Summary

Of Technological Utopias and Programmed Shortcomings / How Artificial Intelligence Is Changing Life and Libraries
(Jeannette Neustadt)
(pp. 298 - 301)

Emerging technologies are not merely a tool or a medium that we use, but also a framework within which new social, political and artistic practice and questioning arise. As self-learning machines take on an ever larger part in our lives, society needs new rules – rules that should not be developed and established exclusively by technology experts. For this reason, the Goethe Institut has been devoting itself around the world to interdisciplinary, intercultural projects in the field of artificial intelligence, also in the context of library work.

As Germany's official cultural ambassador, Goethe Institut promotes social dialogue, international cultural exchange, and education at 158 locations in 98 countries. In cooperation with partner organisations, it focusses on global opportunities and challenges and brings together an array of different perspectives to facilitate dialogue. Such dialogues are of immense importance in the case of artificial intelligence (AI, or in German: KI). Up to now, fathoming the potential for developments in AI has been primarily the domain of private enterprises. Political actors and civil society have lagged behind. It is decisive for our future, however, to cast light on existing approaches and to consider the opportunities and risks of AI from the perspective of all stakeholders in order to facilitate as broad a debate as possible in the public sphere. After all, the key technologies of the 21st century will bring about significant transformations in all our lives and in our understanding of art, work, education, society, and politics.

Omnipresence – Anxiety – Autonomy / Societal Issues Related to Artificial Intelligence in Libraries
(Olaf Eigenbrodt)
(pp. 302 - 305)

Society's perception of artificial intelligence (AI) is to some degree dominated by a distorted view of what AI is and what it can actually accomplish. In brief, it can be stated that in our daily lives we are already surrounded by a plenitude of weak AI systems, while it is instead the images of strong AI systems which take up considerable space in our – especially media-dominated – perceptions. This leads, on the one hand, to many people not knowing how strong their lives are influenced by AI, and, on the other hand, to the propagation of fears about AI systems which will only exist in the realm of science fiction in the foreseeable future.

For libraries which employ AI systems within the scope of their educational mandate, this means that they not only have a fundamental part to play as mediators, but at the same time can and should act responsibly during their implementation. This involves transparency, the promotion of greater competency, participation and putting an end to discriminatory practices. To do this it is necessary to discuss how and for what purposes libraries can implement AI, how these processes can be designed to be transparent and participatory, and how libraries can use their commitment to promote awareness and impart greater competency regarding AI. In this article, Olaf Eigenbrodt makes a contribution to this debate by shedding light on AI in a societal context from a sociological point of view. In a first step, he provides a description of the current situation, and then develops, in a second step, recommendations for further action.

The Joy of Reading from an Early Age / New Round of »Lesestart« in Libraries
(Sabine Bonewitz, Allegra Thomsen-Weiße)
(pp. 338 -342)

More than 5,200 libraries are currently participating in Germany's nationwide programme entitled »Lesestart 1-2-3« (translatable as »Start to Read 1-2-3«) by providing *Lesestart* sets to all parents with three-year-old children through their local library. Many had already been involved in the first programme and were excited that this successful project for early childhood speech development and reading promotion is being continued. An evaluation study of the first phase showed that having libraries participate in *Lesestart* was a significant factor in making families aware of libraries, and also gave valuable stimulus to library work as a whole.

Public libraries are places that invite visitors to linger for a while, to read, to play or just to browse. They are also places designed for interacting with others, for engaging in conversations. In recent years libraries have adapted to societal changes with regard to both media and social customs. Increasingly, libraries are taking up the newest media as well as audio books to expand their classical selection of print media. Moreover, there is a new and important trend taking shape: their collections are being developed increasingly to appeal to families with babies and toddlers. This is a response to a phenomenon that researchers have been pointing out for a long time – that language acquisition and reading promotion begin right at birth. The earlier a child receives language stimulation and is exposed to books, the more positive an affect this has on his or her future scope of education. Being read to aloud on a regular basis expands a child's vocabulary and thus creates an important foundation for a successful educational path. As the 2018 Reading Aloud Study demonstrated, children with a steady experience of being read to will find reading for themselves much easier. When reading aloud is an integral part of family life, it becomes, indeed, more than just a beloved ritual.

Translated by Martha Baker