

IT'S LIKE TALKING TO A GOOD FRIEND

Or, the importance of
human (& librarian) curated Readers' Advisory

AGENDA

- Introduction
- Curation
- What's the difference between algorithms, AI, and human knowledge organization?
- Case Studies
- Why human-powered RA matters



BROOKLYN, SHE/THEY

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD & TWEEN LITERACY LIBRARIAN

ALLISON, THEY/THEM

COORDINATOR, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



CURATION: WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS

Charlie Jane Anders

- Author & book critic
- www.charliejaneanders.com
- “I’m still not over losing my book review gig” (Feb 24, 2026)

CURATION “IS HOW WE SHAPE CULTURE”

- Book selection
- Music - playlists
- Art galleries
- Movie theatre shows
- Netflix suggestions
- News coverage
- Speaker events
- Shopping/merchandise



CURATION & LIBRARIES

- We curate everything, all the time
- We capture differing opinions, biases, experiences
 - We need “a lot of experienced, thoughtful people doing curation.”

THE ENEMY OF CURATION?

ALGORITHMS & AI.

- ❖ Unthinking
- ❖ Unreflecting
- ❖ Unemoting

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

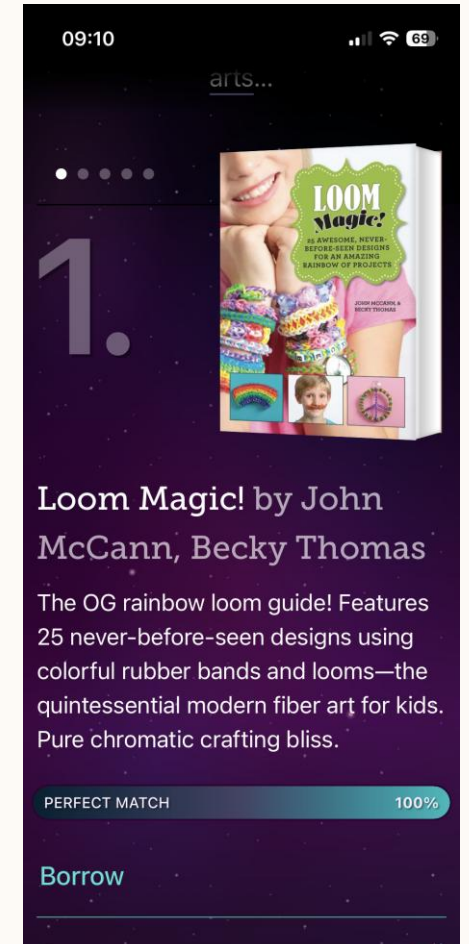
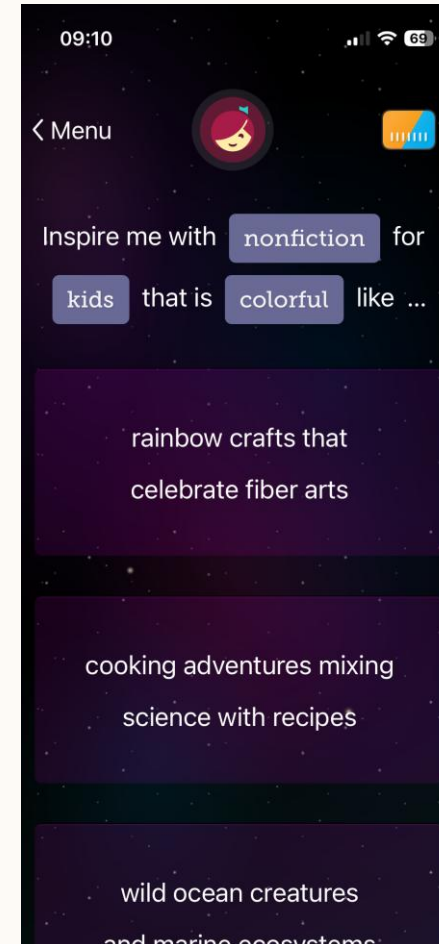
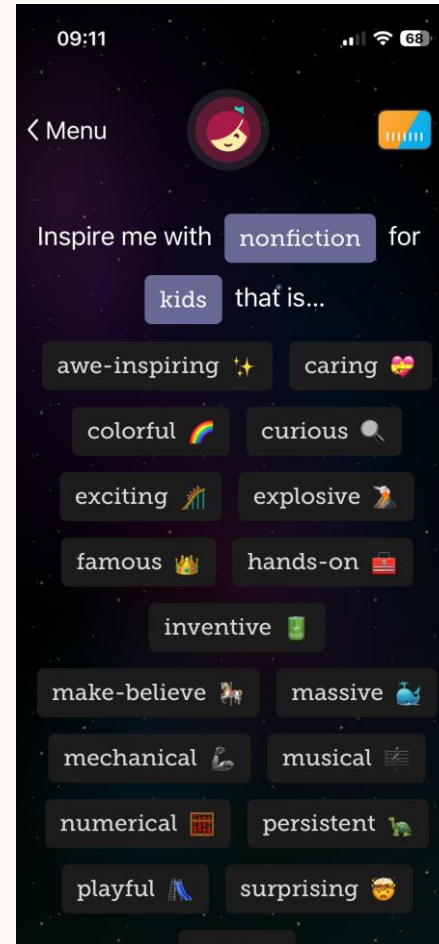
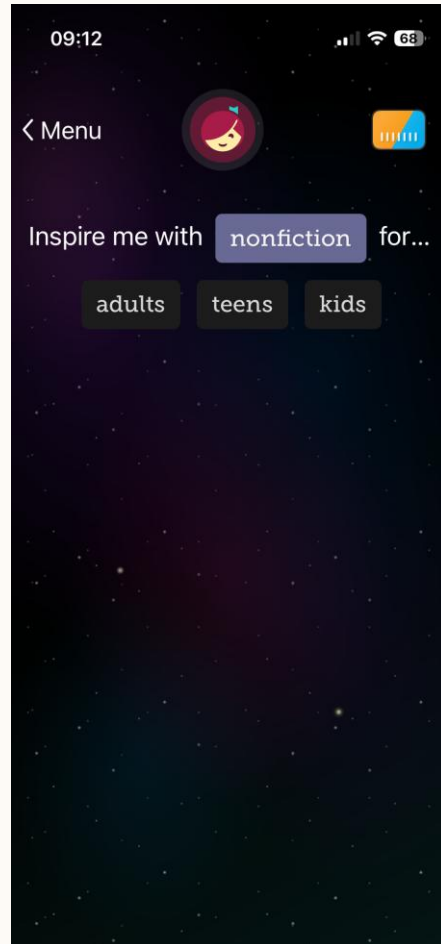
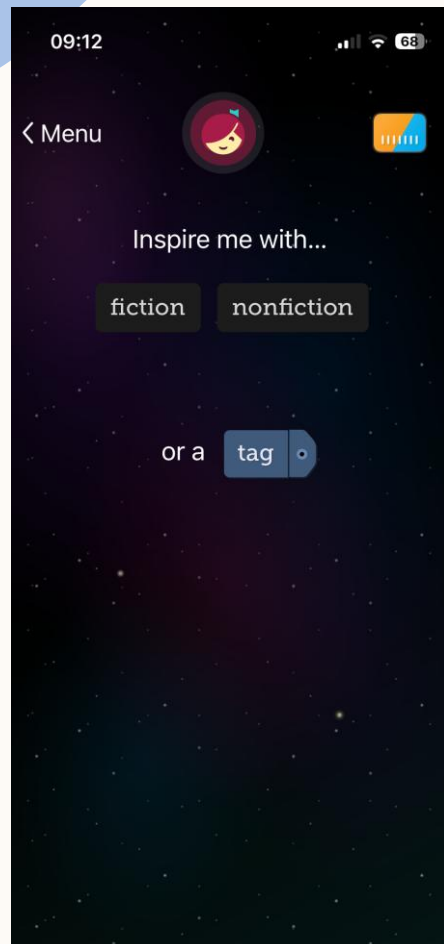
- Algorithm
- AI (artificial intelligence)
- Human knowledge organization



