AI USE ACROSS THE NORTH AMERICAN BOOK INDUSTRY

2025

BISG | BOOK INDUSTRY STUDY GROUP

BOOKNET CANADA

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Introduction

Executive summary

The rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has prompted significant discussion across the publishing industry regarding its potential benefits, risks, and long-term implications. To better understand how publishing professionals are engaging with these technologies, the AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025 survey gathered perspectives on current AI usage, attitudes toward its role in publishing workflows, and information about AI policies and governance structures.

Overall, the findings suggest that AI use within the publishing ecosystem remains uneven and often exploratory. Individuals working at larger organizations report higher levels of AI use and greater interest in training opportunities, while respondents at smaller organizations appear more hesitant. Across the survey, respondents frequently emphasized concerns about copyright, ethics, job impacts, environmental costs, and the reliability of AI-generated outputs. At the same time, many participants acknowledged that AI tools may offer practical benefits for limited operational tasks when used with human oversight. These results highlight a key challenge for the industry: balancing experimentation with emerging technologies while developing policies to protect creative labour, intellectual property, and the integrity of published content.

Formation of the BISG AI Working Group

The AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025 survey is an initiative from the Book Industry Study Group's (BISG) AI Working Group with support from BookNet Canada. The working group was formed in late 2023 in response to growing interest in and uncertainty around the use of AI across the book publishing ecosystem.

As AI tools began to influence editorial, marketing, metadata, rights, accessibility, and supply-chain workflows, BISG identified the need for a cross-industry forum to share information, examine risks, and develop practical, consensus-driven guidance.

Established as a multi-stakeholder initiative, the working group brings together participants from across the publishing supply chain, including publishers, service providers, libraries, and technology vendors. Its formation reflects the recognition that AI's impact on publishing cannot be addressed in isolation, and that effective approaches require shared understanding across roles, organization sizes, and levels of technical maturity. Participation is open to both BISG members and nonmembers.

Purpose of the survey

The purpose of this survey is to support the data-driven development of resources and best practices for the book industry as it responds to the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence.

The survey was developed by the BISG's AI Working Group to better understand how AI is already influencing day-to-day work, where experimentation is occurring, and where uncertainty or hesitation remains. To share a more complete picture of the English-speaking North American book industry, BookNet Canada, a long-time collaborator and partner of BISG and a working group member, took on an active, supportive role, helping promote the survey among Canadian book industry professionals and contributing to the production, analysis, and report writing.

At a time of both heightened interest and concern around AI's potential to impact publishing, the findings aim to ground industry conversations in shared data. Responses strive to help organizations navigate AI in ways that are effective and aligned with industry values.

Scope and methodology

During summer 2025, BISG and BookNet Canada gathered responses from publishing-industry professionals across the United States and Canada through an industry-wide survey titled AI Use Across the North American Book Industry.

The survey received 559 total responses across 24 questions, with a 90% completion rate, indicating strong engagement from participants. Respondents represented a broad range of professional roles and organizational contexts within the publishing ecosystem.

Most respondents reported working for publishers (48%), followed by those working in libraries (17%) and as service providers (7%). An additional 14% identified as independent professionals, including consultants, agents, indexers, editors, and creators.

Geographically, 75% of respondents reported working in the United States, and 18% in Canada, reflecting the survey's focus on the North American book industry.

The respondent pool skewed toward experienced professionals, with 51% reporting 15 or more years of experience in the industry. As a result, the findings largely reflect perspectives from individuals with substantial professional tenure and institutional knowledge.

Many thanks

The BISG and BookNet Canada extend their gratitude to writer Jarin Pintana and to the following volunteers for their support: George Walkley, Chris Jun, Sarah Cole, and Rachel Comerford.

Background and context

State of AI in the industry

The state of AI in the book publishing industry is marked by both concern and cautious experimentation. There remain unresolved questions about consent and compensation, particularly regarding the use of copyrighted works in AI training datasets and the copyright status of AI-assisted content. At the same time, the industry continues to debate where AI tools can be productively integrated and where they risk undermining quality. Sustainability has also emerged as a growing consideration, as AI systems require significant computational power and therefore energy and resources.

Research from the Publishers Association (*People Plus Machines: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Publishing*) illustrates the extent to which larger publishers are moving forward with structured AI investment. In an online industry survey that was sent to all UK Publishers Association member organisations in 2019 and 2020, respondents reported that AI was being applied across nearly all parts of the value chain except customer service. Current use was strongest in content acquisition and development, and approximately three-quarters of respondents were already using or planning to introduce AI-driven marketing and sales solutions within two years. The most common AI-assisted task was content classification, including metadata tagging to improve discoverability, alongside market trend identification and recommendation systems. Two-thirds of the publishers surveyed reported having realized measurable benefits, and all expected to see returns within two years. When asked to use a scale from 0 to 100, publishers rated AI's importance to the industry over the next five years at 69, signaling strong expectations of its growing influence.

AI adoption is also unfolding within a complex legal and regulatory landscape. American cases such as *Bartz v. Anthropic* and *Kadrey v. Meta* have tested whether the use of copyrighted works for AI training constitutes fair use, offering limited clarity while signaling potential legal liability related to copyright. In Europe and Canada, litigation continues over unauthorized inclusion of works in AI datasets, even as legislators develop AI-specific rules addressing transparency, accountability, and intellectual property. These evolving frameworks indicate the importance of careful documentation, policy development, and risk assessment in organizational AI strategies.

Author sentiment reflects many of these same tensions. Survey data from BookBub (*How Authors Are Thinking About AI*) that was published in 2025, shows authors are nearly evenly split: approximately 45% report using generative AI in some capacity, while 48% do not and do not plan to. Among non-users, 84% cite ethical concerns, most frequently the use of copyrighted material without consent or compensation. At the same time, some authors use AI for marketing or administrative support, similarly distinguishing between creative authorship and workflow assistance as is seen in the broader industry. Commentary in a 2025 Forbes article (*4 Ways AI Could Change Book Publishing In 2026*) similarly suggests that while AI can increase efficiency in editing, marketing, and production, it may come at the expense of quality and cannot replace human creative judgment.

Taken together, these findings portray a publishing ecosystem in transition. Institutions are investing strategically and reporting operational gains, while creators and industry bodies call for stronger safeguards around rights, transparency, sustainability, and quality. The sector is actively seeking guardrails that would allow AI to enhance rather than displace professional expertise.

Review of similar research exercises

To contextualize the results of the survey, it is beneficial to consider insights from comparable research. One such study is a large-scale survey of professionals across the Ibero-American publishing ecosystem titled *Navigating the uncertain: Uses and perceptions of Generative AI in the Ibero-American Publishing Sector*. The survey was conducted between October 16 and December 10, 2024 by the Regional Center for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean or, in Spanish, Centro Regional para el Fomento del Libro en América Latina y el Caribe (CERLARC), an intergovernmental organization sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This study focused on the Spanish-language book market, and respondents were primarily from Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Peru. The study found that 50% of respondents have used generative AI tools in their work, similar to the level of adoption in other markets. However, a majority (54%) have not received formal training, despite expressing interest in doing so. Concerns around intellectual property were particularly pronounced, with 86% of illustrators citing copyright infringement as a major issue, while 56% of translators believe AI devalues human creative work. At the same time, there is recognition of potential efficiencies, with 35% of distribution professionals reporting reduced workloads through AI use. Importantly, respondents identified education and training (74%) and regulation (87%) as key mechanisms for ensuring responsible and transparent use of AI.

However, because there are relatively few large-scale surveys focused exclusively on AI attitudes within publishing, broader cross-sector research provides important context. A 2025 global survey by the Pew Research Center titled *How People Around the World View AI* found that people are worried about AI's growing presence in daily life. A median of 34% of adults reported feeling more concerned than excited about increased AI use, while 42% said they felt equally concerned and excited; only 16% said they were more excited than concerned. In the United States, respondents were nearly evenly divided on whether they trust their country to regulate AI effectively (44% trust vs. 47% distrust).

Similarly, the report *Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025*, came out of a survey led by the University of Melbourne in collaboration with KPMG, which was fielded to more than 48,000 people across 47 countries. The findings indicate that AI use has increased rapidly since 2022 and is now embedded in everyday life and work across sectors. While most respondents report feeling both optimistic and worried, 72% accept AI's use. In workplace contexts, 58% of employees intentionally use AI regularly, with one-third using it weekly. Adoption rates are higher in emerging economies (72%) than in advanced economies (49%). Although more than half of employees report performance benefits, many also cite mixed impacts on workload, human interaction, and compliance, and two in five believe AI may replace jobs in their area. The study further notes that governance and training often lag behind adoption, with instances of inappropriate or non-transparent use.

