TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY TO COMMUNITY, PART 6: *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MUSEUMS*

A 2025 ANNUAL SURVEY OF MUSEUM-GOERS DATA STORY

MOST OF US can't go to, or even afford, most museums. We can't attend museum events or even read about them on the news, at work, and among family and friends. It's everywhere!

As society contends what place AI should have in our daily lives, museums are a relevant part of the conversation as well. Visitors bring feelings, ideas, and findings about AI with them when they engage with museum content, importing their experience.

In an earlier *Data Story*,[1] we shared respondents' thoughts on museum trustworthiness and accuracy, and any concerns they had about museum credibility in the coming months and years:

Do you currently feel that museums are trustworthy?
- If no, why do you think they are untrustworthy? If not, why not?
- What concerns do you have about museums, AI, and information in the coming months and years?

If you have any further thoughts about the trustworthiness of museums, please share them here.

What about those who don't visit museums? It's important to note that our survey respondents are a self-selecting group, and their opinions and results may not be representative of those who don't visit museums.

This was an open-ended question, and although we didn't ask about AI directly, it was a significant concern that came up as we coded the responses for qualitative analysis.

In this *Data Story*, we'll focus on those who *did* comment on AI. Many responded emotionally and passionately about their value in exploring their concerns a little deeper. This work will inform our AI strategy, verdict on AI use in museums. Rather, its exploration of what museum-goers (and US adults) are thinking and think about AI, so you can factor their concerns into your own decision-making.

We identified five main themes across respondents' comments:

Concerns about accuracy and integrity of information presented

For many respondents, AI use would make them feel that the content published by museums could no longer be trusted. Most cite AI's tendency to "hallucinate" and provide misleading information, behaviors that made them doubt on the accuracy of information presented.

> "Anything I see something created by AI, I question the accuracy of the information and the accuracy of the information. AI has had wrong issues with incorrect or misleading information. I don't trust it. I think everything museums should stay off."

> "While I understand that AI has some uses, I know little by my friends or myself. It evaluates."

Concerns about AI replacing museum staff

When we asked museum-goers about what makes museums trustworthy and credible, a significant number of respondents said that professional staff are central to museum credibility. Not surprisingly, many expressed concern and fear that AI would replace trusted staff.

> "I worry that people starting to museums will be replaced [by] AI for tours and other jobs. Museum employees are caring & museums [illegible] the [illegible] for ask questions, to learn from them and their enthusiasm."

> "I trust museum whom [sic] staff to present and interpret information with integrity. I hope that stays in human hands. I don't want AI to replace museum staff. [illegible] [sic] [illegible] of AI with the staff participation a human [illegible]. Save that for office work!"

Concerns about museums shifting focus from human creation to AI generation

Since museums are seen as places for and about humans, some respondents worry that AI could result in museums moving away from their fundamental purpose.

> "Generative AI does pose a risk to the trustworthiness of museums, if they choose to have their tours or other content created by AI, at least a disclaimer if there is AI involvement."

> "Museums are meant to be a place where people can see what humans have created. Plus the parts of other lives that can't be conveyed in words. I don't want to see AI replaced, or the museum staff displaced, or the museum tours and displays replaced by AI. I don't want to be a guinea pig for AI. I don't want to be a measuring device[illegible] in my opinion."

Concerns about the ethics of AI and its data sources

Some respondents see the results generated by AI as tainted and untrustworthy, citing its ethics, intentions, scientific, designers, and other content producers.

> "AI is theft."

> "I expect museums to let visitors know when they are using AI-generated content, and I hope that they are using it responsibly and with consideration for the energy cost of content."

> "I do not trust AI as it is not programmed by an actual human being. Museums are supposed to be an actual human being. Museums are supposed to be an actual human being. Museums are supposed to be