Artificial Intelligence &
the Future of Law Libraries

Building the Future of Law Libraries:
Artificial Intelligence, Opportunities, and Advancement

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Executive Summary

The Future of Law Libraries initiative convened six regional roundtables on Artificial Intelligence & the Future of Law Libraries with experts from academic, court, firm, and government law libraries, as well as allied professions, using scenario-building methodology to examine how AI is reshaping legal education, work, and systems and what law libraries must do to lead that change. The common message: legal information professionals must take an active, coordinated role in AI policy, training, and infrastructure or risk being sidelined as legal information vendors and non-library actors set the agenda.

This white paper distills convergent themes and proposes collaborative directions. It explores three recommendations that sprang from the roundtables: 1) create a centralized AI organization, 2) develop tiered training for legal information professionals, and 3) establish a shared knowledge hub. If we are successful in this next stage, we will have coordinated advocacy and standards, a workforce with more advanced skills, and an open, authoritative, dynamic, centralized repository. We will be convening teams to push these recommendations forward and we provide a link in the Call to Action section (below) for our colleagues to join this effort.

Cross-Regional Roundtable Findings

The Future of Law Libraries initiative brought together a team of law library leaders to plan and execute a series of roundtables around the nation. Each roundtable included experts from academic, court, firm, and government law libraries, as well as allied professions who examined how AI is reshaping legal education, work, and systems, and what law libraries must do to lead that change. Using a facilitated scenario-building method, participants explored opportunistic and dystopian scenarios to surface needed concrete actions and innovative ideas for potential future implementation. Learn more about the outcomes of each roundtable on our initiative page. Our MidAtlantic report provides detailed information on roundtable structure and methodology.

Roundtable participants repeatedly expressed concerns about their professional autonomy and institutional role, libraries' market power and resources, AI integrity and ethics, and patron equity and accessibility. While these concerns are complex, three sound, actionable, and impactful recommendations emerged from the events that can help build a foundation to empower our profession.

1. **Create a centralized AI organization**: A multi-type, legal information professional-led coordinating body to facilitate expert connection; set shared priorities for AI policy, standards, training, interoperability, and vendor engagement; and advocate for legal information professionals in the AI legal informatics discourse.

2. **Develop profession-wide, tiered AI training for legal information professionals**: Continuous, role-based AI literacy and model development skills are needed across all staff and knowledge levels to overcome skill gaps.

3. **Create a centralized AI knowledge hub:** A central, open, well-indexed home for AI-related policies, curricula, evaluation protocols, model contracts, datasets, and case studies will accelerate learning and reduce repetition.

Below we expand on each of these recommendations, discuss how they interplay for a more holistic solution, and explore how they address concerns raised by roundtable participants.

Recommendation A — Create a Centralized AI Organization

Varied and dwindling library resources, together with uneven skill levels across legal information organizations, have led to discordant and disjointed efforts to respond to and participate in AI efforts nationally. Roundtable participants acknowledged the limited ability of current organizations to support law libraries in addressing the continually widening gaps to keep the profession relevant and impactful, so many proposed a centralized consortium charged with meeting this need. The consortium could provide mentors to members seeking to grow their AI expertise while also developing and sharing AI best practices, guidelines, workflows, and other materials, all with the goal of developing the law library into a center of AI expertise within its larger institution.

Experts would be able to connect with each other to advance their skills and get advice on niche areas of expertise while other members could find individuals with the expertise they need to either facilitate or consult on projects. As the organization grows, it could advocate with vendors and governing bodies and collaborate with iSchools, bar associations, and legal institutions nationally.

This organization need not take the form of a new legal information professional-led consortium. Many roundtable participants noted the ability to house this initiative within existing consortia, such as NELLCO, ALA, or AALL, as long as it creates the shared forum necessary to articulate standards, coordinate policy positions, and maintain a visible, unified voice on ethics, privacy, transparency, and interoperability. Bringing together academic, court, firm, and government libraries, the organization would position legal information professionals to influence institutional decision-making, engage external stakeholders, and safeguard the human-centered values of the profession.

Next Steps

Because sustainability is paramount, the initial task of the consortium effort is to research and select (or create) an organizational home that best balances cost, administrative feasibility, expertise, and funding possibilities. This effort might lead to a decision to create a

new organization with a niche focus, such as was done with the Data Curation Network, or possibly establish a division within an existing organization, such as was done with the Association of College and Research Libraries within the American Library Association.[1]

Whether an independent organization, a group embedded within an established law library consortium, or a federated network with regional nodes, once that home is identified, an interim steering circle can formalize initial governance structure, membership categories, and strategic goals. This group can also oversee the profession-wide training (further developed in Recommendation B) and serve as the steward of the AI Knowledge Hub (Recommendation C). The result is a light yet authoritative structure capable of evolving over time, empowering legal information professionals to lead responsibly, negotiate from a position of shared strength, and steward the field's collective learning about AI.

Resources

- Gregory Koster & Frank Houdek, *Law Library Consortia: The State of the Art*, 85 LAW LIBR. J. 763 (1993).

- Martha Berglund Crane, *The New England Law Library Consortium Experience*, 85 LAW LIBR. J. 767 (1993).

