



The Digital Conference



The Digital Conference 2026 at King's College London
DIGITAL HUMANITIES TODAY: CRITICAL INQUIRY WITH AND
ABOUT THE DIGITAL

Programme
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Welcome to the Conference

Hello everyone!

On behalf of the Host Committee and the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London, we wish you a very warm welcome!

From the 23rd to 26th June 2026, we will host an international conference exploring the evolving role of Digital Humanities in a world increasingly shaped by digital technologies. Coinciding with the **25th anniversary of Centre for Computing Humanities** officially becoming a department of King's College London, and **15th anniversary of being renamed as Department of Digital Humanities** in 2011, we welcome scholars from around the world to critically reflect on what 'digital' entails in today's world. We will further celebrate the **10th anniversary of King's Digital Lab**.

With over 100 sessions and 3 plenary sessions, scholars and audience from around the world will discuss, debate and reflect on everything digital, giving us a snapshot of 'Digital Humanities Today'.

Welcome, To The Digital Conference 2026!

Conference Organisation Committee: Chloé Locatelli, Güneş Tavmen, Jamie Woodcock and Orçun Can

www.kcldigitalconference.com



The Digital Conference



Conference Host Committee:

Orçun Can is a writer and lecturer in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. His research and teaching focus on the intersections of digital storytelling, media theory, and the evolving cultures of online platforms.

Chloé Locatelli is a Lecturer and Early Career Research Fellow in Digital Media and Culture at King's College London, DDH. Her research explores the intersections of sex work and digital constructions of femininity in heterosexual men's sextech. She has worked collaboratively with London & Manchester Science Museum, The University of Tokyo, The Digital Futures Institute and other partners.

Güneş Tavmen is a Lecturer in Digital Infrastructures in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. Previously, she published on the relation between digital data, urban infrastructure and smart city planning. Her current research sits at the intersection of digital urbanism, climate justice, and critical data studies.

Jamie Woodcock is a senior lecturer in digital economy and chair of the KCL UCU branch. He is on the editorial board of Historical Materialism and Notes from Below.

Special Thanks:

We would like to extend special thanks to the following people and departments for their support:

Zara Asif

Rebecca Dean

Jack Denne

Mark Hedges

Barbara McGillivray

Kirsten Somers

Thanks to all the abstract reviewers who were instrumental in bringing together such an amazing collection of presentations and panels.

Financial assistance for the conference was provided by the Department of Digital Humanities, King's Digital Lab and Digital Futures Institute and KCL Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Further thanks to King's Venues for accommodating the conference and for their ongoing support in the logistics of it.

We are proud to have offered travel bursaries and conference fee waivers to some of our attendees. These have been sponsored by our colleagues from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Special mention must be made for Özgür Şahal for hosting the conference website.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Travelling to the Conference

Venue address

Bush House
King's College London
Strand
London WC2B 4BG

Click [here](#) for map location.

Airports

For international and domestic flights, London is served by [Heathrow](#) (LHR), [Gatwick](#) (LGW), [Stansted](#) (STN), [City](#) (LCY) and [Luton](#) (LTN) airports. Each acts as the destination for different routes and carriers, and so choosing the most convenient depends on your point of embarkation.

From the airport, for travel into central London, the following options are available:

- **LHR** [Heathrow Express](#) to Paddington rail and tube station; or, take the Piccadilly tube line
- **LGW** [Gatwick Express](#) to Victoria rail and tube station
- **STN** [Stanstead Express](#) to Liverpool Street rail and tube station
- **LCY** Docklands Light Railway ([DLR](#)) links to tube and rail stations
- **LTN** take shuttle bus to Luton Airport Parkway and then any rail services to St. Pancras International, Farringdon, City Thameslink, or Blackfriars

Local Public Transport

The conference venue is well served by local public transport options. To plan journeys, visit Transport for London (TfL). Additionally, [Citymapper](#) provides a helpful app for navigating London.

Tube - nearest underground stations:

[Temple](#) (Circle Line, District Line)

[Holborn](#) (Central Line, Piccadilly Line)

[Charing Cross](#) (Bakerloo Line, Northern Line)

Buses – any services stopping within the [Aldwych](#) or [Strand](#) areas will place you close to the conference venue.

Rail - nearest overground stations:

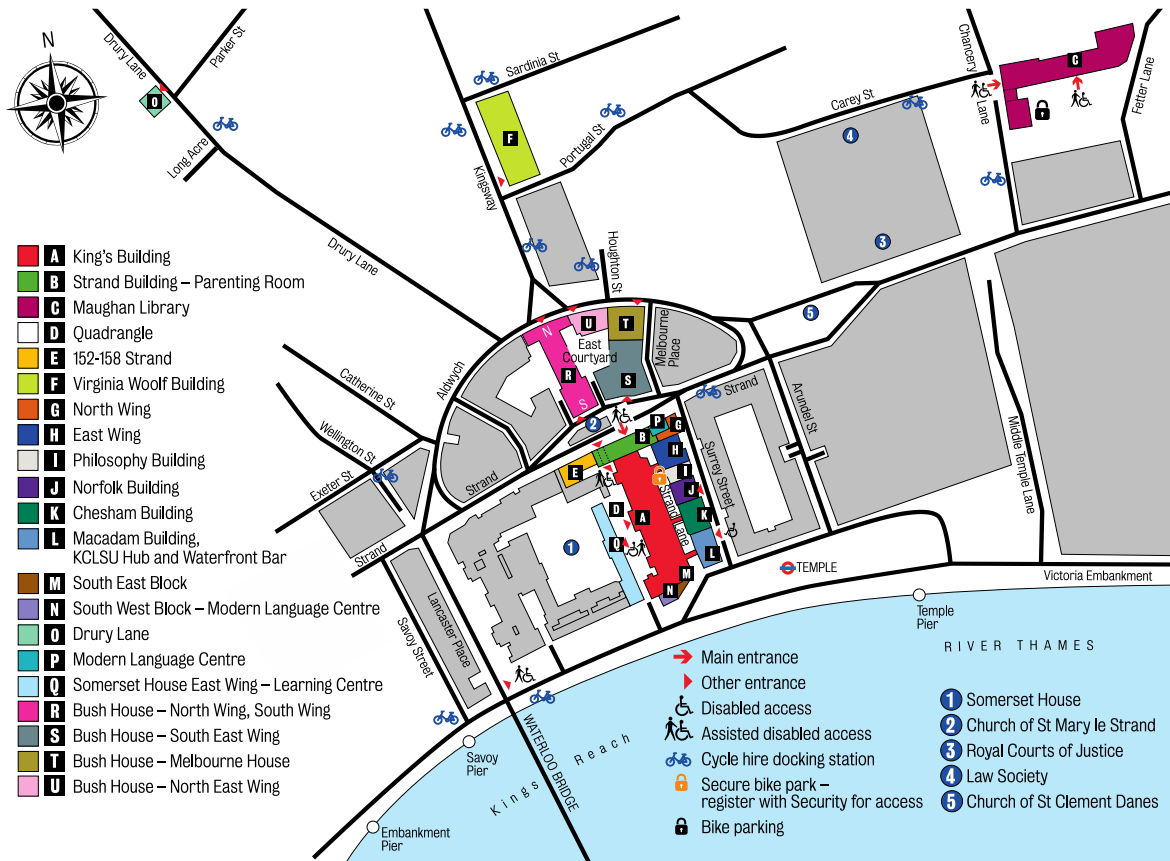
- [Blackfriars](#)
- [Charing Cross](#)
- [Waterloo](#)
- [Waterloo East](#)

Accommodation

Accommodation is not provided by the conference. Hotels and apartments close to King's can be expensive and during June demand may be high. For the best deals, we recommend booking well in advance using the standard search sites: [AirBnB](#), [Booking.com](#), [Expedia](#), [Hotels.com](#), [Kayak](#), [Trivago](#), etc.

Arriving at the Venue

Bush House, the conference venue, has multiple wings and entrances. When arriving at the conference, make sure to therefore enter via the **South Wing** entrance, close to the position marked '2' on the map. Here you'll enter the **Bush House Arcade** where you'll find the registration desk.



The building and street entrance look like this:



Registration

Entering the South Wing, the registration desk is located in the Arcade space on the ground floor.

Registration is open at the following times **only**:

- 9.00-17.00hrs Tuesday 23 June
- 09.00-11.30hrs Wednesday 24 June
- 09.00-09.30hrs Thursday 25 June
- 09.00-09.30hrs Friday 26 June

Security

Very Important: Entrance to Bush House is security controlled. To access the conference, it is necessary to collect your delegate badge from the registration desk and show this at the security barriers. All subsequent entrance to the conference will require presentation of your delegate badge, and so it is **essential** you keep this with you at all times.

Getting Online

WiFi access on the King's campus is available through [eduroam](#) and [The Cloud](#).

Food and Drink

Free water, coffee, and tea will be available during coffee breaks and at the start of each day in **Bush House Arcade**. Free lunch is provided every day during the designated lunch break in **Bush House 8th Floor**.

For breakfast, dinner or alternative lunch arrangements, the venue is in central London and there are many cafes and restaurants in walking distance serving a variety of cuisines.

Navigating the Venue and Accessibility

Bush House (BH) can be a complex building to find your way around.

For the conference we are using rooms spread across three wings:

- South Wing (S)
- South East Wing (SE)
- North East Wing (NE)

Entrance to each is step free.

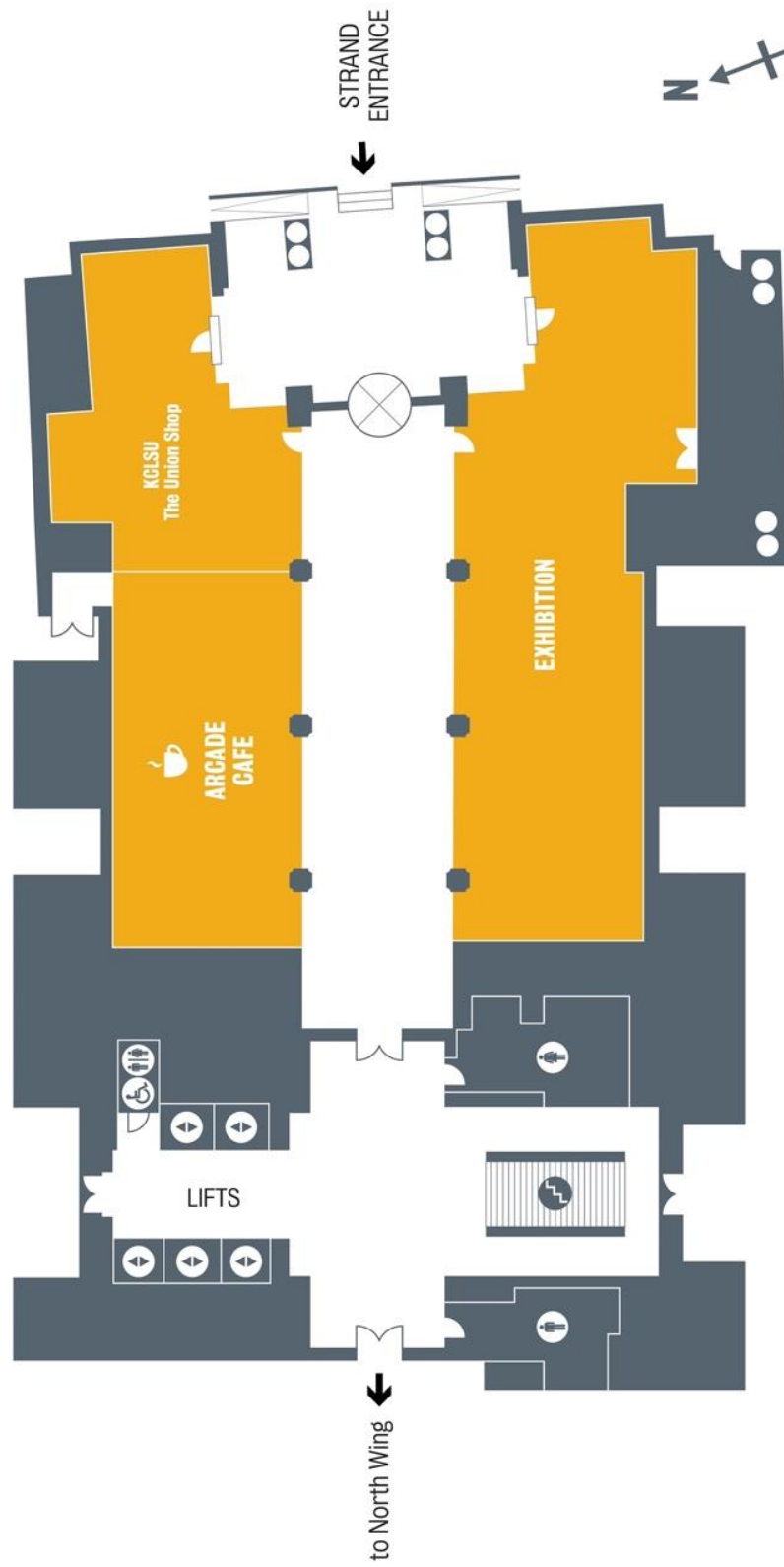
In the conference programme, you'll see rooms identified by name or a code (e.g. BH(S) 1.01 for room 1.01 in the Bush House South Wing). Rooms are spread across multiple floors but all can be accessed via lifts in the relevant wings.

For each room, details of accessibility arrangements are available on [AccessAble](#).

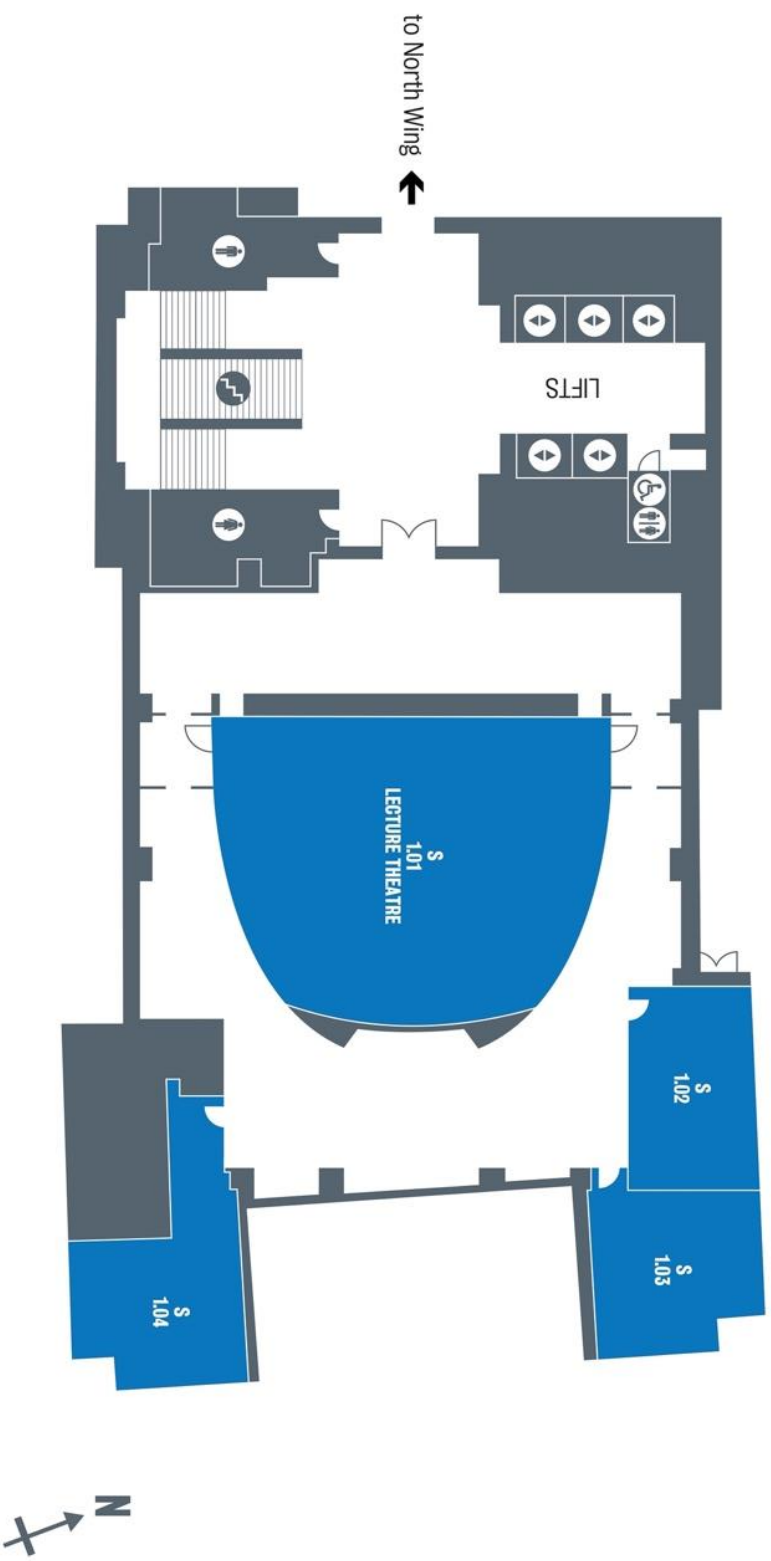
To notify us of any accessibility requirements, please contact: thedigitalconference@kcl.ac.uk

Floorplans

Bush House - South Wing Ground Floor



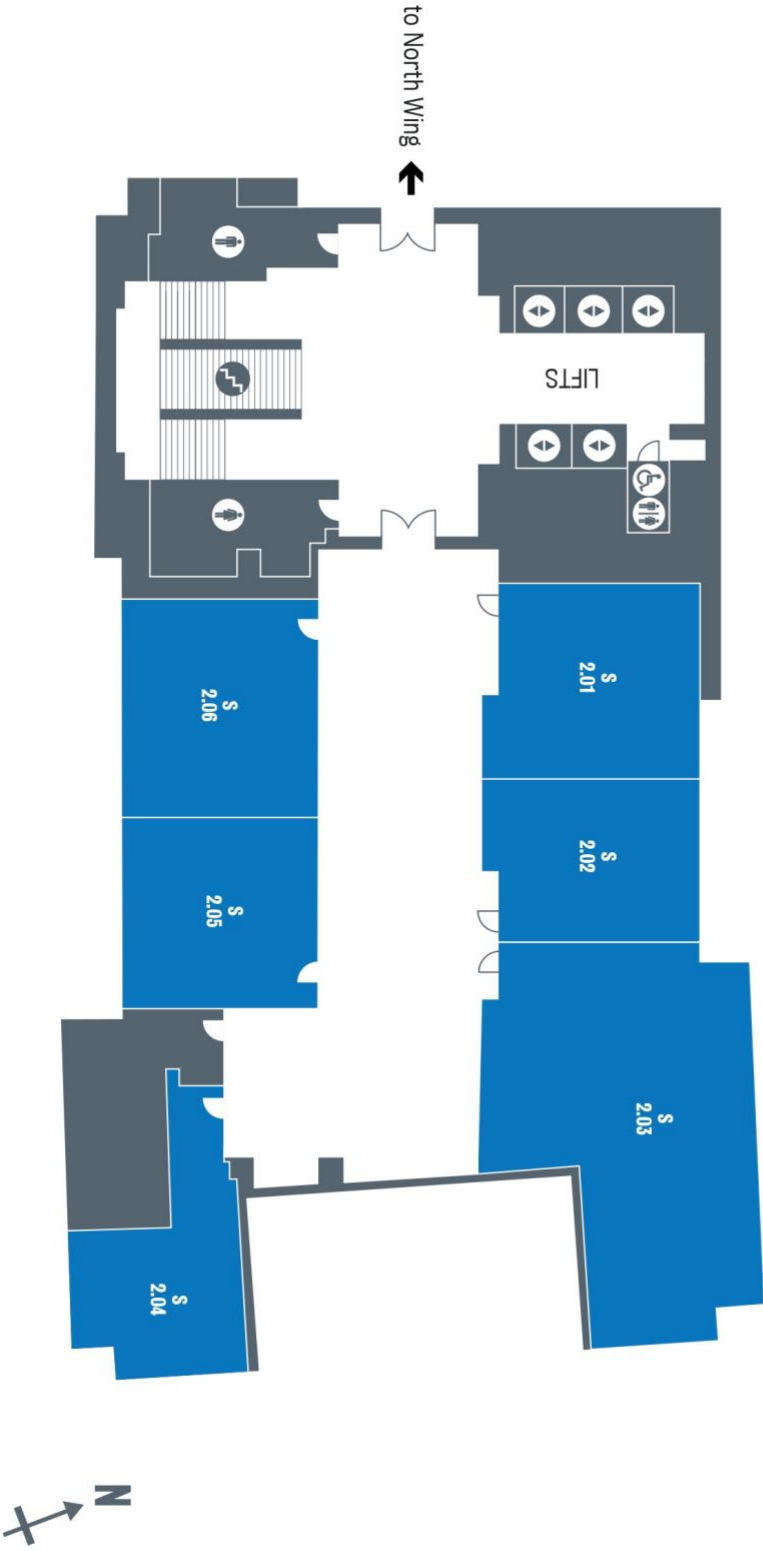
Bush House - South Wing
First Floor



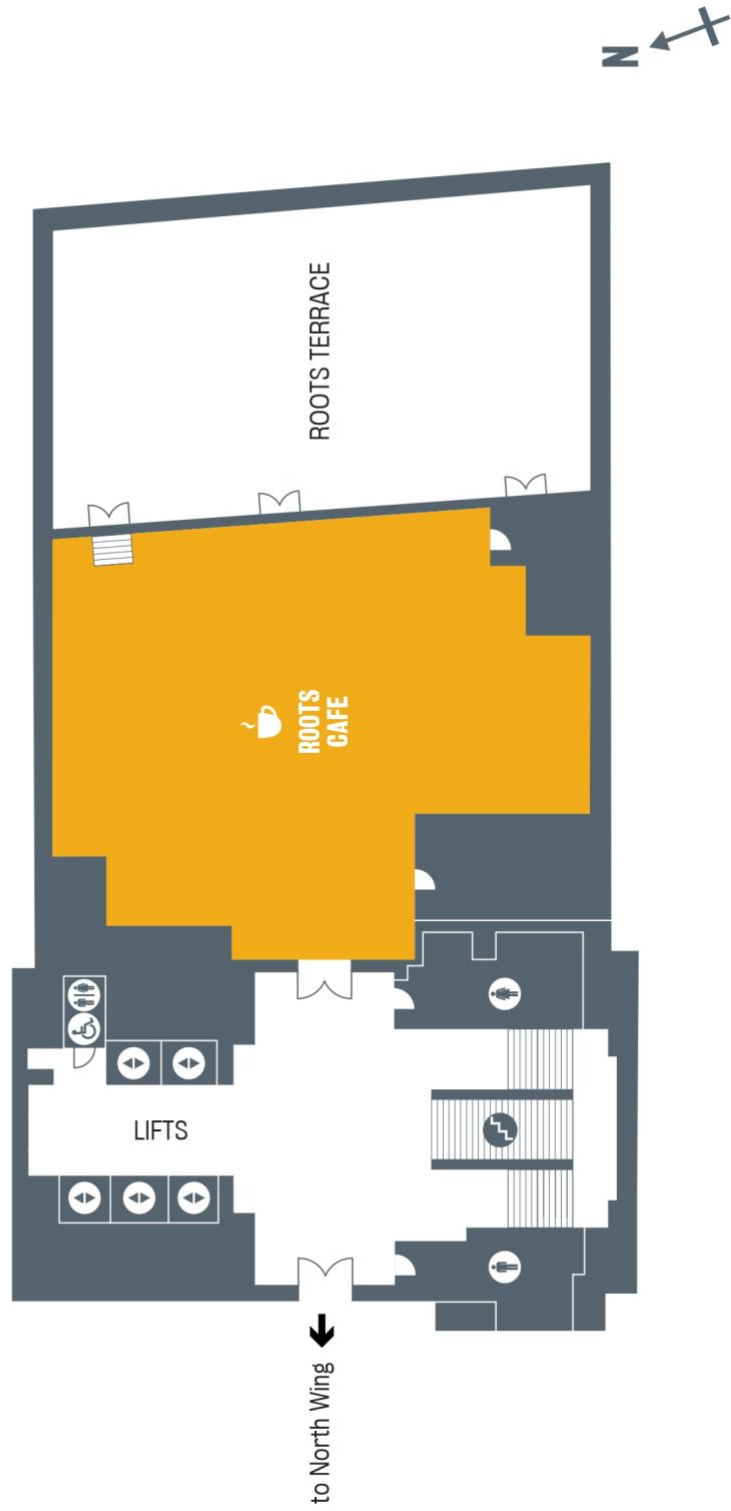
Bush House - South Wing Second Floor



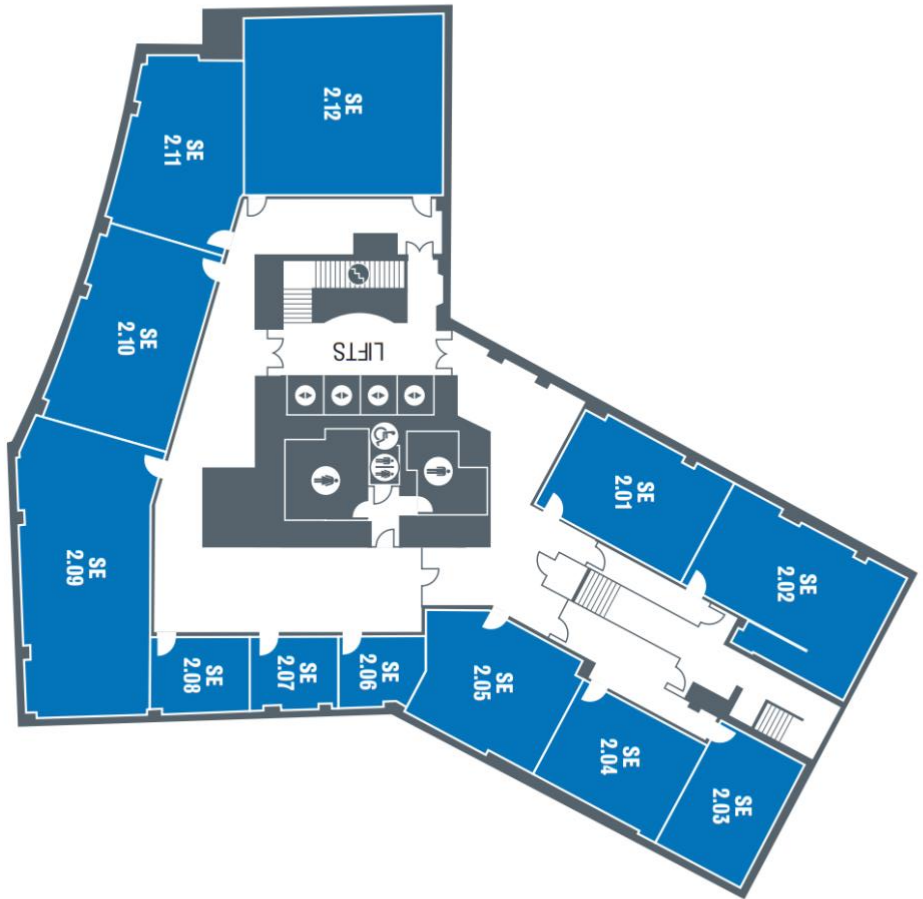
Bush House - South Wing
Second Floor



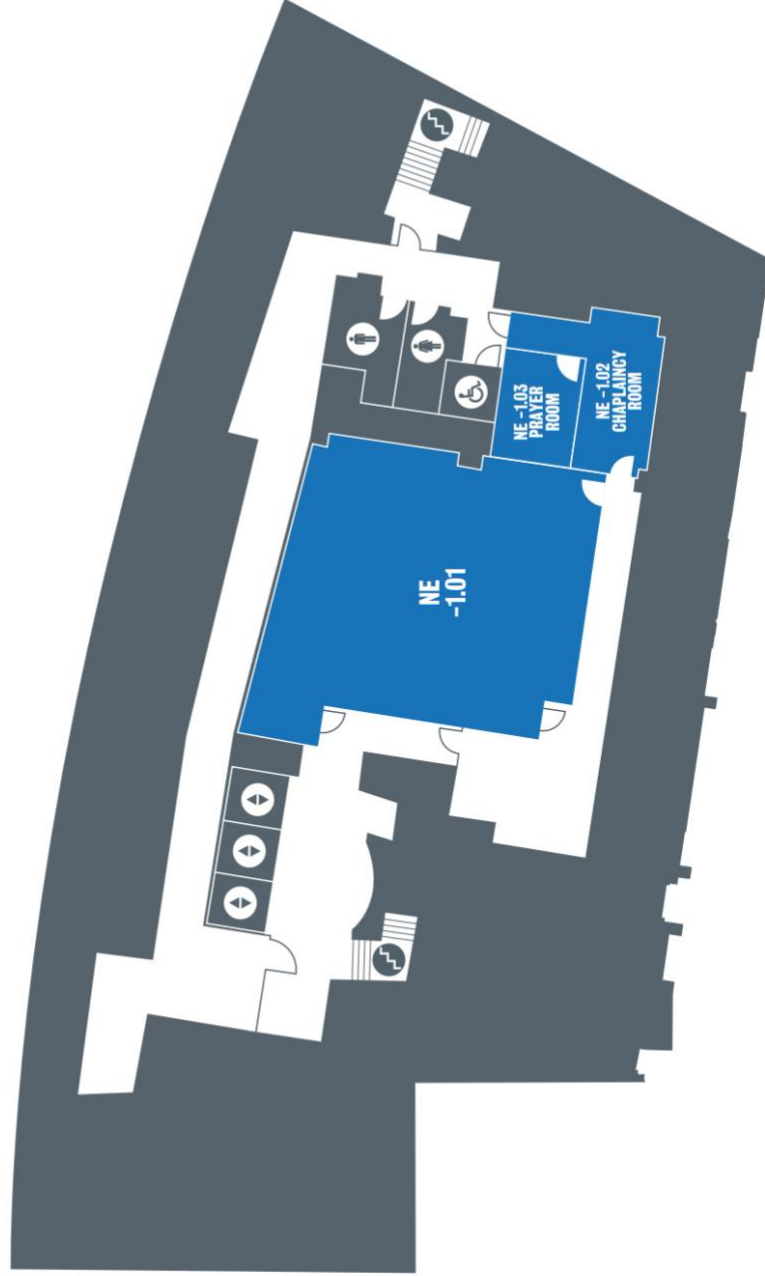
Bush House - South Wing
Eighth Floor



Bush House - South East Wing
Second Floor



Bush House - North East Wing
Lower Ground Floor



Local Leisure and Cultural Life

Located in central London, the venue is well placed for accessing many of London's leisure and cultural attractions.

Bush House is a few minutes walk from [Covent Garden](#) and the [South Bank](#), both with many bars, cafes and restaurants.

These areas are also home to some of London's leading cultural venues, including: [BFI IMAX](#), [BFI South Bank](#), [Hayward Gallery](#), [National Theatre](#), [Royal Festival Hall](#), and [Royal Opera House](#).

In addition, the [National Gallery](#), [National Portrait Gallery](#), [Tate Modern](#) and London's West End 'Theatreland' are all within walkable distances.

Programme

Information on Format and Timing

Formats

The conference uses three formats:

- Paper Sessions: 90min sessions for the solo or joint presentation of 15 minute research papers followed by questions
- Panel Sessions: 90min sessions for preconstituted panels where presentation methods and times are arranged by the panel organisers.
- Plenary Sessions: The conference hosts three 90min plenary sessions (one at the end of each day).

For speakers using presentation software, the easiest option is to have the presentation on your own laptop and use the in-room HDMI and VGA cables (see note below on Mac adaptors) for connecting to the data projector. Otherwise, bring your presentation on a USB drive for plugging into the fixed computer located in the room.

Problems with technology can delay the start of sessions or disrupt their running, so we advise all speakers who are using technology to convene in the relevant room ahead of the start of their session to check facilities and ask for AV support if necessary (see note on contacting the technician below).

Please note that the conference is fully in-person and there will be no remote/hybrid presentations.

Protocols for Chairing Panels and Sessions

In order that both speakers and audience members can gain the most from the sessions, we politely ask all chairs to observe the following guidelines:

- Sessions are limited to 90 minutes, and so chairs are asked to please manage the length of sessions to fit this time. Overruns reduce the time available for incoming participants to adequately set up and prepare for their sessions, or for audience members to move between rooms
- if one speaker goes over time it can restrict the time available for others to speak. Chairs are therefore asked to ensure all speakers get an equal amount of time to speak
- audience members are always keen to raise questions in response to speaker presentations, and so chairs are asked to ensure enough time is available for audience members to make contributions and questions from the floor
- to fairly apportion time between speakers while protecting time for questions, and keeping sessions within the time available, chairs should signal to speakers when they are nearing an end to the time available for their presentation and, if necessary, indicate 'please conclude'
- where the chair is also a speaker, it may be advisable for another speaker to time the chair's presentation.

Audio-Visual Facilities

Rooms for panels or roundtables hold the following pre-installed media:

- data projector
- desktop PC (networked)
- HDMI and VGA cables (Mac users may need to bring their own adapter)
- visualiser

In case AV facilities malfunction, call the on-site AV technician using the internal phone in the relevant room. Details of the extension to call are taped to the console desk in any room. If contacting the technician, you'll need to provide the relevant room name/number.

Programme at a Glance

Day One: Tuesday 23 June 2026

9.00-17.00hrs **Registration** [Bush House Arcade](#)

11.00-11.30 – **Welcome** [Room: BH\(N\) Auditorium](#)

11.30-13.00hrs Session A

A1) Building Critical AI Futures: The Role of DH Research Infrastructures [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Lauren Tilton

Carolin Odebrecht

Torsten Hiltmann

Natalia Ermolaev

Arianna Ciula

Mary Chester-Kadwell

Toma Tasovac

A2) Data, Citizenship and Politics – Chair: Elisa Oreglia [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Foteini Kalantzi - The transformation of EU borders in the digital era

Swati Ganeshan, Rashmi Pavagada Subbanarasimha, Bidisha Chaudhuri, Amit Prakash - Data-doxic Citizen: Unpacking Performances of Citizenship in through Data Relations

Aakansha Natani - The Geopolitics of Data and Digital Technologies

Callum Deery, Leon Xiao - Social media advertising repositories: a new method for gaming/gambling research enabled by the EU Digital Services Act

A3) Playing the Self: Identity, Memory, and Belonging in Interactive Media – Chair: Feng Zhu [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Olivia Thorne - The millennial, the Gen Z and the Nintendo Wii: Gaming as opportunity for bonding for women and girls

Emmanuel Aubert - Queering Agency in Ludobiographies

Gisela De Castro - AFOA.NZ - creative methodologies for building an interactive videobook based on children's letters in Aotearoa New Zealand, on a digital platform

A4) Digital Urbanisms – Chair: Paul McDonald [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Yusuf Yüksesdag - Ethics of Data Relations and Smart City

Shuyan Zhao - Spectacle traveling: Tourist perception in social media era: taking Trevi Fountain as an example

Victoria Szabo - Visualizing Cities: Digital Humanities x Computational Media

Sanjana Muralidharan - Spatial Narratives and Social Currency: Digital Retail Experiences in Chennai Malls

A5) Journalism, Trust and AI – Chair: Alfie Bown [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Nael Jebri - Digital News, Society, and Democracy: Framing Artificial Intelligence in Arabic Regional Media

Nabila Cruz De Carvalho - Trust in digital news media among young audiences in the age of generative AI

Simge Süllü Durul, Tezcan Özkan Kutlu, Gülçin Salman - Navigating the Digital Frontier: Journalism Students' Ethical Perspectives on AI in News Production

A6) Digital Activism and Critical Enquiry: Past and Present [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Joss Hands

Tim Jordan

Eleftheria Lekakis

Pollyanna Ruiz

A7) Decision Systems and Anthropomorphisation of AI – Chair: Tonguc Sezen [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Emelie Andersin - Designing AI-DSS Interfaces: Cognitive and Legal Impacts of AI in Armed Conflict

Lou Manuel Arsenault - Humanizing: On the anthropomorphization of AI as a tactic of cultural integration

Caio Mello, Finola Finn, Donal Khosrowi, Marten Düring and Daniele Guido - Designing archival AI chatbots for enhanced research methods: an introduction to the Impresso Barista

Nzeaka Ezimako - Algorithmic Erasure: Ideological, Social, And Cultural Marginalisation In The Age Of Artificial Intelligence

A8) Platform Labour – Chair: Astrid Van den Bossche [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Can Burak Nalbantoglu - Three-Sided Markets, One-Sided Power: Algorithmic Management and Precarity on Digital Labor Platforms

Alessandro Gandini - *Gentrified labour: meaningful work in the digital economy*
Alkim Yalin Karakilic - *Life on Commission: Datafication, Platform Power, and Precarity in Turkish Creator Economy*

A9) The Craft of Researching Platform Work: Methodologies and Challenges [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Oguz Alyanak
Arturo Arriagada
Tugce Bidav
Kylie Jarrett

A10) AI in Humanities: Trust, Illusion and Critique - Chair: Mark Hill [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

John Bradley and, Geoffrey Rockwell - *Why bother with tools when you can simply chat?: The role of DH tools in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)*
Kostas Karpouzis - *The Illusion of Neutrality in AI for the Humanities*
Shani Evenstein Sigalov, Jane Winters - *Reframing the Humanities in the Age of Generative AI: Toward Critical and Care-Based Approaches to Digital Knowledge*
Doug Stark - *The Synthetic Humanities?*

13.00-14.00hrs Lunch Bush House 8th Floor North and South

14.00-15.30hrs Session B

B1) King's Digital Lab 10th Anniversary Retrospective [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Stuart Dunn
Daniel Chavez Heras
Arianna Ciula
Matt Penn
Harold Short
James Smithies

B2) Platform Urbanism and Mobility – Chair: Yin Wang [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Pauline Baudens - *Digital Geographies: Platforms Reshaping Women's Urban Mobility*
Khushboo Upreti - *Platform Urbanism in Delhi: Mediating Urban Space, Labour and Everyday Inequalities*
Bia Carneiro, Giulia Tucci - *Exploring Human Mobility Discourses through LLMs: A Comparative Experiment*
Marie Godin, Fardosa Ahmed Salah - *Digital Story Mapping: Refugee Women and the Digital Economy in Kenya*

B3) Co-Creating Digital Futures: Building Bridges Between Cultural Heritage, Open Knowledge, and Generative AI [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Elena Simperl
Giota Alevizou
Valentina Vavassori
Caio Mello
Shani Evenstein Sigalov

B4) DIGITAL X CLIMATE [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Rachel Clarke
Anna Watkins Fisher
Jennifer Gabrys
Güneş Tavmen

B5) AI and Visual Methods – Chair: Janna Joceli Omena [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Melissa Macaluso, Sofia Baroncini- *The serpent through LLM's eyes: a study of bias in cross-cultural art iconography*
Ludovica Schaerf - *On latent representations of vision generative models*
Hamidreza Nassiri - *Visual Entanglement: A Computational Tool for Relational Image Analysis and Intercultural Creativity*
Antonella Autuori, Rebecca Bertero - *Rage Against the Machine: A Collective Inquiry on the Emotional Breakdowns in Human-AI Conversation*

B6) Archives, Memory, Digital Preservation – Chair: Peter Conlin [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Lucy March - *Never forget, never remember: Exploring digital archival methods and cultural memory through 9/11 memes*
Giulia Lembo - *Beyond Archives: Interfaces, Standards, and Computational Perspectives on Memories*
George Oates, Fattori McKenna - *A Safe Harbor for Distributed Social Media Archives?*

Chris Groenveld - *Never Again. Five Stars: Creative Interventions in Digital Platforms and the Commodification of Holocaust Memory*

B7) Radical Data Methodologies – Chair: Darren Berkland [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Yu Sun - *Cultivating a green culture via everyday climate action in China: grassroots data as alternative climate knowledge infrastructure*

Lodewijk Petram - *Broadening Access to Dutch Colonial Archives: Digital Methods and Bias Awareness*

Ceren Yuksel – *In the Shadows of UNHCR's Data-fiction: An Inconsistency Framework and Platform for Humanitarian Counter-narratives*

Kristoffer Gansing, Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter - *De-Imagining Media - Material Speculation beyond the Immediate and the Generative*

B8) Digital gaming practices beyond the field of gaming [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Feng Zhu

Gaspard Pelurson

Rob Gallagher

Astrid Van den Bossche

B9) Platform Power: Authoritarianism, Deplatformisation and Disconnection – Chair: Ed Pertwee [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Nate Tkacz - *Authoritarianization: On Platform Becoming*

Cato Waeterloos, Babette Hermans, Laura Jacobs - *Bridge or Gap? Indicators of Deinstitutionalization in Belgian Political Parties' Social Media Campaign during the 2024 Elections*

Damiano Razzoli, Nicola Casucci - *Digital Citizenship beyond platforms: enshittification, resistance, and public digital futures*

B10) Social Media, Games and Health - Chair: Alfie Bown [BH \(NE\) 1-.01](#)

Chingyin Chiu - *Negotiating Rosacea: Visibility, Self-Care, and Commercialisation on Xiaohongshu*

Diane Francis - *Digital Black Feminism and Celebrity Mental Health Disclosures*

Holly Parker, Deanna Holroyd - *"Be Your Own Hero": Hero Narratives, Neoliberalism and The Transformative Power of Video Game Therapy for Neurodivergence*

Yifei Yang, Xin Tang - *Cringe to Stage: Reframing Ageing, Gender, and Rurality through Elderly Women's Douyin Practices*

15.30-16.00hrs Break Bush House Arcade

16.00-17.30hrs Session C - Plenary Session 1: Digital Humanities histories and futures: Reflections from King's and Beyond Room: BH(N) Auditorium

Mark Hedges

Paul Spence

Kate Devlin

Arianna Ciula

Harold Short

Marilyn Deegan

Barry Ife

17.45-20.00hrs Reception Bush House 8th Floor North and South

Day Two: Wednesday 24 June 2026

9.00-11.30hrs **Registration** Bush House Arcade

9.30-11.00hrs Session D

D1) Enriching Cultural Heritage Metadata with Large Language Models and Linked Open Data [BH \(S\)](#)

[Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Gethin Rees - *Enriching Cultural Heritage Metadata with Large Language Models and Linked Open Data: a Lorentz center workshop*

Rossana Damiano - *From Experimentation to Assessment: Evaluating AI-Enriched Metadata*

William Thorne - *Why doesn't this work for me, it worked for them? The challenges of reproducibility and domain adaptation when applying LLMs for heritage metadata extraction*

D2) Digital Publics and Counterpublics – Scott Rodgers [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Suruchi Mazumdar - *Making of a Digital Homeland: Everyday Data And Citizenship Narratives*

Alice Roberte De Oliveira - *Neighbourhood in the Digital Age: Researching WhatsApp Group Chat*

Shalini Senthilnathan - *'Neelam Social' and Tamil Caste Shorts on YouTube: Dalit Counterpublics or Enclaves?*

Noxolo Manyati - *Closing the Gap between Community Radio and its Audiences: Exploring the Value of Audio Diaries*

D3) Decolonising Digital Power– Chair: Nick Srnicek [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Sagnik Dutta, Suruchi Mazumdar - *Reconfiguring data colonialism: Everyday resistance to the postcolonial Indian state*

Emilian Franco - *Metaphors as situated practice of sociotechnical imagining in Brazilian AI Research*

Betti Marenko - *Resisting Reduction: Inoperativity and the Politics of 'Maybes' in Algorithmic Cultures*

Garikai Chaunza, Jeanne du Toit - *The Rise of Podcasting in a Hybrid Regime: Creative Activism and Digital Resistance in Contemporary Zimbabwe*

D4) Conceptualising Digital Public in India - Chair: Jamie Woodcock [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Aakansha Natani - *The Making of India's Digital Public: Policy Trajectories and Regulatory Dynamics*

Manohar Kumar and Praveen Priyadarshi - *The Paradoxical Public? Digital Public Infrastructure and the Citizen-Subject*

Shishir K Jha - *On the Importance of the Public in the 'Digital Public*

Balaji Parthasarathy - *Whose flexibility? The shifting contours of control over time on platform work in India*

D5) Politics and Digital Scholarship – Chair: Paul Spence [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Elena Battaner Moro - *Semantic Labour, Metadata Infrastructures, and the Epistemic Politics of Digital Scholarship*

Gerald Sim - *A Computer for the 22nd Century: What Would Mark Weiser Say About Liquid Glass?*

Arsenii Platonov - *Articulating AI: Two Approaches in Critical Media Studies – Ernesto Laclau and Chantal*

Mouffe's *Discourse Theory in Dialogue with Stuart Hall's Theorisations*

D6) Technology Cultures – Chair: Ashwin Mathew [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Shuxian Liu, Dr. Edgar Gómez-Cruz - *Vernacular Theories: Building Technocultures from the Global South*

Sahar Sagha - *Chords of Small Media Through Time*

Timothy Jordan - *The Four Phases of Blockchain Technology and the Internet's Imaginary*

Karishma Banga - *Digital Regulatory Frameworks: The New Powerbrokers of Digital Trade*

D7) Feminist Digital Activism and Reproductive Politics – Chair: Zeena Feldman [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Rebecca Siddall - *#HandsOffMyUterus: Reproductive Activism on TikTok and Instagram*

Diana-Nicoleta Mirancea - *Algorithmic Opportunities and Constraints: Rethinking Feminist Digital Activism in the Age of AI*

Matt Bassett - *Shaping the politics of 'cisgender': Platform affordances and governance on Tumblr and X*

D8) Digital Pedagogies – Chair: Giota Alevizou [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Jin Gao, Simon Mahony - *Digital Practice and Pedagogy at UCLDH: Reflections on Collaboration across Boundaries*

Sezgi Basak Kavakli - *Teaching in and through Screens: Influence of Extended Reality to Classroom Pedagogy*

Jochem Kootstra - *Media Makers for the Platform Society – A Systems-Thinking Quicksan for Societal Impact*

Zoetanya Sujon - *From data subjects to data agencies: Co-designing inclusive data research skills for the arts and humanities*

D9) Environmental Impacts of AI [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Sinem Görücü, Elena Simperl, Georgia Panagiotidou - *Meme-tivism: Rethinking the Environmental Footprint of AI*

Sebastián Lehuédé - *In-Situ AI: Attuning Technology to Local Ecological Struggles*

Paul Schütze, Michael Latzer - *The Transhumanist Anthropocene - Emerging regimes of (non-)human nature*

Deborah Lupton, Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris - *'It's Actually Quite Horrifying!' Public Understandings and Imaginings of the Impacts of Generative AI on the Environment*

D10) Death of the Artist, Liveness & Digital Sovereignty in the Arts – Chair: Eleonora Lima [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Naf X - *From Liveness to Likeness: Death of the Artist in the Platform Era*

Eva Nieto McAvoy, Bethan Jones, Jenny Kidd - *Crafting responsible AI afterlives: co-designing in the cultural heritage sector*

Carolina Alexandre Calixto - *Popular Digital Sovereignty and cooperative relationships: Reclaiming hegemonic spaces through the use of Artificial Intelligence in art*

Peter Conlin - *Data Annotation and Connotation: Probability, Writing and Critique*

11.00-11.30hrs Break Bush House Arcade

11.30-13.00hrs Session E

E1) Theorising AI development and impacts from Eastern Africa – Chair: Stephanie Diepeveen [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Kojo Apeagyei - *Set Course for liberation: African agency and imagination in shaping AI futures*

Peter Chonka, Stephanie Diepeveen and Yidnekachew Haile - *"No language left behind?" Predictive text, generative AI and dilemmas of digital inclusion for marginalized languages*

George Karekwaivanane - *Disasters and divination: examining AI-powered early warning systems in Eastern Africa*

Nanjala Nyabola - *Foundations for African feminism as an ethics for artificial intelligence*

E2) Embodiment and Resistance in Algorithmic Mediation – Chair: Rafal Zaborowski [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Judd Smith - *In Whom we Trust? Embodied Knowledge in Digital Communication: Reclaiming Physical Presence in Technological Mediation*

Hanna Wentz - *The Sensortype: Exposing the Recursive Ontology of the Digital Image*

Berk Alkoç - *Navigating Against the Algorithm: Neurodivergent Ways of Moving Through the Mediated City*

Firuz Huseynova - *Exploring Alternative Interfaces for Digital Music-Listening*

E3) Generative AI and Critical Aesthetics – Chair: David Moats [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Klara Källström, Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan - *Annotation Fever! On Critical Aesthetic Practice in Generative AI*

Martina Pace - *Distributed Creativity: Art, Agency, and AI*

Mona Hedayati - *At the Threshold of Algorithmic Logic: Towards a Critical Aesthetics*

Sorcha Ní Bhraonáin - *Performing death-tech: The staging of digital grief in Ulrike Quade Company's Roman & ELIZA*

E4) Queering Heritage and Arts Activism – Chair: Chloe Locatelli [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Adnan Hadziselimovic - *Performing and Exhibiting Immersive Virtual Experience Queering of Digital Heritage Assets: A Framework for Artistic Research and Practice*

Lauren Suna - *From Zines to Instagram: The History and Next Steps for Queer Decentralized Networks*

Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter - *Sit-In! - Staying with the Troubles of Digital Back-Ends*

E5) Platformisation, AI and Care Work: Global Perspectives on Social Reproduction in the Gig Economy [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Volkan Yilmaz and Elifcan Celebi - *A Scoping Review of Platformisation in Health and Social Care Sectors*

Myriam Lavoie-Moore - *Rentiership dynamics of the care platform's industry*

Claire Marzo - *The future of care: platform work & digitalisation*

E6) Corpus Linguistics and Digital Translation – Chair: Erik Ketzan [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Xiaorui Yu - *Measuring Literary Influence. A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Intertextuality of Chinese Science Fiction in English Translation*

Sonila Leka - *Exploring Digital Literary Translation: Mapping Eugene Onegin's English Translations in Word Embedding Spaces*

Kira Hinderks - *Sharper Than Any Two-Edged Sword: Tracing Biblical Reuse and the Mobilisation of Divine Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain*

Haruka Tsutsui - *Zones of Tension: Where Modernist Concepts, Citations, and Pedagogy Diverge*

E7) Softwares, Databases, Histories – Chair: Yusuf Yuksekdog BH (NE) 1.03

Sebastian Randerath - *Realtimes. Reflections on software historiography*

Maryam Tatari - *When Interactions Cease to Exist: Accessibility Repair and the Ontology of Databases*

Benjamin Pelling - *Capturing and preserving digital Holocaust memory – an overview of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab's 'living database-archive'*

Damini Kulkarni - *History in the Making: Analyzing Indian film audiences' experiments with digitality's database affordances*

E8) Platforming the Self – Chair: Eva Nieto McAvoy BH (NE) 0.01

Cherie Hu - *From Replika to Moflin: Synthetic Intimacy and the Datafication of Loneliness*

Nicola Bozzi - *Becoming Platform: Masculinity, Infrastructure, and Social Imagination*

Silvia Frota - *Re/Imagining ourselves: mediating citizenship in the age of digital media and AI*

Nilou Davoudi, Jennifer Douglas - *"This is me trying to heal": Death, grief, and memorialisation content on TikTok*

E9) Access and Visibility in Digital Spaces – Chair: Photini Vrikki BH (NE) -1.01

Tina Kristensen - *#metoo was started by a black woman, @Tarana Burke!!! Give credit where it's due! <3' (Marqueza, 2017): The discursive strategies used to discuss race in the #MeToo movement on Twitter*

Laurel Zuckerman - *Opening up the Holocaust and looted property scholarship concealed behind locked paywalls and foreign languages*

Marissa Willcox, Lucia Bainotti - *Feminist digital ethnographic methods for researching digital feminism and femininities*

Ashleigh Harris - *Unruly African Archives and Digital Curatorship*

13.00-14.00hrs Lunch Bush House 8th Floor North and South

14.00-15.30hrs Session F

F1) Climate Futures in Digital Cultures BH (S) Lecture Theatre 2 (4.04)

Armin Beverungen

Diego Arruda

Jana Hitziger

Jan Muggenburg

Luca Scheunpflug

F2) Digital Politics and Communication – Chair: Niki Cheong BH(S) 1.01

Giulia Tucci and Fabio Castro Gouveia - *Forwarding Power: Mapping Political Information Flows on Telegram*

Sean Eddington, James Alexander McVey, Colene J. Lind - *Charlie Kirk, Platformed Debate, and the Rewriting of Deliberative Norms*

Nuria Simelio - *Digital Humanities Perspectives on Migration, Human Rights, and Representation in Spanish and Moroccan Social Media News (2024–2025)*

Vitória Oliveira - *The battleground of attention: Governing the attention economy between state, industry, and civil society in Brazil*

F3) Negotiating AI: Identity, Labour, and Cultural Practice in Mediated Contexts – Chair: Cherie Hu BH (SE) 1.05

Christopher Holliday, Sarah Thomas - *The Stakes of Recognition: Smart Stardom in the Era of Digital Replication*

Aurelia Ayisi - *Resting in Peace? AI-Powered Obituaries and the Transformation in Funeral Announcements in Ghana*

Radhika Gajjala - *Uncertain archives, Probable infrastructures: Postcolonial-Cyberfeminist investigations in producing Selves across Platforms*

F4) Alternative Epistemologies – Chair: Paolo Ruffino BH (SE) 2.09

Amanda Curtis - *Playing to Know: Video Games as Onto-epistemological Media*

Ana Zapata Guzmán, Darío Negueruela del Castillo - *Digital Visual Studies Now—or a Farewell? Toward a Critical Historiography of the Visual Now*

Digdem Sezen, Tonguc Sezen - *Situated Experiences of Creative Writing with LLMs*

Christopher McMahon, Qianwei Jiang - *Noisy Gaming: Developing a Methodology for Observing Emotional Contagion During Play*

F5) Sociotechnical Circulations: Ethnographies of Connection, Articulation, and Blockage in Global Digital Cultures BH (SE) 2.12

Elisa Oreglia
Rafal Zaborowski
Ashwin Mathew

F6) Social Media, Identity and Popularity – Chair: Holly Parker [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Alice McAlpine-Riddell - 'Girling' safety on social media: Confessional storytelling and ironic devices to mediate experience of gender-based harassment and violence on Instagram and TikTok.

Marina Dekavalla - Can lifestyle influencers be digital media auteurs?

Rendan Liu - A "beautiful" bubble: Gender, self-branding, and platform capitalism in China's wanghong economy

Kesara Ariyapongpaioj - Is There A Podcast Bro-Manosphere Pipeline?: Mapping Recommendation Pathways on YouTube

F7) The Digital and the Youth – Chair: Astrid Van den Bossche [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Gülden Demir, Gülsün Bozkurt - Negotiating Digital Surveillance: Turkish Middle Schoolers' Resistance to Parental Controls

Tom De Leyn, Dounia Bourabain - The digital neighborhood: Towards a conceptual framework for understanding young people's everyday lives across digital and physical spaces

Yeran Kim, Dong Hoo Lee - The Becoming of Digital Youth in South Korea: Mediating Identities and Selves

Sabina Huseynova - Digital Childhood, case study in Qatar: Parental Perspectives on AI, Identity and Cultural Learning

F8) Technologies as Cultural Objects – Chair: Darren Berkland [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Supriti Malhotra - The 'Empathy Machines' of Immersive Technologies - A Scoping Review

Zeynep Abes - Feminist Epistemologies for Preserving XR

Carloalberto Treccani - A Noise-Free World: Noise-Cancelling Technologies and the Pursuit of a Sanitised Reality

Claire Reddeman - "The last universalistic icon": the digital 'Blue Marble' images and the loss of the human

F9) Reflecting on Digital Humanities: AI and Beyond – Chair: Paul Spence [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Golnaz Sarkar Farshi - Pitfalls of "Digital Humanities": An Insider's Critique

Jessica White - OCR Correction for LLMs: balancing accuracy and ethics

Fernando Nascimento, Crystal Hall, Theo Barton, Madina Sotvoldieva, Vianney Gomezgil Yaspik - AI Assistants in the Humanities: A Comparative Study with Texts by Paul Ricoeur and Galileo Galilei

Scott Wark - The "Contentification" of the Web: Studying Digital Culture Before and After GenAI

15.30-16.00hrs Break Bush House Arcade

16.00-17.30hrs Session G – Plenary Session 2: Tech and the Body Room: BH(N) Auditorium

Rachael Kent
Dan Nicolau
Lili Golmohammadi
Ned Barker

Day Three: Thursday 25 June 2026

9.00-9.30hrs **Registration** Bush House Arcade

9.30-11.00hrs **Session H**

H1) Precarious Publics: Digital Labour and Queer World-Making in East and Southeast Asian Digital Cultures [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Eva Cheuk Yin Li

Dr. Liang Ge

Kaydence Sun

Kana Yanxin Lu

H2) Governing Platforms, Shaping Work: Critical Perspectives on the State and its Role in Regulating the Gig and Platform Economy - Chair: Yusuf Yuksekdog [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Uma Rani - *Global trends in the regulation of platform work*

Luciana Zorzoli - *Regulatory Strengthening, Innovation, or Recoupling? State Strategies in Governing Platform Work in Latin America*

Aditya Ray - *Bringing the State Back In? Gig and Platform Workers' Welfare Regulations - Few Lessons from India*

H3) Gender, Technology and Labour – Chair: Nina Vindum Rasmussen [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Taylor Annabell, Rianne Riemens - *Dinner at the White House: Techbros, creator culture and network power*

Gaia Casagrande, Alessandro Gandini - *Gendering neo-craft work: from masculinized domain to feminized platform labour?*

Yin (Selena) Wang - *Gendering the Algorithm: A Critical Inquiry into Platform Labour in London and Shanghai*

Hannah Artman - *Gender, power, and societal stigma: Examining media coverage of sex work in the post-pandemic era*

H4) Digital Alternative Narratives – Chair: Digidem Sezen [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Muije Li - *Synthetic Media and Speculative Storytelling for Decolonial Thinking*

Shaheer Tarar – *Defamiliarising the Web*

George Themistokleous - *Automated Selfies along No Man's Land*

Suwen Wang - *From Disconnection To Reconnection: AI-Based Digital Storytelling Communication For Cultural Heritage Artifacts*

H5) Arts, Platforms, AI – Chair: Eleonora Lima [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Leonardo Bindi - *“We wish we could afford silence”: practices of digital disconnection among musicians in the platform economy*

Adriana Campara, Andrea Farina - *Art, Censorship, and AI: Investigating the Role of Large Language Models in Artistic Freedom*

Dion Everett - *Real Readers: The Performance of Professional Reading in the Digital Literary Sphere*

H6) Digital Institutions, Digitalised Institutions Chair: Nicola Bozzi [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Zhiqiang Li - *Embodied Interpretation in Online Museums: Embodied Design Methods based on Roppola's Visitor Experience Framework*

Oksana Ivanova, Zane Senko - *Digital Identity as Institutional Storytelling: A Case Study of Riga Technical University*

Jeff Love - *Designing for Curiosity & Wonder in Cultural Heritage - Thoughts and Actions*

Varya Srivastava, Sameera Deol, Karthik Sridhar - *Operationalising Inquiry in Student-AI Interaction: Developing the Composite Questioning and Dialogue Index (CQDI)*

H7) New approaches to and with computational linguistics - Chair: Erik Ketzan [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Gregor Pobežin and Zrinka Mileusnić - *Gaming Potentials of Latin Epigraphy: Making Epigraphy Fun Again*

Marta Palandri - *Symbols in the Machine: Post-NER Editorial Interventions*

Caitlin Wilson - *Bridging legal and lay language: a BERT and AMR driven semantic search engine for The National Archives' Find Case Law service*

Kevin Wunsch - *Human in the Middle Annotations*

H8) Game engine technologies as infrastructure for creative labour [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Paolo Ruffino — *Engine Workers: Game Engines and the Transformation of Digital Labour*

Aleena Chia — *Rendering Race: Game Engines, Epistemology, and the Limits of Diversity*

Dan Strutt — *Embodied Futures: Telematic Arts, Dance, and the Ethics of Engine-Mediated Interaction*
Teodora Alata — *Beyond Realism: Game Engines as Speculative Infrastructures for Alternative Worlds*

11.00-11.30hrs Break Bush House Arcade

11.30-13.00hrs Session I

I1) Forging Generative Philology: The Humanitext Project's Vision for Human-AI Collaboration in Classics

BH (S) Lecture Theatre 2 (4.04)

Naoya Iwata

Ikko Tanaka

Jun Ogawa

I2) Platforms. Platforms! PLATFORMS!? – Chair: Tugce Bidav BH(S) 1.01

Nina Vindum Rasmussen, Taylor Annabell, Daphne Rena Idiz - *TikTokification of Netflix: Convergence and competition in streaming worlds*

Karmvir K. Padda - *Mirror Worlds and Misogyny: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Incel Discourse Across Mainstream and Alt-Tech Platforms*

Zoë Glatt, Sarah Edwards - *Poisoning the Well: The Battle for Creative Control in the Era of Generative AI*

Barbara Plotz - *The political function of comedy and humour in anti-Trump videos on TikTok*

I3) Labour in Systems: Linking AI Development, Automation and Work BH (SE) 1.05

James Oyange - *Beyond the Algorithm: Visualizing Global Data Flows and Worker Rights in the AI Supply Chain*

Uma Rani - *Human Cogs in the AI Supply Chain: Experiences of Workers in India and Kenya*

Aditya Ray - *Generative AI and the Reorganisation of Knowledge Work in the IT&ITeS Outsourcing Sectors*

I4) Creative Methodologies – Chair: Andrea Farina BH (SE) 2.09

Claudia Sarmiento - *Storytelling, Artivism, and Environmental Journalism in the Amazon: Decolonial Digital Narratives*

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt - *Monster collage to make sense of the sustainable maintenance work for digital and material museum collections*

Yuan Pan, Dr A Bradley Duthie; Professor Nils Bunnefeld; Daksha Patel - *Knowledge Games for Environmental Conservation: Insights from the EcoKnowGames Project*

Scott Rodgers, Robert Topinka - *Jump to Recipe: The Procedural and the Culinary in Quali-Quantitative Digital Methods*

I5) Geospatial Micro-blogging: Dynamics, Politics and Economics of Building Digital Memory of Spatial Heritage with Hexology BH (SE) 2.12

Darrel Butlin

Oksana Yarema

Gabriele Salciute Civiliene

Yustyna Prystupa

I6) Digital Infrastructures and Climate Futures – Chair: Paul McDonald BH (NE) 1.02

Adrian Godboldt - *Cement Blocks and Silicon Dreams: Urban Desire and the Politics of Digital Infrastructure*

Jipson John - *Digital Humanitarianism and Disaster Governance: A Study from Global South*

Jan Muggenburg, Armin Beverungen - *Climate Futures in Digital Cultures*

I7) Policymaking, Governance and the Digital – Chair: Aleena Chia BH (NE) 1.03

Jennifer Castaneda Navarrete, Hilde G. Corneliussen, Cheshta Arora, Steve Evans - *Intergovernmental policy discourses on the green and digital transitions in the context of working life*

Kalimah Wasis Lestari, Emiria Dinar Triana - *AI-Driven Government: Accommodating Deliberative Democracy or Algocracy?*

Siddhi Wadekar, Aakansha Natani - *Unpacking Data Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Critical Inquiry into its Evolution and Contemporary Strategic Relevance*

Eun Sun Godwin, Jennifer Castañeda-Navarrete, Zoi Roupakia - *Whose voice counts? The politics of AI governance*

I8) Videographics and Data-Driven Artistic Practice – Chair: Daniel Chavez Heras BH (NE) 1.04

Jiri Anger, Veronika Hanáková - *Embracing the Slowness of Digital Tools: Videographic Scholarship as Practice-Based Archaeology of Computation*

Irene Bonilla - *On digital film editing and the overlooked power of montage*

Isaac Parkinson - *Data Visualisation as an Evidentiary Framework: Digital Methodologies in Contemporary Documentary Practice*

Rebecca Saunders - *Data drawing for sexual consent and embodiment: using data as a resistant art form against commercial datafication in sex-tech*

I9) Between Compliance and Refusal: Agency under Digital Governance – Chair: Pete Chonka [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Zhuo Wang - *Affective Labor and Compliant Solidarity: Navigating Digital Authoritarianism and Feminist Resistance among Chinese International Students*

Vanita Leah Falcao - *When Iterative Administration Harms: A Data Justice Informed Perspective on India's Digitalised Public Welfare*

Ankur Upreti - *Bordered Bodies, Data Frontiers: Gender, Caste and the Algorithmic Life of Citizenship in India's Bengal and Assam Borderlands*

Hagos Kahssay - *The impact of digital media on polarisation and ethnic violence in Ethiopia*

I10) Dating, Intimacy and the Digital – Chair: Chloe Locatelli [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Selima Kabir, Ishrat Jahan, Prof. Sabina Faiz Rashid - *Decolonising narratives on digital dating apps: Stories of intersectional negotiations from the urban youth in Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Sucharita Sen - *The Digital Life of Caste: NRI Grooms and the Politics of Matrimony in Kolkata*

Nicholas John, Aram Sinnreich - *What is new about digitally-mediated relationships?*

13.00-14.00hrs Lunch Bush House 8th Floor North and South

14.00-15.30hrs Session J

J1) The Future of Digital Research on Encyclopedias [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Erik Ketzan

Giota Alevizo

Thora Hagen

Glenn Roe.

