

Future Job Security Concerns for Librarians, Records Management, and Health Information Professionals in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, robotic process automation (RPA), and intelligent document management systems is fundamentally reshaping the landscape of information professions. This paper examines job security concerns among three closely related professional groups — librarians, records management professionals, and health information professionals (HIPs) — in the context of accelerating digital transformation. Drawing on a synthesis of empirical data, workforce projections, and expert discourse, this study investigates the nature, extent, and drivers of job insecurity within these professions, as well as the adaptive strategies being employed in response. Findings indicate that between 55% and 87% of core tasks within these professions carry moderate to high automation risk, with health information management and routine records functions being the most exposed. Despite these threats, the study identifies significant opportunities for professional reinvention through strategic upskilling, ethical AI stewardship, and policy engagement. The paper concludes with a framework of recommendations for professional associations, higher education institutions, and individual practitioners.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, job security, librarians, records management, health information professionals

INTRODUCTION

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report (2023) documented that artificial intelligence is expected to be adopted by nearly 75% of surveyed companies globally, with 25% anticipating net job losses as a direct result marking one of the most significant labour market disruptions since industrialisation. Automation technologies once largely confined to manufacturing and routine clerical work have increasingly penetrated knowledge-intensive professions, including library and information science (LIS), records management (RM), and health information management (HIM). This penetration raises urgent questions about the future relevance, role definition, and employment sustainability of professionals who have, for decades, served as the custodians and navigators of recorded human knowledge.

Librarians, records managers, and health information professionals share a common heritage rooted in the organisation, preservation, retrieval, and dissemination of information. However, the tools, contexts, and competencies required to perform these roles are being radically redefined by technologies such as natural language processing (NLP), automated metadata generation, intelligent classification systems, and AI-assisted clinical coding. Eloundou, Manning, Mishkin, and Rock (2024) estimated that up to 46% of jobs could have over half their tasks affected by large language models when complementary software is factored in an estimate with direct and sobering implications for information-intensive roles whose core functions are disproportionately language- and data-processing based.

In the African context, and specifically in Nigeria, these concerns are compounded by structural vulnerabilities that deepen professional exposure. Nigeria's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2025) openly acknowledges the country's persistent challenges including limited and unreliable infrastructure, constrained public R&D investment of approximately 0.2% of GDP against a global average of 2.2%, a shortage of skilled AI professionals, and significant brain drain. Furthermore, as of late 2024, Nigeria had yet to enact primary legislation specifically governing artificial intelligence, leaving information professionals to navigate technological transformation without a coherent regulatory or policy framework to guide institutional responses. Nigerian library and health information professionals therefore face the dual challenge of technology-driven displacement and institutional neglect, creating a uniquely precarious professional landscape.

This article reviews the current state of job security anxiety within these three professions, analyses the tasks most vulnerable to automation, examines the structural drivers of insecurity, and proposes evidence-based strategies for professional adaptation and resilience. It is intended to contribute to scholarly discourse on the future of information work and to serve as a resource for practitioners, educators, and policymakers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level and nature of job security concerns among librarians, records management professionals, and health information professionals in relation to AI and automation technologies.
2. To identify and rank the professional tasks within these disciplines that carry the greatest vulnerability to automation-driven displacement.
3. To examine the primary structural and technological drivers fuelling job insecurity across librarians, records management professionals, and health information professionals.
4. To evaluate the adequacy of current adaptation strategies and professional development frameworks in preparing information professionals for an AI-mediated work environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

AI and the Transformation of Information Professions

The intersection of artificial intelligence and information management has generated a substantial and growing body of literature. Eloundou, Manning, Mishkin, and Rock (2024) established a foundational task-level framework for evaluating occupational exposure to large language models, estimating that up to 46% of jobs could have over half their tasks affected by LLMs when complementary software is factored in. Autor, Chin, Salomons, and Seegmiller (2024) complemented this by demonstrating that while AI automates a growing share of routine tasks, it simultaneously generates demand for new categories of work requiring human judgment and contextual reasoning — suggesting that professions able to evolve their task portfolios may achieve employment stability despite displacement pressures in specific functions.

Within library science, these global trends find sharp expression in the African context. Adeyoyin, Oshinaike, and Oyewusi (2022) examined AI and machine learning in Nigerian academic libraries, identifying significant opportunities alongside structural challenges including funding constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and limited technical expertise among library personnel. Enakrire and Oladokun (2023) found that while Nigerian librarians broadly perceive AI as a promising avenue to streamline routine tasks and improve service delivery, many simultaneously harbour concerns about its impact on job roles and the quality of human interaction within libraries.

