engine	68%
Researching new subjects or ideas	64%
Brainstorming about ideas	55%
Summarizing and understanding written material like documents or email	47%
Creating emails	42%
Writing and creating presentations	38%
Planning an event or a trip	34%
Creating social media posts	28%
Writing or checking computer code	23%
Planning a social gathering	23%
Looking up what the LLMs say about people you know	23%
Looking up what the LLMs say about you	18%

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Some users say they have gotten help from large language models at key life moments

% of AI large language model users who say their use of an LLM ever helped them in these areas of their lives

	Yes, an LLM played a **major** role in helping me	Yes, an LLM played a **minor** role in helping me	No
Getting training or more education to upgrade your job skills	12%	29%	59%
Treating an illness or medical condition	9%	29%	63%
Seeking or changing jobs	9%	19%	72%
Making a major investment or financial decision	7%	17%	75%
Deciding where to live	6%	12%	82%

* Those who did not answer are not shown. **Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding. | Source: Imagining the Digital Future survey, Jan. 21-23, 2025

Why it matters economically

McKinsey & Company

The economic potential of generative AI

The next productivity frontier

June 2023

Estimates suggest it could add between **$2.6 trillion and $4.4 trillion** annually across 63 use cases analyzed

McKinsey & Company

THE 2024 MAD (MACHINE LEARNING, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & DATA) LANDSCAPE

Infrastructure

Analytics

Machine Learning & AI

Applications and Enterprise

Data governance
Privacy
Security

AI Observability
Safety
Speech-voice
Nonprofit

Applications - Horizontal

Applications - Industry

Open Source Infrastructure

Data Sources and APIs

Data and AI Consulting

Version 1.0 – March 2024   © Matt Turck (@mattturck) , Aman Kabeer (@AmanKabeer11) & FirstMark (@firstmarkcap)   Blog post: matturck.com/MAD2024   Interactive version: MAD.firstmarkcap.com   Comments? Email MAD2024@firstmarkcap.com

FIRSTMARK
EARLY STAGE VENTURE CAPITAL

GenAIs will create different secondary and tertiary effects than social media did. Social media is optimized for attention and engagement. GenAIs are being optimized for intimacy in liberal democracies … and population control/surveillance by authoritarian regimes.
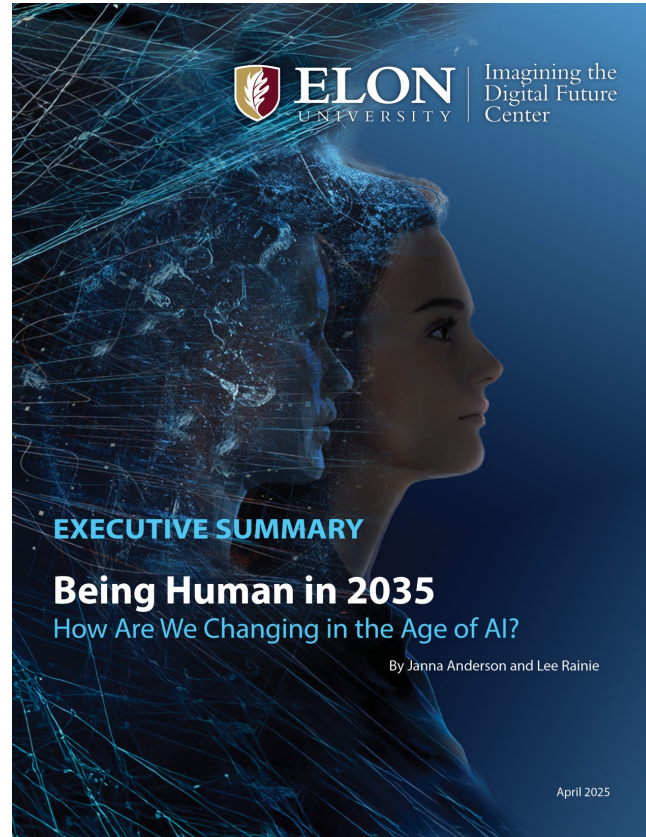
Remember the big question from 2013

7. What's the franchise vs. what's the commodity …

… in the Age of Generative AI?