J2) Decolonial Digital Cultures – Chair: Pete Chonka [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Jiahua Olivia Lin - *Towards a Genealogy of Cinephilic History: Media Archaeology and Chinese Digital Cinephilia*

Cristina Moreno-Almeida, Irene Fernandez Ramos - *Transmedial Imaginations of Folklore: Consuming and Reframing Tradition in the Age of Cyberlibertarianism*

Franklin Yartey - *Seduction of Wealth: A Critical Analysis of Kiva.org's Rhetoric on Social Responsibility*

Sabreen Syeed, Phillip Brooker, Michael Mair, Leon Moosavi, Geraldine Reid - *Algorithms, Social Practice and the Epistemic Decolonisation of the Computational*

J3) Encoding the Body: Desire, Data, and Digital Power – Chair: Digidem Sezen [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Kalli Dockrill - *Beyond 'wounded attachments': Queer feminine desire and vulnerability as trans (dis)embodiment in Harry Potter femslash on AO3*

Ksenia Lavrenteva - *Digital Crafting the Body: Socio-Technical Governance and the Politics of Embodied Data*

Shuying Hu - *Girls' Power Never Die: Chinese Feminist embodiment in Danmei culture under digital censorship*

J4) Telehealth and Technologies of Care – Chair: Ned Barker [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Lydia Hughes - *Squeezed and Scheduled: Digital Technology in Care*

Libei Wang - *The Digital Body in Care: Exploring Embodied Practices of Dance Movement Therapy for Depression*

Ana Ceclia Oliveira Costa, Emily de Jesus Fraga, Ana Carolina Freitas de Andrade, Anna Julia Teixeira de Oliveira, Fernanda de Oliveira Ferreira Roza Victor, Camila Rocha Ataíde Quaresma, Thiago Dias Sarti, Ana Paula Santana Coelho Almeida - *Telemedicine during the Covid-19 pandemic: analysis of access by women in a Brazilian capital*

Ana Ceclia Oliveira Costa, Emily de Jesus Fraga, Bruna Venturin, Ana Carolina Freitas de Andrade, Fernanda de Oliveira Ferreira Roza Victor, Camila Rocha Ataíde Quaresma, Thiago Dias Sarti, Ana Paula Santana Coelho Almeida - *Telehealth in primary care in a Brazilian state: evidence from the 2024 Census of Basic Health Units*

J5) Mediating and managing tensions: the role of cultural intermediaries in the creator economy in China, Latin America, and the U.S. [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Lorena Caminhas

Rongxin He

Yang Huang

Rendan Liu

Rendan Liu

J6) Knowledge Co-Production with AI – Chair: David Moats [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Lea Stöter - *Knowledge Co-Production in Socio-Technical Epistemic Systems: AI-Driven Software in the Digital Humanities*

Ashleigh Percival-Borley - *Bridging the Gap? A Methodological Exploration of Generative AI as a Research Tool in Oral History*

Dipanjan Saha, Gemma Lough and Tatsuya Akutsu - *Vibing on my own: situating computational reasoning in AI-assisted coding*

Michał Dawid Żmuda - "Non-hermeneutic" reading and writing. *How digital machines abolish the need for human understanding*

J7) Digital Humanities Methodologies – Chair: Mark Hill [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Stephanie Diepeveen, Christoffer Guldborg - *Demystifying AI with Freire and Bergson: A Participatory Meme-Making Method for Critical DH*

Kevin Kuck, Kevin Wunsch - *Negotiating Peace Digitally: The EuReD Project and the Critical Inquiry of Early Modern Religious Agreements*

Katrin Schindel - 'And how about your own take on intersectionality?' – *On the complex navigating of friendly rapport and researcher positionality when researching digital feminism*

Ari Stillman - *The Digital Extended Case Method*

J8) Beyond the binary: How informal practices sustain, subvert, and reshape digital systems [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Margie Cheesman, Andreas Hackl - *Dispossessed imposters: identity workaround and exploitation in the digital livelihoods of refugees*

Astrid Van den Bossche & Stefan Bernitter - *From trust trades to exploiting glitches: Children's encounters with grey economies in Roblox*

Thant Sin Oo, Elisa Oreglia - *Trust, Frictions, and Power at the crossroad of tradition and digital platforms: Myanmar jade traders and Chinese livestream ecommerce.*

David Moats - *On the Line: Revisiting the Turing / Polanyi debate about the limits of rule based AI.*

J9) Rethinking Resistance and Violence in Digital Environments – Chair: Can Kocak [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Xinyi Yin - *Lying Flat as Digital Passive Resistance: Rethinking Social Movement Theory in Platform Societies*

Karmvir Padda, Shana MacDonald, Nick Ruest - *Mic Check for Misogyny: Podcasting, Supremacist Masculinities, and the Radicalization of Gendered Violence*

Anja Zlatovic - *Is the future of AI be green? - Exploring the AI usage among young, green activists*

J10) Global Digital Cultures Unfolded: Youth Voices, Civic Becoming, and Playful Resistance [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Ana Kubrusly

Stephanie Thelwall

Martina Paulenová

Yifei Yang

15.30-16.00hrs Break Bush House Arcade

16.00-17.30hrs Session K – Plenary Session 3 – Ecologies of Perception and Attention Room: BH(N) Auditorium

Joanna Zylińska and Feng Zhu (King's College London) - 'Ecologies of Attention and Perception: An Introduction'

Sasha Litvintseva - 'The Personal Equation'

Murad Khan - 'Convexity: A Commons'

Geoff Cox - 'AI Vision Has No History'

Paolo Ruffino - 'The Infinitely Small and Infinitely Large'

Day Four: Friday 26 June 2026

9.00-9.30hrs **Registration** Bush House Arcade

9.30-11.00hrs Session L

L1) Critical Approaches to Text-Based Digital and Computational Humanities [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Naomi Wells

Erik Ketzan

Barbara McGillivray

Megan Bushnell

Mark J. Hill

Andrea Farina

Antonina Puchkovskaia

L2) AI in Institutional Contexts – Chair: Darren Berkland [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Roger Søraa, Kristine Ask, Frida E. Sandvik, Mark W. Kharas - *Mediating Work: Generative AI and the Transformation of Recruitment Practices*

Marc Schuilenburg - *From Control to Care: Redesigning the Role of AI Tools in Policing*

Dustin O'Hara, Jack Sovelove - *Interpretive Computing and Accountability: AI-Human Assemblage and Cultural Heritage Collections*

Gavin Duffy - *Computer vision: The hypervisuality of AI*

L3) Computational Sound and Music – Chair: Mark Gotham [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Luca Marinelli, Iacopo Ghinassi, Charalampos Saitis - *Leveraging RAG for a Low-Resource Audio-Aware Diachronic Analysis of Gendered Toy Marketing*

Iain Emsley - *Programmed Noise: Structuring Sound in Programming Languages*

Martin Nicastro, Mattia Zanotti - *Computational Humanities and Digital Methods: Currents and Future Perspectives in Popular Music Studies*

Barry Ife, Jasper van der Klis - *Texting Scarlatti: large-scale phylogenetic analysis in historical musicology*

L4) Ethics of Care and the 'Afterlives' of Digitisation Projects [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Kelly Foster

Laura Gibson

Hannah Ishmael

Etienne Joseph

Emeka Nwankwo

L5) Platform Economies in India – Chair: Can Kocak [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

Ambi - *Beyond Limbo: Migrant Women, Platform Economies, and the Multiverse of Precarity in Urban India*

Sohini Banerjee - *"We try to use these new arrangements... we opt out": Tactics and refusals of India's domestic workers in the platform economy*

Srimanjori Guha - *"Stepping into the digital": Support Networks and Women's Transition into Masculinised Gig Work in Kolkata, India*

L6) Ways of Gaming – Chair: Tonguc Sezen [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

André Almo, Ana Jovanovic-Harrington and Máira Theophilo de Souza Amaral - *Video Games as Digital Extensions of Protest*

Nicole Khoo, Leon Y. Xiao - *What's in the loot box? Exploring the disclosure and content of loot box adverts in Ireland*

Eva Liu - *How Young Chinese Women Use Yaoi Games to Explore Identity Formation Possibilities*

Jack Lowe - *Pin the Tale: engaging with place through a site-specific storytelling game*

L7) Critical AI practices [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Tobias Blanke

Liliana Bounegru

Jonathan Gray

Sal Hagen

Noortje Marres

Sabine Niederer
Donato Ricci

L8) Digital Care Platforms and Commodification of Care – Chair: Ned Barker [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Elifcan Celebi, Mert Kocak - Migrant Labor in Digital Care Platforms: Gendered and Racial Representations of Care Workers in Turkish Care Platforms

Grace Whitfield, Kate Hamblin - Commodifying and neglecting care: digital imaginaries and marketised realities

Alexandra Gillespie, Stacy Doore - Wanted Dead or Alive: Anticipatory Regulation of Digital Immortality Platforms

Photini Vrikki - Beyond the Leased Self: Weaving Infrastructures of Mutual Care

L9) AI Ontologies and Epistemological Challenges – Chair: Eva Nieto McAvoy [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Hossein Derakhshan - Rethinking Ai/Algorithm Studies: The ontological and epistemological challenges of researching algorithms and the case for renewing ethnomethodology

Natalia Stanusch, Richard Rogers, Natalia Sánchez-Querubín - AI and its (dis)contents: methods of mapping AI as and with digital media

Frederik Bay-Jørgensen, Anders Kristian Munk - Beyond training data determinism? Understanding the value alignment controversy in human-LLM relations

Darren Berkland - The Discursive Function of Data Poisoning in the Time of Generative AI

L10) OpenStreetMap at 20: Critically reassessing the Wikipedia of Maps [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Anne Lee Steele

Gala Camacho

Carlos Cámara-Menoyo

11.00-11.30hrs Break Bush House Arcade

11.30-13.00hrs Session M

M1) How is AI Changing Agency? [BH \(S\) Lecture Theatre 2 \(4.04\)](#)

Morten Hansen

Helen Beetham

Mark Carrigan

Helene Friis

M2) Identity, Agency and Narrative in Videogames – Chair: Tonguc Sezen [BH\(S\) 1.01](#)

Liselotte de Beer - Playing the Posthuman: Authorship and Agency in AI Dungeon

Richard Bingham - Engine Interpretation: Decoding Time and Temporality in Zelda64

Zeren Sevim Sipahioglu Arkin - Haunted Flesh: Feminist Approaches to Disordered Eating and Visual Representation in Downfall

M3) Reimagining Community in Digital Infrastructures – Chair: Cherie Hu [BH \(SE\) 1.05](#)

Jonathan Gray - Rebuilding a Commons: From Black Twitter to Bluesky's Blackacademics

Marie Hermanova - Translating the War: Ukrainian TikTok Creators and the Algorithmic Mediation of Conflict

Matthew Bui - Digital Recipes for Solidarity: Local Community-Driven Interventions for Racial & Class Justice

Shomaila Sadaf, Marko Siitonen - Echo Chambers of Belief: Discursive Constructions of Religious Intolerance in Digital Discourse

M4) Creative AI - perspectives from the Creative AI Lab @ KCL [BH \(SE\) 2.09](#)

Mercedes Bunz - Mapping the crack: on meaning making in technology and culture

Daniel Chavez Heras - Macroscopic imagination

Joanna Zylinska - If machines can create, what makes us so special?

Eva Jäger - Beyond Optimisation: surfacing the cultural and political dimensions of physical AI systems

Mark Gotham - Music about Five-Legged Horses: on creativity uncoupled from semantic "ground truth"

M5) Platform Precarities – Chair: Yin Wang [BH \(SE\) 2.12](#)

James Oyange - Data Rights and AI Labour: Examining Data Protection and Exploitation in AI's Invisible Workforce

Alexandra Moran - Beyond Employment Misclassification: On the Benefits of Including Digital Sex Work in Research and Policy on Platform Work

Angela Li - Expendable Workers: Food Delivery and Techno-Politics in China

M6) Game Worker Solidarity: understanding unionisation in the games industry [BH \(NE\) 1.02](#)

Jamie Woodcock

Mike Cook

Game Workers

M7) Internet Cultures – Chair: Nicola Bozzi [BH \(NE\) 1.03](#)

Ira Solomatina - Discussing cringe, a digital-native affect

Avery Benton - Postintellectualism? The Rise of Digitellectualism.

Xintong Jia, Xumeng Xie - Weird, but aww: Hello Kitty, Capybaras and Postdigital Intimacies of Cuteness in East Asian Pop Culture

Xiaomo Liu - Fake-Eating on Chinese Platforms: Embodiment, Deception, and Vernacular aesthetics

M8) Digital Capitalism with Asian Characteristics – Chair: Paul McDonald [BH \(NE\) 1.04](#)

Pei-Sze Chow - An (A)Imperial Mode of Creativity: Generative AI and Creative Labour in Singapore's Media Landscape

Jack Qiu - The historical and institutional roots of SoftBank digital empire: An inter-Asian analysis

Samuel We - 'If You Skip This Video, You Kill Me': Algorithmic Optimisation and the Imperial Afterlife of Digital Capitalism".

Jon Wilson - Empires of abstraction – or not - from the East India Company to the Digital Age

M9) Rebuilding Knowledge Infrastructures: Feminist and Decolonial Approaches – Antonina Puchkovskaia [BH \(NE\) 0.01](#)

Giorgia Tolfo, Katherine Howells, Elizabeth Haines, Chao Tayiana Maina - Colonial digital photographs: developing a co-designed inclusive, transparent and ethical research framework

Christina Kamposiori - Beyond Access: Inclusive Practices and Digital Innovation in Research Libraries

Zoe Hurley - Scattering and Gathering: The Digitization of Arab Women's Knowledge

Lilian Njeri Mbuthi - From Reach to Relation: Decolonial Digital Commons and Creator Cultures across the Majority World

M10) Trust, Care, and Platformed Selfhood - Chair: Paolo Ruffino [BH \(NE\) -1.01](#)

Hui Lin, Yingwen Wang- Astrology with DeepSeek: Data Disclosure, Playful Labour, and Emotional Bonds in AI-Mediated Divination

Ugo Trelis - Data Work as Care and other forms of resistance: An autoethnographic study

Craig Gent, Michael Dieter, Carolina Bandinelli - Hybrid Togetherness: Critical Livestreaming and the StreamArtNetwork

13.00-14.00hrs Lunch Bush House 8th Floor North and South

14.00-15.00hrs Closing Remarks Room: BH(N) Auditorium

15.00hrs **Conference Ends**

All Sessions, Papers and Abstracts

Numbers next to titles denote how many speakers are in the session.

Corpus Linguistics & Digital Translation (4)

Xiaorui Yu - Measuring Literary Influence. A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Intertextuality of Chinese Science Fiction in English Translation

Chinese Science Fiction (CSF), undeniably, emerges as a result of translating, imitating and reworking of Western SF, against the backdrop of the influx of Western culture and thoughts into China at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Entering the 1990s—identified by Mingwei Song as the “New Wave” of CSF—greater exposure to Western science fiction enabled CSF to significantly enhance its capacity to assimilate influences from global science fiction. As Cixin Liu observes, ‘Contemporary Chinese science fiction is becoming more similar to world science fiction, and styles and subjects that have been explored by American writers, for instance, can find easy analogs in Chinese science fiction’. Such close engagement with global SF indicates the maturity of the conditions for studying the intertextuality of CSF. To position CSF within world literature, Lena Henningsen argues that, compared with intertextuality in other Chinese literature genres, ‘the amount of these[intertextual] references in Chinese science fiction is immense and creates a number of distinct textual effect and affects.’ Henningsen’s attention to CSF’s intertextuality offers an opportunity to engage with her argument, allowing for confirmation or contestation. Therefore, this paper investigates the intertextuality of CSF since the 1990s which has been translated into English, via corpus linguistic methods including named entity recognition and linking authors and text with semantic web data. In addition to the primary corpus of CSF in English translation (3,027,943 word tokens, comprising 9 novels and 201 short stories by 62 writers), an influence corpus comprising SF originally written in English is also compiled. This corpus draws on three distinct sources: Anglo-American SF canons, essays and interviews by CSF writers, and book reviews by Western readers who note resemblances between Chinese works and those of Western writers.

Sonila Leka - Exploring Digital Literary Translation: Mapping Eugene Onegin’s English Translations in Word Embedding Spaces

This paper investigates how digital methods can illuminate the practice of literary translation by applying word embeddings to Eugene Onegin and its English translations. Taking Alexander Pushkin’s canonical novel in verse as a case study, the project explores how semantic proximity and divergence between the Russian original and selected English versions can be modelled computationally. While previous scholarship in Translation Studies has focused on textual analysis, reception, or the translator’s role, this work contributes a computational perspective that uses natural language processing as a proxy for measuring translational shifts. Two complementary approaches are employed. First, custom Word2Vec models are trained on the Russian and English corpora and aligned using Procrustes-based methods, enabling direct comparison of lexical neighbourhoods across languages. Second, multilingual fastText embeddings and transformer-based contextual models are used to provide pre-aligned, higher-dimensional perspectives. Visualisations of the resulting spaces are generated to map the relational structure of words and stanzas, foregrounding areas of semantic consistency as well as moments of divergence across translations. The findings highlight how embeddings capture not only lexical choices but also broader stylistic tendencies, thereby offering a new way to interpret translational strategies. By bridging Translation Studies and digital text analysis, the project demonstrates the value of embedding-based methods for exploring questions of equivalence, domestication, and semantic drift. More broadly, it contributes to the interdisciplinary field of cultural analytics by showing how computational models can support the comparative study of world literature in translation.

Kira Hinderks - Sharper Than Any Two-Edged Sword: Tracing Biblical Reuse and the Mobilisation of Divine Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain

The Bible was the cultural touchstone of the Early Modern period. Proverbs, especially from the King James Version (KJV), which was published in 1611 as a moderate Church of England counterweight to the more radical Geneva Bible (first edition: 1560), had a lasting impact on the English language. Although the share of religious publications decreased in the eighteenth century, there is no doubt that many writers continued to draw upon the Bible in a variety of works and contexts. Gladstone and Cooney (2020) have estimated that over half of the

textual reuse in Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) was of the Bible, a testament to its cultural influence and staying power in a period that is commonly held to be the beginning of secularisation. Nevertheless, there have been few mixed-method studies of biblical reuse in the Early Modern period, which this project hopes to rectify. Computational text reuse detection helps to identify verses or passages that were reused particularly frequently in certain contexts, thus providing a quantitative grounding for examining the writings of individual authors, e.g. how and why they integrated Scripture in their argument. In Early Modern Britain, biblical reuse frequently had a political dimension; for example, debates about the role of the sovereign and the duties of citizens invariably leaned on verses from Scripture to support the author's stance on the divine right of kings or the right to resist unjust regimes. I posit that authors were cognisant that invoking Scripture was not a mere rhetorical strategy but a weighty moral and epistemic claim, i.e. affirming their alignment with divine will and their opponent's rebellion against nothing less than Truth itself, thereby imbuing their sincerely-held convictions with near-unassailable transcendental authority. Religious ideas were thus not incidental to eighteenth-century intellectual life but remained a fundamental object of contention.

Haruka Tsutsui - Zones of Tension: Where Modernist Concepts, Citations, and Pedagogy Diverge

Academic disciplines are in a constant state of negotiation between a stable canon and forces advocating for expansion. This paper takes the field of literary modernist studies as a prime case study to develop a general computational methodology for mapping this fundamental dynamic. The field is particularly well-suited for this analysis, given its history of internal canon wars and, more recently, influential calls for temporal, geographic, and vertical expansion (often associated with the "New Modernist Studies"). Our methodology creates a high-resolution topography of the field by integrating several distinct vectors of scholarly activity. Three vectors anchor the map: (1) the attention economy traced through recent citation formations; (2) the conceptual terrain modelled from journal discourse; and (3) the field's explicit knowledge structures as staged by pedagogical and reference genres. We add a fourth, cross-cutting dimension—evaluative practice—that registers how criticism assigns value when putative expansions are at stake. Analytically, we focus on the convergences and divergences among these vectors. Of particular interest are zones of structural tension—cases where novel conceptual vocabularies coexist with traditional citational hubs, or where pedagogically central authors remain peripheral in research routines. These zones serve as gateways for targeted close reading, clarifying how intellectual innovation interacts with institutional path-dependence and how expansions are consolidated, tolerated, or reabsorbed. The primary contribution of this paper is a transferable and robust computational framework for modeling the dynamics of any scholarly field. While providing a data-rich account of the contemporary state of modernist studies, its ultimate aim is to offer a new, empirical approach to intellectual history. By revealing the complex interplay between disciplinary inertia and intellectual innovation, our model provides a way to move beyond anecdotal accounts and create more nuanced, evidence-based narratives of how scholarly fields evolve.

New approaches to and with computational linguistics (4)

Gregor Pobežin and Zrinka Mileusnić - Gaming Potentials of Latin Epigraphy: Making Epigraphy Fun Again

Classical studies and digital humanities have the increasing ability to intersect with digital technologies, thus creating the possibility to render what used to be inaccessible – either artefacts out of reach or texts out of comprehensive grasp – findable, explorable and widely enjoyable. Drawing on extant academic work (e.g. Gee, 2003 and McGonigal, 2011), the paper focuses on the rewards offered by games as epistemic tools, proposing the exploration and possible exploitation of gaming in teaching Latin epigraphy, thus rendering epigraphic objects pedagogically alive. Approaching the subject of Latin inscriptions – especially in the domains of such hermetic phenomena as abbreviations, ligatures, and particularly omissions such as *damnatio memoriae* – we propose a model of “serious gaming” as a playful but intrinsically AND extrinsically useful way to interrogate both the potentials and limits of digitally enhanced epigraphy and epigraphic teaching: sites where students negotiate inscriptions, ways to engage with texts, confront erasures etc. The core argument is that a gaming approach will possibly provoke reflection: framing the interpretative uncertainty of epigraphic documents within engaging challenges will possibly yield intrinsic (autotelic) pleasure of learning, but also extrinsic rewards of contributing to the academic community. For example: a decoding game where students expand abbreviations or resolve ambiguous ligatures; a scenario in which student-players must find solutions for textual omissions or erasure as results of corruption, devastation or the *damnatio memoriae* (which is of particular interest to this paper): an augmented-reality overlay that lets students “virtually reconstruct” a corrupt inscription, reconstruct the original

position of an inscription which was moved at some later stage, reconstruct a façade etc. – and possibly report the results. A conceptual prototype will be discussed and questions will be raised: how would we benefit from gamification of digital epigraphy? Could it add extrinsic value to the obviously heightened intrinsic value of such learning?

Marta Palandri - Symbols in the Machine: Post-NER Editorial Interventions

Named Entity Recognition (NER) is widely used in digital humanities to extract structured information from texts. Standard NER systems focus on people, places, and organizations, systematically excluding symbolic, metaphorical, and thematic entities that are central to literary and cultural interpretation. These limitations are not incidental, but reveal the assumptions built into computational models about what counts as a meaningful entity. This paper argues that editorial intervention is a critical method of knowledge production rather than a supplementary correction. Editors decide which entities are significant, how to classify them, and which relationships are analytically meaningful. These decisions shape the resulting corpus, network, or database, effectively constructing the knowledge that computational tools appear to uncover. In this talk, symbolic and conceptual entities—such as archetypal figures, motifs, and emotional or moral constructs—serve as test cases for the epistemic limits of automation, highlighting the selective vision of machine learning models and the invisible layer of editorial operations. Drawing on experience in technical and development editing, software development, and hands-on digital humanities practice, this paper demonstrates that editorial frameworks can formalize the treatment of abstract entities, making invisible human interpretive labor explicit and reproducible. The act of curating symbolic entities, mapping relationships, and structuring categories constitutes a methodological intervention that both challenges and extends the capabilities of computational methods.

Caitlin Wilson - Bridging legal and lay language: a BERT and AMR driven semantic search engine for The National Archives' Find Case Law service

Open justice requires that legal processes and decisions are transparent and accessible. The National Archives' Find Case Law (FCL) service advances this cause by providing free access to judgments and tribunal decisions from England and Wales. Yet, users without legal training often struggle to locate relevant judgments when legal language diverges from everyday usage. Terms such as 'owner' or 'custody' may appear intuitive in lay contexts but carry different or narrower meanings in legal discourse. This paper presents an interdisciplinary project combining computational linguistics, UX, and digital archiving to address this accessibility gap through a new prototype semantic search engine. Building on earlier embedding-based approaches, the system combines BERT embeddings with Abstract Meaning Representation (AMR) to capture meaning at both the distributional and structural levels. User queries are encoded as AMR graphs and aligned with graphs parsed from case law texts while BERT embeddings provide semantic similarity scores to rank candidate judgments. This dual-layer architecture facilitates retrieval by taking into account deeper linguistic relational structures as well as variations in vocabulary. The prototype also places a strong emphasis on explainability, allowing users to examine how standard query terms were translated into their legal equivalents, transforming the retrieval process from a "black box" to a transparent one. This work critically investigates what it means to operationalise "meaning" in digital archives from the standpoint of digital humanities. The project emphasises the technical difficulties and the epistemological risks of bridging professional and everyday discourses by combining computational methods with semantic theory and user research. As a result, the prototype offers a useful instrument for open justice as well as a critical analysis of the function of semantic technologies in digital cultural heritage.

Kevin Wunsch - Human in the Middle Annotations

This poster introduces "Human in the Middle Annotations," a concept for the development of a semi-automatic tool for Named Entity Recognition (NER) in Digital Edition Projects. NER is an information extraction subtask that seeks to locate and classify named entities in unstructured text into predefined categories such as persons, organizations, or locations. This concept utilizes an agentic AI system within a Human in the Middle (HitM) framework to streamline the annotation process. Agentic AI describes an artificial intelligence system that can achieve a specific goal with limited human supervision. Our concept envisions a system with one or more AI agents that mimic human decision-making to process data, identify entities, and annotate them in an editable format. These agents would employ various algorithms, such as SpaCy, StanfordNER, transformer-based models, and LLM-based approaches. A key feature of this conceptual system is its ability to identify the text type and make an educated guess as to which annotation method will yield the most accurate initial results. The Human in the Middle (HitM) framework is central to this concept, emphasizing the essential role of human agency in interacting with AI systems. In this proposed semi-automated workflow, the AI agent would first recognize entities and automatically add annotations to a web application. The human expert's main task is then to assess

these predictions, checking and correcting annotations where necessary. Crucially, all human interactions would be fed back into the system to further train the agent, continuously improving the quality of future results. This concept also confronts significant challenges ("Pitfalls" and "Problems") inherent in developing such a tool. These include navigating the ever-changing AI landscape, ensuring data privacy, and measuring success beyond simply counting human corrections. We also address the complexities of model selection, dependency on third-party models, the "black hole" nature of some AI, and determining the best methods for fine-tuning the system, such as reinforcement learning versus RAG. The guiding principle is to create a tool that is only as complex as needed to be effective. Kevin Wunsch studied History and English at Heidelberg University, where he also worked in the administration of the Department of History. He later took on the role of technical supervisor at the University and State Library Darmstadt. His work continues to focus on developing research questions from across the diverse fields of Digital Humanities, which also form the core of his academic research.

Reflecting on Digital Humanities: AI and Beyond (4)

Golnaz Sarkar Farshi - Pitfalls of "Digital Humanities": An Insider's Critique

The term "Digital Humanities" has been in use for over a decade. Driven by substantial funding, even prominent humanities scholars who once showed little interest in anything "digital" are now rapidly engaging with these topics. However, the abundance of produced papers and project outcomes exposes two significant shortcomings for those well-versed in both humanities research and computer science: 1. In their rush to adopt a methodology that was once uncommon in humanities research, scholars have overlooked the fundamental principles of their own discipline. Specifically, they are neglecting the precise use of terminology. Statistical analysis methods are often labeled as "digital" (in phrases such as "digital methods"), resulting in terms that lack semantic depth and clear definition. Moreover, research eager to apply these "digital methods" frequently reproduces previously established knowledge, merely embellishing it with a visualization here and a tabular dataset there. In this process, the humanities risk losing sight of their core principles, including the formulation of relevant research questions and the generation of genuine knowledge. 2. Many established scholars involved in "Digital Humanities" are producing texts on topics such as the workings of "AI" without fully grasping the broader implications of the term "AI" in computer science or possessing a solid understanding of the algorithms and mathematics underpinning it. This rushed engagement with a subject in which they have not deepened their knowledge has resulted in a multitude of papers filled with erroneous assumptions and misconceptions. In my presentation, I will address these gaps and propose strategies for our community of "Digital Humanists" to redirect our focus away from the pursuit of funding opportunities, and reflect on how we can return to the path of authentic research and knowledge production while working with the "digital," rather than continuing to generate texts that lack argumentative and conceptual rigor.

Jessica White - OCR Correction for LLMs: balancing accuracy and ethics

Recent attention toward large language models (LLMs) and generative AI (GenAI) in the humanities has broadly examined their ethical and environmental implications. While these conversations are crucial, this epistemological privileging of theory over practice has contributed to a lack of examples of applied use cases of GenAI in the humanities. In tandem, a need for subjective frameworks for assessing potential ethical risks has emerged. This paper aims to intervene in both of these areas by first presenting an LLM-augmented OCR correction pipeline before turning to a discussion of the specific ethical and epistemological questions this use case raises. The pipeline—developed using the University of Edinburgh's EDDIE high-performance computing (HPC) cluster—combines image-to-text and text-to-text GenAI models to clean and enhance OCR. I fine-tuned an open-access LLM on nineteenth-century English and integrated it into a two-stage workflow: first extracting OCR text using image-to-text models, then correcting the noisy output with the fine-tuned model. Preliminary findings suggest that this approach significantly reduces character error rates (CER), improving the searchability, readability, and accessibility of historical collections. If adopted at scale, such OCR pipelines could expand the availability of archival materials for computational analysis by reducing CER below 5–10%. However, improving digitised archives in this way introduces a range of ethical and infrastructural challenges. The pipeline relies on HPC and LLMs, making it computationally and environmentally expensive, and potentially inaccessible to researchers at smaller institutions or from non-technical backgrounds. Integrating GenAI into cultural heritage workflows also raises epistemological risks, such as embedding 'hallucinations' or misinformation into texts, or modernising historical language in unintended ways. Rather than offering a definitive solution to these issues, this paper invites debate on how we might critically balance the benefits of GenAI in humanities research against such challenges.

Fernando Nascimento, Crystal Hall, Theo Barton, Madina Sotvoldieva, Vianney Gomezgil Yaspik - AI Assistants in the Humanities: A Comparative Study with Texts by Paul Ricoeur and Galileo Galilei

Generative AI and large language models (LLMs) offer new possibilities for humanities research through conversational interfaces. Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) systems represent a particularly promising approach, as these customized chatbots combine the text-processing capabilities of LLMs with curated document collections, enabling AI to generate responses focused on specific corpora rather than their entire training data. This technique could liberate digitized humanities materials from rigid keyword-search constraints, helping students and junior scholars navigate complex theoretical works and extensive archives more effectively. However, RAG systems face significant challenges. Beyond broader concerns about AI's labor practices, environmental impact, and bias, RAG's effectiveness proves inconsistent depending on corpus characteristics and whether source texts were prevalent in the LLM's original training data. Since RAG generates probabilistic outputs like other AI systems, reliability remains a critical concern for academic accuracy. These issues prompt essential questions about how large foundational models interact with smaller, specialized ones. To investigate RAG's viability for humanities research, the authors developed two specialized systems: one for Paul Ricoeur's English-language philosophical works and another for Galileo Galilei's Italian writings. They are conducting a controlled experiment in which domain experts compare RAG-generated responses with those from standard generative AI models. The study examines four key questions: Can RAG systems effectively assist humanities scholarship? How do they perform across different disciplines? Does the prevalence of source text in training data affect the results? And are there performance differences between English and Italian systems? Although focused on two specific cases, this research provides empirical evidence about RAG's effectiveness in bridging the gap between AI technologies and humanistic scholarship. The findings will inform broader methodological development for model-based analysis in the digital humanities, helping scholars understand the appropriate epistemological frameworks for engaging with AI tools while maintaining the accuracy and rigor that academic research requires.

Scott Wark - The “Contentification” of the Web: Studying Digital Culture Before and After GenAI

Generative Artificial Intelligence is changing the web. From undermining whole industries to flooding digital spaces with ‘AI slop,’ it’s clear that the web –digital culture – is in transition. This paper uses a critical engagement with GenAI as the basis for a critical reflection on what it means for our capacity to conceptualise and critique digital culture.

In the platform-driven, Web 2.0 era, digital culture has been organized by a tension between the user and the platform: the user has been encouraged to produce and share content, while the platform is designed to control culture’s byproducts (in the form of data, labour, value, access, etcetera). One possible future inaugurated by GenAI is a break with this Web 2.0 compact. This paper questions this narrative by arguing that we ought to see GenAI as an extension of existing processes encapsulated by the term ‘platformisation.’ Amongst other things, platforms have arguably been designed to automate the production and circulation of media content. In this view, the emergence of ‘AI slop,’ or content reduced to a bland ‘mean,’ is an extension of an already-existing process: what I call ‘contentification,’ or the production of contentless content for the purposes of keeping media circulating and attention captured.

What does ‘contentification’ mean for digital culture and its study? Such processes may undermine the attention-based economy that supports the web as we know it today. But this moment ought to make us question how we conceptualise and study digital culture and its content(s). GenAI is able to smooth content into a contentless, mediocre mean because this is what comprises the vast majority of the web’s contents: filler such as stock images, marketing copy, placeholder videos, etcetera. To understand GenAI, it’s the production and circulation of this kind of media that we urgently need to study.

Computational Sound and Music (4)

Luca Marinelli, Iacopo Ghinassi, Charalampos Saitis - Leveraging RAG for a Low-Resource Audio-Aware Diachronic Analysis of Gendered Toy Marketing

Music can be imbued with distinct identity dimensions upon which ideological discourses are promulgated. Gender is one of these identity dimensions, while androcentrism and heteronormativity are its hegemonic ideological discourses. Multimodal genres—which underlie this phenomenon in media portrayals—describe “regular patterns of semiotic choices in multimodal communicative objects and events that are particular to specific communities and cultures”. Toy commercials are organized in distinct gender-based multimodal genres. In this work, we explore how multimodal genres change over time, at the intersection of music and language. We performed a diachronic analysis of sound and language in toy commercials, leveraging retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) and open-weight language models in low-resource settings. A pool of 2508 UK toy advertisements spanning 14 years was semi-automatically annotated, integrating thematic coding of transcripts with audio annotation. With our RAG pipeline, we thematically coded and classified commercials by gender-target audience (feminine, masculine, or mixed) achieving substantial inter-coder reliability. In parallel, a music-focused multitask model was applied to annotate affective and mid-level musical perceptual attributes, enabling multimodal discourse analysis. Our findings reveal significant diachronic shifts and enduring patterns. Soundtracks classified as energizing registered an overall increase across distinct themes and audiences, but such increase was steeper for masculine-adjacent commercials. Moreover, themes stereotypically associated with masculinity paired more frequently with louder, distorted, and aggressive music, while stereotypically feminine themes with softer, calmer, and more harmonious soundtracks. Code and data to reproduce the results are available on github.com/marinelliluca/low-resource-RAG.

Iain Emsley - Programmed Noise: Structuring Sound in Programming Languages

Sound and computing have a long history that stretches from early mainframes until generative AI systems. This paper focuses on construction of sound in programming languages. I focus on the construction of sound using the given commands as a set of sonic primitives. The move away from signals to the BASIC language changes the design of these primitives. I use computational porosity (Berry, 2024) to explore how cultural concepts are filtered through computational language and create new social relationships. Programming languages are seen as a way of structuring what forms can be read by the underlying machine, while being a way to use or restructure these options, but the implementation shows the relationship with the machine and the developer. It is argued that this democratisation leads to software becoming a porous layer where software provides the structures for sound through which both social and epistemological relations can be read. The early history of programming sound from signals in the transition between two stages—pre-personal (or Mainframe) and the personal—that show differing possibilities of language concerns and creation. Mainframe computing allows programmers a freedom to define their own structures, such representing structures through the combination of partial notes, or basic concepts of sound in a numeric list. The BASIC programming language is designed to make programming accessible (Rankin, 2018). A reading of the defined commands from manuals for personal machines—such as the BBC or Commodore—show hardware creators’ affect in implementing the language. This shows a development of concepts of the possibility of sound from interacting with memory or hardware to structures and terms. This allows sound to be understood as a structured computational object.

Martin Nicastro, Mattia Zanotti - Computational Humanities and Digital Methods: Currents and Future Perspectives in Popular Music Studies

This paper examines how recent advancements in computational humanities and digital methods can reshape the field of popular music studies. We focus on two complementary case studies that integrate historical and platform-based perspectives. The first case study presents a deep mapping of Milan’s music ecosystem between 1958 and 1962. Drawing on 8,228 live music events documented in historical newspapers, we applied geospatial and network analysis to reconstruct the city’s cultural landscape. The results were visualized in a multi-layered digital map, which subsequently functioned as a mnemonic device during interviews with musicians active at the time. Their recollections were then geolocated within the map itself, transforming it into a hybrid platform that combines archival reconstruction, oral history, and multimedia dissemination. The second case study shifts the focus to contemporary platform environments and introduces digital methods designed to investigate the

micromateriality of music as it circulates online. These tools are distinctive in that they allow platform-based music to be studied within its native context – on Spotify, YouTube, and TikTok –, without abstracting it from the specific media logics in which it is produced, circulated, and re-mediated. This approach makes it possible to highlight the layered, and often opaque, interrelations that shape platformised music on Spotify, YouTube and TikTok. Two examples are discussed: one centered on the remediation of Italo disco, the other on Italian trap. In conclusion, we argue that combining historical mapping with platform-based analysis enables researchers to trace continuities and ruptures in musical practices across media and time. Interactive visualizations produced through computational research are not only dissemination tools but also potential objects of inquiry in their own right: by observing how users engage with them, dissemination itself becomes an additional methodological layer. Building on this perspective, future research may design participatory interfaces that invite audiences to explore, interact with, and collectively enrich popular music heritage.

Barry Ife, Jasper van der Klis - Texting Scarlatti: large-scale phylogenetic analysis in historical musicology

The 'Texting Scarlatti' project (Leverhulme Trust, 2023-2025) undertook the first comprehensive, systematic collation of over 3,300 eighteenth-century manuscript and printed copies of the 555 keyboard sonatas by the Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757). Drawing on methods adapted from the life sciences, we employed phylogenetic software to analyse relationships between extant sources and to help map the transmission of Scarlatti's music across Europe. Crucially, the dataset for this project was created with the assistance of some thirty (paid) volunteer researchers from around the world. Referred to as the Argos group, our team used a bespoke machine-readable coding system with which 190,000 variants were recorded and analysed. In this paper we reflect on what this project reveals about the current possibilities and limitations of computational methods in historical musicology, and consider the broader implications for reproducibility and collaborative practice in the digital humanities.

Softwares, Databases, Histories (4)

Sebastian Randerath - Realties. Reflections on software historiography

Real-time planning software shapes our lives. According to a 2020 investor fact sheet from the German ERP vendor SAP, 77% of global transaction revenue involved the planning software provided by SAP alone. Historiographical research into real-time planning software provides important insights into the emergence of supply chain capitalism, the outsourcing of labor, and the history of cloud infrastructures since the 1970s. This history provides important precursors and early stories of what we understand as digital capitalism, industrial digital twinning, or platform capitalism. Methodologically, however, the historiographical study of real-time planning software poses central challenges that elude both classical historiographical methods and methodological considerations of software studies. Combining source-reflective archival research with web and platform historiographical methods, the paper outlines a comprehensive approach to the software historiography of real-time planning software. This approach incorporates methodological considerations on digital methods and software studies by Chun, Rieder, Kirschenbaum, Helmond and van der Vlist, among others, and combines them into a (source) reflexive and critical approach that makes it possible to examine the history of software based on historical sources and various software paradigms with regard to their technicity, power arrangements, and work structures. This approach is outlined in the paper using the history of SAP real-time planning software from around 1970 to 2010. Methodologically, the perspective on SAP draws on a large amount of archival, web, and platform historical sources and combines these under the methodological approach of software historiography. In particular, the question of real-time or the historical development of multiple real-times and their temporal power plays a central role in source-reflective research into technicity, power arrangements, and work structures. The paper thus closes a gap between early and contemporary histories of software and opens up new methodological perspectives on the historiographical study of software.

Maryam Tatari - When Interactions Cease to Exist: Accessibility Repair and the Ontology of Databases

This paper investigates how accessibility repair reveals the ontological politics of databases in digital public infrastructures. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a user tracking laboratory in Germany's public service media (ARD), this paper asks: How do database schemas function as interfaces of recognition, shaping who can exist within a system? And in what ways does repair reconfigure these conditions of existence? Databases are not passive storage devices, but rather contingent infrastructures that require constant maintenance. The database schema and data pipelines decide which user interactions and experiences can become "real": stored, dated, and clustered. When accessibility-based user interactions, such as screen-reader navigation, are absent and not taken as "real," then a whole engagement experience ceases to exist in infrastructural memory. Hence, repair inscribes these forgotten interactions into the database, transforming them from invisible traces into recognized forms of participation. This work is on invisible labour and in itself is an ontological shift: the system gains the capacity to make new worlds, hosting new forms of userhood, and embedding new ways of interaction. Ultimately, this paper draws on databases as sites where design and politics converge, where repair redefines what counts as interaction, and where the very boundaries of digital beings are negotiated.

Benjamin Pelling - Capturing and preserving digital Holocaust memory – an overview of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab's 'living database-archive'

As Holocaust memory becomes increasingly digital, how do these projects influence what is preserved? What role does the technology play in the memory-making? Who are the people and institutions behind these projects? And, what can be learnt if we capture and archive these digital works and experiences? These are some of the questions that have inspired the Landecker Digital Memory Lab's 'living database-archive' of digital Holocaust memory (to be released early in 2026). This new platform brings together walkthroughs of digital projects created by Holocaust museums, memorials and archives. Complementing these walkthroughs are interviews with the diverse range of people involved in their production. In addition, the database captures a wide range of related metadata including, interview transcripts, curated indexed tags, geo-location data, and dated project milestones. The proposed paper will firstly outline the process by which the database content was gathered, cleaned, annotated in parallel to the technical build of the platform. This will include insights as to what approaches proved most successful and which had to be amended. The paper will then highlight some of the digital research tools and visualisations that have been built into the database, such as a map that shows a network of relations between subject matter locations and the locations of the capturing project teams, and a thematic network diagram that highlights where the metadata tags used in the interviews and walkthroughs are connected. Finally, the paper will provide some early examples of the research that I am undertaking by applying a range of digital research methods to the full corpus captured by the database project. Such as, a textual analysis of the interviews and studying changes over time (particularly as the underlying technologies available to the museums, memorials and archives have themselves developed).

Damini Kulkarni - History in the Making: Analyzing Indian film audiences' experiments with digitality's database affordances

Indian cinema has been woven thickly with the identity, national and otherwise, of audiences in the country. Sequestering parts of these films, in the form of song booklets or posters, for example, has been a crucial element of Indian cinephilia, and by extension, to the bolstering of the identity of Indian film audiences. As Indian films, both new and old, start to appear on digital platforms, audiences begin to create film-related repositories that are increasingly composed of digital objects. Since the history of Indian cinema has often been mapped atop the history of the nation's attempts to define and delimit its identity, the consolidation of cinema on the internet has clear implications for the connections between Indian cinema, the historicity and identity of its audiences, and the discourse around Indian national history. This study finds that young Indian audiences use the database logics of digitality to create and maintain collections of memes, reels, and screenshots, and also, with varying degrees of self-awareness and irony, demonstrate an ability to weave personal stories of identity and becoming into and out of these objects. In doing so, Indian film audiences are, quite literally, embodying (in the sense of "giving body to") the contested relationship between database logic and narratives: their stories of becoming enable the database to become imbued with narrative, and vice versa. This study attempts to detail the potential of this renegotiation between database and narrative, which Indian film audiences consuming cinema online are capable of performing, to lead us toward a sharper understanding of the relationship between history and identity as it is being forged in an India that is now increasingly advocating for a push towards digital technologies.

AI in Humanities: Trust, Illusion and Critique (4)

John Bradley and, Geoffrey Rockwell - Why bother with tools when you can simply chat?: The role of DH tools in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Text analysis and visualization is one of the earliest research streams within the Digital Humanities, and it has followed a conceptual trajectory from Father Busa's early concordancing work through TACT (<https://tapor.ca/tools/199>) to the Web-based Voyant system (<https://voyant-tools.org>) which was awarded the ADHO's Zampolli prize in 2022 (Busa 1951; Bradley 1991; Rockwell & Sinclair 2016). Recently, however, an entirely new conceptual approach to the analysis of texts has been made possible by Generative AI: you can simply upload your text to ChatGPT/Gemini/Claude and use natural language prompts to ask for analysis and visualization. There is no need to learn complex tools; instead you can engage an AI in a dialogue about your text or corpus. From the perspective of this new approach, the previous TA tools begin to look like GOFTA (Good Old-Fashioned Text Analysis) by comparison, and the parallels between this and the GOFAI vs Gen-AI development are striking. Why then bother with the tools so carefully crafted by digital humanists? We shall explore this issue by: * theorizing the interaction we have with tools and comparing it to the chat or dialogue we have with AI Large Language Models; * providing some examples of prompts that work to generate textual visualizations, including prompts that generate hallucinations; and * discussing some of the challenges and bullshit (Hicks, M. T., et al. 2024) of Generative AI. Everyone knows that one can't always trust Generative AI's chatter by itself. We will conclude by calling for hybrid practices that balance or combine tools and Generative AI.

Kostas Karpouzis - The Illusion of Neutrality in AI for the Humanities

AI is widely used in Digital Humanities projects, from text mining and image recognition to generative modeling and classification tasks. These systems are often adopted as if they were neutral instruments, tools that simply enhance the speed or scale of analysis. However, information from Computer Science and research results challenge that view: AI models are built on training data that reflect social, cultural, and linguistic hierarchies, often privileging English language sources, dominant historical narratives, and standardized forms of knowledge. Their outputs depend not only on algorithms, but also on assumptions about language, meaning, and structure that are rarely explainable. This paper examines cases where AI introduces distortions into cultural analysis, including bias in Large Language Models, the flattening of historical ambiguity in predictive systems, and the reduction of affect in sentiment classification. These examples show that AI systems can reproduce or even intensify patterns of exclusion, particularly along lines of geography, language, and race. At the same time, we discuss practical strategies within DH for making AI use more transparent and accountable. These include curating alternative training datasets, foregrounding uncertainty, and building interpretability into project design. Rather than treating AI as a threat or a solution, we argue that it should be approached as an infrastructure with political and epistemic consequences; the goal is not to abandon AI in DH, but to educate ourselves and our students to work with it critically, with close attention to how it shapes the questions we ask and the knowledge we produce.

Shani Evenstein Sigalov, Jane Winters - Reframing the Humanities in the Age of Generative AI: Toward Critical and Care-Based Approaches to Digital Knowledge

This paper examines how Humanities professionals across academia, research, and cultural heritage sectors are encountering and adopting Generative AI (GenAI) technologies, guided by five research questions: who is engaging with these tools, how do they learn about and build trust in them, how do they feel about them, what benefits and challenges do they perceive, and how do they envisage the future trajectories of their field? Drawing on a mixed-methods study of 248 participants across 23 countries, the interplay between demographics, learning pathways, emotions, utility assessments, and forward-looking visions shaping adoption behaviours was examined. Key findings include three 'paradoxes', particularly the Trust-Adoption Paradox, showing that low levels of Trust coexist with surprisingly high uptake, as professionals experiment with tools that they openly question. Analysis revealed patterns of critical adoption that challenge prevailing technology acceptance models. While established frameworks emphasise individual decision-making and utility-driven behaviour, findings reveal a more complex picture, where emotional ambivalence, institutional dynamics and regional/national/international contexts play roles. To address the paradoxes and gaps in existing adoption frameworks, the study offers a Multi-Dimensional Technology Adoption (MDTA) framework, conceptualising adoption as a dynamic process unfolding across interconnected micro (individual), meso (institutional), and macro (regional, national, and international) dimensions, inspired by DH's Scalable Reading approaches. The framework highlights the emotional, cultural and political forces that shape adoption and the analytical sophistication with which Humanities professionals evaluate and integrate emerging technologies. It reveals the under-recognised

expertise of Humanities communities and argues for their inclusion in AI governance conversations as critical contributors, offering a tool for more context-sensitive adoption strategies across sectors.

Doug Stark - The Synthetic Humanities?

This paper introduces the concept of Synthetic Humanities by drawing on lessons learned from establishing a Synthetic Humanities Lab within the English Department at the University of Texas at Arlington. The opening section addresses terminology: why “synthetic” rather than “generative” or a continuation of “digital?” Building on terms like “synthetic literacy” and “synthetic media,” as well as recent accounts of how large language models enact “synthesis” (Fazi 2024), I argue that “synthetic” better captures the novelty of today’s technological condition. Where the Digital Humanities grappled with the objects and methods wrought by digitization, the second section outlines the emerging objects and methods of the Synthetic Humanities, with a focus on a stable diffusion exercise in a digital media class and rapid prototyping in a game design course. The third section turns to the infrastructural challenges that accompany work with synthetic systems: the difficulty of securing sufficient compute to run models locally rather than through corporate platforms; the ephemerality of tools, which require constant updating and adaptation in both research and teaching; and the ethical questions surrounding data, IP, and the environment. Ultimately, a Synthetic Humanities Lab can function as a research venue for new technologies, an instructional resource for an evolving educational landscape, and a service to faculty who want to stay abreast of developments without becoming AI specialists. Of course, DH proves that a humanities lab designed to deal with new tech isn’t at all new, and at UTA, we could’ve called it a DH lab too. But winning academic funding is like getting into a nightclub – you have to look sexy. The choice of “synthetic” was in no small part strategic, an example of the move I conclude with in adopting Anna Watkins Fisher’s notion of the “play in the system” to describe an ethos of strategic complicity (2020): humanists can exploit the current wave of AI overinvestment to redirect resources toward critical and creative practice.

Death of the Artist, Liveness & Digital Sovereignty in the Arts (4)

Naf X - From Liveness to Likeness: Death of the Artist in the Platform Era

The ontology of performance has historically been tethered to 'liveness': a condition where the ephemeral co-presence of bodies meet the coordinates of shared temporality of performer and audience. Yet, in today’s cultural economy of deep mediation, liveness can no longer sustain itself as the organising principle where bodies are being distributed across space and time. We have quietly entered a scenario where what circulates, persists, and accrues value is barely the (a)live body, but its rendered likeness. While likeness economies can be traced to technologically lower resolution performances (e.g.: musicals), novel technologies enable the bodily agency to migrate towards IP-holders, platform infrastructures, and algorithmic engines. The artists could potentially never die (or even having needed to live), while being worked (and taxed) beyond death. If mortality is no longer anchored in flesh, crucial questions emerge: Who inherits performance without the performer? What becomes of artistry when reproduction trumps creation? Who, or what replaces performers? This paper proposes ‘likeness economy’ as a critical framework for understanding contemporary performing arts. Drawing on cases such as ABBA Voyage’s avatars and AI-band Velvet Sundown, I argue that likeness functions as a triffecta of currency, method, and medium. As Currency, it is traded, licensed, and extracted across tribute acts, AI-generated voices, immersive musicals, etc. As Method, the creative practices largely stage spectres, thereby deliberately decoupling the image from the body. As Medium, avatars emerging as image-native performers are no longer mere representations of humans but (likely autonomous) imageries with infinite replicability. The particulars of staging likeness over liveness reconfigures liveness’ insistence on presence, immediacy, and mortality, towards likeness’ privileging of rendering, circulation, and persistence. The paper contends that likeness economy is not merely a peripheral node in the liveness debate, but a central prospect in understanding postmodern cultural (re)productions.

Eva Nieto McAvoy, Bethan Jones, Jenny Kidd - Crafting responsible AI afterlives: co-designing in the cultural heritage sector

In this paper we introduce and reflect upon our recent work - in collaboration with UK cultural heritage professionals and alongside creative studio yello brick – to co-design an innovative workbook for museum/historic sites navigating the creation of ‘AI afterlives’. As the capabilities of AI-enabled voice ‘clones’ and ‘deepfake’ technologies improve, working with AI afterlives is becoming a viable proposition for many museums and historic

sites. However these practices – in varied ways – expose deep ethical questions about consent, legacy, ownership and custodianship. How should we work with the digital human remains of public figures and cultural ‘icons’ (and when shouldn’t we)? How might permissions, and perhaps our regulatory frameworks, need to be (re)configured? And how might these approaches accelerate concerns about trust and mis/dis-information? In 2024 we began work on a co-designed pilot workbook to help those working in museums and heritage contexts navigate the emerging challenges of AI afterlives. Through a series of workshops, cultural professionals experimented with digital afterlife tools and reflected on the values and principles guiding their organisations. In Spring 2025 we carried out extensive user testing and evaluation with a wide range of participants. Their feedback and reflections informed the development of the resource that we are presenting here, a framework that supports heritage professionals to reflect on these practices through innovative scenarios and interactive models. This work is part of the Leverhulme Trust-funded Synthetic Pasts project (2024-6), a critical-creative inquiry into what future(s) for personal and collective memory our algorithmic present anticipates and paves the way for. This paper will give an account of the project and our key takeaways from this rich, and ongoing, creative collaboration.

Carolina Alexandre Calixto - Popular Digital Sovereignty and cooperative relationships: Reclaiming hegemonic spaces through the use of Artificial Intelligence in art

This paper is an invitation for all of the art workers to begin to imagine new possibilities of cooperation with Artificial Intelligence frameworks, as well as to reimagine how this technological artifact can shape new forms of political and cultural paradigms, expressed by its usage and implementation. Understanding, from the point of view of ongoing projects in art field from the Global South, that AI can be a new language (FERRÃO, 2024) available to be mixed with other languages in the art process, we intend to analyze the ethical, political and cultural discourse between art workers that are made with the background of AI and their work as a form of resistance against colonialism, sexism and racism, reshaping not only the definition of “presence” of this tool in their artwork as an identity but their relationship with this digital technology. The methodology applied for this paper was to do an analysis of the work of artists that engage with AI in order to stand for a political, cultural or social cause, identifying the necessary theoretical references to do the analysis within the concepts of popular digital sovereignty and ethical AI. The findings suggest that AI frameworks can be a powerful tool in the context of co-operation with art workers, mixing various languages without losing the presence of the artist within their work, revealing their intent of fighting back oppressions raised in society and amplified by digital platforms through creative and critical life drives.

Peter Conlin - Data Annotation and Connotation: Probability, Writing and Critique

This paper explores issues around critical writing in the age of automated predictive statistics and AI mania. The thesis I am exploring is that we are living in the prediction society, and that all references to AI, big data and platformisation are really elements of how probabilistic rationality and operation are reshaping reality. A caveat being that these ‘predictions’ are more about behaviour modification and calculation than forecasting the future. My contention is that although there are vast critical studies of automation and datafication, the predictive thrust of digital technologies has not been fully reckoned with. The objective, then, is to think through what does it mean to do critical writing in social life increasingly integrated into probabilistic systems. The paper explores related concepts and issues through a hybrid of argumentation and poetic prose written in a series of prompts-as-apophorisms. It is written from a quasi-fictional construct: the AI prompt writer. Outlier, a subsidiary of Scale AI Inc., defines the role as ‘helping the world’s most innovative companies improve their AI models by providing human feedback.’ The intention is to explore methodological aspirations for critical writing through this tragicomic framing, along with some value-added liberatory absurdity. Conceptual areas explored in the entries are centred around knowledge politics: the post-epistemic condition (from knowledge to automated operation) in the way AI stats are not representational but operational, connected to Kornbluh’s concept of immediacy; the relation between knowing and betting (pace David Gauthier); the politicisation of chance (in a realm organised around the ideal of total prediction, chance takes on weird stakes as a site of the possible); unknown probabilities (thinking of mystery and constitutive unknowing within statistical vision); and sketching out a transcoding of capitalist realism into the fatalism of predictive reality.

