



Friends Newsletter - Summer 2026

In the News: What is this AI thing, anyway?

by FOBL member, Cathy Pearl

These days, news stories are flooded with the term “AI”. But what does it really mean?

The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) was first coined in 1956, when computers were becoming more common in science and academia. At the time, some believed that within a generation, computers would be as smart as people.

While that didn’t happen, AI did enter mainstream, and it’s part of our everyday lives. For example, if you’re texting someone and it autocorrects your spelling, that’s AI. A fraud alert from your bank, estimating how long it will take to drive to the airport, getting a movie recommendation from Netflix, even creating a formula in Excel—these are all AI.

More recently, AI has been in the headlines with “Gen AI”: Generative AI. This refers to things like ChatGPT, which is a Large Language Model (LLM) you can talk to. It’s called Generative AI because it works a bit differently: it generates new things, rather than analyzing existing things.

Tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude etc. can be super useful. They don’t require complex programming or deep technical understanding, and can help find out information, plan a trip, think through names for your new cat, write

a story, and prepare you for a test. You can think of an LLM as a super fancy word calculator: it does a great job of predicting what word might come next in a sentence. If I said to you “peanut butter and...” you would most likely say, “jelly!” You might also say, banana, bread, or lots of other things, but “jelly” is the most likely result. That’s what the LLM is doing. It’s not “thinking,” and it’s certainly not conscious.

Much of the time, the LLMs produce correct information. But often, they get things wrong, and it can be hard to spot. For example, I recently asked an LLM for information about how many people have climbed Mt Everest. It gave me a very nice-looking graph. But when I did a little bit of searching on my own, I discovered some of the numbers were incorrect.

LLMs can sound very confident. And they can be great tools. Just be sure to follow the mantra: trust, but verify. Check up on things, especially facts and advice.

Don’t be afraid of AI, but do be cautious. And if you want to read more about how AI is impacting our lives there are some terrific books out there, such as *I Am Not a Robot* by Joanna Stern, that go beyond the hype and provide useful info.

ABOUT US

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Belmont Library
P.O. Box 826
Belmont, CA 94002
info@thefobl.org

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Annual Financial Report

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

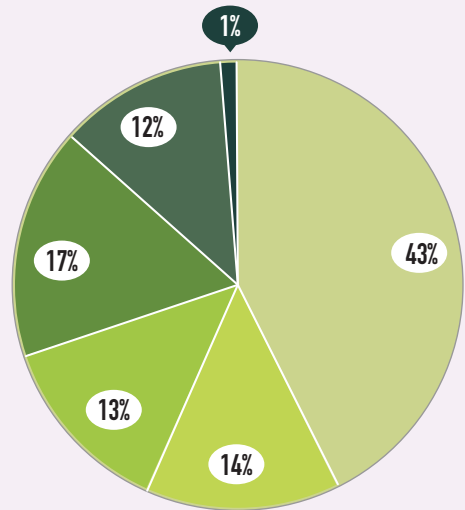
The Friends of the Belmont Library are proud to announce that our year end \$30,000 Library Programs donation for the coming 2026-27 year will support all ages from children to seniors, and includes book clubs, author talks, cultural events, books for the Imagination Library, supplies for the Maker Space, support for the new hybrid Bookmobile, and library staff training and appreciation.

Our assets as of June 30, 2026 total \$189,767.45, including reserves for future renovations.



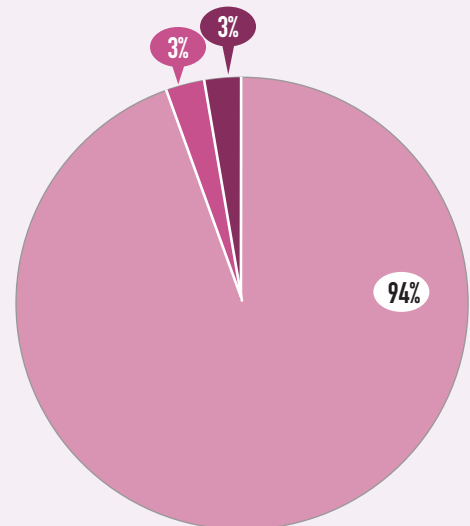
Chris Lu, Belmont Library Manager, accepts a \$30,000 donation from the Friends of the Belmont Library Treasurer Emily Sarver and President Pat Barkett for FY 2026-2027 library programs including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Outreach and Programming support, and the Bookmobile.

Looking forward to seeing you at our
Summer Sale August 1st & 2nd



Income \$21,891

Friends' Store	\$9,371
Donations	\$3,084
Membership	\$2,875
Interest	\$3,649
Book Sales	\$2,665
Book Forest	\$247



Expenses \$32,213

Library Programs	\$30,461
Newsletters	\$840
Operational	\$912



Support the Friends of the Belmont Library

☐

New Membership

☐

Membership Renewal

Membership lasts one year from the date you join.

Name:

Phone:

Street address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Email Address:

Choose your membership Level

☐

Friend/Dues 25

☐

Good Friend/Donor 50

☐

Family Friend/Donor 100

☐

Best Friend/Donor 200

☐

Generous Friend/Donor 300

☐

Additional Donation \$

Send important member correspondence, including the newsletter, by (check one):

☐

Email

☐

Postal Mail

☐

Yes, I would like to volunteer!

Make checks payable to:

Friends of the Belmont Library

and mail to:

P.O. Box 826

Belmont CA 94002

Parents & Teachers: Want Happier, More Connected Kids? Hand Them a Book!

Too much screen time can leave children feeling isolated — but reading is a powerful antidote. A shelf of inviting books at home or in the classroom gives kids an easy, healthy alternative to scrolling.

And here's something exciting: reading doesn't just boost academic skills. It strengthens empathy. The European Journal of Psychology Students reports that reading fiction helps kids step into others' shoes, understand different viewpoints, and connect emotionally — all essential skills for building friendships and navigating school life.

So, let's kick off the new school year with stories that inspire. The Friends of the Belmont Library have been gathering fantastic children's books all year, and we're offering them at **deep discounts** during our August sale.

Join us August 1–2, 10–5 PM and build a low-cost library that supports imagination



Friends of the Belmont Library

P.O. Box 826

Belmont, CA 94002



Friends Summer Sale

Used Books & Media 30% off of our low prices

Mass market paperbacks
10 for \$1

Trade paperbacks & hardcovers
30% off

CDs/DVDs **4 for \$1**
(multi-disc sets **30% off**)

August 1 & 2
10 AM to 5 PM
at the Belmont Library

Cash, Checks & Zelle Accepted



Members receive an additional 10% off!

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT BELMONT LIBRARY PROGRAMS