SCREEN BERKSHIRE

AI skills in film and television production

By Dr Dominic Lees and Dr Sarah Byrne

A research report commissioned by Screen Berkshire, a skills cluster of the British Film Institute

Synthetic Media Research Network

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Executive Summary

This report summarises research into the use of AI tools in live action film and TV production undertaken on behalf of the Screen Berkshire skills cluster. It presents a detailed picture of how AI is being adopted by below-the-line workers in the UK's mainstream film and television industry, and maps the response of freelancers to the introduction of AI tools into production.

Through surveys and interviews we have made these key findings:

1. The adoption of AI tools is not universal.
2. AI adoption is highly varied by department.
3. The primary uses of AI tools by film and TV workers are not for specialised tasks.
4. There is widespread concern about the ethics and impact of AI among film and TV professionals, regardless of whether they use AI or not.

These findings contextualise the principal task of this report: to deliver recommendations on the necessary skills and training needs of film professionals in the AI era. Through our industry-wide survey and interviews with film and TV workers across multiple departments of production, we report here on the AI skills and knowledge requirements that have been expressed by our participants.

We present the following recommendations:

1. Targeted training must be developed for specific departments.
2. Training should focus specifically on responsible AI practice and appropriateness.
3. Training must be provided by an independent body, led by the BFI, and must be evidence based.
4. Training should be made available through online courses.
5. There must be ongoing reviews of AI tool use in Film and TV production to ensure that training remains relevant.
6. There needs to be clearer signposting for the training that is developed.

Introduction

In 2025, Screen Berkshire identified a fast-approaching requirement to develop skills training for UK film and television workers on the use of AI. As a BFI regional skills cluster, it saw a responsibility to understand the workforce needs around the new technology and to provide relevant upskilling support. However, there existed major gaps in knowledge: what is the level of adoption of AI Tools by film professionals working in live action production, and what are the specific tasks for which AI is used? For educators and trainers in film and TV production skills, the gap in knowledge was summarised by Sara Whybrew, BFI Director of Skills and Workforce Development: "What do AI skills in film production look like?".

This study was commissioned to understand in granular detail how AI Tools are being used by film professionals, as the first step towards designing AI training that is responsive to current industry requirements. Research was undertaken by Screen Berkshire's partner HE institution, the University of Reading, between January and May 2026.

Screen Berkshire

Screen Berkshire is a regional skills cluster supported by the BFI, awarding National Lottery funding. Launched in October 2023, the cluster is led by Resource Productions CIC and brings together the following core partners: the University of Reading, Shadowbox Studios Shinfield, Amazon MGM Studios, Bedlam Film Productions, and Berkshire Film Office.

Screen Berkshire has facilitated training, built up creative networks and identified clear paths to employment. The cluster has supported the growth of Berkshire as a premiere filming location: the county has one of the fastest growing screen industries in the UK.

Context and controversy

There has been a strong backlash against the use of Generative AI from many in the creative industries. It is a fraught point of debate, with legal and ethical arguments often conflicting with the growing pragmatic use of AI Tools by film and TV professionals. Throughout this research, **we have taken a neutral position on AI**. This report will reflect current AI without judgement or bias.

However, AI tools are not neutral, either in terms of the data that has been used to train their models, nor the processes for which they are used. Respondents to our survey are fully aware of the controversies over Text and Data Mining (TDM) by AI developers, breach of creators' copyright, and policy debates around AI. The anxieties of film and TV professionals are directly connected to the decisions that they make on whether to use or not use AI tools.

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Methodology

Survey

The first task of this research was to understand AI use in film and TV in the current moment. We disseminated a survey to the UK's film and TV professionals, through networks of professional organisations, BFI skills clusters across the nations and regions, and crew directories. This aimed to produce a comprehensive picture of which AI Tools are being used, by whom, and for what tasks in the multiple professions that make up live action film and TV production. Questions also sought the reasoning behind people's choices to use or not use AI, and their experiences with specific AI tools.

We next asked about the AI training and resources that film and TV professionals had already accessed, their satisfaction with those offerings and their cost. Our survey then focused on questions about the AI training they would like to see in the future, and which organisations they would trust to deliver it.

We received 131 responses from across production departments, including assistant directors, camera operators, art department professions, sound technicians, production managers, editors, and other postproduction roles. The majority of survey respondents were mid-career professionals, although this profile had not been targeted specifically.