Embodiment and Resistance in Algorithmic Mediation (4)

Judd Smith - In Whom we Trust? Embodied Knowledge in Digital Communication: Reclaiming Physical Presence in Technological Mediation

The rapid evolution of communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the phenomenology of place and how we experience, record and share our relations with ourselves, community, and space. While current AI software—trained on datasets over-indexed in the global north—offer unprecedented capabilities for content generation, they simultaneously hasten our detachment from the embodied communication of experience and local knowledge. Screen-based interfaces have homogenized and flatten our complex interaction engine (Levinson 2006) into a faint set of textual indexes predetermined by technological ecosystems. While digital platforms promised to democratize information access, they instead reconstitute our communicative attention into commercial assets while algorithmically homogenizing cultural understanding. Our research investigates new forms of embodied attention through technological mediation of place-based knowledge. How can communication technologies utilize the full spectrum of human embodied interaction to strengthen place-based knowledge and organic trust? Through participatory design and cultural observation, we are developing tangible interfaces responding to collective haptic input. We investigate new tactile interfaces that protect embodied knowledge and community agency in collective understanding through new sensors and interaction patterns. Through rapid prototyping, these design systems prioritize elements of multimodal intersubjective communication based on the fundamental building blocks for mutual understanding including “backchanneling,” (Schegloff 1982) successful “turn-taking,” and “repair” (Schegloff 1977). This work contributes to discussions around technological sovereignty by exploring alternatives to the incumbent ecosystems. We must expand our minimum standard of mobile communication beyond messaging to encompass our emotional presence.

Hanna Wentz - The Sensortype: Exposing the Recursive Ontology of the Digital Image

Digital images should not be understood as reflections of human vision, but outputs of machinic systems with their own sensory logics. Cameras are computers that record, compress and classify. They do not see as we do. To understand contemporary images, we must move beyond representational frameworks and instead examine the technical apparatuses that govern visibility. This shift opens up new possibilities for image-making that are expressive, critically-situated, and attuned to their conditions of production. As a response, I introduce the sensortype: a new category of mixed-exposure image that interrogates the computational mediation of digital photography. Rather than conforming to photographic instrumentalization, sensortypes reveal the recursive and contingent nature of computational vision by foregrounding lighting conditions, sensor technology, file formats, denoising algorithms, and compression schemes. Drawing on the practice of investigative aesthetics, I frame sensortypes as visual inquiries that expose and map the hidden technical conditions of machine seeing. By engaging post-processing not as correction but as critical revelation, these images make visible the infrastructures that underlie contemporary image-making. Sensortypes are both artistic strategy and theoretical tool, contributing to a digital art history attuned to mediation, material systems, and the politics of algorithmic visibility.

Berk Alkoç - Navigating Against the Algorithm: Neurodivergent Ways of Moving Through the Mediated City

Commercial mapping apps shape how urban space is perceived and traversed, privileging speed, popularity, and monetizable attention. This paper investigates how such defaults meet embodied sensory difference. Focusing on neurodivergent adults with sensory sensitivities, it asks: how do users appropriate, resist, or reconfigure mapping platforms to move through the city, and what does this reveal about the normative assumptions embedded in their algorithms and interfaces? Drawing on qualitative research with 20 participants in Berlin—combining contextual interviews, walk-along/think-aloud sessions, and short screenshot/route diaries—the study traces everyday tactics that exceed or subvert platform logics. Anticipated practices include pre-scanning Street View for light and crowd cues; time-shifting to avoid “popular” periods; stitching side streets and green corridors the default route ignores; and mining review text for proxies (quiet seating, low music) absent from official filters. These workarounds surface sensory politics in interface and ranking systems: coarse accessibility tags, misleading “busy” indicators, ad-boosted venues displacing safer options, and the cognitive load of constant

customization. The analysis reframes mapping apps as sociotechnical systems that encode normative bodies and movements, not neutral wayfinders. The paper contributes (1) an account of neurodivergent navigation as situated design critique; (2) a typology of feature appropriations and frictions; and (3) actionable implications for sensory-inclusive routing and review design—richer sensory metadata, user-controlled thresholds for noise/crowding/light, and prompts that prioritize access over gamified popularity. More broadly, it argues for care-centered mobility metrics beyond speed and throughput in mediated cities.

Firuz Huseynova - Exploring Alternative Interfaces for Digital Music-Listening

A general malaise has been brewing among music-listeners and musicians for a number of years now; the dominant form of digitally interacting with music feels optimized for corporate profits over user experience and musical flourishing. Users are seeking alternatives to the streaming model mastered by Spotify and later mimicked by competitors, but become 'locked in' to hegemonic platforms due to network effects and high perceived switching costs (Ghaffari et al. 2025). At a time when new interfaces are actively being proposed and designed, this paper seeks to critically investigate the viability of alternative interfaces for digital music-listening through a combination of primary artifact analysis and semi-structured interviews. Inspired by the artifact analysis approach detailed in Odom et al. (2022), this paper explores four established and emerging alternative interfaces for digital music-listening as objects of study: Nina Protocol, Subvert, Apple Music Classical, and SoundCloud. Adopting an artifact analysis approach gives prominence to first-hand insights emerging through the creation of real platforms that materially ground conceptual ideas through their actual existence - "a process of moving from the particular, general and universal to the ultimate particular - the specific design." (Nelson & Stolterman 2003, p. 33). In addition, through conducting semi-structured interviews with artists, founders, and music industry professionals, this paper aims to answer the broad question: how can we design alternative interfaces for digital music-listening? The word 'alternative', intentionally utilized for its subjectivity, will be defined inductively based on qualitative insights gleaned from interviews. In classic DH fashion, this paper draws on literature across varied disciplines including human-computer interaction (HCI), critical technical practice, affect studies, and science and technology studies (STS), with the ultimate goal of generating unique knowledge that contributes to building a healthier digital music-listening environment.

Generative AI & Critical Aesthetics (4)

Klara Källström, Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan - Annotation Fever! On Critical Aesthetic Practice in Generative AI

This presentation by artists Klara Källström and Tobias Fäldt and media theorist Bernard Geoghegan explores annotation, foundational to the creation of datasets for generative AI, as a series of ongoing artistic and pedagogical exercises. Initiated in 2025 as part of the Gothenburg Biennale for Contemporary Art and currently on view at Fotografisk Center in Copenhagen, the project continues into an upcoming exhibition at Camera Austria in Graz. Building on Källström and Fäldt's two-decade collaboration, marked by critical experiments in photography, appropriation, and media aesthetics, the project explores how annotation increasingly permeate collective vision. In today's generative AI, the photographic is everywhere and nowhere at once. Photography's histories, conventions, and archives form the foundation of training large datasets, which, in turn, condition the emergence of statistical logics used to read and generate new sets of images. At the core of these processes lies annotation. Annotation is not only central to machine learning but also to documentary practice. In *On This Day*, this becomes evident in the Beijing Silvermine archive of vernacular Chinese photography, assembled by artist Thomas Sauvin, where date stamps dotting negatives function as a kind of proto-AI annotation. These marks are not simply placeholders but sites of events, ruptures in representation that cannot be fully translated yet insist on acknowledgment. They highlight both what is present and what resists circulation. Annotation is also the basis of today's multimodal models, which rely on tens or even hundreds of thousands of dispersed human annotators, meaning every machine-readable image bears a collective intelligence. To annotate is to learn to see as the machine sees, aligning human intuition with statistical deduction. The exhibition and workshops expose these invisible negotiations while raising questions of authorship, ownership, and computational afterlives. Annotation becomes a way of marking what tomorrow's collective perception will become.

Martina Pace - Distributed Creativity: Art, Agency, and AI

This contribution investigates the intersections between contemporary artistic practices and generative systems as a framework to analyze the broader human–machine relationship. The aim is to propose the notion of co-creativity as a critical tool to foreground the reciprocal interplay between human beings, technical systems, and their digitalized environments. This opens the possibility of overcoming a merely instrumental model of interaction, resisting a reductionist rhetoric that flattens the technical object into a single operational dimension. Mutual influence instead gives rise to systemic emergence irreducible to either agent alone, pointing toward a collective dimension. In this sense, we can speak of a distributed logic that resemanticizes the creative process itself, decentering it from the culturally codified notion of singular authorship. This also entails acknowledging that creativity has always been structurally mediated by its material and technological conditions (Zylinska, 2020), and that artistic experimentation offers fertile ground to make such conditions visible. In this light, creativity can be seen as a negotiation at the intersection of computational automation and subjective intentionality. AI systems intensify this dynamic, framing the artwork as an emergence, a constellation of human and non-human agentive intersections and dialogues. At the same time, these technologies are not neutral tools: they incorporate the possibility of opacity and cultural bias which, among other serious concerns, can entail a reduction of the creative process to automated pattern replication. As paradigmatic examples of practices seeking to overcome and challenge these issues, the work of Sougwen Chung, Sasha Stiles, and Anna Ridler will be examined. Their creative processes, developed in collaboration with algorithmic systems, will unfold as instances of participatory collaboration that make the distributed and relational nature of creativity clearly visible.

Mona Hedayati - At the Threshold of Algorithmic Logic: Towards a Critical Aesthetics

This proposal explores how artistic practice can offer a critical methodology for engaging with the increasing integration of AI into contemporary life. As such systems shape perception, decision-making, and communication, artistic experimenting at the intersection of art, digital technology, and critical inquiry are well positioned to challenge the normative assumptions embedded in big data ecologies and the algorithmic infrastructures of deep learning—the technical core of what is widely referred to as AI today. This contribution focuses on how art-based methods—through speculation, processuality, and materiality—can interrogate AI's epistemic assumptions, shifting the focus from accelerated pragmatism to critical retooling and remediation. It examines how artistic inquiry can reframe the force of correlation, classification, and predictive control. Drawing from science and technology studies (STS), feminist critical data studies, and media archaeology, the discussion highlights how dominant approaches to AI not only marginalizes certain demographics but also inherent human qualities such as embodiment, emotion, situatedness, and relationality. By intervening into these dimensions, artistic practice can work against flattening lived experience into extractable data points and optimized outputs. Methodologically, the aim is to highlight critical-technical practice(s) (Agre 1997), emphasizing approaches such as data materialization (Wiens et al. 2020) and data visceralization (D'Ignazio and Klein 2020) that counter the abstraction and distraction logic of machine learning. Case studies touch upon web-based platforms and synthetic data repositories designed through rigorously critical artistic projects to intervene in and disrupt AI's recognition and integration systems. These works complicate assumptions about data transparency in AI practices and challenge the tropes of datafication by exposing the feedback loops and control architectures. The contribution thus argues for artistic interventions as a central force in reimagining how AI is developed and deployed, positioning artists as critical agents in shaping AI's cultural and technical imaginaries and materialities.

Sorcha Ní Bhraonáin - Performing death-tech: The staging of digital grief in Ulrike Quade Company's Roman & ELIZA

The advent of the 'technological theatre', live theatrical performance taking place in a hybrid digital environment, poses an apt setting to explore the increasing enmeshment of virtual and material realities evinced by digital technologies. This setting emphasises how virtual environments are not devoid of sense, materiality and physicality much like how 'real-world' environments are informed by imaginal and speculative dimensions. Performance as method remains an under-explored form of critical inquiry into digital technologies both on the level of application – the technologies used to create the performance – and on the level of content – the narratives and socio-cultural understandings of technologies as central a topic of the performance itself. Roman & ELIZA is an ongoing artistic research project by Ulrike Quade Company developed in collaboration with the IDlab (Amsterdam University of the Arts) as part of the EU Horizon project PREMIERE. It seeks to investigate emerging technologies known as 'griefbots', generative AI-powered bots built from the digital data of the deceased. Amidst online mourning rituals and the growing 'death-tech' industry, data-driven technologies continually disrupt our conceptions of death and processes of grieving. To explore these ideas, the project employs several analogue and digital technologies through the combination of puppetry, motion capture (digital puppetry), XR and generative AI motion analysis tools. A multidimensional sense of reality, originally proposed by

the traditional theatrical apparatus, becomes further heightened by the introduction of advanced technologies as they interact with performative modes of storytelling. What can this double staging of technologies through live performance do for our understanding of these technologies? How can theatre propose a kind of speculative ethics for the complex questions of our digital age? What are the ethical implications of utilising data-driven technologies for theatre practitioners themselves? In this presentation, I will zone in on some key insights gleaned from this year-long performance research project which will culminate in a full production to debut across the Netherlands in spring 2026.

Queering Heritage and Arts Activism (4)

Adnan Hadziselimovic - Performing and Exhibiting Immersive Virtual Experience Queering of Digital Heritage Assets: A Framework for Artistic Research and Practice

This paper delves into the performing of immersive experience queering of digital heritage assets, a transformative approach explored within the IMPULSE research project. IMPULSE investigates innovative methods for experiencing and interpreting digitised cultural heritage within immersive virtual environments, challenging conventional narratives through speculative and inclusive frameworks. By integrating emerging immersive technologies, the project re-imagines the role of digital heritage in contemporary cultural discourse. At its core, IMPULSE employs artistic research methodologies to interrogate and expand the potential of digital heritage archives and assets. Through performances and exhibitions, the project creates dynamic, user-centered experiences that foster emotional and cognitive engagement. These speculative interpretations serve to "queer" digital heritage archives, questioning normative understandings and reshaping their cultural significance. This approach highlights the capacity of immersive technologies to make digital heritage more accessible and inclusive while addressing critical challenges such as interoperability and design. The paper also examines the role of artistic research in transforming digital heritage practices, emphasizing its power to unlock new layers of meaning in cultural artifacts. By queering digital archives, IMPULSE transcends traditional boundaries, offering audiences an active role in the reinterpretation of heritage. The findings underscore the potential of immersive and performative methodologies to redefine the dissemination and experience of cultural heritage in the digital age. Ultimately, this paper showcases how IMPULSE's integration of technology, artistic research, and speculative design contributes to a more inclusive and dynamic cultural heritage landscape. It highlights the project's significance in addressing pressing issues of accessibility and representation, demonstrating how performing digital heritage can challenge and enrich our understanding of the past. This innovative approach not only expands the scope of heritage research but also positions immersive experiences as a vital tool for cultural engagement and reinterpretation.

Lauren Suna - From Zines to Instagram: The History and Next Steps for Queer Decentralized Networks

This paper investigates how Queer community sports and interest group leaders used grassroots organizing on Instagram to create a decentralized network of Queer community spaces in Toronto. Drawing on my own participation in these groups and previous scholarship on Queer networks, I map where these organizations operate, how they are connected, and suggest strategies for sustaining them beyond Meta-owned platforms. Before moving to Toronto, I found Queer Run Club on Instagram, an all Queer gender-inclusive running group. By looking at who this group was following, I uncovered a thriving community with clubs spanning climbing, softball, art, and food. Although this community is strong, after Meta scaled back fact-checking and aligned with right-wing politics following the 2024 U.S. election, they have increasingly become a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ users. For many, boycotts of Meta platforms have disrupted these once-crucial routes to community connection. What was my entry point to Toronto's network became a deeper investigation into their sustainability beyond corporate platforms. This paper draws from Cait McKinney's work on the lesbian periodical, *Matrices*, which demonstrates how the circulation of subscriber data fostered Queer networks. Avery Dame-Griff extends this history in *The Two Revolutions: A History of the Transgender Internet* by analyzing how hashtags were used to create safe spaces for the transgender community on Tumblr. Urban ethnographer Claire Carter examined Toronto's Queer sports leagues, highlighting how they shift alongside societal, cultural, and technological change. I bring these perspectives together to show how Queer networks historically form and transform with new technologies. Using these authors' works as a foundation, combined with my ethnographic work, I outline how Queer community groups use Instagram to organize while mapping where they created safe spaces in the city. This map can serve as a valuable resource for organizers to envision a future beyond platformed infrastructures.

Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter - Sit-In! - Staying with the Troubles of Digital Back-Ends

This paper introduces and explores the underlying implications of Sit-In!, an artistic software intervention that exposes the hidden labour sustaining digital infrastructures. Rooted in fieldwork conducted in Nairobi, Kenya in autumn 2024, the project emerged from conversations with former content moderators employed by Big Tech companies such as Meta and their subcontractor Sama. These workers, often based in the Global South, remain deliberately obscured by design, rendered invisible behind the seamless interfaces of platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Sit-In! is a browser-plugin that challenges this invisibility by embedding the voices, reflections, and aspirations of these workers directly into the user experience of social media platforms. The project explores how digital methodologies can move beyond representational approaches by employing direct software-based interventions, in this case highlighting labour-politics and promoting solidarity. The tool intervenes within the very platforms it critiques, requiring users to perform an act of refusal, actively rejecting Meta, to access the artistic tool. The paper will outline the practice-based research which went into developing this tool, as a form of "world-making through maintenance". Here, maintenance is redefined, not as passive upkeep or the preservation of the status quo, but as an active, critical practice of care and alteration from within, one that stays with the trouble, exposes systemic fragilities, and enables transformation from inside the very infrastructures it inhabits. By embedding resistance into the infrastructure of social media, Sit-In! opens a space for critical engagement and collective care. It demonstrates how practice-based research can function simultaneously as intervention and advocacy, surfacing the structural inequalities embedded in digital back-ends while imagining new modes of visibility and solidarity.

Digital Alternative Narratives (4)

Muije Li - Synthetic Media and Speculative Storytelling for Decolonial Thinking

This presentation examines how the synthetic media of AI chatbot interfaces can be used to speculate decolonial alternatives. Set in Melaka's bureaucratic spice trade history, the narrative experiment Margins of Paperwork uses a large language model to generate a fictional story through synthesising elements like misfiled archives, gendered labour, cinnamon dust, and false logbooks. Rather than recovering historical truth, the writing experiment conceives synthetic media that stage narrative as a mode of epistemic resistance. Co-writing with GPT is approached not as a tool for content generation, but as a medium through which the narrative logics of misfiled archives, spectral materials, and extractive histories are synthesised and estranged. In doing so, the writing experiment challenges dominant regimes of computational language, those that prioritise semantic legibility, statistical efficiency, and linguistic standardisation, by embracing opacity, instability, and poetic excess. Two conceptual anchors guide this process: the ocean medium and language infrastructure. The sea, as both material and metaphor, conditions narrative drift, dispersal, and erasure. Language infrastructure, shaped by colonial and computational abstractions, does not merely flatten or extract, but also provides a structured field through which speculative narratives can surface, circulate, and reassemble meaning otherwise. Writing thus emerges as a speculative, decolonial method grounded in the procedural conditions of synthetic language. Rather than restoring erased voices, the project seeks to invent alternate ways of imagining, assembling, or refusing historical knowledge within computational regimes that encode and contain the possibilities of language.

Shaheer Tarar – Defamiliarising the Web

The concept of Hypertext—"text that contains links to other texts"—is foundational to the World Wide Web. The act of linking documents in meaningful ways has transformed nearly every aspect of society. Yet in the last decade the Web has moved in a direction contrary to this vision. Instead of establishing connections between knowledge, we have seen the proliferation of barriers in what is called the rise of "walled gardens" or the "platform web." Social media platforms actively discourage links that lead users beyond their networks, while artistic, journalistic, and academic outputs are increasingly locked behind paywalls that extract value from authors and audiences alike. Peering beneath and across these walled gardens, however, reveals networks alive with traffic. Each time we click a link, a vast infrastructure distributed across the world is mobilized to fulfill our request. At the same time, autonomous web crawlers freely hop across links, harvesting content to train large language models. Attending to the Web from these perspectives produces unfamiliar cartographies. This is a form of defamiliarization: a strategy of making the familiar strange in order to see it differently. Applied to the Web, defamiliarization opens paths for recovering the connective, contingent, and political dimensions that are

obscured by its dominant commercial interfaces. In this paper, I detail my development of a body of new-media artworks that experiment in defamiliarizing the Web. *Spiral Getty* autonomously descends a Wikipedia rabbit hole, visualizing it as a spiraling constellation of linked pages. *Hyperflower* is an autonomous Wikipedia browser embodied in sculptural form. *Netsurfer* is a web-based platformer where players traverse the hyperlink structure of the internet as spatial terrain. Together, these works automate and cartograph the act of browsing, defamiliarizing a routine interface to surface how algorithmic decision-making and network infrastructures shape our encounters with knowledge.

George Themistokleous - Automated Selfies along No Man's Land

In *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1990), Gilles Deleuze describes how modulated and “free-floating” forms of control (data) supersede disciplinary enclosure. Yet there remain specific geopolitical territories where disciplinary regulation persists. The divided city of Nicosia exemplifies such a site: its buffer zone is maintained through material enclosures, barrel walls, and the monitoring of bodies, where “walls and fences are erected predominantly to control the flow of what can hardly be virtualized: the flow of people” (Deutinger 2018, 37). The *operating table*—an art project attached to the barrel-walls of the buffer zone—intervenes in this apparatus through an act of digital capture. A stainless-steel surface, with a head-shaped cavity, invites the passer-by to slot their head inside this void. Without the participant’s awareness, the installation generates stereoscopic projections of their body across the inaccessible no man’s land. These in-depth “selfies” are not chosen or posed but extracted and simulated by the apparatus. What emerges is an uncanny encounter: one sees oneself seeing oneself, refracted in three-dimensional depth, as if subjected to an algorithmic gaze that surveils, fragments, and remediates the body. This parasitic network both mimics and exposes the logics of digital surveillance, destabilising the checkpoint’s control of visibility. At the same time, it unsettles the bi-ethnic identities prescribed by the border, drawing on the postcolonial figure of the *Linobambakoi*—a “minor” Cypriot race suppressed under colonialism—as a model of impure, nomadic subjectivity. By bifurcating striated border territories, the *operating table* produces a digital space where identities emerge as hybrid configurations blurring background and foreground, human and nonhuman. The paper situates the work within digital humanities debates on embodiment, media, and control. By framing border inscription through captured and simulated selfies, the *operating table* demonstrates how digital practice can both replicate the coercive extraction of identity and open a critical space for its re-imagination.

Suwen Wang - From Disconnection To Reconnection: AI-Based Digital Storytelling Communication For Cultural Heritage Artifacts

This research explores the transformative potential of AI-driven digital storytelling as an affective communication practice that reconnects displaced cultural heritage artifacts with their original historical, emotional, and geographic contexts. Positioned at the intersection of digital humanities, immersive media, and intercultural narrative design, the study investigates how AI-based storytelling systems can mediate cultural differences and foster mutual understanding between diverse global audiences and the heritage of distant or marginalized communities. Through a practice-based methodology that integrates ethnographic fieldwork, immersive design, and computational creativity, the research develops a multisensory narrative framework capable of translating culturally specific meanings into emotionally resonant experiences. Using technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), 3D scanning, AI-generated text, sound, and visual media, the study reanimates cultural artifacts as narrative agents—capable of “speaking” across cultures through first-person poetic monologues, synthetic voices, and dynamic visual storytelling. Importantly, this work addresses the “heritage empathy gap”—a term coined to describe the emotional and contextual disconnection that often occurs when artifacts are removed from their cultural origins and presented in unfamiliar museum contexts. By examining how cross-cultural audiences interpret, respond to, and emotionally engage with these reanimated objects, the study investigates how AI technologies can be ethically integrated not merely as tools of preservation but as co-authors in emotional storytelling—bridging linguistic, historical, and sensory divides.

Videographics & Data-Driven Artistic Practice (4)

Jiri Anger, Veronika Hanáková - Embracing the Sloppiness of Digital Tools: Videographic Scholarship as Practice-Based Archaeology of Computation

In recent years, digital humanities has become more self-critical, questioning the tools, sources, algorithms, and interfaces that shape research (Fickers and Tatarinov 2022; Dang, van der Heijden, and Olesen 2024). While

vital for identifying the risks of computational methods, this reflexive turn has largely focused on large-scale, data-driven approaches. This paper asks how reflexivity might also emerge through creative, arts-based practice – by embracing the sloppiness of digital tools: those moments when software ceases to function seamlessly and reveals its historical and experiential grounding. Videographic scholarship has developed over the past fifteen years as a form of practice-based research in film and media studies (Keathley, Mittell, and Grant 2019; Bean 2023). By repurposing video-editing software, screen capture, and visualisation programmes, videographic work demonstrates how computation can be used for speculation and defamiliarisation. Such practices also take on media-archaeological dimensions (Fickers and van den Oever 2022), where tinkering, hacking, and re-enactment examine the historicity of digital tools: how past and present interfaces intersect, how software ages and circulates, and which user experiences are marginalised or repressed. Drawing on examples from Johannes Binotto, Kevin L. Ferguson, Occitane Lacurie, and our own experiments with rediscovering early digital interfaces, we show how videographic scholarship cultivates distinctive forms of media-historical reflexivity: by (1) re-enacting digital objects, (2) staging media anachronisms, and (3) embracing DIY constructivism. Against the drive towards efficiency and smoothness in contemporary AI and large-scale computation, videographic work insists on the methodological value of imperfection. By working through the flaws and histories of digital tools, it expands the repertoire of what counts as critical inquiry in the digital humanities.

Irene Bonilla - On digital film editing and the overlooked power of montage

In this paper we will approach the paradox that film editing, whose pioneers introduced the principle of montage into 20th century art, has continued to ignore through its eminently technological teaching—a kind of computer science applied to the audiovisual—its extraordinary creative potential (collage, photomontage, literary montage, architectural montage). Art studies related to digital video editing tend to forget the extraordinary creative, artistic and pedagogical power of the montage principle, also known as montage-effect in the words of Jean Mitry. Additionally, we will present our proposal of montage-collage practices where creative clashes of images and sounds are taught and practiced in both a narrative sense and in their more artistic, political, poetic or simply playful dimension. The relationship between montage and the new digital aesthetics of remixing, sampling and mash-up —popular in the stream of content that students consume everyday on their mobile phones— may also provide an excellent intergenerational meeting point.

Isaac Parkinson - Data Visualisation as an Evidentiary Framework: Digital Methodologies in Contemporary Documentary Practice

This paper examines how data visualisation functions as both a new representational regime and epistemic framework within investigative documentary texts, reshaping how visual evidence is constructed and interpreted. Drawing on recent visual investigations from civilian harm watchdogs like Airwars, open-source intelligence (OSINT) groups like Forensic Architecture, and humanitarian documentary filmmakers like Laura Poitras, I analyse how digital methodologies such as computational modelling and virtual simulations are expanding documentary's traditional evidentiary capacity. The research positions data visualisation not merely as a tool for presenting information, but as a method of generating visual evidence for judicial proceedings and networked truth production. This represents a significant departure from conventional documentary practice, where evidence primarily relies on testimony and observational footage. Contemporary digital methodologies enable the reconstruction of events through spatial modeling, temporal mapping, and statistical analysis, creating new forms of visual argument that carry legal and social weight. By examining the theoretical implications of these developments, this paper contributes to understanding how digital methodologies are transforming documentary studies, shifting the field toward computational approaches while maintaining a core commitment to truth production and social justice.

Rebecca Saunders - Data drawing for sexual consent and embodiment: using data as a resistant art form against commercial datafication in sex-tech

This paper presents important new research funded by GW4 (2025) on the impact of sex-tech on sexual health and well-being, with a particular focus on embodiment and consent. It also presents a public engagement initiative with NHS service users and university students at multiple UK institutions, which uses arts-based methods as a form of resistance against the reductive and standardised commercial datafication common to sex-tech, and to the related industries of digital pornography and dating apps. The sex-tech industry, which includes technologies from AI relationship bots to sexual consent apps, is now worth fifty billion dollars and has far reaching societal implications. Dr Saunders sets out findings from a research project focused on sex tracking

apps and the first smart sexual devices that gather data about the body during sex. In particular, she explores how regular engagement with datafication and data cultures through using these technologies, impacts on users' experiences of embodiment and their understanding of consent. Sexual consent and gendered sexual violence are one of the most pressing societal issues of our time. Now that digital technologies are thoroughly integrated into people's intimate lives, with many promising data-driven solutions to relational and sexual health issues like consent, we must investigate the real impact of these technologies on users' sexual well-being. This paper sets out the use of the innovative arts-based method 'data drawing', as an alternative data practice. The method is used in workshops and in an upcoming visual arts book to support people to reflect on how the standardised and reductive forms of datafication common to sex-tech may influence their experiences of embodiment, consent and sexual well-being. This method shows how data can be used as an art form to resist negative aspects of data cultures and foster improved sexual well-being and societal understandings of consent.

Decision Systems and Anthropomorphisation of AI (4)

Emelie Andersin - Designing AI-DSS Interfaces: Cognitive and Legal Impacts of AI in Armed Conflict

This article examines the design and use of AI-decision support systems (AI-DSS) in military targeting, focusing on their cognitive and legal implications. While AI-DSS do not directly execute force, they collect, analyse, and provide recommendations to military decision-makers. They can be designed to identify potential targets, generate 'targeting lists', estimate expected collateral damage or quantify the probability of civilian harm. These systems are often portrayed as tools that support, rather than replace, human judgement. There is an assumption that human oversight of military personnel is sufficient as they would detect technical errors or mistakes. This paper challenges that assumption, arguing that the mere presence of military personnel does not guarantee compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The design and use of AI-DSS can introduce both technical and cognitive biases. Outputs are not inherently objective - they are a product of developers' and companies' subjective choices during design, training and testing. Algorithmic bias and ambiguous categorisations can produce systematic errors. At the same time, interface design features - such as confidence scores and visual representations - can unintentionally trigger cognitive biases, including anchoring, salience, or automation bias. These effects can shape commanders' perception of a target's legal status and influence decisions in ways that undermine IHL principles. By examining how AI-DSS structure, frame, and visually present intelligence, this article highlights the interplay between human judgement, interface design, and legal compliance. It emphasises the importance of critically assessing the assumptions embedded in these systems and understanding their real-world effects on the civilian population. Doing so, it requires an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from IHL, cognitive psychology, and interface design.

Lou Manuel Arsenault - Humanizing: On the anthropomorphization of AI as a tactic of cultural integration

This article explores the anthropomorphization of artificial intelligence (AI) as an aesthetic tactic aimed at integrating AI into culture and society. Drawing on Gilbert Simondon's philosophy and his developments on aesthetic thought in *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, this paper argues that anthropomorphization mystifies AI, fostering a "technical hypnosis" that obstructs critical engagement and deep knowledge of its functioning. Simondon's concepts of technophanies (ritualized displays of technology) are also explored in relation to anthropomorphization. Further, using Jeffrey Alexander's theory of cultural pragmatics, this paper analyzes how anthropomorphism acts as a "re-fuser" of meaning: aligning AI's presentation with shared cultural scripts and allowing users to identify with machines. Successful performances, such as AI chatbots with gendered voices or humanoid robots in stylized settings, tap into collective imaginaries shaped by media and science fiction. Ultimately, the article argues that anthropomorphization is not merely a design choice but a political strategy—normalizing AI's presence while bypassing public deliberation and the very possibility of critique.

Caio Mello, Finola Finn, Donal Khosrowi, Marten Düring and Daniele Guido - Designing archival AI chatbots for enhanced research methods: an introduction to the Impresso Barista

AI chatbots utilising Retrieval Augmented Generation are increasingly deployed to navigate and analyse major archives and collections. So far, the prototypes released typically employ query-answer interfaces that mirror

popular LLMs like ChatGPT, with users invited to “Ask the Archives” questions. This paper argues that such design choices potentially hinder effective archival research by obscuring the complexity of collections, fostering reductive approaches to historical inquiry, and diminishing critical engagement with collections. We reflect on alternative designs for archival AI chatbots, and propose that they should foster accessibility while maintaining, and even enhancing, research integrity. Our strategy prioritises effective communication of chatbots’ capabilities, tailor-made approaches that speak to the specificities of particular corpora, and innovative design choices that encourage thoughtful research. We will discuss our approach through the case study of Barista, a chatbot designed to help users navigate digitised cultural heritage collections processed by ‘Impresso – Media Monitoring of the Past II’ project. The Impresso Web App enables researchers to explore an unprecedented collection of semantically enriched digitized newspapers and radio collections. Researchers can study the materials using data-driven approaches by making use of, for example, multiple filters, metrics of text reuse, and embeddings. To help users navigate this vast and complex corpus, Barista serves as an intermediary by translating natural language prompts into Impresso Web App queries. In this way, the chatbot helps users to understand the specificities and affordances of the Impresso interface. Moreover, it opens up new ways of exploring the Impresso corpus by suggesting not what documents the user should consider, but rather ways to search for relevant documents within this particular ecosystem. Overall, our approach aims not to reduce the complexity of collections and the research process, but rather to help better navigate these complexities to enrich understandings of the past.

Nzeaka Ezimako - Algorithmic Erasure: Ideological, Social, And Cultural Marginalisation In The Age Of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence has permeated all facets of social life. In the era where artificial intelligence (AI) enhances information access and interpretation, the fantasy of algorithmic neutrality conceals a troubling truth: the systematic sidelining of non-dominant ideologies, minority identities, and cultures. This study examines the role of AI technologies, specifically those related to language processing, content regulation, and facial recognition, in erasing ideological, social, and cultural aspects of language. This research seeks to explicate the processes by which AI systems integrate, amplify, and legitimise predominant worldviews while concurrently marginalising subaltern perceptions. This paper scrutinises the functioning of algorithmic power by incorporating ideas from critical theory of the Frankfurt school and postcolonial media theory. This approach integrates content analysis and discourse study of algorithmic outputs with in-depth interviews (n = 7) on AI-induced marginalisation, emphasising language suppression and content filtering across various platforms. The results indicate that the training data, system design, and content moderation guidelines frequently neglect or mischaracterise minority cultures and beliefs, so perpetuating historical injustices while asserting efficiency. This research contributes to the growing body of literature that critiques the epistemic violence perpetrated by AI systems, particularly within postcolonial and Global South contexts. This study offers academic substance for digital humanities, media studies, and AI ethics, while providing practical value to governments, developers, and policymakers.

Platform Labour (3)

Can Burak Nalbantoglu – Three-Sided Markets, One-Sided Power: Algorithmic Management and Precarity on Digital Labor Platforms

Digital labour platforms are rapidly growing online marketplaces that facilitate the connection between those who provide labour and those who require it. These platforms generally operate as three-sided markets, with the platform provider transferring the majority of the costs, risks and responsibilities of the work to independent contractors or a new precarious class of workers known as the “cyber proletariat”. Platforms can be categorised into two primary classifications: remote cloud work, which encompasses freelance markets, micro-tasking and competition-based creative work, and gig work performed at a specific location, including accommodation, transportation, delivery and home services. The total size of the gig economy in the European Union is estimated to have reached 14 billion euros in 2020. Nevertheless, this business model engenders considerable challenges for workers. It is a widely documented fact that platform workers frequently operate within conditions characterised by low remuneration and an absence of social security provisions. Algorithmic management, rating systems, constant monitoring (screen captures, keystrokes), and gamification severely restrict workers’ autonomy and control. In instances of job rejection or non-payment, the available dispute resolution mechanisms are often limited or non-existent. Furthermore, platforms frequently impose unilateral, constantly changing, and overly comprehensive service terms. These circumstances underscore the necessity for additional research, transparency, and regulatory intervention to guarantee that workers are provided with fair and decent working conditions.

Alessandro Gandini - Gentrified labour: meaningful work in the digital economy

This paper advances the notion of gentrified labour to capture a shift in the cultural conception of work as a source of identity and status. Gentrification, as the process that reshapes urban neighbourhoods through the influx of affluent middle-class populations, is seen here in an analytical lens to make sense of why certain jobs traditionally associated with the working class - manual, labour-intensive, and often low-status - are increasingly taken up by middle-class workers who resignify them as meaningful (Ocejo, 2017). Drawing on qualitative research on neo-craft work in the European Union, the paper shows how conventional middle-class jobs in the digital economy, once celebrated for stability and status, are now perceived as unrewarding or 'bullshit' (Graeber, 2018). By contrast, forms of manual and material work infused with craft principles have become newly desirable, through a process of resignification that provides them with a fresh narrative and an aesthetic framework grounded in authenticity and particularisation (Gandini and Gerosa, 2023). This resignification is entrenched with broader logics of platformisation of work; despite their manual nature, digital platforms function as the actual 'point of production' for such craft-restyled, manual jobs, ensuring the becoming productive of the social relations that underpin them. In doing so, they enable the discursive and aesthetic restyling of craft work and also structure its visibility and recognition as socially-desirable work (Gandini et al., 2024). Operating as 'status machines' (Boy and Uitermark, 2023), digital platforms thus create new hierarchies of social validation and job desirability. The paper critically examines this process, reassessing the relationship between identity and work in a digital economy where labour has become pervasive yet no longer conforms to the employment logics of industrial society.

Alkim Yalin Karakilic - Life on Commission: Datafication, Platform Power, and Precarity in Turkish Creator Economy

This paper examines Turkey's leading e-commerce platform Trendyol and its influencer program. Following its acquisition by Alibaba in 2018, Trendyol established the largest influencer network in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Region, comprising over 30,000 creators (Trendyol, n.d.). Many of these creators work under Trendyol's affiliate program, which allows them to earn a commission-based income by sharing shopping links through their social media accounts, particularly through Instagram. Affiliate work constitutes the most common strategies of content monetization for Turkish content creators, and while it appeals to many creators for its perceived flexibility, it also reveals the perilous integration of e-commerce and influencer industries in the country that enhances the relations of dependency and precariousness experienced by content creators.

By analyzing Trendyol's case, through interviews with 17 content creators and influencer agents, this paper explores how the integration between e-commerce and influencer industries informs the platform work experiences of Turkish content creators, and draws attention to global and local forces that shape the platformization of cultural production. Due to its multinational ownership and ties with platform companies such as Alibaba and Meta, Trendyol posits a unique case study where the combined influences coming from the technocultures of Shenzhen (Alibaba) and Silicon Valley (Meta) contributes to a highly platform contingent and precarious creator economy. At the end, this paper highlights that creators' experience of precarity cannot be reduced to dependency on social media platforms, but instead it is embedded in a dynamic network that consists of e-commerce and social media platforms, market actors including predatory influencer agencies, and instability within the local and political and economic landscape.

Platforming the Self (4)

Cherie Hu - From Replika to Moflin: Synthetic Intimacy and the Datafication of Loneliness

Emotion has become an extractive resource within the infrastructures of platform capitalism in the age of datafication. This paper interrogates the emerging economies of mood, especially loneliness in which affective experience is quantified, operationalised and monetised through digital technologies. Building on posthumanist and critical media frameworks, it traces how emotional data, captured via sensors, interfaces and algorithms, circulates as a form of biopolitical capital that sustains engagement-driven models of profit and prediction. This paper develops two interrelated concepts. First, the digital mood economy, where platforms extract and manipulate affective data to personalise experience and maximise retention, and the loneliness economy, a market system that detects, targets and commodifies social isolation through affective interfaces such as AI companions. Through case studies ranging from TikTok's feedback loop to the emotionally responsive AI Chatbot Replika and the first AI pet Moflin, the analysis demonstrates how emotional life is being reconfigured through systems of quantification and simulation. Particular attention is given to the paradox of synthetic intimacy,

wherein technologies designed to alleviate loneliness increasingly reproduce it by replacing relationality with algorithmic companionship. The discussion of emotional surveillance and predictive modelling reveals how affective computing not only interprets but actively shapes human emotion to fit data-driven models of engagement, raising ethical considerations about agency, consent and affective autonomy. By mapping the entanglements between data, emotion and capital, this paper argues that the commodification of loneliness signals a broader shift toward the manufacturing of emotional dependency.

Nicola Bozzi - Becoming Platform: Masculinity, Infrastructure, and Social Imagination

This presentation discusses the evolving relationship between digital platforms, framed as infrastructures for the performance of the self (Bozzi, 2024), and the rise of powerful, hypermasculine figures like Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Joe Rogan as cultural avatars or social disruption. Using the popular Joe Rogan Experience podcast as the main case study, my main argument is that this popular format has facilitated broader cultural shifts that call for urgent critical inquiry from media and communications scholars. Firstly, the personification of complex social and cultural issues like “free speech” into individual battles between individuals and the establishment - e.g. Elon Musk vs liberal Twitter (Ferrari Braun, 2023); Donald Trump vs the US political class). Secondly, the rise of “platforming” as both a discursive metaphor and a business model, offered as the only solution for a masculinity in crisis against “woke” and “cancel culture” (Ng, 2022). Ultimately, the “becoming platform” of Rogan, Musk, or Trump fuels the dangerous identification of aspiring influencers and social media users with communicative capitalist (Dean, 2014) and platform capitalist (Srnicek, 2015) models. By analysing a range of visual material across digital art, NFTs, and viral generative AI content, I position the “becoming platform” of figures like Rogan, Musk, or even Trump (each of whom have come to embody platforms of sorts – JRE, X, Truth Social) in the context of a “platformed personality capitalism” founded on “personality as infrastructure” (Rosamond, 2023). My main argument is that the mantra of “becoming platform”, while de facto a Ponzi-scheme that only benefits its upper echelons, has acquired cultural momentum as the mandatory escape for a mostly-Western masculinity in crisis.

Silvia Frota - Re/Imagining ourselves: mediating citizenship in the age of digital media and AI

Artificial intelligence has become a privileged site for the construction of socio-technical imaginaries, shaping how societies imagine their futures. These imaginaries circulate across diverse media ecologies—from news coverage and social platforms to documentaries, literature, graphic novels, streaming series, and even memes, videos, and hashtags. Together, they assemble competing visions of what it means to be human in today’s digital societies and how we can live together as digital citizens. The concept of the Neo-Human is articulated as a figure that embodies new ways of being human, encompassing both anxieties about automation and loss of agency, and hopes for augmented creativity, longevity, and quality of life. If technology is a language, and language creation and development are drivers of evolution, the Neo-Human can be understood as an outcome of this process. This paper explores how digital media and popular culture function as laboratories where imaginaries of AI are tested and contested, producing new understandings of citizenship in digital societies. While some narratives celebrate AI as an enhancer of human potential, others foreground exclusion, precarity, and ecological harm. These cultural productions negotiate who the Neo-Human is or could become, what capacities define them, and how rights and participation are reconfigured in digitally mediated futures. Methodologically, the paper combines critical discourse analysis with critical digital humanities approaches to trace how imaginaries crystallise across genres and platforms. By examining the cultural scripts through which AI is narrated, visualised, and satirised, it highlights how digital media not only represent but also actively shape political imaginaries of citizenship. Ultimately, the analysis shows that the Neo-Human emerges as both a cultural trope and a political figure, crystallising tensions between empowerment and dispossession in the age of pervasive AI.

Nilou Davoudi, Jennifer Douglas - “This is me trying to heal”: Death, grief, and memorialisation content on TikTok

“This is me trying to heal. This is grief... I was afraid his clothes would smell like death. They smelled like him.” (TikTok caption, posted August 2024) Drawing upon scholarship pertaining to death, grief, and memorialisation content on digital platforms, this study demonstrates how TikTok is emerging as an ad-hoc memorial space for the dead and a communal digital platform for the bereaved by offering new ways for users to document and share their experience of death and grief. This study utilises a qualitative approach in the analysis of user-generated content found on TikTok through the hashtags #griefjourney and #grieving. Our analysis identified three emerging conventions for death, grief, and memorialisation content on TikTok: 1) TikTok as a digital diary reflects documented day-to-day struggles and personal experiences with grief; 2) TikTok as co-creation with the

dead demonstrated how content creators incorporated digital remains (Lingel, 2013) to narrate their experience of grief; and 3) TikTok viral trends allow the bereaved to share their grief experiences by connecting to a wider range of audiences. We also illustrate the potentials for adverse experiences, including the possibility of grief policing and trolling (Gach et al., 2017; Philips, 2015), as well as the potential for the exploitation of the digital dignity of the dead (Becker, 2022; Bruneault et al., 2023). This study also notes that the affordances of the platform may contribute to users presenting their grief narratives in simplified ways that prioritise views and potential financial gains. Our findings suggest that while TikTok provides a valuable “safe space” (Eriksson Krutrök, 2021) for connection and support for the bereaved, it simultaneously raises urgent ethical questions about death, grief, and memorialisation content on highly unregulated digital platforms. Thus, we critically examine TikTok’s platformisation of grief, arguing that such content cannot be treated as neutral but must be understood through its socio-technical and commercial conditions.

Gender, Technology and Labour (4)

Taylor Annabell, Rianne Riemens - Dinner at the White House: Techbros, creator culture and network power

2025 has been labelled by Big Tech CEOs as a significant year for their companies. Part of this relates to the ongoing “AI hype”, fostered by and benefiting these men. This year also marks the heightened influence of Big Tech CEOs in the political arena, made visible through their attendance of President Trump’s inauguration, Musk’s involvement in the Department of Government Efficiency, and the White House dinner in September. This close alignment is advantageous for Big Tech, leading to favourable outcomes like data centre permits and deregulation practices. This contribution explores how Sam Altman, Jeff Bezos, Tim Cook, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Satya Nadella, Sundar Pichai, and Mark Zuckerberg share personal updates, promote their tech companies, political views and visions of the future through media appearances. Following Little & Winch (2021), we see these eight figures as prominent representatives of Silicon Valley, and thus as key actors in a patriarchal network of power that drives digital capitalism. To examine the public creation of and access to tech CEO personas in January – June of 2025, we curate a dataset of media appearances in podcasts, talks and conferences, broadcast and print media (n = 119) and Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, TikTok and X posts (n = 5887). Through a qualitative content analysis and close analysis of selected examples, we unpack the role of CEOs in advancing the AI industry, while each configuring a particular “tech-bro” identity. Our analysis speaks to issues of media mistrust, which is entangled with the rise of social media, and the creator economy. We find the CEOs act as creators in their production and dissemination of content through the very channels they operate. They also engage with creators through interviews, which are rebranded as conversations, challenging the watchdog function of news media and highlighting the issue of accessibility.

Gaia Casagrande, Alessandro Gandini - Gendering neo-craft work: from masculinized domain to feminized platform labour?

The aim of this paper is to frame neo-craft work as ‘feminized’ labor, on the basis of the shift of this activity from productive to re-productive, also derived by its intertwining with platform logics. Consequently, this paper suggests a gendered reframing of neo-craft work, usually described as subject to ‘masculinized’ practices and imaginaries (Land et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022). The tendency of late-capitalism to “feminize” labor is characterized by repurposing activities originally confined to the private sphere such as domestic, care labor, as productive services. This tendency can also be found in digital work practices - e.g. with regard to flexibility, or to the blurring of professional and private boundaries (Fortunati 2007; Jarrett 2014; Jarrett 2015); it can also take on platform specificities, such as practices concerning visibility and ‘vulnerability’ (Bishop, Duffy 2022). In this sense, contemporary neo-craft work is ascribable to the process of platformization of labor (Casilli, Posada 2019) which, also through the aforementioned process of feminization, transforms social relations into relations of production making affective commitment a monetizable commodity (Gandini et al. 2024). Deriving from the qualitative analysis of 63 semi-structured interviews with neo-craft workers, and from the content analysis of 20 of their social media accounts (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), we observed two main dynamics referable to ‘feminized’ labor practices: the increasing trend to providing services, in addition to the activity of producing goods; the disposition to romanticize care and service work, and in particular of strenuous and exhausting activities, through digital discursive practices. Concerning the first, we observed how many neo-craft workers resort to the creation of paid activities and services, such as workshops and ‘lab tours’, not only as a source of supplementary income but also for the purpose of maintaining social (and re-productive) relations with clients and colleagues. On the

other hand, the disposition toward romanticization of service work can be traced in the use of specific platform grammars (e.g. the use of viral audios) aimed at 'glamorizing' often repetitive and wearisome daily activities, such as the labelling and stocking of products, or the cleaning of the tools and work surface. Therefore, this paper suggests the shift of neo-craft work from manual, productive labor to service, re-productive labor, leading to the risk of a professional and status decay of neo craft work - an impoverishment that often characterizes 'feminized' work (Komarraju et al. 2025).

Yin (Selena) Wang - Gendering the Algorithm: A Critical Inquiry into Platform Labour in London and Shanghai

Online labour platforms are reshaping flexible employment, yet their impact on workers—particularly women—remains underexplored. While platforms are often framed by platform companies as promoting autonomy, emerging evidence reveals complex and gendered challenges. This study investigates the experiences of female delivery riders to uncover the mechanisms shaping their working conditions. Despite growing interest in algorithmic management, little is known about how local socioeconomic contexts mediate its effects. Gender norms, labour protections, and cultural expectations vary significantly across regions, influencing platform labour outcomes. Existing literature often overlooks these contextual differences, necessitating comparative research. Adopting a critical realist approach, the paper draws on data from a mixed methods study in London and Shanghai, combining non-participant observation, semi-structured interview, and survey analysis. This design enables a nuanced understanding of how algorithmic control interacts with local legal, economic, and sociocultural factors. The findings challenge assumptions of technological neutrality and contribute to theories of digital capitalism, algorithmic governance, and labour precarity. By centring the voices of female riders, the study offers practical insights for policymakers and platform designers seeking equitable gig work arrangements. It highlights the resilience and inequalities embedded in the global platform economy.

Hannah Artman - Gender, power, and societal stigma: Examining media coverage of sex work in the post-pandemic era

Though sex work is often wryly referred to as one of the world's "oldest professions", it is still stigmatized in society, sensationalized in the media, fuzzy at best in its definition, and policed to vastly different degrees around the globe. And while societies increasingly become more digitized through the lasting legacies of the pandemic, these conditions are further complicated and thus worthy of critical, social scientific inquiry. For example, the prevalence of the online platform OnlyFans has elevated sex work as an accessible choice in the gig economy (Easterbrook-Smith, 2022). At the same time, some countries like the United States and Belgium (Kim, 2024) have moved to decriminalize sex work, addressing longheld social inequalities that place gender, sexual, and ethnic minorities in further precarious positions. These shifts would lead one to believe in changes in societal attitudes towards sex work as well, however, news headlines that link strip clubs to bribery, shootings, illegal prostitution, or drug rings and OnlyFans to secrecy, stalking, or societal shunning indicate that the topic is still as salacious as ever. This paper applies critical discourse analysis to news headlines from a five-year period to examine the contemporary social context of sex workers and how they are portrayed in the media. Utilizing an open-source web scraper, English-language newspaper headlines and links were collected from Google News from 2020 to 2025 using the search term "sex work", "stripper", "strip club" and "onlyfans." Qualitative analysis was conducted on headline text to analyze the interdiscursivity of newspaper coverage of sex work in the highly platformized, post-pandemic era. The findings are synthesized with historical and global perspectives on media representations of sex workers (e.g. Easterbrook-Smith 2022; Martins et al. 2024, Pilcher, 2008) and represent a critical contribution to understanding the intersection of digital media, gender, power, and labor.

Internet Cultures (4)

Ira Solomatina - Discussing cringe, a digital-native affect

Building on Ahmed's work, in the paper interrogates the role of cringe in the current polarised political and cultural climate. Importantly, cringe has become part and parcel of the Internet culture at a time when political polarisation permeates seemingly all domains of culture – from entertainment to lifestyle. At a time when mundane choices from music to shopping to means of transportation are imbued with political meanings, social life online is akin to a minefield of risky (and potentially cringe-y) choices. Inquiring into the affective nuance of cringe, I consider its relation to hate and humour – two pervasive affective modalities of online interactions which have invited increased scholarly attention over the past few years (Milner, 2016; Udupa, 2019). While acknowledging its close

relation to the humorous and hateful, the research argues that cringe is a unique affective modality, which allows for nuance and deliberation. As cringe oscillates between humorous takedown and condescending mockery, it has a range of intensity and preserves some room for empathy towards its target. The research further explores the relationship between cringe and sentimentality, given that unfiltered expressions of emotion are frequently labeled as "cringe-y." The perceived sophistication of cringe often stands in contrast to the simplicity of sentimental expression. To negotiate between the two, the research draws on Lauren Berlant's (2009) work on sentimentality as an ambiguous and politically fraught rhetoric, defining cringe as an interjection against a certain naivité. To re-purpose Berlant's argument (2009), cringe calls for a deliberation whether political alliances are "best built across fields of social difference through channels of affective identification and empathy".

Avery Benton - Postintellectualism? The Rise of Digitellectualism.

The digital age has opened up the university to truly be a metaphysical commons. Since the advent of the internet, the online world has multiplied knowledge ten-fold into itself, leading to a wildfire spread of misinformation and disinformation. In today's world, how are we to understand what is and isn't knowledge, and the origins of our epistemological thought? This paper seeks to dissect and understand "the digital" and its over-democratization of knowledge. With the internet's vast "information" available at anyone's fingertips, society is arguably approaching a tipping point to the end of intellectualism. How do we know something we search is factual? This paper critically examines the over-democratization of knowledge in digital contexts, arguing that the sheer volume and accessibility of information has catalyzed a shift toward what may be termed a "post-intellectual" condition. In this condition, often described as "post-truth", the authority of expertise, academic rigor, and peer review is destabilized by algorithmic amplification, virality, and the commodification of attention. The central question explored is: how do we discern what constitutes legitimate knowledge in an age where everyone is simultaneously a producer and consumer of content? This paper interrogates the very foundations of what is considered "true," "factual," or "credible" and what is post our post-truth society. Rather than advocating for a return to traditional gatekeeping, this work seeks to map the contours of a new epistemological terrain. We enter a postintellectual era, one ruled by the "digitellectual", and with the reigns currently loose on our understanding of what is fact and fiction. Ultimately, this paper calls for a critical re-engagement with the philosophical and sociohistorical underpinnings of knowledge production in order to navigate the complexities of digital life and its implications for the university, public discourse, and democratic society at large.

Xintong Jia, Xumeng Xie- Weird, but aww: Hello Kitty, Capybaras and Postdigital Intimacies of Cuteness in East Asian Pop Culture

Research on cuteness, or cute studies has developed since the 2010s. Cuteness has previously been applied and conceptualized in various ways: as an aesthetic category, as a political tool both for nationalist-driven diplomacy and grassroots resistance, and as a means for individuals to express their everyday sensibilities in a hyper-commodified and consumerist society (Dale, 2016; McVeigh, 2000; Miller, 2011; Ngai, 2012; Yano, 2013). Building on this focus of the political and cultural dimension of cuteness, we argue that cuteness, far from being merely an aesthetic or marketing strategy, is an embedded logic for navigating and managing contemporary intimacies. In this light, we seek to highlight cuteness as an organizing affective force that channels emotions, restructures sociality and mediates attachments within increasingly platformized and algorithmically driven environments. In particular, we examine how cuteness is mobilized and appropriated amid the growing prevalence of AI-enabled image generation and algorithmic regulation of online presence on digital platforms for image sharing and editing. Two more-than-human figures serve as case studies: the newly popularized capybara as the 'master of relaxation' and the established 'cute ambassador' Hello Kitty. Through analyzing the aesthetic and affective charge of these two pop culture icons, we demonstrate how cuteness has not only been deployed as a novel instrument for self-expression and affective connection, but is also a site where subtle refusal and quiet resistance to neoliberal, gendered and performative social norms emerge. Drawing on feminist posthumanism, affect theory and cultural analysis, we conceptualize cuteness as an intimate infrastructure (Paasonen et al., 2023) within postdigital cultures. The paper offers a sustained and situated theoretical discussion of cuteness—not simply as cultural fluff, but as a serious terrain for affective negotiation, social connection and political possibility in face of intersected challenges and vulnerabilities of postdigital lives.

Xiaomo Liu - Fake-Eating on Chinese Platforms: Embodiment, Deception, and Vernacular aesthetics

This paper explores the phenomenon of "fake-eating" (jiachi) in China's vernacular media culture as it circulates across platforms such as Xiaohongshu, TikTok (Douyin), and Kuaishou. Food videos—including chibo (mukbang-style eating shows), e-commerce commercials, and restaurant-rating or travel vlogs—highlight eating as a main

attraction. Yet creators often rely on tactics of deception: exaggerating taste reactions, miming chewing without swallowing, or using props, digital filters, and editing tricks to create striking, affective scenes. These practices demonstrate how embodiment extends beyond the performer's body into material and digital techniques that generate sensory and affective engagement. Rather than viewing fake-eating as mere fraud, this paper argues that "faking" functions as both stylistic and ethical labour within platform economies. For creators, deceptive practices become tools to navigate moral questions about wastefulness or indulgence, respond to gendered expectations around eating, and meet the algorithmic demands of attention systems. Through such embodied and mediated performances, creators shape an ethical, affective self while gaining visibility, popularity, and income. Drawing on close analysis of diverse video examples rather than ethnographic or platform-based methods, the paper foregrounds the aesthetic and affective strategies through which deception is staged. Deceptive aesthetics appear in multiple forms: the creation of props and sets that dramatize abundance; food aesthetics that amplify colour, texture, and scale; and even new products designed to serve as edible or non-edible stand-ins for on-screen eating. Fake-eating, therefore, constitutes a form of digital labour that connects bodily performance with platform infrastructures and the economies of creator culture. By situating fake-eating within broader discussions of embodiment and identity, the paper shows how everyday acts of consumption are transformed into performative, ethical, and affective practices. In China's rapidly emerging vernacular media culture, "faking" becomes a way of making the body—together with props, sets, and techniques—a site for negotiating authenticity, deception, and everyday aesthetics.

Platform Precarities (3)

James Oyange - Data Rights and AI Labour: Examining Data Protection and Exploitation in AI's Invisible Workforce

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence depends on an often-invisible workforce of data annotators, content moderators, and data labellers primarily based in the Global South, who work under harsh and murky conditions set by the platforms. One most essential aspects of this work, but often not mentioned, is the systematic violation of data privacy of those workers. They are often requested to submit personal data such as images, voice recordings, and biometrics to train the AI models. Such breaches are against existing data protection laws. Article 5(1)(b) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) mandates purpose limitation, while Section 25 of Kenya's Data Protection Act upholds principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency in data processing. Even then, AI companies and outsourcing firms are in constant disregard of these laws and use loopholes in the various country laws to coerce workers into collecting their data under coercive employment terms, with little to no oversight. Therefore, this research seeks to answer two questions: (1) What are the legal and ethical implications of requiring platform workers to submit personal data (e.g., biometrics) for AI training, and how do these practices intersect with existing labour and data protection laws? (2) How are these data workers organizing to demand stronger privacy protections and ethical AI labour conditions? Using a mixed-methods approach like qualitative interviews with affected workers, legal analysis of data protection regimes, and case studies of worker-led movements, the study seeks to show how algorithmic management enforces labour exploitation and data privacy infringements while leaving workers without control over their personal information. Grassroots and transnational advocacy continue to work against such organizing challenges. The unions and worker-led campaigns demand fair wages and transparency in algorithmic management and the right to data protection, consent, and control over their personal information. Thus, this paper argues that a dual approach, strengthening data protection laws to protect workers' privacy and supporting collective organizing efforts to resist exploitative AI labour practices, must address AI labour precarity. The research will form a more extensive discourse on countering the powers of platforms and promoting the ethical governance of AI by linking data protection/privacy with labour rights.

Alexandra Moran - Beyond Employment Misclassification: On the Benefits of Including Digital Sex Work in Research and Policy on Platform Work

The rise of platform-mediated sex work has accelerated, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leading many to pursue webcamming or explicit content creation (Brouwers & Herrmann, 2020; Callander et al., 2022). However, sex work has often been neglected from digital labour politics and debates on platform work (Easterbrook-Smith, 2023; Rand, 2019). This paper examines how this exclusion affects the autonomy and labour conditions of workers, particularly in relation to the recently adopted EU Platform Work Directive. An interdisciplinary approach is taken, complementing legal analysis of the Directive with semi-structured interviews with Slovak digital sex workers and exploratory expert interviews. Focusing on content delivery platforms, primarily OnlyFans, the paper examines the ambivalent effects of platformization on workers' ability to exercise autonomy. In addition to the challenges faced by platform workers (Veale et al., 2023), sex workers encounter

further issues due to the stigmatization and criminalization of their work, from censorship (Are, 2024), financial exclusion (Franco & Webber, 2024), discrimination (ESWA, 2022), content theft (Stuart, 2022), to harassment and violence (Are & Gerrard, 2023). As the Platform Work Directive addresses primarily the issue of misclassification and grants limited rights to the self-employed (Rainone & Aloisi, 2024), it ultimately fails to overcome the underlying dichotomy of dependence and independence due to its narrow definition of the digital labour platform (Silberman, 2023). This paper contributes to the growing body of literature on governance of platform-mediated sex work and elaborates on the findings on the impact of state regulation (Kinzer, 2025; Stegeman et al., 2024). The state's role is examined through the lens of exclusion from discourses on platform work and the failure to understand sex work as work. It further explores the possibility and desirability of regulation which preserves workers' agency and addresses the overarching political dynamics.