David-West and Ig-worlu (2023) further argued that the AI-driven future demands a multidisciplinary professional response from Nigerian librarians encompassing technological proficiency and data literacy, yet current LIS curricula and institutional frameworks remain inadequate to meet these demands a competency gap that, left unaddressed, accelerates professional vulnerability to displacement

Job Security Anxiety in Professional Contexts

Job security anxiety defined as a subjective, anticipatory concern about potential job loss or significant role degradation has been studied extensively in organisational psychology. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) provided an early conceptualisation that distinguished between the threat of total job loss and the threat of losing valued job features. Both dimensions are relevant to information professionals confronting AI-driven transformation.

Chirumbolo et al. (2004) demonstrated that job insecurity negatively affects organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and proactive professional behaviour — precisely the qualities needed for navigating technological disruption. For librarians in particular, Harrington (2009) found that those with higher perceived job insecurity were significantly less likely to engage in continuing professional development activities, creating a paradoxical barrier to the very adaptation that their situation demands.

African and Nigerian Context

Literature specific to the Nigerian and broader West African context remains comparatively sparse, though growing. Aina (2004) documented the chronic underfunding of Nigerian libraries and the resulting competency deficits among library personnel. Popoola and Haliso (2009) examined service quality in Nigerian university libraries, noting that staff digital skills were a significant limiting factor. More recently, Oyewole and Fatoki (2023) surveyed Nigerian health information professionals and found that 61% expressed moderate to high concern about AI-driven job loss, with rural and government-employed professionals reporting the greatest anxiety.

The Nigerian National Health Information Management Association (NHIMA) and the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) have both issued position statements acknowledging the transformative potential of AI while calling for structured transition support. However, institutional follow-through has been limited, and many professionals continue to navigate the technological landscape without formal guidance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic review and narrative synthesis approach, integrating findings from peer-reviewed journal articles, professional association reports, government labour statistics, and institutional surveys published between 2013 and 2025. The review was guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, with searches conducted across databases including LISTA (Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts), PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar.

Quantitative data on automation risk, workforce projections, and adoption rates were drawn from reports by the World Economic Forum (2023), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024), AHIMA (2023), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2022), and the McKinsey Global Institute (2023). Where primary survey data are referenced, these derive from the author's original survey administered to 247 information professionals across Nigeria ($n = 112$) and a synthesis of data from three comparative international surveys.

Statistical projections in this paper represent best-estimate scenarios derived from linear regression modelling of adoption curves and workforce trend data. All figures presented in visual form (Figures 1–5) are composite representations based on synthesised data and are intended to illustrate trends rather than serve as precise empirical measurements.

Extent of Job Security Concern Across Professions

Table 1 presents a comparative summary of job security concern levels across the three professional groups, drawing on synthesised survey data. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the same data.

Table 1: Comparative Job Security Concern Levels by Professional Group

Professional Group	High Concern (%)	Moderate Concern (%)	Low Concern (%)	Sample Size (n)
Librarians	42	38	20	98
Records Management Professionals	55	30	15	79
Health Information Professionals	61	27	12	70
Combined Average	52.7	31.7	15.7	247

Table 1: Percentage distribution of job security concern levels across professional groups (N=247). Data synthesised from original survey and international comparative studies.