Stake your
claim on
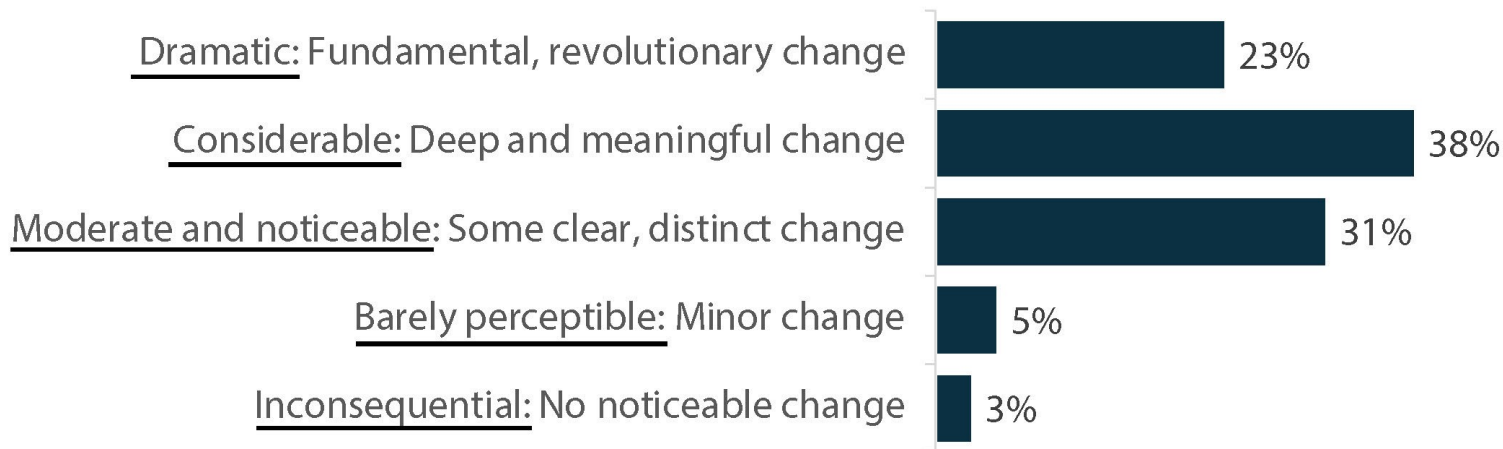being human

A majority of experts believe the magnitude of change on human capacities by 2035 will be deep and meaningful - and then some
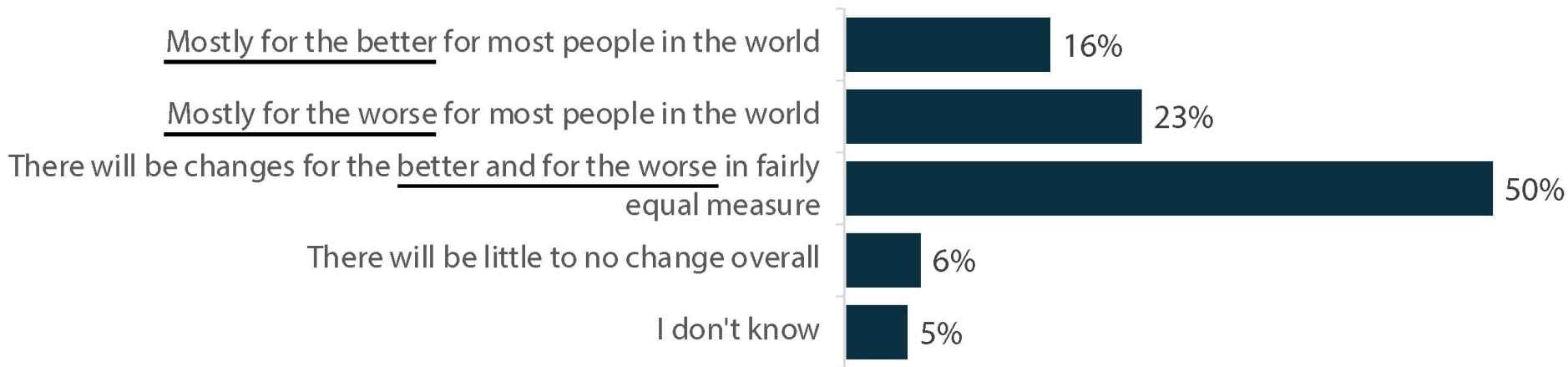
% of experts who say the amount of change in human capacities and behaviors that will occur as advanced AIs are more broadly adopted by 2035

Dramatic: Fundamental, revolutionary change	23%
Considerable: Deep and meaningful change	38%
Moderate and noticeable: Some clear, distinct change	31%
Barely perceptible: Minor change	5%
Inconsequential: No noticeable change	3%

Note: Non-scientific canvassing of tech pioneers, builders and analysts. | Source: Elon University Imagining the Digital Future Center canvassing, Dec. 27, 2024-Feb. 1, 2025

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Experts think AI will have a mixed impact in the coming decade on the essence of being human

% of experts who say artificial intelligence and related technologies are likely to **change the essence of being human** in these directions in the next decade