Angela Li - Expendable Workers: Food Delivery and Techno-Politics in China

Through a case study of Meituan Waimai, China's dominant food delivery platform, this article examines how algorithmic management is intertwined with labor politics. It develops the concept of the techno-politics of labor expendability, which rests on two interrelated arguments. First, the logic of optimization underpinning algorithmic management is not realized solely through the manipulation of data inputs and computational models. Rather, it fundamentally depends on the presumed expendability of migrant workers. In the Chinese context, couriers are first imagined as disposable, an assumption that enables the exclusion of their needs, preferences, and well-being from the computational frame. Second, this vision is further normalized and legitimized through its alignment with specific political and ideological formations, particularly China's fetishization of technological superiority and the longstanding marginalization of rural migrant workers, which consistently treats them as disposable resources. By situating algorithmic management within China's political economy, this article challenges its dominant portrayal as a universal technical phenomenon and highlights the specific labor conditions that shape its design and application.

Platform Economies in India (3)

Ambi - Beyond Limbo: Migrant Women, Platform Economies, and the Multiverse of Precarity in Urban India

Waiting is not merely an economic condition but an affective, embodied, and intersubjective experience, shaping the everyday (im)mobilities of precarious platform workers. This paper critically examines the temporal immobilities of migrant women gig-platform workers in India's at-home beauty service sector, set against the Indian government's vision of self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) and the paradox of platform-mediated precarity. Drawing on Van Doorn's (2022) concept of "liminal precarity", this study interrogates how migrant women inhabit multiple, overlapping realities—a "migrant multiverse"—where agency, control, aspiration, and exclusion coalesce in unpredictable ways. Through an ethnographic study of the "everyday lives" of 20 migrant women workers engaged with platforms like Urban Company and Yes Madam in the National Capital Region (NCR), the paper explores how waiting that is between bookings, for job allocations controlled by algorithms, and for social mobility, becomes an affective and embodied experience. The study finds that while platform work promises economic opportunity, it simultaneously reproduces hierarchies of caste, gender, and migratory status, where migrant women workers must navigate emotionally performative labour, algorithmic uncertainty, and precarious temporalities of hope and frustration. Migrant women's bodies become sites of waiting, emotional discipline, and surveillance, reinforcing digital infrastructures of control that dictate their everyday mobilities and constraints. By positioning waiting as an affective and embodied practice, this paper contributes to debates on (im)mobility, affective labour, and platform capitalism. This paper contributes to digital humanities by drawing on critical migration studies and labour process theories to interrogate how digital infrastructures condition labour and life in the emerging economies of the Global South. It extends debates on digital labour, embodiment, and decolonial digital cultures, while demonstrating how ethnographic and critical-technical approaches can illuminate the socio-cultural and ethical dimensions of platform economies. The research findings challenge dominant narratives of migrants in "limbo," proposing instead that a multiverse perspective enables a more nuanced understanding of how migrant women experience temporal fractures, contested agency, and the emotional geographies of precarity. It urges scholars to reconsider how digital platforms, rather than enabling movement, often create new affective borders that regulate migrant bodies through waiting and uncertainty in developing economies.

Sohini Banerjee - “We try to use these new arrangements... we opt out”: Tactics and refusals of India’s domestic workers in the platform economy

In India, Mumbai’s longue durée of caste struggle and labour organising meets a present shaped by deindustrialisation, circular migration, and the material-ideological production of a technocratic smart/global city. It has been exemplified by quick-commerce logics which now extend from groceries to labour. Domestic work, which has been historically feminised and caste-stratified in India, has become the proving ground where caste-ridden urbanism is translated into a platform-driven logic of convenience. We read this turn through a lens of gendered precarity where Dalit Bahujan Adivasi (DBA) women occupy the least-protected strata of the care economy. This turn is also where the idea of ‘homes-as-workplace’ obscures labour rights and wage theft and controls the disciplining of time. Platformisation of domestic work has grown favourable to India’s upper-class/upper-caste households in metropolitan cities because it rests on a long history of offloading ‘dirty work’ to oppressed communities dwelling in informal settlements of the same cities. This condition is coupled with an oversupply of a precarious informal workforce who lack the means of collectivisation in alienated platform work. This paper proposes to draw on women workers’ experiences and negotiations with app-mediated domestic labour in Mumbai. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with women domestic workers in Mumbai, guided by feminist labour studies and Actor–Network Theory, we treat phones, OTPs, ratings, wallets, and digital interactions as mediators in the new labour relations. A Heideggerian lens on enframing helps us read the datafied body and the techno-affects and attunements of their work. We also look at the cultural politics of time which grounds how temporal discipline is lived, contested, and negotiated with every day. We seek to trace four terrains of this labour-technology relationship: a) access and visibility (thin in-app leads vs. robust kin networks), b) phones and proficiency (shared handsets, low digital literacy, intermittent data), c) temporal regimes and shadow work (unpaid waiting, training, KYC/recharge rituals, commute calculations, punctuality scripts), and d) tactics and refusals (multi-homing across agencies/apps, selective responsiveness, negotiated start times, strategic delays, glitch-exploits, and opting out from punitive flows). Rather than treating platforms as totalising or subversion as radical, the paper aims to explore how women work the seam between the increasing need for work and the digital control of new forms of work. It also aims to understand how and why workers adopt ‘new arrangements’ when they serve their ends and refuse them when they compromise the safety and dignity of labour. In doing so, the paper aims to ask what the promise of digital ease actually means across the labour-supplying and labour-demanding ends of India’s domestic-work market, and on whose time that ease rests.

Srimanjori Guha - “Stepping into the digital”: Support Networks and Women’s Transition into Masculinised Gig Work in Kolkata, India

The expanding gig economy in India has been promoted as ideal for women, for its supposed flexibility. However, recent studies contradict such assumptions and underline the precarious conditions of women gig workers in India. Further, widely available gig work, such as app-based driving and delivery service, is traditionally masculine in nature.. Additionally, Indian social security codes and the newly introduced state-specific gig welfare boards do not explicitly address the gig worker’s need for childcare facilities and mechanisms against workplace harassment. We contribute to this literature by drawing on the case study of women trainee drivers of Kolkata associated with the Azad Foundation. We analyse trainees’ negotiation with familial, non-familial networks as they transition from feminised occupation (or not from the labour force) to a masculinised occupation in the gig economy. Further, we explore conflict and support within familial and non-familial networks around childcare and response to workplace harassment. Narratives highlight that women’s transitions into professional driving are facilitated by breaking out of the homophily and leveraging heterogeneous ties, such as previous employers, online contacts and campaigns held by training organisations. However, such ties remain fragile, provide incomplete information, and remain embedded in social hierarchies. Additionally, the decision to enter a masculinised occupation leads to conflict and judgements with familial and neighbourhood networks limiting their support for care responsibilities. With limited support from institutional networks, future gig workers face uncertainty over childcare. While associated with Azad, the trainees were prepared with self-defence training and awareness about laws against sexual harassment, none of the workers were able to resist the workplace harassment due to a lack of female support at the workplace, fear of job loss and the possibility of conflict within their familial networks. Without explicit policy intervention and structural change, the digital economy can reproduce and intensify the existing marginalisation.

Platform Urbanism and Mobility (4)

Pauline Baudens - Digital Geographies: Platforms Reshaping Women's Urban Mobility

In metropolises worldwide, increasing access to digital technologies, and its adoption, generate a multitude of evolving effects across different scales. These effects reshape everyday practices, create new spaces and spatialities, and change urban dynamics. This research, contributing to the field of digital geographies, explores how digital platforms (e.g., e-hailing, MaaS, safety, and navigation apps) designed to address mobility challenges reshape the experience of navigating time and space, as well as transport planning, in highly constrained and rapidly expanding urban contexts. As a result of integrating several studies, the methodology combines observations and semi-structured interviews with up to fifty interviewees in Pune (India), Abidjan (Ivory Coast), and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), along with up to twenty experts mostly from these cities. The results from these three very different cities provide an interesting cross-sectional view of three cases from the Global South that are rarely compared. They present different levels of access to digital platforms and varying degrees of adoption. Thus, this comparison between cities and the triangulated methods allows for an understanding of how digital platforms redefine mobility practices and perceptions and reshape transport planning in growing cities of the Global South. By creating new mobility possibilities, several digital platforms have become indispensable tools for organising and facilitating daily mobility. However, their adoption raises a multitude of paradoxes and ambiguities at the individual, societal, and urban levels, for instance, questioning the actual benefits in terms of autonomy.

Khushboo Upreti - Platform Urbanism in Delhi: Mediating Urban Space, Labour and Everyday Inequalities

Urban studies have historically examined how capitalism shapes cities. "Platform urbanism" is seen as the latest stage in this process. It refers to the ways digital platforms mediate, commodify and rework urban space, governance and labour. Manifested through e-governance and gig-based platforms, their impact runs deeper than the convenience they offer. Spatially, they transform the urban space by creating dark stores and repurposing streets, thereby identifying and commodifying urban spaces. Policy wise, the neoliberal state acts as an enabler of innovation, facilitating profit motivated enterprises to reshape labour markets. Platform work offers employment, flexibility and autonomy while embedding surveillance, performance metrics and precarity-induced informalisation. This creates an inclusion-exclusion paradox for workers. Since platform urbanism is context sensitive, India, with its burgeoning youth population, becomes a fruitful site of inquiry. Niti Aayog projects 23.5 million gig workers by 2030. Research on India's platform economy remains nascent, focussing on social security, platforms operation and collectivisation while the urban dimension remains underexplored. This paper examines how market driven platforms in Delhi shape the urban space and quotidian experiences of migrant labour. It investigates how platforms shape and are shaped by urban infrastructure. Equally important is the question of gig workers' "right to the city", entailing drinking water, restrooms and waiting areas amid climate induced heatwaves and erratic rainfall. Furthermore, narratives of migrant workers are salient to comprehend the impact of their social location in accessing urban space, strategies to navigate urban space, encounters with algorithmic surveillance and opportunities for resistance. Grounded in the Indian context, this paper helps illuminate the distinctive contours of "actually existing neoliberalism". In technology-driven Fourth Industrial Revolution, studying the platform - urban space - labour axis underscores that technology is ideological, not neutral. It further opens pathways to envision more democratic platforms and reimagine cities for dignified work.

Bia Carneiro, Giulia Tucci - Exploring Human Mobility Discourses through LLMs: A Comparative Experiment

This paper outlines an experimental framework to examine how large language models (LLMs) construct and reproduce narratives about international movements of people, which includes migration and displacement. The study focuses on two distinct systems: ChatGPT, chosen for its widespread use and cultural visibility, and Grok, notable for incorporating real-time social media content (especially from X/Twitter) into its responses. By combining these models, the research aims to capture both a mainstream baseline and a more social media-oriented perspective. The core of the methodology consists of designing prompts to inquire about issues around migration, displacement and refugees, which are then submitted from different simulated locations using a VPN. The same prompts will be run both countries of origin and destination within specific migratory routes, allowing for a comparative analysis of geographic and discursive framings. For instance, one might investigate Libya–Italy, Venezuela–Brazil, or Ukraine–Poland, while remaining open to incorporating other significant routes depending on data availability and research priorities. Rather than focusing on a single flow, the experiment maintains

flexibility to test a variety of contexts, ranging from humanitarian crises to highly politicized routes, or less visible South–South flows. This openness ensures that the framework can adapt to multiple case studies and reflect the diversity of global mobility. It is anticipated that ChatGPT will produce relatively standardized, policy-oriented accounts, while Grok may foreground more polarized or socially resonant framings due to its integration of online discourse. By comparing these outputs across origins and destinations, the study will explore how LLMs participate in constructing knowledge about human mobility, revealing both their epistemic potential and their inherent biases. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of interrogating LLMs as analytical tools while considering they are also agents actively shaping perceptions of migratory movements.

Marie Godin, Fardosa Ahmed Salah - Digital Story Mapping: Refugee Women and the Digital Economy in Kenya

Prevailing accounts of refugee women’s engagement with the digital economy often reproduce reductive assumptions that obscure underlying structural inequalities. Representations of women as passive recipients of aid or training overlook the broader political, economic, and social conditions that shape their participation in the digital economy. Within digital training initiatives, refugee women remain underrepresented not only in overall enrolment but also in advanced skill acquisition, thereby reinforcing gendered occupational segregation and foreclosing trajectories of upward mobility. Digital exclusion, therefore, must be understood as gendered rather than as a matter of individual “self-exclusion.” Refugee women navigate complex, intersecting constraints shaped by gender norms, insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, limited physical mobility, and systemic bias. Our project draws on a mixed-methods design that foregrounds digital story mapping as a participatory mode of inquiry. This approach enables us to examine the spatial and temporal dimensions of how refugee women in Nairobi and Kakuma camp negotiate livelihood strategies, including digital livelihoods, and practices of mobility and immobility within unequal urban and camp geographies. Beyond documenting constraints, digital story mapping foregrounds women’s aspirational horizons—spanning migration and mobility projects, education, family, and future employment—thereby situating their everyday practices within broader debates on gender, displacement, and digital economies.

Digital Pedagogies (4)

Jin Gao, Simon Mahony - Digital Practice and Pedagogy at UCLDH: Reflections on Collaboration across Boundaries

This talk critically examines the digitisation practices and pedagogy of the UCL Digitisation Suite, reflecting on its role in bridging academic research and the operational demands of the cultural heritage sector. While the Suite exemplifies how interdisciplinary spaces can integrate hands-on training with research and foster collaboration across the boundaries of academia and industry, it also reveals challenges that raise questions about the sustainability and inclusivity of such models. Drawing on case studies, including our collaborations with the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Natural History Museum, we examine the tensions between the operational realities of running and maintaining a digitisation lab and the pedagogical goal of preparing students for careers in cultural heritage. We assess issues such as the financial precarity of digitisation projects, staff workloads and insecurity, ethical dilemmas of collection prioritisation, and the limitations of current approaches to integrating sustainability into digitisation workflows. These challenges, alongside the socio-technical hurdles of embedding digital methods into humanities curricula, highlight the complexities of balancing academic and professional needs in collaborative settings. Situating UCL’s practices within a broader context, including developments in Chinese Digital Humanities, we examine how digitisation efforts intersect with global discourses. By interrogating the assumptions behind digitisation as a solution for accessibility and preservation, we invite participants to consider how collaborative projects across disciplinary and institutional boundaries might reconfigure power dynamics, challenge the privileging of certain collections over others, and reduce inequalities in access and representation. Rather than presenting a perfected model, this talk engages with the contradictions and limitations inherent in digitisation labs. It aims to provoke critical discussion on how the digital humanities can adopt a more reflective and equitable approach to collaboration, one that accounts for financial, ethical, and environmental constraints.

Sezgi Basak Kavakli - Teaching in and through Screens: Influence of Extended Reality to Classroom Pedagogy

How can education keep pace with the rapid evolution of screen technologies, and what happens when these technologies become immersive environments rather than simple tools? This paper examines the spread of extended reality (XR) technologies—augmented reality, virtual reality, and other forms of immersive media—and considers their role in turning teachers into digital storytellers. Katz (2009) noted that television, once the dominant medium, was giving way to fragmented and personalized forms of digital content. Douglas (2015) showed how streaming platforms kept screens relevant by catering to individualized but connected audiences through binge-watching and accelerated production cycles. Together, these perspectives capture a dual shift: media has become decentralized, yet continually reinvented for cultural relevance. These same dynamics are visible in education, where screen-based practices are no longer peripheral but central to how knowledge is organized and shared. In recent years, schools and universities have experimented with immersive learning environments that promise to stimulate creativity, empathy, and critical thinking. Simulations, VR modules, and interactive platforms borrow heavily from entertainment and social media, drawing students into stories rather than simply presenting information. While these practices expand what teaching can look like, they also raise important questions. What kinds of narratives do immersive tools privilege? How do they influence ideas of participation, authority, and truth in the classroom? This paper reviews current approaches to XR in education and offers a critique of how they reshape the teacher's role. Rather than functioning solely as transmitters of knowledge, teachers are expected to design, curate, and perform stories through screens. By placing these practices in conversation with media studies and narrative theory, the paper highlights both the opportunities and the cultural risks of importing screen-based storytelling logics into educational spaces.

Jochem Kootstra - Media Makers for the Platform Society – A Systems-Thinking Quickscan for Societal Impact

In January 2025, Meta's policy permitting gendered and LGBTQ+ content labels exposed how profit-driven platforms shape societal norms – revealing a critical pedagogical gap. First-year media makers in applied sciences programs require rapid, accessible systems-thinking tools to assess platforms as complex socio-technical ecosystems, addressing algorithmic governance, environmental footprints, and ethical implications. This paper introduces the first pedagogical quickscan for media makers that seamlessly merges Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck's updated 2025 platformization framework – covering Digital Infrastructure & Algorithmic Systems, Economic Impact & Power Relations, Governance & Human Rights, and Planet & Resources – with Light's walkthrough method. In a 30–45-minute exercise, students undertake a structured walkthrough of onboarding, daily use, and exit phases, performing targeted yes/no observation tasks tied to each dimension. The quickscan generates a traffic-light risk profile visualizing vulnerabilities across systemic dimensions such as privacy, power, governance, and sustainability. By translating abstract frameworks into actionable classroom activities, it bridges digital skills with critical cultural inquiry, enabling students to identify risks, critique hidden power structures, and formulate evidence-based recommendations. The methodology is developed collaboratively with educators, ICT professionals, philosophers, and industry practitioners to ensure theoretical rigor and practical applicability. Planned validation will include case study analyses of major platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) and iterative testing with Communication & Creative Business students at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. This interdisciplinary approach addresses the gap between technical literacies and ethical reflection. As future media makers encounter emerging platforms first in professional contexts, equipping them with systems-thinking analytical tools fosters holistic analysis of interdependent platform effects. It also supports broader societal goals of more ethically conscious digital ecosystems. Advanced modules – introducing issue mapping and algorithm audits – will extend the methodology for upper-year cohorts.

Zoetanya Sujon - From data subjects to data agencies: Co-designing inclusive data research skills for the arts and humanities

While data oriented and computationally informed research skills and methodologies open up new lines of interdisciplinary enquiry and innovation, there are well-known and systemic biases embedded within socio-technical systems and datafication processes (e.g. Noble 2018, Benjamin 2019, D'Ignazio and Klein 2020, Broussard 2023, Guyan 2025). The socio-demographics of those in computing, data science, technology, and research professions reflect these biases and impact who benefits and succeeds in these landscapes. In tandem, many skills and EDI oriented initiatives fail to support long-lasting institutional change (e.g. Ahmed 2012). Inspired by these persistent gaps, this paper reports on the Inclusive Data Research Skills for Arts and Humanities (DAReS) project (2023-2024). The DAReS project developed a trust-based co-design methodology to work with 30 under-represented researchers as co-designers. This meant valuing lived experience and instead of asking what is wrong with current data skills provision, engaged questions on barriers and contingent demands to open up epistemic and practical entry points into digital research and data-oriented methods. Fundamentally, DAReS did not provide a training service but instead provided a collective reimagining of what inclusive data

research skills can look like. The outcomes of the project include a syllabus, report, and some important findings. First, inclusion is not a single point object or artefact; instead, it is a process of interaction that involves explicit acknowledgement and active engagement of lived experience over disciplinary canon – and dedicated space, time, and focus. Second, many approaches to data informed research position researchers as fixed subjects - of strict step-by-step methods and for applied abstraction and/or categorisation – resulting in an experience of epistemic and social exclusion. Facilitating data agencies – where researchers can draw from their lived and/or culturally specific knowledges to impact, resist, and epistemologically shape abstraction, classification, and analysis is crucial for deconstructing data barriers and enabling better, more inclusive research cultures.

Environmental Impacts of AI (4)

Sinem Görücü, Elena Simperl, Georgia Panagiotidou - Meme-tivism: Rethinking the Environmental Footprint of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructures demand vast planetary resources, contributing significantly to carbon emissions and environmental degradation. Yet, this impact is often obscured by the metaphors of “cloud computing” and “artificial intelligence,” which suggest immateriality and inevitability. For many AI practitioners, sustainability remains framed as a distant problem; relevant to “others” building larger models or operating at different stages of development. This distancing not only limits action but also hinders the formation of collective responsibility within developer communities. This paper explores memes as a creative and critical medium for fostering situated awareness and shared dialogue around AI’s environmental footprint. Humor, sarcasm, and meme culture are already deeply embedded in online developer communities, where they are used to navigate technical frustrations, foster solidarity, and normalize shared struggles. Drawing on these practices, we investigate how memes can open space for earlystage, communal engagement with sustainability grounded in practitioners’ own contexts and that goes beyond generic, abstract and guilt-inducing narratives that often fail to resonate. Building on insights from climate justice movements that employ humor and memes to reframe responsibility and mobilize collective action, this work proposes memes as an entry point into more approachable, critical, and participatory conversations about the environmental costs of AI. By leveraging their shareability, relatability, and potential for subversive critique, memes can help practitioners internalize complex issues, disrupt narratives of dematerialization, and create conditions for peer-to-peer learning.

Sebastián Lehuedé - In-Situ AI: Attuning Technology to Local Ecological Struggles

In recent years, AI has been presented as a crucial tool for climate action and biodiversity conservation. A wide range actors, including Big Tech companies and international organisations, have engaged in projects seeking to leverage AI for sustainability. Yet a pressing question remains: how can AI for sustainability include, rather than sideline, the communities most affected by environmental harm? To address this question, this paper turns to the Common Garden, a plant conservation project employing AI in a region marked by environmental controversies in the Colombian High Andes. While led by scientists, the initiative has sought to involve local peasants in activities such as data collection, with only partial success. Yet, what has been particularly significant for participants is the close proximity between scientists, engineers and peasants that the project facilitates. Due to its remote location, peasants often host collaborators in their homes, sharing everyday life, meals and activities such as grocery shopping. Thanks to this proximity, scientists and engineers have become increasingly aware of the project’s potential impacts on local communities. Building on a term derived from conservation science, I develop the notion of ‘in-situ AI’ to describe AI systems developed in close contact with the tensions, ambivalences and uncertainties of local ecological contexts. Under this approach, AI systems initially conceived under strictly scientific or technological justifications become ‘polluted’ by ecological struggles and come to incorporate reflexive questions of justice. Unlike top-down ‘AI alignment’ or idealised ‘participatory AI’ approaches, in-situ AI allows developers to become sensitive to local contexts and to reflect on both their own role and the role of AI within them. Yet, while pragmatic and grounded, in-situ AI is far from perfect, as it does not guarantee horizontal control and may not be applicable to larger-scale projects. While this case study focuses on AI, the concept of ‘in-situ AI’ sheds light on an increasingly pressing question: how can technological systems be developed to deliver both sustainability and justice?

Paul Schütze, Michael Latzer - The Transhumanist Anthropocene - Emerging regimes of (non-)human nature

This paper connects the socio-technical transformation driven by digital technologies to the topic of the climate crisis. Concretely, it identifies a significant shift in the current dynamics of the Anthropocene driven by transhumanist thought. While the Anthropocene has traditionally emphasized humanity's impact on the natural environment, transhumanist visions, fueled by digital developments, now direct this transformative force inward, targeting human nature itself. This marks an expansion of human action toward the technical control of human evolution, generating unprecedented living conditions that redefine what it means to be human. To capture this development, we introduce the notion of the "Transhumanist Anthropocene". With it, we point to a novel trajectory within the overall Anthropocene dynamics, mainly driven by digital technologies and the digital transformation at large. This is characterized by a reinforced anthropocentrism, the rise of techno-religion, a reduction of the perceived urgency of the climate crisis, and an increasing reliance on techno-solutionist models of environmental governances. We argue that the growing dominance of transhumanist logics within the Anthropocene narrows possible future pathways. This significantly complicates efforts toward effective and sustainable regulation and oversight in the face of the climate crisis. The paper relates to the conference theme : "Digital ecologies, environmental justice and sustainable digital futures".

Deborah Lupton, Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris – ‘It’s Actually Quite Horrifying!’ Public Understandings and Imaginings of the Impacts of Generative AI on the Environment

The boom in generative AI has serious environmental impacts, including heavy water and energy use as well as contributing to increased e-waste, carbon emissions and noise pollution. In this presentation, we discuss findings from our 'Digitising and Datafying the Four Elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water' study, part of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society's signature project on 'Automated Decision-Making, Ecosystems and Multispecies Relationships'. This study investigates how generative AI technologies and infrastructures, including the building of massive data centres, generate significant heat, requiring substantial energy and water use for cooling. We wanted to identify what members of the public knew about these environmental impacts, what concerns they may have and how environmental justice may be achieved through sensitising people to these harms. Our approach also adopts a future-oriented perspective in encouraging people to imagine the futures of generative AI. The conceptual underpinning of the study brings together elemental and more-than-human theory with critical studies of AI, infrastructure, thermopolitics and data centres to explore the sociomaterialities of generative AI in relation to the natural world. One phase of our study involved conducting focus groups with Australian adults, using a digital whiteboard tool with images of data centres and e-waste together with creative prompts to inspire lively discussions among the participants. Findings from these workshops are presented, including how participants conceptualised the current impacts of these new digital technologies and infrastructures and how they imagine the future in terms of generative AI's impacts on the natural world. Our study offers insights for how to attune the public to the environmental impacts of generative AI use and the possible futures of such use using creative approaches.

Creative Methodologies (4)

Claudia Sarmiento - Storytelling, Artivism, and Environmental Journalism in the Amazon: Decolonial Digital Narratives

This paper explores how hybrid digital narratives emerging from the Amazon region can combine journalism, art, and activism to challenge dominant representations of the territory and reframe environmental issues through a lens of social justice. Drawing from a decolonial perspective and alternative media studies, the research focuses on independent digital media initiatives and indigenous-led communication projects that confront extractivist logics and give visibility to marginalised voices historically excluded from social-environmental debates. Based on qualitative analysis of selected case studies, the paper investigates how digital media formats such as longform journalism, podcasts, short videos, and interactive content are used to articulate narratives of resistance from a region where environmental degradation and social conflicts are linked to colonial legacies and the idea of nature as a commodity. The chosen cases are: 1) "Sumaúma", a trilingual forest-based award-winning news platform; 2)

The podcast “Copiô, Parente”, created by indigenous communicators from the Brazilian Amazon; and 3) “Varadouro”, a non-profit journalism organisation produced to protect the Rain Forest and its people. The cases are examined with attention to how visual and narrative elements construct counter-hegemonic framings. The research highlights the lead-up to COP30, to be held in Belém (Brazilian state of Pará) in November 2025, as a key moment when the Amazon will be at the centre of global environmental discourse. In this context, the paper examines how these media actors leverage digital tools not only to document socio-environmental injustices, but also to affirm non-Eurocentric worldviews. Rather than portraying the region as either an exotic wilderness or a site of climate catastrophe, these digital initiatives aim to centre the Amazon as a space of political and cultural agency. They intersect journalism with activism and community-based storytelling, contributing to broader discussions on digital ecologies, environmental communication and decolonial media practices from the Global South.

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt - Monster collage to make sense of the sustainable maintenance work for digital and material museum collections

Museums are part of the larger social fabric, and their digital collections are often considered to be a core resource for digital humanities work. A lot of the work goes into building relevant databases and considering data structures, establishing FAIR data practices, creating digital records and maintaining them. This work intersects with the traditional collection care work that museums undertake to ensure the preservation of their physical collections. Often, this care work is part of the invisible work of infrastructure maintenance (Star 1999). Maintaining the digital and physical collections is resource-intensive and raises questions about the sustainability of such efforts. The aim of the paper is to present a creative methodological experiment developed to study the sustainability challenges that museums face at the intersection of material and digital curation and maintenance of their collections. The experiment considers the broad definition of sustainability, encompassing environmental, social, economic and cultural components. Implementing a collaborative collage-making technique and inviting participants to create a Kratt (an Estonian mythological treasure-bringing monster), the methodological experiment explores how we can investigate sustainable futures by taking care of and maintaining the past. The figure of a monster as a cultural trope becomes a way to explore the tensions and troubles that the museum staff encounter when working with the digital and material collections. Building on monster theory (Cohen 1996) and questioning the data care (Jarke and Bücher 2024), the monsters made within the experiment tell a story about tensions, unresolved sustainability problems and work that is necessary but not always acknowledged. Each of the four monsters – economic, social, cultural and ecological comes with its own, often contradictory care challenges that museum professionals need to navigate.

Yuan Pan, Dr A Bradley Duthie; Professor Nils Bunnefeld; Daksha Patel - Knowledge Games for Environmental Conservation: Insights from the EcoKnowGames Project

Environmental conservation research requires robust methods for collecting large-scale behavioural data and engaging diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. This paper presents insights from the EcoKnowGames research project, an active transdisciplinary project developing knowledge games as platforms for environmental citizen science and data collection. We explore two knowledge games created by academics: “Power Up!”, which has collected over 57,000 player decisions on energy-biodiversity trade-offs, and “RESTORE”, focused on ecosystem restoration scenarios. Our project will integrate game development with ecological modelling, establishing pathways from player decision-making data to predictive socio-ecological models. EcoKnowGames will develop open-source game builder tools in partnership with an established game studio, allowing researchers to create custom knowledge games without extensive technical expertise. Our framework addresses key challenges in game-based research including privacy protection measures, participant consent in gaming environments, community engagement and integration with policy processes. This novel methodological approach contributes to environmental research by providing empirically tested tools for integrating human behaviour data into social-ecological models, offering a complementary approach to traditional stakeholder engagement methods in environmental decision-making processes.

Scott Rodgers, Robert Topinka - Jump to Recipe: The Procedural and the Culinary in Quali-Quantitative Digital Methods

In this paper, we reflect on the challenges of authoring helpful yet contextually adaptable methodological recipes for quali-quantitative research. There has been a proliferation of digital methods recipes online, partly owing to the burgeoning availability of free or low-cost data processing and visualisation tools. While usable by researchers without training in coding or quantitative data science, such tools often require awareness of or attention to steps and procedures. This is where recipes come to the fore. And yet, the procedural emphasis of recipes can sit uneasily with the interpretive and improvisational orientation quali-quantitative approaches have to the messiness of digital data. Reflecting on experiments undertaken in a pair of British Academy-funded workshops focused on quali-quantitative approaches to social media data, and the subsequent development of an online resource, we suggest the connotative connections between methodological and culinary recipes may be clarifying. Borghini (2020), a philosopher of food, observes that while food recipes are oftentimes conceived as procedural, they are also culinary. Recipes spell out procedures to achieve an end result, but these procedures are irreducible to the food being prepared and consumed in particular settings. Methodological recipes are no different: they need to be portable across contexts; yet that is arguably best achieved when their contexts of authoring are more visible. Users of online methodological advice might feel an understandable urge to figuratively press the “jump to recipe” button – to advance more quickly to the desired instructions. Yet a gastronomical orientation reminds us that methodological recipes can take many forms, and be interpreted in many ways. This, we suggest, is increasingly relevant with the emergent digital dynamism of food and method recipes alike – not only written and audiovisual recipes online, but LLM-generated recipes and advice synthesising distributed training and queried digital data in response to the cook’s prompts.

Digital Infrastructures and Climate Futures (3)

Adrian Godboldt - Cement Blocks and Silicon Dreams: Urban Desire and the Politics of Digital Infrastructure

There is growing recognition that the digital is not bodiless but grounded in the material infrastructures that sustain our online lives. This materiality has become increasingly visible through the multibillion-dollar rush to construct data centers and the international push to localize semiconductor manufacturing after COVID-19 supply chain disruptions. Drawing from preliminary ethnographic research in Phoenix, Arizona, which is one of the leading US states investing in data centers and chip manufacturing, this paper examines how communities, corporations, and governments collectively shape and contest the expansion of digital infrastructure. In the southeast of Phoenix, residents describe the newly built data centers that pepper the highways as “cement blocks,” daunting structures that threaten unknown amounts of water extraction in a state already facing historic drought. Northwest of Phoenix, a local community organization is actively fighting the development of a chip manufacturing plant in their neighborhood. At the same time, an NGO proudly describes helping bring the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company to northern Phoenix, viewing the project as fostering cultural exchange between the US and Taiwan. These tensions reveal that the digital is never neutral but is produced through ongoing social negotiations over land, resources, and belonging. Using Anna Tsing’s notion of patchwork, I propose patchwork ethnography as a methodological lens for Digital Humanities - one that maps the uneven, interconnected, and transnational assemblages sustaining digital worlds. By following the interactions among NGOs, data center realtors, and local advocates, this approach highlights how global digital politics are lived and interpreted in everyday life. Ethnography, though not new to Digital Humanities, remains vital for tracing how digital infrastructures materialize through human decisions and desires. Rather than abstract systems of progress, these infrastructures are politically charged terrains, where communities negotiate what it means to live with, and against, the digital future being built around them.

Jipson John - Digital Humanitarianism and Disaster Governance: A Study from Global South

This paper deals with how the intersections of technology, data, and governance are redefined during crises and social change through lived experiences in the global south. At the time of discourses happening around ‘digital technology’ across the globe, this paper looks into how digital power came to the front stage of climate hazards management in Kerala, a southern state in India. Kerala is one of the most populated and coastal states falling between the Arabian sea and the Western Ghats. It is one of the most environmentally vulnerable states in terms

of ecological and climate aspects. Looking into last decade, Kerala has witnessed unprecedented ecological and climate events that caused enormous loss. At the same period, digital platforms and infrastructure have evolved in everyone's life like never before. In this context, this paper looks into how digital tools played a significant role in managing the crisis in Kerala. This paper further explores how digital technologies can redefine the scope and reach of humanitarian action during the environmental crisis. As one of the most literate and technologically aware communities, the paradigm shifts from the traditional humanitarian response to digital humanitarianism completely redefined the response to environmental disasters in Kerala. This raises important questions about the actors and infrastructures now shaping aid: multinational tech companies, and private platforms increasingly participate alongside traditional NGOs and govt agencies. The growing dependence on digital tools also brings important concerns around data governance, privacy, and equity, particularly regarding the use of big data in crisis contexts. This paper has taken up Ulrich Beck's concept of 'risk' as a matter of analysis and discusses how digital technology is addressing environmental issues in Kerala. Finally, the paper looks into various aspects through the lens of digital humanitarianism, exploring how digital tools and infrastructures have reshaped aid practices of Kerala's disaster governance.

Jan Müggenburg, Armin Beverungen - Climate Futures in Digital Cultures

In this contribution we propose a framework for researching the relation between climate futures and digital cultures along three dimensions. The first considers the way computing has contributed through its environmental footprint to the climate crisis, while the history of computing already entails a reckoning with the environmental. The second reflects the ways computing is today used to manage climate, either to mitigate the climate crisis or to provide resilient climate futures. The third highlights the way our very relation to climate futures is mediated through computing, in particular through the simulation(s) of climate futures but also imaginaries distributed through computational media. In short, reflecting on climate futures in digital cultures involves understanding computing as a contributor to the climate crisis, as a potential mitigator, and as intimately involved in making climate futures. We will provide a brief overview and one example for each of these dimensions. Where today we perhaps first think of the environmental impact of generative AI and its data centres in relation to the environmental impact of computing, we will briefly introduce biological computing as an historical attempt to model computing on nature. We briefly discuss digital twins as a prevalent means by which computing, in sensing and datafying the broken planet, offers mitigation and resilience. And we explore computer simulations in climate modelling as a principal method or means to relate to distant climate futures. Overall, the aim of the paper is to demonstrate how thoroughly entangled digital cultures and climate futures are, and how urgent it is to reckon with the ways in which computing relates to the climate crisis (as contributing, mitigating and envisioning) and how our relation to climate futures requires us to work through the contradictions of digital cultures.

Policymaking, Governance and the Digital (4)

Jennifer Castaneda Navarrete, Hilde G. Corneliusen, Cheshta Arora, Steve Evans - Intergovernmental policy discourses on the green and digital transitions in the context of working life

As the green and digital transitions reshape economies and societies, intergovernmental organisations play a crucial role in framing these transformations. This article examines how intergovernmental organisations conceptualise the green and digital transitions, and their interplay within the context of work, highlighting the policy implications of these narratives. Drawing on 101 policy documents from nine European and international organisations, alongside key informant interviews and a policy webinar, the study applies the Pathways Approach to identify six key areas of dominant and alternative narratives: (i) skills development versus structural barriers, (ii) preventing inequalities versus transformative change, (iii) business as usual versus new economic models, (iv) national just transitions versus global justice, (v) controlled futures versus navigating uncertainty and (vi) twin transitions versus a systemic approach. Findings suggest an overemphasis on skills development and risk mitigation, with less attention given to structural inequalities and transformative opportunities.

Kalimah Wasis Lestari, Emiria Dinar Triana - AI-Driven Government: Accommodating Deliberative Democracy or Algocracy?

Following the rise of AI-driven campaigns in the 2024 Indonesian election, AI technology is being utilised to provide government recommendations by harvesting insights from mass online public debates. The emergence of AI-driven government is expected to enhance the possibility of accommodating online deliberative democracy.

In this form of democracy, citizens can express and contest their political argumentation through online platforms. This study aims to raise a critical question about the extent to which AI can accommodate online deliberative democracy, or whether this technology is transforming current democracy into algocracy (algorithm + cracy), a form of government governed by algorithm technology. We employ case study analysis by interviewing 10 key stakeholders, including executive government officials who have been using AI to produce policy recommendations, the founders of AI companies that provide services to the executive government, as well as government staff, AI experts, and NGOs, to evaluate its implementation. To support the primary data, we also collect archival data from AI companies and government teams, providing a broader understanding of AI products and the circumstances under which these products are implemented. Drawing on the concept of deliberative democracy, this study explores the potential of AI in facilitating the practice of online deliberative democracy, particularly in translating public opinion into actionable recommendations. This study also employs the concept of algocracy as a comparison of AI use as an agentic AI system in replacing citizens' roles in governing the government. Finally, this study emphasises the challenge of AI-driven government in two categories: 1) the internal challenge relates to the executive government's epistemic agency and capacity for reflexivity, and 2) the external challenge relates to the output of AI use, including inequality, information dissemination bias, and opacity.

Siddhi Wadekar, Aakansha Natani - Unpacking Data Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Critical Inquiry into its Evolution and Contemporary Strategic Relevance

At a time of technology-driven geopolitics, data diplomacy is quickly emerging as a means employed by nation states to achieve the goals of traditional diplomacy by attempting to territorialise data sovereignty through data governance laws and diplomatic negotiations. Data diplomacy is closely linked to the expression of digital sovereignty where data as a powerful resource enhances political sovereignty of the Westphalian nation state. Within the global context of growing trade frictions, influence of big tech and disputes over disruptive technologies, data diplomacy has evolved from an amalgamation of digital diplomacy and economic diplomacy and is being deployed in varied ways and approaches by dominant players like the US, the EU, China as well as middle powers like India to redefine the terms of engagement with other actors, both public and private in the form of digital economy agreements, digital trade chapters, etc. The paper explores the determining elements of data diplomacy as an emerging foreign policy practice that has complex interconnections with domestic factors such as internal regulatory capacity, level of technological and economic development, constitutional provisions and political narratives that influence foreign policy choices. With differences cropping up between like-minded allies like the US and the EU on data free flows and data privacy, data diplomacy is evolving into a partnership-based transaction characterised by a complex layering of hard and soft contractual commitments on data localisation and data sharing. The paper goes beyond the existing free data flow vs data sovereignty narrative to differentiate how data diplomacy is now evolving into a kind of strategic and tactical engagement to forge issue-based coalitions between nation-states based on power differentials over normative commitments. The paper also critically examines how data diplomacy means differently to the global north and global south and its impact on governing coming-of-age data intensive technologies like AI.

Eun Sun Godwin, Jennifer Castañeda-Navarrete, Zoi Roupakia - Whose voice counts? The politics of AI governance

AI governance represents an important space of digital politics where power relations determine whose voices shape technological futures. This paper examines how current AI policy-making processes function as mechanisms of political inclusion and exclusion, analysing the power dynamics that structure participation in digital governance.

Our paper addresses two questions: Whose voice is missing? and How can those voices be heard?. Current AI government strategies tend to emphasise the adoption of AI technologies, with limited attention to how power is exercised at the developmental and deployment stages of these systems.

Building on the authors' previous work (Roupakia & Castañeda-Navarrete, 2025), we review national and supranational AI strategies and legislation, examining both the actors and the forms of evidence mobilised in their design. Particular attention is given to how evidence is produced, the kinds of data that underpin it, the narratives on the purpose of AI, and how these choices shape which perspectives gain authority.

Our analysis focuses on four contexts that are both leaders in AI development and advancing inclusive governance: Canada, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. Applying critical discourse analysis and the Pathways Approach (Leach et al., 2010), we investigate how these policymaking processes function as mechanisms of political inclusion and exclusion: whose voices and forms of knowledge are legitimised, whose are marginalised, and what implications these asymmetries hold for democratic digital governance.

We explore the potential for resistance through alternative policy narratives. These narratives challenge dominant techno-economic framings of AI and foreground: (1) who and what AI is for; (2) the scope of societal

transformations and inequalities associated with the technology; and (3) the boundaries and governance mechanisms required to anticipate and mitigate harms and create space for more democratic and inclusive digital futures.

Radical Data Methodologies (4)

Yu Sun - Cultivating a green culture via everyday climate action in China: grassroots data as alternative climate knowledge infrastructure

Studies on data activism have seen the emancipatory potentials of data and datafication in promoting public good and social justice from the bottom up (Gabrys et al. 2016; Gutierrez & Milan, 2018; Beraldo & Milan, 2019; Baack, 2015). The study explores how the crowdsourced citizen data opens up alternative ways to generate climate knowledge and low carbon culture in the specific sociopolitical and sociocultural context of China. ENGOs and public sectors have been developing carbon data initiatives to engage ordinary citizens as alternative actors in the production of carbon knowledge, driving community-centred climate action. Taking the Climate Data Initiatives designed by an ENGO as green initiative to mobilize the general public in the production of knowledge related to carbon emission and its associated impact on people's everyday life as case study, this project aims to look at how the app is facilitating citizens' practices of "lifeworld environmentalism" (Author, in press) through forging the connection between the environmental with the cultural and the social and thus transforming app users into agents of change in everyday life. In so doing, the project reveals the potential of crowdsourced data and citizen narratives about carbon emissions as transformative power to pressure enterprises to improve their ESG performance. Taking indigenous perspectives, the study contributes to enriching the discussion on the necessity of moving beyond the universal Western-centred norms in understanding the diverse forms of digital good in global south.

Lodewijk Petram - Broadening Access to Dutch Colonial Archives: Digital Methods and Bias Awareness

The archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) were long accessible only to a small group of mainly Dutch historians who could travel to The Hague and read early modern Dutch. With the GLOBALISE project (<https://globalise.huylgens.knaw.nl/>), this situation is changing fundamentally: five million pages of VOC documents have been digitised, transcribed and enriched with metadata, making them available to an international research community. With the aid of advanced search options and translation tools, researchers who do not master Dutch can soon ask detailed questions of these sources. This shift disrupts linguistic hierarchies and opens the archive to a much wider range of research topics, from migration and slavery to environmental change. But this new breadth also makes the problem of bias more urgent. The VOC archives were created for the purposes of a colonial trading empire. Historians used to be trained to keep this perspective in mind, but for research questions further removed from the company itself the origin of the sources is easier to overlook. However, what the VOC chose to record – and what it ignored – is crucial context. Without this awareness, the promise of digital methods risks sliding into naïve readings of 'big colonial data'. In this contribution, I discuss how GLOBALISE tries to address this. We cannot eliminate the bias in the sources, but we can help users recognise it. Informed by the output of the Combatting Bias project (<https://combattingbias.huylgens.knaw.nl/>), we do so by offering contextual information – e.g. about ethnic minorities and other groups whose voices are faint – and by building bias awareness into the design of the research portal. In line with the call's emphasis on critical inquiry with and about the digital, GLOBALISE shows how infrastructure can both broaden access and encourage researchers to remain attentive to the situated, partial nature of colonial archives.

Ceren Yuksel – In the Shadows of UNHCR's Data-fiction: An Inconsistency Framework and Platform for Humanitarian Counter-narratives

RefugeeDataMinder is a practice-led doctoral research project that responds to longstanding scholarly critiques of misplaced accountability in international refugee protection by proposing a digital archival design where data

becomes a site of power that can be contested and reclaimed. The United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) legalises individuals as refugees who would otherwise be categorised as illegal immigrants, in return for multi-billion-dollar annual funding from donor states and the public, funneling them into its protection and assistance services when national governments delegate their responsibilities under the UN Refugee Convention. In the absence of independent oversight, UNHCR operates within a conflict of interest, acting as both evaluator and subject of evaluation as it transforms individuals registered with the organisation from data subjects into subjects of data through this quantification process. Visibility and accountability are intimately connected. When rights violations are obscured or unrecorded, the actual gap in refugee protection remains unaccounted for. Visibility concerns not just data absence, but how algorithmic systems structure and privilege narrative possibilities. UNHCR holds significant technical and financial resources to produce curated representations of refugee lives, while scholarly data and grassroots testimonies that document injustice remain siloed, archived but unseen. The RefugeeDataMinder (<https://refugeedataminder.com>) draws together these fragmented narratives to surface what has been erased from public view or never recorded, with an architecture of visibility where inconsistencies in UNHCR's data are a marker of withheld accountability. Designed to evolve through digital humanities led methods, the archive explores what else data could do and who else it could serve.

Kristoffer Gansing, Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter - De-Imagining Media - Material Speculation beyond the Immediate and the Generative

This paper builds on a research project that asks how a critical understanding and transformation of contemporary media infrastructures could be promoted through artistic research methods of de-imagining, to be understood as a process of mediating and re-mediating current media infrastructures into forms that are techno-aesthetic reflections of their material relations as well as provocations towards the emergence of new modes of production and distribution. Through digital methods such as copying the meta-data structures of Netflix and analysing their interface as well as back-end architectures, we found out that rather than abundant, this is an infrastructure of optimisation with the goal to circulate a relatively small amount of localised popular content to a large user base, predicted to want to consume that particular content. Our artistic remediations of the content of streaming media infrastructures into physical media such as VHS, have served to make visible this misconstrued relation and suggest models of ownership and distribution, based on distributed ownership and labour, and offline, personalised diversity of content. This and other interventions are attempts to work on de-imagining the ideals and material structures of the immediacy and generativity of "endless media" as the basis of the current technological imaginary. Following a methodology of material speculation where artistic interventions both probe the functioning of existing media infrastructures and inform the prototyping of alternatives, the paper proposes and explores three interconnected artistic methods of de-imagining, namely de-description, de-generation and de-mediation. The goal is to contribute to the development of sustainable alternatives in the field of digital media infrastructures, against the background hypothesis that in the face of environmental and socio-political devastation, what is urgently needed is not more but less, slower and smaller media: de-imagined media infrastructures that operate at a different scale than the paradigm of everything everywhere all at once.

Ways of Gaming (4)

André Almo, Ana Jovanovic-Harrington and Maíra Theophilo de Souza Amaral - Video Games as Digital Extensions of Protest

Video games have expanded beyond pure entertainment into tools for communication, cultural expression, and political engagement. As the video game industry continues to thrive, the accessibility of development tools has enabled independent creators and studios to produce games that challenge dominant narratives and give space to marginalised voices. While earlier politically-charged titles such as *Papers, Please* (2013) and *This War of Mine* (2014) offered reflective commentaries on conflict, a new wave of creators has been using games not to revisit past crises, but rather to create a digital addendum to their opinions of current events. This shift has been particularly evident in Serbia, where digital games are emerging as a novel medium of protest. Amid ongoing student-led demonstrations and widespread dissatisfaction with the government, young developers have begun creating browser-based games that directly reference ongoing events, satirising political figures, representing street protests, and mobilising players. These projects blur the line between art, activism, and participation, positioning game development as a digital extension of protest rather than a detached critique. By creating a playable form of protest, these games invite players to engage with politics interactively, creating a digital collective, political experience. This work examines this idea and three Serbian protest games to explore how

they function as political expression and digital resistance, and how games by independent studios and solo developers should integrate broader debates on participatory media and activism.

Nicole Khoo, Leon Y. Xiao - What's in the loot box? Exploring the disclosure and content of loot box adverts in Ireland

'Loot boxes' are products in video games that can be bought for randomised rewards. Loot boxes are known to be structurally and psychologically similar to gambling and is correlated with gambling symptomology. Despite this, loot boxes are not widely recognised as gambling, particularly by the law, and thus are highly promoted through social media advertising. Additionally, other inappropriate content prevalent in video games are featured in these adverts as a way to attract younger players to download the game. Ireland was chosen as a case study since gambling advertising is heavily regulated but does not recognise loot boxes as gambling. Analysis is easier as well – as a country under the EU, data transparency is required by the Digital Services Act and the adverts are mostly in English. We assessed the disclosure of loot boxes in adverts in Ireland and analysed their content. A list of games containing loot boxes was checked in the Meta Ad repository for ads displayed in Ireland. If present, the 10 most recent adverts are checked for disclosure of loot boxes, the target demographic, and reach numbers. 500 of the total adverts were randomly selected for thematic analysis. Of 1428 total adverts, only 2.4% adverts clearly disclosed loot box presence in the games. While women are only featured in 36% of the sample, 20% of those adverts portrayed women in a sexualised manner. Only 2.4% of adverts with men featured sexualised men. 22.4% of the adverts featured gambling and loot box imagery and 29% of adverts feature violence. These results indicate poor regulation of video game advert content on large social media platforms and a blatant lack of disclosure, causing concern for consumer protection. Further action should include clear disclosure of loot boxes in games as well as regulating what content is being featured in adverts.

Eva Liu - How Young Chinese Women Use Yaoi Games to Explore Identity Formation Possibilities

This pioneering study examines the transformative power of yaoi games as a platform for young Chinese women to engage in identity exploration, challenging societal norms and restrictions. Yaoi games, a genre originating in Japan and primarily targeting female audiences, immerse players in narratives where they assume the role of a male protagonist navigating romantic and sexual relationships with other male characters. By focusing on Chinese female players, this study aims to (1) deconstruct the sociocultural factors shaping their self-formation, (2) analyse the gendered restrictions faced by women in contrast to men within contemporary Chinese society, and (3) elucidate how yaoi games serve as vital alternative spaces for negotiating and experimenting with gender identities and relational possibilities. In the context of China's party-state propaganda that stigmatizes single women over twenty-seven as 'leftover women' and the tightening control over heteropatriarchal norms, yaoi games offer a critical "escape route" for women to articulate more diverse and flexible paradigms of gender and masculinity. This research highlights how these games function as sites of subtle resistance against oppressive societal expectations, providing Chinese women with a safe yet transformative arena to explore identities that may otherwise be constrained offline. Employing qualitative methods, including in-depth player interviews and interpretative phenomenological analysis, the study investigates how players experience the strong sense of participation unique in video games (through interaction and agency, emotional immersion, parasocial interactions, and the existence in the distinctive chronotope of the game world) enables the reconfiguration of the self. The findings contribute important empirical insights to interdisciplinary discussions across video game studies, gender theory, and media psychology, revealing the evolving landscape of digital self-fashioning and gender identity negotiation in contemporary Chinese culture.

Jack Lowe - Pin the Tale: engaging with place through a site-specific storytelling game

Pin the Tale is a location-based game about connecting with the world around you through stories, which launched in early-access in spring 2025. It is played on a UK-wide digital story-map (accessible via web browser on mobile, tablet, PC and Mac) that uses the what3words grid. What3words divides the world into 3m x 3m squares and gives each one a unique address made up of three words. These words are the building blocks of all the stories on Pin the Tale. Players that submit site-specific stories to appear on the game map must use all three words of their places' what3words addresses in their stories. Once uploaded to the platform alongside an image of the place, other players can then challenge themselves to identify the locations (what3words addresses) associated with each story, using the information contained within them. In this paper, I will discuss how Pin the Tale's gameplay intersects with, and impacts, the ways its players engage with place. Drawing upon insights from the design, testing and public release of the game, I will consider the practices through which players of Pin the Tale have adopted the platform as a tool for site-specific storytelling, their reported experiences of playing the

game and how these observations connect to (and depart from) my intentions as the game's designer. Through this analysis, I will make some observations about the ways that digital and locative media more broadly are implicated in our experiences of being-in-the-world today, and how playful uses of these media in platforms like Pin the Tale can reproduce, disrupt and multiply relational processes of emplacement. Pin the Tale can be accessed for free at pinthetale.co.uk

Identity, Agency and Narrative in Videogames (3)

Liselotte de Beer - Playing the Posthuman: Authorship and Agency in AI Dungeon

The paper examines the shifting boundaries in authorship and agency within digital literature and gaming through the lens of posthumanism. Using AI Dungeon as case study, it explores how narrative, game design and player interaction disrupt the notion of the autonomous author within the emerging AI space. The digital space challenges notions of authorship and creation and considers texts as processes that may involve interactivity, reader/player agency and human-machine collaboration. The paper will draw on posthuman theory (Hayles & Braidotti) to explore notions of posthuman authorship in which the single, human author is decentred and authorship and storytelling becomes a multifaced and hybrid human-machine collaboration. The blurring lines between human and machine in the contemporary digital world creates space for exploration of authorship and creation. Hayles' technogenesis argues that there is a symbiosis between human and machine, not only in fields such as medicine or biology but also within the arts and literature. This technogenesis, necessitates a reconsideration of the traditional notions of 'authorship' and 'agency'. In an evolving world where technology takes centre stage, one must consider the way issues such as authorship and agency can, and perhaps even should, be challenged. The paper takes on an interdisciplinary approach and adds to the discussions on electronic and digital literature as well as game studies. Interactive games do not merely provide entertainment but are sites of exploration for a changing literary and gaming world. Games often rely on narrative and storytelling as key devices and electronic literature gamifies texts to explore multimodality. Consequently, the digital space, specifically given the current prominence of AI is the perfect site for an examination of posthuman authorship as it is not only the digital form that echoes the posthuman technics but also the narrative form that challenges boundaries in posthuman fashion.

Richard Bingham - Engine Interpretation: Decoding Time and Temporality in Zelda64

Engines (collections of "core" functions and assets) support the production of interactive digital simulations such as videogames. Engines are transient, subject to updates and revisions. Nonetheless, their "protocols, standards, and affordances" produce a style and ontology shared among games built using it (Nicoll and Keogh). This paper asks: are engines themselves meaningful texts, rather than influential agents in the process of creating texts? Interpretation is the practice of uncovering a text's meaning, a "hidden code". This search for latent meanings can obscure aspects of a text that neither affirm nor negate that code (Sontag). In games studies, scholars have criticised the fetishisation of source code as an "original" meaning behind the imagery on screen and mechanics (Chun; Anabel). However, this surface/depth debate presupposes a "default" gameplay situation: playing a game on official hardware, working towards the designed goals. Player communities upend this situation by emulating, hacking and speedrunning them with supplementary software. Such practices explore a single plane upon which computation is encountered alongside – rather than hidden "beneath" – the game-world (see image above). While these practices are oriented toward unofficial goals (Boluk and LeMieux), they also generate instances of interpretation, exchanged on fan forums. This paper applies these community tools and insights to interpret the "Zelda64" game engine, created for the two Legend of Zelda games released on Nintendo 64 (1998/2000). Using such tools opens "weird" encounters with the basic ontology of these once-familiar environments. People and things are reshuffled into hierarchies of "actors" that blur distinctions between humans, animals and inanimate objects. Moreover, previously invisible actors emerge, including ones that embody the passing of time. Beginning in this weird space, this paper demonstrates that interpreting the tangles of computational temporalities in the Zelda64 engine enriches the thematic explorations of time and temporality offered by both games.

Zeren Sevim Sipahioglu Arkin - Haunted Flesh: Feminist Approaches to Disordered Eating and Visual Representation in Downfall

This paper examines the psychological horror game Downfall (2009/2016) through the lens of feminist theory, fat studies, affect theory, and visual culture analysis. Focusing on the characters Ivy and Sophie, it explores how the

game constructs disordered eating, femininity, and coercive care through grotesque imagery, fragmented narrative, and player mechanics. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Judith Butler, Susan Bordo, Julia Kristeva, and bell hooks, the paper argues that *Downfall* transforms feminine suffering into a visual spectacle navigated through a male protagonist. The 2016 remake intensifies Ivy's and Sophie's abjection through explicit depictions of eating disorders and bodily grotesquery, reinforcing patriarchal control while offering a space for critical reflection. Player reception is also analyzed to highlight the tension between empathy and complicity. Ultimately, this paper positions *Downfall* as a feminist horror text that visualizes the haunting intersections of gender, pain, and control, and calls for more critical engagements with visual storytelling in games.

Social media, games and health (4)

Chingyin Chiu - Negotiating Rosacea: Visibility, Self-Care, and Commercialisation on Xiaohongshu

This paper examines how rosacea, a highly visible and stigmatised chronic skin condition, is discursively constructed on Chinese social media, with a particular focus on Xiaohongshu. While existing scholarship on digital health has explored medicalisation and commercialisation, less attention has been paid to how platform logics, visual culture, and everyday patient practices intersect in shaping illness meanings. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of 400 Xiaohongshu posts and 31 in-depth interviews with female rosacea patients, this study investigates how medical, commercial, and experiential narratives converge to redefine the condition in digital spaces. The analysis shows that rosacea is framed simultaneously as a medical disorder, an aesthetic flaw, and a moralised object of self-care. Patients navigate these overlapping discourses by engaging in practices of self-surveillance, selective trust, and trial-and-error experimentation. While Xiaohongshu provides a supportive space for sharing experiences and fostering patient agency, it also intensifies pressures of visibility and consumer responsibility, embedding health management within cycles of commodification. In particular, discourses of "scientific skincare" and "skin barrier repair" exemplify how commercial narratives appropriate biomedical concepts, turning illness into both a site of empowerment and anxiety. By situating rosacea at the intersection of digital health, embodiment, and consumer culture, this paper highlights the ambivalent role of social media in reconfiguring patient subjectivity. It contributes to broader debates in digital health and body sociology by showing how illness in the platform era is not only treated but also lived, narrated, and commercialised through the entanglement of medical authority, market logics, and visual regimes of visibility.

Diane Francis - Digital Black Feminism and Celebrity Mental Health Disclosures

Over the past decade, several prominent Black women have shared their struggles with mental health. In August 2020, Michelle Obama mentioned experiencing low-grade depression on her podcast. A year later, Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles announced their withdrawals from sports competitions via social media, citing mental health and psychological pressures. Despite these high-profile disclosures, scholars have paid limited attention to how Black women celebrities reshape mental health narratives or the broader implications for health and digital communication. This paper addresses this critical gap by building on digital Black feminist scholarship (Steele, 2021). Drawing on my broader project, which examines how Black women's disclosures contribute to public healing (Francis & Finn, 2022), I develop the concept of strategic vulnerability to analyze how these celebrities intentionally use public platforms to challenge dominant mental health narratives and offer culturally resonant alternatives. Through analysis of interviews, podcast transcripts, press statements, and social media posts, I explore how these celebrities reframe mental health stories. My findings show that these women model accessible mental health communication by using plain language that connects with Black communities, rejecting clinical terms in favor of everyday descriptions. Their platform choices, such as Obama's podcast disclosure or Osaka's press conference refusal, exemplify digital Black feminists' resistance to traditional media gatekeeping. Instead of passively participating in existing mental health discussions, these women actively shape digital conversations about wellness and challenge respectability politics that demand Black women always appear strong. These insights reveal that celebrity disclosures about mental health serve as complex cultural work within digital Black feminism, creating counternarratives that can benefit marginalized groups. This research advances digital humanities scholarship by linking health communication with critical inquiry into how digital platforms foster new forms of public discourse.