CASE STUDIES

How is AI affecting how patrons access, navigate, and enjoy our digital resources?

LIBBY "INSPIRE ME"

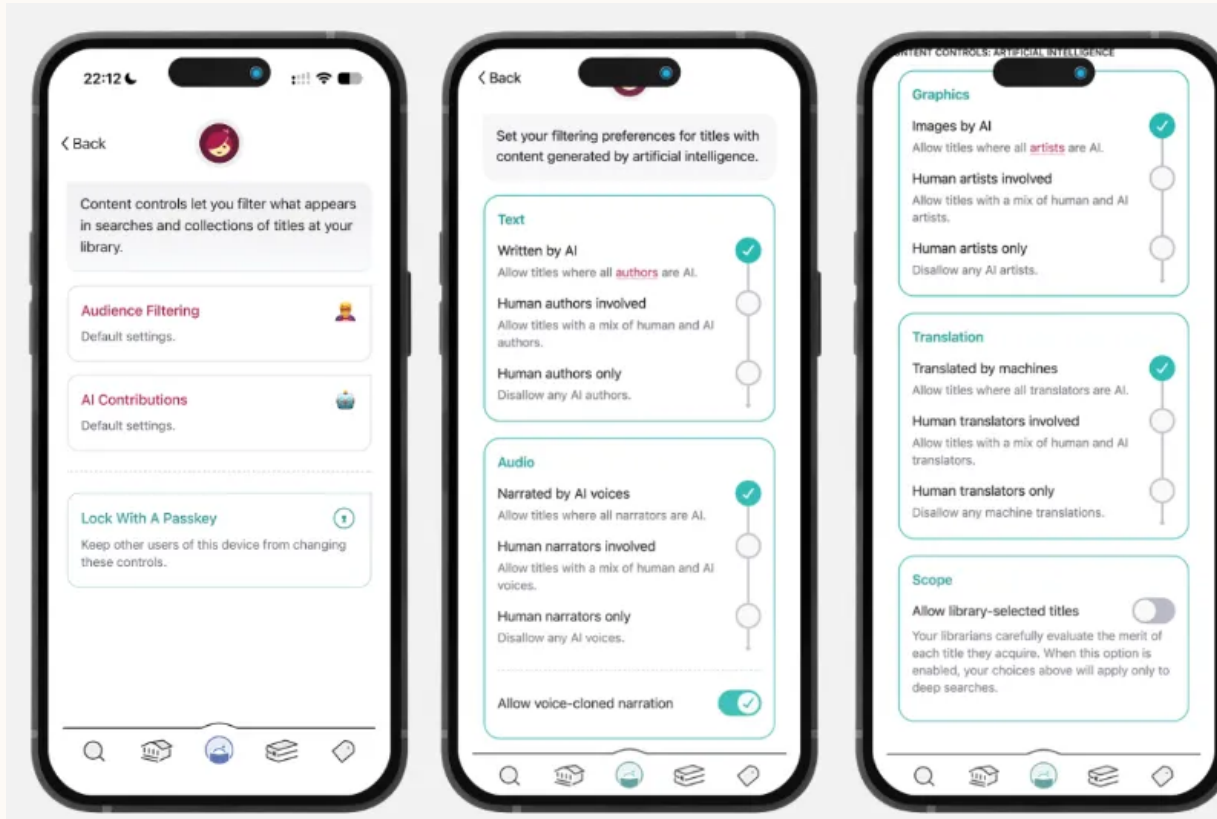


LIBBY & AI POLICY

"OverDrive is excited to launch our newest Libby feature: **Inspire Me**. This innovative experience is driven by machine learning. Specifically, the *suggestions* and *recommendations* are produced by large-language-model generative artificial intelligence."

- Privacy
- Environmental Impact
- Mistakes and inappropriate responses
- Respect for intellectual property

COMING SOON TO LIBBY: AI "CONTRIBUTIONS" FILTERS

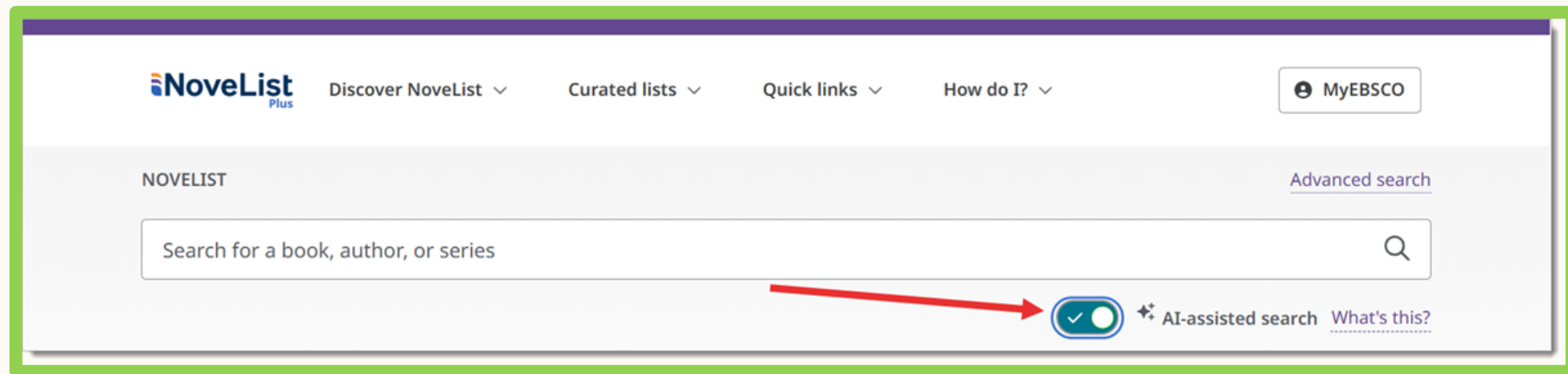
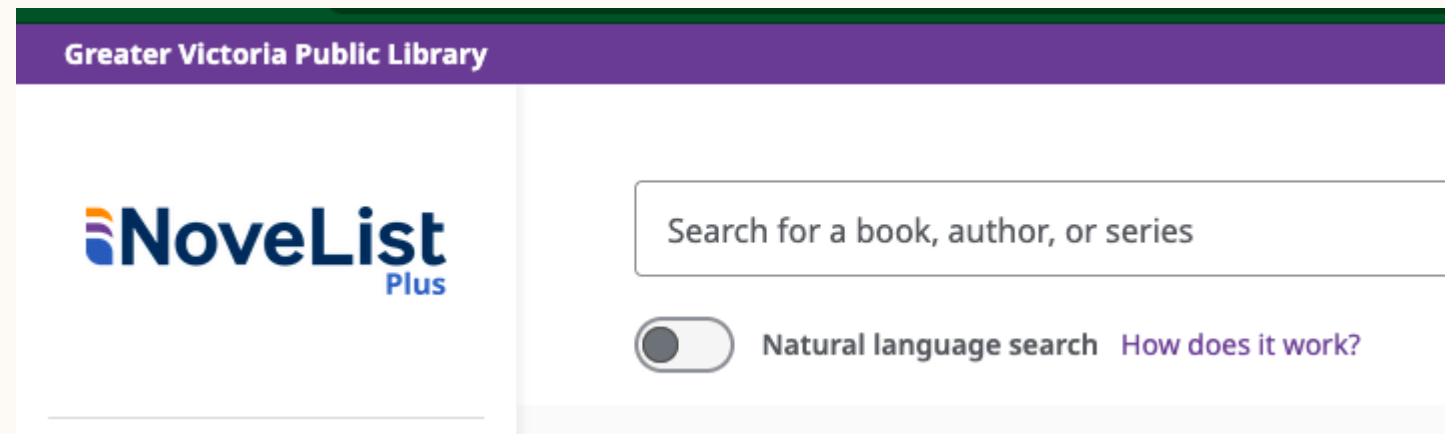