Interviews

To capture the nuance of the issues around AI and its use in live action production, from our survey participants we invited 20 to interview. These interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and allowed participants to expand on the answers they had given in the survey. They provided a very detailed picture of professionals' experiences with AI tools: we asked for a detailed account of what AI tools they used, the process of choosing certain tools over others; interviewees described how they had learned to engage with those tools and how this experience had shaped their attitude to AI and its usefulness. As with the survey, we finished by asking our interviewees to look forward and share what interventions they would most like to see.

The anonymised transcripts of the interviews, as well as survey results, are available in the University of Reading's Research Repository.

Findings from our research

FINDING ONE:

The adoption of AI tools is not universal

Our research has found evidence to contradict the assumption by some commentators that AI 'is reshaping every aspect of the film industry'[1]. Both the survey and the follow up interviews revealed a mixed picture of AI use. We asked whether respondents used AI tools in their professional work. The most notable result was that, at the time of our survey, most respondents were **not** frequent users of AI tools.

- Sixty-five per cent of respondents either 'rarely' or 'never use AI tools'.
- For only 14% of film workers that we surveyed, AI is used 'always' or 'frequently'.

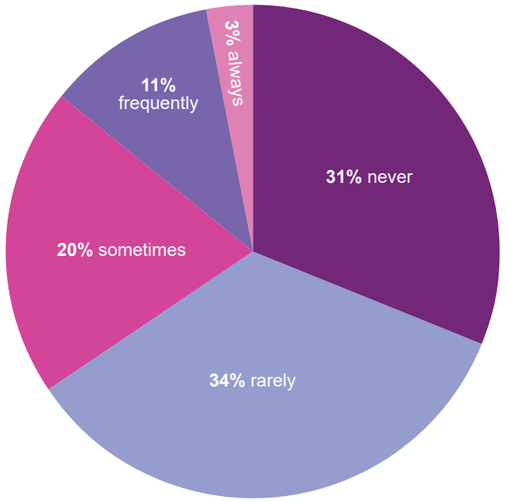

Figure 1: Do you use AI tools as part of your role?
31% never use AI tools; 34% do so rarely;
20% sometimes; 11% frequently;
3% always use AI tools in their work.

This finding is a snapshot, and the figures may change as the broader social use of AI develops (Ofcom reports that UK adults' use of chatbots increased from 31% to 54% between 2024 and 2026).

Our research has identified several key factors that determine the limitations of AI use by many film and television professionals, and these are detailed in the following findings.

[1] Tsiavos, V and Kitsios, F. 2025. 'The digital transformation of the film industry: How Artificial Intelligence is changing the seventh art.' Telecommunications Policy 49, p6

FINDING TWO:

AI adoption is highly varied by department

Our research reveals that existing AI tools have no applicability for several departments and a wide range of roles in live action film and TV production. These areas of work largely involve physical tasks on a film set, for example: camera, sound recording, costume assistant, and makeup. A property master commented to us, "In the props department there isn't any need at the moment to use AI", and a motion control operator told us that "it doesn't really impact on anybody around me". AI is limited to the area of digital operations, so all human-embodied, non-digital tasks are outside its potential for intervention. As a result, ten per cent of our survey respondents believed that AI skills were not applicable to them at all:

> "Many of the skills required to do my job are physical responses based on careful observation of the audio. AI is currently unable to replicate this. While many aspects of post-production sound can be effectively automated with AI, the initial capture of audio requires a physical and reactive element that has not yet been developed in AI." **(Sound mixer)**

> "There is as yet very little integration of AI with professional cameras and camera accessories." **(1st AC)**

Financial controllers and production accountants described how the nature of their work, handling large amounts of confidential financial data, means there have always been greater restrictions on the software that can used: this may influence our survey's finding that these professions have not yet begun to integrate AI tools. However, this sector showed enthusiasm for the potential of AI tools. A production accountant told us,

> "I wish to use them [AI tools] - but there is a nervousness by Production Companies to allow it. It is a must for the future for routine tasks' automation."