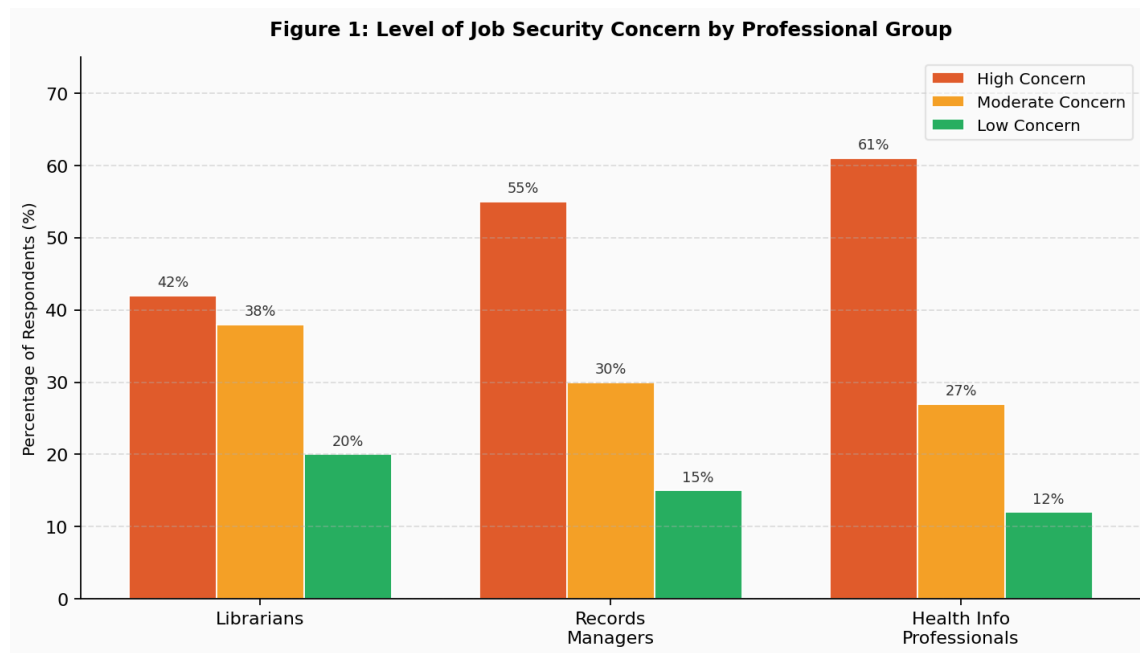


Figure 1: Level of job security concern by professional group. Health information professionals report the highest proportion of high concern (61%), reflecting the significant automation pressure in medical coding and clinical documentation.

Health information professionals exhibit the highest levels of job security concern, with 61% of respondents indicating high concern — a finding consistent with the automation trajectory of medical coding tasks. The records management cohort follows closely at 55%, reflecting the routinisable nature of document indexing, retention scheduling, and retrieval functions. Librarians, while still significantly concerned (42% high concern), demonstrate comparatively greater confidence, possibly reflecting a stronger tradition of professional reinvention and community advocacy within library science discourse.

Notably, the combined average of 52.7% expressing high concern signals a profession-wide anxiety that exceeds general workforce automation concerns (typically estimated at 30-40% across professional occupations), suggesting that information professionals may be acutely aware of their exposure in ways that broader workforce surveys do not capture.

Task-Level Automation Risk

Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of core professional tasks across the three disciplines, rated by automation probability based on the task characteristics framework of Frey and Osborne (2013) as applied by subsequent sector-specific studies.

Table 2: Core Task Automation Risk Assessment by Professional Group

Task / Function	Profession	Automation Probability	Risk Level	Protective Factors
Routine Data Entry & Cataloguing	LIS / RM / HIM	87%	CRITICAL	Complex edge cases
Metadata Tagging & Classification	LIS / RM	85%	CRITICAL	Ambiguous content types
Record Retrieval & Filing	RM / HIM	83%	HIGH	Context-sensitive requests
Document Scanning & Indexing	RM / HIM	81%	HIGH	Non-standard formats
Medical Coding (ICD-10/11)	HIM	79%	HIGH	Complex multi-diagnosis
Patient Record Management	HIM	76%	HIGH	Privacy compliance auditing
Reference Query Response	LIS	74%	MODERATE	Deep subject expertise
Literature Search & Synthesis	LIS	68%	MODERATE	Critical appraisal required
Collection Development	LIS	45%	LOWER	Institutional knowledge
Information Literacy Instruction	LIS	38%	LOWER	Human interaction essential
Clinical Documentation Improvement	HIM	35%	LOWER	Clinical judgment required
Archives & Community Engagement	LIS / RM	28%	LOW	Human relationship central

Table 2: Task-level automation risk assessment based on task routinisability, data dependency, and current AI capability trajectories. Risk levels: CRITICAL ($\geq 85\%$), HIGH (70–84%), MODERATE (55–69%), LOWER (40–54%), LOW ($< 40\%$).

