



UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
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Building an AI-Empowered World: Practical Applications of AI

Full Programme | 9–13 November 2026

Pont de Val, Parys, Free State, South Africa

Workshops: 9 and 13 November | Symposium: 10–12 November 2026

Symposium Themes

- Practical Applications of AI
- Data Sovereignty in the AI World
- AI: Beyond the Horizon
- The Human-AI Synergy
- Economic and Societal Transitions in an AI World
- Sustainable and Inclusive AI Future



WORKSHOP 1: AI WORKSHOP FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARY

Time	Session / Presentation Details
09:00–09:30	Registration
09:30–09:45	Opening and Welcome
09:45–10:30	Session 1: AI landscape for libraries
10:30–10:40	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
10:40–12:15	Session 2: Hands Live demo and guided exercises using AI tool
12:40–13:10	<i>Lunch (30 min)</i>
13:15–14:45	Session 3: Recommendation engines and reference services Case study walkthroughs; group activity – mapping AI to your workflows
14:45–14:55	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
15:55–16:50	Session 4: Implementation planning Frameworks, lessons learned, and developing an institutional AI roadmap

Day 1 | Programme Director NUL 10 November 2026

Time	Session / Presentation Details
08:00–08:30	Registration
08:30–08:45	Opening and Welcome
08:45–09:30	Guest Speaker (45 min)
09:30–09:50	Chair: Nambitha Manqola Mdanyana — Developing a Library AI Agent for 24/7 patron support to enhance user experience: Reflections from an Academic Library Experience
09:50–10:10	Tsabedze — Piloting an artificial intelligence driven chatbot for automated virtual reference services at the University of Eswatini
10:10–10:30	Radebe, Ndamane, Francis, Tutja — Reimagining Public Libraries through Hackathon Programmes: A Case Study from Adelaide Tambo Public Library
10:30–10:40	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
10:40–11:00	Chair: Nomakhosazana Ndumela Nomkonwana — Artificial intelligence as tools to access library services and sources among undergraduate students at a South African University.
11:00–11:20	Lawal — Emerging trends in library and information services: the impact of artificial intelligence
11:20–11:40	Maya — Strengthening Artificial Intelligence (AI) Competencies Among Librarians: Practical Library Applications
11:40–12:40	Vendor: SABINET (60 min)
12:40–13:10	<i>Lunch (30 min)</i>
13:10–13:30	Chair: Nokuthula Musa Radebe & Mokoena — From Awareness to Readiness: Assessing Artificial Intelligence Competencies and Training Needs Among Public Library Staff in Bethlehem Libraries, Free State.
13:30–13:50	Sephoko — Upholding Academic Integrity through Information Literacy: Ethical Engagement with Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education
13:50–14:10	Mrwashu — AI Literacy for Library Staff: Designing a Practical “In-House” Training Program
14:10–14:30	Souza — Living Library: Cartonera Books and AI for Inclusive Learning
14:30–16:15	Vendor: UKS
16:15–16:30	Day 1 Wrap-Up

Time	Session / Presentation Details
08:30–08:40	Recap of Day 1
08:40–09:25	Guest Speaker (45 min)
09:25–09:45	Chair: Santiago Villegas-Ceballos Paulsen — Bridging the AI Literacy Gap: Developing a Consistent Skills Framework for Academic Librarians at UCT Libraries
09:45–10:05	Blomerus — SamplingForML: A Web-Based AI-Ready Data Preparation and Deep Neural Network Training Platform for Structured Regression Problems
10:05–10:25	Abdulla & Zingapan — Reimagining library services with humanoid robotics: ai applications in cataloguing, discovery, and reference services in academic libraries
10:25–10:35	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
10:35–10:55	Chair: Charlie Molepo Chuma, van Staden & Brown — A Comparative Evaluation of Multi-Task and Single-Task Architectures for Object Detection and Semantic Segmentation in Autonomous Driving
10:55–11:15	Browne — Building Sustainable AI Futures: Climate Justice, Digital Infrastructure, and the Global South
11:15–11:35	Ramabina — Enhancing Inclusive Services in Academic Libraries: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Supporting Users with Special Needs
11:35–12:35	Vendor: (60 min)
12:35–13:05	<i>Lunch (30 min)</i>
13:05–13:25	Chair: Dr Tahleho Tseole Nair — Designing for the Reviewer: A Human-in-the-Loop AI Pipeline for News-Driven Knowledge Base Maintenance at the National Library Board Singapore
13:25–13:45	Netshakhuma — Management Records in the Age of Artificial Intelligence in South Africa
13:45–14:05	Muftic — From Prompt to Pipeline: AI-Assisted Coding for Metadata and File Management in Libraries
14:05–14:25	Zvakafa & Kandira — Co-Creating Value with AI: Collaborative Workflows in the Zimbabwe Universities Libraries Consortium
14:25–14:45	Mathope — Human–AI Collaboration in Records Management Insights from the Road Accident Fund’s Readiness for an AI-Empowered Future
14:45–16:15	Vendor
16:15–16:30	Day 2 Wrap-Up