- Text
- Audio
- Graphics
- Translation
- "[Content] by AI"
- "Human [roles] involved"
- "Human [roles] only"

DID YOU NOTICE?

- No opt-out option for libraries (or, ideally, opt-in!)
- Ambiguity of labels and how results are generated
- Complaint process is at the end (after using the AI tool) and focused on the suggested titles
- "Monitoring the energy footprint" = reactive approach
- Search in OverDrive and Libby has always been really limited (poor subject headings, mis-matched author and series names)

NOVELIST: NATURAL LANGUAGE SEARCH



rainbow crafts that celebrate fibre arts



All filters (0)

All dates



Source type



Natural language search

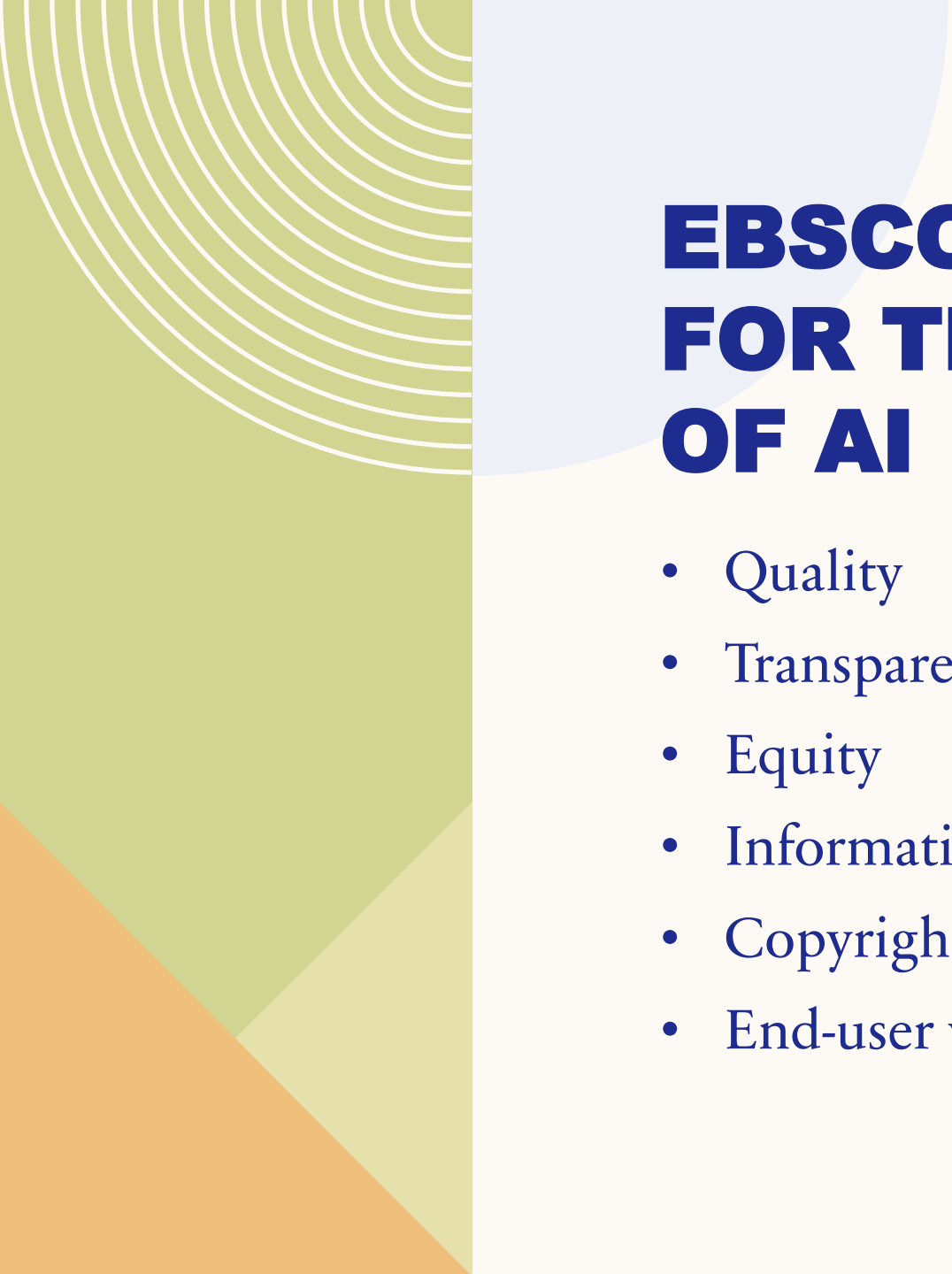
[How does it work?](#)