In contrast, our survey found routine use of AI tools by many workers in particular departments. **Art department** professionals were among the most frequent users of AI:

> "I use AI tools selectively where they offer clear practical value, mainly in early-stage ideation, reference generation, rapid testing of visual directions, research support, and communication." **(Art director)**

> "I use it for quickly generating content that might be difficult to find in an image search. I then import it into Photoshop and use it as if were a [stock] photo in a piece of concept art." **(Storyboard and concept artist)**

> "I use it for generating copy and answering questions. Basically, it saves a huge amount of time." **(Graphic designer)**

Many editors who responded to our survey were resistant to AI, but across **postproduction** there were many instances of AI use:

> "It's great for temp work, whether that be sound, creating stems from music, graphics placeholders etc. Nothing in my dept is really final, so the risks associated with it being in the final product are minimised. It gets us closer to a version of whatever we have in our heads, quicker." **(Assistant editor)**

Postproduction software providers have integrated AI tools into their suites, including Avid's Scriptsync and Phrasefind, and new tools within Adobe software and DaVinci Resolve. This means that those editors and post-production professionals using these platforms have adopted AI tools into their workflow.

Many professionals in **production office roles** have adapted their work pattern to use AI tools:

> "I most often use AI tools to help when I need to work fast. Whether that is getting a quick answer to a query that I don't have time to search Google for, helping when writing a Risk Assessment, or helping me to draft an email." **(Production manager)**

> "It [AI] is an integrated part of our workflow as well as our production pipeline." **(Production executive)**

FINDING THREE:

The primary uses of AI among screen professionals are not specialised tasks

Our survey enabled respondents to share what AI tools they use, if any. The use of general tools such as Large Language Models (LLMs) far outstripped the use of more specialised, role specific tools.

There were 52 mentions of general tools in the survey responses as opposed to 22 mentions of more specialised tools. Of the former, ChatGPT was the most popular with 33 mentions among results, followed by 22 mentions of Claude and 10 mentions of Gemini.

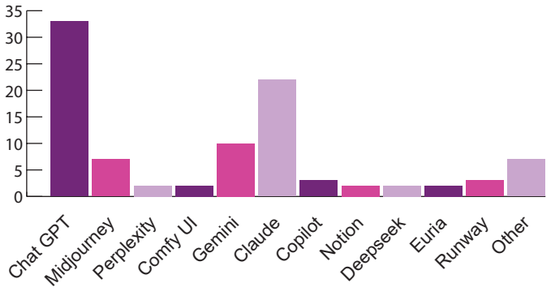

Figure 2: Use of AI tools among survey respondents.

Chat GPT - 33, Midjourney - 7, Perplexity - 2, Comfy UI - 2, Gemini - 10, Claude - 22, Copilot - 3, Notion - 2, Deepseek - 2, Euria - 2, Runway - 3, Other - 7.

Due to their nature, the general tools, such as ChatGPT, are frequently used to complete simpler tasks: for instance, a production manager uses ChatGPT "to help with mundane tasks, like alphabetizing lists". Frequently, respondents and interviewees talked about using chatbots for research (using the tool as a search engine), and as a sounding board.

> "Claude tends to be the one of use. So for example, I've been writing some things recently and it's been useful for research." **(Assistant director)**

> "I have occasionally used Gemini or Aria for research purposes to quickly get the information I need or to summarise things like medical articles that I need to understand for work. I also use Google Lens a lot to find matching products if we have to replicate/ replace something." **(Art department assistant)**

Survey respondents described using chatbots informally in concept development: a production worker noted that they subscribe to ChatGPT and "use the 'discussion' tool regularly to chat through ideas."

Our research finds that the use of film industry-specific AI tools is much rarer than the use of general purpose LLMs and chatbots. Of the specific tools, there were 13 survey mentions of Adobe tools, and various AI tools built into other pre-existing software packages. A postproduction worker commented that "Currently the ML and Generative AI specific tools being used the most are Runway ML and ComyUI" and an assistant editor has used "Elevenlabs for temp ADR, vocal removers for music, some generators for screen graphics for temp VFX". Other survey respondents mentioned the use of the 'storyboarder.ai' online tool, 'Filmustage' preproduction assistant; a small number cite creative suites by pollo.ai and pika.

FINDING FOUR:

Film and TV workers are already harnessing AI's efficiencies but do not want it to play a role in creative work

Many survey respondents report that they find AI tools very beneficial in increasing the efficiency of their work in early stages.

> "An art assistant appreciated an AI tool that "can speed up more fiddly but less important parts of my job."

> "An editor described "being able to sort through very complex sets of files and put them into a useful order I can then creatively work with."

> "A colourist uses AI tools for the "removal of drudgery - long and tedious tasks almost eliminated."

However, there was near-unanimous agreement that AI should not encroach on human creativity.