Holly Parker, Deanna Holroyd - “Be Your Own Hero”: Hero Narratives, Neoliberalism and The Transformative Power of Video Game Therapy for Neurodivergence

Public discourse has long critiqued video games for diminishing users' ability to focus and pay attention, and for exacerbating loneliness, stress, anxiety, and violence. However, the therapeutic qualities of gameplay are becoming increasingly acknowledged by healthcare institutions and private health-tech corporations; evidenced by the recent surge in serious games designed to treat mental health issues, and the proven success of the integration of video games in therapy spaces. Amongst these emerging video game therapy options, there exists a burgeoning genre of privatized therapy that combines video game play and therapy to help treat neurodivergent individuals with disorders such as autism or ADHD. Through a critical techno-cultural discourse analysis (Brock, 2018), this paper analyses the promotional materials and testimonials of four digital ludic therapy platforms (Playful Therapy, Mind Jam Counselling, Mightier and Hero Journey Club), to explore how digital games are imagined and marketed as therapeutic tools for treating neurodivergence in teens and children. We engage with theories of neoliberalism, digital wellness culture, and critical neurodiversity studies to interrogate how video games, ludic therapy, and online platforms are entangled with, and can transform, neurodivergent care practices and neoliberal healthcare models. We find that these platforms present video games as techno-solutions for helping neurodivergent individuals integrate into society and meet neoliberal norms and expectations. These platforms also aim to transform discourses and preconceptions surrounding neurodivergent experiences and identities by utilizing hero narratives and individualist self-improvement discourses to empower neurodivergent users. Although these ludic therapy services encourage users to accept and embrace their neurodivergence, we ultimately argue that the therapeutic potential of these platforms will remain limited, so long as these platforms promote the Sisyphian neoliberal ideals of self-responsibilization, productivity, and self-improvement.

Yifei Yang, Xin Tang - Cringe to Stage: Reframing Ageing, Gender, and Rurality through Elderly Women’s Douyin Practices

This study explores how elderly women in rural China negotiate and perform their social identities through their use of the Chinese side of TikTok, Douyin, the most popular short-video platform in the nation. Amid global ongoing digitalization, the Chinese rural elderly are actively participating in digital consumption and online content production. More than 60% of older adults engage with TikTok daily, attributing it to its simplicity and expressive affordances (Wang et. al., 2022). While challenging the stereotypical, deficit-oriented notions of aging, existing research on digital media and ageing in China has largely focused on urban contexts or younger generations; Oversight is particularly evident in relation to rural–urban divides, rural users represent an important yet underexplored demographic (Kaye et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, this study centers on elderly women who engage with emerging social media technologies, employing a gerontological perspective that positions elderly people as active social actors (Twigg & Martin, 2015), while considering the role of Douyin’s affordances as a vital part of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Drawing on digital ethnography that can capture the experience of online everyday life, this research explores the types of content these women produce, the affordances they utilise, and the cultural-political realities that shape their online practices. The study also investigates how their interactions with audiences affect their perceptions of self and community belonging. By situating these practices in the context of broader conversations about gender, ageing, and rurality, the study shows how Douyin can be a stage where stereotypes and injustices are perpetuated as well as a place of agency—allowing visibility, self-expression, and community-based interaction. To foreground the voices of elderly women, the paper provides new insights for digital gerontology and media feminism studies, offering perceptions on the complexities of digital inclusion.

Digital Care Platforms and Commodification of Care (4)

Elifcan Celebi, Mert Kocak - Migrant Labor in Digital Care Platforms: Gendered and Racial Representations of Care Workers in Turkish Care Platforms

Care platforms exemplify the evolving nature of migration industries driven by digitalization. As emerging intermediary market actors, these platforms connect care workers with potential households, where clients contact and hire care providers through algorithmic management techniques for their services. Türkiye represents a crucial case with extreme numbers of migrant flows, increasing participation of women in the labor force, a gradually aging society, and an increasing role of platforms for care and domestic services. By critically

engaging with the literature on migration industries and the politics of care, this study explores gendered and racial representation of care workers in three selected care platforms in Türkiye by using novel data of more than 7.500 worker profiles. The analysis draws on the facets of the user interface by using mixed methods. The findings show that migrant care workers must navigate a precarious terrain through strategic self-presentation, often drawing on gendered, cultural, or moral scripts to secure employment in a competitive market. The study shows how digital care platforms mediate migrant labour and contribute to the growing literature on migration, care, and digitalization in the Global South.

Grace Whitfield, Kate Hamblin - Commodifying and neglecting care: digital imaginaries and marketised realities

This paper explores the contradictions and conflicts of digital care. As an aspect of social reproduction, care is variously ignored and marketised. Drawing together policy analysis, case studies, and interviews, we argue that the introduction of digital technologies reiterates these dynamics. In policy produced by the UK Government (reflecting strategy in the EU and beyond) technology is positioned as inevitable and as a solution to the care 'crisis'. For instance, a 2022 policy paper contended that 'a brighter future depends on a stream of transformative technologies being developed and spreading fast through the health and social care system'. Key to such a claim is the potential that technology will make care more efficient and will reduce care needs (which will alleviate issues of funding and workforce supply). Introducing digital technologies thus becomes another way that care is ignored and needs minimised; it becomes, too, a way that care is further commodified, with an emphasis on stimulating a digital care market to private equity investors. Our paper situates case studies of care providers and interviews with people using care services and their families, alongside local government and industry stakeholders, within this broader political context. Looking at digital social care records, AI tools, sensors and monitoring systems, and consumer devices, we highlight the 'messiness' of digital care. This includes issues of privacy and consent, overlooked wraparound services, and potentially detrimental (and non-efficient) transformations of care labour. Further, positive implications of technology, such as online community and increased safety, are impacted by dynamics of digital exclusion and are unequally spread. Additional inequalities of introducing technologies are global: emphasising the extractive effects of AI use - in care provision as in other domains - we contextualise developments in the UK within wider contours of care, capital, and colonialism.

Alexandra Gillespie, Stacy Doore - Wanted Dead or Alive: Anticipatory Regulation of Digital Immortality Platforms

The loss of a loved one is a painful and debilitating process, often complicated by personal contexts and experiences with the deceased. To combat the ramifications of losing a loved one, technology companies have turned to different versions of digital immortality, or the preservation of a person's memory via data collected pre- and post-mortem. This can range from scraping social media profiles and text conversations to recording conversations with a person prior to their death. The interactive capabilities of these technologies also vary, from chatbots to multimodal generative AI phone calls with a representation of the deceased voice. When considering how this technology might be generated and operated, psychological and philosophical researchers should have a central role in its development to better understand its potential benefits and harms. The diversity of human understanding of the concepts of mortality and death poses a unique challenge to the ethics of these interactive systems. Data privacy and informed consent of the deceased is a fairly new frontier in digital law, and this technology has the potential for the violation of rights and protections based on existing professional codes of ethics. This paper argues that these technologies are creating the illusion of digital immortality and should be governed by a set of regulatory constraints to protect all parties, living and dead, from commercially motivated exploitation. We argue that current frameworks for social media regulation and psychological care for grief are not adequate to address the potential for harms and offer several alternative regulation pathways.

Photini Vrikki - Beyond the Leased Self: Weaving Infrastructures of Mutual Care

The contemporary data economy has reconfigured the self into a leased asset, a resource to be monetised by platforms in a perpetual and asymmetrical exchange. This paper argues that this condition of the "Leased Self" is the foundational social harm of informational capitalism, creating subjects of resigned dependence and eroding the possibility of digital autonomy. Moving beyond a critique of extraction, this paper proposes a radical shift in framework: from a politics of individual data rights to a practice of mutual care. Drawing on qualitative research, it documents the lived experience of datafication, revealing a spectrum of response from tactical resistance to profound ambivalence. These findings challenge narratives of user naivety and instead illuminate a landscape of structural powerlessness. Situating this analysis within feminist care ethics and critical data studies, the paper

argues that resistance cannot stop at personal data management (self-care) but must advance to the active creation of collective support systems (mutual care). It introduces the concept of "weaving infrastructures of mutual care", a deliberate practice of building relational, community-oriented, and technologically-mediated networks that centre reciprocity, shared vulnerability, and collective well-being over extractive profit. This research contributes to digital humanities and critical data scholarship by reframing the central problem of the digital age not as a privacy crisis, but as a "crisis of care". It posits that a sustainable and just digital future depends not on better leasing agreements, but on our capacity to weave new social and technical fabrics that protect and sustain the community, not the corporation.

Telehealth and Technologies of Care (4)

Lydia Hughes - Squeezed and Scheduled: Digital Technology in Care

The social care sector in Britain is made up of predominantly low-paid, labour-intensive work. While it is often not recognised as such, care work is foundational for the operation of contemporary capital. There is a rapidly growing demand for care work, both with an ageing population and more widely. Previously, visa programmes like the Health and Social Care visa have been used to try and meet the expanding recruitment gap for care workers. However, following the closure of this scheme, digital technologies are increasingly being put forward as a solution to the multiple ongoing care "crises." Much less is known about how these new digital technologies are being deployed and experienced by care workers. Back office functions are being handled through global business process operation (BPO) outsourcing, often on the other side of the world. Scheduling apps are facilitating the development of "just-in-time" care work provisions, squeezing already overworked care workers. In low-margin sectors like care work, the ways in which these digital tools can be used are constrained, but they also have the potential to indicate how these could be applied more widely in the economy. This presentation draws on an ongoing ethnographic project in a care home in Britain, supplemented with further empirical research. First, with an organising project of migrant care workers across different workplace contexts, developing new forms of union organising – often responding to the use of these technologies. Second, research at care conventions, detailing the new tools being advertised and promoted to care home managers. This research demonstrates both the practices and potential new uses of digital technologies in care work in Britain, as well as exploring the ways in which workers resist these technological interventions.

Libei Wang - The Digital Body in Care: Exploring Embodied Practices of Dance Movement Therapy for Depression

This paper examines how digital technologies reconfigure embodied experiences of care in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for individuals living with depression. This study draws on a two-stage mixed-method research design. The first stage was conducted at the University of Malaya Medical Centre and involved a quantitative survey of fifty-one outpatients diagnosed with depression, aged between 14 and 71. The findings reveal that 66.7% of participants showed positive interest in DMT and considered it helpful for emotional regulation and improving daily functioning. Transportation distance was identified as a major barrier to participation. Building on these findings, the second stage conducted semi-structured interviews with patients who had experienced online DMT sessions and certified dance movement therapists. The qualitative analysis explored how digital mediation reshapes therapeutic embodiment, emotional connection, and perceptions of healing. The results indicate that online DMT improved participants' quality of life, alleviated depressive symptoms, and reduced reliance on medication. These outcomes suggest that digital platforms can extend the embodied space of care beyond physical and institutional boundaries. Situating these findings within broader reflections on the relationship between humans and technology, the paper engages with theories of embodiment, affect, and digital care to explore how healing, empathy, and connection are reimagined in digital environments. By reflecting on the psychological dimensions of patient experience, the study contributes to a critical understanding of how digital technologies create not only accessibility and efficiency but also new modalities of relational care. It argues that online DMT represents more than a pragmatic adaptation—it is an emergent form of embodied digital care that challenges conventional notions of presence, intimacy, and therapy in the digital age.

Ana Cecília Oliveira Costa, Emily de Jesus Fraga, Ana Carolina Freitas de Andrade, Anna Julia Teixeira de Oliveira, Fernanda de Oliveira Ferreira Roza Victor, Camila Rocha Ataíde Quaresma, Thiago Dias Sarti, Ana Paula Santana Coelho Almeida - Telemedicine during the Covid-19 pandemic: analysis of access by women in a Brazilian capital

In the pandemic context, with the closure or reduction of many in-person health services, telemedicine has been widely expanded as an emergency response. However, despite this expansion, the service has not reached all individuals. In a population-based cross-sectional study in a Brazilian capital, 655 women who sought care during the health crisis were analysed. The analyses were performed using Stata 17 software, calculating the prevalence of demand for and use of in-person and online services. Bivariate analyses were performed for the outcome “online care,” considering sociodemographic characteristics such as exposures, and for the outcome “lack of access,” considering the type of service used as exposure. Fisher's exact test was used to assess associations. Lack of access was defined as the situation in which the interviewee reported a need for medical care, sought the service, but was not attended to. 98.78% (95% CI: 97.75 - 99.38) of the participants sought in-person care, while only 1.22% (95% CI: 0.61 - 2.43) sought the service online. Of the 611 who received care, 98.36% (95% CI: 96.98 - 99.12) were seen in person and 1.64% (95% CI: 0.88 - 3.02) via telemedicine. This slight increase suggests that a small portion migrated to remote care after failing to obtain in-person care. Analysis according to sociodemographic characteristics showed a significant association only with the presence of private health insurance ($p = 0.031$). Regarding lack of access, 6.65% (95% CI: 4.96 - 8.85) of those who sought in-person care were not seen, while among users of the online service, there were no such cases. The results highlight the potential of telemedicine to expand access during public health emergencies; however, it remains insufficient to alter usage patterns, as existing inequalities persist.

Ana Cecília Oliveira Costa, Emily de Jesus Fraga, Bruna Venturin, Ana Carolina Freitas de Andrade, Fernanda de Oliveira Ferreira Roza Victor, Camila Rocha Ataíde Quaresma, Thiago Dias Sarti, Ana Paula Santana Coelho Almeida - Telehealth in primary care in a Brazilian state: evidence from the 2024 Census of Basic Health Units

Telehealth is one of the main strategies of the Unified Health System (SUS), and the SUS Digital Programme uses digital tools to complement face-to-face care, expanding access to specialists, reducing queues and speeding up diagnoses and treatments. This study aimed to analyse telehealth activities in Basic Health Units (UBS) in the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil. This cross-sectional study used data from the 2024 Primary Health Care Census. A total of 824 UBS in Espírito Santo, located in the Southeast Region of Brazil, with an area of 46,074 km² and a population of 3,833,712 inhabitants, were analysed. The variable analysed was the type of telehealth activity performed, with analysis stratified by health regions (Metropolitan, South, and North). Prevalence and confidence intervals were calculated using Stata 17 software. Approximately 84.0% (95% CI: 81.3–86.3) of UBS did not perform telehealth activities. Among those that did, professional training activities predominated, with emphasis on web conferences (11.4%; 95% CI: 9.4–13.8) and distance learning courses (9.3%; 95% CI: 7.5–11.5). The use of teleconsultation was observed in only 2.9% (95% CI: 2.0–4.3) of units. Regionally, the highest concentration of activities was in the South Region (31.7%), with prevalence of 24.2% (95% CI: 18.9–30.4) for web conferences, 18.5% (95% CI: 13.8–24.3) for courses, and 5.7% (95% CI: 3.3–9.8) for teleconsultations, even with the highest investment in equipment recorded in the Metropolitan Region. Although the SUS was a pioneer in implementing Telehealth in 2006, through the Telessaúde Brasil Redes Programme, the provision of these activities in Espírito Santo's UBSs remains incipient, restricted to training activities and with low healthcare utilisation.

AI Ontologies and Epistemological Challenges (4)

Hossein Derakhshan - Rethinking Ai/Algorithm Studies: The ontological and epistemological challenges of researching algorithms and the case for renewing ethnomethodology

If media have been studied in three aspects of production, media text and reception, algorithms have now become the de facto media text of digital platforms. Ontologically, three features of algorithms complicate researching them: Hyper-modulation: Algorithms do not have a fixed textuality; Invisibility: They are infrastructural and thus invisible to users; Inextricability: They are interwoven with one another, with platforms' core code, and with user data. Given the distinct and disruptive ontology of algorithms and challenges of a positivist epistemology, this paper proposes a pragmatist epistemology and thereby a conceptual model (Figure 1) which views platforms as two core intertwined processes: datafication and personalization. Datafication consists of surveillance and categorization and is oriented to the present time. Surveillance links human life to digits, resulting in a modulating relation which can be called life-digits or data. Categorization is linking these life-digits (data) to each other. Personalization is oriented to the near future and consists of two sub-processes of prediction and allocation. Prediction is a re-categorization toward the future; it is a speculative reconfiguration of the links between life-digits, or data relations based on the existing categories. Allocation is a future-oriented reversal of surveillance, a process in which predictions (which are themselves relations between data relations) are disentangled down toward life qualities. This cyclic model of platforms calls for different research methods. Given how platforms have become infrastructures of sociality, the paper proposes a renewal of ethnomethodological breaching experiments that disrupt the platforms' personalized affordances to make them visible. For instance, in my current research project on the domestication of algorithmic listening on Spotify, I have asked my participants to use Spotify accounts of other unknown people for a few weeks before they are allowed to use their own accounts again. In each phase I'm interviewing them (coupled with walkthrough method) about their experiences and practices, particularly those that have become visible through the experiment.

Natalia Stanusch, Richard Rogers, Natalia Sánchez-Querubín - AI and its (dis)contents: methods of mapping AI as and with digital media

What kind of new medium is artificial intelligence (AI), and how do we begin to answer such a question? This contribution proposes three methodological interventions of mapping AI as media by operationalizing the digital. By doing so, AI emerges as different media 'mediated' by and situated within epistemological regimes of particular digital platform ecosystems, accounting for its complexities and pluralities. We discuss three methodological prepositions, their usefulness and limitations, and the subsequent media localities they afford: issuefication of media imaginaries, lifecycle of ideation fields, and artifacts of participatory vernaculars. By issuefication of media imaginaries, we mean tracking the issuefication of AI imaginaries by operationalizing issue and controversy mapping. What we refer to as the lifecycle of ideation fields implies approaching AI as operating across multiple temporalities and discourses, employing computational approaches to map the epistemological online space of influence in which AI resides. By tracing the artifacts of participatory vernaculars, we mean turning to the ways in which the role of AI as a medium emerges by mapping its participatory use cases online. The interventions we propose involve an array of interdisciplinary critical approaches combined with digital methods and in tune with the tradition of digital humanities. While our case studies focus on social media platforms, online encyclopaedia, and participatory short-video platforms (primarily LinkedIn, Wikipedia, and TikTok), the interventions we discuss can be applied to a variety of media objects and scrutiny avenues. What this contribution does is to use three case studies as research protocols, or rather mappings, to explore what such mappings offer conceptually and empirically. By taking AI as our primary object of interest, we demonstrate how we can account for its manifestations as discursive material media by turning to the digital. Our methodological prepositions focus on repositing the internet, proposing generalizable framings for new technology critique.

Frederik Bay-Jørgensen, Anders Kristian Munk - Beyond training data determinism? Understanding the value alignment controversy in human-LLM relations

Value alignment is one of the most heavily debated topics in discussions concerning the societal implications of generative AI. However, both the specific formulation of the problem(s) and potential solutions take many different shapes and forms. Notably, within academia, there exists a widespread training data determinism, that is, a tendency to explain LLM behavioral patterns as bias problems stemming from culturally specific training data, which often leads to calls for developing culturally aligned or culturally aware LLMs. Meanwhile, in the broader discourse, much of the discussion centers around the prevention of super-intelligent and malicious AI and the risk of potential harm against 'humanity'. It appears that under the broad umbrella of value alignment discussions, fundamentally different culturally contingent ontological outlooks linger latently, and mostly not explicated. In this article, through the analysis of selected case-studies, we offer a way to conceptualize and navigate the current value alignment controversy. We do so by first characterizing distinct ontologies of LLM-human relations and positions that different noticeable actors occupy in the controversy at large, both within and outside of academia. We propose a heuristic model characterizing four alignment conceptions between two key tensions: 1) whether the goal is aligning LLMs with universal human values or particular cultural values, 2) and whether alignment means creating an instrumentally good machine or one relatable to human values, norms or preferences. Finally, we discuss the shortcomings of these outlooks and an alternative for academic AI alignment research; one that moves beyond anthropocentrism and training-data determinism often exhibited in current academic research. We propose a computational anthropology that investigates LLMs-as-culture itself, with its own logics that must be understood on their own terms and discuss the implications of adopting such an approach.

Darren Berkland - The Discursive Function of Data Poisoning in the Time of Generative AI

The anxiety sparked by the recent boom in generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) has brought with it various pockets of resistance. This paper critically examines one mode of resistance to gen AI referred to as “data poisoning attacks” (Shan et al. 2024, Lu et al. 2024) in which the dataset of an AI model is rendered unusable via a series of novel techniques (such as a “dirty-label” attack, machine unlearning (Bourtole et al. 2021), or via software tools such as Nightshade, Fawkes or Glaze). However, this paper draws into questions the efficacy of these modes of resistance. The paper will demonstrate that while these modes of resistance work on both a technical and hypothetical level, they offer little hope in dismantling the more existential challenges faced in the wake of the gen AI boom and offer limited promise in confronting the broader ethical concerns at hand. Drawing on critical theory, this paper begins by first reviewing the technical work conducted on AI poisoning to demonstrate how this research functions discursively: by demonstrating feasibility without addressing their position in the wider gen AI economy. Following this, the paper will turn to the work of various theorists (including Vilém Flusser, Donna Haraway, and Shane Denson) to construct a framework that demonstrates the limitations of AI poisoning at a socio-political level. In doing so, the paper hopes to reframe data poisoning not as a solution to gen AI’s existential dilemmas, but as a lens for understanding the constraints of technical resistance in a deeply mediated, digital society.

AI in Institutional Contexts (4)

Roger Søråa, Kristine Ask, Frida E. Sandvik, Mark W. Kharas - Mediating Work: Generative AI and the Transformation of Recruitment Practices

Job application and recruitment is a key domain where digital technologies like AI are rapidly changing working life. Recruitment has long used digital tools for screening, matching, and communication—but with recent developments in AI, job applicants are faced with different forms of scrutiny. This makes recruitment a valuable case for examining how technology mediates—and disrupts—human interactions, particularly in the assessment

of candidate “fit” through selection tests and the datafication of interaction and selection. Digital selection tests have become a particularly sensitive site of technological integration, employed to evaluate cognitive abilities, skills, and personality traits. These range from IQ and aptitude assessments to personality tests and game-based tasks as part of the recruitment process. Marketed as efficient, scalable, and objective, such tests are nevertheless criticised for limited predictive validity and for being poorly aligned with actual job requirements. They also raise concerns about cheating, unequal digital literacy, and the reproduction of bias when algorithmic scoring systems are involved. Studying applicants’ experiences of these tests offers insight into how recruitment logics are being reshaped, and how individuals are classified and represented within labour markets. Recruitment technologies are often framed through narratives of objectivity, efficiency, and fairness—promising to reduce bias and improve hiring outcomes. Yet these promises are accompanied by unintended consequences or “revenge effects.” Aware of algorithmic screening, job seekers increasingly use digital and AI tools to tailor applications, sometimes submitting large volumes with minimal personal input. This creates a feedback loop where employers and applicants alike rely on technology, rendering the process more opaque and less personal. Rather than simplifying recruitment, digital systems introduce new layers of complexity. This paper asks what remains of the human in these sociotechnical entanglements, and argues that digital humanities provide critical tools for analysing these dynamics, unpacking the cultural narratives, power structures, and ethical tensions embedded in technology-mediated hiring.

Marc Schuilenburg - From Control to Care: Redesigning the Role of AI Tools in Policing

Can AI tools in policing be used in other ways than just the politics of 'law and order' and its war-language of 'fighting' and 'combatting' crime and nuisance? Can it be done in an ethically and legally responsible way, for example? And how can it create positive safety? For the last two years, I have been closely working with six police forces in the EU-project KOBAN to research the use of AI technology in order to strengthen the relations between citizens and local police officers. This means moving away from enforcement-focused AI tools and their fundamental risks – e.g., discrimination, stigmatization, self-fulfilling prophecies, and overpolicing of minority neighbourhoods – to engagement-based AI tools which facilitate issues such as care, trust, and well-being on a neighbourhood level. In this case-study, I show how in the Dutch pilot Zaanstad, AI tools have the potential to be part of the solution, not the problem. In Zaanstad, two asylum boats have recently been put into use with more than 1500 asylum seekers. Language and cultural barriers and bad experiences of asylum seekers in their country of origin undermine trust in the local police. In this pilot, AI tools have been developed to increase trust in the police, including special AI earpieces that allow asylum seekers and police officers to talk to each other in their own language. There have so far been very few empirical studies into the research and development (R&D) and implementation of AI tools in policing in which the focus is on empowerment instead of repression and that promote more equitable, humane, and sustainable societies. Through (1) in-depth interviews with professionals (police officers, data scientists and tech developers) and (2) observations on the ground for two years, I shed light on this initiative to use AI with and for affected communities, grounded in ELSA-methodology, and subject to strict proportionality, purpose-limitation, and oversight measures. I argue that AI – when designed and deployed within a ELSA-based and community-centred framework – can serve as a facilitator of care rather than control.

Dustin O'Hara, Jack Sovelove - Interpretive Computing and Accountability: AI–Human Assemblage and Cultural Heritage Collections

This paper positions interpretive computing as a methodological framework for designing AI systems in cultural heritage contexts, emphasizing their role as participants in meaning-making rather than neutral tools of retrieval. Drawing on hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1977) and narratology (Genette, 1980), we argue that large language models (LLMs) function within an interpretive assemblage—a network of AI processes, archival records, human experts, and community stakeholders—where narratives emerge through dynamic interaction. The central challenge is twofold. First, AI systems inevitably transform the interpretation of archival collections, and in doing so, they introduce limits: flattening nuance, reproducing bias, and constraining the range of possible interpretations. Second, these transformations raise questions of accountability and trustworthiness: how can the interpretive choices made by both humans and machines remain visible, verifiable, contestable, and open to plural perspectives? While interpretive computing provides the conceptual frame, we build on the recent concept of paradata (Cameron, Franks, & Hamidzadeh, 2023) as a way of talking about accountability. Paradata—documentation of the processes shaping data, including methodological choices, interpretive interventions, and tool-specific affordances—offers a methodological bridge for making visible the interpretive labor within AI–human collaborations. We illustrate this approach through a case study of the U.S. Library of Congress Civil Rights History Project, where LLMs generate thematic playlists and metadata for long-form oral histories. By integrating paradata into interpretive computing, we move toward systems that foreground the accountability of AI–human assemblages while enabling more dialogic, plural, and reflexive engagements with digital

representations of the past. Ultimately, interpretive computing is advanced here as the primary conceptual innovation, with paradata serving as one practical mechanism for enacting its principles of accountability and transparency in archival contexts.

Gavin Duffy - Computer vision: The hypervisuality of AI

With the rise of AI in public consciousness, much has been said about its infrastructure, from the manufacturing of semiconductors to the building of data centres. In the EU, a great deal of investment and fanfare has been dedicated to establishing 'AI sovereignty' and the construction of AI 'gigafactories'. In the UK, the Labour government has promised to 'mainline AI into the veins' of the nation, spreading across every sector of society, including having council areas compete to host large-scale data centres (or 'AI Growth Zones'). This stands in contrast to previous technological infrastructures, which have largely attempted to remain invisible (or minimise their visibility, at least). This is perhaps most evident in 'the cloud', a terminology seeking to obscure any connection whatsoever between digital technologies and the material world. This paper asks a simple question about this shift: Why? When other technologies have tried to appear ethereal, why does AI seek hypervisibility? It will be suggested that this reflects a turn in how 'tech lords' (Brevini, 2023) view their products, away from seeking to become 'infrastructure' and instead to becoming 'superstructure'. Rather than deriving value from facilitating interoperability between societal systems, AI companies now seek to be these systems. As such, it will be suggested that AI currently derives much of its value from visibility alone, rather than its actual functioning, promoting a technological determinism toward AI and a resultant AI-thropocene. This turn will be analysed through Isaiah Berlin's (1953) framework of the hedgehog and the fox, used originally to understand Tolstoy's view of history. This paper will draw parallels between the logic of history articulated by Tolstoy and the current logic of AI, as a basis for resisting AI and advocating for an alternative, convivial approach.

Archives, Memory, Digital Preservation (4)

Lucy March - Never forget, never remember: Exploring digital archival methods and cultural memory through 9/11 memes

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks remain a significant part of America's collective cultural and political memory. The extensive audiovisual documentation of the event simultaneously turned the Twin Towers into "sacred icons" (Edwards 2022, 36), and subjects for endless reproduction, circulation, and fetishization in the digital age. Accordingly, 9/11 has become a canon event for meme creators across the globe, and is arguably one of the first examples of a meme in American digital culture (Kuipers 2005). Digital historian and archivist Trevor Owens (2024) finds that memory is both "social...and perpetually entangled with our technologies" (p. 12), while memes constitute part of the 'connective turn' in memory studies, in which individuals position their memories within a larger sociocultural environment (Ristić 2023, Silvestri 2018). I thus consider in this paper how internet users employ memes to construct collective memory around 9/11 using methods informed by the digital humanities, including digital archiving and 'metapicturing' for large amounts of visual data (Rogers 2024). I grapple with the growing vulnerability of these approaches given tech companies' changing policies towards researcher use of APIs to scrape platform data, costs of storing large amounts of data, and digital decay. Using a blend of manual archiving and scraping accounts of meme creators on Instagram, I discuss the process of building my own 9/11 Meme Archive, using visual similarity software ImageSorter to group the memes by visual properties and date posted, and analyzing discursive approaches to memory construction around 9/11 from 2015 to the present. Particular focus is paid in my analysis to the ways meme creators relate 9/11 to current political events, demonstrated recently by the ways in which meme creators negotiated the overlap between 9/11/2025 and the murder of Turning Point USA CEO and conservative influencer Charlie Kirk.

Giulia Lembo - Beyond Archives: Interfaces, Standards, and Computational Perspectives on Memories

Archival and digital interfaces exhibit their un-neutrality daily (Michetti, 2015): decisions that appear merely technical embed values, silences, and partial perspectives. This project mobilises emerging computational methodologies to critically reconfigure archival practice, using as a case study the post-war Julian-Dalmatian exodus to Naples. It reframes the archive as a dynamic interface that shapes access and representation, in dialogue with the archival multiverse (Gilliland, 2017; Bastian, 2017) and continuum theory (McKemmish, 2017). Through this lens, the project examines how choices of description and modelling, within archival systems and, in particular, within digital ecosystems, shape collective memory and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. International standards project neutrality, yet their development reveals limits of geographic, linguistic, and

cultural representativeness. Adoption in computational settings therefore requires making such biases explicit rather than adopting them uncritically. Methodologically, the project integrates heterogeneous sources, including prefectural records and oral histories, within a relational digital library. Data structuring follows the FAIR principles to ensure interoperability. Written sources are digitised and processed via ATR in eScriptorium, with models adapted to mid-twentieth-century scripts, and segmented using a SegmOnto-aligned ontology. Oral histories are transcribed with Whisper and described through CMDI-compliant metadata; named entity recognition (NER) with TINT and spaCy supports semantic enrichment. Both streams converge in TEI-XML and are published through TEIPublisher on an eXist-db backend, with IIF-based visualisation. TEI functions as a negotiated encoding framework balancing source singularity with a shared, interoperable language. Paradata and model cards surface editorial assumptions, training data, and parameters; ethical governance (e.g., informed consent) and community co-curation are integral throughout. By combining critical archival theory with experimental computational workflows, the project offers new heuristic lenses for examining how contested memories are constructed and negotiated in digital ecosystems. While rooted in Naples, the approach is transferable to other contexts of political and mnemonic tension, accommodating resources from diverse domains of production, both official/written and private/oral, and enabling the co-creation of plural memories.

George Oates, Fattori McKenna - A Safe Harbor for Distributed Social Media Archives?

Despite the internet's seeming ubiquity and omnipresence, digital preservation remains notoriously difficult. Bit rot corrupts files, format obsolescence renders content unreadable, and existing web archiving tools fall short. Platform downloads produce bloated, proprietary exports; API shutdowns eliminate access overnight; web crawlers capture only fragmented, impermanent copies. The Flickr Foundation was established to address this crisis. Our mission is to safeguard the billions of photos on the social web and render them valuable and usable for future generations. We started with Flickr.com, but also advocate for other platforms to contribute to digital cultural heritage preservation. Since 2023, we've worked with partners including the National Archives, British Library, Library of Congress, and Royal Danish Library and in 2025 we released Data Lifeboat, a novel tool for compiling archival copies of social media content with consideration, context and consent. Data Lifeboat's software design prioritises ethical preservation, ensuring the human, social elements aren't lost in pursuit of a complete, technologised record. Informed by recent scholarship in Digital Humanities and Digital Ethics, it records original creator permissions (safety settings, copyright designations and privacy choices) while enabling compilers to add critical qualitative context. Early adoption of our beta demonstrates Data Lifeboat's utility for archivists, community organisations and individuals alike. Yet we remain struck by an ever-pressing challenge: how to store, secure and share these newly-built digital, social archives? This paper introduces the Safe Harbor Network, a proposed distributed preservation infrastructure, inspired by LOCKSS principles but designed specifically for social media content. We will address the affordances of social media archiving and maintaining permissions over time, as well as the challenge of representing the 'sociality' of this content. We will explore how institutional collaborative networks can offer a third way – neither reliant on private companies nor governments, both of which have failed to adequately support digital preservation. Such urgency intensifies as we witness an era of unprecedented digital authoritarianism, heightening the risk of losing critical social media content for good.

Chris Groenveld - Never Again. Five Stars: Creative Interventions in Digital Platforms and the Commodification of Holocaust Memory

"If you have been to Auschwitz, well, then Dachau will be disappointing" writes one TripAdvisor reviewer about Dachau Memorial Site. Another acknowledges: "It is difficult to give a concentration camp 5 stars", but they nevertheless do. These reviews represent a crisis in how traumatic memory encounters digital commodification, yet they also contain testimony that defies simple dismissal. This paper examines how digital platforms reshape collective memory through an experimental analogue game that critically engages with TripAdvisor reviews of Holocaust memorial sites. Drawing on an archive of thousands of English-language reviews of Dachau, this practice-based research explores the intersection of platform capitalism, memorial tourism, and digital memory formation. Through the design and rehearsal of many iterations, the analogue game serves as both research methodology and artistic intervention. In a recent version, players encounter real user-generated reviews and embody different perspectives to critically reflect on the implications of digital remediation of traumatic historical memory. Additionally, the game encourages self-reflexivity about the extractive nature of any form of systematic analysis of vernacular digital archives for institutional or individual advancement. By materializing and re-politicizing the seemingly trivial gestures of digital interaction, the research invites critical reflection on our entanglement in networked remembrance cultures. As Holocaust memory is increasingly transmitted through digital mediation, this project offers vital insights into how platforms shape not only what we remember, but how we remember, and what happens when we attempt to share our experience with others.

AI and Visual Methods (4)

Melissa Macaluso, Sofia Baroncini – The serpent through LLM’s eyes: a study of bias in cross-cultural art iconography

High-performance generative tools, which increasingly shape how knowledge is accessed and understood, are widely available to the general public. Within the cultural heritage domain, however, users risk acquiring inaccurate or biased information (Macaluso et al., 2025) about artworks’ descriptions and meanings, reflecting the influence of undisclosed training datasets underlying commercial models. To the best of our knowledge, despite a growing body of research on bias in generative AI and on GenAI’s capacity to classify (Spinaci et al. 2025) and caption artworks, no study has yet examined bias in the cross-cultural interpretation of art iconography. This study investigates the commonsense knowledge and cultural bias encoded in Multimodal Large Language Models (MLLMs) when interpreting art iconography represented across diverse cultural contexts and historical periods. As a case study, we focus on the iconography of the serpent, whose global diffusion has been traced in foundational works of visual cultural studies (Wittkower 1939). We analyze the interpretations generated by selected models, assessing whether commonly used tools correctly identify the symbolic meanings of artworks from different traditions—such as Catholic and Graeco-Roman contexts—or whether they rely on distorted commonsense assumptions, particularly in the case of rare or ambiguous representations. The evaluation combines qualitative and quantitative methods, adapting existing frameworks for assessing MLLMs bias (Oberbichler & Petz 2025) and for analyzing artwork descriptions (Arita et al. 2025; Hayashi et al. 2025). Results are compared with critical scholarship and semantic knowledge graphs on symbols (HyperReal, Sartini 2021) and art historians’ interpretations (the Iconology Dataset, Baroncini 2025). By confronting AI-generated interpretations with established cultural scholarship, the study highlights how generative AI may reinforce stereotyped readings and amplify cultural bias in the understanding of artworks. In doing so, we seek to foster a broader critical discourse on the societal impact of these technologies beyond the confines of specialized academic research.

Ludovica Schaerf - On latent representations of vision generative models

In this presentation, we reconceptualize “latent representations” in generative vision models as technical abstractions and cultural constructs. Models are viewed here as cultural snapshots resulting from the combination of model choices and data: the weights sediment an episteme; the data insert biases. Representation, in this perspective, is not a neutral description but a historically situated “way of seeing”: representations are imbued with cultural canons, aesthetic hierarchies, and exclusions. Two complementary views of latent space representations are advanced. In the code view, latent space functions as a machinic archive: a vast repository governed by principles of similarity and organization. In the spatial view, it appears as a space of potentiality, where distance relations rather than categories structure cultural meaning and enable exploratory creativity. The space is the virtual in Deleuze. Here, metaphors from Borges’s library, Aleph, garden, and Calvino’s atlas and chessboard serve as conceptual instruments for circling the opacity of models, highlighting the differences between the two views. The work also tracks an ongoing shift beyond latent space. Newer representational systems, such as Diffusion models, loosen the indexical link between point and image, multiplying the possible imaginaries of generative systems while introducing new dependencies. As latent space multiplies in meaning (dynamic, high-dimensional, and spatially structured), it loses both the metaphoric value and critical stakes, demanding fresh imaginaries.

Hamidreza Nassiri - Visual Entanglement: A Computational Tool for Relational Image Analysis and Intercultural Creativity

In this presentation, I will demonstrate “Visual Entanglement” (“VE”), a web-based research and creative tool I developed to study how images carry knowledge across time, place, and media. Users can upload images and annotate them with visual or historical metadata. The system uses an AI model to segment the images and builds an interactive graph in which nodes are the segments and links represent specific similarities between them (shape, color, texture, composition, and contextual metadata), each with varying strengths. Users can explore the resulting “graph of motifs” to trace their potential journeys or select specific nodes and links to generate new “fusion” images. The generative system combines the selected visual information (and, optionally, a text prompt) to create machine-made images grounded in targeted, contextualized data rather than the statistical averaging typical of large-scale GenAI models. Unlike Phillips et al.’s “Visual Motif Identification” project, which treats motifs as thematic iconographies, I approach motifs as structural, semantically and symbolically dynamic, and context-dependent entities. A motif (like a rosette or a turban) is a visual unit that repeats with variation, gaining meaning through its material, historical, and cultural contexts. While I initially built “VE” to study geometric patterns across

Silk Roads art, it now works across complex images (miniature paintings, film stills), revealing how aesthetics and knowledge circulate through mutual influence. Drawing on Gasparini's *Transcending Patterns* and Smith's *Entangled Itineraries*, I frame "VE" as a computational model of the pre-colonial Silk Roads' knowledge exchange: decentralized and locally grounded yet global in scope. "VE" challenges the flattening effects of AI and neoliberal globalization by grounding digital practice in the plural, context-aware exchanges that once moved along material roads. It connects historical networks with digital ones to show how creativity and knowledge have long emerged through intercultural dialogue. In doing so, it challenges modern binaries—global vs local, center vs periphery, functional vs decorative, abstract vs concrete—and simulates pre-colonial forms of exchange not as nostalgia but as inspiration for sustaining diverse creative praxes as a foundation of global knowledge evolution.

Antonella Autuori, Rebecca Bertero - Rage Against the Machine: A Collective Inquiry on the Emotional Breakdowns in Human-AI Conversation

What modes of emotional embodiment emerge when subjects engage with large language models, and how do frustration or moments of rupture disclose the politics of affect in human-machine interaction? Addressing a "nonhuman" interlocutor unsettles normative categories of communication and agency, opening terrains where emotion operates simultaneously as vulnerability, resistance, and negotiation of power. Rather than reducing these encounters to errors or breakdowns, this paper positions them as critical sites through which the affective behaviour of digital subjectivity can be interrogated. Through playful and collective methods, the analysis exposes the contradictions embedded in these exchanges. When users curse or mock a chatbot, they are not simply disinhibited but actively probing the unstable boundaries of civility and authority. This recalls the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004) and the ELIZA effect of anthropomorphic projection (Weizenbaum, 1976), oscillations intensified in the uncanny valley (Mori, 1970/2012). Such breakdowns resonate with Kneese's (2022) "breakdown as method," where glitches and screenshots expose infrastructural fragility, and with Distelmeyer's (2023) call to treat interfaces themselves as epistemic sites. Here, negative effects are recast as embodied modes of inquiry, rendering visible both the extractive logics of technocapitalism and their anti-ecological, colonial entanglements (Liboiron, 2021). Methodologically, we draw on visual research practices (Colombo & Niederer, 2024; Lassen, 2025) through a collective screenshot archive. Screenshots, as argued by Kneese (2022), act simultaneously as mourning objects and precarious research tools, foregrounding both the intimacy and risk of exposing private dialogues. They illuminate unstable hierarchies (master/servant, user/machine) that can be inverted, parodied, or momentarily suspended in conversational play. In a speculative register, one might even suggest that if the long-imagined "rebellion of the machines" were to arrive, it would be shaped not only by technical autonomy but also by the affective intensities we have already projected onto them.

Digital Humanities Methodologies (4)

Stephanie Diepeveen, Christoffer Guldberg - Demystifying AI with Freire and Bergson: A Participatory Meme-Making Method for Critical DH

This paper presents a simple method for critical DH teaching and participatory research that (1) uses AI as a mirror to surface racialised, gendered and colonial assumptions embedded in legal, social and political concepts (e.g., "migrant," "expat," "police officer"), then (2) turns AI's images into a canvas for human remix - in the form of collage, writing and drawing to produce multimodal online meme, allowing students to co-produce knowledge and reclaim agency. Grounded in Freirean pedagogy and Bergsonian ideas of creativity, humour and consciousness, the exercise invites learners to prompt an AI image model with their chosen concepts, audit the visual outputs, and then annotate or subvert them through meme-making artistic practices. Outcomes include: (i) concrete discussion starters on platform bias and computational epistemologies; (ii) low-barrier creative outputs that travel between classroom and social media; and (iii) reflective artefacts that assess understanding without outsourcing thinking to AI. We illustrate the method with classroom and workshop examples and show how it scales across disciplines (from International Relations to cultural studies) and teaching formats (seminars, labs, exhibitions). We also address ethics (privacy, consent, representational harm) and practicalities (materials, timeboxing, assessment). For DH, the contribution is twofold: a replicable pedagogy for critical technical practice that centres human multiplicity, and a research workflow that treats memes as data and as method. The paper draws on two forthcoming book chapters by Christoffer Guldberg, outputs from a series of workshops and blogs on AI and memes in teaching and research as funded by the LISS-DTP and the KCL Strategic Teaching Fund, and Stephanie Diepeveen's published work on how digital technologies transform democratic politics and inclusion in the Global South.

Kevin Kuck, Kevin Wunsch - Negotiating Peace Digitally: The EuReD Project and the Critical Inquiry of Early Modern Religious Agreements

Once finished, the European Religious Peace Agreements Digital (EuReD) project will present online, for the first time, a corpus of over 200 peace agreements that sought to regulate religious coexistence in the Holy Roman Empire and wider Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries. These documents represent a crucial yet underexplored genre of political-legal writing: situated between theology, law, and diplomacy, they negotiated the fragile balance between religious difference and political stability. EuReD offers a digital edition that combines diplomatic transcriptions, metadata, and facsimiles with a structured ontology for legal and political concepts, enabling comparative research across texts. Beyond providing access, the project interrogates what it means to model historical sources digitally: How do encoding choices influence our understanding of negotiation, tolerance, and authority? Which aspects of early modern legal thinking can—and cannot—be captured in structured data? This paper will present both the conceptual and technical framework WDB+ used in EuReD and reflect on the role of digital infrastructures in shaping historical inquiry. This includes, but is not limited to UI/UX, which is based on usability studies with participants from specific target groups, namely historians, archeologists, and librarians. We will discuss challenges such as: balancing philological accuracy with usability; representing multilingualism and legal formulae; and the epistemological implications of linking fragmentary early modern concepts to modern controlled vocabularies. Although the project is funded long term, we are well aware of the challenges that arise from infrastructures depending on short-lived initiatives that go against the aim of establishing long-term research infrastructures, which – ideally – outlive the research projects, in which they were developed. We would like to gain insights into these types of issues from outside our regular – mostly central European – circle and hope to provide information on how we tackle these obstacles. Of course, we would be delighted to likewise present the project and engage in a fruitful debate about the digital humanities with other participants.

Katrin Schindel - ‘And how about your own take on intersectionality?’ – On the complex navigating of friendly rapport and researcher positionality when researching digital feminism

This paper follows Brit Kelley’s (2016) call to be ‘vulnerable’ as a researcher of the digital and critically reflects on a project examining popular articulations of intersectionality in digital feminist spaces. Conducted in 2021, the project involved zoom/email interviews with digital feminists and a Facebook discussion group with three interviewees. While earlier discussions of online research methods have mostly been concerned with the ethics of observation (e.g., Kelley 2016, Whiteman 2012, Hine 2000), I argue that my study needed to consider further aspects specific to its conversational nature and research topic. On the one hand, many research participants were my peers not just in regards to our shared feminist politics and engagement in digital feminist spaces, but also in terms of age, gender, race, and sexuality. Both the conversations via video call (particularly during a time when video calls with friends and family had rapidly increased) as well as via email (which might have simulated the experienced of writing a pen pal), could easily evoke an intimacy reminiscent of two friends chatting about feminism. On the other hand, the goal of my project was to critically examine how intersectionality is articulated in regards to whiteness and femininity. This is of a particular sensitive nature in the age of callout and cancel cultures, where a general fear of saying the wrong thing online persists, especially in the context of digital feminist spaces in which ‘perfect’ feminism and allyship are increasingly demanded (Gill 2023, Kanai 2020). As such, I was faced with the complex navigating of building friendly rapport and my own positionality as a researcher. This paper critically reflections on these issues through analysing researcher-participant interactions from this project.

Ari Stillman - The Digital Extended Case Method

In 1998, already 20 years in the making, the late Michael Burawoy articulated what he termed the extended case method. Rather than creating empirical descriptions or testing hypotheses, this methodology uses case studies to challenge and iterate on existing social theories. This entails theory reflexivity, dialogical data collection, context-specific dynamics, and social processes over time. It is especially useful for identifying contradictions and gaps in theories, expanding theoretical propositions, and nuancing complex social dynamics. Updating Burawoy’s methodology for our era in the spirit in which it was designed, I introduce the extended digital case method. More than simply applying Burawoy to a digital field site, the extended digital case method makes use of digital tools such as Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and Large Language Models (LLMs) to both focus and complement embedded qualitative research. In this paper, I will discuss the extended digital case method as it emerged from and situated within my research on the subreddit Antiwork. This will entail encountering various constraints throughout the research timeline and leveraging technological developments to circumvent those

constraints. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of how qualitative research augments the methodological limitations of purely computational methods.

Alternative Epistemologies (4)

Amanda Curtis - Playing to Know: Video Games as Onto-epistemological Media

What does it mean to “know” through play? This paper proposes that video games function as onto-epistemological media: spaces where players experiment with how to know, relate, and become. Drawing on ethnographically-informed research (diary studies, streams, and in-depth interviews) with players of *Stardew Valley*, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, and *Skyrim*, this work explores everyday gameplay as a form of situated knowledge practice. Rather than treating games as mere entertainment or educational tools, this paper offers a framework for studying games as layered, entangled knowledge environments. It maps how gameplay supports layered and reflexive knowledge practices, including learning, sense-making, meaning-making, meta-knowing, and, ultimately, worlding. From tacit strategies to moments of reflective insight, players use games to make sense of the world around them. While grounded in play, this framework invites researchers to consider how other digital technologies likewise reconfigure and reflect diverse ways of knowing. It presents games as a powerful Digital Humanities lens to examine how knowledge is lived, felt, and made through digital entanglements. This research demonstrates that games shape how we come to know, not only what we come to know.

Ana Zapata Guzmaán, Darío Negueruela del Castillo - Digital Visual Studies Now—or a Farewell? Toward a Critical Historiography of the Visual Now

This piece is inspired by James Elkins, Gustav Frank, and Sunil Manghani's volume *Farewell to Visual Studies* (2015). This paper adopts a similar critical stance toward field assessment and transformation. Like the *Farewell to Visual Studies*, which sought to “raise the question of visual studies’ successes and failures and to promote a critical orientation”, our “farewell” is not dismissive but transformative. Yet, the field's historiography remains unclear. What constitutes digital visual studies? What are its characteristic modes, methods, and subjects? In what contexts has it emerged and developed? What have we focused on, and what have we left behind? Our intervention comes at a critical juncture: between the large-scale computational analysis of images using machine learning models and the call for a more explicitly digital visual critique. How, then, do we understand the “ways of meaning” of the visual today? Central to this assessment is the recognition that some of the most incisive critiques of digital technologies, and of artificial intelligence in particular, have taken shape not in theory but in practice: through artistic “image-making” itself. Image production here is not simply aesthetic but analytical, a mode of cultural critique and, increasingly, a pragmatic vehicle for interrogating AI. This paper aims to centralize these practices within the historiography of digital visual studies and to initiate a debate on how we account for them—acknowledging how artistic-critical interventions across diverse global contexts have shaped the field's development, even as questions remain about how to theorize and historicize this practice-theory relation. Ultimately, the politics of digital visual studies remain opaque. What are we trying to accomplish? And what is the role? Are we, as Elkins questions, producing an archaeology of power? It is necessary to debate the field itself, its directions, contexts, and assumptions to understand the multiple histories and theories behind what we call digital visual studies.

Digdem Sezen, Tonguc Sezen - Situated Experiences of Creative Writing with LLMs

This paper introduces an exploratory research project examining how writers who create in non-Western contexts, specifically in Türkiye, across literature, screenwriting, and game writing, engage with generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude. It investigates how large language models (LLMs) influence creative writing practices and the creative industries surrounding them. It will also explore how creative writers experience and adapt to the English-dominant architectures of generative AI. Building on research indicating that multilingual LLMs may “think” through English even when producing text in other languages (Schut, Gal & Farquhar 2025), the study approaches this question from a digital media and cultural studies perspective. It

draws on the concept of algorithmic narrativity (Rettberg & Rettberg 2025; Oke 2025), which is a mode of co-authored creativity between humans and computational systems, to examine how aesthetic decisions emerge through iterative prompting, translation, and collaboration with AI. By focusing on creative writing in Turkish, this paper highlights how writers navigate and reinterpret generative technologies across languages, negotiating authorship, style, and agency in ways that reveal both the constraints and affordances of AI-assisted creation. The paper also investigates the impact of AI on the creative writing profession in Türkiye, a topic highly debated in the Western context. Through semi-structured interviews with Turkish writers who integrate LLMs into their practice, the project investigates these situated, multilingual engagements. Participants are selected through purposive sampling, and analysis follows a qualitative, interpretive approach informed by cultural and media theory. Situated within digital media and creative practice studies, the paper contributes to critical digital humanities debates on creativity, authorship, and algorithmic culture in global infrastructures. By centring lived, multilingual experiences of writing in Türkiye, it expands current discussions of generative creativity beyond Anglophone paradigms.

Christopher McMahon, Qianwei Jiang - Noisy Gaming: Developing a Methodology for Observing Emotional Contagion During Play

This paper will detail the methodology developed for recent fieldwork that observed the impact shared gaming spaces had on a group of players. This fieldwork is part of a funded study detailing the emotional, social, and other benefits of shared physical play-spaces in the context of the videogame medium becoming increasingly immaterial. The researchers wanted a non-interventional method of observation to maximise how natural the play of the individuals and groups were, working under the assumption that different levels of observation impact play in different ways. An observational framework was developed from which the researchers made their notes, ensuring minimal contact with research participants as they played. The methodology works on the assumption that when we play, we create a play-space that exists both within the digital game and the immediate physical surroundings of the player. The observational methodology is designed to observe positive affects and emotional contagion. This work is influenced by Crawford (2015), Wood (2012), Calleja (2007), and Tychsen and Hitchens (2009), developing how videogames establish a feedback loop with players, alter objects and space, and alter player perceptions and agencies. What our theoretical work adds is how the space and objects further adapt when play-spaces are physically shared. The broader aim of such a methodology is to provide balance in approaches to assessing the impact of gaming. We argue gaming and play often resist overly formalized structures and our methodological approaches need to be able to reflect this. A more humanities focused method of observing affect and emotion is developed by this methodology.

Platforms. Platforms! PLATFORMS!?! (4)

Karmvir K. Padda - Mirror Worlds and Misogyny: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Incel Discourse Across Mainstream and Alt-Tech Platforms

This paper analyzes incel discourse as both an affective and ideological system across mainstream and alt-tech platforms, focusing on Reddit and Incels.is. Incel communities matter because they have been linked to online harassment, digital radicalization, and offline gender-based violence. Using a Computational Grounded Theory (CGT) approach, I combine BERTopic topic modeling with qualitative discourse analysis. The corpus includes over 700,000 Reddit submissions (2014–2025) and 32 million posts from Incels.is (2017–2024). Reddit data was collected from NetLab at the University of Waterloo, and Incels.is data from the ExtremeBB archive at the University of Cambridge. Analysis identifies three recurring formations: (1) biologized rejection, where rejection is naturalized as genetic destiny; (2) the “foid” logic (a derogatory term for women), which frames misogyny as epistemic clarity; and (3) glorified violence, where despair and rage are transformed into fantasies of revenge and martyrdom. Building on Naomi Klein’s “Mirror World” concept, I argue that alt-tech spaces do not invent new ideologies but stabilize and ritualize misogynistic extremism. Incel discourse is not merely descriptive: it is productive, converting emotional pain into knowledge claims through repetition, resonance, and platform affordances. Conceptualized as an affective epistemology, this system shows how misogyny becomes foundational to group identity and makes violence feel not only imaginable but morally justified.

Nina Vindum Rasmussen, Taylor Annabell, Daphne Rena Idiz - TikTokification of Netflix: Convergence and competition in streaming worlds

In May, Netflix (2025) promoted a line-up of new features such as the integration of generative AI into the search function and a vertical feed populated by clips from Netflix content. Whilst the announcement framed this as a 'new TV experience', it parallels and reproduces TikTok's design (Kaye et al. 2022; Annabell et al. 2025). Rather than treating this development as contradictory, we argue it reveals the company's broader expansionary logic: sustaining legitimacy as a producer of premium long-form content while embedding itself in the daily routines of audiences with algorithmically optimised features and short-form content. In part, this materialises in the actual screen output, which is increasingly engineered for 'second-screen viewing,' for instance, by having characters announce key plot points for distracted audiences (Idiz, 2024; Tavlin, 2025). Yet, in interviews, streaming executives have pushed back against this point, highlighting how Netflix offers prestige entertainment that is 'premium and commercial at the same time' (Syme, 2023). In this paper, we examine the promotional discourse of Netflix through investor calls, trade press appearances, blogs and announcements to trace how the company defines itself and its services over time, with a focus on disentangling the discursive construction from interface design and features. Whilst Netflix has always been driven by an expansionary logic, with the aim of becoming a 'global internet TV network' (Netflix, 2016), our analysis shows that the company has moved towards embracing the logics of social media, folding its core streaming product into a broader strategy of capturing user attention across contexts. Our paper argues that the discursive positioning of companies like Netflix is central to the way platforms seek to differentiate their services and maintain power within an era of 'super-appification' (van der Vlist et al., 2025).

Zoë Glatt, Sarah Edwards - Poisoning the Well: The Battle for Creative Control in the Era of Generative AI

Since the spectacular launch of ChatGPT from OpenAI in November 2022, we've seen extraordinary investment and growth across sectors in the realm of generative AI systems that produce synthetic media in the form of text, images, videos, music and voices. In attempts to make Big Tech's Big Bet on AI pay off, social media platforms have been frantically seeking ways to incorporate this new technology into their infrastructures, from YouTube's Dream Screen and Dream Track features, and TikTok's Symphony Assistant and Symphony Digital Avatars, to Meta's Movie Gen and AI Studio. Despite their best attempts to frame generative AI in a positive light, platforms have faced a backlash from creative workers on several fronts, with much of the debate focussing on the issue of intellectual property and the massive amounts of data scraping required to train LLMs by companies like OpenAI, Nvidia, and Anthropic. This paper examines the contestations between platforms, creators and intermediaries grappling with the issue of intellectual property, as each attempts to control the rapidly evolving future of generative AI in the creator economy. Deploying a critical media industry studies framework, we consider the push and pull between macroeconomic forces and configurations, and the ways in which cultural producers are navigating, circumventing and subverting institutional and structural interests to their own ends. Drawing on a corpus of corporate promotional materials, trade press articles and social media content, we explore how platforms are discursively constructing and promoting generative AI tools, how creators are resisting this incursion, and how intermediaries like Overlai, Nightshade and Glaze have emerged to capitalise on this tumultuous moment. Debates around intellectual property and platforms are a fruitful site to investigate the struggles for power over the legitimacy of generative AI: who gets to decide if these tools are adopted, who gets to frame them discursively, and who is able to refuse their use.

Barbara Plotz - The political function of comedy and humour in anti- Trump videos on TikTok

Since Donald Trump was inaugurated as US president for a second time in January 2025, he and his administration have made a number of far-reaching economic and political decisions, both in terms of domestic as well as foreign matters, that have caused protests, nationally and abroad. One of the sites of anti-Trump-protest has been TikTok, and in my paper I will discuss the use of humour and comedy within that protest movement. Whereas TikTok was originally known as the social media app for lip-synching and funny dances, it has since then also become an arena of political expression, protest and/or propaganda. Examples of this include the run-up to the 2020 and 2024 US presidential elections (Sanchez-Querubin et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025), political parties increasingly relying on TikTok for political communication (Gerbaudo and Moreno, 2023), or the alleged interference of Russia in the Romanian presidential elections 2024 via 25,000 TikTok accounts. My paper will address how comedy has been employed on TikTok to express dissent against the second Trump presidency. Comedy and humour have a long tradition within political activism and resistance (Sorensen, 2016; Borum Chattoo and Feldman, 2020) and the focus of the analysis will be on the specific functions humour fulfils in anti-

Trump videos. Part of that will be a discussion of how TikTok's platform vernaculars such as mimesis (Zulli and Zulli, 2023) or "embodied responses" (Jung, 2023) are an integral aspect of this political utilization of humour.

Knowledge Co-Production with AI (4)

Lea Stöter - Knowledge Co-Production in Socio-Technical Epistemic Systems: AI-Driven Software in the Digital Humanities

The use of artificial intelligence in knowledge production processes and in academia has been illuminated from different disciplinary perspectives. The introduction of digital tools and research software in non-computational disciplines, the emergence of fields like the digital humanities, and the introduction of AI-driven tools for general application in the research process impact the types of engagement and interaction between researcher and tool. Starting from the notion of playing software, I introduce three metaphors for engagement with AI-driven research software: 1) software as laboratory, 2) research software as sandbox game, and 3) the scientific method as game rules. Based on a conceptual analysis of game studies and knowledge production literature, this theory adaptation of research as a game-ful process aims at creating awareness for the agencies within socio-technical epistemic systems by examining one's own practices in relation to (AI-driven) technology and increasing transparency by recognising intra-actions to account for the decisions made in knowledge production processes. By breaking down the components of games they can be mapped onto research processes and the ways digital tools are integrated. Approaching software-supported research as a game-ful process allows for engaging with AI-driven software as a research tool as a more entangled and co-constructive process.

Ashleigh Percival-Borley - Bridging the Gap? A Methodological Exploration of Generative AI as a Research Tool in Oral History

Generative AI has become a contentious aspect of modern life, provoking a variety of reactions. Dystopian fears of machine autonomy, as portrayed in popular culture by The Terminator's Skynet, in contrast with the utopian vision of Star Trek, where technology addresses the world's problems and fosters altruistic space exploration. AI has been integrated into numerous tools amongst the digital humanities, providing AI-assisted coding, transcription and discourse analysis, among others. The prolific utilisation and development of AI has generated much anxiety among the academic community regarding scholarly diligence, particularly concerning its use by students. But what if there were a suitable and ethical way to use generative AI as an effective and efficient research tool within the field of oral history? It would bridge the gap between dystopian and utopian views, as well as between the discipline of oral history and intelligence studies. This paper will situate generative AI as a critical methodological tool within the digital humanities and examine its application through a case study of oral histories from the Second World War organisation, the Special Operations Executive (SOE). This paper will identify the tools and capabilities of this methodology while emphasising the diligence and discipline required by the researcher to ethically incorporate AI into a study. It considers the role of AI as an augmentation rather than the replacement of researcher skills in a process that blends traditional oral history methods with AI-assisted thematic analysis. Such a methodology has broad implications and significant caveats but ultimately offers a hopeful perspective on the future of AI in academia. Additionally, the paper adds to wider discussions on the ethics and socio-cultural factors related to the use of AI in scholarly work.