[Show refined query](#)

Refined query



((rainbow OR multicolored OR colorful OR vibrant) AND (crafts OR DIY projects OR handmade projects OR creative projects) AND (fibre arts OR fiber arts OR textile arts OR textile crafts))



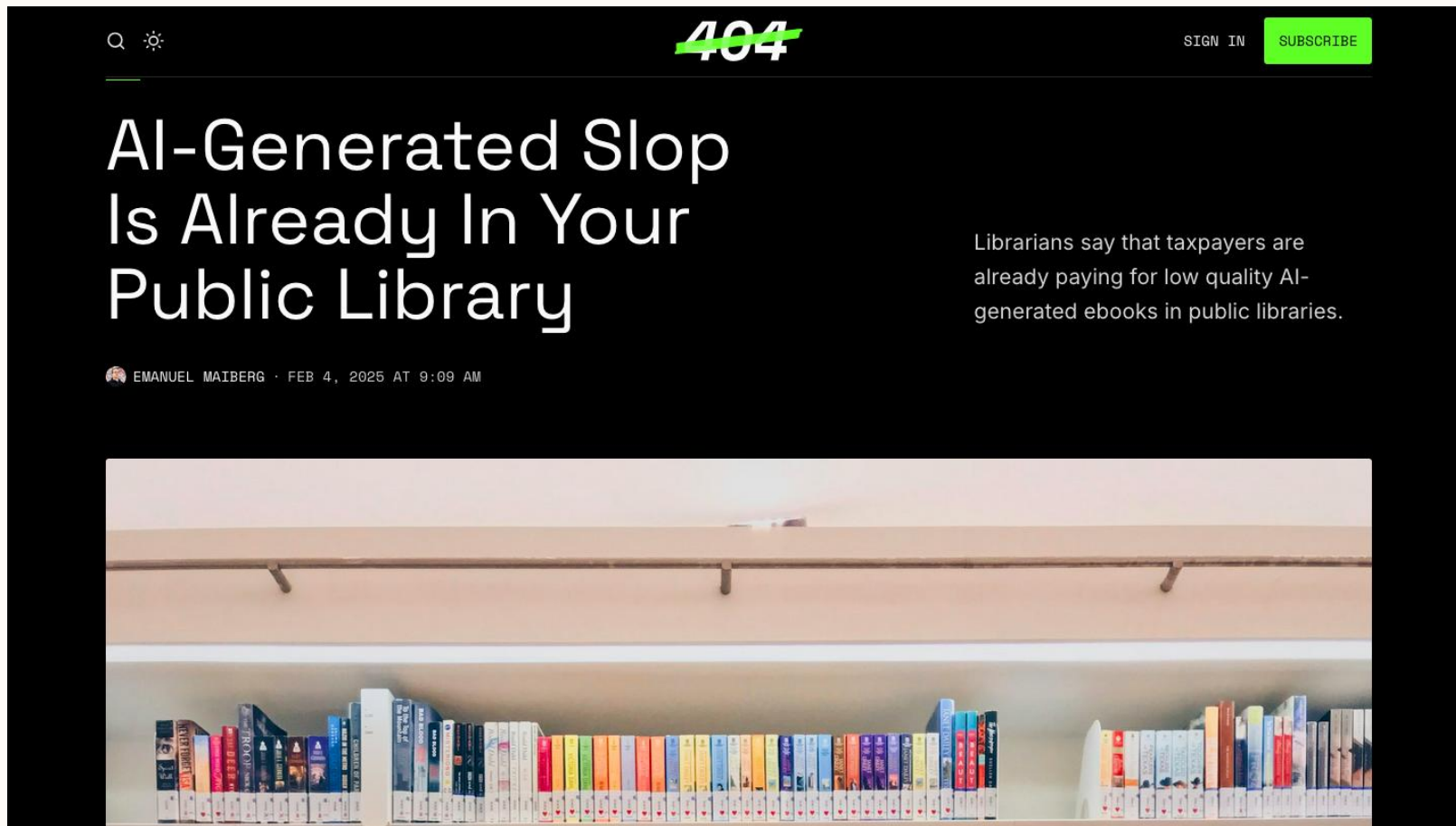
EBSCO GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI

- Quality
- Transparency
- Equity
- Information Literacy
- Copyright Integrity → Data Integrity
- End-user value → User-First

DID YOU NOTICE?

