

17th SAOIM 2026

27-29 MAY 2026



Theme:

AI and Information Organisations:
Empowering Communities through
Innovation and Emerging Technologies



Southern African Online User Group

In collaboration with



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Engineering,
Built Environment and
Information Technology
Fakulteit Ingenieurswese, Bouw-omgewing en
Inligtingstechnologie / Lefapha la Boesteneere,
Tlaloango ya Kago le Theknoloji ya Tshetdimolao

Wednesday, 27 May 2026 - Conference, Day 1

07:00 - 08:00	Registration
08:00 - 08:00	Move into Auditorium
08:00 - 10:30	SESSION 1: Session chair – Jacqueline Wilson
08:15 - 09:00	Welcome Prof Marlene Holmner/ Prof Wynand Steyn
09:00 - 10:00	Keynote: Prof Abebe Rorissa (Tennessee University, USA) Title: From Anxiety to Agency: How Libraries and Information Organizations Lead Through the AI Transformation Abstract: Libraries and information organizations are facing an artificial intelligence (AI) transformation that sparks both real anxiety and genuine excitement. As emerging technologies rapidly reshape how information is created, accessed, evaluated, and used, leaders and professionals across the LIS field are being called to guide their organizations through profound uncertainty. This keynote explores how libraries can move from apprehension to agency by grounding AI adoption in mission, values, and human expertise. It highlights why libraries—rooted in equity, intellectual freedom, stewardship, and service—are uniquely positioned to turn anxiety into purposeful action. Drawing on emerging practices from public, academic, and special libraries, the talk illustrates practical ways to cultivate responsible experimentation, build staff confidence, and design organizational structures that support sustainable innovation. Rather than reacting to technological change, libraries can model thoughtful, ethical, and community-centered approaches that strengthen trust and expand opportunity. By leading through the AI transformation, information organizations can shape a future where technology amplifies—rather than replaces—their enduring commitments to learning, equity, and the public good.
10:00 - 10:30	Invited speaker: Sean Kruger Title: AI Governance as Public Enablement: Building Inclusive E-Governance Ecosystems Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly positioned as a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) enabler of e-governance. Despite this, the binding constraint is not tool access but whether governments can connect infrastructure, worker capability and community access into a usable public system. Not to mention governing this in an ethical manner. The Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework remains theoretically defensible as it is one of the predominant underlying adoption models applied in 4IR settings. Building from this base, this study reframes AI governance as an enablement problem. We consider how the state can link IoT-based data collection, mobile-first service interfaces, and AI-supported decision systems within accountable, citizen-facing digital ecosystems. The empirical gap is stark. In a South African government survey of 205 respondents, blue-collar workers showed low willingness to adopt AI ($M = 2.37$; $SD = 0.96$). HR support for AI training had only a weak association with readiness ($r = 0.447$), and workers were markedly more supportive when AI enhanced service delivery ($M = 6.5272$) than when it threatened routine work. By contrast, enterprise surveys spanning white-collar employees, managers, and leaders show widespread but shallow uptake. 72% are regular AI users overall and 68% in South Africa. Yet, only 36% feel properly

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	trained, only 25% of frontline employees report sufficient leadership support where 41% fear job loss. Not to mention that only 28% of AI-using organisations place AI governance under the CEO. The policy implication is direct where we need an inclusive AI governance policy. To this end we unpack key elements such as literacy, oversight, workflow redesign, and multilingual public access as primary conditions for community integration, not secondary implementation issues.
10:30 - 11:10	TEA
11:10 - 12:45	SESSION 2: Session chair – Anika Meyer
11:50 - 12:30	Invited Speaker: Prof Mashilo Modiba (UNISA) Title: Application of AI-Embedded Open-Source Systems and Databases in Library 5.0 – Skills, Types and Security Abstract: AI-embedded open-source systems and databases play an integral role in Library 5.0 by enabling libraries—particularly those affected by financial constraints—to access, manage, and disseminate information effectively without incurring excessive licensing fees associated with proprietary systems. The purpose of this presentation is to explore the application of AI-embedded open-source systems and databases within the Library 5.0 environment. Central to this discussion are the skills required for effective implementation, the different types of AI-enabled open-source systems and databases, and the associated security considerations. Furthermore, the presentation will address practical implementation strategies for integrating AI-embedded open-source systems and databases into Library 5.0 to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and sustainable information management.
12:30 - 12:50	Speaker Call for Paper: Isak Bosman (University of Pretoria) Title: The use of Virtual Reality (VR) as a training tool Abstract: Virtual reality has been deployed in a variety of contexts with varying degrees of success. The utility of such implementations requires consideration of the unique capabilities of the technology and aligning the application of this technology with areas that may benefit from aspects such as embodied interaction, spatial fidelity, etc. This presentation will focus on the use of virtual reality as a tool to enhance different modes of training and discuss the benefits and pitfalls of each.
13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH + Student Poster session – Graduate centre foyer
14:00 - 15:40	SESSION 3: Session chair – Ntswaki Makhubele
14:15 - 14:50	Lightning session (7)

