

Forward: Special Issue - Future of AI in Arts and Humanities Education

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The advent of this special issue marks a pivotal transition from speculative discourse to applied research, as institutions, educators, and scholars now grapple directly with the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence within arts and humanities curricula. Conceived in the context of a digital symposium that prioritized practical integration over mere theoretical reflection, this volume seeks to capture the breadth and depth of experimentation and evidence now emerging as educators move beyond conjecture to cultivate methodologies, frameworks, and classroom strategies that foreground human agency and ethical stewardship in an age of rapid technological acceleration.

The symposium, serving as the impetus for this collection, convened a diverse array of contributors united by the conviction that the time for theoretical anticipation of the impact this technology has passed; practitioners must now contend with its concrete influence on pedagogy, research, authorship, and cultural heritage. Accordingly, the articles within this issue coalesce around four interrelated thematic constellations: (1) authorial agency and writing pedagogy in the era of AI; (2) digital conservation, cultural heritage, and ethical innovation; (3) creative practice and critical making within generative art and design; and (4) inclusive education, open pedagogy, and global curricular transformation.

The first thematic grouping interrogates the evolving dynamics of authorship, voice, and curation in AI-assisted composition. The contribution of Dr. Plate illustrates a praxis-driven methodology, repositioning students as curators who synthesize quotation glosses and stylistic personas to assert agency in partnership with automated text generators. This dual curation approach, grounded in classical rhetoric and contemporary language model affordances, provides actionable pathways for students to maintain control over both content and style, thus reframing the human-AI relationship from one of alienation to authentic collaboration. The significance of such work lies not only in its ability to restore ownership to writers but also in its capacity to foster metacognitive awareness and adaptability—competencies indispensable in a world where communicative agility and reflective practice are paramount.

A second thematic arc foregrounds the integration of artificial intelligence within cultural heritage preservation and humanities research. The analysis of Ghaith demonstrates how machine learning, digital twinning, and natural language processing can improve documentation, access, and restoration, while also unflinchingly confronting the ethical quandaries of algorithmic bias, synthetic restoration, and cultural representation. The practical value of these interventions emerges through case studies of interdisciplinary collaboration, which model best practices and advocate for open-source democratization of heritage technologies. Recommendations within this cluster emphasize that sustainable, inclusive, and ethical

frameworks must accompany technical innovation—ensuring that AI functions as an augmentative force, not a disruptive agent, and that humanistic interpretation retains its primacy.

A third constellation, dedicated to creative practice and art/design education, addresses the lived realities of integrating generative AI within studio pedagogy. The examination on the part of Prof. Blum of neural filters, generative fill, and non-destructive workflows in Photoshop models an instructional approach that balances technical fluency, creative agency, and legal-ethical discernment. By positioning students as editors, curators, and responsible co-authors of algorithmically mediated imagery, such pedagogical frameworks respond directly to the shifting legal landscape and the imperatives of copyright, originality, and artistic authorship. The findings underscore the necessity of iterative, critical engagement with generative tools, cultivating a culture wherein technological collaboration becomes a springboard for creative confidence, ethical reflection, and future-readiness in rapidly evolving cultural industries.

The final group of articles interrogates the intersection of inclusivity, open pedagogy, and global curricular transformation. Contributions in this section range from explorations of the capacity of AI to democratize access and personalize learning pathways in art history classrooms, to qualitative studies on open pedagogy as a vehicle for building AI literacy and student agency in online graduate education. These works illustrate that the future of humanities education is not found in defensive retrenchment but in radical openness: co-creation of knowledge, participatory design, and sustainable instructional models that prepare learners for digital citizenship and collaborative innovation. Alade Ibiwumi Abiodun’s analysis of AI and curricular transformation in Africa, in particular, illuminates the urgency of stakeholder training, strategic policy, and adaptive frameworks, as educational systems worldwide seek to balance technological advancement with contextual relevance and sustainable development.

The collective significance of these contributions cannot be overstated. Each article foregrounds the practical strategies, ethical considerations, and collaborative mindsets now necessary to steward integration into the arts and humanities. The recommendations advanced—ranging from the systematic development of authorial voice and style prompting, to the establishment of ethical frameworks for digital heritage, and the expansion of AI literacy and open pedagogy—provide a scaffold for educators, administrators, and policy-makers seeking to move from inertia to intentionality.

In closing, the field stands at an inflection point. The humanities, long the crucible of critical and creative thinking, empathy, teamwork, and nuanced communication, now find these “power skills” elevated as the most sought after in the workforce—a reality amplified, not diminished, by the rise of intelligent systems. Rather than capitulating to fear or adopting a posture of passive resistance, scholars and educators are called to lead: to position AI not as an existential threat but as a catalyst for renewed human-centered, ethical, and creative flourishing. The charge to the profession is clear. Let us move decisively beyond inertia; let us reimagine arts and humanities education as the vanguard for preparing students—indeed, global citizens—for a future where

technological and humanistic intelligence are inextricably intertwined, and where the enduring values of the humanities shape, inform, and ultimately humanize the intelligent systems we now co-create.