- Changing fast
- Opt-in (at both library and user level) *EBSCO is changing to opt-out as of Sept 1, 2026
- Open-ended feedback process
- Based on NoveList's existing extensive analysis and organization
- Focused on specific principles
- Extensive documentation
 - Which AI tool used
 - How built and tested

HOOPLA



HOOPLA

"To protect the integrity of our catalog—and those of our library partners—Hoopla employs multiple strategies that both filter out unwanted low-quality AI-generated content and that help libraries identify content to determine if it meets each libraries' standards for quality."

Huge focus on metadata standards that identify AI-generated content



DID YOU NOTICE?

- Still no policy on AI
- Continues pre-existing challenge of curating content in this vendor model
- 3rd or 4th hand accountability is very difficult

August 12, 2024

Hoopla's Content Problem: Strange, Skewed Results Still Dominate Catalog

LAURA CROSSETT →

JENNIE ROSE HALPERIN →

NAXOS MUSIC LIBRARY

The screenshot shows the Naxos Music Library website. At the top, there's a blue header with the Naxos Music Library logo on the left, user information (Greater Victoria Public Library, Log Out, English) in the center, and search bars (Keyword Search, Advanced Search, Search Booklet) on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, New & News, People, Categories, Labels, Favourites, Playlists, Videos, and Resources. A 'Figures at a glance' box shows 'Disc Count 201,270', 'Track Count 3,064,835', and 'as of 1 May 2026'. The main content area features a large banner for the 'Download the latest NML app' with details about features like sleep timer and offline streaming. Below this is a 'Featured Albums' section with five album covers: 'Brass Quintets - BACH, J.S. / CRESPO, E. / IRVINE, J.S...', 'MOZART, W.A.: Piano Concertos Nos. 20, 25 (arr...', 'MOZART, W.A.: Piano Sonatas (Complete), Vol. 1...', 'Choral Concert: Bristol Choral Society -...', and 'BLACKBIRDS - Music from the 1960s (Altstaed...'. A 'Popular Albums' section is partially visible at the bottom with covers for 'RAVI', 'THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA', 'JUVENILIA', 'YUNCHAN LIM BACH Goldberg Variations', and 'STUDY'.

"Please be informed that there's no AI integration in any of our products or services.

Also, kindly note that it's prohibited to use our NML contents for AI training per terms of service statement."

PEOPLE-MADE PLAYLISTS

Animals in Music (5)

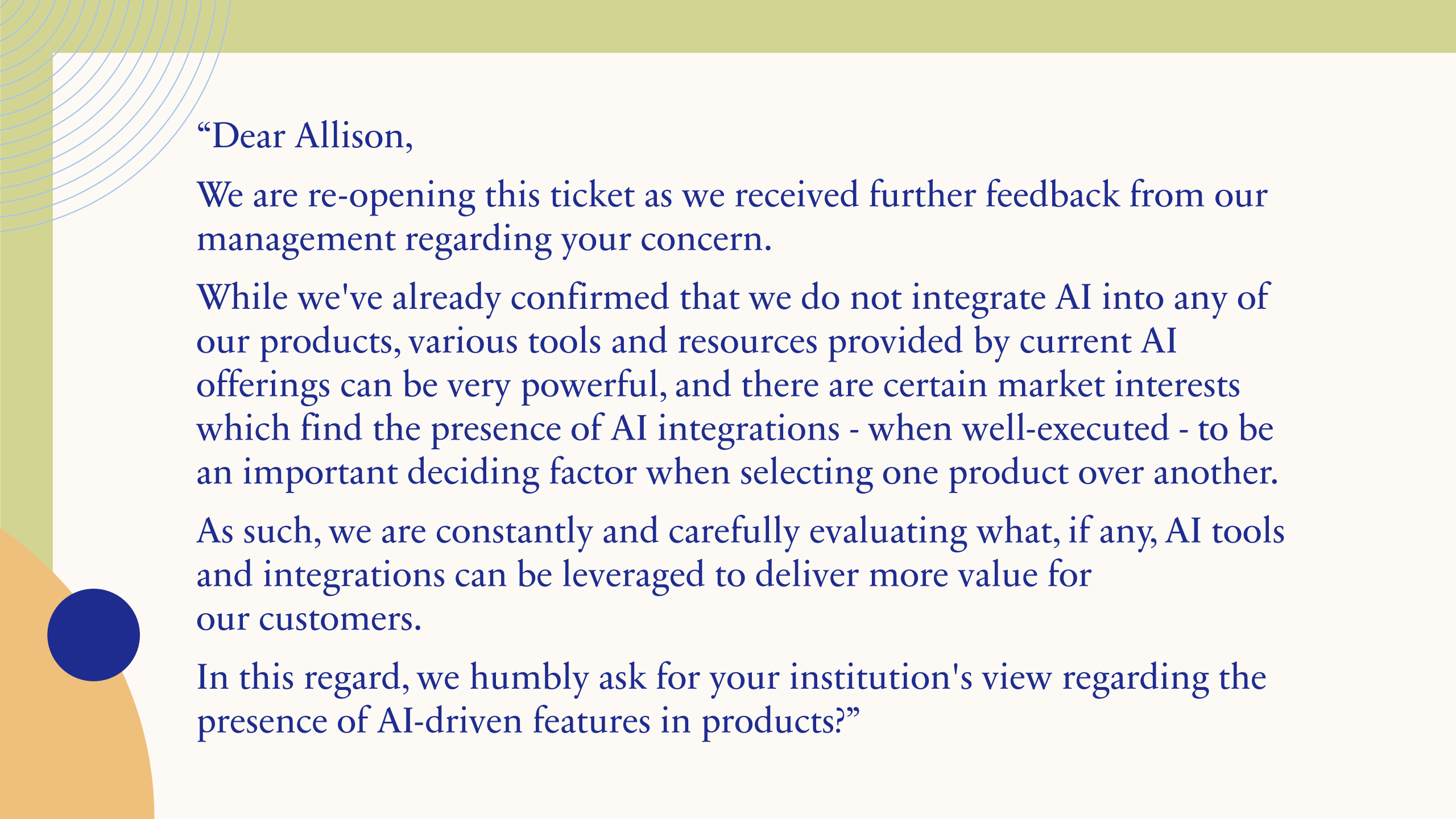
-  Battles and Fights in Music (4)
-  Composers for Wind Band (1)
-  Discover New Favorites (7)
-  Diversity and Visibility Matter (8)
-  Exercise and Explore (8)
-  Have A Happy Day! (9)
-  Label in the Spotlight (21)
-  Love Scenes in Music (4)

