

What Boards Need to Know About AI

The decision facing the board

What guidance will help staff use AI responsibly while protecting the library's values and keeping people accountable for the work?

What boards need to know

AI policy gives staff a shared basis for deciding whether and how to use AI. It should connect everyday decisions to privacy, intellectual freedom, equitable access, transparency, and professional responsibility. A template can help start the conversation, but the library needs to adapt it to its staff, services, and community.

The MPLA/NM presentation centers a **Human–AI–Human workflow**: a person defines the task, AI assists, and a person reviews the output and takes responsibility for it. Approval to use a tool does not remove the need to verify its work. The source policy template also keeps final employment, discipline, and evaluation decisions with people and excludes confidential patron or staff information from unapproved tools.

Implementation needs attention alongside policy language. Staff need usable examples, a clear tool-approval process, training, and someone to ask when they are unsure. Patron education matters too: helping people understand AI's limitations, recognize privacy risks, and evaluate its output is part of the approach presented in these sessions.

The board can focus its discussion on values, boundaries, resources, and review. Operational detail can live in procedures where that fits the library's governance structure. Set a review schedule and make sure the policy connects to existing privacy, technology-use, collection, and vendor practices.

Source: Robin Hastings, *Thinking Through AI Policy for your Library*, MPLA/NM presentation: Guiding Principles, Human–AI–Human Workflow, Prohibited Uses, Tool Approval, Staff Training, Patron Education, Living Document, and AI in Other Policies.

Questions to ask

- What are staff and patrons already doing with AI, and where is guidance unclear?
- Which uses would we permit, restrict, or prohibit, and why?
- How will staff verify AI-assisted work and protect confidential information?
- Who approves tools, answers questions, and recommends policy changes?
- What time and support will staff need for training and patron education?

A practical next step

Ask the director to bring a short policy summary and two realistic examples to a board discussion. Use them to test the proposed boundaries before reviewing the full policy. Agree on responsibility for implementation and a review schedule.

Illustrative discussion: AI helps draft a program description from public information. A staff member checks the details, language, and accessibility before using it. Contrast that with asking AI to make a final personnel evaluation: the source template keeps that judgment with people. What guidance would help staff recognize the difference?