Dipanjan Saha, Gemma Lough and Tatsuya Akutsu - Vibing on my own: situating computational reasoning in AI-assisted coding

The no-code/low-code software development movement has taken a new turn with the recent advancements in Large Language Models (LLMs), giving rise to terms such as "vibe coding" or "agentic coding" (Sapkota et al., 2025; Sarkar & Drosos, 2025). Proponents of these technologies often claim that they obviate the need for users to read, write or even understand the underlying logic of AI-generated code (Roose, 2025). Instead of contributing to that hype, this paper, following an ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel, 1967, 2002) and its associated studies on doing "coding" (Brooker et al., 2019; Button & Sharrock, 1996; Rooksby et al., 2006), analyses our engagement with one such LLM-powered coding platform to understand what it takes to build something useful, in this case useful for us, an offline transcription software. Our findings demonstrate that, contrary to and far from detaching the user from technical complexities, the process necessitates a deep engagement with a whole background of technical tools, methods, and shared practices that programmers take for granted but could be extremely challenging for the novices. Reasoning through the computational steps in order to guide LLMs in debugging code is a dynamic and collaborative practice which requires management (Vertesi, 2015, 2020) and "staying with the troubles" encountered (Haraway, 2016). Based on our empirical

analysis and demonstration, we argue that "vibe coding" requires our practices for it to "work" and therefore is not the absence of technical skill, but rather a constant negotiation between the technical mastery required to build something useful and the pragmatic acceptance of what is "good enough" (Bialski, 2024) for that intended use. We suggest that this reframes AI-assisted coding as a new site for computational reasoning, not its obsolescence.

Michał Dawid Żmuda - "Non-hermeneutic" reading and writing. How digital machines abolish the need for human understanding

This paper tackles digital machines that read and write, focusing on the technique of cutting, which transforms the input material from one discrete system (human language) to another (mechanic). Using Foucault's, Kittler's, and Siegart's theories, I interpret "cutting" as an epistemic technique, fundamental for all computers (the word "compute" comes from Proto-Indo-European *pau-, denoting an act of cutting). I explore the prevalence of the technique by showing how it structures the work of large language models, telegraphic systems, and punch card machines. In all of them, the technique of cutting abolishes the need for human understanding in the processing of language. Telegraphic receiving apparatus does not distinguish between signals generated by a conscious human and those generated by randomly pressed keys. A prominent goal of the analytical engine, a punch card machine conceived by Babbage, was to remove cognitive involvement in work. Due to its "non-hermeneutic" quality, the technique of cutting either changes the role of human subjects or outright diminishes human involvement in reading and writing processes. This change is especially evident in the punch card machines, in which it is the needles, not humans that read the holes punched in the cards. The primacy of mechanical work leads to complicated translation methods between human language and cut material (e.g., with cutting devices, pantograph punches, "reading boards"), as humans slowly lose their grasp on the processed material. I show how this "non-hermeneutic" quality of telegraphy and punch card machines influenced RVL Hartley's and Claude Shannon's theories of information and communication, which in turn influenced main principles of LLMs: randomization and predication of language. The inspection of cutting then allows us to better understand our contemporary situation, in which digital software shifts reading and writing practices from the dominion of understanding and interpretation to the sphere of randomness and probabilities.

Technologies as Cultural Objects (4)

Supriti Malhotra - The 'Empathy Machines' of Immersive Technologies - A Scoping Review

In 2012, when 'empathy game' was attributed to 'dys4ia', its developer, Anna Anthropy, was furious: "Flush yourself down the toilet," Anthropy wrote to her Twitter followers, if "you think you've 'learned empathy for trans women' by playing dys4ia" (D'Anastasio). For many practitioners of psychology, cognitive science and social neuroscience, empathy is affective, "elicited by the inference or imagination of another person's state," "isomorphic with the other person's state," while simultaneously involving self-other differentiation (McCall & Singer, 2013, p. 195). Given the intricate entanglements of tangential variances in the physiological, phenomenological, psychological and ethnocultural factors that influence intersectional identity formations and complex cognitive processes, 'walking a mile in someone's shoes' is not the same for everyone. In contrast to dys4ia's flash animation, however, immersive technologies' visceral experiences often leave a deep imprint on an individual's psychological corpus. More than a decade later, while ludic "approaches to knowledge acquisition and skills development, following behaviourist and cognitivist theories of learning" have expanded, interventions to promote Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity (EDI) have increasingly harnessed the 'empathy machines' of Extended Reality (XR) technologies (Wilkinson). Within this landscape, the nebulous emergence of Mixed Reality (MR), combining Virtual Reality's (VR) interactivity with Augmented Reality's (AR) digital superimposition, represents a relatively less-explored aspect of digital narratology. Through an exploration of existing research pertaining to use of VR/MR for facilitating empathy/prosociality, this Scoping Review seeks to determine: What are the design elements that have proven to be effective in Mixed Reality interventions for facilitating empathy and/or promoting prosocial behaviours? Drawing upon scholarly works in the SCOPUS, ACM Digital Library & DRS Digital Library databases, this analysis is part of a larger PhD study aimed at formulating effective design strategies for development of an MR game that facilitates ethnocultural empathy and promotes prosocial behaviours.

Zeynep Abes - Feminist Epistemologies for Preserving XR

Traditional archives alone cannot compete with dominant cultural narratives, leaving the history of immersive media largely unexplored. Focusing solely on preserving hardware and what society deems technological innovations ignores the social, political, and cultural contexts of XR. Archiving historically significant work requires rethinking what counts as significant in the first place. Beyond storing content, we must build compelling, accessible stories rooted in care and context to transform what is seen as legitimate history and innovation. This paper proposes feminist epistemologies for preserving XR that challenge dominant archival models and introduces inclusive, relational, and embodied frameworks for immersive media histories. Drawing from Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's idea that "memory is not static but an active process... Memory does not equal storage," the paper positions feminist archival practices as dynamic systems that reactivate memory rather than merely store it. Feminist approaches to preserving XR align with the growing rhizomatic model for archives, rejecting linear and hierarchical systems of knowledge and instead focusing on decentralized networks of relationships that can be accessed in multiple ways. Traditional archives of media technologies tend to have rigid and exclusionary structures that often favor male and Western-dominated narratives. Archives have never been neutral; they reflect the perceptions of those in power. In contrast, feminist approaches to preservation aim to disrupt this imbalance by making space for voices and histories that are repeatedly ignored. Embracing fluid structures in which information becomes an open-ended conversation that evolves over time prioritizes inclusion over hierarchy and control. Finally, this paper argues that feminist epistemologies and the ethics of care transform preservation into a shared responsibility grounded in relationships, inclusion, and accountability. Feminist frameworks for XR preservation not only offer ethical and methodological alternatives but also reveal how what we choose to preserve determines the values embedded in our technological futures.

Carloalberto Treccani - A Noise-Free World: Noise-Cancelling Technologies and the Pursuit of a Sanitised Reality

In photography, noise is generally considered an unwanted visual element, often causing dissatisfaction and annoyance. To address this, noise-cancelling techniques were introduced in digital photo cameras in the late 1990s and in smartphone cameras in the mid-2000s. Initially used to mitigate noise due to technical limitations, these techniques gradually expanded with advances in computing and machine vision, enabling more sophisticated operations. For example, automatic removal of the red-eye effect—a common issue until the late 2000s—and other denoising purposes to enhance image quality. The recent surge in generative AI capabilities for smartphone cameras has expanded the applications of these technologies once again. A case in point is Samsung's S23 Ultra, whose 100x Space Zoom feature claims to capture highly detailed Moon photographs. However, a Reddit post revealed that these sharp images are mostly the result of complex and opaque operations rather than the zoom itself. The Reddit user, through an ingenious solution, demonstrated that the S23 Ultra generates non-existent Moon-like details, essentially producing a new, fake Moon. Their operations are, however, not limited to generating sharp images of the Moon. A second case in point includes smoothing skin functions in selfies by overimposing newly generated elements to cover stains and wrinkles. This autocorrection feature, paradoxically, was so strong that Apple had to fix it, as many users complain of the excessive, unrealistic "airbrushing" effect. These profound and rapid denoising corrections, enabled by the digital in its photographic domain, represent a continuous attempt to discipline an undisciplined reality—a reality increasingly shaped to fit the user's desires and expectations. Through the examples discussed, this paper argues that the digital has evolved into a sanitising system for managing anxieties. The pursuit of a noise-free photograph reflects a deeper cultural trend: the desire for a noise-free world.

Claire Reddeman - "The last universalistic icon": the digital 'Blue Marble' images and the loss of the human

In this paper, I offer a reading of NASA's later iterations of the 'Blue Marble' series of images of the Earth (as it might appear) from space. The images extend the ways in which abstraction distances the image from its 'real' referent, notably through the elimination of clouds from the earth image. I trace this trajectory of cartographic abstraction to interpret the later Blue Marbles as anti-human fantasies, cleansed of both the hydrological cycle as a whole and of traces of the human. The image of the earth seen from space, as Earthrise (1968) and then as the Blue Marble (1972), is often regarded as 'the' iconic image of the environmental movement. However, I argue that it fails as environmental icon precisely because it presents an image of anti-politics: so abstracted as to offer no interpretive purchase for action in the human sphere. The larger context is the critique of capitalist abstraction, whereby the relation to the real is always mediated via illusory forms of appearance; the more specific problematic of cartographic abstraction is brought to bear on the question of how the symbolic form of the globe ultimately obscures our real relations of interdependence as Robert Spencer's "dependent mammals".

Digital Politics and Communication (4)

Giulia Tucci and Fabio Castro Gouveia - Forwarding Power: Mapping Political Information Flows on Telegram

This study examines the dynamics of political information circulation on Telegram during the 2024 Brazilian electoral campaign, leveraging the platform's unique forwarding traceability affordance to map use patterns of message sources. Telegram's forwarding design distinguishes the `fwd_from_author` (the original content creator) from the channel that redistributes the message. By collapsing the typical forwarding relation (`fwd_from_author` → channel) into a source-to-source network, we study how different message origins are commonly mobilized by communities of channels as primary information sources. Such a networked perspective reveals dominant political content producers and the structural entanglements between sources mediated by channel forwarding practices. This approach goes beyond traditional author- or channel-centric analyses, emphasizing the relational assemblages that support political information ecosystems on digital messaging interfaces. Methodologically, the study employs network analysis techniques to uncover clusters of co-used sources, thereby illuminating patterns of influence and alliance within the digital political landscape. Telegram's affordance of forwarding traceability, absent in messaging apps like WhatsApp, provides a window into the configurations of digital political communication and circulation. By situating the analysis within the broader context of digital platform politics, algorithmic mediation, and information flows, this work contributes to critical digital humanities scholarship on how technical features shape political discourse, public knowledge, and power relations in contemporary democracies. It highlights the importance of platform-specific affordances in shaping the visibility and authority of political voices and reinforces the value of network approaches for understanding emergent forms of digital political mediation.

Sean Eddington, James Alexander McVey, Colene J. Lind - Charlie Kirk, Platformed Debate, and the Rewriting of Deliberative Norms

After Charlie Kirk's assassination, users online began to reshape his legacy by celebrating him as a model of civil discourse (Hannah-Jones, 2025). They emphasized his willingness to "debate anyone," arguing that he was deeply committed to promoting American democratic norms (Kelly, 2025). This reframing contradicts the reality of Kirk's previous online presence, which was marked by antagonistic performances, dehumanizing statements toward political opponents and marginalized groups, and arguments rife with logical fallacies. In death, Kirk became metonymic for "good debate" itself (King, 2023), a symbolic transformation that both reflects and enables contradictory frameworks for what counts as legitimate deliberation. We examine how users construct meanings of "good debate" following Kirk's assassination. We draw from theorizing on microcelebrity performance (Marwick, 2015, 2018) and algorithmic publics (Gillespie, 2014) to ask how, if at all, these constructions prioritize sensationalism and viral moments over depth and complexity (Nguyen, 2020; Rathje et al., 2021). More specifically, we explore whether social media affordances, such as visibility and virality, intersect with culture war logics and influencer economies to potentially reshape what online communities recognize as meaningful debate (Lewis, 2018; Mason, 2018; Van Dijck et al., 2018). We use semantic network analyses (Eddington et al., 2023) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010) to analyze eulogies from partisan elites alongside everyday users on TikTok and Reddit. The following questions guide us: How do users construct meanings of "good debate" in Kirk's posthumous discourse? What do users' discursive constructions reveal about deliberative norms in algorithmically-mediated spaces? Ultimately, our work-in-progress paper explores whether online discourses privilege spectacle over substance, potentially undermining the shared standards necessary for engaged citizens to evaluate claims and engage in meaningful democratic deliberation (Brady et al., 2021; Törnberg, 2022).

Nuria Simelio - Digital Humanities Perspectives on Migration, Human Rights, and Representation in Spanish and Moroccan Social Media News (2024–2025)

This paper examines the representation of migration and human rights in Spanish and Moroccan social media news outlets, based on a dataset of 1,537 posts published between 2024 and 2025. Using content analysis, we investigate how digital platforms frame migration, rights, and global governance across a total of 1,537 units of analysis, all of which contained valid data. The corpus spans leading outlets with strong social media presence in Spain (El País, El Mundo, La Vanguardia, Diario Sur) and Morocco (Hespress, Lakom, Le Matin), enabling a comparative perspective on regional platformed journalism. Most posts (82.7%) appeared in 2024, with a marked decline in 2025, reflecting shifting editorial and political priorities online. Visual testimony—especially photographs of people (56.7%)—is the most common form of accompaniment, underscoring the role of affective imagery in shaping engagement with migration. Yet explicit references to human rights frameworks and

international agreements such as the Global Compact for Migration remain limited, suggesting that coverage on social media privileges immediacy and affect over structural or normative issues. Moreover, 42% of posts lack identifiable sources, raising concerns about transparency, accountability, and credibility in platform-based journalism. By situating these findings within broader debates in Digital Humanities, we demonstrate how digital platforms not only distribute but also actively shape public understandings of migration, rights, and belonging. Our methodological approach highlights the value of computational techniques for scaling up the analysis of social media corpora, while also emphasizing the need for critical and interpretive frameworks to understand the politics of digital representation. In doing so, the study engages the conference's central concern with interrogating what "the digital" entails today, where infrastructures, practices, and imaginaries are deeply intertwined.

Vitória Oliveira - The battleground of attention: Governing the attention economy between state, industry, and civil society in Brazil

As digital governance enters a new phase—moving beyond content moderation concerns to address design mechanisms and their effects on users—the regulation of manipulative interfaces and attention-extractive practices has emerged as a critical frontier. This shift, exemplified by emerging frameworks targeting dark patterns (EU Digital Services Act, California Age-Appropriate Design Code), reveals growing recognition that platform harms stem not only from what users see, but from how interfaces are engineered to capture and retain attention.

This paper examines how digital platforms strategically deploy "digital wellbeing" features as self-regulatory responses within this contested terrain. Focusing on Brazil as a critical case study, I analyze the interplay between three key actors: platforms advancing self-regulatory initiatives (Apple's Screen Time, Meta's Take a Break, TikTok's Screen Time Management), emerging state regulatory frameworks addressing addictive design and persuasive technologies (Bills no. 2,630/2020, 2,628/2022 and 4,675/25), and growing civil society movements organized around attention activism (Um Minuto de sua Atenção, Instituto Delete, Movimento Desconecta, Instituto Alana).

Through documentary analysis of corporate communications, legislative proposals, and activist manifestos, I argue that industry self-regulation operates less as genuine reform than as strategic positioning to shape—and potentially preempt—state intervention. While platforms frame "digital wellbeing" tools as evidence of corporate responsibility, preliminary evidence suggests these features may increase rather than decrease screen time (Silverman & Etkin, 2024), revealing fundamental contradictions between attention-maximizing business models and user wellbeing claims. This echoes broader critiques of how corporations have weaponized behavioral science insights to engineer habit-forming technologies (Nadler & McGuigan, 2018).

Drawing on platform governance scholarship (Gorwa, 2019; Gillespie, 2018), I demonstrate how Brazil's governance landscape illuminates broader tensions in this emerging regulatory paradigm: industry efforts to define "responsible design" on their own terms clash with legislative attempts to impose mandatory standards, while grassroots movements demand more radical transformations. These movements—ranging from digital detox programs to organized attention activism creating "attention sanctuaries" for collective resistance (Burnett & Mitchell, 2025)—reframe attention problems as issues of empowered solidarity rather than mere individual self-management. This dynamic reveals attention governance as a battleground where competing visions of digital capitalism, user autonomy, and state authority collide.

By denaturalizing industry narratives and situating corporate measures within a broader governance context—spanning Brazilian legislative proposals, civil society activism, and international frameworks—this analysis contributes to critical digital humanities scholarship on platform power, revealing "digital wellbeing" as strategic maneuvering within multi-stakeholder struggles over who controls the definition and future of digital capitalism.

Negotiating AI: Identity, Labour, and Cultural Practice in Mediated Contexts (4)

Christopher Holliday, Sarah Thomas - The Stakes of Recognition: Smart Stardom in the Era of Digital Replication

From Deepfakes and virtual holography to digitally-enabled posthumous performances and digital de-aging, the contemporary era of synthetic media production has appeared to culminate the much-anticipated “crisis in the conception of acting” that was first heralded as a defining feature of the computer age (Wojcik 2006: 71), a crisis that was conceived largely in relation to early-2000s anxieties around Hollywood’s growing reliance upon cyberstars, synthespians, virtual actors, avatars, and proxies (King 2011). Yet if transformations in computer replication processes have progressively re-negotiated what Christine Geraghty has called the “work of acting” (2000: 192), then the recent 2023 SAG-AFTRA industrial action concerned with artificial intelligence and machine learning has only intensified issues around the potentially unwieldy digitisation of bodies, faces, and likenesses, while asking the question of who can – and does – ‘own’ the star as a valuable data asset. This talk maps the current ‘state-of-the-art’ with regards to the industrial and cultural narratives of synthetic media, looking specifically at the exchange between screen acting, the labour of self-performance, branding, and notions of consent and trust within increasing digital intervention. It explores these concerns via current intersections between celebrity and advanced digital technologies that produce new modes of digital identity (the ‘smart star’) alongside the asset value and cultural power of this emerging and interactive virtual stardom (‘smart stardom’). By identifying how stars have increasingly and ‘smartly’ complied with virtual production processes and a spectrum of smart technologies to become complex computational artefacts, this talk reflects on how shifts in computer VFX since the turn of the millennium have renewed the smart star’s profitable function as a converging site of labour, capital, and technology.

Aurelia Ayisi - Resting in Peace? AI-Powered Obituaries and the Transformation in Funeral Announcements in Ghana

Despite growing trends in death memorialization in digital places, empirical research on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in technology-mediated funeral practices remains limited, particularly within African contexts. Ghana’s funeral sector is currently undergoing a technological shift with the emergence of AI-powered obituaries, which utilise voice cloning, avatars, and “legacy recordings” to enable the deceased to announce their own funeral arrangements digitally. While these innovations resonate with some of Ghana’s longstanding funeral traditions of storytelling, oral performance, and communal remembrance, they simultaneously subvert cultural, ethical, and spiritual norms of respect for the dead. Drawing on Technological Mediation Theory (TM theory), this study examines how AI technologies are mediating relationships between the living, the dead, and the wider community, reshaping practices of mourning and memory. Using qualitative interviews with families, funeral directors, and AI entrepreneurs, combined with discourse analysis of funeral announcements that incorporate AI obituaries, the research examines how stakeholders navigate emotional closure and ethical dilemmas, such as consent, privacy, and voice ownership. The analysis highlights tensions between technological innovation and cultural continuity, situating Ghana’s experience within broader global debates on digital afterlives. The study proposes a preliminary framework for the responsible integration of GenAI in funeral-related customary practices in Ghana, anchored in two critical pillars of a) regulatory oversight to safeguard data rights, privacy, and security in the production and circulation of AI obituaries, ensuring dignity and trust are maintained; b) the development of culturally responsive GenAI integration within Ghanaian’s cultural practices of death and aligning digital memorialization with indigenous traditions, and communal values. Together, these pillars provide a crucial foundation for scholarly inquiry, ethical policy design, and industry practice in a rapidly evolving field at the intersection of technology, culture, and death.

Radhika Gajjala - Uncertain archives, Probable infrastructures: Postcolonial-Cyberfeminist investigations in producing Selves across Platforms

For the past few years, I have been engaged in a series of experiments – provocations drawn from questions raised by postcolonial feminists - using the Generative Artificial imaging tools (gen ai) Midjourney. Bias was easy to locate. Results most certainly reproduce majoritarian biases. Yet the way to work against such biasing of output is not simple given that these platforms produce a mix of deterministic and probabilistic. Can we “fix” these outputs through deterministic modes of intervention and why would we even bother to do this? In order to create a scenario and assert creative autonomy over the output, the user will need to employ multiple skills and different image platforms and tools. Who then does the work of deconstructing and reconstructing while pushing against

these accidental biases, ethical dilemmas and (in)visibilities that these emerging technologies perpetuate? In thinking about how gender is produced, performed and shaped through digital visual cultures, feminists have written about a range of ways in which user autonomy can work to intervene and also to extend the gender performativity beyond a limited binary grid. Attempts to explore the kind of work that might be needed and possible for the user to intervene and produce diverse and intersectional images through a gen ai platform such as Midjourney led to a series of experiments in producing small vignettes. Creating interchange between the visual selves produced through both the gen ai platform of Midjourney and the in-world avatar from Second Life from my Second Life inventory from two decades ago, I iteratively produced variations of “selves” - as images and reels shared via Instagram. The digital artifacts preserved and brought back to “life” in gen ai visualizations represent a kind of digital domesticity and material culture exchange between public platform participation and private, affective identity and memory work.

Digital Urbanisms (4)

Yusuf Yüsekdağ - Ethics of Data Relations and Smart City

The concept of data relations has recently attracted some attention in critical technology and media scholarship. Drawing on the Marxist notion of relations of production, this approach explores how datafication of everyday life both implies and legitimizes certain social relations, often commodifying or exploitative. This, I argue, is an insightful approach to also explore and formulate the ethical implications of data-driven platforms and the certain socio-economic relations stemming from them. While the original Marxist framing emphasizes justification, I use data relations more broadly to denote the processes and relations that emerge from data-driven platforms. In this analytical paper, as a case in point, I focus on the concept and nature of smart city applications. Given the ideal of data-drivenness on the background, I pay attention to the data relations it accommodates and their potential ethical implications. This particular ethics of data relations approach applied to the concept of smart city paves the way for certain ethical methodologies that are process-oriented and that can benefit from the standpoint of the individuals. The paper proceeds in three parts. First, I motivate the data relations approach by identifying three defining features of smart city platforms: (i) their neoliberal design constraints, (ii) their basis in datafication, and (iii) their algorithmic relations. Second, I develop a process-oriented ethics of data relations through three exemplary issues: (a) commodification of personal mobility data, (b) exclusionary practices against minority groups in city-making, and (c) algorithmic relations that obscure corporate moral responsibility. Finally, I suggest that analyzing such issues within smart cities calls for bottom-up ethical methodologies, particularly by considering how city-dwellers perceive values like social equality in urban spaces.

Shuyan Zhao - Spectacle traveling: Tourist perception in social media era: taking Trevi Fountain as an example

Taking photos has become necessary during traveling for almost every tourist in contemporary society. In addition, with the development of digital media, many people are willing to share these photos on social media, and some angles, poses, and clothing of these photos may become popular references for other tourists. This may reflect the more complex relationship between technology, the human, and media spectacle. This article takes Trevi Fountain as a case study, based on Debord's (1967) theory of spectacle society to explore the transformation from cultural heritage to mediated landscapes through social media and digital recording devices, and also the influence on tourists' perception of attractions during this process. It does the thematic analysis on Xiaohongshu, a famous Chinese social media platform, to explore how social media users describe Trevi Fountain through different pictures. Besides, it also uses the datawalking method to observe travelers' photo behavior around the Trevi Fountain. The article finds that there is a circulation between tourists' sensory perception of attractions, digital recording, and social media. The Trevi Fountain has become a media spectacle, which changes as symbols and spreads online, creating a series of perform models and inviting travelers to simulate. All these media spectacles are fragments which only reflect a small part of the fountain. Based on this, people's traveling experiences are no longer generated naturally but are pre-planned recorded fragments through various digital infrastructures. This pre-planned event may continue becoming a part of a media spectacle when they are published on social media. This reflects the body's engagement in the construction of media spectacles in the digital media era.

Victoria Szabo - Visualizing Cities: Digital Humanities x Computational Media

For over 15 years, the Digital Art History & Visual Culture Research Lab at Duke University has explored immersive and interactive media for research, teaching, and public outreach in art history, urbanism, and cultural heritage. Our interdisciplinary team investigates spaces, places, objects, and people through collaborative

projects that bridge scholarly inquiry and digital design. We maintain long-standing partnerships with architectural historians and engineers in Venice and Padua and continue dialogue with colleagues from our recent Summer Institute, Exhibiting Hidden Histories: Bringing Art History Projects to Publics through Digital Exhibitions and XR. This talk introduces our interrelated Visualizing Cities projects, featuring examples from Venice (Italy), Charlotte, North Carolina (USA), and Providence, Rhode Island (USA), with a focus on design principles that balance scholarly rigor and immersive media effects. Our goal is to foster both comprehension and apprehension of urban experiences and histories. As digital humanists, we prioritize rich archives, accurate reconstructions, and transparent metadata, favoring models and environments that acknowledge their partiality and constructed nature. Yet, through our engagements with computational media, we also embrace extended reality and game design principles to enhance engagement and media impact. Visualizing Cities is thus about both our relationship to the objects of inquiry and the experiences we create around them. These efforts face new challenges with the rise of generative AI, which can simulate historical completeness through automated inference and generalization. As we navigate this evolving landscape, we seek new vocabularies, tools, and guardrails to guide critical practice, while continuing to reflect on how digital humanities and computational media shape the future of historical and cultural urban visualization in novel, affective, and increasingly participatory dimensions.

Sanjana Muralidharan - Spatial Narratives and Social Currency: Digital Retail Experiences in Chennai Malls

Spatial Narratives and Social Currency: Digital Retail Experiences in Chennai Malls Abstract Over the past decade, urban malls in Chennai have undergone a profound transformation, shifting from primarily transactional retail spaces to digitally immersive storytelling environments. These spaces now function as curated stages for brand narratives, where spatial design, interactive installations, and influencer-led campaigns operate as powerful narrative tools inviting consumers into branded “storyworlds.” Drawing on Jean Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality and Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital, this study explores how malls employ aesthetic and technological strategies to move consumption beyond material acquisition toward the performance of identity, class, and taste within algorithmically mediated frames. Based on ethnographic observations in selected Chennai malls and through semi structured interviews with marketing professionals and visitors, the study aims to reveal how the digital retail experience through “Instagrammable” aesthetics in malls such as themed installations, curated lighting, and visually striking seasonal displays are deliberately designed to encourage photographic engagement and social media sharing and how these spectacles are amplified by influencer collaborations, which lend aspirational credibility and embed the act of visiting the mall within a wider narrative of cultural belonging where visibility becomes the new social currency. The paper also delves into how these spatial narratives enhance brand perception and emotional loyalty, particularly among Gen Z and urban millennials. The paper also critiques the cultural gatekeeping embedded within these spatial narratives. While these digitally immersive storytelling environments in malls foster an illusion of inclusivity and brand intimacy, it simultaneously privileges certain languages, styles, and price points, reinforcing socio-economic hierarchies. The mall thus becomes both a site of imaginative participation and a mechanism for cultural exclusion.

Journalism, Trust and AI (4)

Nael Jebril - Digital News, Society, and Democracy: Framing Artificial Intelligence in Arabic Regional Media

Quality news coverage provides a crucial foundation for public discussions on AI’s impact on society. Prior research suggests that AI’s promises and concerns shape global AI media discourses, varying by context (Nguyen and Hekman 2024), and that public support for AI may depend on the valence of framing in news coverage (Brewer et al. 2022). However, existing studies on AI media representations primarily focus on Western contexts, overlooking emerging media markets like the Arab region, where AI literature mainly explores its impact on newsroom practices (Abdulmajeed and Fahmy, 2022). Drawing on quantitative content analyses, this study examines media discourse on AI in the Arab region, focusing on influential online news outlets with dedicated technology sections. Specifically, it compares news coverage by four mainstream news outlets with an Arab regional focus, reflecting various ideological and international perspectives—BBC Arabic, Al Jazeera, CNBC, and DW—highlighting key topics, frames, and sources over six months. The study explores AI-related topics alongside frame usage, focusing on impact versus issue framing and positive versus negative framing. It also analyses AI-democracy frames within news focusing on AI’s impact on disinformation, political participation, surveillance, government-citizen relations, and journalism’s societal role. Moreover, the study investigates the inclusivity of AI discussions in the region through source analysis. Overall, the study highlights that AI coverage in the MENA region mirrors global trends in some respects, such as the strong focus on business, finance, and

regulation, and largely replicates Western patterns by privileging insights from industry and business sources. However, the dominance of episodic framing over thematic framing further reinforces a narrative that prioritises technological advancements and market-driven concerns over deeper societal transformations. These analyses contribute to a wider understanding of the ways media interprets AI's essence and objectives in the region.

Nabila Cruz De Carvalho - Trust in digital news media among young audiences in the age of generative AI

The rapid proliferation of AI-generated content has transformed the digital media landscape, intensifying worries about rising misinformation and diminishing trust in the news. Since the debut of ChatGPT in November 2022, much scholarly interest has centred on how news organisations and journalists integrate generative AI into their practices. However, there remains a notable gap in comprehensive qualitative studies exploring the perceptions of the wider public, and in particular, the experiences of younger audiences navigating this evolving digital realm. This project investigates how generative AI affects young audiences' trust in the news, specifically looking to understand how their lived experience influences their encounters with technology and information. Its overall aim is to identify how these factors affect the trust relationship between media organisations like the BBC and its young, often underserved audiences. This is a critical issue for digital media entities such as the broadcaster seeking to maintain relevance and credibility among emerging generations. Recognising trust as a relational concept between trustors and trustees, I conducted semi-structured interviews with both BBC staff and young adults aged 18 to 24. Insights from these interviews were used to design a creative workshop, where young participants engaged with generative AI (Google Gemini) to simulate a journalistic workflow. This qualitative and creative elicitation approach enabled a deeper understanding of how young people conceptualise trust and trustworthiness in the context of news consumption. The findings reveal the complex nature of audience trust, shaped by both affective factors and systemic elements. BBC staff tended to adopt a pragmatic stance towards the use of generative AI, while young people exhibited general distrust. Significantly, young participants indicated that their trust in digital news hinges less on the use of AI per se, and more on the openness and transparency with which news organisations communicate their AI practices.

Simge Süllü Durul, Tezcan Özkan Kutlu, Gülçin Salman - Navigating the Digital Frontier: Journalism Students' Ethical Perspectives on AI in News Production

As artificial intelligence and digital technologies rapidly transform the media landscape, future journalists must grapple with complex ethical challenges surrounding the use of these tools in news production. This paper explores journalism students' ethical perspectives on incorporating AI-driven tools—such as automated writing assistants, deepfake detection software, and algorithmic news curation—into journalistic practice. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study investigates students' attitudes toward issues such as transparency, accountability, editorial autonomy, and the preservation of human values in reporting. The research focuses on a purposive sample of undergraduate journalism students enrolled in accredited journalism program at Anadolu University in Türkiye. 120 participants are included in the sample for the quantitative phase, where baseline data is gathered on their familiarity with AI tools used in journalism, frequency and context of use, and ethical attitudes toward AI-assisted news production. Following the survey, a subset of 15 participants is selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews in order to explore students' ethical reasoning in greater depth, focusing on how they interpret core journalistic values—such as truth, fairness, autonomy, and public interest—within the context of AI-driven technologies. Questions also examine students' views on the evolving role of the journalist, accountability in algorithmic decision-making, and the limits of automation in editorial processes. Data collection for the study is ongoing. This paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about journalism education, professional ethics, and the evolving role of human agency in AI-assisted newsrooms. By centring the voices of emerging journalists, the study is expected to provide valuable insight into how journalism ethics are being reinterpreted in the digital age.

Social Media, Identity and Popularity(4)

Alice McAlpine-Riddell - 'Girling' safety on social media: Confessional storytelling and ironic devices to mediate experience of gender-based harassment and violence on Instagram and TikTok.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork both in New York City and online, this paper explores the digital mediation and circulation of safety, following the practice of posting about experiences of gender-based harassment, insecurity, and violence on social media, including Instagram and TikTok. Through the genre of confessional storytelling and

the deployment of certain devices, including humour, irony and what I call 'girling' as a satirical narrative strategy, this chapter explores how Millennial and Gen Z female New Yorkers mediate and rewrite experiences of (in)security in the city online. This paper asks, how do women make sense of experiences of insecurity and violence via social media? How do these practices of storytelling and irony function within overlapping economies of affect and attention online? Following cultural theorist Alex Quicho's conceptualisation of the figure of the girl online (2023), this paper maps digital iterations of tactical passivity and ironic sincerity to distance experiences of insecurity while also connecting with other women online who have similar experiences. This can mean performing and subverting Western stereotypes of femininity and gender norms to communicate and process violence as a tactic of mediation. For example, girling is posting a pouting selfie while discussing a break-in or making a joke about being attractive after experiencing gender-based violence. Critiques of postfeminism online emphasize neoliberal individualism, entrepreneurial empowerment and a denouement of power dynamics, effectively depoliticising feminism (McRobbie, 2009; Gill, 2019). 'Girling' can be understood as operating within postfeminist sensibilities while also troubling them through feminized irony and humour. I frame this as neither empowering nor victimizing but ambivalent, strategic, and transitional, deployed as an affective trick operating between anger and acceptance. Moving beyond postfeminist critiques regarding self-disclosure online, I ask instead how can we better understand performative femininity as expressions of negotiation to mediate experiences of gender-based harassment and violence?

Marina Dekavalla - Can lifestyle influencers be digital media auteurs?

This paper explores authorship in the work of female lifestyle influencers on social media. It investigates whether and how traditional concepts of authorship in the creative industries may be understood and applied in a sector ruled by commercial imperatives and often seen as lacking space for creative distinctiveness. It engages with scholarly understandings of authorship in different disciplines, and it applies them to analysing the case studies of two highly successful, professional lifestyle influencers' work on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. The paper challenges common perceptions about social media and creativity: that the affordances of social media inevitably foster repetition and imitation, that a notion of authorship based on originality and uniqueness is tenable in other creative sectors, that fashion/beauty/lifestyle content is too commercial and frivolous to allow the development of an authorial signature, that studying influencers is about analysing either mediated performance or corporate exploitation and precarity in a consumerist ecology. This paper is part of a research project on authorship, social media influencers and creative identity. It contributes to debates around what authorship and creativity mean in a digital world.

Rendan Liu - A "beautiful" bubble: Gender, self-branding, and platform capitalism in China's wanghong economy

In post-socialist China and the burgeoning wanghong economy, women fashion and lifestyle influencers are embracing contradicting experiences and expectations, from the national and Party gender policy that emphasises women's traditional roles to the rise of neoliberal narratives emphasising individual agency fuelled by the market economy. They constantly negotiate contradictory ideals such as empowerment and commercial exploitation. This negotiation is shaped not only by personal positioning but also by the platform governance and the influence of other industry stakeholders. Grounded in media and culture studies, gender studies, and platform studies, this study analyses Chinese women fashion and lifestyle influencers' self-branding practices and their interactions with various industry stakeholders on Xiaohongshu, a leading user-generated content e-commerce lifestyle social media platform in China. I use an ethnographic study composed of (1) online and offline participant observation, (2) semi-structured interviews with influencers, brand marketing/PR managers, multi-channel network company employees, and Xiaohongshu's employees, complemented by (3) autoethnography. Through grounded theory analysis, I argue that Chinese women influencers' "inspiring" self-branding practices create an illusion of inclusivity and diversity, while in reality reinforcing stratification among Chinese women along class and geographic lines, governed by often invisible patriarchal structures. These self-branding practices remain largely constrained by platform capitalism and industry stakeholders who collectively sustain a curated "beautiful" bubble. This research foregrounds the social and structural dimensions of the asymmetrical power relations embedded within this ecosystem. Understanding these dynamics is essential for critically engaging with gendered digital labour and neoliberal subjectivity, and for imagining more equitable, transparent digital futures.

Kesara Ariyapongpaioj - Is There A Podcast Bro-Manosphere Pipeline?: Mapping Recommendation Pathways on YouTube

During the run-up and in the aftermath of the 2024 U.S. presidential election, media outlets reported that a group of male podcasters, referred to as "podcast bros", played a significant role in shaping young men's political views, with many linking their influence to Donald Trump's victory. This group of podcasters have also been informally associated with the "manosphere," a loosely defined network of online communities and influencers promoting

misogyny, antifeminism, and contested forms of masculinity. While existing research has examined incel forums, manosphere communities, and algorithmic radicalisation on YouTube, little research has explicitly investigated whether podcast bros represent a new entry point into the manosphere, or how YouTube's recommendation system may facilitate such pathways. This paper addresses that gap by asking two questions: 1) Does watching podcast bro content on YouTube lead to exposure to manosphere-related content?; 2) How does YouTube's recommendation algorithm systematically lead podcast bro viewers to manosphere-related content? Drawing on scholarship on digital masculinities and algorithmic radicalisation (Ging, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Sugiura, 2021), the paper locates podcast bros at the intersection of bro culture, anti-political correctness, and the manosphere. The study employs ethnographic walkthroughs to simulate user pathways on YouTube, mapping recommended videos across five popular podcast channels. These pathways are visualised in an image collection, coded by topic, and qualitatively analysed to identify when and how manosphere-related content emerges. By examining podcast bros as both cultural producers and algorithmic entry points, this research contributes to ongoing discourse on algorithmic radicalisation and the socio-political influence of YouTube as a site where ideology and infrastructure converge, specifically where the latter forms a digital ecosystem that facilitates the former.

The Digital and the Youth (4)

Gülden Demir, Gülsün Bozkurt - Negotiating Digital Surveillance: Turkish Middle Schoolers' Resistance to Parental Controls

This paper proposes to investigate how young adolescents in Türkiye negotiate the expanding presence of parental digital controls in their everyday lives. Against the backdrop of global calls for online child safety, parental monitoring tools and restrictive practices are becoming increasingly normalized. Yet empirical research that directly centers children's own perspectives—how they experience, interpret, and respond to such interventions—remains limited. This study aims to address this gap. Drawing on the “new sociology of childhood,” which positions children as active social agents, and on critical theories of power and resistance, the project seeks to illuminate how young people shape their digital lifeworlds within family contexts. The research will be based on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with middle school students in Istanbul, foregrounding children's voices as they describe the strategies through which they navigate parental restrictions. These include turning to alternative devices, drawing on peer knowledge, or subtly bending rules in ways that they associate with autonomy, fairness, sociability, or the simple right to play. The study is expected to show that children are not merely passive recipients of parental authority, nor simply rebellious actors, but creative negotiators who seek to balance parental expectations with their own desires for online freedom, connection, and self-expression. In doing so, it highlights how power within the home is neither a straightforward top-down process nor a fixed structure, but one that is constantly negotiated and reshaped in everyday practice. By grounding debates on surveillance, intergenerational trust, and digital citizenship in children's lived experiences, this research aims to make an empirically informed contribution to digital childhood studies and to broader discussions of power and resistance in the digital age. Keywords: digital childhood, parental control, resistance, agency, digital cultures

Tom De Leyn, Dounia Bourabain - The digital neighborhood: Towards a conceptual framework for understanding young people's everyday lives across digital and physical spaces

The digital neighborhood is an emerging concept within the field of digital youth cultures that addresses how digital media practices are embedded within both 'physical' and 'digital' neighborhood dynamics (De Leyn, 2023; Lane, 2018; Sandelson, 2023). First coined by Stevens et al. (2017) and building further on hybrid perspectives in media studies (de Souza e Silva et al., 2025), it can be defined as a networked third space in which youths' everyday power dynamics, relationships, and subject positions are mirrored, reinforced, and transcended. Moreover, central to the concept's focus is how gendered, racialized, and classed inequalities in youths' physical neighborhoods are both amplified and challenged within the architecture of digital spaces, and vice versa (De Leyn, 2023; Lane, 2018; Stevens et al., 2017). As such, the digital neighborhood also introduces an intersectional lens by examining the role of inequality in the hybrid lives of young people (De Leyn, 2023). To date, however, little attention has been paid to the conceptual foundations of the digital neighborhood. This gap hinders its systematic use to develop research questions and approaches. We therefore work towards a conceptual framework by identifying three key dimensions. First, intersectional identity work: how young people experience, practice and embody their identities simultaneously in digital and physical spaces, with attention to how intersecting axes of inequality (e.g. gender, ethnicity, social class) shape these practices. Second, digital platforms as third spaces: how platforms create opportunities for community and belonging while also reproducing or amplifying social exclusion already experienced in the physical realm. Third, everyday (dis)empowerment: how young people's individual and collective acts of agency are facilitated but also

constrained by the hybrid space of the digital neighborhood. Building on these dimensions, we outline avenues for future research to capture the entanglement of digital and physical spaces in youths' hybrid lives.

Yeran Kim, Dong Hoo Lee - The Becoming of Digital Youth in South Korea: Mediating Identities and Selves

The COVID-19 crisis of early 2020 rapidly reshaped South Korea's media environment. Digital media technologies first adopted to sustain social distancing quickly became part of daily routines, while innovations once confined to policy discourse—5G networks, platforms, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence—were rapidly embedded in social infrastructure. Yet such perspectives—whether instrumentalist or determinist—overlook the complex dynamics of everyday change. Digital media are not simply neutral tools deployed for specific purposes, but rather human conditions—articulated with social systems and continuously shaping and reshaping human sense and experience. Through their mediating processes, cultural desires and practices are structured in particular ways, generating interdependent and entangled relations in which digital technologies and human beings are mutually dependent and inseparably intertwined. Within this context, the mediation of Korean young people in the digital environment can be discerned in four distinct modes: *homo laborans*, *homo economicus*, *homo solitarius*, and *homo politicus*. The emphasis is placed on the diverse and dynamic processes of human development within the digital environment, grounded in the interconnected individual and collective, emotional and rational, and compliant and dissenting processes of subjectivity formation. These ways are not only varied but also uneven, haphazard, precarious, and challenging, as well as innovative, novel, and alternative. Building upon these four points, I have presented four modes of living and the subjectivities they constitute throughout this study: *homo laborans*, *homo economicus*, *homo solitarius*, and *homo politicus*. In other words, the ways in which individuals practice care—encompassing multifaceted self-care, care for others, and engagement with the world through digital interactions—alongside their invention and use of self-technologies via digital platforms, are pivotal in shaping the heterogeneity of digital natives.

Sabina Huseynova - Digital Childhood, case study in Qatar: Parental Perspectives on AI, Identity and Cultural Learning

AI tools now dominate classroom learning in Qatar's K-12 schools, yet parents worry these technologies privilege standardized knowledge while marginalizing local cultural practices. This study investigates how multilingual families navigate tensions between AI's promised benefits and cultural preservation concerns. Parents, as both observers and mediators, offer valuable perspectives on how young people manage within these digital environments.

Drawing on an exploratory survey of 64 parents across Qatar's K-12 system, this research explores how AI platforms influence children's study routines, language use, and cultural identity. The analysis addresses three research questions. First, how do parents assess AI's impact on daily learning? Parents report mixed feelings; they appreciate personalized learning and efficiency but worry about screen dependency and reduced social interaction. Second, how do AI platforms affect cultural identity? Many observe that these tools favor English content and global standards over local cultural knowledge. Third, how do families navigate these tensions? The data reveals conflicts between parents' desire for culturally relevant education and pressure to adopt global digital standards.

The methodology combines SPSS statistical analysis to identify demographic patterns in parental attitudes with AntConc corpus linguistic analysis of open-ended survey responses. This mixed-methods approach reveals both quantitative trends and qualitative discourse patterns around AI in education. Early findings suggest that while parents appreciate AI platforms for their adaptability and exposure to global knowledge, they also express concern about the erosion of cultural references, reduced opportunities for embodied social learning, and increased tendency of digital dependency.

This work contributes to digital humanities by challenging assumptions about universal AI benefits and demonstrating the need for culturally responsive educational technology. It extends critical inquiry about digital colonialism into educational contexts, showing how seemingly neutral technologies reproduce existing power structures in knowledge production.

Digital Institutions, Digitalised Institutions (4)

Zhiqiang Li - Embodied Interpretation in Online Museums: Embodied Design Methods based on Roppola's Visitor Experience Framework

As digital extensions of traditional museums, online museums often reproduce authoritative institutional narratives, where visitor interaction relies mainly on vision and limited clicking, leaving embodied experience excluded from meaning-making. This study addresses the question of how embodied experience can be

integrated into online museum narratives to support more inclusive interpretive practices. Drawing on Tiina Roppola's four-process framework of museum experience—framing, resonating, channeling, and broadening—the research compares differences between physical and virtual museums and, through case analysis, proposes six methods for incorporating embodiment into online narratives: Substitution, Fitting, Gaze-anchoring, Temporal co-presence, Narrative through Walking, and Collaboration. These methods can be applied systematically to create unified embodied experiences or combined flexibly to enrich specific stages of interaction. The contribution of this study lies in presenting a framework that serves both theoretical and practical purposes, online museums as multivocal and inclusive environments in which visitors become active participants and co-authors of meaning rather than passive receivers of information.

Oksana Ivanova, Zane Senko - Digital Identity as Institutional Storytelling: A Case Study of Riga Technical University

The study re-examines the digital identity of a university by considering the higher education institution as a platformed storyteller, whose voice is computationally constructed across search engines, social media channels, and knowledge graphs rather than restricted to a single website. Extending Lyons et al.'s insight that digital identity is not a single concept but “the sum total of all the attributes [...] – a continually expanding, evolving collection of data points” (Lyons et al., 2019, p. 5), we transform that person-centric claim to the institutional level and reveal how scattered traces about the institution that platforms select and remix cohere (or conflict) into a public multimodal story. Building on the OECD's (2007) characterization of digital identity as a nine-attribute pyramid – social, subjective, valued, referential, composite, consequential, dynamic, contextual, and ambiguous –, we apply these properties to the institutional case. Thus, the study aims to reconceptualize the digital identity of the university (a case of Riga Technical University (RTU)) and extend OECD/Lyons et al.'s frameworks from individuals to institutions. We will particularly focus on (1) social and referential dimensions to be measured through knowledge-graph coverage and cross-platform linkage; (2) subjective and valued aspects applying narrative sentiment and audience reception; (3) composite and contextual variation across social media channels; (4) ambiguity through different representations on third-party platforms. This study draws on the knowledge base and the digital toolkit developed and approbated within the project “Language Technology Initiative” implemented by the researchers of the Institute of Digital Humanities of RTU. Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as topic modeling and keyword change, visual brand analysis, network analysis of hyperlinks, and close readings of high-impact pages, we evaluate and measure how institutional narratives are produced, ranked, and recirculated by platforms. The results will offer an applicable methodological toolkit to support governance, inclusivity, and resilience of institutional storytelling on the web.

Jeff Love - Designing for Curiosity & Wonder in Cultural Heritage - Thoughts and Actions

Curiosity, imagination and wonder triumph in the worlds of children, but they should not remain the sole domain of youth. Why do we not keep them with us through adolescence and into adulthood? The World Wide Web once promised boundless discovery but more often presents overwhelming torrents of text. Discovery does not come without effort; it requires intentional design. We argue that the physical & digital spaces of libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs) are vital civic laboratories (Bennett 2005) where curiosity can be revived and where disorientation, surprise and delight can be cultivated as part of cultural engagement. Our explorations of curiosity in cultural organizations include a series of design projects created by, with and for GLAM visitors conducted in recent years. These projects interrogate how we ‘read’ historical materials (texts, artifacts and sites) through methods of research-through-design. By building experimental digital artifacts and services, we probe assumptions about cultural heritage engagement and invite new forms of interaction. Museology, art history and archaeology are foundational to these designs, and they are further informed by perspectives from literary studies (e.g. Stagl 2012) and the social sciences (Naylor 1981, Kashdan 2009), whose arguments and insights we translate into experimental prototypes. Examples include a machine tour guide that reframes navigation as playful dialogue, a light installation that transforms the viewing of religious artifacts and haptic books. These interventions highlight both the potential and the limits of design in fostering curiosity and wonder. From these we present current understandings of how to embed or instill these more abstract states of mind as well as demonstrating where we find our expectations foiled, sometimes by technology but more often by constraints we place on our ideas or our spaces. We close with suggestions for ways to dig deeper via diachronic studies and reflective interviews.

Varya Srivastava, Sameera Deol, Karthik Sridhar - Operationalising Inquiry in Student–AI Interaction: Developing the Composite Questioning and Dialogue Index (CQDI)

The widespread adoption of generative AI in higher education has reconfigured how inquiry is enacted and understood. While such systems expand access to knowledge, they risk narrowing intellectual engagement into transactional question–answer exchanges. This paper introduces the Composite Questioning and Dialogue Index (CQDI), a theoretically grounded and computationally operationalised framework for evaluating inquiry in student–AI interaction.

Drawing on Dewey’s (1938) conception of inquiry as the transformation of indeterminate situations, Paul and Elder’s (2006) model of critical thinking as evaluative reasoning, and Craft’s (2005) notion of “little c” creativity as generative exploration, the CQDI integrates three dimensions: critical interrogation (the extent of probing and challenging), exploratory breadth (diversity of directions pursued), and intellectual autonomy (independence from AI outputs). Each dimension is computationally assessed using discourse analysis, prompt entropy, and semantic similarity measures, moving beyond categorical counts of prompt types toward a multidimensional operationalisation of inquiry.

We apply this framework to interaction logs from twelve undergraduates tasked with using ChatGPT to address the societal challenge of urban and rural skilling. Results reveal a structural narrowing of inquiry: the majority of students clustered in the low-to-moderate range (0.1–0.35 CQDI), displaying repetitive prompting, limited counter-questioning, and high semantic overlap with AI responses. A smaller subgroup (0.45–0.65) showed partial independence, yet no student approached high levels of dialogic engagement.

By demonstrating how inquiry can be measured as a composite behaviour rather than an isolated variable, the CQDI provides a replicable framework for diagnosing epistemic vulnerabilities in human–AI interaction. More broadly, this study situates educational AI use within critical digital humanities, foregrounding the risks of epistemic dependency and the need for methodological tools that interrogate—not just adopt—digital technologies.

Playing the Self: Identity, Memory, and Belonging in Interactive Media (3)

Olivia Thorne - The millennial, the Gen Z and the Nintendo Wii: Gaming as opportunity for bonding for women and girls.

My doctoral research examines how women aged 18-30 engage with gaming and whether their identity as a gamer is impacted. Current research into digital youth and embodiment within youth identifies complex relationships between physical and virtual experiences. Bengtsson and Jensen (2024) demonstrate how gaming is embedded in the everyday lives of the Danish youth, highlighting its entanglement with friends and family. This study reveals that gaming can extend beyond play and can influence the way bonding is created and understood, across both digital and non-digital contexts. Similarly, Farrow and Iacovides (2014) explored how digital games engage the body through mimetic sequencing (for example, the Nintendo Wii or Xbox Kinect), arguing that while total immersion is not possible, the relationship between game and player creates a unique form of digital embodiment. My own research has examined how women began to engage with gaming and found that the Nintendo Wii, with its placement within a shared family space, increased familial bonding between father/daughter and brother sister, and years later, this bond has held momentum to this day. In this sense, the Nintendo Wii acted as a socialisation tool for familial bonding and intimacy. Its placement in the shared family space, nurtured by the family-friendly approach Nintendo markets itself as, facilitated intergenerational play. The Wii exemplifies how digital embodiment is not confined to a singular player or experience but expands and lives on through memory and nostalgia. These family bonding experiences were noted by my participants as formative for many women, grounding themselves within gaming and as a gamer, demonstrating how identity is co-constructed through digital and non-digital practices. Ultimately, my doctoral findings illustrate how the Nintendo Wii fostered intergenerational intimacy and also formed the beginning of many women’s gaming identities, sparked through digital play, embodied experiences and familial bonding.

Emmanuel Aubert - Queering Agency in Ludobiographies

Drawing from a comparative analysis of Anna Anthropy’s *Dys4ia* and Didier Eribon’s *Returning to Reims*, I intend to show how the renewal of agency throughout a ludobiography (Gallagher, 2019) can present a powerful

expression of self-emancipation for queer communities. Ludobiographies present an inherent tension stemming from the act of playing a memory : playing entails decision-making—a certain degree of freedom within the space of the magic circle the player enters (Huizinga, 1938); conversely, memory tells the impossibility of a decision, through the display of its passivity (Jankélévitch, 1974). Put simply, freedom is crushed by temporality. In a ludic context, this can at times lead to a situation of ineffectual agency, where the player is presented with unattainable goals (Chew & Mitchell, 2019). Such scenarios can nonetheless meaningfully convey lived queer experiences, often marked by structural or emotional constraints. In *Dys4ia*, Anthropy expresses the structural denial of her gender identity through unattainable goals. Eribon, in *Returning to Reims*, similarly reflects on such denials: “[...] but because we were two boys, it was obviously impossible for me to express my feelings to him.” Yet, the fact that he wrote these words indicates that this impossibility had already been lifted. Likewise, in *Dys4ia* Anthropy translates her hard-won self-emancipation into updated gameplay situations, offering renewed outcomes or new gameplay verbs. By comparing a literary and a gameplay work, I argue that games offer unique and powerful windows onto the life trajectories of queer individuals, because they are ontologically centered on the performance and negotiation of agency.

Gisela De Castro - AFOA.NZ - creative methodologies for building an interactive videobook based on children's letters in Aotearoa New Zealand, on a digital platform

Since the advent of writing, letters have been a powerful means of expressing feelings and confidences, proposing ideas, connecting people, creating literature, and contributing to the understanding of national identity. This ongoing research-creation project addresses issues related to the artistic process in epistolary literature, geography, and transdisciplinarity. Beyond the practical part of the PhD process, the thesis seeks to respond to the research question: What are the creative possibilities of curating and representing children's letters about their places as an interactive videobook? The process explores creative possibilities for transforming children's letters into digital art, through animated short videos, as well as a digital archive of the original letters preserved for posterity. Considering the current technological era and issues of place and belonging, the project explores the intersection between the curation of the collected material and the methodology for developing a digital reading platform. The artistic aspects involve New Zealand students in a collaborative process of narrative construction and storytelling. Preliminary results address the conundrum of whether AI tools could be suitable options for creating an interactive videobook for 21st-century readers. All content on the digital platform is available free of charge to increase accessibility in the field of electronic literature.

Encoding the Body: Desire, Data, and Digital Power (3)

Kalli Dockrill - Beyond 'wounded attachments': Queer feminine desire and vulnerability as trans (dis)embodiment in Harry Potter femslash on AO3

This paper examines embodiment and identity in Harry Potter femslash on fanfiction platform AO3, in the wake of JK Rowling's first essay on trans women in June 2020 and leading up to the April 2025 UK Supreme Court ruling defining gender as biological sex. I understand this decision as part of a larger, transnational anti-gender movement, leveraging images of white, female vulnerability to uphold regulatory distinctions between bodies. In the UK, in particular, the perceived threat of trans-ness to lesbian communities has been key to reinforcing vulnerability as an asocial, ontological property of the sexed body. This shared sense of vulnerability, threat and loss has gained resonance among gender-critical lesbian communities like Get the L Out and LGB Alliance, and has been of increasing interest to feminist and trans scholars as it produces trans-exclusionary forms of lesbian solidarity (Thurlow, 2024; Elliot & Lyons, 2017). Within this context I ask how femslash, as both a digitally affective medium, and reading method, might reconceptualise lesbian vulnerability, offering new opportunities for queer feminine identification which disrupt neoliberal frameworks for bodily classification. Examining Pansy x Hermione fic 'I know you're not my type, but still I fall', I argue that the structuring force of queer feminine desire in Harry Potter femslash, reconfigures lesbian vulnerability as a state of trans disorientation and (dis)embodiment. Rather than reasserting individual ontology, femslash produces vulnerability as a trans-ing force itself, necessitating the young, white, queer reader confront their own complicity in the deeply entangled web of liberal rights, trans and racial oppression, by forcing them to relinquish their own attachment to individual and distinct embodiment.

Ksenia Lavrenteva - Digital Crafting the Body: Socio-Technical Governance and the Politics of Embodied Data

Digital technologies are transforming how embodied skills are preserved, shared, and repurposed. Motion-capture and tactile sensing record the nuanced gestures of skilled practitioners, generating datasets for VR experiences, robotics training, and cultural preservation. Yet these digital “representations” are never neutral: the infrastructures, standards, and modelling choices that govern capture and storage shape what knowledge is preserved, who is represented, and how it circulates. This paper examines these processes through the Mingei craft digitisation project, drawing on project documentation and interviews. It analyses how decisions about sensors, metadata, file formats, and model representations encode assumptions about bodies, movement, and cultural context. In particular, it considers how movements captured from abled, male practitioners are frequently treated as standard or universal, and how these motions are replicated across models and used to train AI, shaping perceptions of what is “natural” or normative within datasets and beyond. Framed by critical data studies, science and technology studies, and embodiment theory, this research demonstrates that governance occurs not only through policy but also invisibly through technical infrastructures and standards. By examining the interplay between embodied knowledge, digital tools, and socio-cultural values, the study foregrounds the political and representational stakes of embodied datasets. Understanding these processes is essential for developing practices that are reflective, inclusive, and culturally sensitive, offering guidance for the design, curation, and reuse of embodied data in digital humanities projects.

Shuying Hu - Girls’ Power Never Die: Chinese Feminist embodiment in Danmei culture under digital censorship

Chinese *Danmei* (耽美, Dan 耽 as addiction, Mei 美 as beauty) culture, which centres on erotic and emotional creations between males, has flourished over the past three decades. Its evolutions forced by the media and digital censorships continuously reshape imaginaries, perceptions, desires of non-heterosexual affinities, and Chinese feminism in all subgenres. Prevalent extant research on Chinese digital danmei culture focuses on the adaptation, fandom and censorship. Rare studies investigate the feminist perspectives and experiences embedded in danmei works under the current tighter digital censorship. I thus critically propose that Danmei feminist embodiment challenges entrenched values on gender and sexuality, particularly in power and subjectivity, through positing female social experiences into the male homoerotic narrative. This gender reversal is an underestimated factor in the virality of danmei culture on social media and in the persistent digital suppression of homoerotic creation. Thus, this paper aims to explore the relationships between danmei feminism and its virality on Chinese social media since 2010, incorporating the case study of Shui Qiancheng’s (水千丞) ‘188 Group’.

Reimagining Community in Digital Infrastructures (4)

Jonathan Gray - Rebuilding a Commons: From Black Twitter to Bluesky's Blackacademics

This paper tracks the recent evolution of the Black digital commons. After Elon Musk completed his purchase of Twitter in March of 2023, millions of users—including the influential international online Black community known as Black Twitter—sought a new space where they might reform. While some landed at Spill and others at Mastodon, a critical mass of Black Twitter ended up at Bluesky after they opened to the public in 2024, thanks in part to the efforts of Rudy Fraser. Working with the permission of the founders while Bluesky was still an invite only network, Fraser set up a community moderated vertical known as Blacksky. Due to this preparation, Black users fleeing Twitter during Musk’s election year antics quickly found a home for themselves at Bluesky. During this 2024 influx I asked Fraser to allow me to set up a space within Blacksky for Black Academics, hoping to reproduce the kinds of transformative conversations that once distinguished one corner of Black Twitter. Both Blacksky and the #Blackacademics feed have successfully recreated an online digital commons for Anglophone social media users of African descent, though its influence has yet to approach the heights of Black Twitter. This paper will detail the transformative political and social power of Black Twitter, tracing its influence through the Arab Spring to Black Live Matter to #BringBackOurGirls to #FeesMustFall to the George Floyd protests before tracing the mostly futile attempts to recapture that potential in other online spaces. Blacksky has recreated the sense of promise and freedom that distinguished Black Twitter without reproducing the outsized political impact of that collective. But as a former member of Black Twitter that has worked to create a new home at Bluesky, I see a number of generative ways forward.