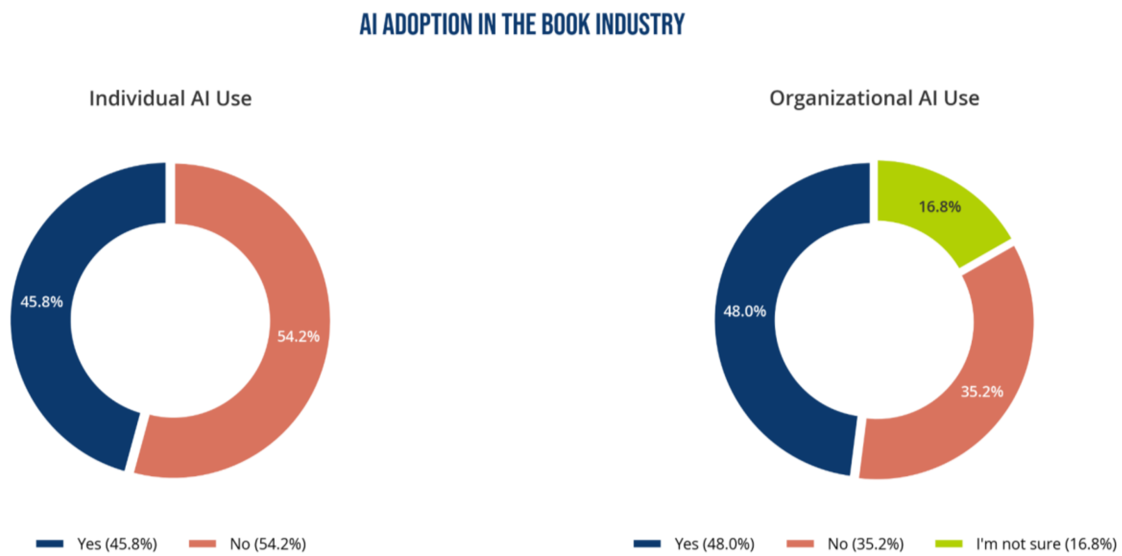
Findings from the *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2025 Global Survey on AI and Human Development* reinforce the importance of context in shaping trust and expectations. Patterns of AI use, for example, differ by life stage and occupation. Students primarily use AI for learning, workforce participants for job-related tasks, and retirees for entertainment and health. Across most occupations and countries, expectations of augmentation (AI supporting human work) exceed expectations of automation (AI replacing human work). The report emphasizes that poorly managed integration of AI and human work could exacerbate inequalities between countries and sectors.

Collectively, these global studies suggest that the attitudes observed in publishing, marked by cautious optimism, ethical concern, and demand for clearer governance, reflect broader societal trends. AI is widely accepted and increasingly used, yet trust, regulatory clarity, and responsible implementation remain central challenges across industries.

Overview of AI use in the book industry

AI is increasingly being integrated into various aspects of the book publishing workflow, with 45.8% of respondents to the AI Use Across the North American Book Industry survey saying they, as individuals, use AI and 48.0% saying their organization uses AI.

Figure 1.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Use cases

Current usage patterns suggest that AI is being applied primarily to improve efficiency, streamline workflows, and enhance data-driven decision-making rather than to replace creativity. Both individuals and organizations report similar areas of experimentation, with slightly higher uptake at the organizational level, indicating more formalized implementation within companies. The following data provides a snapshot of where AI tools are most and least commonly being used across the industry:

Where AI is being used most

Area of use	Individual	Organizational
Administrative or operational tasks	23.5%	29.1%
Marketing activities	19.3%	29.1%

Data analysis or reporting	20.5%	21.4%
Editorial tasks	14.4%	19.8%
Metadata and title optimization	14.6%	16.8%

Where AI is being used least

Area of use	**Individuals**	**Organizations**
Rights and licensing management	2.2%	2.8%
QA testing	3.6%	4.2%
Creating AI-voiced audiobooks	4.1%	5.7%
Translating book content into other languages	4.1%	7.0%
Customer service or reader engagement	3.9%	10.0%

As shown above, the data indicates that AI is being deployed primarily to support efficiency. More sensitive tasks like content creation and translation, rights-related work, or consumer-facing applications remain comparatively limited.

Top concerns and barriers

Although AI adoption appears to be expanding, significant concerns and barriers remain. Survey responses indicate that ethical, legal, and quality-related risks are top of mind for industry professionals, with most potential pain points rated at notably high levels. The data suggest that apprehension is not limited to a single issue but reflects a broad unease about governance, accountability, transparency, and long-term impacts on creative labour. The following findings highlight the primary concerns shaping industry discourse:

- Inadequate controls around the use of copyrighted material (86.4%)
- Hallucinations (AI providing false or made-up information as fact) (84.3%)
- AI-generated books, including fraudulent or low-quality content, flooding major retail platforms (81.1%)
- Inaccurate, false, or biased training data used by AI systems (79.2%)
- Lack of disclosure to consumers when AI-generated content is used (73.9%)
- Lack of trust in the companies developing and controlling AI technologies (73.7%)
- Legal liability (e.g., copyright infringement, data privacy breaches) (70.3%)
- Reinforcement or amplification of bias, discrimination, or oppression (63.7%)
- Job loss or negative impacts on authors and creators (64.1%)

- Incorrect or misleading content that hinders accessibility (60.7%)
- Job loss or negative impacts on publishing career pathways (57.1%)

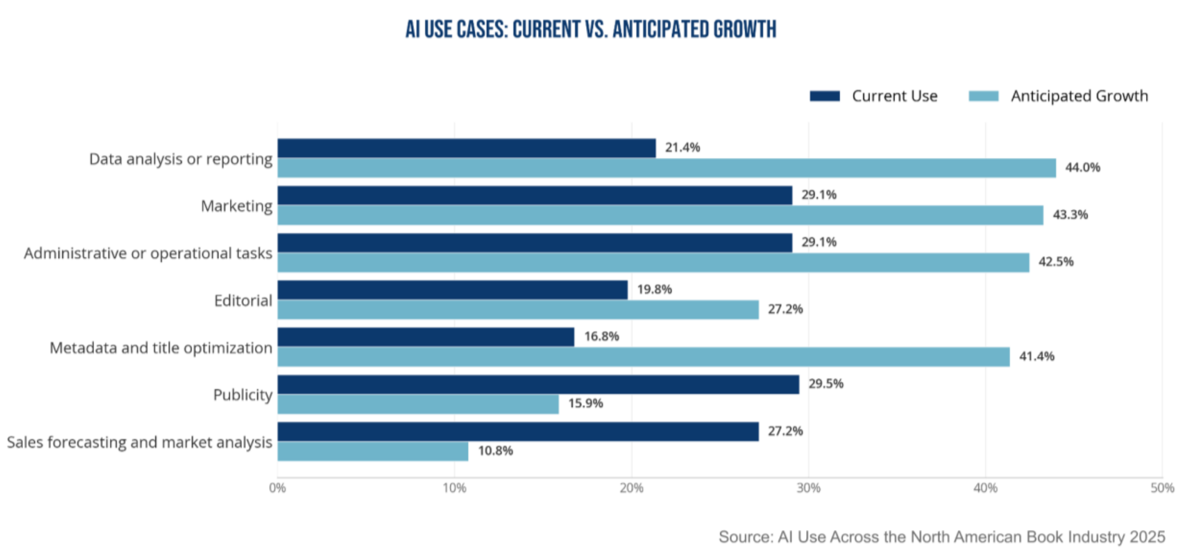
The highest-rated concern relates to inadequate controls around copyrighted material. By contrast, comparatively fewer respondents identified cost barriers (20.4% cited AI as too expensive for smaller organizations) or negative impacts on sustainability goals (34.2%) as primary pain points. Overall, the data shows that ethical governance and rights management are dominant industry concerns, although many issues received strong agreement, indicating widespread apprehension.

Areas poised for growth: Anticipated future use

Looking ahead, the data points to a few areas of anticipated growth. While current AI use is concentrated in operational functions, respondents expect adoption to expand in the following areas:

- Data analysis or reporting (44.0%)
- Marketing (43.3%)
- Administrative or operational tasks (42.5%)
- Metadata and title optimization (41.4%)
- Publicity (29.5%)
- Editorial (27.2%)
- Sales forecasting and market analysis (27.2%)

Figure 2.



These figures show that organizations expect AI adoption to expand beyond current levels, particularly in data analysis, discoverability, and strategic market functions, with more moderate but still notable growth anticipated in editorial, publicity, and sales contexts.

Where education and training are wanted

- 56.6% of individuals believe training or professional development on using AI is a good use of their time.
- 32.5% say AI training is a good use of time, though not a current priority.
- 13.2% say AI training is essential to their work.

Opportunities identified

There was significant interest in best practices and practical guidance, especially in metadata, laws and regulations, editorial processes, ethics, and sales/marketing applications.

- 59.4% of respondents report actively staying informed about new AI developments.
- 45.0% are experimenting with AI tools directly, indicating a proactive approach to learning and adoption.