Grammy Nominees (56)

-  Holidays and Special Occasions (10)
-  Instruments: Brass (17)
-  Instruments: Guitar (53)
-  Instruments: Harpsichord (17)
-  Instruments: Organ (33)
-  Instruments: Piano (90)
-  Instruments: Strings (47)
-  Instruments: Woodwinds (33)
-  Kids (13)

Music for Mindfulness (1)

-  Pacific Opera Victoria 2019/20 sea...
-  Victoria Symphony 2019/20 seaso...



“Dear Allison,

We are re-opening this ticket as we received further feedback from our management regarding your concern.

While we've already confirmed that we do not integrate AI into any of our products, various tools and resources provided by current AI offerings can be very powerful, and there are certain market interests which find the presence of AI integrations - when well-executed - to be an important deciding factor when selecting one product over another.

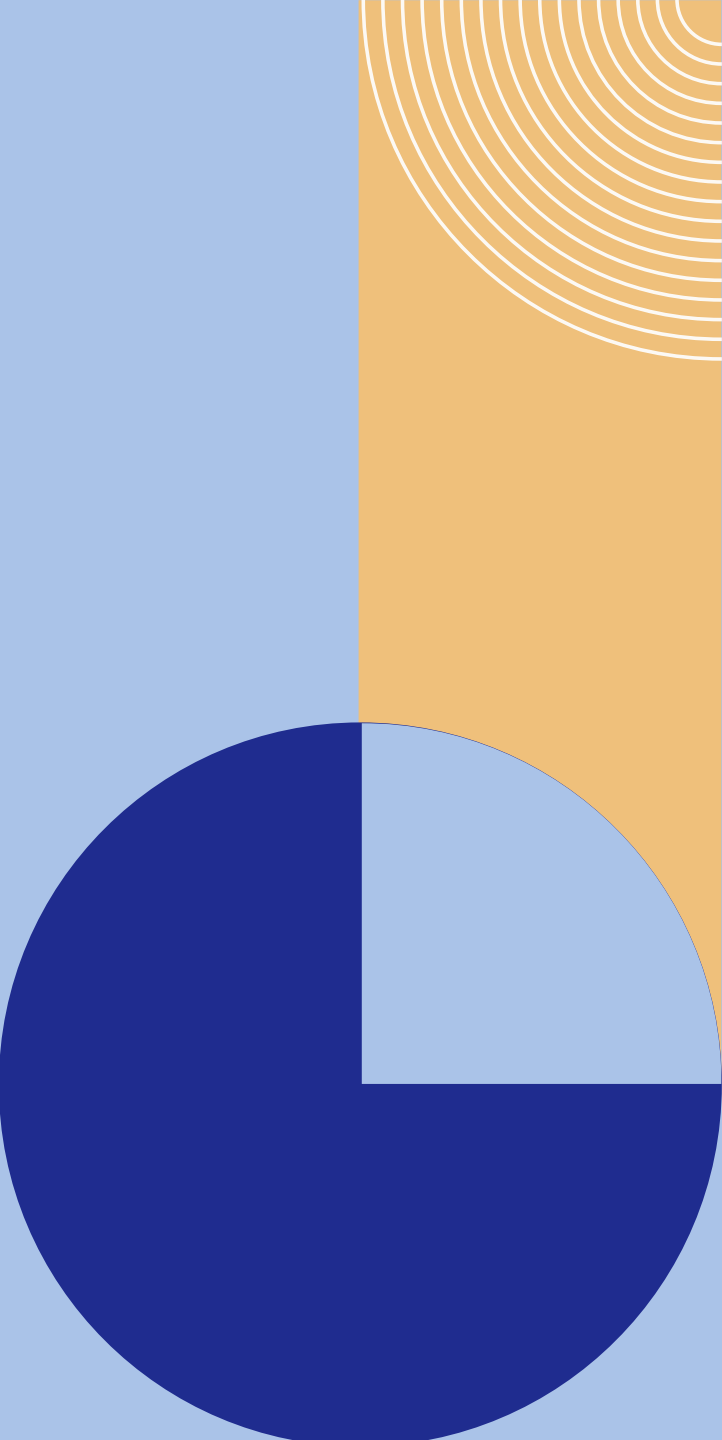
As such, we are constantly and carefully evaluating what, if any, AI tools and integrations can be leveraged to deliver more value for our customers.