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14:50 - 15:20	Invited speaker: Prof Marlene Holmner Title: Empowering Communities through Ethical AI: The Role of Information Organisations in Building Responsible and Inclusive Futures Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming libraries, archives, universities, and other information organisations. From intelligent search systems and AI chatbots to automated metadata generation and research support tools, AI offers unprecedented opportunities to improve access to information and enhance service delivery. However, these technologies also raise significant ethical concerns, including algorithmic bias, privacy violations, misinformation, exclusion, and the erosion of human agency. This presentation explores how information organisations can adopt AI responsibly to empower the communities they serve. Drawing on research in information ethics and responsible computing, the presentation highlights practical strategies for ensuring that AI systems are transparent, fair, inclusive, and accountable. Particular attention is given to the role of digital literacy, critical AI literacy, and ethical governance in enabling professionals and users to engage with AI confidently and responsibly. The presentation argues that information organisations are uniquely positioned to act as trusted stewards of ethical AI, balancing innovation with social responsibility to create more equitable and sustainable information futures.
15:20 - 15:50	Invited speaker: Prof Hanlie Smuts (University of Pretoria) Title: From Algorithms to Agency: UX for Empowering Communities in AI Abstract: As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes deeply embedded in information systems, the focus of design must extend beyond technical performance to the ways in which people engage with, understand, and shape these systems. <i>From Algorithms to Agency: UX for Empowering Communities in AI</i> explores user experience (UX) as a critical socio-technical interface that connects AI capabilities with human values, community contexts, and knowledge practices. This presentation considers how UX design influences trust, inclusion, and access in AI-driven environments. It highlights the importance of explainability, participatory design, and ethical considerations in shaping more human-centred AI interactions, positioning UX as a key enabler in aligning technological systems with broader societal needs.
15:50	Closing

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Thursday, 28 May 2026 - Conference, Day 2

07:30 – 08:15	Registration
08:15 – 10:25	SESSION 1: Session chair - Devind Peters
08:15 – 08:30	Move in to Auditorium
08:30 – 09:30	Keynote: Prof Lihong Zhou, School of Information Management, Wuhan University Keynote Title: Rural Libraries in AI Society Abstract: Rural libraries are indispensable in China's cultural service system, not only as community centres for information and technologies, but also as hubs for social activities and reading promotion. This presentation reports on a longitudinal ethnographic inquiry that investigated how rural libraries serve as critical agents to enhance technology acceptance, social inclusiveness and equity, and the protection of indigenous culture. This presentation will discuss the observations and findings from a 13-month field study across China, visiting around 60 rural libraries and interviewing 195 library professionals and rural residents. This study revealed a substantial mismatch between library services and residents' requirements in space, service, technology, and information. A set of development strategies is proposed that requires rural libraries to place the perspectives and expectations of rural residents at the heart of library service delivery.
09:45 – 10:15	Invited speaker: Prof Lefose Makgahlela (University of Limpopo) Title: Exploring users's intent to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in libraries with technology acceptance model (TAM). Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology are undeniably the game-changing technology of the moment, influencing various sectors from academia to hospitality. Library and information services sector is no exception. It's evident that the integration of AI technologies in libraries is reshaping traditional library services, offering new possibilities to enhance user experiences and streamline operations. AI technologies integration is also emerging as a revolutionary trend in libraries, changing traditional library services and functions as they adapt to the evolving digital world. While ethical concerns such as data privacy and misinformation are significant AI Technologies' advancements are here to stay. As it becomes more sophisticated, improving our AI literacy is essential. The purpose of this presentation is to examine the applicability of the technology acceptance model (TAM) in libraries. While we acknowledge that AI technology has been widely accepted by the uses in all sectors, it is important that we apply the theoretical framework to test the acceptability of these AI technology in libraries. accommodate all the users. Applying theoretical frameworks ensures that library technology initiatives are guided by evidence-based factors rather than just trying to keep up with trends. TAM can be

