Preparing for ‘near-future’ eTextbook technologies

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## Background to the project

ARU (Anglia Ruskin University) has campuses in Cambridge, Chelmsford, Peterborough, and London, with approximately 55 library staff working across three departments: Academic and Research Services and Library Services. ARU Library aims to meet the strategic priorities of the University, which places an emphasis on active learning, inclusivity, student employability and graduate outcomes. Our University Librarian, Libby Homer participates in the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) Workforce Development Task and Finish Group and the library prioritises the long-term professional development of library staff, especially for digital literacy. The project detailed in the poster arose from an ARU Library operational plan objective to increase awareness of and investigate how AI (Artificial Intelligence) might impact on the skills library staff will need in their future roles.

ARU introduced personalised eTextbooks for a key text in all level 4 modules for students starting in 2019-20. This introduction of technology has improved the student experience, with its enhanced reading functionality and accessibility features. It has also had an impact on the way library staff offer training and support, and lecturers have used the learning analytics data to facilitate engagement. Some library staff had already been investigating how AI could impact libraries by attending webinars and events, gaining insight into how fast AI is rapidly been employed throughout the corporate sector. With our practical knowledge of eTextbooks, we asked 'how are eTextbooks going to change when AI technologies become more readily available? And how will this change the role of library staff?’

## Project explanation

Adapting Huusko (2018), we designed workshops for library staff to explore the impact of future eTextbooks, which could potentially incorporate AI. This was influenced by a research method called design fiction which involves creating a series of fictional artefacts to represent a plausible near future (Stead, Coulton and Lindley, 2018). For the workshop we created our design fictions, which were a series of playing card style handouts (licensed CC-BY-NC) which listed how eTextbooks could evolve using AI over the next 5-10 years. In the workshop we asked participants to write a narrative of themselves using the near-future eTextbooks, which we followed up by discussing how their roles might be impacted by these technologies.

Running creative sessions like this resulted in positive feedback from library staff. One participant from one of our workshops said: "Just what I wanted from this session – a chance to think outside the box and tackle a problem with a fresh mind." Future research will explore the use of design fiction to discuss how AI could impact learning and teaching.

### References

Huusko, M. 2018. The roles of design fiction in a co-design fiction. Available at: https://core.ac.uk/display/159158412

Stead, M. Coulton, P. and Lindley, J., 2018. Do-It-Yourself Medical Devices: Exploring Their Potential Futures Through Design Fiction. *Proceedings of the Design Research Society Conference 2018, 6.* Design Research Society, IRL, pp. 2511-2523