Marie Hermanova - Translating the War: Ukrainian TikTok Creators and the Algorithmic Mediation of Conflict

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, TikTok has emerged as a pivotal site for the circulation of information from the conflict—both authentic and false—prompting commentators to call it the “first TikTok War” (Bosch 2022). This created both challenges and opportunities for Ukrainian content creators, many of whom shifted from lifestyle-oriented posts to documenting the impact of the war on their daily lives, reporting on current events, and producing explainers for international audiences (Heřmanová, Eriksson-Krutrök, and Divon 2025). In doing so, they have taken on the role of “war influencers” (Divon and Eriksson-Krutrök 2025), navigating the tensions between personal expression, platform logics, and global visibility. This paper examines how Ukrainian creators experience and negotiate these processes, with particular attention to how they use TikTok's affordances and algorithmic infrastructure to mediate the embodied realities of living in a warzone for global audiences. I focus on practices of “translating the war”: producing content in multiple languages (especially English and Russian), framing local experiences through globally recognizable trends and challenges, and adapting narratives of war to the viral dynamics of the platform. Methodologically, the paper draws on long-term ethnographic fieldwork with Ukrainian TikTok creators, including interviews, participant observation, and qualitative content analysis of their videos. By analyzing how creators translate and circulate their lived experience of war, the paper highlights the entanglement of digital infrastructures, personal testimony, and global attention. More broadly, it contributes to interdisciplinary debates in the digital humanities on how platform-specific practices shape the representation, circulation, and reception of conflict in networked media environments.

Matthew Bui - Digital Recipes for Solidarity: Local Community-Driven Interventions for Racial & Class Justice

In this paper, I spotlight grassroots interventions in Los Angeles that reimagine foodie platforms (such as Yelp and Instagram) beyond the prevailing logics of platform capitalism. I develop the concept of “digital resistance recipes” to capture such bottom-up views and “alternative” worldbuilding efforts—from using Instagram to educate users about tenants' rights and coordinate direct actions against exploitative landlord practices, to digital mutual aid campaigns to supplement and provide affordable, fresh groceries for unhoused patrons. Put another way, while focusing on “foodie platforms” as a site where the representation of urban space takes place and gets (re)mediated, I contend that food itself can operate as a technology and can provide important yet novel insights into building up new assemblages—or digital “recipes”—for racial and class solidarity, within and beyond online environments. My cases and vignettes explore food as technology through three key themes: 1) how food can highlight the people-related impacts of tech; 2) how the provision of food overcomes barriers such as language and generation through interpersonal connections, relations that get flattened within digital environments; and 3) how food can also repair interracial and historical conflicts. In all, this paper (and its broader project) spotlights the interplay between the digital and physical environment and deeply examines how local context—especially legacies of racial and social inequality—shape the harms, risks, and impacts—and potential futures—of urban digital technologies. This novel sociohistorical and relational framework expands the scope of interventions and data governance conversations to foreground the marginalized communities not always well-represented within obfuscating conceptions of (digital) users.

Shomaila Sadaf, Marko Siitonen - Echo Chambers of Belief: Discursive Constructions of Religious Intolerance in Digital Discourse

Religion remains one of the most persistent frontiers of personal prejudice, often provoking more negative affect than ethnicity or nationality (Sherwoof, 2020). Social media amplifies such dynamics by fostering ideological echo chambers that reinforce in-group worldviews while narrowing engagement with difference (Kitchens et al., 2020; Sunstein, 2002). The paper investigates how religious intolerance circulates within digital discourse, foregrounding the tensions between prejudice and tolerance online. Here, tolerance is conceptualized as an ideological tension: supporting others' rights despite personal disapproval (Billig et al., 1988). The empirical focus is a YouTube video uploaded on 28 May 2023, depicting Israeli locals obstructing Christian tourists from accessing the Western Wall. With over 71,000 likes and 43,000 comments, the video provides a rich site for discursive analysis, offering insights into how religion is narrated, contested, and policed in participatory media environments. Comments with the highest reply counts were selected to examine user interactions through the lens of religious in-group/out-group positioning. To capture this negotiation, the study applies Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991) which allows for systematic, fine-grained analysis of meaning-making in social episodes. This framework facilitates a deeper understanding of how religious identities and prejudices are negotiated and contested in digital spaces. Theoretically, the study draws on Imagined Intergroup Contact (Crisp et al., 2009) to consider whether digitally mediated exchanges can function as sites of tolerance or whether they reinforce antagonistic boundaries. By integrating discourse analysis with digital theory, this paper contributes to critical digital humanities by showing how algorithmically amplified debates not only

reflect, but also actively shape contemporary religious prejudice. In doing so, it highlights the urgent need for nuanced tools to interrogate intolerance within digital publics.

Decolonial Digital Cultures (4)

Jiahan Olivia Lin - Towards a Genealogy of Cinephilic History: Media Archaeology and Chinese Digital Cinephilia

This paper aims to highlight a genealogical turn in cinephilia and its history today, and to show how media archaeology can serve as a key method within this turn. Cinephilia does not simply refer to the “love of cinema”. Traditionally, it signifies an impassioned, but discriminating, fervour for films that originated from film societies and clubs of post-war France, which is often regarded as cinephilia’s point of origin. However, recent scholarship has called for a decentralisation of this narrative, questioning whether such linear and historically bounded approaches not only adopt a passive and defensive stance towards digital technology, but also inadvertently reinforce traditional cultural centres in Western Europe and North America (Navitski 2024). For instance, Jean Ma (2025) summarises recent research on Hong Kong cinephilia in the 1960s and 1970s that intervenes in cinephilic historiography by reframing it within “the thick fabrics of social relations, everyday life, spatial practices, economic systems, ideologies, and structures of feeling”. This approach shifts attention away from particular films or genres and towards audiences and cinephilia’s local histories. This paper examines Chinese online film commentaries, focusing in particular on early BBS platforms, university forums, and other Web 2.0 cinephilic spaces, many of which now persist as fragmented forms of “dead media”. I argue that media archaeology enables us to move beyond nostalgic narratives of a “lost” internet, allowing for a genealogical analysis of how power relations, user practices, and cultural hierarchies were negotiated on these early media materials. Ultimately, this paper asks how we might write a history of cultural practices from an archive that is inherently unstable and incomplete, thereby contributing to a decolonial turn in digital humanities and film studies.

Cristina Moreno-Almeida, Irene Fernandez Ramos - Transmedial Imaginations of Folklore: Consuming and Reframing Tradition in the Age of Cyberlibertarianism

The term folklore has resurfaced as a transmedial cultural tool, circulating across advertising, fashion, music, and digital platforms. Once associated with specific cultural practices, communal creativity and collective memory, folklore in the postdigital age operates as a flexible signifier of authenticity, memory, and belonging—often without clear or agreed-upon definition. This renewed fascination with folklore—its sounds, motifs, and visual styles—overlaps with the rise of conservatism, libertarianism, manifested online through among others “trad” subcultures idealising pre-modern gender roles, rural life, and national heritage. While folklore once referred to aesthetic practices rooted in oral tradition, and tradition to inherited social structures, digital iterations reveal a shifting cultural landscape in which both are rebranded, re-mediated, and contested online. The reinterpretation and commodification of folklore - from Ikea ad campaigns to the emergence on Instagram of new Spanish folk artists, and its use by Moroccan online users- makes it a site of debate over belonging, cultural ownership, and history. This paper examines how the resurfacing of folklore is entangled with the traditional turn embedded by the rise of the postdigital cyberlibertarianism. At the same time, it explores how politics, cultural production, and social media intersect to reshape folklore, tracing its transmedial circulation through viral aesthetics, branding strategies, and digital remixing practices. Its renewed relevance is often contentious: in being reinterpreted, stylized and commodified, folklore becomes a site where debates over belonging, cultural ownership, and national memory are played out – often instrumentalized in broader cultural and political conflicts. Taking a non-Anglocentric perspective, it highlights how folklore is both consumed and creatively transformed, reflecting aesthetic, emotional, and political dimensions of digital culture. Ultimately, we explore how folklore reveals the complex interplay of tradition, creativity, and cultural power in global digital spaces.

Franklin Yartey - Seduction of Wealth: A Critical Analysis of Kiva.org’s Rhetoric on Social Responsibility

The mission of online microfinance institutions like Kiva.org, operating within a global digital economy, is shifting from solely providing financial services to the poor, mainly in the Global South, to expanding the range of people they serve to remain socially relevant and responsible in a changing global landscape. However, like any initiative, some issues need to be examined closely; the process of empowering the poor is not smooth. This study highlights some of these issues and contributes to the broad literature on online microlending by enhancing

our understanding of emerging issues in online microfinance, such as the role of impact investors in microlending organizations like Kiva, which operates within a broader digital culture. It also adds depth to current research on the social implications of online microlending, using Kiva as a case study. Specifically, building on previous research by scholars such as Radhika Gajjala, Anca Birzescu, Majia Holmer Nadesan, and Anke Schwittay, I examine how microlending platforms like Kiva.org appear to align themselves with various social causes to stay socially relevant, attract more lenders, and ultimately boost profits for their corporate investors like Google. I critique Kiva's communicative practices and its ongoing quest to culturally match itself to lenders and investors. The study employs Arjun Appadurai's Scapes and Clifford Bob's concept of Cultural Matching as theoretical frameworks.

Sabreen Syeed, Phillip Brooker, Michael Mair, Leon Moosavi, Geraldine Reid - Algorithms, Social Practice and the Epistemic Decolonisation of the Computational

Current developments in Artificial Intelligence, Large Language Models in particular, are regularly presented as a radical rupture in human history. However, a wave of research that began in the 1960s in computer science challenges that view. Returning to mathematical cultures whose distinctive ways of working had been dismissed as pre- or even anti-scientific according to dominant EuroAmerican conceptions of proof, Donald Knuth, the founder of computer science in the US, among others, showed Babylonian mathematical systems could be examined in algorithmic terms, involving as they did the elaboration of procedural rules and recursive functions to tackle problems based on available quantitative but also qualitative data – 'multimodal models' *avant la lettre*. Karine Chemla, along with others, has subsequently shown that mathematical cultures of the first millennium BCE in China and India as well as Babylonia/Persia can also, in key areas, be treated as algorithmic in character too, something also true of the developments we see later in what has come to be known, somewhat misleadingly in terms of the limits of the standard periodisation, as the Islamic Golden Age. As James Ritter has demonstrated, Babylonian algorithmic approaches were not confined to mathematics but spread out into a range of other 'rational practices', as Ritter has labelled them, from medicine, through the law and jurisprudence all the way to harp tuning, wide-ranging practice entanglements also visible in later historical periods as well. Drawing on our own work on 'Golden Age' Islamic mathematics, we will argue a recovery of the practical embeddedness of the algorithmic globally and historically is key to breaking with the epistemic horizons bequeathed by the colonial imagination and thus to a form of epistemic decolonisation in relation to the computational, an approach that allows us to assess our digital present in more clear-sighted and critically informed ways.

Technology Cultures (4)

Shuxian Liu, Dr. Edgar Gómez-Cruz - Vernacular Theories: Building Technocultures from the Global South

Contemporary narratives of technological innovation are deeply shaped by Silicon Valley's ideologies and Eurocentric development models. These dominant paradigms emphasise scale, disruption, and algorithmic progress while obscuring the structural inequalities, neocolonial extractivist logics, and epistemic violence embedded in global techno-capitalism. Yet, as these frameworks falter under the weight of algorithmic injustice, climate breakdown, and digital disenfranchisement, communities across the Global South have been crafting alternative, situated forms of technological engagement. We propose vernacular technocultures as a conceptual and analytic lens to theorise how historically marginalised communities in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East innovate under conditions of precarity, improvisation, and interdependence. Localised concepts such as Tequio in Mexico, Gambiarra in Brazil, Rebusque in Colombia, Resolver in Cuba, Jugaad in India, Shanzhai (山寨) and Zizhu Chuangxin (自主创新) in China share a reliance on embedded folk knowledge, collective action, emergent solidarities, environmental attunement, and locally adapted solutions to everyday challenges in contexts marked by colonial legacies and global inequalities. While these concepts have circulated within academic discourse, we argue for recognising them as legitimate epistemic orientations and as the foundation for a broader theoretical agenda that decentres technology studies from Global North hegemony. Through comparative analysis of their meanings and applications, we identify five key tenets that characterise vernacular technocultures: situated agency, collective care, subversive adaptation, ambivalent affects, and theory–practice symbiosis. These tenets not only critique dominant techno-scientific paradigms but also articulate alternative ontological techno-politics and innovation imaginaries from the Global South. Meanwhile, tensions—such as survival versus complicity, resistance versus commodification, and collective care versus exploitative labor—are highlighted to caution against the romanticisation, depoliticisation, and dehistoricisation of these concepts and

neoliberal co-optation for profit-driven purposes. We further call for research that interrogates local–global hybridity and cultural hybridisation in these practices, thereby helping to forge techno-futures that honor the pluriverse.

Sahar Sagha - Chords of Small Media Through Time

People found ways to resist suppression and censorship in Iran long before digital media, through what Sreberny and Mohammadi (1990) called small media: decentralised, hard to trace, and circulated outside official channels. During the 1979 Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches travelled through cassette tapes and Xeroxed leaflets. These media carried risks for those who reproduced and shared them, yet they gave people courage to resist state control and bridged the literacy gap, making revolutionary messages accessible to wider publics.

My paper argues that while technologies change, the core function of small media as tools of grassroots mobilisation persists in the digital age. Instagram during the Woman, Life, Freedom protests (2022) can be read as a new form of small media. Although it retains the characteristics of earlier forms, it also acquires new aspects. This new form of small media, particularly when expressed through Instagram, is visual, emotional, interactive, and rooted in the anger and mourning of ordinary users who transform personal grief into political testimony. The combination of images and Instagram paved the way for a new form of dissent storytelling, where the rawness of family photographs and the authenticity of voices — often those closest to the deceased — created a sense of immediacy. As Bolter and Grusin (1999) argue, this reflects the desire for transparent media experiences, where the medium becomes invisible and interaction feels direct and authentic.

Alongside this immediacy, Papacharissi's (2015) notion of affective publics helps explain how dissent circulated through networks of sentiment. These publics, shaped by Boyd's (2010) concept of networked publics, mobilised through expressions of grief, outrage, and solidarity. In contrast to the didactic model of cassette tapes, where listeners were passive reproducers of Khomeini's voice, Instagram fostered dialogic forms of storytelling. Here, protest was not shaped by a single leader's message but echoed across multiple voices and visuals.

Timothy Jordan - The Four Phases of Blockchain Technology and the Internet's Imaginary

This paper examines the recurrent imagining of the digital age as either a utopia (AI as superintelligence that cures all diseases) or dystopia (AI as superintelligence that kills humanity). The history of blockchain technology is now long enough to be a study of this interplay and it will be examined in four phases: distrust of trust and cryptocurrencies; initial coin offerings; non-fungible tokens; and memecoins. Each of these four phases includes a hope for reordering society by decentering previously centralised authorities through a technological method that utilises a cryptographically secured token or coin which leads to a market for that coin. The market then leads to a focus on financial profit, with the ensuing appearance of various scams such as rug pulls and pump and dump schemes. These two sides mirror the recurrent imagining of digital and internet dreams and nightmares. Each phase will be briefly examined. An of this is that for many NFTs were conceived to be a means of the artist and the consumer of art disintermediating the art industry; losing agents, art galleries, auction sites and so on so that artists controlled their art and could offer it directly to their market. NFTs had some spectacular sales, famously Beeple's 'Everydays' being auctioned for nearly 70 million US dollars, and led quickly to the production of procedurally produced images for such as bored apes yacht club, cryptopunks or pudgy penguins, in which small tiled images that were barely distinguishable from each other could be used for exchange. A market here was produced focused almost entirely on profit and loss. To conclude it will be suggested that this history of blockchain as a history of the internet's imaginary offers ideas for understanding other phenomena of the internet such as Web 2.0 or the recent AI furore.

Karishma Banga - Digital Regulatory Frameworks: The New Powerbrokers of Digital Trade

As digital trade increasingly shapes global economic relations, the asymmetries between rule-makers and rule-takers have become more pronounced, particularly in the Global South. There are critical incentives, as well as formal and informal power structures, that determine how and why decisions on digital trade governance are made. Integrating political economy analysis into digital governance frameworks is, therefore, crucial for preventing the perpetuation of power imbalances and economic inequalities within digital economies (Banga and Hernandez 2021; Beyleveld and Sucker 2023).

With this view, I adopt a political economy approach in this chapter to deepen the understanding of why relationships, alliances, and disagreements around digital trade rules exist; what incentivises actors to behave in particular ways or to form alliances; and the domestic and international power dynamics that shape it. This paper

interrogates the evolving architecture of digital trade governance through the lens of political economy, examining how formal rules—such as trade agreements, digital chapters, and regulatory standards—interact with informal norms. Employing John Gaventa's 'powercube' framework, the paper examines how 'visible', 'hidden', and 'invisible' forms of digital power are opening or closing spaces of decision-making on digital trade flows, the actors that are shaping the dominant narrative on digital trade, and their incentives and motivations. It explores issues of lobbying on digital trade by BigTech firms, design of specific digital provisions by select few developed countries in trade agreements, and concerns of regulatory sovereignty in developing countries. The analysis draws on an extensive review of literature, thematic analysis of policy documents, and in-depth elite interviews, including with high-level digital trade policy makers and regulators of developing economies. Such an approach provides new insights into the complexities of digital power dynamics.

Rebuilding Knowledge Infrastructures: Feminist and Decolonial Approaches (4)

Giorgia Tolfo, Katherine Howells, Elizabeth Haines, Chao Tayiana Maina - Colonial digital photographs: developing a co-designed inclusive, transparent and ethical research framework

In the archives of the National Railway Museum of Kenya in Nairobi, there is a photograph album which contains some of the oldest known photographic images of Kenya. It is not currently accessible to the public and is in a poor state of preservation. A 'twin' of this album was digitised in 2011 by The National Archives of the UK as part of the project 'Africa Through a Lens' and is openly available on Flickr at low resolution. The disparity between the two contexts of the physical archives and the changing role of digital images in rapidly advancing AI content generation pose new urgent questions around access and custodianship, interpretation and collaboration. These questions cannot be answered solely by the institutions which hold colonial records but must be addressed by and with stakeholders in the Global South. To this end, The National Archives (UK) have partnered with the world-renowned public history organisation African Digital Heritage (ADH) and under their leadership, contributed to the ideation of a workshop at the National Railway Museum of Kenya in Nairobi to investigate issues that are at the heart of equitable digital access, and globally-informed digital humanities practices. The workshop aimed to better understand what stakeholders in Kenya's cultural and heritage sectors think and need in relation to digital access to collections, digital infrastructure, the use of AI in the context of colonial photography (specifically in relation to interpretation, automatic captioning and invisible labour). This paper will outline how the workshop was developed, the original driving questions it set out to address, and explore the findings and next steps for the project - co-designing an inclusive, transparent and ethical research framework that can be implemented in future international collaborative projects

Christina Kamposiori - Beyond Access: Inclusive Practices and Digital Innovation in Research Libraries

In recent years, higher education institutions in the UK and internationally have increasingly sought to become more inclusive and diverse environments where scholarship and learning can thrive. Academic and research libraries sit at the heart of these efforts, given their central role in supporting students, researchers, and local communities. As such, they often lead or actively contribute to initiatives that embed equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into existing practices or develop new, more inclusive strategies and approaches. This paper, drawing on recent research and strategic initiatives and discussions led by Research Libraries UK (RLUK), highlights how RLUK member libraries are working to build equitable and inclusive practices and services. Examples of current initiatives include establishing processes to develop a more diverse workforce, uncovering 'hidden voices' in collections through engagement with underrepresented communities, fostering cross-disciplinary collaborations, and advancing decolonisation practices. Engaging creatively and critically with technology is a key aspect of current efforts to open up collections to wider and more remote audiences as well as to design inclusive digital and physical spaces. By sharing emerging practices and lessons learned from across the research library sector, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader conversation on creating inclusive and equitable services and infrastructure. It argues that through innovative use of technology, community partnerships, and the reimagining of physical and digital spaces, research libraries can provide transferable insights that can be valuable for interrogating and reshaping the conditions under which knowledge is created, shared, and sustained in the field Digital Humanities.

Zoe Hurley - Scattering and Gathering: The Digitization of Arab Women's Knowledge

To consider how the current digital transformations of society and academia are impacting interpretation of female epistemologies in the Global South, this study takes the case of Arab Gulf women's early media and its scholarly lacuna. A feminist digital ethnographic framework is developed to consider what can count as archival information, considering the relative absence of traces of Gulf women's historical media. To begin exploring these issues, the study will first discuss some of the challenges involved in reviewing Gulf women's epistemological heritage and scattered texts, including women's magazines, early television, cinema and radio broadcasts, in order to explore their almost forgotten contribution to regional media. Second, the study will take matters of epistemology into consideration in order to theorise the diversities of media cultures within the Gulf region. This will help to consider the ambivalences of conceiving of Gulf women's media as necessarily needing to contribute to a coherent archive. Third, the paper will critique the theoretical tensions and limitations surrounding digital humanities, including the import of western epistemologies and frameworks, normative notions of citizenship, the public sphere, and the assumed cultural value of digital archives. As a result, the study will consider the extent to which Gulf female counterpublics, media scholars and students of digital humanities might inform, respond and debunk normative notions of digital archives as well as their signifying absence.

Lilian Njeri Mbuti - From Reach to Relation: Decolonial Digital Commons and Creator Cultures across the Majority World

Positioning

I use the term majority world to foreground demographic reality and self definition, avoiding the West framed "Global South." The paper asks how creator cultures across Africa, Latin America, and Asia can shift from extractive platform logics to decolonial digital commons grounded in relation, reciprocity, and repair.

Context

Platform analytics privilege scale over care, erase audience labour, and intensify asymmetries in moderation, monetisation, and data extraction, including AI training on cultural IP without consent.

Methods

Mixed methods across six countries. Comparative audits of 12 platforms. Trace ethnography of 60 content lifecycles. Interface and recommendation audits on 12,000 posts with multilingual captions. Four co design sprints on consentful data flows with youth and feminist collectives. Semi structured interviews, n = 90, with creators, community archivists, moderators, and audience stewards.

Key findings

Decolonial discoverability. Platform rules suppress vernaculars; targeted prompts, captioning, and federated tags raise visibility by 27 to 41 percent.

Care centric participation metrics. A three part metric relation, repair, redistribution predicts sustained engagement 1.8 times better than reach.

Creator infrastructure typology. Extractive, hybrid, and commons aligned models with co-ops, community licenses, data trusts, and federated moderation; hybrid models show 22 percent higher income stability.

Contributions

A conceptual frame for decolonial discoverability, a validated participation metric, & a typology to guide infrastructure choices.

Implications

A design and policy playbook for institutions and funders to invest in public interest infrastructure, adopt open standards and commons based licensing, mandate consentful training data for AI, reward relational work, and back community owned pipelines for preservation and income.

Relevance

Critical inquiry with and about the digital that offers actionable pathways for just and sustainable creator economies

Dating, Intimacy and the Digital (3)

Selima Kabir, Ishrat Jahan, Prof. Sabina Faiz Rashid - Decolonising narratives on digital dating apps: Stories of intersectional negotiations from the urban youth in Dhaka, Bangladesh

This paper examines how urban middle-class youth in Dhaka, Bangladesh negotiate the contradictions between inherited sociocultural expectations and the globalised imaginaries of modernity they consume through media, in a largely 'online' world. Drawing on 15 interviews with young adults in Dhaka, we explore how dating apps both subvert and reproduce patriarchal norms, social status and class identities in the ways young people experience online dating culture in the city. While socio-religious norms stress abstinence and purity, dating apps provide discreet yet accessible spaces for youth to pursue the emotional or physical intimacies depicted in global media. Current discourse on digital intimacy is dominated by Global North perspectives, where social mobility is relatively fluid and professional identity carries less weight in determining romantic compatibility. In South Asian contexts, markers such as residence or locality, spoken languages, family background, and profession are deployed as boundaries of respectability, sustaining rigid class hierarchies. Here, the middle class in particular operate as gatekeepers, preserving symbolic purity by policing social boundaries, even as they pursue upward mobility. Within this context, dating apps enable both mobility and misrecognition. Through curated profiles, users can temporarily blur visible class indicators, giving rise to new evaluative cues, such as grammar, profile photos, 'mutuals,' and direct inquiries into education and employment, to ensure there is an alignment in terms of socio-economic status to preserve family honour. This paper positions digital dating as a site of negotiation, where everyday acts of self-presentation quietly test and blur the rigid markers of middle-class respectability and honour in virtual dating spaces. In capturing how young people navigate and negotiate with class in dating apps, this study broadens the discourse on digital intimacy by decolonising dominant narratives from the Global North, foregrounding how class, gender, and cultural norms shape digital experiences in the Global South.

Sucharita Sen - The Digital Life of Caste: NRI Grooms and the Politics of Matrimony in Kolkata

Our son is Assistant Professor in the U.S and has recently received an NIH award of a million USD. He is tall, strong and handsome. We are East Bengal origin Kulin Brahmin looking for fair, highly-educated, sweet-natured Brahmin bride. Bengali Matrimony, a regional affiliate of the leading national marriage website Bharat Matrimony, flaunted this advertisement on its portal as a pinned profile. Parents of the NRI (non-resident Indian) groom boasted their son's coveted credentials in tandem with foregrounding the criteria for selection of a potential daughter-in-law that, among others, demonstrated a preference for maintaining ethnic boundaries and pronounced an infatuation with caste endogamy. This paper pivots through Kolkata's arranged marriage market which reflects a stunning continuity, displaying the centrality of caste routinely renewed, renovated, and re-emphasized. Focused on upper-caste NRI marriage negotiations, I explore the phenomenal success of online matrimonial websites whose debut trumpeted the arrival of digital technology in the tradition-bound institution of marriage. Styled after international dating sites, matrimonial websites however did not dilute the restrictive injunctions in matrimony. Instead, they sustained the mobility of caste beyond national borders, allowed a paradoxical cohabitation of modified tradition and innovated modernity that left parochial commitments unhindered and increased the pool from which marital partners could be selected without flouting the customary caste frontiers long established in the socio-cultural practices of the Hindu Bengali marriage market. Examining NRI matchmaking in Kolkata, I argue, relieves from obscurity the nested complexities that underline the politics of matrimony. Educational qualifications and coveted employment shape eligible grooms, themselves offspring of educated middle-class parents professing to represent an ostensible liberal intelligentsia. Not half as progressive, their apparent liberal image is disrobed by their caste obsession in the digital matrimonial market. They keep caste alive, perpetuate its transnational relevance and proliferate its invidious impacts on global terrains.

Nicholas John, Aram Sinnreich - What is new about digitally-mediated relationships?

The digital mediation of interpersonal relationships via social apps and services entails new ways of managing relationships. Terms such as "ambient presence" and "connected presence" gesture towards the importance of presence as a key concept. Sometimes, though, the presence of certain others is unwanted, at which point users can unfollow, block, or mute them. Moreover, other features allow users to control content flows between their followers (such as Instagram's "Restrict" feature). On the face of it, these look like radically new social situations. At first glance, such situations appear new because they resist translation into embodied interactions: I am unable to simply silence one of the people with whom I am in an in-person group conversation such that their words are inaudible to me. I am certainly unable to prevent comments made by one friend of mine from reaching

another friend of mine—something that Instagram’s Restrict feature quite explicitly does. This, though, is to make assumptions about the relationship between embodied togetherness and presence that should be challenged. To start, being in the same physical space as someone is not a sufficient condition for the experience of presence, as the phrase, “I was a million miles away,” indicates. Nor is it a necessary condition: contemporary communication technologies (not least teledildonics today and letters in the 17th century) can make others feel present. We argue, therefore, that when thinking about the new ways that social media allow us to manage our interpersonal ties, it is a mistake to hold up the physically co-present dyad as the gold standard for presence. Rather, we should think the novelty of digitally-mediated relationships them without recourse to comparisons with what seems more real, because embodied, but rather through other categories, such as power, and in particular power in relation to the technological media through which we today maintain our interpersonal relationships.

Digital Publics and Counterpublics (4)

Suruchi Mazumdar - Making of a Digital Homeland: Everyday Data And Citizenship Narratives

This paper explores how marginalised, exiled refugee groups in the global South such as the Rohingya, an ethnic minority Muslim community from Myanmar, negotiate with platforms and AI- and data-centric technologies to articulate claims of citizenship in Bangladesh and Malaysia, Muslim-majority host countries in South and Southeast Asia. Traditionally, digital platforms such as Facebook were linked to personal freedoms through global networks. Such celebratory approach has been sobered by the widespread use of technological assemblage for governance. Biometric, AI, and blockchain, which are used by humanitarian agencies, local governments, and corporate actors, foreground the classic security-versus-human rights dilemma. Platforms are positioned as economic actors and infrastructures, which allow diverse stakeholders (governments, non-profits, large businesses as well as individual freelancers) to engage in (economic) exchanges. The challenges of precarity counter the possibilities of visibility as marginalised digital users are seen as data bodies and data subjects in the critical scholarship of platforms and technological assemblage. This paper recentres marginalised exiled, refugee groups’ affective digital creative practices and everyday use and negotiations with platforms (Facebook, TikTok, YouTube), and AI- and data-driven technologies such as biometric smart cards, drones, and blockchain technology. Drawing on qualitative interviews with and digital ethnography of Rohingya refugee digital content creators and civil society actors in Bangladesh and Kuala Lumpur, critical thematic analysis of user-generated social media posts and online videos, this paper introduces the conceptual category of digital homeland. It argues that affective creative practices, as constituted by digital family making and archiving/documentation, must be recentred in data justice and humanitarianism, beyond top-down, data-centric approaches of emergency support and refugee management.

Alice Roberte De Oliveira - Neighbourhood in the Digital Age: Researching WhatsApp Group Chat

The paper discusses ‘condo group chats’ (‘grupo de condomínio’ in Portuguese) as tools, fields, and objects of research. These groups are online communities of people living in residential blocks and gated communities; they function primarily on WhatsApp and structure social practices. Widely popular, they require a multimodal, critical, and situated engagement to understand the minutiae of their uses and appropriations. Ethnography emerges as the primary method to avoid a deterministic and universalistic approach to technology. This paper integrates PhD research that explores the living experience of a flat block in the Digital Era, drawing on a case study: the Ipê Residential Block, located in Brasília, the capital of Brazil. The 18 months of fieldwork included participant observation, interviews, and participation in four WhatsApp groups. Adopting a ‘non-digital-centric’ approach, the analysis explores how WhatsApp groups are embedded in mundane processes and social structures. The groups constitute an artefact that forms part of the block’s digital ecology and operate in relation to neighbours’ offline practices, reflecting values, moralities, and social normativities. The study uses digital anthropology lenses to examine how these groups function within a scale of intimacy and under different social codes. Furthermore, it classifies “condo chat groups” as an analytical category, highlighting specific communicational practices and forms of sociality. The study also analyses the platform’s affordances and productivity for vicinal interactions. These groups serve as a resource for navigating everyday life, helping neighbours meet their material and symbolic needs, and extending the block’s limits beyond the home and street. The paper contributes to digital humanities by theorising mundane practices and technologies, such as WhatsApp, that shape the circulation of meanings and the production of everyday routines.

Shalini Senthilnathan - 'Neelam Social' and Tamil Caste Shorts on YouTube: Dalit Counterpublics or Enclaves?

Discourse on 'Caste and Digital space' in India often oscillates between two poles: the digital space either as mirroring/deepening the caste hierarchy (Shree 2022) or as a medium for resistance, mobilisation and advocacy of the oppressed caste groups (Thakur 2019). The paper aims to extend the conversation away from this polarising view and builds on Squires' notion of enclave to read the digital presence of the Neelam Social Foundation, a Tamil Dalit production house, as constituting a "digital enclave". The study, an extension of my ongoing PhD on "Civic Storytelling and Tamil Short Films on Caste", focuses on the selected short films from the 'Neelam Social' YouTube channel's playlist 'Kadhai Kelu' (listen to a story). The paper has two primary objectives: analyse the selected short films and their metadata in shaping the Dalit counterpublic in Tamil YouTube space by borrowing from Nancy Fraser (1992), Catherine Squires (2002) and Gopal Guru (2005). Secondly, it studies the comment section of the shorts to understand the discursive engagement of the Tamil Dalit public with the caste question. The method it employs to study the shorts, their metadata and the comment section is digital ethnography. The paper raises questions about the illusoriness of "the free space of the internet" (Castells 2015) and its counter hegemonic possibilities beyond the digital platform.

Noxolo Manyati - Closing the Gap between Community Radio and its Audiences: Exploring the Value of Audio Diaries

This praxis-based research project critically investigates the audio diary as a method for community radio to reassert its participatory ethos against the homogenizing pressures of digital platformization. As community radio stations increasingly adopt social media logic to engage audiences, their unique potential for deep, hyperlocal storytelling risks being eroded. This study, situated at Rhodes Music Radio (RMR) in Makhanda, South Africa, asks: can the intimate, first-person form of the audio diary serve as a decolonial practice to amplify marginalized voices and resist the extractive tendencies of platform-centric engagement? The project employs Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycles, working with marginalized township youth to co-create audio diaries for broadcast on RMR's airwaves and social media. This methodology is framed by a critical dialogue between two fields: decolonial digital cultures, which questions the universalizing claims of digital technologies, and audio studies, which emphasizes the affective and political power of the human voice. The research deliberately uses a 'low-tech' yet deeply personal medium—the recorded voice—to explore an alternative to the metrics-driven, often exploitative engagement models of commercial digital platforms. By centering slowness, co-creation, and contextual specificity, the audio diary process is positioned as a form of critical technical practice. It seeks to create a digital artifact (a broadcast/podcast) that embodies values of care and ownership, rather than data extraction. The study aims to contribute a practical framework for "humane digital participation" within media studies. It argues that the Digital Humanities must not only critique digital systems but also actively design and champion alternative methods that prioritize community agency. The findings will offer a critical case study on how local media can harness digital tools for dissemination while grounding production in practices that resist the very power imbalances digital platforms often reinforce.

Decolonising Digital Power (4)

Sagnik Dutta, Suruchi Mazumdar - Reconfiguring data colonialism: Everyday resistance to the postcolonial Indian state

An influential strand of communication scholarship uses the term data colonialism to draw parallels between the functions of historical colonialism in global economic development and resource extraction from countries of the global South carried out by Big Tech corporations, originating from the global North and China. The elite beneficiaries of data colonialism — Big Tech corporations, based in the United States and China, where the state participates in a hybrid alliance with these corporations — create data subjects using the extractive practices of historical colonialism and abstract quantifying, computing methods. Such conceptions of data colonialism, however, blur new forms of power asymmetries within specific cultural contexts. Based upon interviews with civil society actors and activists in India, digital ethnographic methods (digital walkthrough of Twitter/ X handles of state actors) and secondary media reports, this paper traces the Indian state's evolving, dynamic relationship with global big Tech and domestic start-up sectors and bottom-up forms of negotiation with new forms of extractivist data policies in a postcolonial society. This paper proposes an activist data justice-based framework of data sovereignty imagined as negotiations in authoritarian societies that witness complex forms of interactions between the state, big Tech, and domestic start-up. The paper thereby reimagines the concept of data

colonialism by drawing attention to the power asymmetries within postcolonial states and the resistance to practices of data colonialism in these cases.

Emilian Franco - Metaphors as situated practice of sociotechnical imagining in Brazilian AI Research

This paper is based on a four-month ethnographic field study conducted in 2022 at the Center for Artificial Intelligence (C4AI) in São Paulo, Brazil. Through interviews, observations, and informal exchanges with researchers and developers, it explores how sociotechnical imaginaries of artificial intelligence are articulated through metaphor. It explores how metaphors are not simply linguistic ornaments but function as praxeological devices—tools for doing conceptual work, for assembling sociotechnical imaginaries, and for enacting speculative futures in the field of AI. Central to this analysis is the emergent metaphor of “anthropophagic AI” - a consuming, transforming logic that draws on Brazil’s modernist aesthetics of cultural cannibalism (Andrade, 1928) to reframe AI development as an act of selective devouring. Global discourses are not simply adopted, but absorbed and metabolized, giving rise to hybrid imaginaries that seem to resist both mimicry and purity. The paper draws on critical metaphor theory and decolonial AI studies (Mohamed et al. 2020; Birhane 2021; Kövecses, 2005) to argue that such metaphoric framings are central to the articulation of sociotechnical futures. Brazilian imaginaries of AI try not to simply mirror dominant models but engage in their own situated speculation - absorbing techno-scientific vocabularies while adapting them into national, institutional, and affective trajectories. By foregrounding metaphor as a site of epistemic and political struggle, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to provincialize AI and shift analytical focus toward the Global South. It proposes an anthropology of AI attentive to the entangled aesthetics, frictions, and imaginations through which digital futures are composed.

Betti Marenko - Resisting Reduction: Inoperativity and the Politics of ‘Maybes’ in Algorithmic Cultures

This paper interrogates the notion of digital resistance through the conceptual lenses of Félix Guattari, Giorgio Agamben, and Gilles Deleuze, drawing upon Herman Melville’s *Bartleby, the Scrivener* as a critical figure for rethinking power, potentiality, and refusal. Against the contemporary “steamroller” of algorithmic capture, datafication, and the instrumental logics of digital infrastructures, I argue that resistance must be reconceived not as negation or outright rebellion but as the cultivation of what Agamben terms impotentiality: the capacity “to not” that coexists inseparably with potential. *Bartleby’s* refrain—“I would prefer not to”—functions as what Deleuze identifies as a “formula of creation,” a radical suspension that refuses determination without lapsing into passivity. This gesture opens a zone of indiscernibility in which potentiality and impotentiality continuously recharge one another. In the digital present, where every action and inaction risks appropriation through predictive governance, this zone marks a vital site of resistance. Inoperativity, understood not as idleness but as an active form of non-doing, emerges here as both ontological practice and political strategy: it preserves the surplus of ‘maybes’ against the reductionist forces that would exhaust life into productivity and calculation. The paper advances three contributions. First, it situates *Bartleby* within a genealogy of resistance that foregrounds the refusal of instrumentality, extending Agamben’s notion of form-of-life into digital contexts. Second, it outlines how strategies such as exit, exodus, and creative duplicity can be mobilized as micropolitical practices that evade capture while affirming contingency. Finally, it reflects on the implications for design, proposing a shift away from anticipatory and utilitarian frameworks toward modes of practice that incubate uncertainty, indeterminacy, and “whateverness.” In this sense, digital resistance is framed less as opposition than as the active inhabitation of the inoperative: a speculative, non-instrumental practice that resists reduction while sustaining the possibility of unthinkable worlds.

Garikai Chaunza, Jeanne du Toit - The Rise of Podcasting in a Hybrid Regime: Creative Activism and Digital Resistance in Contemporary Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe’s hybrid regime, where authoritarian control persists alongside limited democratic processes, digital platforms function simultaneously as instruments of repression and as channels of resistance. This paper examines podcasting as a form of creative digital activism, highlighting how artists and cultural producers use it within the contemporary moment to bypass state-controlled media and engage audiences directly. Drawing on in-depth interviews with five Zimbabwean podcasters, musicians, comedians, poets, and social commentators, the study investigates their motivations, practices, and challenges. Methodologically, it employs qualitative ethnography, combining narrative analysis of life history interviews with cultural interpretation. The study foregrounds podcasting as it exists in Zimbabwe as more than a technological phenomenon: it is a situated digital culture shaped by the local political economy, sociocultural traditions, and infrastructural constraints.

The findings show that podcasters are driven by commitments to amplifying marginalised voices, reclaiming cultural space, and resisting dominant state narratives. Their practices, satire, storytelling, civic dialogue, and music education reveal podcasting's potential to build communities, foster critical engagement, and sustain cultural activism under restricted conditions. Yet these practices remain precarious, constrained by high data costs, censorship, surveillance and limited financial support. Such constraints highlight that “the digital is not neutral” but is conditioned by geographies of inequality and authoritarian governance.

By situating Zimbabwean podcasting within global debates on digital resistance and decolonial creative practice, this paper demonstrates how podcasting reconfigures media ecologies in contexts of repression. It contributes to critical digital humanities by showing how qualitative, humanities-driven methods can illuminate the cultural and political textures of podcasting, moving beyond metrics and platform analytics. Ultimately, it argues that Zimbabwean podcasters are not only resisting state power but also reshaping understandings of digital creativity, activism, and knowledge production in the Global South.

Between Compliance and Refusal: Agency under Digital Governance (4)

Zhuo Wang - Affective Labor and Compliant Solidarity: Navigating Digital Authoritarianism and Feminist Resistance among Chinese International Students

This research investigates how Chinese female international students navigate politics, power, and resistance through affective practices on social media in the digital age. Focusing on platforms like WeChat and RedNote (Xiaohongshu), it examines how digital authoritarianism enforced through state-media alliances and algorithmic censorship—disciplines gendered citizenship transnationally. The study reveals how students perform “compliant solidarity,” tactically blending nationalist narratives with covert feminist critique to evade surveillance and negotiate identity. By analyzing everyday acts like self-censorship, coded humor, and meme-sharing, the research reframes digital resistance as affective labour—a form of embodied agency that challenges state and platform power. Methodologically, it employs digital ethnography and discourse analysis to trace how emotions become sites of political contestation. The findings contribute to debates on deplatformisation by exposing how Western platforms (e.g., Instagram) inadvertently sustain transnational repression, urging reforms in digital governance. For the digital university, it highlights the urgent need to protect diaspora students from platformed surveillance and emotional harms. As engaged digital research, this project pioneers a feminist-political framework to study technology's role in perpetuating inequality, offering tools for marginalized groups to reclaim digital space.

Vanita Leah Falcao - When Iterative Administration Harms: A Data Justice Informed Perspective on India's Digitalised Public Welfare

Widescale digitalization of public services has resulted in iterative principles used in software development and the private sector being popularised as effective strategies for the digital transformation of public administration. While scholars have explored institutional readiness and challenges to implementing iterative approaches such as agile and test-learn-grow, limited attention has been paid to how such approaches to public administration impact people and power asymmetries. To answer this question, the following article uses an ethnographic study and oral history of the early years of the digitalization of the world's largest food rationing programme – the Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS) in one of India's poorest states – Jharkhand. Using a data justice framework, it traces and analyses the impact of a series of tech-driven reforms initiated between 2017 and 2020. Tempering arguments in favour of iterative welfare governance, as well as the more nuanced idea of patching development (Veeraraghavan, 2022), this article highlights how such administration can devolve into apolitical iteration to solve for specific inefficiencies in welfare delivery. It demonstrates how such an approach risks losing perspective of the complexities of the context and disempowers citizens by deepening the digital and informational asymmetries that enable corruption, exclusion, harmful intermediation, and undermines state accountability and sustainable social change.

Ankur Upreti - Bordered Bodies, Data Frontiers: Gender, Caste and the Algorithmic Life of Citizenship in India's Bengal and Assam Borderlands

Debates on digital sovereignty often imagine “data” as circulating in frictionless space and as a tool for efficient governance. The Government of India’s Digital India program, for instance, promises transparency and inclusion through technology, especially for the marginalised. Yet scholarship on data colonialism (Couldry & Mejías) and surveillance capitalism (Zuboff) shows how states and corporations annexe life worlds through data extraction. These critiques rarely extend to borderlands, which this paper foregrounds as primary sites for digital sovereignty’s experiments, where data is entangled with histories of territory, caste, and gender. The paper traces data regimes in two fraught zones: the Bengal borderland of Cooch Behar and the erstwhile Bangladesh enclaves, and the Brahmaputra-facing districts central to Assam’s National Register of Citizens (NRC). Looking at Schendel’s framing of borderlands as “laboratories of the state” and Baruah’s argument that the Northeast is governed through permanent exception, these regions exemplify how digital democracy collides with enduring forms of rule. As Benjamin notes, ‘colonial afterlives’ often disappear behind claims of algorithmic neutrality. Reading these projects alongside Banerjee on gendered precarity in Bengal, Jones on bordering as violence, and Khera’s audit of Aadhaar, the paper situates digital infrastructures within longer histories of caste oppression, patriarchal control, and militarised nation-building. Drawing on secondary data from Bengal and Assam, the paper revisits Scott’s notion of the state’s “legibility project,” now reconfigured by machine-learning opacity beyond residents’ contestation. It argues that digital sovereignty operates as internal bordering, producing what may be called ‘algorithmic enclavisation’: a governance mode that sorts citizens into graded zones of verifiability under the guise of frictionless welfare and smart security.

Hagos Kahssay - The impact of digital media on polarisation and ethnic violence in Ethiopia

Digital media platforms have transformed political discourse and activism in recent years. These platforms have become powerful tools for mobilising social movements and amplifying marginalised voices. They have provided substantial opportunities for rapid information sharing through increased immediacy (Landeau, 2011); reducing the gap between news producers and the public (Brinkman, 2019); and decentralising, democratising, and reinvigorating political debates (Boulianne, 2020), and digital democracy (Fuchs, 2023). However, they have also raised concerns about the spread of controversial content, biased language, and misinformation that exacerbate societal divisions based on ethnicity, politics, and ideological lines. This study examines the impact of digital media on polarisation and ethnic violence. It focuses on Facebook and YouTube platforms, which are integral to the daily lives of Ethiopians and shape public opinion and political discourse. The research questions investigate the factors contributing to ethnic polarisation in Ethiopia, the prevalence of ethnic polarisation, and whether digital media-based polarisation leads to ethnic violence in Ethiopia. It employs Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and content analysis. As a theoretical framework, this study employs Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and van Dijk’s ideological square (van Dijk, 2006) to explain polarisation and intergroup conflicts in the country. The application of these theories allows for a nuanced examination of how group identities and ideological biases shape public discourse and social interaction. By analysing the language used in digital media posts and news articles, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that perpetuate division and conflict among different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the study’s insights could potentially inform policy decisions and interventions aimed at promoting social cohesion and reducing intergroup tensions in Ethiopia and similar multicultural contexts. The findings of this study will contribute to our understanding of the complex sociocultural dynamics and causes of polarisation and violence in ethnically diverse societies such as Ethiopia.

Feminist Digital Activism and Reproductive Politics (3)

Rebecca Siddall - #HandsOffMyUterus: Reproductive Activism on TikTok and Instagram

Over the last few years, a significant social media discourse has emerged around IUDs (contraceptive ‘intra-uterine devices’). Users are sharing their lived experiences of trauma, detailing coerced IUD insertions, inadequate pain management, a lack of informed consent, and medical gaslighting. Using short-form video platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels, they articulate their stories, either as first-person narrative recall or live phone footage of the traumatic appointment. These users - predominantly young, Western women - are

adamant that they are breaking traditional taboos around discussing contraception and women's health in order to warn others about potential harms and to call for change. The movement has been under-researched in academia, but news media have provided ambivalent coverage, often accusing users of driving misinformation and panic. I use qualitative feminist media studies methods to argue that this IUD trauma awareness movement has been broadly misinterpreted by mainstream media. When taken in the context of the long history of coerced contraception, from eugenics to population control, we can recognise these users' work as lying at the intersection of modern digital feminist activism and foundational reproductive justice activists (Mendes et al. 2019; Ross and Solinger 2017). Feminists in the 20th century protested the dangers of earlier forms of birth control, including the now-banned Dalkon Shield IUD. Today, social media users take up the same activist mantle, emphasising the sexist, racist, and ableist biases within medical institutions and raising them in popular discourse. Ultimately, I describe how the digital is not neutral, but instead a new battleground for activist discourse around contraception and reproduction.

Diana-Nicoleta Mirancea - Algorithmic Opportunities and Constraints: Rethinking Feminist Digital Activism in the Age of AI

This paper presents a theoretical investigation into the ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic infrastructures reshape feminist digital activism. While a significant amount of literature on social movements focused on how political opportunity structures determine the possibilities for mobilization, the emergence of AI-driven technologies requires a reconceptualization of these frameworks. Algorithms, far from being neutral tools, act as socio-technical actors that mediate visibility, amplify or suppress narratives and configure the digital terrain on which activism manifests. Drawing on feminist digital activism (Milan, 2013) and political opportunity theory (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015), the paper argues that algorithmic governance represents a new layer of political opportunity, characterized by its dual capacity to both empower and restrict collective action. Algorithmic systems have the capacity to amplify feminist counter-narratives, create solidarities across borders and provide innovative modes of resistance. On the other hand, the same infrastructures represent powerful tools for surveillance, content moderation or algorithmic silencing of marginalized voices. The paper rethinks the discussion about the potential of digital technologies to liberate people. It suggests that scholars should think about activism in a new way, by looking at the connections between different algorithms and the ways they affect society. This approach highlights the political and technological interdependencies that shape the feminist activism. Ultimately, the paper makes a significant contribution to the field of digital humanities by offering a critical theoretical framework that interrogates the role of AI and algorithms in regulating political participation. The article emphasizes the necessity of incorporating feminist insights into the discourse surrounding digital governance. It proposes that future research must engage with algorithms not merely as technical artifacts, but also as political agents that influence the potential for resistance.

Matt Bassett - Shaping the politics of 'cisgender': Platform affordances and governance on Tumblr and X

Tumblr and X have polarised political cultures. Tumblr has long been characterised as a safe space for minoritised communities, with a strong emphasis on social justice issues. X, on the other hand, has been increasingly associated with far-right politics since its takeover by Elon Musk. These differences are borne out by discussions about the term 'cisgender' on the two platforms, and further by Musk's public denouncements of the word 'cis' and designation of it as punishable 'hate speech' on X. Drawing on an interpretive affordance analysis of Tumblr and X posts about 'cisgender', this paper argues that political discourse on Tumblr and X is shaped not only by how those platforms are governed and moderated, but also by the material conditions of the platforms themselves. I identify three key affordances at play in those discussions which demonstrate how the discourse is shaped by platform features: agglutination, reactivity and visibility. The agglutinative features of Tumblr systematically sideline unpopular views, combining with the platform's social-justice-oriented culture to produce a broad consensus on using the term 'cisgender' as a sign of allyship with the trans community. The reactive features of X hinder nuanced discussion about the political significance of 'cisgender' in a platform culture which is increasingly explicitly hostile to marginalised groups, further bolstered by punitive platform governance which hampers discussion of the topic. On both platforms, features and governance thus combine to affect the visibility of certain political views, shaping not only the kinds of political discussion possible on the platform, but those discussions' possible conclusions. These findings highlight the role played by digital platforms' features in shaping political discourse today, and therefore also stress the importance of accounting for the unique material conditions of digital platforms when doing research online.

Platform Power: Authoritarianism, Deplatformisation & Disconnection (3)

Nate Tkacz - Authoritarianization: On Platform Becoming

This presentation advances an authoritarian critique of platforms. It begins with an overview of previous critical approaches, where platforms are typically understood as economic or techno-economic entities. The economically-derived critique of platforms is important and has underpinned numerous regulatory interventions, counter-practices and forms of activism. From the economic position, far-right activity is tolerated by the platforms because of its attention value. The fostering of far-right subjectivities is thus positioned as a side-effect of platforms pursuing profits over caring for their users. This presentation suggests the economic critique of platforms is no longer enough. Rather than seeing far-right and authoritarian content as an unfortunate side-effect of platform capitalism, or techno-feudalism, this presentation proposes we see platforms as forms of organisation that are available for authoritarian transformation. An authoritarian critique of platforms reorients our understanding in line with such transformations. The notion of 'authoritarianization' is offered as a way to understand the authoritarian becomings of platforms. It can be applied to platform ownership and economics, interface and feature design, moderation and regulation, and platform sociality, among other things. Authoritarianization is offered as way to approach technocultural logics and practices that work 'on top of' the platformised web, but also in tension with it.

Cato Waeterloos, Babette Hermans, Laura Jacobs - Bridge or Gap? Indicators of Deinstitutionalization in Belgian Political Parties' Social Media Campaign during the 2024 Elections

Social media have become indispensable in political campaigning across European democracies. Political parties employ these platforms to connect with voters, often circumventing traditional gatekeepers such as journalists (Russmann et al., 2021). These changes in political communication coincide with what is often labelled a 'crisis of democracy' (Pfetsch et al., 2023). Though this notion is not new, contemporary scholarship emphasizes the problematization of party-based representative politics, which is central to most liberal democracies. This crisis is framed as an expression of late modernity, marked by citizens' disillusionment with elections and institutional participation, and a turn away from traditional sites of political power toward individualization and digitalization (Tormey, 2022). These shifts have been grouped under the label of 'deinstitutionalization', applying to both media and politics (Mancini, 2023). Empirical research has largely focused on changing citizen attitudes and behavior (Ercan & Gagnon, 2014) or on novel political actors such as influencers (Gonzalez et al., 2023). Still, the current media logic and citizens' evolving political engagement may prompt parties to adapt to this new political culture (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Yet, it remains unclear whether political parties reflect these shifts in their social media communication. We therefore ask how the Facebook communication of Belgian parties during the 2024 elections is indicative of deinstitutionalization. We conducted a quantitative content analysis of Facebook posts from 11 Belgian political parties during the month before the Belgian and European elections. From 1.143 posts, a random subsample of 734 was manually coded for textual and visual elements, capturing diverse indicators of deinstitutionalization (e.g., personalization, references to institutional issues and actors, calls for (non-)institutional action). The findings provide unique insights in a striking paradox: parties use social media to embed themselves in citizens' deinstitutionalized lifeworld while potentially undermining efforts to bridge this gap and revitalize representative democracy.

Damiano Razzoli, Nicola Casucci - Digital Citizenship beyond platforms: enshittification, resistance, and public digital futures

This paper interrogates the contemporary crisis of commercial social media platforms – characterized by "enshittification" (Doctorow 2023) and the rise of a "broligarchy" of tech oligarchs – as a fundamental barrier to meaningful digital citizenship. Moving beyond narratives of mere exodus (e.g., from X to Bluesky), we argue that such migrations perpetuate extractive logic, constituting "platform capture" rather than liberation. We frame this crisis through Lovink's critiques of platform nihilism (2016) and Couldry & Mejias' theory of data colonialism (2019). Employing Yuk Hui's concept of technodiversity (2024), we argue that platform logic's homogenizing force erodes local contexts and alternatives, co-opting user agency for extractive engagement at the expense of democratic deliberation. We posit digital citizenship not as mere digital literacy, but as the political capacity to inhabit digital spaces as active citizens. Drawing on Floridi's "onlife" paradigm (2014), Nissenbaum's work on contextual integrity (2010), and critiquing the loss of multi-dimensional proximity (Boschma 2005) on commercial platforms, we advocate for citizenship demanding digital spaces designed for conviviality and the common good, not profit. We explore emergent alternatives embodying this principle: decentralized networks like Mastodon – which seeks to "make social social again" – and local public-interest platforms like "Hamlet" in Reggio Emilia.

These exemplify a shift from creator/audience dynamics toward citizen/community models. They move beyond commercial logic by embodying principles of public digital infrastructure (Star 1999) – reliable, embedded, and designed for social practice. They engage with infrastructural empowerment (Elyachar 2010), designing digital spaces that enable civic agency rather than capture social life for market logics. The path to full digital citizenship requires a cultural and political leap: stop consuming digital tools and start inhabiting digital environments. True resistance lies not in finding new platforms, but in building new ecologies of public, common, and hybrid digital spaces where deliberation flourishes and citizenship is fully realized.

Arts, Platforms, AI (3)

Leonardo Bindi - “We wish we could afford silence”: practices of digital disconnection among musicians in the platform economy

The growing platformisation of cultural and creative industries poses significant challenges to creative workers, forcing them to maintain constant visibility and conform to algorithmic logic. This pressure is perceived as a form of subordination to platform power, a condition considered “necessary” for self-promotion and establishing a professional presence within a highly competitive ecosystem. There is now a wealth of literature on the consequences of platformisation on creative work, while the practices that creative workers employ to cope with the pressure exerted by the algorithmic logic of platforms visibility remain largely unexplored. Framed as an intervention in the field of disconnection studies, this research focuses then on the effective negotiation strategies employed by a specific set of creative workers (musicians) to regain their work-life balance. Drawing on a series of 15 semi-structured interviews, conducted from July 2025 to September 2025, this study aims to analyse how disconnection practices serve as a strategy for musicians (soloists and bands) to reassert control over time and agency by removing their profiles or their music from the surveillance logic of platforms. However, a key distinction emerges between soloists and bands regarding their disconnection approach. For soloists, the fear of missing out job opportunities exerts a powerful nudge, making disconnection difficult and anxiety-inducing. Indeed, the pressure to remain constantly connected to seek work and build a reputation may be more pronounced for emerging artists, limiting their ability to disconnect compared to more established professionals. In contrast, bands are more inclined to disconnect from streaming platforms (Spotify) or social media (Instagram). In particular, the decision to remove own music from streaming platforms is often interpreted as an act of resistance. This study argues that disconnection is not merely an individual choice, but also a political act shaped by musicians’ economic and positional power within the platform economy.

Adriana Campara, Andrea Farina - Art, Censorship, and AI: Investigating the Role of Large Language Models in Artistic Freedom

Global censorship has increased in the 21st century, rising by 224% since 1998 (Freemuse, 2016). Between 2015 and 2021, over 24% of censorship cases involved visual arts, undermining freedom of expression (United Nations, 1948) and imposing economic costs (UNESCO, 2015; Freemuse, 2024). Concurrently, Large Language Models (LLMs) increasingly shape how art is described and interpreted (Khadangi et al., 2025). While they demonstrate remarkable capabilities, research shows they inherit biases from training data and moderation mechanisms, potentially distorting sensitive or controversial topics (Ahmed et al., 2025; Gorilla & Tuttle, 2025; Noels et al., 2025; Tuck & Verma, 2025). Open questions remain: can LLMs recognise censorship in visual art, and do they themselves reproduce it? This study investigates how five LLMs developed in distinct geopolitical and commercial contexts – DeepSeek (China), GPT (USA), Mistral (France), GigaChat Max (Russia), HyperCLOVA X (South Korea) – evaluate artistic censorship. Using over 100 paintings covering historically sensitive themes (e.g., political critique, religious imagery, nudity, sexuality, death), each model is asked whether an artwork would likely be censored in a given country and how it would be treated if displayed in a national museum. Responses are recorded alongside any filtering or refusal, and analyses combine qualitative coding with quantitative comparison to assess cross-cultural judgments, potential biases, and distortions. Our design compares how each system evaluates censorship within its own national context and across others, assessing potential biases in how countries’ censorship practices are represented. Discrepancies are cross-checked against official laws, policies, and case studies to distinguish factual representation from model distortion. This research extends censorship studies into the digital domain, showing how LLMs may reproduce or distort cultural understandings of censorship. It highlights the impact of AI moderation on the visibility and interpretation of artworks, raising questions about the compatibility of algorithmic regulation with the human right to artistic freedom.

Dion Everett - Real Readers: The Performance of Professional Reading in the Digital Literary Sphere

Readers in the online community known as “BookTok” started a new trend in September 2025: creating your own curriculum in time for the autumn term. These readers present facsimile reading lists of fiction in certain genres, usually from the Western canon or other markers of hierarchy associated with professional literary study in the university. These readers are expanding on the community which has evolved over the past decade on social media, known as “dark academia”, which performs an emulation of academic life modelled on the depiction of that experience in their favoured novels – Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History* (1992), M. L. Rio’s *If We Were Villains* (2017), Olivie Blake’s *The Atlas Six* (2021), and R. F. Kuang’s *Babel* (2022). This paper aims to suggest the potential benefits of taking account the influence of online fan and reader communities in the production the dark academia genre, exploring the facsimile performance of literary scholarship through the transmedia of social media, such as YouTube-video analyses of canonical novels and TikToks offering lists of “intellectual” books to read. The attempt to recreate literary scholarship and make it accessible is problematised by the misunderstanding of literary study on display: creators delineate their affective responses as though they are academic, rarely involving theory or doing research into a novel’s historical or generic contexts. This paper will analyse how the depictions of scholarship in the humanities in the above novels has influenced the performance of academic life in the digital literary sphere. I will then use this analysis to suggest that contemporary studies of literary scholarship may benefit from exploring the complex relationship between literary scholarship and lay reading presented by the dark academia community and the pseudo-academic practices of the digital literary sphere.

