

PEACEful Use of AI

A Tool for AI Education

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for research and writing has left librarians with a new challenge: how to teach ethical use of AI in a time of little to no regulation, pending court cases regarding copyright, and concerns over the level of environmental impact and potential stunting of critical-thinking skills. Students' views of and experiences with AI are mixed,¹ though their use of such tools is growing. Introducing a simple method for considering the issues that are inherent in AI use can help guide students (and faculty) through critical thinking that can deepen their understanding of AI and promote use that minimizes environmental, social, and intellectual harm. PEACEful Use of AI, or PEACE, offers a set of guiding questions, informed by values and ethics embedded within information literacy knowledge practices and dispositions, that encourages critical thinking before selecting or using an AI tool.

Acronyms as Teaching Tools

Acronyms provide a structure that can help the instructor and learner direct thinking around complex, layered concepts or processes. They offer a vehicle for teaching that can easily be adopted by other educators looking to produce similar learning outcomes. Librarians are likely familiar with Blakeslee's CRAAP acronym² to teach information literacy in the pre-framework days—either because they once taught with it or learned it as students themselves. Similarly, Caulfield's SIFT³ has been a staple in teaching lateral reading for evaluating information online. These acronyms are not enough in themselves, but they offer educators a structure that they can develop a lesson plan or learning object around. A search for “SIFT AND Caulfield” in the LibGuides Community returns thousands of results. A search for “CRAAP” returns more than 12,000 results. These tools have clear use in library instruction. PEACEful Use of AI (Figure 1) is a tool that specifically can guide instructors and learners through a critical assessment of the use of AI tools, specifically generative AI, in order to promote responsible use of AI and foster information literacy skills.

Development

This acronym emerged while I was developing a cocurricular workshop for students on the use of AI in a literature search. Before introducing AI tools and strategies for using them, I wanted to activate the learners' critical thinking concerning AI. In brainstorming and

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Policies	Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies?
Ethics	Does it align with ethical standards and values?
Agency	Do you retain control over your data and its use?
Critical Thinking	Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning?
Environment	Do the benefits justify the environmental impact?

Figure 1. Slide showing the guiding question of the PEACEful Use of AI tool.

grouping the issues I was aware of regarding use of generative AI tools, the acronym surfaced: PEACEful Use of AI:

Policies: Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies?

Ethics: Does it align with ethical standards and values?

Agency: Do you retain control over your data and its use?

Critical Thinking: Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning?

Environment: Do the benefits justify the environmental impact?

PEACEful Use of AI: Promoting Information Literacy

The guiding questions of PEACEful Use of AI are complex; some do not have clear answers (*Policies*, *Environment*), others are subjective (*Ethics*, *Critical Thinking*), and others are difficult to establish (*Agency*). However, working through these questions introduces a critical pause before using a generative AI tool and can reinforce knowledge practices and dispositions central to the Information Literacy Framework for Higher Education.⁴

Policies: Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies? When considering the use of AI, learners may ask about copyright and fair use in the training of generative AI models. However, many of these issues have had contradictory court rulings,⁵ and the US Copyright Office issued a prepublication that recognizes potential copyright claims in generative AI training but recommends the market play out for now.⁶

For this question, the frame Information Has Value is fundamental. A discussion about court cases, such as *The New York Times Co v. Microsoft Corp, et al.*⁷ helps learners explore the social construct of intellectual property and develop a disposition of respect for the work and ideas of others. It is also an opportunity to discuss concepts such as fair use and public domain and to introduce AI tools trained on open access or licensed content. For example, Adobe follows the European Union (EU) AI Pact,⁸ which promotes responsible development of AI, and has trained its image generation models on its own licensed content in addition to works in the public domain. A comparison of this training model with that of a company like OpenAI raises questions about ownership, respect, and agency.

In addition to considering the legal aspect, the *Policies* question provides an opportunity to encourage learners to consult local restrictions. For example, students can check their class

or college policies related to AI use; faculty and graduate students can consult the author guidelines for the top journals in their field.