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	viewed as an appropriate theoretical model to explain the users' intention towards technology acceptance. Such understanding will help decrease the mismatch between system design and local users' realities, and further facilitate the successful adoption of AI in libraries. The acceptance and the use of AI technologies in libraries can bring immediate and long-term benefits. Librarians are increasingly required to move beyond treating technology adoption as a purely technical exercise and instead apply structured theoretical frameworks. Arguably, lack of research on the user side of technology adoption is in part responsible for the resistance to change attitude and underutilization of information systems implemented in libraries.
10:15 – 11:00	TEA
11:00 – 12:40	SESSION 2: Session chair – Ntobeko Sikhakhane
11:00 – 11:15	Product Review: Sabinet
11:15 – 11:35	Speaker Call: Sihle Blose, Andrew Memela and Biziwe Tembe Title: AI in academic libraries: widening or narrowing the digital divide Abstract: Globally, academic libraries are adopting AI to streamline services and improve access for users. In South Africa, however, deep-seated digital inequalities, including limited broadband access, infrastructure gaps, and uneven digital literacy, raise concerns that AI adoption may rather increase than mitigate the existing digital divide. The digital divide refers to unequal access to and meaningful use of digital technologies, shaping opportunities in education, employment, healthcare, and social participation. This paper critically examines the role of AI in South African academic libraries through a review of policy documents, institutional practices, and existing literature to assess whether AI adoption narrows or widens the digital divide among library users. The papers adopt a critical digital divide framework (CDDF) to examine how access, skills, institutional capacity, and outcomes shape the equity implications of AI in academic libraries. AI has the capacity to narrow gaps in access, provided institutions are adequately resourced. In well-resourced institutions, AI can improve access and personalise support; whereas in under-resourced institutions, weak connectivity, limited skills, and policy gaps mean AI often deepens existing inequalities. AI in South African academic libraries is not inherently equitable; its impact depends on intentional planned strategies and sustained support. Targeted investment in infrastructure, inclusive policies, and digital literacy guided by the ethic of ubuntu is essential to ensuring that AI narrows, rather than widens, the digital divide. The paper argues that AI will not automatically promote equity in South African academic libraries; its impact depends on how it is implemented and supported. Targeted investment in infrastructure, inclusive policy, community centered innovation, and digital literacy is therefore essential to ensure AI helps in narrowing the digital divide. Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Academic libraries, Digital divide, South Africa, Equity, Inclusion, Digital literacy

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11:35 – 11:50	Product Review: Ebsco
11:50 – 12:10	Speaker Call: Maphefo Maake Title: Bridging the digital literacy divide in rural communities: the NWU Library Mahikeng experience. Abstract: Digital literacy has now become an essential skill required by everyone around the globe. It has eventually embedded itself in civil society 's way of doing things. The Global South faces several challenges that hinder the development of digital literacy skills with rural communities being the most affected, they find themselves having to deal with issues such as poverty, lack of employment, lack of water and electricity, and poor technological infrastructure development.
12:10 - 12:25	Product Review: Brill
12:25 – 14:00	LUNCH
14:00 – 16:05	SESSION 3: Session chair – Faith Zalekile
14:00 – 15:00	Immersive technology lab (book a slot): https://doodle.com/sign-up-sheet/organize/07c1dd03-c84b-4a4a-a974-21d872744e70 Workshop 1: Introduction to gamification and game-inspired design (Annique Smith, Isak Bosman, Yan Wong) Workshop info: This interactive workshop introduces the concept of gamification and how game-inspired design can be used to improve engagement. Participants will then apply a guided framework to brainstorm, design, and iteratively refine a gamified solution to a chosen problem, gaining practical insight into how gamification can be leveraged in their own contexts. Sign up form: https://forms.gle/SwbbmxA8a149emne9 Workshop 2: Creating creative outputs with generative AI tools (Lesego Makhafola, Anika Meyer and Prof Marlene Holmner) This hands-on workshop introduces participants to the exciting world of generative AI for creative multimedia content. Attendees will learn how to use AI tools to develop scripts, transform ideas into audio and video content, and generate high-quality images for storytelling, marketing, education, or digital media projects. Sign up form: https://forms.gle/Vo3d78nJrb7t4LBm6

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15:00 – 15:20	Speaker Call: Biziwe Tembe, Nomonde Dos Santos and Sanele Kunene Title: Caught between innovation and expectation, the library directors' dilemma in AI-driven libraries Abstract: Academic library directors increasingly face a complex leadership dilemma as growing user demand for AI-enabled services intersects with executive expectations for strategic alignment, ethical governance, and resource efficiency. These pressures require library leaders to navigate innovation while safeguarding institutional priorities and values. This paper examines how academic library directors mediate between the imperatives of AI-driven innovation and institutional expectations in higher education. The study employs a qualitative synthesis of recent global case studies and established leadership frameworks to identify key tensions, leadership responses, and strategic practices associated with AI adoption in academic libraries. The findings indicate that effective library directors function as strategic mediators, leveraging leadership frameworks to articulate the value of AI, promote organisational and user digital literacy, and implement ethical and governance-oriented approaches to AI integration. The study concludes that proactive, strategically grounded leadership in AI adoption enables academic libraries to reposition themselves as critical agents of digital transformation and community empowerment while sustaining institutional trust, credibility, and strategic relevance. Keywords: Artificial intelligence; Academic libraries; Library leadership; Strategic mediation; Ethical governance; Digital transformation.
15:30 - 16:00	Lightning session (6)
16:05	Closing
16:30	Drumming and Cocktail function