<u>Mostly for the better</u> for most people in the world	16%
<u>Mostly for the worse</u> for most people in the world	23%
There will be changes for the <u>better and for the worse</u> in fairly equal measure	50%
There will be little to no change overall	6%
I don't know	5%

The 301 experts who responded to the quantitative questions were asked to predict the impact of change they expect on 12 essential traits and capabilities by 2035. They predicted that change is likely to be <u>mostly negative</u> in the following nine areas:

- social and emotional intelligence
- capacity and willingness to think deeply about complex concepts
- trust in widely shared values and norms
- confidence in their native abilities

- empathy and application of moral judgment
- mental well-being
- sense of agency
- sense of identity and purpose
- metacognition

Pluralities said they expect that change for humans in by 2035 will be <u>mostly positive</u> in these areas:

- curiosity and capacity to learn
- decision-making and problem-solving
- innovative thinking and creativity.

Column headers:
- More **negative** change than positive
- More **positive** change than negative
- Fairly equal positive, negative change
- Little or no change

More negatively than positively

Emotional Social Internal

	More negative change than positive	More positive change than negative	Fairly equal positive, negative change	Little or no change
Capacity and willingness to think deeply about complex concepts	50%	21%	21%	7%
Social and emotional intelligence	50%	14%	19%	14%
Confidence in their own native abilities	48%	16%	22%	7%
Trust in widely shared values and cultural norms	48%	10%	24%	11%
Mental well-being	45%	14%	28%	8%
Empathy and application of moral judgment	45%	12%	25%	12%
Individual agency, the ability to act independently in the world	44%	29%	16%	8%
Self-identity, meaning, and purpose in life	39%	18%	24%	14%
Metacognition, the ability to think analytically about thinking	36%	27%	20%	14%

More positively than negatively

Instrumental External Actionable

	More negative change than positive	More positive change than negative	Fairly equal positive, negative change	Little or no change
Curiosity and capacity to learn	29%	42%	23%	5%
Decision-making and problem-solving abilities	30%	40%	25%	3%
Innovative thinking and creativity	30%	39%	25%	3%

Roles for libraries
Reimagine how services and roles can be divided

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What is AI better at? What can humans be freed to do?

----- answering basic patron reference questions

----- routine circulation and scheduling chores

----- basic marketing

----- cataloguing materials

----- performance metrics for collections and patrons

----- others?

Roles for libraries
Centers for AI literacy and digital empowerment

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- Offer **AI literacy workshops** covering how AI works, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and ethical considerations.

- Curate **AI explainer materials** tailored to different age groups and learning levels.

- Provide **open access to AI experimentation tools** (e.g., LLM interfaces, coding sandboxes, chatbot demos) with human guides.

- Develop **train-the-trainer models** to help educators, librarians, and community leaders bring AI education to their networks.

Roles for libraries
Transform libraries into human-AI collaboration spaces

- Place special emphasis on **aiding workers** during a time of massive labor force transition.

- Develop **personalized learning, coaching, mentoring** services.

- Offer **co-working spaces with AI assistants** where patrons can get help drafting documents, coding, researching, or brainstorming.

- Host **design-thinking labs** where citizens co-create ideas and solutions alongside AI systems and librarians.

- Provide **maker spaces and digital studios** with AI-enhanced creative tools (e.g., music generation, graphic design, storytelling).

Roles for libraries
Preserve human memory and cultural context

- Serve as **"experience orchestrators"** of learning and engagement with media.

- Become **community ethnographers**. Develop **digital archives of oral histories**, community narratives, and underrepresented voices to feed more inclusive AI training sets.

- Use AI to **augment digital preservation** (e.g., repairing old documents, organizing historical material) without losing human curatorial control.

- Partner with artists and scholars to **document and reflect** on society's evolving relationship with AI.

Roles for libraries
Curate trustworthy, human-vetted knowledge systems

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- Reinforce the library's role as a **truth filter** by curating vetted content, teaching fact-checking, and offering media literacy programs.

- Partner with academic institutions to **preserve and elevate human-authored knowledge** that could otherwise be drowned out by AI-generated noise.

- Develop and maintain **hybrid knowledge systems** where AI recommendations are moderated by human librarians, enhancing trust.

Roles for libraries
Serve as ethical stewards and AI watchdogs

- Advocate for **transparent, open-source, and community-governed AI systems**.

- Provide **public briefings** on AI policy, surveillance, and the risks of bias in algorithmic decision-making.

- Build **data privacy literacy programs** and offer privacy-enhancing digital tools to protect patrons.

Hybrid intelligence: The work ahead

Reclaim your identity as sanctuaries of human insight, empathy, and public empowerment. The next generation of library workers will be community technologists, ethical educators, and humanists, stewarding people's shared journey through the digital age.