Ethics: Does it align with ethical standards and values? Beyond the question of what is *permissible*, this question asks, “What is *right*?” Differences in individual values make this the most subjective question, but it is an essential one. To help learners identify their values as they pertain to the use of (or non-use) of AI tools, instructors can share value statements and ask to which degree individuals agree or disagree. In some cases, professional associations have released statements clarifying their values and ethical stances as they relate to AI, which can be another opportunity for discussion.

Agency: Do you retain control over your data and its use? This question introduces, or reinforces, the concept of privacy, a core value of librarianship, and is an opportunity to encourage learners to search for and read privacy policies. This is complicated, as many are hard to find and understand, but thanks to stricter EU laws around data protection,⁹ the information is usually available. Having learners explore cases of data breaches and misuse of private data can help make the issues around digital privacy concrete.

Critical Thinking: Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning? This consideration is an opportunity to discuss different approaches to using generative AI tools. Policies and ethics aside, the degree of critical thinking used depends on how the tool is used. For example, there is a significant difference between using AI to generate a paper and using it to generate examples to help the user understand a difficult concept. Reading about the emerging studies that demonstrate the potential harm of using generative AI critical thinking can also lead to important discussions about the purpose and value of education.¹⁰

Environment: Do the benefits justify the environmental impact? We may not truly know how one-time use of a generative AI tool affects the environment, but it is clear that the massive expansion of data centers to support these tools is having an alarmingly adverse impact on the environment and human health.¹¹ After exploring these effects, comparing use of AI to generate a meme for social media versus use of AI to detect potentially cancerous cells in a biopsy reveals an obvious discrepancy in the benefit versus drawback equation. Use in the first example has little to no benefit to the individual or society, whereas the second example is potentially lifesaving. Learners can place scenarios of specific AI uses on a continuum to demonstrate where benefits might outweigh harms and where specific uses cause more harm than good.

Application of the PEACEful Use of AI in Instruction

I first tested this set of guiding questions about AI use in a cocurricular workshop on using AI for literature searching. I began the workshop by first explaining how large language models (LLMs) work. I then asked the learners to identify potential ethical or legal issues related to LLMs. Once they shared their ideas, I built on their knowledge by revealing specific examples of these issues. For instance, participants were familiar with concerns over data centers. I cited a study that estimates that, in 2024, data centers consumed about the same amount of energy it takes to power the entire country of Thailand.¹² After providing several alarming examples of issues related to LLMs, I introduced the PEACEful Use of AI tool. Learners had varying degrees of receptiveness to and comprehension of the tool’s concepts, as their viewpoints regarding AI use and prior exposure to information literacy

concepts were diverse. Unsurprisingly, learners who were also educators themselves were the most receptive to the concepts, as it addresses a need for AI literacy and reflects professional values.

This acronym can be used in one-shot instruction, cocurricular workshops, tutorials, and credit-bearing courses. In the case of one-shot instruction, a session should be largely devoted to AI ethics, as these steps are complex and pull in a variety of other concepts that may need to be explored, depending on prior experience with information literacy concepts. In fact, there are so many related ideas, case studies, and potential applications that this tool could guide the curriculum of a semester-long credit-bearing course.

In an undergraduate cocurricular research program, I use the acronym as the basis for an activity that asks students to consider different scenarios of AI use in an academic setting (i.e., writing an abstract, discovering resources, and refining a research question). The students work through each letter of the acronym as it relates to the scenario. Finally, they come up with an alternative tool or way of using the AI tool that would more closely align with PEACEful Use of AI. As with the introductory workshop, the students' receptiveness and comprehension of the tool's concepts were mixed, highlighting the importance of scaffolding AI instruction with core information literacy concepts.

Although generative AI tools and the ethics around their use are evolving, PEACEful Use of AI is flexible, not prescriptive. Through guided questions, it aims to engage learners in a process of critical thinking instead of uncritical acceptance. The pace at which tech companies are developing generative AI tools and organizations are embracing them is overwhelming. My hope with PEACEful Use of AI is that librarians and other educators can use it as a starting point to help learners navigate and consider how AI fits into their own lives and to devise other variations and uses of the acronym as the AI landscape evolves—because we have to start somewhere.

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Notes

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