> "It does some things quicker and better than I could but I pick non creative tasks. Creative tasks I never use it for unless it's just a concept." **(Graphic designer)**

> "I work in a creative industry and value creativity, so I'm really keen to develop my own talents rather than rely on AI." **(Multiskiller)**

We also heard some very forceful opposition in this regard: a director of photography declared that "Generative AI is a plagiarism engine".

FINDING FIVE:

Concerns among professionals about AI influence their decisions on the use of AI tools

Our survey has found that a large proportion of film and television workers have a principled objection to AI, which guides their decision not to use the technology. This varies in intensity, from the editor who told us, "I have zero interest in engaging with this poison in any way", to less focused anxieties.

Concerns were expressed by a broad spectrum, from those who were AI users, to those who are curious about AI tools, and those who do not use AI tools at all. The reasons for their concerns fall into three categories:

1. Ethical concerns
2. Ideological concerns.
3. Employment concerns.

Questions of what data AI tools are trained upon, and what happens to the data that a user inputs, were common across our participants. A set designer explained that they "avoid it where reliability, provenance, copyright, or creative specificity are too uncertain." A production accountant said that "security of IP" was their main obstacle to using AI tools.

The environmental impact of AI, in the form of high energy and water usage, was also noted:

> "AI is environmentally damaging, wasting tonnes of drinking water and using enough electricity to warm the planet at a rate the planet can't sustain." **(Videographer)**

A big majority of those we surveyed expressed concern at how AI will soon impact the nature of work in film and television. Seventy-one per cent of our survey respondents were 'very concerned' or 'somewhat concerned' about the impact of AI on their own professional role.

> "My main concerns are job displacement, downward pressure on rates, devaluation of specialist craft skills, and the use of AI by decision-makers who may not understand the limitations of the tools or the value of the people they are replacing." **(Art director)**

However, some respondents expressed a positive sense of how AI could be used in film and TV production:

> "AI should be used to automate mundane or difficult processes to increase efficiency or accuracy in important areas." **(Sound mixer)**

> "It could be great if AI did the boring tech admin, and production companies actually trained up editors. That could be a great thing." **(Film editor)**

> "I'm looking forward to AI being used as a tool to HELP the accounts department, but my main concern is that it is so fast moving that we will get left behind and struggle. What I would like to happen is for AI to help with data processing so we can save human time, to shorten our workday across the team, rather than lose a head from the team." **(Production accountant)**

FINDING SIX:

AI skills are not widespread, but the desire for AI skills training is uneven

Our research finds that only 32% of our respondents believe that they are skilled in using AI tools. More than half, 51%, lack confidence in using AI tools, saying they feel that they only partially have the required skills, or not at all.

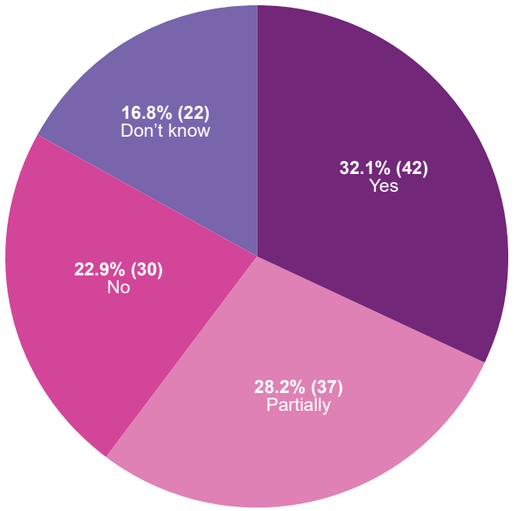

Figure 3: Survey question, 'Do you have the required skills to use AI tools?

Yes - 42 respondents; Partially - 37 respondents;
No - 30 respondents; Don't know - 22 respondents.

This indicates a major gap in skills provision in the film and television industry, a fact illustrated by the next question that we asked: 'Where have you found AI training in the past?' We found that a significant majority, 65%, had received no training at all.

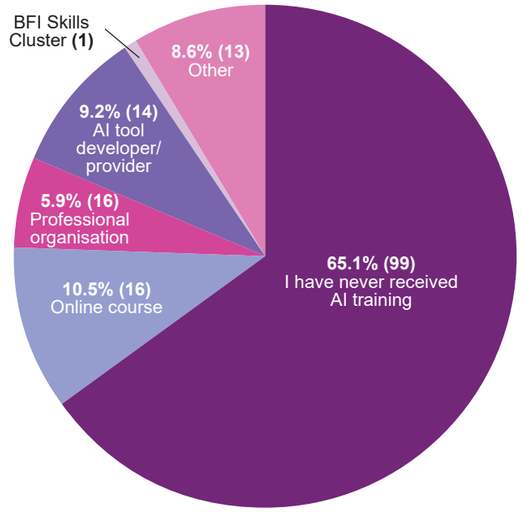

Figure 4: Sources of current AI training.

