> ❝ **The disruptive AI tsunami looms large across the education sector from schools, through FE and HE. The potential benefits are huge.**

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UKeiG

A digital revolution in education

AI continues to dominate the media with extensive debate on the implications for the future of education. The common mantra has been "don't fear it… embrace it and reap its benefits", and the sector is buzzing with discussions on what those benefits might be. To temper any enthusiasm for Ed Tech innovation, there has also been a rally cry not to throw the baby out with the bath water to "ensure that the vital human elements of education are preserved".

THE first quarter of 2025 was a turbulent one for the education sector; one of depressing economic forecasts, deficits, funding squeezes, low teacher morale and a staff retention and recruitment crisis all played out in the context of the need for strategic vision and planning alongside enhanced student support and engagement.

AI, digital and online teaching and learning form an essential tenet of the Government's January 2025 AI Opportunities Action Plan. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer described AI as "the defining opportunity of our generation. It is not a technology that is coming, a future revolution on the horizon. It is already here, materially changing lives." Skills, prestigious scholarship, and a strong talent pipeline lay at the heart of the growing momentum to "build sufficient, secure, and sustainable AI infrastructure".

The disruptive AI tsunami looms large across the education sector from schools, through FE and HE. The potential benefits are huge. A reduction in bureaucratic grunt work, personalised learning, enhanced tutor support and assessment, for starters. On the other hand, critics see generative AI as a death knell for information literacy.

It's fascinating to monitor AI media discussions as we experience this extraordinary paradigm change. It should catalyse a total rethink about how we train librarians and information professionals in the future.

In July 2024, *The Telegraph* newspaper published a fascinating insight into non-software plagiarism detection interventions and articulated the complexity of grappling with the issue. Julie Henry in *How universities spot AI cheats – and the one word that gives it away* gave some hints on the signs that lecturers are beginning to look out for. "Sitting in his office, working his way through a pile of undergraduate essays, Dr Edward Skidelsky's suspicions were aroused by one tell-tale word – delve. The sentence was something like 'this essay delves into the rich tapestry of experiences…' and I thought there is that word 'delve' again," says the Exeter University philosophy lecturer. "The sentence is typical of the purple but empty prose that ChatGPT produces."

The article cited other terminological clues including *showcasing, underscores, potential, crucial, enhancing* and *exhibited.* "Sudden changes in writing styles within one essay is another red flag… The generative AI phenomenon has left academics so at sea that they look back with nostalgia to the days of straightforward, old-fashioned plagiarism, which can be spotted by software and checked against source material."

The GoStudent Future of Education Report 2024 was an annual "deep dive into the future of education", and a highly recommended and fascinating read. When UK children were asked to list the top ten topics they wanted to study, learning technology developments including Ed Tech, AI, Virtual Reality, coding and programming were on the list, alongside a demand for life skills, finance, ethics and morality, diversity and inclusion, and most notably wellness and mental health. So, the future curriculum looks blended, hybrid and emotionally as well as artificially intelligent.

Jisc's AI community is leading the way in defining an educational future with the technology, supporting policy making, guidance, operational and strategic planning and emphasising "the importance of taking a comprehensive organisation-wide approach".

"AI is already having a significant impact on education. Across the UK's tertiary education sector, universities, colleges, and skills providers are experimenting with, adopting, and embedding AI technologies. They are exploring how these technologies can enhance student experiences, improve learning outcomes, and increase staff efficiency."

If you want to explore further don't forget to read Andrew Cox's (University of Sheffield) UKeiG paper *Developing a library strategic response to Artificial Intelligence* at: https://elucidate-ukeig.org.uk/index.php/elucidate/article/view/847 **IP**

Links

www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-opportunities-action-plan/ai-opportunities-action-plan

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/18/ai-academic-essays-marking-exeter-university/

www.gostudent.org/en-gb/education-report/2024/

www.jisc.ac.uk/get-involved/artificial-intelligence-community