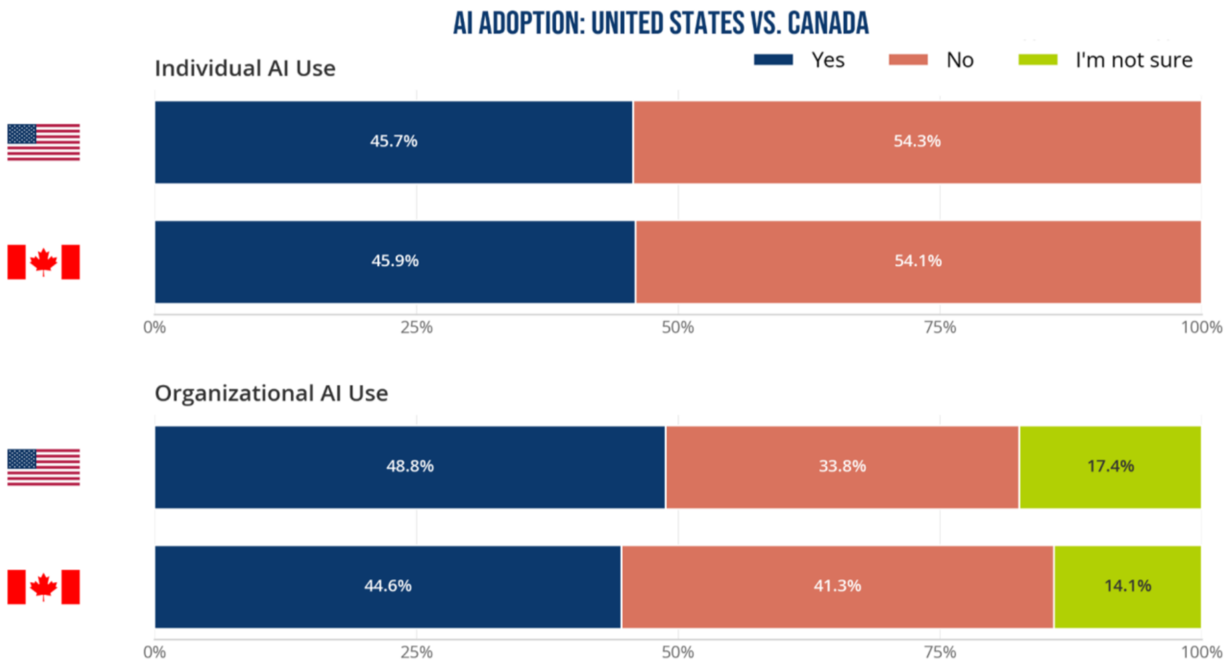
In tandem, the findings highlight a sector that is preparing for broader AI integration while recognizing the need for education. This appetite for training signals that many professionals are navigating this shift cautiously and are seeking structured support to build skills strategically.

Individual vs. organizational adoption: Patterns and deviations

While organizations report slightly higher overall AI use (48.0%) compared to individuals (45.8%), a substantial share of both groups remains non-users, underscoring that adoption is far from universal. Individuals tended to show stronger enthusiasm for skill-building: 56.6% view AI training as a beneficial use of their time. By contrast, organizations appear to be formalizing their approach more slowly; only 31.0% report having an official AI policy in place, while 34.2% have no policy and 26.3% are in the process of developing one. Together, these patterns suggest that professionals are personally open to experimentation and education, even as institutions work through governance, risk management, and policy frameworks before fully embedding AI into operations.

A comparison between the Canadian and US markets reveals broadly similar patterns of AI adoption and sentiment. Among individuals, adoption rates are nearly identical: approximately 46% of respondents in both countries report using AI tools in their work, while roughly 54% do not. Organizational use is comparable, with 48.8% of US organizations and 44.6% of Canadian organizations reporting AI adoption. Attitudes toward professional development align closely as well, with a majority in both countries viewing AI training as beneficial (US: 57.5%; Canada: 53.1%). Overall, the data suggest that the two markets are moving at a similar pace, reflecting parallel levels of experimentation and caution across the North American publishing landscape.

Figure 3.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Though there appear to be a high number of similarities, some differences emerged when comparing responses from the United States and Canada:

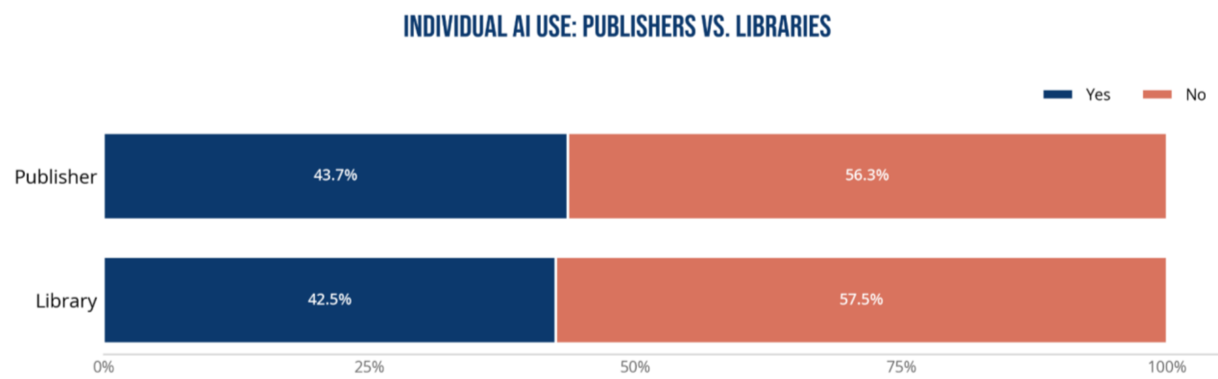
- Desire for best practices for AI use in ethics: A higher proportion of Canadian respondents (45.7%) indicated that guidance in this area would be helpful compared with respondents in the United States (34.6%).
- Lack of disclosure to consumers when AI-generated content is used: This pain point was more frequently identified by Canadian respondents (83.7%) than by respondents in the United States (71.5%).
- Negative impacts on sustainability goals: Canadian respondents (43.5%) were more likely than US respondents (31.9%) to identify sustainability impacts as a pain point related to AI use.

Key findings by segment

Publishers and libraries

AI use among individuals is relatively similar between those working at publishers and those working at libraries: 43.7% of individuals working at publishers report using AI tools in their work, nearly identical to individuals working at libraries (42.5%).

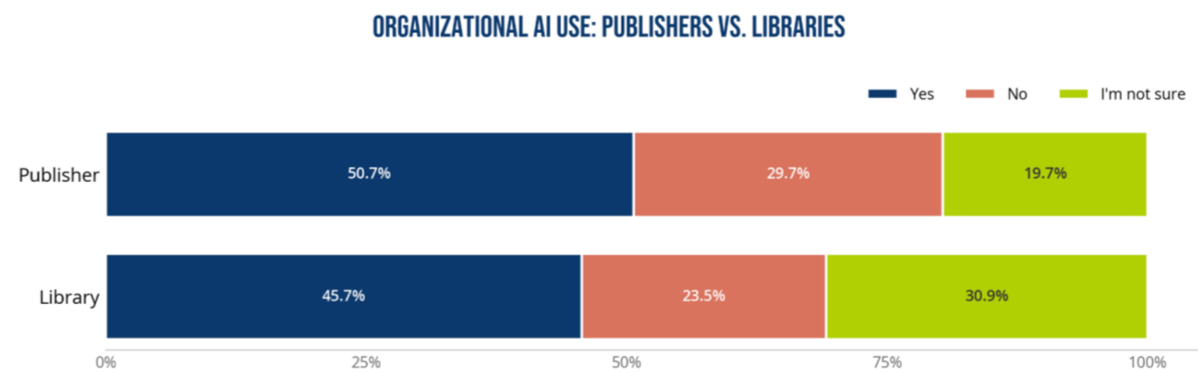
Figure 4.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Similarly, at an organizational level, AI use between publishers (50.7%) and libraries (45.7%) is very close.

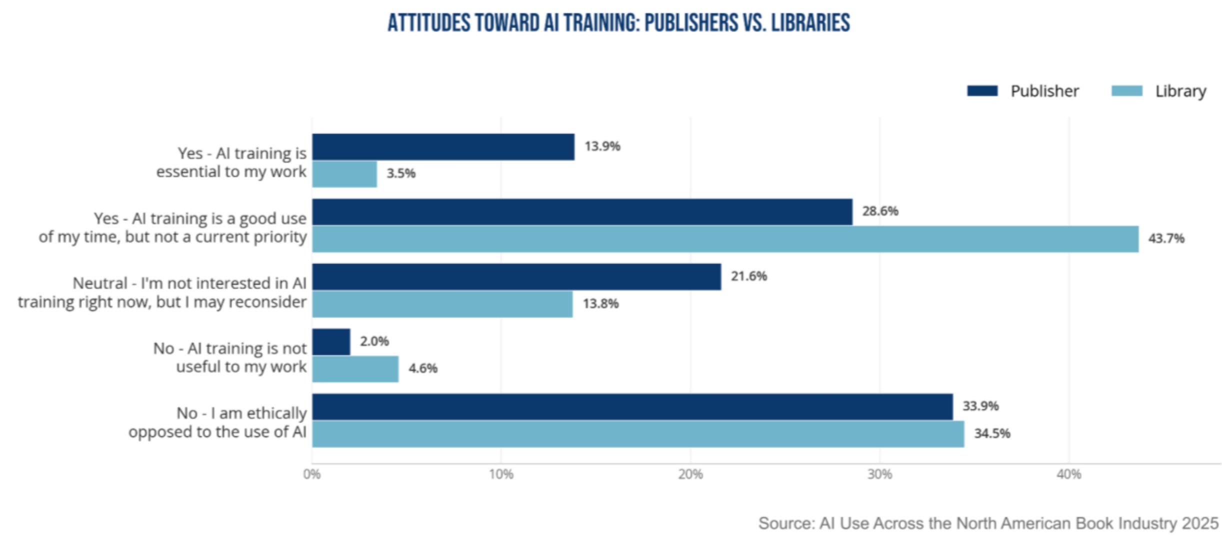
Figure 5.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