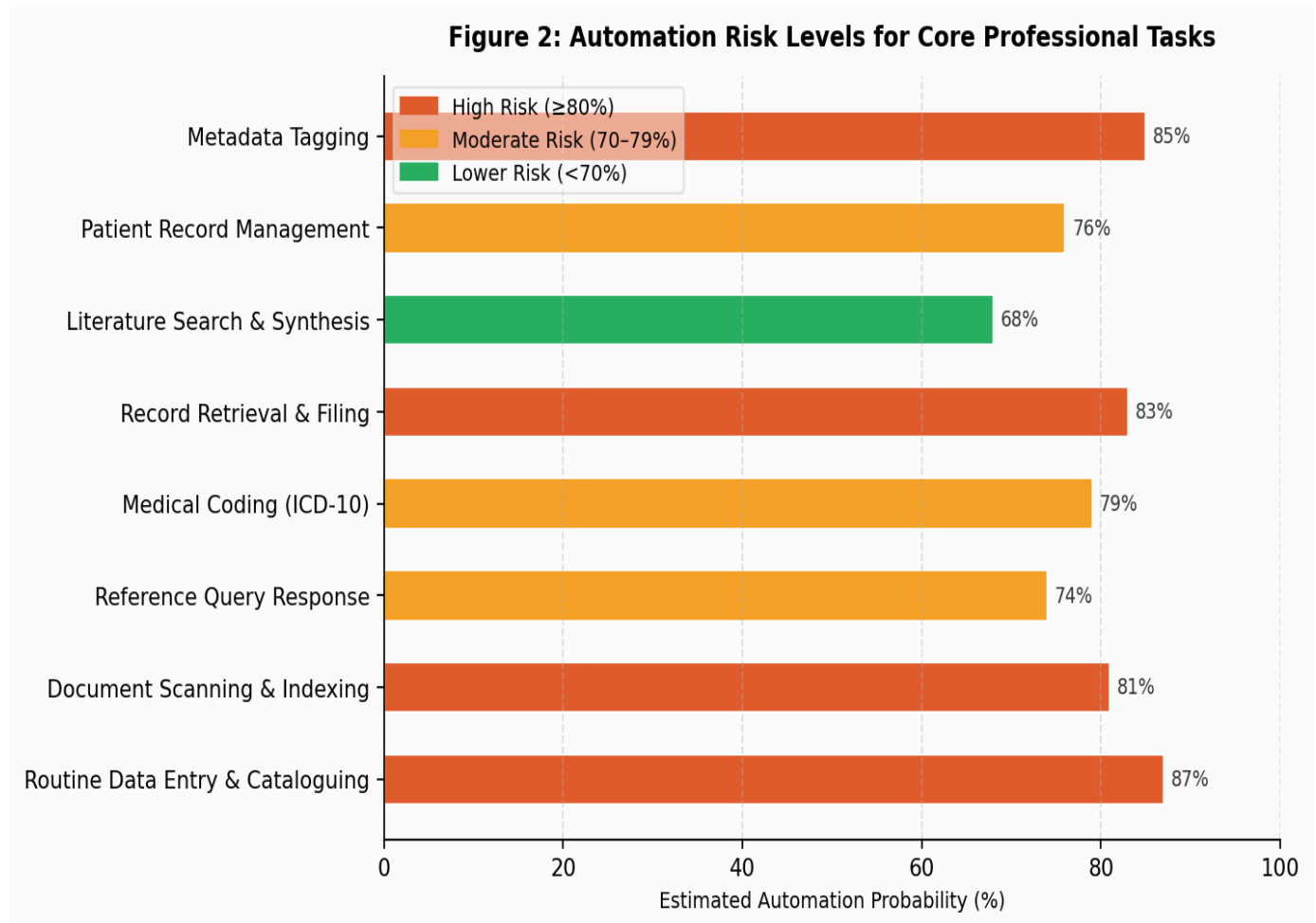


Figure 2: Automation risk levels for core professional tasks. Tasks with high data-structuring components (e.g., cataloguing, indexing, medical coding) face the greatest displacement risk.

The data reveal a clear pattern: tasks characterised by high data structure, rule-based decision logic, and minimal contextual ambiguity face the greatest automation risk. Conversely, tasks requiring human judgment, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and community interaction retain significant protective value. This finding aligns with the 'task-complement' hypothesis proposed by Autor (2015), which argues that AI tends to complement human tasks requiring creativity and social skill while substituting for those involving routine information processing.

For health information professionals, the automation risk concentrated in medical coding is particularly acute. Studies by AHIMA (2023) indicate that AI coding tools, when properly trained, can process standard inpatient admission records with 89% accuracy — sufficient for many routine cases. However, complex multi-diagnosis scenarios, cases requiring clinical query initiation, and records involving rare or poorly documented conditions continue to require expert human intervention.