In this regard, we humbly ask for your institution's view regarding the presence of AI-driven features in products?”



DID YOU NOTICE?

- Slow, thoughtful
- Asked for input
- Have other ways to find "inspiration" and new music
- Care about the use of their content for training AI



IN MANY WAYS, THESE VENDORS REACTIONS TO AND USES OF AI EMPHASIZE PRE-EXISTING PRIORITIES OR PROBLEMS

Libby/OverDrive	Cute, engaging app experience
NoveList	Robust, complex database
Hoopla	High quantity, varied quality
Naxos	Classy classical music lovers

HUMAN-POWERED RA

In a climate that is overrun with AI and algorithms...

Libraries & library staff are one of the remaining free, wide-spread, publicly-funded resources where the masses can access human-powered curation.

- Caveat: RA (readers' advisory) also includes music, tv, film, research, etc.

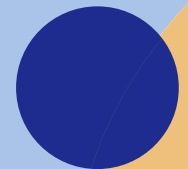
FASCISM, POWER, & GOVERNANCE

Current climate in US & Canada:

- Rise of alt-right belief systems
 - Especially “parental rights”
 - Censorship

Dangerous & oppressive power structures:

- Rely on the masses to be:
 - Tired
 - Unconnected
 - Un-questioning





DESIRE FOR CONNECTION

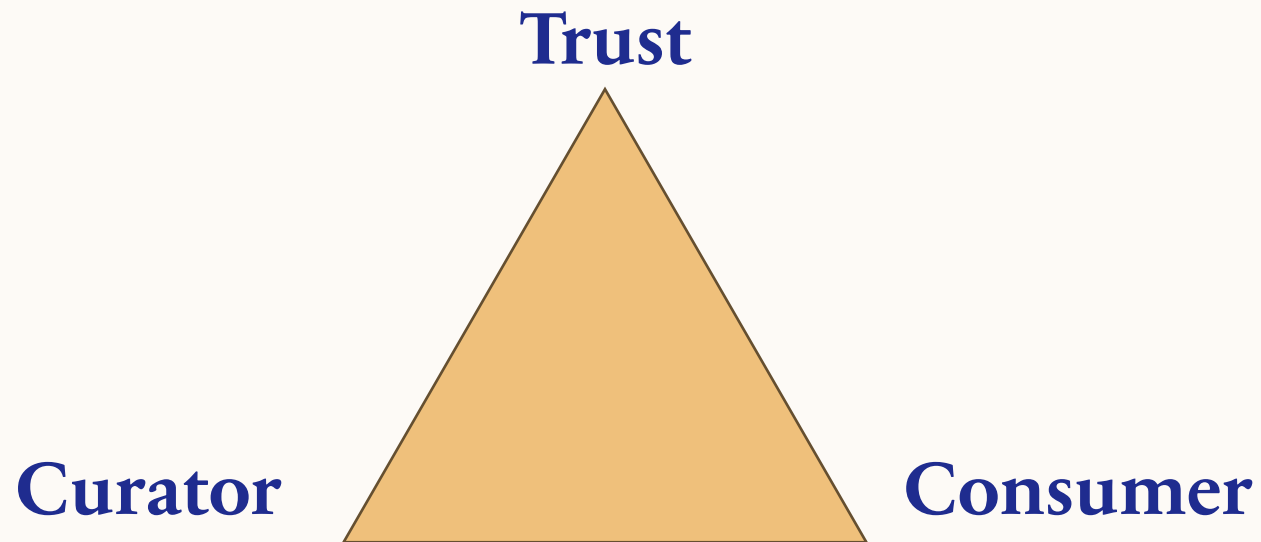
- Doom-scrolling
- Restlessness with media
- Loneliness
- Resurgence of analog entertainment

Desire for human connection & community

HUMAN-POWERED RA

Library staff are filled with different opinions, biases, & experiences

- We get to use this for the benefit of our patrons



FINAL TAKEAWAYS

Libby/OverDrive	Cute, engaging app experience
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NoveList	Robust, complex database
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Hoopla	High quantity, varied quality
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Naxos	Classy classical music lovers
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Library Staff	Like talking to a good friend
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THANK YOU!

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Brooklyn: bkemp@gvpl.ca

Greater Victoria Public Library

www.gvpl.ca