

Why you and your students should use the Library rather than AI for Research.

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SDSU Library

<https://library.sdsu.edu/>

Librarians and Library resources (e.g., databases, journals, etc.) can help with research in all subject areas.

Library Resources are more accurate:

1. No false citations.
2. Summaries of books and articles are usually incomplete and often wrong (Ross, 2025).
3. The answer or result depends on how you phrased the question or prompt.
4. Answers are not reliable or reproducible.
5. Not designed and have no mechanism to ensure accuracy just to imitate based on the dataset used - LLMs predict text from patterns, not facts
6. No accountability. AI does not have a system for retractions or public loss of reputation

Library Resources are more complete

7. AI tools have access to a very limited set of literature.
8. Control of information by a few players.
9. The Library has subscriptions that can get you to paywalled content - not everything on the internet is free.

Library Research helps promote critical thinking

10. AI is programmed to be nice and easy, based on patterns, which creates homogenization of ideas and incorrect answers (McMahon, 2026).
11. Make informed choices about usage to minimize the environmental impacts of usage (see [Ethical AI Assessment Tool](#))
12. AI is Biased - the same as any algorithm (Noble, 2018), the programmers are biased, but also the text they pull from (things like Reddit) are also biased
13. Agreeability and sycophancy of AI (Cheng, 2026)
14. AI can be misled by misinformation, pseudoscience or fake information (Stokel-Walker, 2026)

Librarians provide more support than AI

15. Reference interview helps to discover the real question by asking questions to investigate, refine research questions, and identify effective keywords.
16. Librarians help to build metaliteracy - teach students search mechanisms, indexes, controlled vocabularies, Boolean operators so students can navigate complex systems independently.
17. Librarians help build critical evaluation skills, persistence, and discernment.

18. Librarians teach students how to evaluate authority, methodology, peer-review rigor, and funding/context behind a source or citation.
19. Privacy protections (ALA Code of Ethics, FERPA) & copyright and provenance.
20. Navigating and helping with research anxiety.
21. AI is just one research tool. Librarians know how to use different information tools depending on what you need to do. In other words, librarians save you time and frustration because we know the different ways to obtain reliable information at the various stages of a research process aimed at creating knowledge.
22. Avoid “cognitive surrender”(Shaw and Nave, 2026), where the decision-maker no longer constructs an answer, but adopts one generated by an external system. Instead, aim for “cognitive sovereignty” (Konigsberg, 2026), the deliberate capacity to maintain independent thought, judgment, and mental autonomy, even when using AI or other external cognitive tools.

AI can be used to help with:

23. Help create study tools - podcasts, flashcards, study guides
24. Brainstorming.
25. Accessibility and language support by providing alt-text, translation, captions, or voice interfaces.
26. Help with planning and editing projects.
27. Tailor materials to learning style
28. Digital communication efficiency and collaboration in academic settings (Blanka and Pikhart, 2025)

Students should be able to:

29. Evaluate the accuracy and feasibility of AI generated solutions, which means you need to know how to find reliable information and check sources.
30. Understand that if you ask ChatGPT a question, it is able to respond not because it “knows” the answer to your question, but because it has identified patterns and relationships within the training data and can reassemble language from that data to produce an answer.

Check out these guides for more information:

[AI at SDSU](#)

[Ethical AI Assessment Tool](#)

[AI in Healthcare](#)

[Questions about AI? \(in Education\)](#)

[How to Cite AI Tools](#)

[Look for your subject specialist](#)

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