

“Relentless change is the new normal, and adapting to it, managing it and initiating it should be our *raison d’être*.”

INSIGHT

UKeiG

Keep calm and recalibrate

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence was a striding colossus of an elephant in the keynote room at CILIP Conference 2023 back in July. During CEO Nick Poole’s closing remarks, a colleague leaned over and asked what I thought.

“Keep calm, but don’t carry on as normal”, was my take on the event. I’ve chosen five encapsulating key words to explain why.

Recalibrate

‘Business as usual’ has left the building. It’s time to refuel in mid-air, take stock and reflect on a perpetually morphing library, information and knowledge landscape. Relentless change is the new normal, and adapting to it, managing it and initiating it should be our *raison d’être*. Leading the creation of knowledge-centric organisations remains a key priority, but the ultimate challenge lies with negotiating a volatile external environment. We need to build resilience through flexibility, adaptability and risk-taking.

Initiate

The AI train has been a long time coming down the track and some argue we nearly missed it when it drew into our station. We’ve been paralysed by analysis, by the recent media noise, and it’s time to focus on the practical application of AI, the (dare I say) ‘quick wins’ of workplace implementation, strategic and operational policy planning and resource and service development relevant to our customer base and organisational culture.

Ethical, responsible AI issues, discussions of morality, legality, digital inequality, diversity, inclusion, disintermediation and existentialism form the bigger picture, but let’s park them now, and focus on the understanding and utilitarian implementation of the applications and technology. We need to:

- Keep one step ahead, evaluating the impact of impending releases like Microsoft’s 365 Copilot;¹

- Embrace the integration of generative AI tools by layering AI literacy on to our well-established information and digital literacy portfolio. Academic integrity, critical thinking, query and prompt formulation, content evaluation, appraisal, issues of information currency, bias and intellectual property are our bread and butter;²

- Maintain a watching brief on AI news and developments. (I was impressed by AI research support initiatives facilitating access to peer reviewed articles and academic research);³

- Define a roadmap of requirements for AI application development working with digital content providers, software developers and publishers.

Educate

AI complements human intelligence: it doesn’t replace it. It will create more jobs than it will make obsolete. The removal of time consuming, low value tasks that eliminate the drudgery of work will enable us to focus on value addition elsewhere. To achieve this, workforce development, training and upskilling requirements should be our primary objective. Getting to grips with the technology is a key professional development imperative embracing digital skills and disciplines including coding, natural language processing, generative AI and data management. UKeiG, born out of the Institute of Information Scientists, has led the way in these areas.⁴

Collaborate

For the library, information and knowledge sector to flourish and survive, collaboration is essential. As a profession we are brilliant at talking to and encouraging each other, but less so to allied professions and associated disciplines. CILIP represents a diverse community, so SIGS like UKeiG should be encouraged to play a proactive role in shaping and defining the landscape.

Convergence and cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience with our



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IT and computer science colleagues is paramount. UKeiG’s international annual Strix award is a case in point. It celebrates innovation in information retrieval and search technology and is presented in partnership with the International Society for Knowledge Organisation UK (ISKO UK), the Royal Society of Chemistry Chemical Information and Computer Applications Group (RSC CICAG) and the British Computer Society Information Retrieval Specialist Group (BCS IRSG).

Imagine

Knowledge Management expert Rebecka Isaksson envisages “a long and rapidly changing journey” ahead for us all, but an exciting, undoubtedly AI-powered one. Masud Khokhar, University of Leeds, sees it as a transition from the “information age to the imagination age”: a period of digital experimentation in a culture of innovation.

We have an incredible opportunity to jettison the familiar, to embolden ourselves and throw caution to the wind, reinventing the leadership of innovative digital libraries.

It’s time to reboot our mindsets and... recalibrate. **IP**

References

- 1 MS 365 Copilot – <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2023/03/16/introducing-microsoft-365-copilot-your-copilot-for-work/>
- 2 AI – A Whole New Way of Working – <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/ai-a-whole-new-way-of-working>
- 3 AI Research Assistant – <https://elicit.org/> and the ScholarAI generative AI plugin – <https://scholar-ai.net/>
- 4 UKeiG’s upcoming CPD workshops – https://www.cilip.org.uk/events/event_list.asp?show=&group=201314