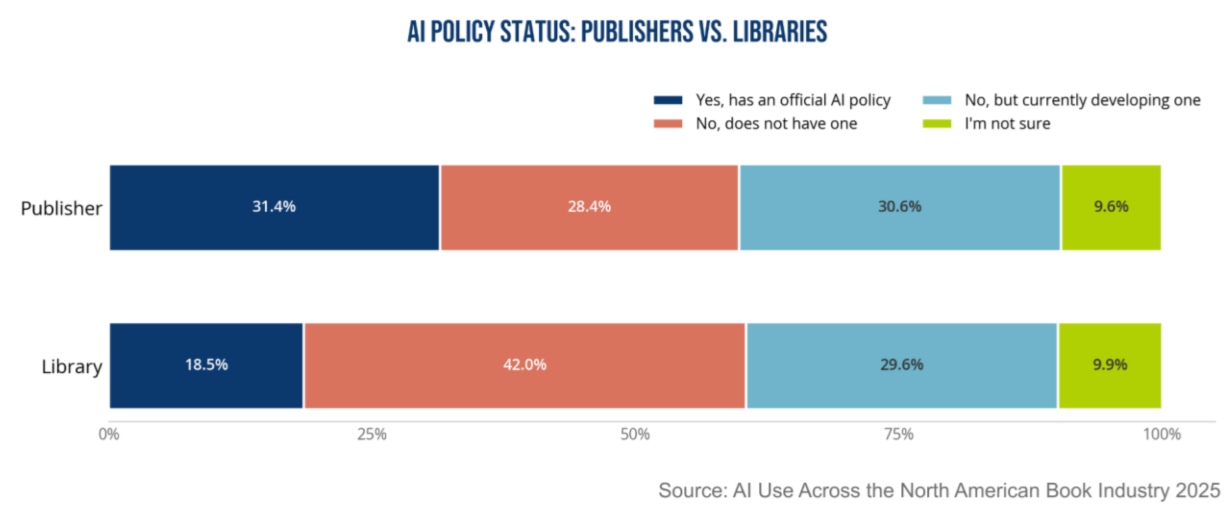
There were some differences between individuals working at publishers versus libraries when it comes to attitudes toward AI training. Respondents working at publishers were more likely to say that AI training is essential to their work (13.9%) than those working at libraries (3.5%). However, a higher percentage of respondents working at libraries (43.7%) said AI training is a good use of their time but not a current priority, compared to those working at publishers (28.6%). A nearly identical percentage of respondents in both these segments said they were ethically opposed to AI.

Figure 6.



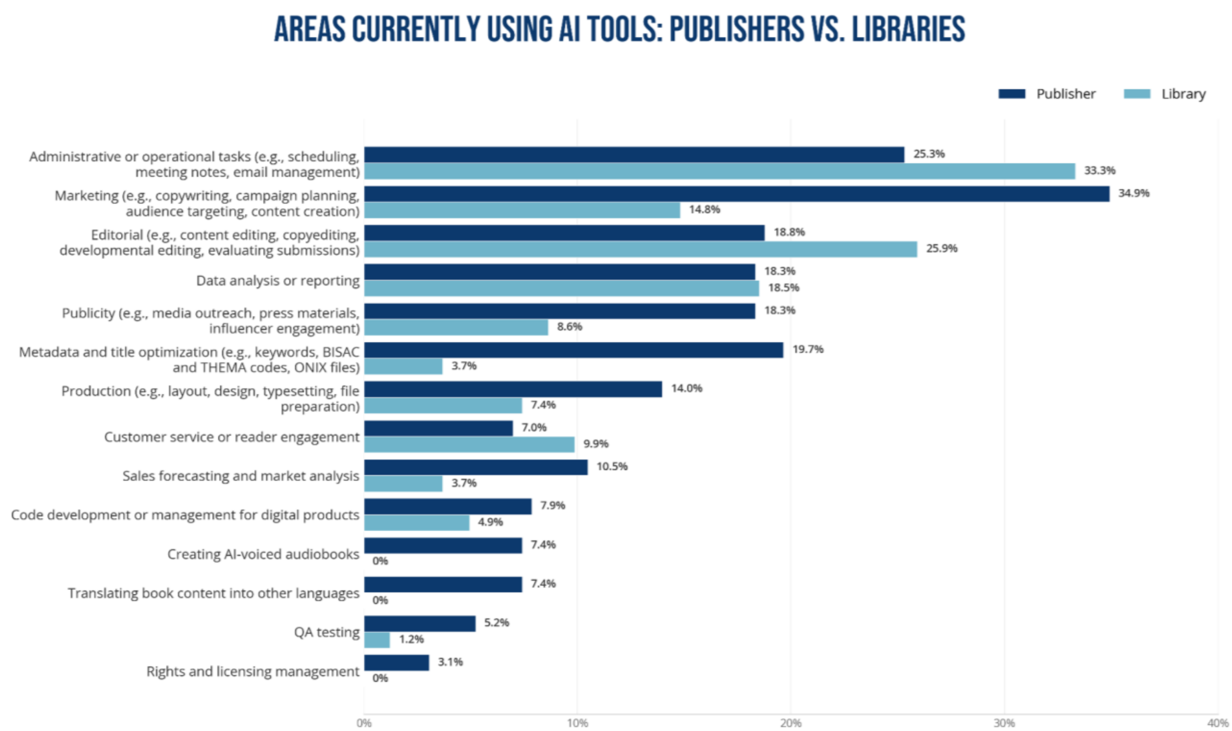
Based on the data, publishers (31.4%) were more likely to have an official policy on AI than libraries (18.5%). However, an almost identical percentage (both close to 30%) said their organization was currently developing one.

Figure 7.



Organizational use of AI tools varies across segments, with different areas of emphasis reflecting the priorities of publishers and libraries. Among publishers, AI is most commonly used in marketing-related activities, with 34.9% reporting current use in areas such as copywriting, campaign planning, audience targeting, and content creation. Libraries, by contrast, report higher levels of AI use in editorial and administrative contexts. About 25.9% of library respondents indicate using AI for editorial-related tasks, such as content editing or evaluation, compared with 18.8% of publishers. Libraries also show the highest uptake in administrative or operational tasks, with 33.3% reporting AI use for activities like scheduling, meeting notes, and email management, compared with 25.3% of publishers. These patterns suggest that while publishers are primarily leveraging AI to support outward-facing functions like marketing, libraries are more likely to integrate AI into internal workflows and information-management processes.