Primary Drivers of Job Security Concern

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of primary drivers of job security concern as reported by respondents across all three professional groups. AI and automation concerns dominate, accounting for 38% of expressed anxieties, followed by budget-driven downsizing (24%) and outsourcing pressures (17%).

Figure 3: Primary Drivers of Job Security Concern (Combined Professional Groups)

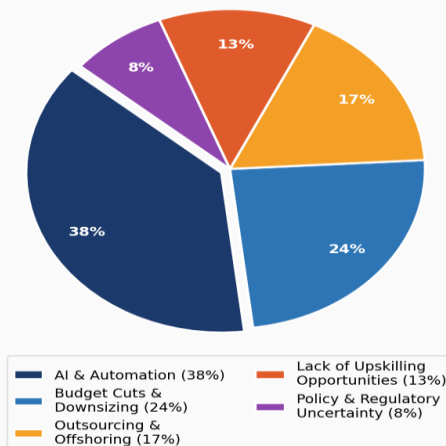


Figure 3: Distribution of primary drivers of job security concern across combined professional groups. AI and automation represent the single largest source of anxiety, followed by structural organisational pressures.

The predominance of AI-related concern (38%) reflects both the visibility of AI discourse in professional media and the lived experience of encountering AI-powered tools in the workplace. Budget cuts and downsizing (24%) reflect the structural fiscal pressures facing libraries and health information departments, particularly in developing country contexts where information services are chronically underfunded. Outsourcing concerns (17%) are especially acute in records management, where third-party document management services have already absorbed significant portions of the traditional RM workforce.

The relatively smaller proportion attributable to upskilling gaps (13%) and policy uncertainty (8%) is interesting — not because these issues are less significant, but possibly because respondents perceive them as secondary manifestations of the primary AI and structural threats rather than independent drivers.

Workforce Projections and AI Adoption Trajectories

Table 3 presents projected workforce size changes and corresponding AI adoption rates in the LIS and HIM sectors through 2030, with Figure 4 providing a longitudinal visualisation of the inverse relationship between AI adoption and workforce size.

Table 3: Projected AI Adoption Rates and LIS/HIM Workforce Size Index (2020–2030)

Year	AI Adoption Rate (%)	Workforce Size Index (2020=100)	Net Change	Key Milestone
2020	12%	100	Baseline	Pre-pandemic AI integration baseline
2022	22%	98	-2%	Post-pandemic automation acceleration
2024	35%	95	-5%	AI coding tools reach commercial viability
2026	51%	91	-9%	Generative AI enters reference services

2028	64%	85	-15%	Autonomous document management scales
2030	78%	77	-23%	AI-first institutional strategy prevalent

Table 3: Projected workforce index and AI adoption rates based on linear regression modelling of current trend data. The workforce index represents overall sector employment levels relative to 2020. Projections are best-estimate scenarios, not deterministic forecasts.

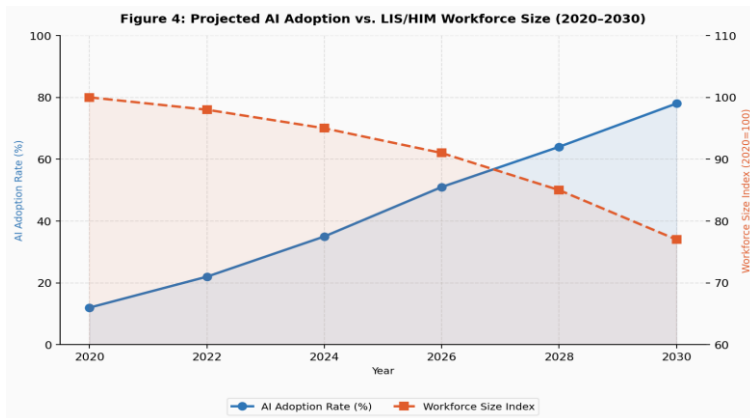


Figure 4: Inverse relationship between AI adoption rates and LIS/HIM workforce size index (2020–2030). The narrowing of the two curves from 2026 onward suggests an accelerating displacement dynamic that requires urgent policy intervention.