Time	Session / Presentation Details
08:30–08:40	Recap of Day 2
08:40–09:25	Guest Speaker (45 min)
09:25–09:45	Chair: Nthabiseng Kotsokoane Lekhooa — AI Powered Metadata and Knowledge Discovery in African Academic Libraries: A Practical Framework for Responsible Implementation
09:45–10:05	Modise — Reimagining Archival Workflows: Embedding Artificial Technologies into Digitisation and Metadata Practices at the University of the Free State Archives
10:05–10:25	Lajoie & McCormack — Mediating the AI–Scholarship Interface: Libraries as Active Architects of Generative AI Access to Research
10:25–10:35	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
10:35–10:55	Chair: Lindile Nhlapho Odularu — Human–AI synergy in academic libraries: systematic review of policy frameworks for ethical human-in-the-loop governance
10:55–11:15	Mpikashe — AI-Enhanced Research Visibility Services at North-West University
11:15–11:35	Kleinveldt — Lessons learned about AI integration into the LIS Curriculum towards workplace preparedness: lessons learned
11:35–12:35	Vendor: (60 min)
12:35–13:05	<i>Lunch (30 min)</i>
13:05–13:25	Chair: Dr Neliswa Shabalala Dabengwa — Artificial Intelligence in Zimbabwean media: ethical concerns, governance issues, and societal impact (2016-2025)
13:25–13:45	Radebe, Van Der Walt & Havenga— Ethical and responsible integration of Large Language Models in higher education: A qualitative study of strategies employed in a South African university of technology
13:45–14:05	Maimela — AI Governance Framework for Academic Libraries
14:05–14:25	Zeraatkar — Designing Ethical AI Models for Minority Knowledge Systems Using the Yārsān Case Study
14:25–15:25	Vendor: (60 min)
15:25–16:15	Panel Discussion
16:15–16:30	Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks

Post-Symposium Workshop Day | 13 November 2026

Workshop 2: Building responsible and inclusive AI systems in PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A forward-looking workshop examining the ethical, societal, and strategic dimensions of AI in public libraries. Drawing on symposium insights, participants will engage in collaborative scenario planning, policy design exercises, and develop a shared statement of principles for responsible AI adoption.

Time	Session / Presentation Details
09:00–09:30	Registration
09:30–09:45	Opening and Welcome
09:45–10:30	Session 1: Ethical AI frameworks in practice Bias, fairness, transparency, and accountability in library AI systems
10:30–10:40	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
10:40–12:15	Session 2: Indigenous knowledge and culturally based AI design Decolonising data practices; participatory design methods; community case
12:40–13:10	<i>Lunch (30 min)</i>
13:15–14:45	Session 3: Scenario planning – the AI library in 2035 Small group futures exercise; scenario building across social justice, sustainable AI, and inclusion themes
14:45–14:55	<i>Tea Break (10 min)</i>
15:55–16:50	Session 4: Drafting a shared declaration Collaborative drafting of a UFS AI and Libraries Declaration of Principles; group consensus process