Figure 8.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

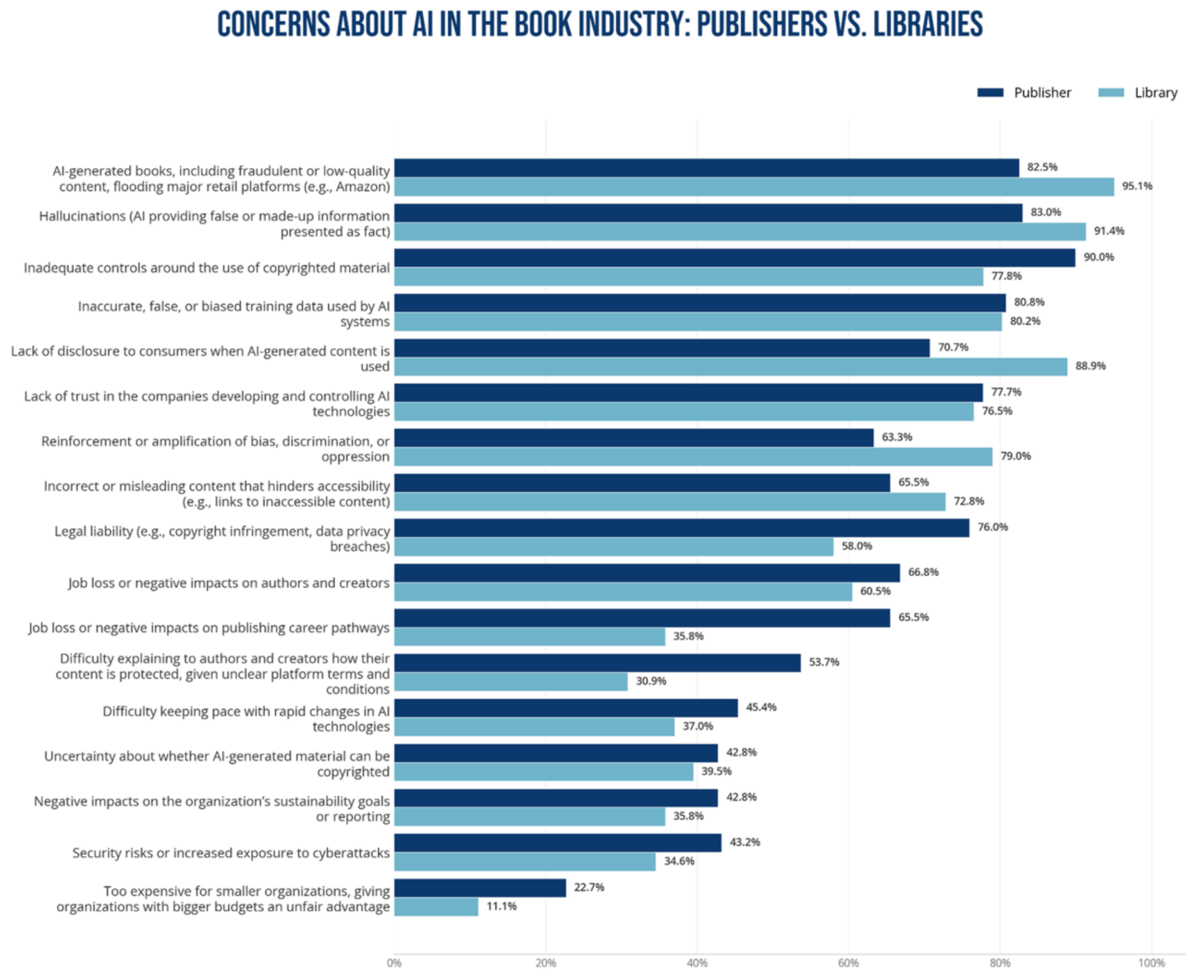
Pain points related to AI were broadly similar across respondent groups, with some notable differences.

Concerns about inadequate controls around the use of copyrighted material ranked highly across all groups, but were especially pronounced among respondents working at publishers (90.0%), followed by all respondents (86.1%) and those working at libraries (77.8%).

Concerns about AI-generated books, including fraudulent or low-quality content, flooding major retail platforms were particularly strong among library respondents, with 95.1% identifying this as a pain point, compared with 82.5% of publisher respondents and 80.6% of all respondents.

Similarly, lack of disclosure to consumers when AI-generated content is used ranked as a major concern among library respondents (88.9%), while it was somewhat less prominent among publisher respondents (70.7%) and among the overall respondent pool (72.9%).

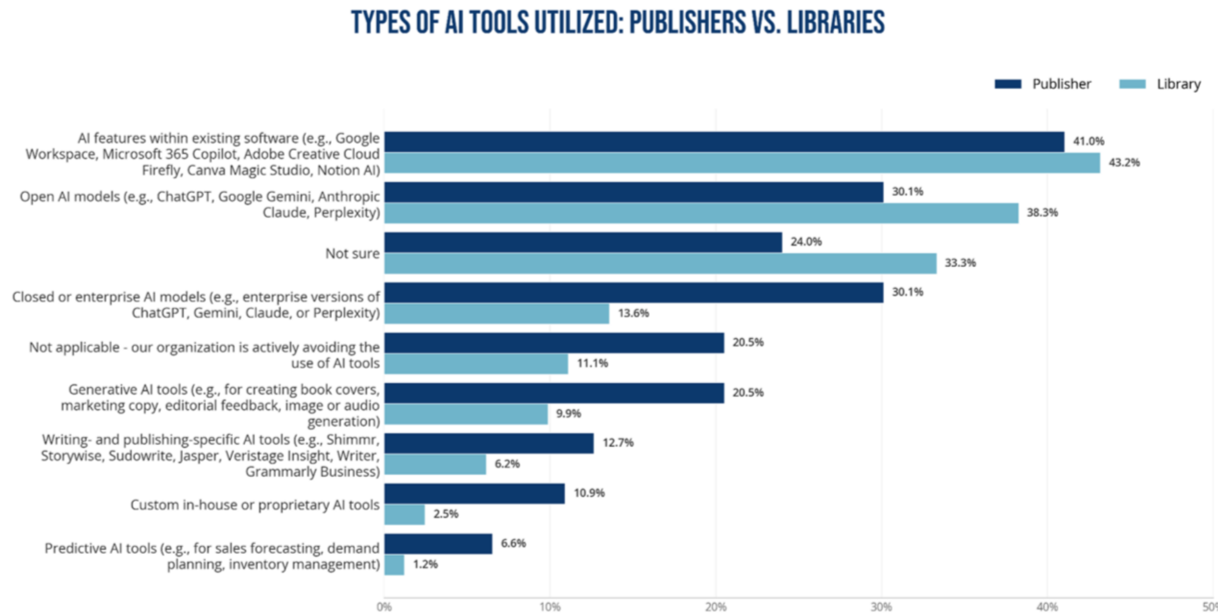
Figure 9.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Publishers were much more likely to say they use closed or enterprise AI models than libraries. An equal percentage of respondents from publishers said their organization used open AI models and closed or enterprise AI models (30.1%). Whereas 38.3% of respondents from libraries said their organization used open AI models, and only 13.6% said they used closed or enterprise AI models.

Figure 10.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Organization size

At a glance, respondents from organizations with more than 100 employees make up the largest share of individuals reporting AI use (46.6%) and also represent a substantial portion of those who believe AI training is a worthwhile use of their time (44.2%). In contrast, respondents from smaller organizations are less represented among AI users and more likely to express skepticism about training. Individuals from organizations with fewer than 20 employees account for 30.2% of AI users but 39.8% of non-users, and they represent a majority share of those who do not believe AI training is a good use of their time (51.8%). Respondents from mid-sized organizations (20–100 employees) fall between these groups, making up 23.3% of users and 36.2% of non-users, while representing roughly a quarter of those who support AI training (24.7%).

Figure 11.