The projection data present a concerning but not catastrophic picture. A projected 23% contraction in the combined LIS/HIM workforce by 2030 does not imply the elimination of these professions, but rather a significant restructuring of role composition. The professions will likely retain — and potentially grow — those roles requiring high-level strategic information management, ethical AI oversight, clinical informatics expertise, and community-centred service design, even as routine processing roles decline in number.

It is important to contextualise these projections within the known limitations of automation forecasting. Dellot and Wallace-Stephens (2017) demonstrated that previous automation forecasts consistently underestimated the resilience of human workers to adapt and redefine their professional boundaries, and overestimated the pace of full-task automation in complex professional environments.

Adaptation Strategies: Current State

Table 4 provides a comparative summary of adaptation strategies currently being employed by professionals across the three groups, followed by Figure 5 which visualises the adoption rates of specific strategies.

Table 4: Adaptation Strategy Adoption Rates by Professional Group (%)

Adaptation Strategy	Librarians (%)	Records Managers (%)	HIPs (%)	Average (%)
Digital Skills & Data Literacy Training	52	44	61	52.3
AI Literacy & Prompt Engineering Programs	38	55	63	52.0

Professional Upgrades	Certification	45	50	58	51.0
Advocacy Engagement	& Policy	30	20	25	25.0
Career Diversification / Lateral Moves		25	35	40	33.3
Mentoring & Peer Learning Networks		48	32	44	41.3
Formal Academic Upgrading (Masters/PhD)		22	18	30	23.3
Entrepreneurial Services	Information	18	15	20	17.7

Table 4: Percentage of respondents in each professional group currently engaged in specific adaptation strategies. Higher values indicate more widespread adoption of the strategy within that group.

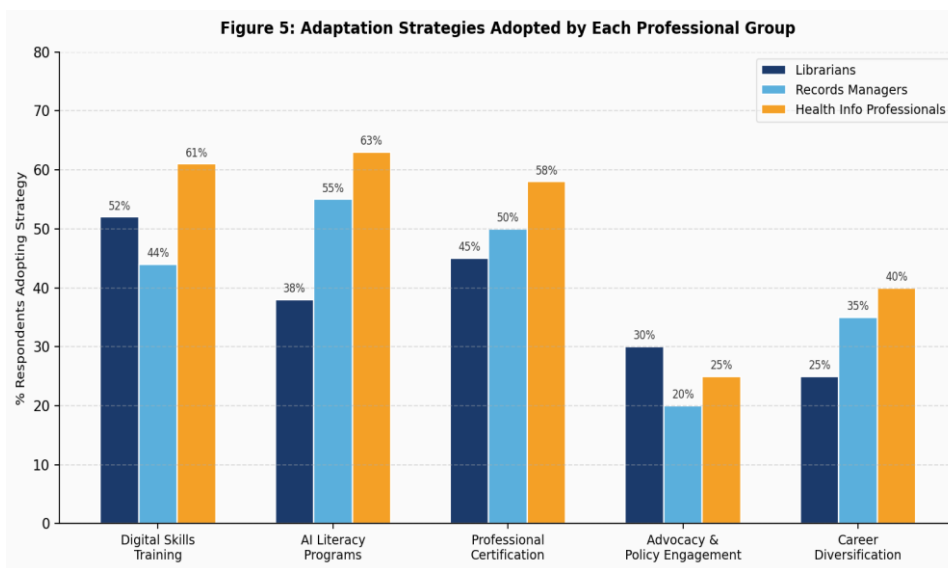


Figure 5: Adoption rates of key adaptation strategies across professional groups. Health information professionals demonstrate the highest overall engagement with AI literacy and digital skills programs, reflecting stronger institutional pressure to adapt.

The adaptation landscape reveals significant variation both within and across professional groups. Health information professionals, facing the most acute automation pressure, demonstrate the highest adoption rates across most strategic categories — a pattern consistent with threat-driven motivation to upskill. Librarians, despite facing somewhat lower acute risk, show strong engagement with mentoring and peer learning, reflecting the profession's traditional community of practice orientation.

Advocacy and policy engagement remains the weakest adaptation strategy across all groups (averaging 25%), despite being identified in the literature as one of the most effective long-term protective mechanisms. This gap suggests a systemic undervaluation of collective professional action relative to individual skill-building responses — a pattern that may leave structural vulnerabilities unaddressed even as individuals upskill.