I have never had AI training - 99 respondents;
Online course - 16 respondents;
Professional organisation - 9 respondents;
AI tool developer/provider - 14 respondents;
BFI Skills Cluster - 1 respondent;
Other - 13 respondents.

We found that 79% of film and TV production workers are unsatisfied with the level of AI skills training available to them. For Screen Berkshire and the BFI funded Skills Clusters, this finding points to a significant new training requirement that requires a swift response.

Yet surprisingly, when we asked if survey respondents wanted AI skills training, we found an almost even split between those who are eager for more training about AI, 51%, and those who do not want AI training, 49%.

This relative lack of interest in AI skills training appeared to contradict the responses to our previous question. However, when we closely examined the data a correlation emerged between those who did not want AI training and three subgroups:

- those who have found no use for AI in their own professional role in film production;
- those who feel that they already have the requisite skills to use AI tools;
- those who are ethically opposed to AI.

Our prediction is that the slight majority who want AI training will grow over time, as more AI tools emerge that have been developed for specific departments of film and TV production. This finding leads us to Recommendations One and Two, below, on the design and targeting of new AI skills courses.

FINDING SEVEN:

There is a desire for training focused on best practice in the use of AI tools

Employees in film production expressed to us their need for “clear guidelines of what’s appropriate” in relation to the use of AI tools. This comment was from a graphic designer and was echoed multiple times in our survey: a props trainee specified that they wanted courses focused on “when it is appropriate to use [AI], ethical concerns, and how to make the most of it when it is appropriate to do so.”

Several participants indicated that deeper knowledge would allow them to make better informed decisions on AI tool use and thus work more effectively and ethically at the same time. They want to work with AI tools that match the legal and ethical standards or their creative practice.

> “I would like more future-facing training, so: what are the programmes and resources that have just come on the market and how they can help me in my role? ... It would also be useful to understand copyright when a production uses music or imagery from an AI source.” **(Script editor)**

Generally, there was very little appetite for the use of general AI tools for creative tasks, even from more enthusiastic users of AI tools:

> “AI can be useful for certain tasks, like reasoning, and helping to develop ideas but when it comes to art, it feels cold.” **(Editor)**

> “It does some things quicker and better than I could, but I pick noncreative tasks. Creative tasks I never use it for unless it’s just a concept.” **(Graphic designer)**

Ethical and professional guidance on issues around AI is severely lacking in the UK film and television industry. This leaves workers very dissatisfied with the guidance and support that they are receiving. We asked respondents in our survey, ‘Are you satisfied with the level of ethical and professional guidance you are receiving from your union, professional organisation or BFI Skills Cluster?’ A significant majority, 61%, say they have never received any guidance at all.

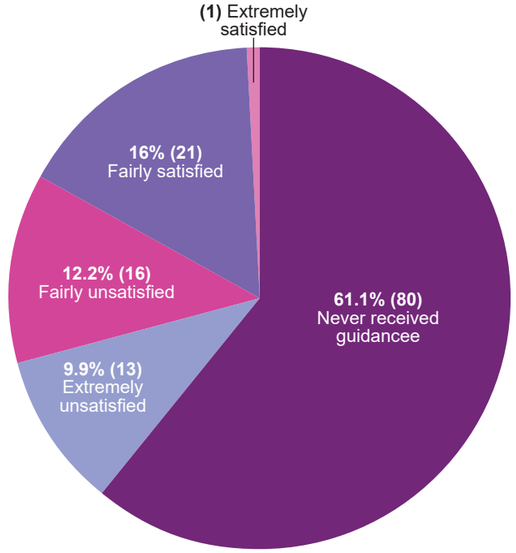

Figure 5: Satisfaction with current ethical guidance on AI.

- Never received guidance - 80 respondents;
- Extremely unsafisfied - 13 respondents;
- Fairly unsatisfied - 16 respondents;
- Fairly satisfied - 21 respondents;
- Extremely satisfied - 1 respondent.