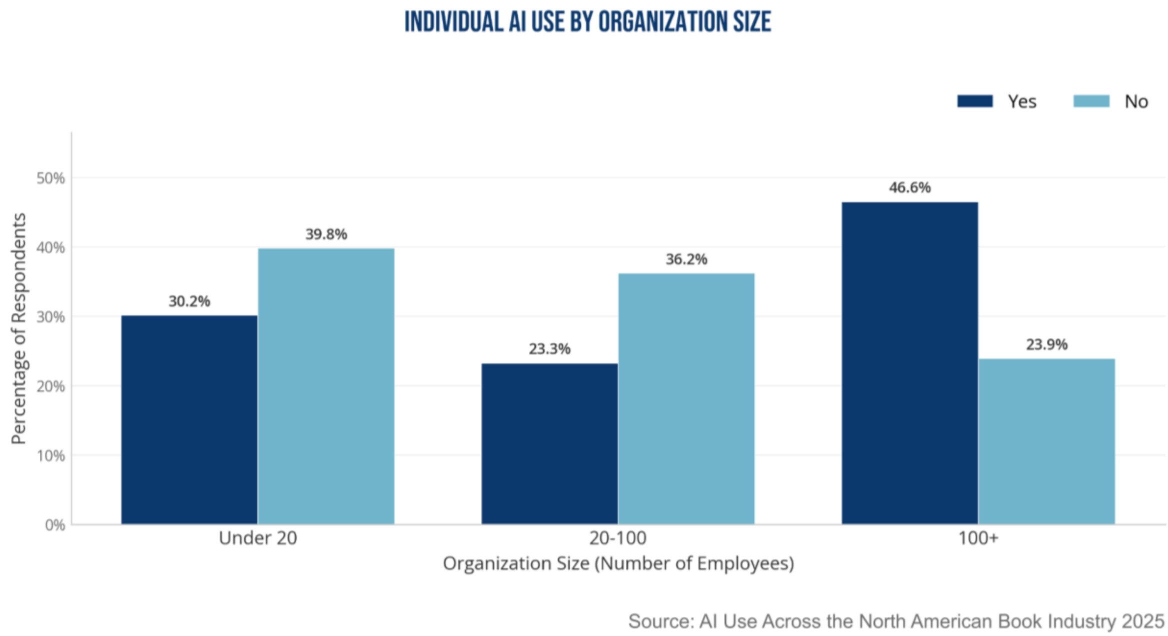
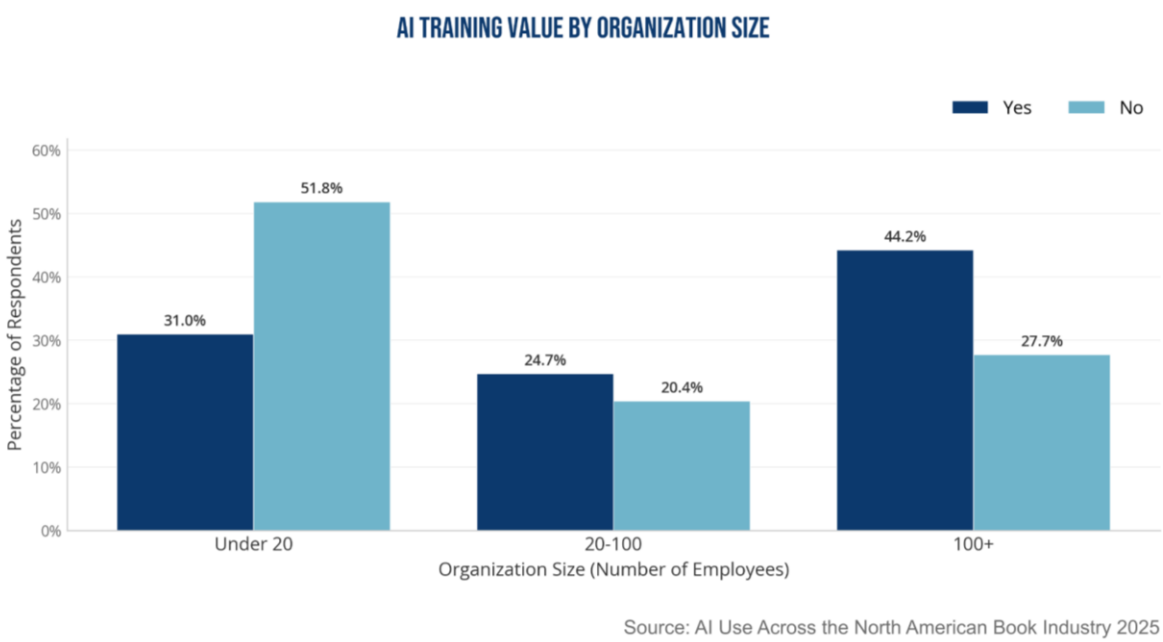
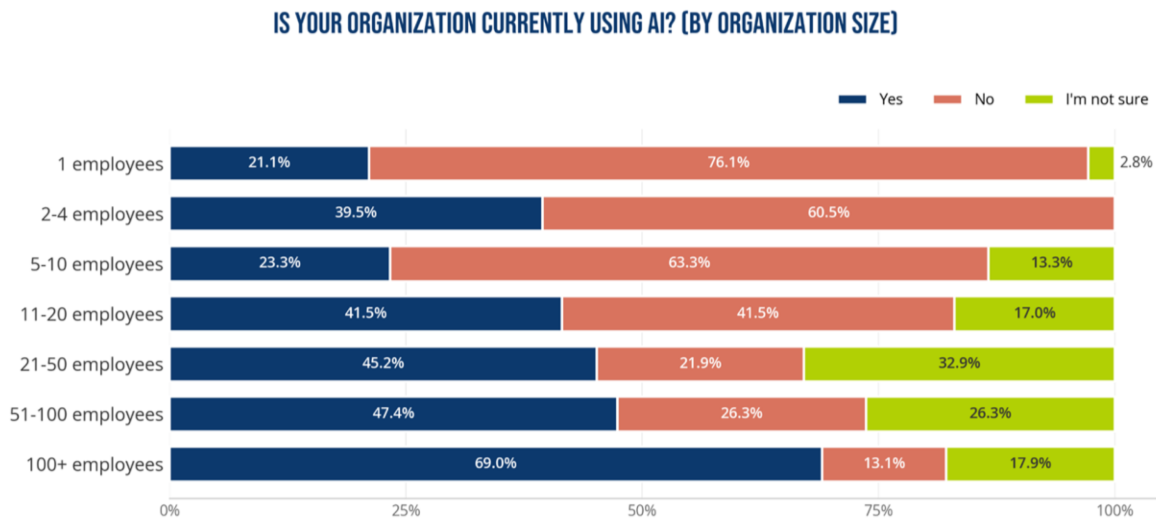


Figure 12.



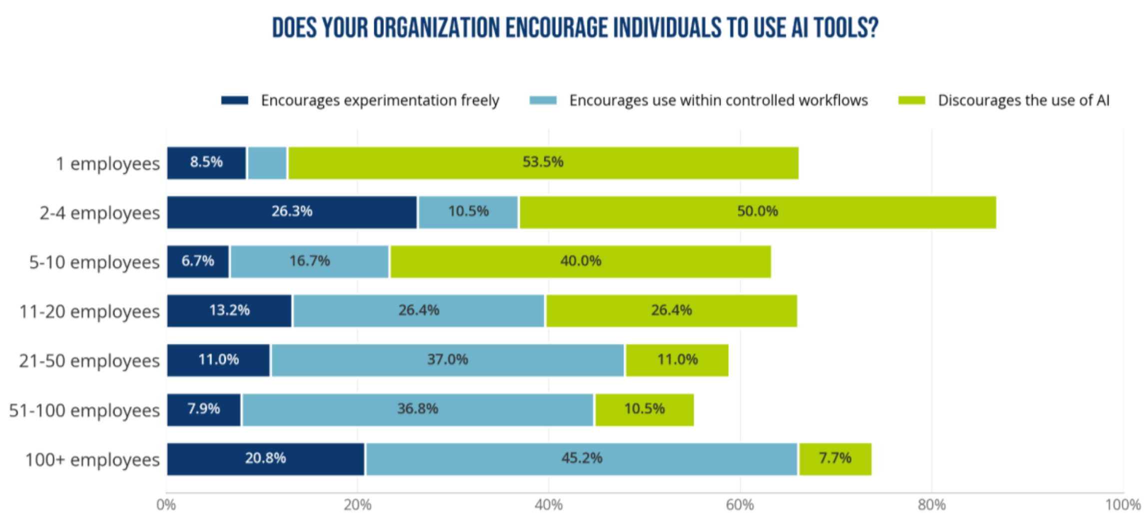
The above data suggest that individuals working in larger organizations may have greater exposure and institutional support for AI tools, while those in smaller organizations may be more hesitant to adopt or invest time in AI-related training. This is further corroborated by the graphs below, which show that as organization size increases, organizational use of AI increases and discouragement of AI use decreases. Similarly, organizations with 100+ employees were most likely to have an official AI policy or set of best guidelines and practices (48.2%).

Figure 13.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Figure 14.



Source: AI Use Across the North American Book Industry 2025

Open ended responses

In addition to the survey questions, respondents were invited to share additional comments. There were 170 additional comments from respondents and the sentiments were predominantly negative (about 72%), with 20% neutral and about 8% positive. Many comments focused on

1. skepticism about accuracy and reliability;
2. concerns about impacts on creativity, jobs, and the publishing ecosystem; and
3. environmental and societal concerns.

A selection of comments (where available the respondent's workplace, department, and role are indicated):

➔ "AI has no place in the book industry, or in any industry for that matter, but especially not in one that relies on human creativity."

➔ "I would be disappointed to see the book industry fully jump on to the AI bandwagon. While this is an exciting new technology, just because it's available does not mean it is the best or most useful tool. I would like conversations regarding AI to address reasons not to use it and environmental concerns rather than assuming that everyone can and should be using AI for everything possible."
(Publisher, Department: Acquisitions, Role: Editorial Assistant)

➔ "As an industry we should be extremely intentional about the ways in which we can appropriately and ethically use it as a TOOL, and avoid embracing the extensive downsides of throwing our industry into generative AI to create any kind of content."
(Publisher, Department: Design and Production, Role: Art Director)

➔ "AI is as likely to destroy as it is to disrupt the publishing industry."

➔ "I am strongly opposed to AI in its current popular understanding. I can see the use for some LLM applications based on very specific data points, but that data must come from informed and approving sources. In its current form, AI has already made a mess of search engines and spreads disinformation in a way I can't support. In addition, the environmental impact is egregious."

➔ "I think there are too many people who are already a little too comfortable just using and accepting it. It hasn't been around long enough and tested at a good depth."

➔ "AI is another development in a long line of technology and policies that devalue humanity. AI is theft."
(Publisher, Department: Editorial, Design, and Production, Role: Production Manager)

➔ "The publishing industry is very fairly worried about falling behind in technology. But AI is a form of technology that turns most publishers into hypocrites and liars who are willing to ignore their own company statements, relationships with authors, and sustainability practices to try and 'keep up'."
(Publisher, Department: Editorial, Role: Editorial Assistant)

➔ "Our teams have very different views on AI applications. Our editorial team members are highly suspicious and anxious about the dehumanizing impacts. Our marketing team members are highly excited about AI tools and their applications for simplifying their

work. We have yet to resolve these sorts of tensions.”
(Publisher, Department: Editorial, Role: Sales and Editorial Operations Manager)

➔ “Stop treating the use of AI like it is: a) inevitable; b) harmless; and c) providing a net good for humanity. We should be able to opt out without difficulty and we resent this being imposed on us by tech companies.”

➔ “AI is absolutely going to help my organization with certain workflows and operational tasks, such as the creation of metadata, production tasks, coding, accessibility compliance, etc. Tasks that might have taken days can take moments. However, I do fear that the costs of AI, as an industry and a society, vastly outweigh these marginal shortcuts.”