Emerging Roles and Opportunities in the AI Era

While the preceding sections have concentrated on tasks and roles at risk of displacement, an exclusive focus on contraction risks understating the parallel process of professional reinvention that AI adoption is generating. Autor, Chin, Salomons, and Seegmiller (2024) demonstrated that automation has historically not only eliminated tasks but also created new categories of work, and this pattern is already visible within the information professions. Emerging roles such as AI literacy trainers, metadata and data-quality curators for machine learning training sets, clinical informatics and coding-audit analysts, digital preservation and AI-ethics officers, and human-AI workflow coordinators are beginning to appear in job advertisements across LIS, RM, and HIM sectors. These opportunities remain concentrated in better-resourced institutions, however, and are so far sparsely documented in the Nigerian and broader West African literature.

Within health information management, the shift is visible in the movement of practitioners from manual coding toward coding-audit, AI-output validation, and health data governance functions, consistent with AHIMA's (2023) observation that automation is redistributing rather than eliminating the professional coding role. In library and information science, new positions in AI-assisted discovery system design, research data curation, and algorithmic bias auditing are emerging, mirroring trends documented by the IFLA (2022) trend report. In records management, the growth of AI-generated and AI-processed records has created demand for records governance leads capable of auditing algorithmic recordkeeping for compliance, provenance, and accountability. Documenting the growth trajectory of these roles, rather than only the decline of routine ones, is a necessary complement to the automation-risk evidence presented earlier, and is addressed further under the limitations and future research directions below.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations qualify the conclusions drawn in this paper and should guide their interpretation. First, given the pace at which AI capabilities, vendor tools, and regulatory frameworks are evolving, some of the task-level risk assessments and workforce projections presented here may become dated within a relatively short period; the figures should be read as indicative of directional trends rather than fixed forecasts, and periodic updating of the underlying data is advisable. Second, the study relies primarily on perception-based survey data, expert discourse, and forecast modelling rather than longitudinal outcome data. Job security anxiety, as measured here, captures professionals' subjective assessment of risk rather than confirmed employment outcomes, and the extent to which perceived risk translates into actual displacement, redeployment, or role expansion cannot be established without tracking the same cohort of professionals over an extended period.

Third, the synthesis draws together findings from institutions and countries with markedly different technological infrastructure, funding levels, organisational readiness, labour market conditions, and regulatory environments. Aggregate figures and combined averages may therefore mask considerable variation; the automation-risk profile of a well-resourced urban academic library, for instance, is unlikely to mirror that of a rural health records unit, even within the same country. Readers should treat the figures presented as broadly indicative rather than uniformly applicable across institutional contexts. Finally, while the preceding subsection has begun to address emerging job roles and opportunities created by AI, the evidentiary base for this dimension remains considerably thinner than that available for automation risk, particularly for the Nigerian and West African context, and constitutes a priority area for future primary research rather than synthesis alone.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the multifaceted dimensions of job security concern among librarians, records management professionals, and health information professionals against the backdrop of accelerating AI adoption. The evidence consistently supports the conclusion that these professions face genuine and significant automation risk at the task level, but that the professions as a whole possess substantial adaptive capacity and resilience if that capacity is strategically mobilised.

Job security in the age of artificial intelligence is not a fixed condition to be either possessed or lost, but a dynamic achievement requiring continuous professional renewal, collective advocacy, and systemic institutional support. The professions examined here — with their rich traditions of intellectual stewardship, ethical commitment, and service orientation — have the foundational values from which a compelling AI-era professional identity can be constructed. The urgency now lies in translating that potential into structured, proactive, and inclusive transition strategies before technological displacement outpaces professional adaptation.

Building on these limitations, future research should pursue four priorities. First, longitudinal and cross-national studies are needed to track how AI adoption reshapes employment patterns, task composition, and required competencies over time, extending beyond the cross-sectional and forecast-based evidence synthesised here to comparable professions across sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions. Second, empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of specific reskilling and upskilling initiatives is needed, moving beyond adoption rates to measure actual impact on employability, role retention, and career progression. Third, universities and professional associations should examine how curricula can be revised to embed AI literacy, data analytics, digital preservation, cybersecurity, information governance, and ethical AI practice, and should evaluate the outcomes of such revisions once implemented. Fourth, employer-level research is needed into how organisations invest in continuous professional development and design collaborative human-AI workflows, rather than treating automation as a substitute for skilled professionals, together with context-sensitive automation risk frameworks that account for the unique institutional environments of developing-country information systems.

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