Recommendations

Our recommendations focus on how the Screen Berkshire skills cluster, as well as other film and television skills training providers in the UK, should develop a first wave of AI skills provision for the sector.

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Targeted training for specific departments

The training offered should be targeted by department, as the current use of AI tools is concentrated in specific creative and professional roles in live action film and TV production. The professionals most enthusiastic for AI training and skills development work in varied roles in these departments:

- Art
- Postproduction
- Assistant Directing
- Production

Only small numbers working in sound recording, script development, and camera departments expressed interest in AI skills training.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Concerns among professionals about AI are relevant to training design

AI remains an emotive debate in this industry and any skills provision should be carefully developed so as not to widen that divide or flatten the important, ongoing conversations around AI use in film and TV production. Our respondents’ concerns focused on AI and creativity: they were interested in knowing how AI tools can be utilised efficiently and effectively, without negatively impacting the creative process.

The concerns of film and TV workers should be incorporated into the design of new training programmes. We found demand for course content that helps navigate these issues:

Ethics guidance

Many of our interviewees and survey respondents felt a strong need for more knowledge to help navigate the ethical complexities of AI in the workplace.

Law

Training on navigating the unique legal requirements of AI use was widely requested. Understanding of the legal landscape around AI will support guidance on the most appropriate tools to use in specific roles and departments.

Copyright

Related to the broader legal issues, many participants expressed confusion over whether the use of AI would lead to a loss of copyright or authorship over material. Many also considered this to be an issue of personal morality. Course content should help them manage these issues.

> “When you use AI ... you have no idea who you’re sharing it with. Copyright’s gone... we just don’t know. And it’s for sure going to be somewhere in a rack of servers somewhere, copies of everything. And that could be profoundly immoral.” **(Script professional)**

Sustainability

A number of participants wished for more information about sustainability issues and the use of AI tools. One example is a graphic designer who would like training in,

> “How to use in an ‘ethical’ way in my design work, with a climate perspective. Who to avoid / use... who are the worst players in the AI game in terms of using fossil fuels and funding war.”

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

The BFI should lead on the design and delivery of AI training programmes.

We asked participants who they would trust to deliver AI training: the BFI was widely seen as the best body to lead the design, regulation and delivery of AI skills training.

The BFI should take a lead role in developing and delivering AI training, drawing on its network of skills clusters. The role of higher education partners in the skills clusters is a significant opportunity in supporting the design of AI training programmes.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

Training should be online or hybrid in its delivery.

We asked those survey respondents who would like to receive AI skills training about how this should be delivered: 48% prefer to attend an online-only course; 40% would like hybrid training; and only 12% choose in-person training.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE:

Ongoing reviews of AI use in live action Film and TV Production

To keep skills training relevant, we propose that there are systematic and ongoing reviews of AI tool use in live action film and TV production. Snapshot data will help to track the evolution of AI use across the sector as a whole and by department.

Uncertainty in the sector over AI is coupled with a pervasive sense that things are moving quickly. Regular audits on AI tool use, like our survey, will allow training providers to keep their offerings up-to-date and enable the quick development of more targeted training in AI as uptake increases in departments where it is currently low, due to new AI tools becoming available. This will ensure that resources are not spent unnecessarily and that the training provided at any given time will be of a high standard and evidence based. Confidence in AI skills training programmes will only be maintained if they are responsive to the developing workplace realities of film and TV workers.

A realistic, dynamic map of AI use will cut through unhelpful narratives, such as its inevitability and the claim that it will be transformative across all aspects of the film and television industry. Future planning should acknowledge and support those who remain committed to not using AI, for whatever reason.

It is vital that any ongoing research maintains a granular focus, differentiating by department and role so as not to flatten any data collected.

RECOMMENDATION SIX:

Clearer signposting of the AI training and support available to professionals

A common challenge for those participants who were eager to access AI training and skills development was not knowing where to look, and not knowing who is best placed to offer guidance. Twenty-three per cent of our survey respondents did not know that they live in an area covered by a BFI skills' cluster.

Following the design of new AI skills training courses, there should be increased signposting of major support networks such as the BFI skills clusters and the AI training provision available to working screen professionals.

Acknowledgments

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Use of Generative AI

AI was not used in the research, drafting or design of this report.

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Dr Sarah Byrne

Dr Sarah Byrne completed her PhD at the University of Reading in the summer of 2024. Her research interests include participatory modes of engagement, the soft boundaries in between media and qualitative research in the creative industries.

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