➔ “We need way more protections for jobs and authors/creators. We need to think much more carefully about the environmental impact. If we've been printing on recycled paper for years with an eye for sustainability, we're undoing all that work by using AI without caution.”

➔ “The use of AI is not worth the cost to the environment and not worth compromising the creative health of the business. It also makes no sense from a marketing perspective — people want work created by people, and feel fooled or misled when found art was created or produced by AI.”

➔ “Challenging situation. I am encouraging staff to try it out and be open, with care, since it can be very helpful. They are not wrong to raise concerns, but it would be a big mistake to dig in and refuse to learn about and make use of these tools — carefully, with human oversight.”

➔ “Until the following concerns are addressed, we aren't interested in using it: a) the use of copyrighted material to train AI, b) quality of content produced by AI, and c) difficulty in identifying AI content, including images and recordings.”

➔ “As a public library, our community looks to us to provide accurate, vetted information. With the recent AI publications, our team has been having to scrutinize materials purchases more thoroughly, which increases costs in staff time. Even with more scrutiny, we have unknowingly purchased some AI titles, which upon receipt were unusable due to poor writing and factual inaccuracies.”
(Publisher, Department: Acquisitions & Technical Services, Role: Acq & Tech Svs Sr Manager)

➔ “AI is a misnomer. It is not self-intelligent, and is only capable of expressing the words, opinions, and knowledge of its creators. We all have our biases. Which is why we put our names on our creations that we share with others, and why serious projects cite their sources. AI programs naturally obfuscate where their information comes from. It is hard enough to double-check the sources of an article written by a professional academic; is anyone capable of double-checking a database with millions of sources? Even if

someone was capable of doing so, are the AI's creators going to engage in a debate over every single academic challenge? If an AI is proven to be prejudiced, who is to blame?"
(*Library, Department: Reference Desk/Information Services, Role: Information Specialist)*

Recommendations and next steps

The findings point to several areas where further research would help the industry better understand AI's evolving role.

➔ More detailed study of how AI is being integrated into specific publishing workflows would help identify both effective practices and more specific potential risks.

➔ Additional inquiry into how AI policies are being developed, particularly given the survey's findings that many institutions have not yet formalized governance structures.

➔ Longitudinal research tracking changes in attitudes, use cases, and policy development over time would provide insight into whether current concerns shift as the technology matures.

➔ Assess the availability and effectiveness of AI training resources currently available and where gaps remain.

➔ Prioritize addressing key industry pain points before expanding AI adoption to help build trust and establish responsible foundations for future use.

The survey results suggest organizations and individuals across the publishing supply chain should approach AI adoption with caution, understanding that, though it is a tool at their disposal that may offer efficiencies and new capabilities, it also introduces meaningful risks that require careful consideration. Concerns raised by respondents reflect broader industry debates around copyright, ethical use, the potential inclusion of copyrighted or stolen material in training datasets, lack of transparency in how AI systems operate, and uncertainty about where user data is stored or how it may be reused. These risks highlight the importance of approaching AI with informed caution rather than uncritical adoption.

At the same time, even those who are skeptical of or opposed to AI's use may benefit from remaining engaged in the conversation. AI technologies are already widely used across many sectors. OpenAI's suite of generative AI tools obtained over 100 million users in only two months, and global research shows that 58% of employees intentionally use AI at work on a regular basis (KPMG). The individuals and organizations actively engaging with these tools are likely to influence how they evolve and are governed. For the publishing industry, this suggests the need for a deliberate and thoughtful path forward: developing training and education programs, establishing clear standards and policies, and creating guidance that helps professionals understand both the opportunities and the limitations of AI tools. Rather than framing the discussion as simply “AI is good” or “AI is bad,” the goal should be to equip individuals and organizations with the knowledge needed to make informed, responsible decisions about if, when, and how to use these technologies. Organizations such as BISG and BookNet Canada can play an important role by continuing to offer shared learning opportunities and developing practical guidance as the sector keeps navigating these technological changes.

Conclusion

The findings in this report illustrate an industry that is actively grappling with the opportunities and risks presented by artificial intelligence. While adoption of AI tools is already underway across parts of the publishing ecosystem, attitudes remain cautious, with strong concerns around copyright, transparency, quality, and ethical use. However, respondents expressed significant interest in training, guidance, and shared best practices, suggesting a clear need for coordinated industry support as organizations and individuals navigate this evolving landscape.

There are some fascinating implications that emerge when looking across findings. As seen in the data, publishers seem to be using AI as a megaphone to produce more marketing and metadata at scale, while libraries are becoming quality gatekeepers increasingly concerned about AI-generated content flooding the ecosystem. This dynamic creates a growing tension between efficiency and administrative burden: as AI accelerates content creation in one part of the ecosystem, it shifts the responsibility for verification and quality control onto others.

These insights matter because the decisions made now around policy, education, standards, and responsible experimentation will shape how AI is integrated into publishing workflows in the years ahead. Nearly half the industry is using AI, yet qualitative sentiment is overwhelmingly negative. The industry is adopting AI faster than it is becoming comfortable with it. By approaching AI with intention, the industry has the opportunity to make informed decisions about its adoption or lack thereof and, if sensible, harness its potential benefits while protecting the creative, professional, and cultural values that underpin the publishing ecosystem.

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Appendix A

AI Use Across the North American Book Industry survey

Q1. Which of the following best describes where you work?

- United States
- Canada
- Other (please specify)

Q2. Which of the following best describes your employer?

- Publisher
- Manufacturer (printer, paper mill, etc.)
- Distributor
- Retailer
- Library
- Service provider (software company, vendor, etc.)
- Literary agency
- Independent operator: Consultant
- Independent operator: Creator (author or illustrator)
- Independent operator: Self-publisher or author-publisher
- Other (please specify)

Q3. What is your department?
(Open-ended)

Q4. What is your job title?
(Open-ended)

Q5. As of 2025, approximately how long have you worked in the book industry?

- Less than 3 years
- 3–6 years
- 7–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–25 years
- 26–35 years
- 36+ years

Q6. As of 2025, approximately how long has your organization been in business?

- Less than 3 years
- 3–6 years
- 7–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–25 years

- 26–35 years
- 36+ years

Q7. Approximately how many people currently work at your organization? *(excluding freelancers and vendors)*

- 1
- 2–4
- 5–10
- 11–20
- 21–50
- 51–100
- Over 100

Q8. As an individual, are you using AI tools for your work?

- Yes
- No

Q9. As an individual, how are you managing the use of AI in your work? *(Select all that apply)*

- Actively seeking or participating in AI training and/or professional development
- Incorporating AI into existing structures or workflows
- Experimenting with AI tools and approaches
- Staying informed about new AI developments and applications
- Not currently using AI to support my work
- Not interested in using AI to support my work
- Other (please specify)

Q10. Do you believe that training or professional development on using AI is a good use of your time?

- Yes
- No

Q11. Why (or why not) do you see AI training as a good use of your time?

- Yes – AI training is essential to my work
- Yes – AI training is a good use of my time, but not a current priority
- Neutral – I'm not interested right now but may reconsider
- No – AI training is not useful to my work
- No – I am ethically opposed to the use of AI

Q12. What areas of your work are you using AI tools in? *(Select all that apply)*

- Editorial
- Marketing

- Publicity
- Production
- Sales forecasting and market analysis
- Rights and licensing management
- Metadata and title optimization
- Customer service or reader engagement
- Data analysis or reporting
- Administrative or operational tasks
- Code development or management
- Translation
- AI-voiced audiobooks
- QA testing
- None
- Other (please specify)

Q13. Is your organization currently using AI?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Q14. Does your organization encourage individuals to use AI tools?

- Yes, freely
- Yes, within controlled workflows
- No
- Other (please specify)

Q15. Does your organization have an official AI policy or guidelines?