- JACK CARLSON ET AL., THE ART, SCIENCE, AND MAGIC OF THE DATA CURATION NETWORK: A RETROSPECTIVE ON CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION (2023).

RECOMMENDATION B — DEVELOP PROFESSION-WIDE TIERED AI TRAINING FOR LEGAL INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

In the face of rapid AI advancement and adoption and uneven institutional capacity, our profession needs more than ad hoc workshops and webinars: we need robust curriculum to train legal information professionals so that they can expertly develop, test, evaluate, deploy, and oversee AI responsibly and ethically. Universally, roundtable participants recognized the need for trusted, targeted, and topically diverse AI training that positions legal information professionals as experts, educators, and ethical stewards of AI in the legal information field.

To that end, instruction should be mapped to various facets of law library work, be case-based and hands-on, and produce work products that directly transfer into practice and

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[1] DCN was established to help data experts learn from each other, set standards, and share data curation workloads by committing time to curate submissions. Interview by Cas Laskowski with Joel Herndon, Director, Center for Data and Visualization Sciences, Aug. 15, 2025. ACRL was transformed from a section of ALA to a division in 1936 to provide it with full autonomy and the ability to meet a growing demand for "a stronger professional organization capable of undertaking a broad range of activities, programs, research, and publications" for the academic library profession. Ass'n of College & Research Libraries (American Library Ass'n), ACRL History, https://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/history/history (last visited Sept. 4, 2025).

that progress in their complexity. To scale capacity, it will likely be necessary to develop a train-the-trainer model as well. This will enable us to establish a common knowledge baseline and clear pathways for developing deeper expertise to train competent legal information AI leaders while simultaneously creating a foundation for the profession to respond to other advancements more nimbly.

Next Steps

Creating the desired training must start with a coherent competency framework, in which constituents identify what skills are needed and what type of training is desired, which will inform the initial training topics and methods. One possible model for this work is The Carpentries. They have demonstrated how, with minimal initial funding and a dedicated team, high-quality training modules can be created, maintained, and utilized with a mostly volunteer force. Such a model could be included in the development of the AI organization (Recommendation A).

Resources

- The Carpentries, About Us, https://carpentries.org/about-us (last visited Sep. 18, 2025).

- IDEA Institute 2025 - Virtual Certificate Course on AI, https://www2.asist.org/events/Details/idea-institute-2025-virtual-certificate-course-on-ai-1398828 (last visited Sep. 18, 2025).

RECOMMENDATION C — CREATE A CENTRALIZED AI KNOWLEDGE HUB FOR LAW LIBRARIES

Roundtable participants determined that the legal information profession needs a durable, legal information professional-governed locus for law library AI materials, such as teaching resources, evaluation protocols, model policy and contract language, standards, best practices, and reflective case studies. A centralized hub counters fragmentation and reduces unnecessary duplication of effort, and complements Recommendations A and B (above).

Next Steps

Similar to the other recommendations, a feasibility study that would identify options for a knowledge hub is a key first step. This would require not only identifying where the information might be stored, but also understanding where our community searches for and how we engage with information. After gathering that data, we should examine frustration points that arise in existing repositories and aim to avoid them. From there, we would need to establish a collection policy and contributor guidelines in preparation for a call for submissions, which would follow the completion of this initial phase.

Resources

- Code4Lib, *Code4Lib GitHub Repository*, https://github.com/code4lib (last visited Sep. 18, 2025).
- AI4LAM, *AI4LAM GitHub Repository*, https://github.com/AI4LAM (last visited Sep. 18, 2025).

How the Recommendations Intertwine

These three pillars are necessarily interdependent. The **organization** provides the governance, advocacy, and strategic vision; the **training** ensures our community is competently able to engage in AI discourse nationally and implement prudent AI solutions locally; and the **knowledge hub** captures, preserves, and disseminates the outputs so every library, regardless of size or budget, benefits from this work.