Friday, 29 May 2026 – Conference, Day 3	
07:50 – 08:30	Registration
08:30 – 10:10	SESSION 1: Session chair - Dr Magdeline Mashilo
08:30 – 08:40	Move in to Auditorium

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08:40 – 09:40	Keynote: Prof Emma Ruttkamp-Bloem (University of Pretoria) Title: AI Ethics as Enabler for Community Resilience Abstract: I make the case that AI ethics is more than lists of principles. I offer a perspective, based on capability theory, on which AI ethics principles are viewed as capacities for flourishing with AI technology. From within this approach, I then offer some reflection on how to translate resilience against potential harm from an individual responsibility into a communal, societal one. I conclude that through the lense of capability theory, AI ethics becomes an enabler of community resilience against potential AI harm.
09:40 – 10:10	Invited speaker: Dr Brenda van Wyk (University of Pretoria) Title: what does tomorrow hold? A critical discussion on the role of ai innovation on Online services and user behaviour Abstract: The rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI (GenAI) is posing new and uncharted challenges for legacy online information legacy online services. Legacy business models have been successful for the past 10 – 15 years, where the user needs were actively researched to inform new products. What was once novel and niche now stands before a new problem. While many of our service providers and the platforms that they offer have a top layer AI applications like summarising articles, the changes in online behaviour are going to dictate the future. As a group for whom online behaviour and services are essential, do we know what tomorrow holds? One has to recall the 'KODAK' analogy, where a camera product did not read the radical and profound changes of digital innovation correctly. Traditional online information systems such as subscription databases, digital libraries, and scholarly discovery platforms were designed around a platform- centric model in which users entered authenticated environments, performed keyword searches, navigated interfaces, and manually retrieved documents. However, AI-driven conversational systems are disrupting this model by changing both user behaviour and expectations. Is it time for us to revisit the search-to-retrieve-approach to a new model informed by rapid changes observed in online information behaviour? Users are increasingly preferring direct, contextualised, and conversational responses to natural-language prompts. There is a growing trend where users now interact with systems such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity as intelligent intermediaries capable of summarising, synthesising, explaining, and recommending information instantly. We notice that emerging AI ecosystem model focuses interoperability, AI accessibility, semantic retrieval, API-based integration, and most notably conversational knowledge delivery. We see that information systems are shifting from storing and retrieving content toward enabling trusted AI-mediated knowledge interactions. While many of our services still hail single sign-on functionality as high-tech innovation, the writing is on the wall. We could take que from the direction that the AI company Anthropic is heading as they are is already working closely with the publisher Wiley on bringing high-quality, peer-reviewed content into CLAUDE to improve the accuracy, depth, and reliability of AI-assisted research, particularly in fields like life sciences and education. How do our other products compare? Ultimately, AI and GenAI should not be approached as only technological advancements and add-ons to our existing information systems, platforms and services. We need to admit that they represent a structural

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	transformation in the relationship between users, knowledge, and digital access itself. These critical discussions are necessary to explore and plan for a new online ecosystem.
10:10 – 11:00	TEA
11:00 – 13:20	SESSION 2: Session chair – Marriette Mapheto
11:00 – 11:40	Title: Workforce 5.0 and Beyond: Learning, Working, and Reskilling in the Age of AI Panellists: Marlene Holmner, Brenda van Wyk, Anika Meyer, Lesego Makhafole, Lihong Zhou Abstract: As artificial intelligence reshapes industries, institutions, and everyday life, the future of work demands new approaches to learning, collaboration, and human capability development. This panel explores the evolving landscape of Workforce 5.0 and the skills, literacies, and ethical frameworks needed to thrive in an AI-driven world. Discussions will examine lifelong AI literacies, human–AI collaboration, platform ecosystems, AI governance, and workforce transformation across Asia-Pacific contexts. Panelists will also address educational strategies for preparing individuals for century-long careers, alongside critical issues in information ethics and AI ethics. Together, the session will offer interdisciplinary perspectives on how societies can build inclusive, adaptive, and human-centered futures of learning and work.
11:40 – 12:40	Closing Speaker: Govan Whittle
12:40 – 13:20	Conference Closure & Lucky Draws – Jacqueline Wilson
13:20	LUNCH