- Yes
- No
- No, but currently developing one
- I'm not sure

Q16. What areas is your organization currently using AI tools in? *(Select all that apply)*
(Same response options as Q12)

Q17. What areas does your organization anticipate using AI tools in? *(Select all that apply)*
(Same response options as Q12, with "None anticipated" option)

Q18. If you are in a leadership position, how are you managing AI use within your team?
(Select all that apply)

- Not applicable
- Hiring staff with AI skills
- Providing AI training
- Supporting AI tools in existing platforms
- Hiring consultants/vendors

- Experimenting with AI
- Including AI in strategic planning
- Incorporating AI into employee objectives
- Developing AI policies/guidelines
- Participating in AI initiatives
- Other (please specify)

Q19. What concerns or pain points do you have regarding AI in the book industry? *(Select all that apply)*

- Copyright concerns
- Copyright ownership uncertainty
- Biased or inaccurate training data
- Legal liability
- Accessibility issues
- Low-quality or fraudulent AI-generated books
- Hallucinations
- Job loss (publishing professionals)
- Job loss (authors/creators)
- Security risks
- Bias/discrimination
- Lack of disclosure to consumers
- Rapid pace of change
- Sustainability impacts
- Difficulty explaining content protection to authors
- Lack of trust in AI companies
- Cost barriers for smaller organizations
- No concerns
- Other (please specify)

Q20. Would your organization find best practices helpful in the following areas? *(Select all that apply)*

- Editorial
- Metadata
- Audiobook production
- EPUB production
- Design
- Sales and marketing
- Translation
- Rights and royalties
- Licensing to AI companies
- Accessibility
- Forecasting
- Manufacturing
- Customer service
- Distribution
- Ethics
- Laws and regulations

- None
- Other (please specify)

Q21. What types of AI tools or environments are you using? *(Select all that apply)*

- Open AI models (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude)
- Enterprise AI models
- Generative AI tools
- Predictive AI tools
- Publishing-specific AI tools
- AI features in existing software
- Custom/proprietary tools
- Not sure
- Not using AI
- Other (please specify)

Q22. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the role of AI in the book industry? (Open-ended)

Q23. We may include selected comments in our survey report or related communications. Please indicate your preference:

- Yes - you may use my comments and include my role and department
- Yes - you may use my comments, but without including my role and department
- No - please do not use my comments in any public materials

Q24. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results, please provide your email address. Your email will be used only for sending the results and will not be linked to your survey responses.

Appendix B

Graph data

Figure 1. AI adoption in the book industry

As an individual, are you using AI tools for your work?

- Yes – 45.8%
- No – 54.2%

Is your organization currently using AI?

- Yes – 48.0%
- No – 35.2%
- I'm not sure – 16.8%

Figure 2. AI use cases: Current vs. anticipated growth (Organizational)

	Anticipated	Current
Data analysis or reporting	44.0%	21.4%
Marketing	43.3%	29.1%
Administrative or operational tasks	42.5%	29.1%
Metadata and title optimization	41.4%	16.8%
Editorial	27.2%	19.8%
Publicity	15.9%	29.5%
Sales forecasting and market analysis	10.8%	27.2%

Figure 3. AI adoption: United States vs. Canada

As an individual, are you using AI tools for your work?

	Yes	No
United States	45.7%	54.3%
Canada	45.9%	54.1%

Is your organization currently using AI?

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
United States	48.8%	33.8%	17.4%
Canada	44.6%	41.3%	14.1%

Figure 4. Individual AI use: Publishers vs. libraries

As an individual, are you using AI tools for your work?

	Yes	No
Publisher	43.7%	56.3%
Library	42.5%	57.5%

Figure 5. Organizational AI use: Publishers vs. libraries

Is your organization currently using AI?

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Publisher	50.7%	29.7%	19.7%
Library	45.7%	23.5%	30.9%

Figure 6. Attitudes toward AI training: Publishers vs. libraries

As an individual, why (or why not) do you see AI training as a good use of your time?

	Yes - AI training is essential to my work	Yes - AI training is a good use of my time, but it's not a current priority	Neutral - I'm not interested in AI training right now, but I may reconsider as AI technologies evolve	No - AI training is not useful to my work	No - I am ethically opposed to the use of AI
Publisher	13.9%	28.6%	21.6%	2.0%	33.9%
Library	3.5%	43.7%	13.8%	4.6%	34.5%

Figure 7. AI policy status: Publishers vs. libraries

Does your organization currently have an official AI policy or set of guidelines/best practices?

	Yes, our organization has an official AI policy or set of guidelines	No, our organization does not have one	No, but our organization is currently developing one	I'm not sure
Publisher	31.4%	28.4%	30.6%	9.6%
Library	18.5%	42.0%	29.6%	9.9%

Figure 8. Areas currently using AI tools: Publishers vs. libraries

As an organization, what areas of your work are you CURRENTLY using AI tools in?

Area of AI use	Publisher	Library

Administrative or operational tasks (e.g., scheduling, meeting notes, email management)	25.3%	33.3%
Marketing (e.g., copywriting, campaign planning, audience targeting, content creation)	34.9%	14.8%
Editorial (e.g., content editing, copyediting, developmental editing, evaluating submissions)	18.8%	25.9%
Data analysis or reporting	18.3%	18.5%
Publicity (e.g., media outreach, press materials, influencer engagement)	18.3%	8.6%
Metadata and title optimization (e.g., keywords, BISAC and THEMA codes, ONIX files)	19.7%	3.7%
Production (e.g., layout, design, typesetting, file preparation)	14.0%	7.4%
Customer service or reader engagement	7.0%	9.9%
Sales forecasting and market analysis	10.5%	3.7%
Code development or management for digital products	7.9%	4.9%
Creating AI-voiced audiobooks	7.4%	0.0%
Translating book content into other languages	7.4%	0.0%
QA testing	5.2%	1.2%
Rights and licensing management	3.1%	0.0%
None (not using AI)	28.0%	29.6%
Other	26.2%	22.2%

Figure 9. Concerns about AI in the book publishing industry

What concerns or pain points do you have regarding the book industry's current use of AI? (check all that apply)

AI concern / pain point	Publisher	Library
AI-generated books, including fraudulent or low-quality content, flooding major retail platforms (e.g., Amazon)	82.5%	95.1%
Hallucinations (AI providing false or made-up information presented as fact)	83.0%	91.4%
Inadequate controls around the use of copyrighted material	90.0%	77.8%
Inaccurate, false, or biased training data used by AI systems	80.8%	80.3%
Lack of disclosure to consumers when AI-generated content is used	70.7%	88.9%
Lack of trust in the companies developing and controlling AI technologies	77.7%	76.5%
Reinforcement or amplification of bias, discrimination, or oppression	63.3%	79.0%
Incorrect or misleading content that hinders accessibility (e.g., links to inaccessible content)	65.5%	72.8%
Legal liability (e.g., copyright infringement, data privacy breaches)	76.0%	58.0%
Job loss or negative impacts on publishing career pathways	65.5%	35.8%
Job loss or negative impacts on authors and creators	66.8%	60.5%
Difficulty explaining to authors and creators how their content is protected, given unclear platform terms and conditions	53.7%	30.9%
Difficulty keeping pace with rapid changes in AI technologies	45.4%	37.0%
Uncertainty about whether AI-generated material can be copyrighted	42.8%	39.5%
Negative impacts on the organization’s sustainability goals or reporting	42.8%	35.8%

Security risks or increased exposure to cyberattacks	43.2%	34.6%
Too expensive for smaller organizations, giving organizations with bigger budgets an unfair advantage	22.7%	11.1%
No concerns / not applicable	0.9%	0.0%
Other	15.3%	13.6%

Figure 10. Types of AI tools utilized: Publishers vs. libraries

If your organization currently uses AI, what types of tools or environments are you utilizing? (check all that apply)

AI tool type	Publisher	Library
AI features within existing software (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365 Copilot, Adobe Creative Cloud Firefly, Canva Magic Studio, Notion AI)	41.1%	43.2%
Open AI models (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Anthropic Claude, Perplexity)	30.1%	38.3%
Not sure	24.0%	33.3%
Closed or enterprise AI models (e.g., enterprise versions of ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or Perplexity)	30.1%	13.6%
Not applicable (avoiding AI use)	20.5%	11.1%
Generative AI tools (e.g., for creating book covers, marketing copy, editorial feedback, image or audio generation)	20.5%	9.9%
Writing- and publishing-specific AI tools (e.g., Shimmr, Storywise, Sudowrite, Jasper, Veristage	12.7%	6.2%

Insight, Writer, Grammarly Business)		
Custom in-house or proprietary AI tools	10.9%	2.5%
Predictive AI tools (e.g., for sales forecasting, demand planning, inventory management)	6.6%	1.2%
Other	5.7%	6.2%

Figure 11. Individual AI use by organization size

As an individual, are you using AI tools for your work?

Number of employees	Yes	No
Under 20	30.2%	39.8%
20-100	23.3%	36.2%
100+	46.6%	23.9%

Figure 12. AI training value by organization size

As an individual, do you believe that training or professional development on using AI is a good use of your time?

Number of employees	Yes	No
Under 20	31.0%	51.8%
20-100	24.7%	20.4%
100+	44.2%	27.7%

Figure 13. Is your organization currently using AI (By organization size)

Number of employees	Yes	No	I'm not sure
1	21.1%	76.1%	2.8%
2-4	39.5%	60.5%	0.00%

5-10	23.3%	63.3%	13.3%
11-20	41.5%	41.5%	17.0%
21-50	45.2%	21.9%	32.9%
51-100	47.4%	26.3%	26.3%
100+	69.0%	13.1%	17.9%

Figure 14. Does your organization encourage individuals to use AI tools?

Number of employees	Yes, my organization encourages experimentation freely	Yes, my organization encourages the use of AI within controlled workflows	No, my organization discourages the use of AI
1	8.5%	4.2%	53.5%
2-4	26.3%	10.5%	50.0%
5-10	6.7%	16.7%	40.0%
11-20	13.2%	26.4%	26.4%
21-50	11.0%	37.0%	11.0%
51-100	7.9%	36.8%	10.5%
100+	20.8%	45.2%	7.7%