Thus, the three pillars work together:
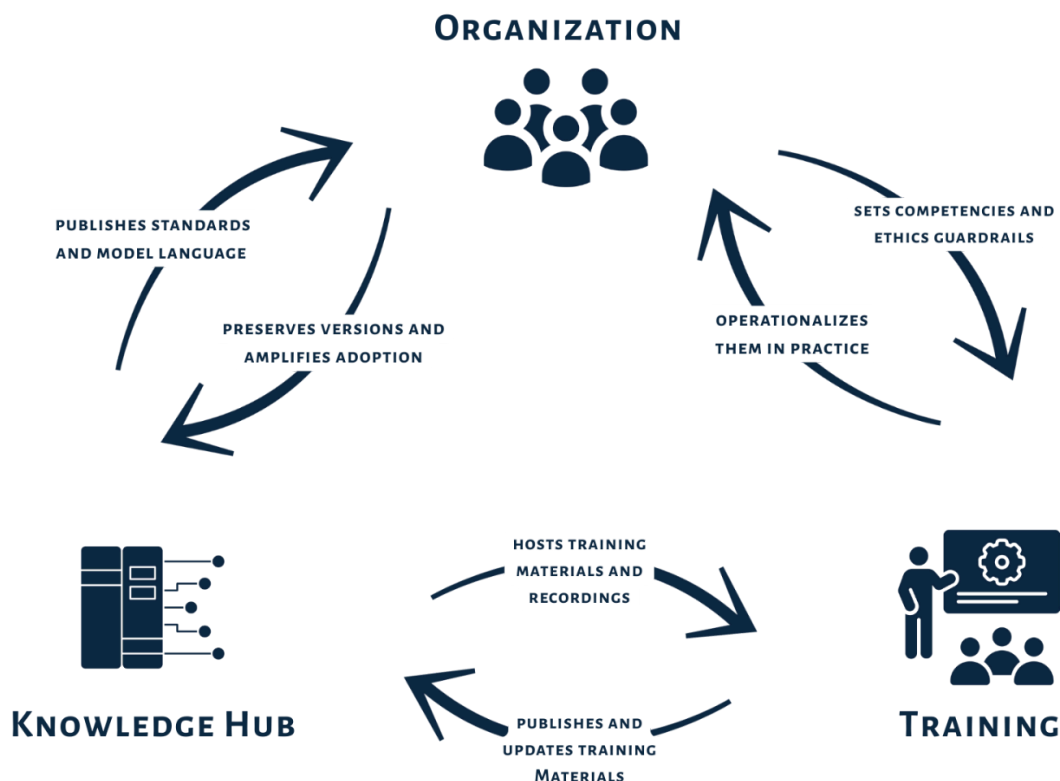
How the Recommendations Address Concerns and Build on Our Strengths

It is crucial to identify recommendations that not only address the concerns voiced by roundtable participants but also leverage the strengths inherent in our profession. A legal information professional-led AI organization that provides tiered training and a curated

knowledge hub converts the risk of marginalization into visible leadership by giving legal information professionals a unified voice, shared competencies, and citable exemplars that travel across institutions.

Taken together, these elements reaffirm professional autonomy, restore balance to vendor relations, and strengthen both ethical and technical safeguards without hindering innovation. The consortium establishes the policy center and aligns priorities; training implements these priorities through measurable skills and "human-in-the-loop" heuristics; and the hub promotes openness and accessibility, reducing duplication while expanding reach to all our communities. In this framework, the message of the roundtables is clear: the role of legal information professionals is not technological determinism but principled, human-centered legal informatics governance.

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF LAW LIBRARIES

The roundtables prove that legal information professionals are ready to lead on AI. This leadership will require steady commitment and meaningful collaboration from all areas of our profession to create the shared governance, skills, and infrastructure discussed above.

It is our goal to move the initiative forward in the next year (2026) and begin meaningful progress towards these recommendations in the next two years (2026-2028). With 12–24 months of coordinated effort, the profession can achieve: (a) a recognized forum for AI standards and vendor dialogue; (b) measurable growth in legal information professionals AI competencies and certified trainers across library types; and (c) an openly governed repository that reduces duplication, speeds adoption of good practices (and eventually best practices), and elevates legal information professional contributions to AI governance and access to justice. Regional reports emphasize that this work is already underway and the time to engage is now.

CALL TO ACTION

We invite individuals to volunteer for one of four efforts: the Steering Committee, the Consortium/Program Charter Group, the Training Development Group, or the Knowledge Hub Creation Group. Choose your path to contribute:

1. **Steering Committee**
   Charge: Provide strategic oversight for the Future of Law Libraries Initiative and its subgroups by facilitating the work of subgroups and preparing the initiative for subsequent phases.
   Scope of Work:
   a. Coordinate work across subgroups by aligning timelines, disseminating information, and convening decision meetings.

    b. Identify partners and resources that will support proposals from subgroups, including applying for grants or other funding as necessary to support this phase of the work.

    c. Draft reports and communication on project progress.

Time Commitment: Approximately 7-10 hours monthly (meetings, coordination, partner communication, and report drafting).

2. **Consortium/Organization Charter Group**

Charge: Identify the most sustainable organizational option & create foundational organizational governance.

Scope of Work:

    a. Research and select an organizational model (new or existing consortium/organization)

    b. Propose mission, values (e.g., privacy, openness, equity, accessibility), & governance structure.

Time Commitment: Approximately 3-4 hours monthly (meetings, research, and recommendation drafting).

3. **Training Development Group**

Charge: Define core competencies and create one pilot module.

Scope of Work:

    a. Release a 1–page Competency Framework (Awareness → Practitioner → Specialist → Leader) with role examples.

    b. Draft one pilot module outline (60–90 minutes each) with learning outcomes and simple pre/post checks, and schedule instructors.

Time Commitment: Approximately 5-7 hours monthly (meetings, research, and pilot training model development).

4. **Knowledge Hub Creation Group**

Charge: Select a hosting option, set minimal editorial rules, and open intake.

Scope of Work:

    a. Research and select the best hosting option.

    b. Publish a 1–page Collection Policy v1 + contributor guidelines (scope, licensing, provenance, accessibility).

Time Commitment: Approximately 4-5 hours monthly (meetings, research, and recommendation drafting).

Ready to join our efforts? [Sign up](#) today.