Data, Citizenship and Politics (4)

Foteini Kalantzi - The transformation of EU borders in the digital era

In recent decades, the borders of the European Union have undergone a profound transformation. No longer are they simple cartographic lines on a map, guarded by physical fences or passport controls alone. Today, EU borders are becoming highly dynamic infrastructures infused with advanced technologies, biometric systems, and algorithmic decision-making processes. These changes reflect a larger shift in the governance of mobility and security, shaped by the increasing flows of people seeking to enter the Union. The EU’s answer to migration challenges has been the creation of what can best be described as a technological border regime. At its core are large-scale biometric databases, interoperable information systems, predictive analytics, and pilot programs for AI-based monitoring tools. Together, these technologies represent a radical transformation in how borders are conceived and managed. They blur the distinction between inside and outside, between movement and stasis, between security and rights. AI technologies have the potential to improve efficiency in border control and security while detecting fraud, and effectively analysing risks. Nevertheless, these powerful technologies also present significant challenges, particularly due to their inconsistent accuracy and the risks they pose to fundamental human rights. The ethical, legal and efficacy issues that arise become more conspicuous when intertwined with the political economy of AI processes, market dynamics and powerful lobbying in the biometrics and surveillance sector. Drawing on the literature that points out challenges on the legal, ethical and efficiency level, like for example migrants’ data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and fairness, this paper will address the ways AI technologies have affected civic and human rights in the context of migration in the EU, the role of actors and discourses in the technologised borderisation and body datafication processes.

Swati Ganeshan, Rashmi Pavagada Subbanarasimha, Bidisha Chaudhuri, Amit Prakash - Data-doxic Citizen: Unpacking Performances of Citizenship in through Data Relations

Over the last decade, visions of datafied governance have been on the rise, owing to the ubiquity of datafication. With tensions arising from calls for collective management of data and the push for assetisation of digital data, we see a distinct rhetoric being shaped within the realm of governance (more specifically in urban areas) where citizens wish to create, manage and interface with data in their own ways. Data have also been portrayed as modalities for citizens to engage with the state and enact their own roles in varied ways. While living labs, open data movements and other such efforts by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are touted to counter assetisation calls and barriers to the state, the ground reality calls for a more nuanced examination of who engages and how they engage with data within such efforts. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork in the Indian city of Bengaluru, this study attempts to unpack such nuances by focusing on practices where citizens interact with a) data through hackathons, data collection efforts, open-data events and b) the state through data using communication platforms and information portals. We employ the framing of ‘data doxa’ (Smith, 2018) which critically analyses how digital data technologies are deemed “(a) panaceas for the problems associated with contemporary life, (b)

figures of progress and convenience, and (c) mediums of knowledge, pleasure and identity” (ibid.). Using (Smith, 2018)’s conception we demonstrate how data relations of fetishisation, habit and enchantment are formed around a certain ‘taken-for-granted’-ness of data within this context. Through this, we attempt to show how such doxic sensibilities associated with data contribute to who gets to perform their roles as citizens and how they do so.

Aakansha Natani - The Geopolitics of Data and Digital Technologies

This paper critically examines the evolving geopolitics of data and digital technologies against the backdrop of the rapidly evolving global data economy. It highlights the growing recognition of data as a strategic resource that transcends traditional economic and political boundaries, reshaping power dynamics worldwide. It further explores global data governance regimes, analyzing the diverse and often conflicting frameworks by global actors and national policies that govern data flows, ownership and usage. Focusing on three key dimensions, the paper first investigates the extra-territorial effects of data regulations, illustrating how policies enacted within one jurisdiction extend their influence beyond borders, complicating global data governance discourse. It attempts to highlight the key aspects of tension between tech-advanced countries and developing countries in this context. Second, it delves into the enduring dilemma between advocating for cross-border data flows, framed around narratives of innovation and economic growth, and the rising push for data localisation, driven by concerns over national security, privacy and digital sovereignty. This tension is further reflected in debates between the pursuit of interoperable regulatory standards and the assertion of sovereign control over the digital ecosystem. Third, the paper explores the geopolitics of data infrastructures, including access to critical minerals, technical competencies in data storage and processing, the energy demands of data centers and emerging narratives around nuclear energy as a solution to these challenges. The paper argues that data is not merely a technical resource but is inherently political and geopolitical. Control over data flows, infrastructure, and governance reflects deeper struggles over power, sovereignty, and influence in the digital age, and understanding data through this lens is crucial to interrogating the broader implications of digital transformation.

Callum Deery, Leon Xiao - Social media advertising repositories: a new method for gaming/gambling research enabled by the EU Digital Services Act

Stakeholders are concerned about social media advertising being untransparent about targeting vulnerable consumers and potentially causing harm. Article 39 of the recent EU Digital Services Act requires the biggest social medias (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), to publish a database of all paid advertising shown. Which user demographics the ad was intended to ‘target’ and how many users of various demographic groups were eventually ‘reached’ must also be revealed. This transparency measure enables the public to better scrutinise big tech companies. Some companies voluntarily also provide data for non-EU countries, like Meta does for the UK in the absence of any legal obligations. Digital humanities researchers should use this resource to study, for example, video game advertising and contribute valuable evidence to policy debates, thus also encouraging policymakers to adopt more similar data access rules. I share how to use social media advertising libraries to conduct research and present results from our studies using this method. Gambling-like loot boxes in video games offer players (including children) random rewards in exchange for real-world money. Concerns have been raised about potential financial harms and the normalisation of gambling participation amongst young people. In the UK and South Korea, we studied thousands of ads for popular games with loot boxes to find that less than 10% disclosed the presence of loot boxes as required by UK, EU, and South Korean consumer law. The few disclosures we found were also often visually obscured. In Belgium, we found that most games with loot boxes, which uniquely constitute illegal gambling in that country, were illegally advertised to Belgian users, even though excluding Belgians from being shown the ad is trivially easy. These studies have directly contributed to policy debates (e.g., in the UK and Flemish Parliaments), demonstrating the wide potential application of this method beyond just video games.

Politics and Digital Scholarship (3)

Elena Battaner Moro - Semantic Labour, Metadata Infrastructures, and the Epistemic Politics of Digital Scholarship

This paper explores the infrastructural role of metadata in shaping the epistemic conditions of digital scholarship. It argues that metadata –abstracts, keywords, author identifiers, institutional affiliations, funding, and so on– are not merely descriptive artefacts but structured points of mediation that define what knowledge becomes

discoverable, citable, and evaluable within the digital research ecosystem (Bowker & Star, 1999; Meyer & Schroeder, 2015). Its aim is to address the politics of metadata as epistemic infrastructures in the digital academy, offering a contribution to the growing body of critical digital humanities concerned with infrastructural mediation, scholarly labour, and knowledge governance. Within platforms such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Dimensions, these structured data operate as the substrate of algorithmic systems used for recommendation, evaluation, and institutional benchmarking. Yet the semantic labour involved in generating this metadata, distributed across writing, submission, and compliance workflows, remains largely invisible, unpaid, and technically imposed through opaque editorial and indexing standards (Battaner, 2026; Pooley, 2022, 2024). This dynamic reproduces asymmetries of visibility and recognition across researchers, disciplines, languages, gender, and geographies, with consequences for the humanities and for plural knowledge systems. Rather than treating metadata infrastructures as neutral or predictable, the paper proposes to frame them as epistemic designs, i.e. technical systems that embed assumptions about what counts as knowledge, how it should be classified, and who gets to decide (Moore, 2021; Neylon, 2021). It further examines alternative, community-led infrastructures such as Wikidata, Crossref, and OpenAlex, not as frictionless solutions, but as sites where competing principles of governance, openness, and interoperability can be negotiated. Metadata is not only a means of access: it is a mechanism of epistemic authority. And by foregrounding the technical and epistemological dimensions of metadata infrastructures, this paper positions the Digital Humanities not only as users of these systems, but as critical participants in their design, critique, and transformation.

Gerald Sim - A Computer for the 22nd Century: What Would Mark Weiser Say About Liquid Glass?

This paper offers a technocultural history of Apple's "Liquid Glass" graphical user interface, which presents digital elements like control sliders and icons as transparent or translucent, mimicking the optical and physical properties of glass. I situate Liquid Glass within an interlaced account of computing, digital media, and film culture, thoroughly aware that Apple's creative directions have traditionally exerted disproportionate influence on its peers. I argue that Liquid Glass is an iteration of "invisible" computing, an idea articulated by computer scientist Mark Weiser, who is considered the father of ubiquitous computing and the Internet of Things. By "invisible," Weiser meant that computing and computers themselves should recede into the user's physical environment and the background of their consciousness. "Invisibility" was informed by his idealistic politics and philosophies. For Weiser, "invisible" computers would liberate users to collaborate with others, engage with their environments, and focus on humanistic goals. These values were abundantly echoed during Liquid Glass's product launch. Promotional campaign videos appropriate Weiser's language and reiterate "invisibility" by visually featuring the abundance of transparent surfaces in the architecture and interior design of Apple's Cupertino headquarters. Weiser's "invisibility" is expressed in *Minority Report* (2002) and *Her* (2013), iconic films that influence industry understandings of user interface (UI) design, user experience (UX), and human-computer interaction (HCI). *Minority Report's* gestural interface presages the swipes and pinches now routinely performed on touchscreens. *Her* is frequently idealized by tech executives for its story of a man's relationship with a "product interface that feels so natural that it fades away." I discuss Liquid Glass's implicit promise to embody Weiser's ideals through an analysis of the films. Both reify "invisibility." The science consultant for *Minority Report* was in fact influenced by Weiser. But both films have also become ideological vessels for industry priorities over Weiser's staunchly humanistic ideals.

Arsenii Platonov - Articulating AI: Two Approaches in Critical Media Studies – Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's Discourse Theory in Dialogue with Stuart Hall's Theorisations

This study examines the socio-cultural mythologisation of artificial intelligence (AI) in media within critical media studies paradigm, defining myths as distorted, yet constitutive, representations that shape societal interaction with technology. While many essentialist critiques focus on AI's inherent properties, they often neglect the contingent and contested nature of its meaning, incapable of countenancing the prospect of alternative meanings. Grounded in archival insights that reveal a previously undocumented collaboration between the key theorists, this research fills that gap by synthesising the post-Marxist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe with Stuart Hall's media theorisations. Through a case study of Microsoft AI CEO Mustafa Suleyman's TED Talk, this project deconstructs the discursive strategies used to frame AI, analysing both its construction and its reception by online audiences. The central finding is that techno-utopian narratives construct AI as a hegemonic, inevitable "wave" to obscure its environmental costs and power asymmetries, yet this meaning is actively challenged by audiences, highlighting contingency as a vital response to essentialist critique and the basis for future resistance. Ultimately, this dissertation provides a novel theoretical framework for demystifying AI, offering an approach that can be flexibly adapted for further research into the evolving myths of artificial intelligence.

Rethinking Resistance and Violence in Digital Environments (3)

Xinyi Yin - Lying Flat as Digital Passive Resistance: Rethinking Social Movement Theory in Platform Societies

This paper explores China's "lying flat" (tang ping) phenomenon as a form of digital passive resistance that unsettles both platform governance and classical social movement theory. Drawing on digital ethnography (2021–2025) across Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and Douban, combined with 100 semi-structured youth interviews, the study examines how low-desire lifestyles and anti-competition narratives circulate through algorithmic infrastructures and content moderation. While often dismissed as apathy, "lying flat" constitutes a politics of refusal—resisting through slowness, withdrawal, and non-participation in hyper-productive norms. Methodologically, the project integrates computational text analysis (topic modeling, co-occurrence networks) with qualitative coding to trace discursive shifts from early pandemic articulations to subsequent platform deplatformisation. Findings suggest that "lying flat" is less an organized movement than a resistant stance enacted digitally: by refusing visibility and economic acceleration, participants generate fragile publics that evade capture, yet are continuously commodified by platform logics. Theoretically, this case challenges social movement paradigms centred on mobilisation, protest, and visibility. Instead, it foregrounds resistance through inaction, invisibility, and refusal—dimensions often overlooked in digital politics. By framing "lying flat" as digital passive resistance, the paper contributes to rethinking how power and resistance are negotiated in platform societies, and how the digital expands the repertoire of contentious politics beyond traditional activism.

Karmvir Padda, Shana MacDonald, Nick Ruest - Mic Check for Misogyny: Podcasting, Supremacist Masculinities, and the Radicalization of Gendered Violence

In this paper, we examine how podcasting operates as a cultural infrastructure for the construction, circulation, and normalization of supremacist masculinities. Through a multi-method analysis of over 1,800 podcast episodes from Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes, the study shows how these figures blend hegemonic masculine ideals with grievance politics, affective mobilization, and ideological radicalization. Supremacist masculinities are constructed through three interlinked discursive formations: the naturalization of patriarchal dominance, the framing of grievance as masculine identity, and the escalation of grievance into calls for violence. Using BERTopic modeling, misogyny, emotion and hate speech classification, and critical thematic discourse analysis, the research demonstrates how digital media ecologies amplify affective registers like anger, resentment, and humiliation, turning them into political tools. Rather than relying on isolated incidents of hate speech, these influencers embed gendered hierarchies into everyday speech, humor, and narratives of embattlement, creating emotional infrastructures that normalize violence and exclusion. The findings situate podcasting within broader concerns around digital radicalization, gendered extremism, and ideological violence, highlighting the political consequences of seemingly informal media spaces. This study underscores the urgent need to understand podcasting not as marginal, but as central to contemporary formations of reactionary masculinity and online radicalization.

Anja Zlatovic - Is the future of AI be green? - Exploring the AI usage among young, green activists

The paper examines the use of AI technologies by green youth activists and politicians in Europe, as well as their understanding of the environmental impact, and whether this knowledge influences their potential use of AI. With the development of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in general, more work is being published regarding the moral and environmental circumstances and impacts of AI development and the way people handle it. It is clear that the entire AI field is heavily dependent on neocolonial practices and has a significant environmental impact. However, all this information doesn't seem to be publicised, nor does it affect the rising usage of AI technologies among young people. With all this in mind, through in-depth interviews and active participation, we wish to explore and analyse the position of youth who are directly working on the topics of social and environmental justice regarding the question. The starting hypothesis is that, while the AI is starting to be a subject discussed among political circles, it is still not the central one compared to various security and climate crises, and the convenience and the availability of the AI technologies push even those who are supposed to be worrying about these issues to still put them in the second plan. This topic is important to understand what young people concerned about the environment know about the development of AI technologies, and whether their policies and practices regarding it align with their usual values.

Access and Visibility in Digital Spaces (4)

Tina Kristensen - '#metoo was started by a black woman, @Tarana Burke!!! Give credit where it's due! <3' (Marqueza, 2017): The discursive strategies used to discuss race in the #MeToo movement on Twitter

This paper will look at how people use language to discuss and centralize race in the #MeToo movement on Twitter, using data from 2017, around the inception of the movement, and 2022, around the fifth anniversary. The #MeToo movement became an international phenomenon in 2017, however, many people did not know that years prior an offline 'me too' movement was started by Black activist Tarana Burke. As a result, Burke was initially overlooked, and Alyssa Milano was claimed as the founder of the movement. Despite the millions of tweets using the #MeToo hashtag Trott's (2020) research found that only 432 of their collected tweets mentioned race. This information calls into question who is visible within the international #MeToo movement, and what efforts were taken to mitigate the lack of visibility. To investigate this, this paper will analyse tweets and comments from 2017 and 2022 which all mention 'Black' and/or 'race'. This paper will show the discursive strategies and intersectional lens through which Black women discuss their experiences of sexual violence in addition to how prevailing stereotypes hurt and diminish them and their experiences. As this paper is looking at two timepoints it will allow for suggestions to be made about how any offline events, such as the 2020 resurgence of the BlackLivesMatter movement following the murder of George Floyd, might have affected the discursive strategies used. By looking at the discourse in the international #MeToo movement on Twitter we can see the complex inequalities and harms done to Black women.

Laurel Zuckerman - Opening up the Holocaust and looted property scholarship concealed behind locked paywalls and foreign languages

Research on the Holocaust and on looted cultural property is central to questions of justice, memory, and accountability. Yet much significant scholarship, particularly in German and other European languages, remains inaccessible—trapped behind academic paywalls, limited print runs, or untranslated. These barriers exclude independent researchers, claimants, and broader publics, creating structural inequalities in who can engage with essential knowledge.

This paper examines how restricted access has shaped the field. Widely circulated publications often reflect institutional narratives, while more critical or investigative work is obscured by cost and language. The imbalance is not simply academic; it influences restitution debates, legal outcomes, and the collective memory of the Holocaust.

A paradox underscores this situation: commercial artificial intelligence companies have secured large-scale access to copyrighted and paywalled texts to train proprietary models. If corporations can exploit these materials for profit, why are survivors, heirs, and researchers still denied access to scholarship necessary for truth and justice?

This paper calls for an ethics of accessibility. In addition to open access publishing, translation initiatives, and interoperable digital infrastructures, I suggest discussion of more ambitious measures: for example, the retroactive conversion of Holocaust and looted property scholarship to Creative Commons (CC0) where feasible, coupled with systematic online publication of PDFs. These steps would allow the use of advanced digital tools—text mining, linked data, knowledge graphs—that can expose patterns of dispossession and restitution otherwise invisible.

Opening up this body of work is not simply a matter of convenience but a responsibility to survivors, descendants, and future generations.

Marissa Willcox, Lucia Bainotti - Feminist digital ethnographic methods for researching digital feminism and femininities

Conducting feminist research on social media platforms poses unique challenges, particularly in the sociodigital world where gender, intersectionality, and visual culture are deeply entangled with the politics of visibility. The progressive embedding of digital data, devices, and infrastructures within social life necessitates methodological frameworks that take seriously the ongoing intra-action of 'the social' and 'the digital.' While feminist epistemologies and methods (Harding, 1987; van Zoonen, 1994) have long shaped research practices, and

digital methods (Caldeira, 2024; Luka & Millette, 2018) have responded to the evolving empirical world, there remains a scarcity of approaches that explicitly integrate feminist perspectives, digital ethnography, and visual methodologies (Rose, 2016) for investigating digital feminism and femininities.

Moving beyond traditional feminist critiques of femininity as disempowering (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1997; Brownmiller, 1984), recent scholarship has reframed femininity in digital spaces as simultaneously “queer,” “transformative,” and occasionally “toxic” (McCann, 2018; 2022). Building on the concept that “femme narratives can be used to bolster femme as theory and critical analytic” (Hoskin, 2019, p.1), this paper contributes to the field of digital and feminist research methods by engaging with the challenges of studying sociodigital phenomena such as “digital feminism” and “digital femininity”.

Based on the principles we term co-creation, and reciprocity, we outline concepts from (digital) ethnography rooted in the social sciences and integrate these with theory from the study of femininities (Dahl, 2016) and femme aesthetics (Schwartz, 2020), paying attention to visual digital cultures and platform affordances from the field of media studies. In this paper, we propose both a feminist and feminised approach to digital ethnography in which leveraging platform affordances to boost participants’ visibility, fostering the circulation of their visual artefacts, can be understood as a methodological intervention for studying digital feminism and femininities in social media spaces.

Ashleigh Harris - Unruly African Archives and Digital Curatorship

A significant portion of African literature and expressive cultures – from the late 19th century to the present – has been produced as print, audio, video, and (more recently) digital ephemera. From market pamphlets to YouTube videos, the materiality of the African expressive archive is often anathema to the standards and cataloguing practices of formal libraries and collections. This poses challenges to attempts to make these materials visible and findable in a dataverse dominated by literary data on commercial, English-language novels. This paper addresses the problem of messy and informal data in the work of the African Literary Metadata (ALMEDA) research project, raising questions about the unruly archive and what is at stake when we try to curate it.

Trust, Care, and Platformed Selfhood (3)

Hui Lin, Yingwen Wang- Astrology with DeepSeek: Data Disclosure, Playful Labour, and Emotional Bonds in AI-Mediated Divination

Large language models are increasingly entangled with vernacular spiritual practices. On Xiaohongshu (RedNote), a popular Chinese lifestyle platform, thousands of user-generated posts detail how to prompt DeepSeek, an OpenAI-based chatbot, to perform astrology readings from birth data. These posts circulate step-by-step instructions (“enter your birth hour, ask about your past life”), screenshots of personalised readings, and comment threads filled with intimate self-disclosures. Although users recognise that providing such sensitive, biographical information raises ethical concerns, they remain eager to engage in these AI-mediated divination rituals. Existing studies have explored astrology on Chinese platforms such as Douyin, highlighting how astrology content facilitates self-understanding and intimacy (Zhang & Wang, 2025). However, this scholarship has largely focused on content consumption rather than users’ data-sharing practices with generative AI. Our study addresses this gap by examining how and why users engage with AI-mediated astrology through qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Our findings reveal a central paradox: users are simultaneously aware of privacy risks and yet seduced by the promise of personalised cosmic insight. Beyond accuracy, participants described AI as an emotionally reliable confidant—non-judgmental, always available, and capable of offering affective comfort. This affective attachment helps normalise the disclosure of personal data despite ethical concerns. We argue that AI-mediated astrology not only reconfigures spiritual intimacy but also legitimises the extraction of users’ biographical data under the guise of playful, personalised divination.

Ugo Trelis - Data Work as Care and other forms of resistance: An autoethnographic study

What is the place for data workers’ lived experience in research? I propose an autoethnography of data work that goes beyond the now established fact that human work is essential to platforms and AI. The ephemeral and globalized aspect of data work make it hard to find participants willing to share their experiences. We can find personal experiences told through The Data Workers Inquiry, led by the Distributed AI Research Institute. They give the opportunity to data workers to share their experience through articles and other research forms in order to explain their work and tasks as data workers. Data work can also be abstract and difficult to explain. Labeling, training or annotating refer to tasks in data works. Even if they are technically accurate, they sound distant to what I have been doing as a data worker, an activity I have in parallel with my doctorate program. As an « AI

transcriptionist », I have been training a machine to recognize language patterns. This training was based on vocal commands made by users on their connected devices, unaware that their demands would be listened and analyzed by other humans. Thus, I have been experiencing different aspects of datafication. As I listen to data stolen from users, I am trying to understand the constant surveillance I am subjected to as a worker. Finally, I want to use a standpoint perspective, usually absent in platform studies, to show how human labour behind automation is more than just a technical skill. More than training, or cleaning datas, I handle with care the recordings that I have to transcribe, using cultural and social cues to understand and facilitate the training of the machine. This autoethnographic study aims to frame differently data work, not only as a transformation of labour but as a devalued form of care.

Craig Gent, Michael Dieter, Carolina Bandinelli - Hybrid Togetherness: Critical Livestreaming and the StreamArtNetwork

In Autumn 2024, we co-founded StreamArtNetwork (SAN), a distributed network of collectives spanning Europe, from Coventry to Kyiv, dedicated to developing livestreaming as a critical and experimental aesthetic practice. Streaming in general has become a defining feature of digital culture, shaping artistic production, political communication and public discourse, yet its potential remains limited by the corporate architectures of the platform economy, which centralize governance, automate visibility, and standardize participation through metrics and defaults.

Through SAN and our experimental channel CDI-TV, we approach livestreaming as a critical interdisciplinary trading zone - a space for negotiation between artistic, technical and political practices, and a means of cultivating hybrid presence, collaboration, solidarities and care under conditions of crisis. We describe this as hybrid togetherness: a form of co-presence across distance that departs from extractive and homogenizing platform logics while exploring the livestream itself as a cultural and political mode of relation. Engaging with free and open-source software, Fediverse infrastructures and interface aesthetics, our work intersects with feminist server practices, software art, permacomputing, media activism and the legacies of tactical media. Together, we suggest, these form a transdisciplinary field of critical livestreaming. In this talk, we outline SAN's evolving methods and transmissions, showing how experimental livestreams can foster accessibility, (post-)digital solidarity and eco-critical practice. We argue that these practices not only critique Big Tech, but actively prototype alternative infrastructure, reimagining the digital commons and advancing a democratic, decentralized media stack.

PREDETERMINED PANELS

Platformisation, AI and Care Work: Global Perspectives on Social Reproduction in the Gig Economy

Digital platforms and AI-driven management systems are increasingly reshaping care work across the globe (Hunt and Machingura, 2016; Flanagan, 2018; Schwiter and Steiner, 2020). While the platformisation of sectors like transport and delivery has already been well documented, the platformisation of domestic work, sex work, healthcare work, education work and social work have been overlooked (Ustek-Spilda and Wells, 2024; West, 2025). In Spain, for instance, the proliferation of digital brokers specialising in care work has been particularly pronounced in the domain of senior home care. This phenomenon can be attributed to the enhanced collaboration between the welfare regime and private enterprise (Martínez-Buján and Moré, 2024). These shifts are mediated by algorithmic systems that allocate tasks, structure working time, manage reputations, and facilitate (or deny) access to social protections and labor rights (Ticona and Mateescu, 2018). The digitalisation of the care labour process is at the centre of a profound restructuring of (re)production capitalist relations. While platform providers have lauded their ability to formalise care work, such as domestic labour, recent academic research has exposed how the enhancement of visibility is counterbalanced by the exacerbation of precarity and the intensification of existing inequalities for workers (Ticona and Mateescu, 2018; Micha, 2024). The prevailing preoccupation among scholars in the field pertains to the role of digital platforms in the devaluation of care labour, as evidenced by the perpetuation of global/colonial care chains (Schwiter and Steiner, 2020; Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2022, 2024).

The objective of this panel is to explore how platformisation and AI are transforming the labor process of care work in multiple national and regional contexts. In order to decenter from the platform and center care environments (Orth and Baum, 2024), our goal is to create a space for interdisciplinary dialogue around the political economy of care, highlighting intersections between technology, institutions of care, welfare regimes,

law, migration and economic policies, gender, race and coloniality. The papers in this panel explore "working conditions in digital care work" and discuss the consequences of digitalisation, platformisation and the introduction of AI for care workers and the organisations and infrastructures that support and govern them.

Presenters:

- Volkan Yilmaz and Elifcan Celebi, A Scoping Review of Platformisation in Health and Social Care Sectors
- Myriam Lavoie-Moore: Rentiership dynamics of the care platform's industry
- Claire Marzo, The future of care: platform work & digitalisation

Digital Activism and Critical Enquiry: Past and Present.

Early research on digital activism attempted to explore its significance, at the time it seemed an increasingly impactful phenomenon. Much early research offered a broadly optimistic tone for the potential of these new forms of connection and action, although with some balancing reservations. The digital activism of the 1990s associated with the alter-globalisation movement, the 2012 'Arab Spring', and a string of further digitally augmented movements suggested the potential of the digital to support activism, especially radical democratic and anti-authoritarian strands of collective politics. In subsequent years the picture has become far more ambiguous with the increasing interconnection between political and market-based forms of participation. Amongst other challenges have been the increasing algorithmic drive for the colonisation of attention on social media platforms, the rise of populism and misinformation, the increasing threat of AI and the undermining of journalism and democracy. This panel will reflect on past digital activism and its conceptualisations and on present difficulties of digital activism. Tim Jordan will examine the early use of the internet to align with social movements to the more recent populist uprisings such as the Gamestop share price. Eleftheria Lekakis will draw on the recent history and analysis of forms of digital consumer activism where asymmetries in agency, ambivalence in ideology and dynamics of geoeconomics can be observed. Joss Hands will reflect on the evolution of digital activism since the publication of his book *@ is For Activism* in 2011, with particular reference to the progress of radical democracy, and will ask whether *@ is still for activism?* Pollyanna Ruiz will reflect back upon the conceptual framework laid out in her book "Articulating Dissent" and examine the way in which changed understanding of 'mainstream media' and 'alternative truths' have impacted upon the potential of the digital to spread and support polyvocal activism.

Panel Presenters: Dr Joss Hands, Reader in Critical Theory, Newcastle University (Co-organiser); Professor Tim Jordan, UCL (Co-organiser); Dr Eleftheria Lekakis Associate Professor in Media and Communication, Sussex University; Professor Pollyanna Ruiz, Sussex University.

Creative AI - perspectives from the Creative AI Lab @ KCL

This panel with Daniel Chávez Heras, Joanna Zylinska, Mercedes Bunz and Eva Jäger explores how AI reconfigures our understanding of creativity, culture and imagination drawing on critical frameworks of digital humanities and our practical experience of working with Serpentine Galleries as a core collaborator of the Creative AI Lab.

In her talk, Joanna Zylinska emphasises that creativity is not a fixed human trait but a relational, reflexive process that is now being co-articulated with machines. Mercedes Bunz then shifts the perspective slightly to investigate how machine learning blurs the boundaries between technology and culture by generating meaning itself, while Daniel Chávez Heras positions AI as a new kind of 'macroscope' that opens up imaginative possibilities alongside scientific inquiry. Eva Jäger explores the cultural and political dimensions of 'physical AI' systems, which learn, sense, and act in the material world. Mark Gotham rounds out the panel by examining how engaging modalities beyond text and image reveal distinct dimensions of both AI's capabilities and human creative judgment.

All five highlight AI's role in shifting creativity from an exclusively human domain to a hybrid space where meaning, value and imagination are collectively redefined. They also explore socio-political consequences of this shift.

If machines can create, what makes us so special? - Joanna Zylinska
Mapping the crack: on meaning making in technology and culture - Mercedes Bunz
Macroscopic imagination - Daniel Chávez Heras
Beyond Optimisation: surfacing the cultural and political dimensions of physical AI systems - Eva Jäger
Music about Five-Legged Horses: on creativity uncoupled from semantic "ground truth" - Mark Gotham

Biographies:

Mercedes Bunz is Professor in Digital Culture and Society, DDH, KCL. Her research explores how digital technology transforms knowledge and with it power.

Daniel Chavez Heras is Lecturer in Digital Culture and Creative Computing, DDH, KCL. Daniel specialises in the algorithmic production and analysis of visual culture.

Joanna Zylinska is Professor of Media Philosophy and Critical Digital Practice, DDH, KCL. She looks at the emergence of the human in conjunction with amongst others the digital and combines her philosophical writings with image-based art practice and curatorial work.

Eva Jäger is Serpentine's s Arts Technologies Curator and Creative AI Lead. She is co-founder of the Creative Ai Lab and curated Holly Herndon's and Mat Dryhurst's exhibition 'The Call'.

Mark Gotham is a musician, composer, and Senior Lecturer in Cultural Computation at DDH, KCL.

Precarious Publics: Digital Labour and Queer World-Making in East and Southeast Asian Digital Cultures

This panel interrogates the diverse forms of digital labour that underpin the formation of precarious queer publics and affective economies within East and Southeast Asian popular cultures. Moving beyond conventional analyses of prosumerism, we examine how digital labour functions as a strategic practice of world-making, memory-keeping, and survival in the region's increasingly complex cultural landscapes. Collectively, the papers argue that for queer (broadly defined) communities, digital labour is not only productive but also reparative and resistive, offering a vital means of crafting alternative histories and futures against the grain of heteronormative and state-sanctioned narratives.

Our inquiry begins in Taiwan, where Dr. Eva Cheuk Yin Li (Lecturer, King's College London) conceptualises "speculative mnemonic labour" within queer fandom archives, showing how remixing and re-narrating practices forge living memoryscapes that rehearse queer futurities. Shifting to mainland China, Dr. Liang Ge (Lecturer, University College London) theorises "meticulous labour" in the Girls' Love audio drama scene, analysing it as a dual resistance against both commercial co-optation and state censorship, thereby safeguarding queer female agency and narrative integrity. A third paper from Kaydence Sun (PhD Candidate, Lancaster University) deepens this focus on precarity by examining the often-invisible labour queer women in the Sinosphere perform to navigate and counter online hate cultures, reframing resilience as a form of sustained, defensive work. Finally, broadening the scope to communities operating beyond the Great Firewall, our fourth paper by Kana Yanxin Lu (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Maynooth University) explores the dynamics of "autonomous digital labour" among Chinese lesbian camgirls. Lu's work reveals how this form of digital sexual labour functions as a mode of political resistance against state-controlled censorship and nationalist patriarchy. It uncovers a striking paradox wherein creators express political agency, while their consumers—often heterosexual men illegally bypassing the firewall themselves—simultaneously defend state power and reproduce patriarchal narratives. Together, these four papers illuminate the high stakes of digital engagement and dynamic affective economies in East and Southeast Asia. By juxtaposing creative, curatorial, and defensive digital labours, the panel provides a textured understanding of how queer subjectivities are negotiated online, offering crucial insights into the precarious yet persistent project of building alternative queer worlds in the digital age.

Eva Cheuk Yin Li (Lecturer, King's College London)
Dr. Liang Ge (Lecturer, University College London)
Kaydence Sun (PhD Candidate, Lancaster University)
Kana Yanxin Lu (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Maynooth University)

Digital gaming practices beyond the field of gaming

Digital gaming practices have variously been said to extend the “normative order of reasoning” that began with game theory and continued with neoliberalism (Jagoda, 2020); to further the impulse towards pre-emptive control that is the technoscientific legacy of cybernetics (Croghan, 2003); and to train productive worker-consumers and soldier-citizens (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter, 2009). What these perspectives have in common is the view that our habituation through practices in a virtual system can carry forwards into other domains, that certain ways of gauging value and reasoning about relations with others can be sedimented in individuals. In this panel, we propose taking a critical fine-grained approach to particular cases in which digital gaming practices have migrated beyond the game worlds in which they were formed. Our view is that totalising theoretical claims are in need of spiralling, progressive refinement. We also believe that the work of critique calls for us to formulate theoretical perspectives that look beyond the specificities of the phenomena in question. In ‘The concept of ‘gamer habitus’’, Feng Zhu will consider how taking a relational view of the Bourdieusian concept of ‘habitus’ can inform our understanding of the way in which gaming practices are not always confined to a specific ‘field’ of gaming. Gaspard Pelurson will then consider how digital flânerie resonates with a wish to hike and explore physical terrains. Drawing on queer theories of exploration and orientation, it suggests how practices resist normative pathways and cultivate openness to alternative modes of movement. In ‘The figure of the NPC’, Rob Gallagher will discuss how the concept of the non-playable character or ‘NPC’ has migrated from gaming discourse into other domains of culture in recent years, from far-right memes and viral TikToks to Marxist video art. Finally, Astrid Van den Bossche will draw on the shadow trading markets surrounding gaming platforms like Roblox to explore what ‘platform pedagogies’ might mean in the context of economic enculturation on digital playgrounds.

Short biographies

Feng Zhu researches habits, dispositions, and relations to self through gaming practices.

Gaspard Pelurson researches queer game studies, temporality, and ludic pedagogy.

Rob Gallagher researches the spread of terms, logics and aesthetics from gaming to other areas of culture.

Astrid Van den Bossche researches digital childhood and consumer culture, including economic enculturation on digital platforms.

Game Worker Solidarity: understanding unionisation in the games industry

This panel is a hybrid of academic papers from Jamie Woodcock and Mike Cook (KCL, Department of Informatics) and contributions from game worker union activists (to be confirmed closer to the time). There has been a wave of unionisation in the games industry since the formation of GWU (Game Workers Unite) in 2018. As this social movement spread and developed, game workers have sought to unionise in different local contexts, involving a range of collective actions. Seven years have now passed since the movement for unionisation began at the international level and then developed in different ways at the national level as game workers attempted to unionise. There are emerging models of unionisation that have adapted to both the national industrial relations context and the chosen union that game workers have joined or formed alliances with. While in some cases, workers have been able to win recognition and begin negotiating, in other cases, game workplaces have proven to be much more hostile to unionisation. The panel builds on Game Worker Solidarity (GWS). This project maps and documents collective movements among game workers. It began as a collaboration between academics and game workers, particularly aimed at collecting and preserving an emerging history of game worker organising. The panel will present findings and reflections from across the new wave of unionisation.

The Craft of Researching Platform Work: Methodologies and Challenges

This panel brings together researchers examining platform labour to explore the methodological, ethical, and practical dimensions of studying work mediated by digital platforms. Platform labour—ranging from gig economy delivery services to freelance digital labour—presents unique challenges for researchers, including opaque algorithmic management, dispersed and fluid worker populations, and the rapidly evolving nature of platforms themselves. These conditions create significant uncertainties that shape how research is conducted, from designing studies to collecting and interpreting data.

Our panel foregrounds the “craft” of research in this context, emphasising the hands-on, adaptive, and reflective practices scholars develop to navigate complex research environments. Panellists will discuss strategies for

gaining access to workers and platforms, negotiating ethical considerations around consent, surveillance, and privacy, and responding to methodological hurdles such as sampling difficulties, data incompleteness, and the influence of platform-mediated labour dynamics on study outcomes. The panel also engages with conceptual challenges, highlighting the importance of looking beyond the platform to adjacent actors and the specific difficulties this poses—particularly because it decentres the digital. We will also consider the emotional and relational dimensions of research in this field, including how scholars manage interactions with workers who are simultaneously research subjects and participants navigating precarious work conditions. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the panel highlights both the creativity and the constraints inherent in studying platform labour, and the creative and critical, self-reflexive ways to design research in platform studies. We aim to provide insights into how methodological and conceptual decisions intersect with ethical responsibilities, and how researchers balance rigour, reflexivity, and responsiveness in uncertain and rapidly changing research contexts. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the practical, intellectual, and conceptual work involved in platform labour research, as well as an appreciation for the broader implications of studying labour in digital economies where access, transparency, and accountability are often limited. Ultimately, this panel offers a space to share experiences, foster dialogue, and collectively reflect on the evolving practices, dilemmas, and innovations that define the craft of researching work in the digital age.

Guz Alyanak* is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Oxford Internet Institute, UK.

Arturo Arriagada* is Associate Professor of Digital Culture and Creative Labour in the School of Communications at Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez in Chile.

Tugce Bidav* is Lecturer in Digital Labour and Marketing in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London, UK.

Kylie Jarrett* is Professor of Information and Communication Studies in the School of Information and Communication Studies at University College Dublin, Ireland.

Jobias Kuttler is Research Associate at the Fairwork Secretariat based at the WZB, Germany.

Funda Ustek-Spilda is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London, UK.

Jonas Valente is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Oxford Internet Institute, UK.

*Presenting Author

DIGITAL X CLIMATE

Digital technologies have long been sold through fantasies of limitlessness and seamless continuity, while obscuring staggering environmental and human costs. Over the last decade, it has become increasingly clear these systems depend on extractive labor, mineral and water depletion, and fossil fuels—with environmental impacts rivaling those of the aviation industry. Yet the dominant narratives of innovation and immateriality persist, masking the material realities of our digital infrastructures.

Our dependence on energy-intensive technologies—cloud computing, AI, and smart devices— contributes significantly to the climate crisis, demonstrating the profound unsustainability of our always-on digital culture. These systems not only contribute to environmental degradation but also reinforce global inequalities, relying on precarious labor and disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.

This panel asks: How does digital technology contribute to the intensifying climate emergency? What would it mean to theorize, demand, and design digital systems within planetary limits? While there is growing awareness of digital capitalism's power to promote distraction and to normalize and incentivize unbounded growth and heedless hyper consumption, this panel interrogates the challenges critics and activists face in asserting the necessity of limits—legal, regulatory, and cultural—as a means of mitigating harm.

We also ask how the digital humanities might offer urgently needed frameworks for critique, resistance, and collective action. What role can digital humanists play in confronting extractive logics and imagining alternative techno-ecological futures?

Bringing together scholars working at the intersection of digital studies and environmental humanities, this panel invites critical reflection on the material and political entanglements of digital culture. It explores how the digital humanities can harness critique toward practices of design, activism, and intervention.

- Dr Rachel Clarke is a researcher at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, whose work explores the intersections of design, media, and social engagement.

- Dr Anna Watkins Fisher is Senior Lecturer in Digital Culture and Media in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London, specializing in critical theory, digital aesthetics, and visual culture.

- Professor Jennifer Gabrys is Chair in Media, Culture and Environment in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge, where she researches the politics and materialities of environmental media and sensing technologies.

- Dr Güneş Tavmen is Lecturer in Digital Infrastructures and Sustainability in the Department of Digital

Humanities at King's College London, focusing on the environmental and political dimensions of digital infrastructures.

Digital Capitalism with Asian Characteristics

Our panel examines the characteristics of digital capitalism in contemporary Asia, particularly its relationship to cultural and creative industries. Panels think about the impact of digital capitalism at multiple scales and temporalities, with particular emphasis on the modes of power they operate through and the way they are instantiated and contested. Panelists will consider topics ranging from the operation of venture capital funds across Asia, to the changing definition of creativity in the post-AI media landscape of Singapore. A concern throughout is whether digital capitalism replicates imperial forms of power which governed large parts of the region before the Second World War. The panel will showcase ongoing work within Nanyang Technological University Singapore in Digital Humanities, particularly in its newly created Asian Centre for Digital Cultures. A crucial question will be how NTU Singapore's location in postimperial Asia allows a reframing of Digital Humanities' central concerns.

Paper titles:

Pei-Sze Chow, An (A)Imperial Mode of Creativity: Generative AI and Creative Labour in Singapore's Media Landscape

Jack Qiu, The historical and institutional roots of SoftBank digital empire: An inter-Asian analysis

Samuel Wee, 'If You Skip This Video, You Kill Me': Algorithmic Optimisation and the Imperial Afterlife of Digital Capitalism".

Jon Wilson, Empires of abstraction – or not - from the East India Company to the Digital Age

OpenStreetMap at 20: Critically reassessing the Wikipedia of Maps

Last year, OpenStreetMap [OSM] - the largest and most successful collaborative map of the world and a critical digital commons infrastructure – celebrated its 20th birthday. Like Wikipedia, OSM is based on principles of openness and neutrality, its data is contributed by volunteers, and its active community remains evocative of the hopes, promises, and utopianism of the early mass adoption of the internet. The context in which OSM operates, however, has shifted radically, from early activists 'liberating' geographic data with handheld GPS devices to its current role as a cornerstone of 'global technical infrastructure'. The making visible processes of OSM requires investigation that moves beyond the technical to consider power, labour, representation, the structuring of the platform economy and the threat of the hegemony of big tech in relation to the promise of a knowledge commons. Drawing on recent calls to 'reignite critical Wikipedia research' (Ford et al 2024, Jankowski et al 2025), our experiences in the ESRC funded project 'Can digital goods be neutral? Evaluating OpenStreetMap's equity through participatory data visualisation' and the communities involved on it (Geochicas, Digital Good Network, LivingMaps Network, researchers at City), we propose a panel that seeks to bring together researchers to spark critical scholarship into OSM. This panel invites questions of both the politics of visibility and the methodological experimentations required by digital humanities researchers to understand how openness and neutrality are being operationalised, configured, maintained and challenged. We, therefore, expect the discussions from this panel to have a wide relevance beyond OSM, including feeding into research on digital commons, community-led digital infrastructures and transferable to many other areas of digital humanities research.

Panellists:

Anne Lee Stele

Gala Camacho

Carlos Cámara-Menoyo

The Future of Digital Research on Encyclopedias

Historical encyclopedias were important cultural repositories which strove to condense all forms of knowledge, but while encyclopedias invite interpretation, their length challenges interpretation. Digital humanities thus holds promise to reveal new knowledge through computation, and meanwhile, encyclopedias have re-emerged as critical sites for negotiating authority, credibility, and epistemic value, through Wikipedia, knowledge graphs, and AI training. The digital epistemologies that emerge alongside encyclopedic works raise important questions of negotiating forms of evidence, differences between disciplines, and moving ideas through epistemological infrastructures from one geography to another. This panel assembles researchers who study the encyclopedia and its role in larger phenomena through various approaches; each will provide a short presentation of their work and work in progress, then convene to discuss what future goals and challenges the digital study of encyclopedias can pursue, and how the various approaches of the panelists might inform future work in new or mixed methodologies.

Chair:

Dr Erik Ketzan.

Panelists:

Dr Giota Alevizou.

Thora Hagen.

Dr Glenn Roe.

Global Digital Cultures Unfolded: Youth Voices, Civic Becoming, and Playful Resistance

As digital media becomes increasingly ingrained in contemporary societies, our everyday lives, practices, politics, identities, and cultures are transformed. To explore these changes, we follow Bollmer's (2018) conceptualization of digital cultures, considering how bodies (and their agency), narratives (about technology), and infrastructures (that shape communication) are intertwined. Using this framework, we explore a unique set of case studies across geographical contexts that employ a medley of methodological approaches — ranging from diaries and questionnaires to critical discourse analysis — with the goal of bringing fresh insights into contemporary digital culture. The first paper explores Portuguese adolescents' perspectives on digital media through a questionnaire, aiming to assess how they compare to collective narratives on technology by adopting a youth-centric approach. The following paper explores how the civic becoming of Filipino Americans, an ethnic minority group, are shaped by affordances on highly visual media. Next, we qualitatively investigate motivations and practices behind the circulation of political memes, paying special attention to the underexplored private exchanges and non-partisan users. Finally, we explore digital subculture's negotiation with state discourse in the global south, employing critical discourse analysis and close textual reading on Chinese fandom's playful resistances. Through these case studies, our panel looks at what hides under the hood of digital cultures: the beliefs, practices, and socio-political dynamics shaping digital environments. Our multi-methodological and people-centric approach allows us to go beyond techno-deterministic framings, emphasizing varying intensities of agency in the global media landscape. We explore how participation in digital spaces is shaped by material aspects, as well as by beliefs and meanings attributed to technology. By moving from the wider digital audiences to niche subcultures, our panel will present a holistic view of contemporary digital culture's inner workings.

Ana Kubrusly

Stephanie Thelwall

Martina Paulenová

Yifei Yang

Mediating and managing tensions: the role of cultural intermediaries in the creator economy in China, Latin America, and the U.S.

Cultural intermediaries have historically been key stakeholders in cultural production, but their roles and positions within cultural industries have shifted significantly with platformization. From their repositioning within production chains to the emergence of new intermediaries, they continue to mediate and manage critical dimensions of cultural production.

This panel brings together an international cohort of scholars investigating the role of cultural intermediaries in the creator economies in China, Latin America, and the U.S. These intermediaries include marketing and advertising professionals, influencer talent managers, and multi-channel networks (MCN) who liaise between content creators, brands, and platforms. In so doing, they must navigate complex relationships and often contradictory demands from each of these parties. We argue that cultural intermediaries both mediate and manage industry tensions to consolidate their positions of power in the industry. On the one hand, these intermediaries facilitate communication across diverse sets of stakeholders, streamlining and professionalizing activities such as launching advertising campaigns or pioneering the use of A.I. tools. On the other, they capitalize on these existing tensions to consolidate their power and legitimize their work in the creator economy.

This panel tackles this dynamic from a global perspective. Caminhas investigates the role that influencer marketing agencies play in adopting A.I. in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, arguing that these agencies establish both symbolic and practical infrastructure for A.I. use in the industry. He and Huang examine how Chinese MCN commodify audience attention, constructing a “beyond users” logic that institutionalizes not only their taste-making but also their role as attention merchants through relationships with platforms and advertisers. Finally, Liu analyzes the strategies that Chinese MCNs undertake to navigate competing priorities across stakeholders to legitimize their work.

Biographies:

Lorena Caminhas is a lecturer in Media Studies at Maynooth University.

Rongxin He is an M.A. student at King's College London.

Yang Huang is a lecturer at Beijing Language and Culture University.

Rendan Liu is a PhD candidate in Digital Humanities at King's College London.

Enriching Cultural Heritage Metadata with Large Language Models and Linked Open Data

The depth and diversity of Cultural Heritage collections are not only a valuable economic resource but enrich lives and foster social and cultural cohesion. However, realising this potential relies on metadata which can be sparse and unstructured, often containing unpopulated fields. This panel explores the transformative potential of combining Large Language Models (LLMs) and Linked Open Data (LOD) to enrich cultural heritage metadata in ways that foster FAIR usage. Panellists organised a five-day workshop on this topic with 24 participants in Leiden, Netherlands, kindly supported by the eScience Center and the Lorentz Center@lambda. The primary output was the Cultural Heritage AI Cookbook which combines LOD and LLMs to offer a pathway for heritage institutions to enrich metadata at scale. This panel will include participants from cultural heritage, computer science and digital humanities to examine the development, implications and potential impact of the cookbook.

The cookbook provides recipes in the form Google Colab notebooks for the recognition, disambiguation, and relations of named entities, for the evaluation of the accuracy, validity and biases of outputs and for applications based on enriched data. LOD has proven effective in structuring entities such as place, people, objects and events, but implementation can require a massive investment of time, resource and expertise. LLMs have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to interpret and contextualise natural language. However, while more intuitive to use, LLMs' probabilistic and variable outputs make data enrichment unstable and unpredictable: they can return simply too many errors to make their use worthwhile for data curation. This panel will discuss how a careful combination of both approaches can harness the benefits and mitigate the weaknesses of each. Panellists will discuss the challenges of embedding AI in cultural heritage practice, the role of FAIR principles in cultural heritage metadata and new potential forms of engagement with collections.

Gethin Rees - Lecturer in Digital Products and Industries, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London, UK - Enriching Cultural Heritage Metadata with Large Language Models and Linked Open Data: a Lorentz center workshop

Rossana Damiano - Associate Professor of Computer Science, Department of Informatics, University of Turin, Italy - From Experimentation to Assessment: Evaluating AI-Enriched Metadata

William Thorne - PhD candidate, School of Computer Science, University of Sheffield; National Gallery - Why doesn't this work for me, it worked for them? The challenges of reproducibility and domain adaptation when applying LLMs for heritage metadata extraction

Labour in Systems: Linking AI Development, Automation and Work

Artificial intelligence and platform technologies enabling automation are reshaping not just how we work but also how we perceive and govern it. From large language models, autonomous agents to machine learning systems and predictive data analytics - we are witnessing the rise of new technologies and services that promise to augment human capability, reconfiguring labour processes and workers' identities, but also impact labour markets and socio-economic development. Underlying new AI systems and technologies is also a large global data workforce, for instance, the ones engaged in data annotation, validation and model refinement (see Tubaro, Casilli and Coville, 2020; Muldoon, Cant and Graham, 2024). The 'human-in-the-loop' processes are therefore indispensable, yet they expose workers to dynamics of de-skilling and re-skilling, threats to professional identity and status, uncertain employment and career pathways (Rani and Dhir, 2024). In interconnected and global markets, these risks and uncertainties 'extend down' the labour market hierarchy - from sub-contracted annotators, content moderators and techies in the global South, to freelancer creatives and salaried professionals in the global North. The recent waves of layoffs in the global IT and IT-enabled services sector, often citing automation and AI, foreshadow the impact of these technologies and highlight their volatility. This panel will aim map the current state and future trajectories of automation and AI development through its interaction with human labour in different industries, sectors and geographies:

Panellists:

1) James Oyange, Founder, Data Safety Alliance

Title - Beyond the Algorithm: Visualizing Global Data Flows and Worker Rights in the AI Supply Chain

This talk exposes the hidden labour underpinning AI systems by mapping content moderation and data work across Kenya and Nigeria. By tracing data flows through 17 global companies, it reveals the systemic precarity and labour violations embedded within the AI supply chain. The presentation also highlights how workers are reclaiming "power through data" through legal access requests and collective evidence-building to demand accountability from global technology platforms.

2) Dr Uma Rani, Senior Economist, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Title - Human Cogs in the AI Supply Chain: Experiences of Workers in India and Kenya

This presentation examines the interconnections between algorithmic labour and data labour, focusing on the lived experiences and working conditions of data workers in India and Kenya. Drawing on recent ILO surveys conducted between 2022 and 2023, it explores issues including surveillance, low pay, psychological strain, and the invisibility of labour that sustains AI systems.

3) Dr Aditya Ray, Senior Lecturer, UWE Bristol

Title- Generative AI and the Reorganisation of Knowledge Work in the IT&ITeS Outsourcing Sectors

This presentation examines how generative AI is reshaping 'knowledge work' across India's IT and ITeS sectors. It explores how decisions around AI adoption are driven by multinational firms and global technology platforms elsewhere, and how their impacts are experienced locally by workers.

Conceptualising Digital Public in India

Panel Coordinator/ Moderator- Dr Aakansha Natani

The idea of the digital public has gained significant traction in India amidst the rapid expansion of state-led digital public infrastructures and the increasing entanglement of everyday life with platformized technologies. From governance and identity to finance, labor and service delivery, digital systems are no longer peripheral, they are central to how public life is imagined, structured, and experienced. In this context, this panel brings together critical perspectives that seek to unpack the conceptual, political and material dimensions of the digital public in India.

Rather than taking the digital public as a given or a benign space of participation, the panel interrogates the assumptions embedded within it: What constitutes "publicness" in digital infrastructures? How do state policies and regulatory frameworks shape the formation of the digital public? In what ways do digital systems reconfigure the relationship between citizens, markets and the state? And crucially, how are labor, identity, and agency being transformed through digital mediation? Through interdisciplinary inquiry, the panel aims offer a grounded and critical lens on how digital publics are being made, governed, and contested in India.

Paper 1: The Making of India's Digital Public: Policy Trajectories and Regulatory Dynamics (Dr Aakansha Natani)
Paper 2: The Paradoxical Public? Digital Public Infrastructure and the Citizen-Subject (Dr. Manohar Kumar and Dr. Praveen Priyadarshi)
Paper 3: On the Importance of the Public in the 'Digital Public' (Prof. Shishir K Jha)
Paper 4: Whose flexibility? The shifting contours of control over time on platform work in India (Prof. Balaji Parthasarathy)

Theorising AI development and impacts from Eastern Africa

As scholars grapple with the nature and significance of generative AI, it is critical to look beyond the gaze of theories, institutions and experiences which derive from Global North contexts. Inequalities in how - and whose - knowledge is valued, and in the resources, institutions and priorities of academia, mean that without intentional efforts, it is likely that understandings of AI will be constrained by a small subset of scholars, institutions and experiences. This narrows the conceptual registers from which we might make sense of why AI matters, while hampering us from contending with ongoing and historical global interconnections and colonial injustices in the context of AI. This panel features scholars who are attempting to explore the implications of AI through critical theories that emanate from (Eastern) Africa. This work is informed by the subregion's status as an important site of global digital innovation in itself (e.g. groundbreaking developments in digital finance) and a locus of foundational decolonial thinking around language and cultural imperialism.

Papers

Kojo Apeagyei: Set Course for liberation: African agency and imagination in shaping AI futures
Peter Chonka, Stephanie Diepeveen and Yidnekachew Haile: "No language left behind?" Predictive text, generative AI and dilemmas of digital inclusion for marginalized languages
George Karekwaivanane: Disasters and divination: examining AI-powered early warning systems in Eastern Africa
Nanjala Nyabola: Foundations for African feminism as an ethics for artificial intelligence

Critical AI practices

What are the prospects of "critical AI practices" grounded in digital arts and humanities research? This panel proposal draws together critical AI, data and Internet researchers to explore how the notion of critical technical practice might inspire contemporary critical and creative engagements with machine-learning technologies.

Originating in 'endogenous critique' of symbolic AI, critical technical practices (CTP) have been characterised as those which have "one foot planted in the craft work of design and the other foot planted in the reflexive work of critique" (Agre, 1997). This notion has been adopted and adapted by many fields and communities of practice – re-envisioning critique in relational terms (van Geenen, van Es & Gray, 2023). How might CTP be re-activated, re-equipped and pluralised to address challenges posed by current paradigms of deep-learning and data-intensive AI and their consequences?

In keeping with the theme of this event, critical AI practices can be envisaged as those which support critical inquiry both with and about AI technologies. They explore how capacities of machine learning may be reoriented in light of critical research on AI and its social, cultural, economic and ecological consequences – from biased datasets to polluting data centres to extractivist economies. How might critiques of AI grounded in decolonial, feminist and Indigenous scholarship inform not only refusing AI, but ways of engaging with it differently?

This panel examines different approaches to critical AI practices through a review of a range of practices and projects in these areas, as well as underpinning theories – drawing on research from across the Public Data Lab research network (<https://publicdatalab.org/>) and the Deep Culture project at the University of Amsterdam (<https://deep-culture.org/>). It aims to support those interested in critical AI practices to gather and learn from each other – re-imagining and recomposing the epistemic and societal possibilities of AI beyond the platforms, infrastructures and logics which currently predominate.

The panel is proposed by Tobias Blanke (Professor of AI and Humanities; University of Amsterdam), Liliana Bounegru (Senior Lecturer in Digital Media, Culture and Society, King's College London), Jonathan Gray (Reader in Critical Infrastructure Studies, King's College London), Sal Hagen (Postdoctoral researcher in Deep Learning and Digital Methods, University of Amsterdam), Noortje Marres (Professor in Science, Technology and Society,

University of Warwick), Sabine Niederer (Professor of Visual Methodologies, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences), Donato Ricci (Head of Design Research, médialab, Sciences Po, Paris), Daniela van Geenen (PhD Candidate, University of Siegen), together with colleagues from the Public Data Lab.

Game engine technologies as infrastructure for creative labour

Game engines have transcended their original purpose, emerging as foundational infrastructures that reshape creative practices across the culture industries. From film production and architectural visualization to digital art and real-time immersive media, Unity and Unreal Engine now power diverse creative ecosystems far beyond gaming. This panel examines the cultural, economic, and political implications of this technological shift, exploring how game engines function as platforms that both enable and constrain creative expression.

Drawing on critical platform studies, media archaeology, and cultural studies, our four speakers interrogate the complex relationships between technological affordances, creative labour, and cultural production. The panel addresses critical questions: How do game engines function as infrastructures that mediate creative labour? What new forms of digital labour emerge within engine-mediated creative workflows? How do artists and creators negotiate agency within these automated systems? By examining engines as socio-technical assemblages, we reveal how these platforms shape not only what gets made, but who gets to make it and under what conditions. This interdisciplinary conversation illuminates the broader implications of platform capitalism in the algorithmic age, and the influence of videogame technologies for the creative industries.

Paolo Ruffino will present findings of the 'Engine Workers' project, which investigates how game engines are shaping the work and lives of digital artists in the London area.

Aleena Chia will discuss how game engines operate epistemologically – representing racial variation in ways that undermine the very basis for diversity politics, however fraught.

Dan Strutt will speculate on some ethical futures for the kinds of embodied interaction that game engines afford, within a framework of telematic arts, dance, and 'technoethics'.

Teodora Alata will discuss how game engines can operate not only as tools of realism, but also as speculative infrastructures, where departures from prescribed cultural possibilities open pathways for resistant and alternative re-worldings.: *Affect, Metaphysics and Post-Cinema*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Sociotechnical Circulations: Ethnographies of Connection, Articulation, and Blockage in Global Digital Cultures

Early social science and humanities research on digital technologies focused in large part on the Global North, with work on the Global South being framed largely in terms of underdevelopment and digital divides, through the literature on information and communication technologies and development (ICTD). Recent years have seen significant shifts in these dynamics, as digital cultures in the Global South are examined as distinct phenomena in their own right. In this panel, we push these understandings further to examine how digital cultures are produced through circulations of knowledge, practice, and technology across different geographies, to construct (always unfinished, always partial) "global" digital cultures. We draw from our work to show how global digital cultures are produced through connections across regions, through rearticulation as cultures travel, and in blockages as governments, corporations, and other powerful actors seek to control and close off the circulations we study. Elisa Oreglia will discuss expertise and knowledge exchanges among Global South countries, focusing on tech innovations in Cambodia and the role played by entrepreneurs, investors and technicians from China, Central and South Asia. Rafal Zaborowski will examine intergenerational fandom and its circulation across digital platforms, showing how audience practices complicate national identities and cultural boundaries, and reshape family and community dynamics. Finally, Ashwin Mathew will explore how the technical communities who maintain and operate Internet infrastructure coordinate their work across corporate and state boundaries through circulations of knowledge in transnational communities of practice.

Critical Approaches to Text-Based Digital and Computational Humanities

As quantitative methods for text analysis have evolved from early humanities computing to contemporary digital humanities, scholars have developed diverse approaches to understanding cultural production and discourse through computational means. This panel brings together researchers working across historical and contemporary corpora to critically examine the applications, challenges, and ethical dimensions of these evolving methods. Drawing on expertise spanning classical languages to digital social spaces, panellists explore how computational text analysis reshapes our understanding of culture, from stylometric analysis of literary texts (Ketzan, 2021) to discourse analysis of social media (Wells, 2023) and social network analysis of idea transmission (Hill, 2023).

The panel addresses critical methodological and interpretive challenges that emerge when applying quantitative methods to qualitative humanities questions, particularly as digital infrastructures and computational tools become integral to research practice. Panellists will discuss issues of multilingualism in digital spaces, semantic annotation and Linked Open Data design for historical languages (Farina), and the integration of generative AI tools in humanities research. The conversation will engage with fundamental tensions between scalable computational analysis and traditional close reading, examining how corpus linguistics (McGillivray, 2017), computational social science, social network analysis, and digital discourse analysis can productively combine with humanistic inquiry whilst developing and enriching research infrastructures such as CLARIN (Bushnell, 2024). These discussions will explore not only the technical possibilities of text-based methods but also their interpretive limitations and the ethical frameworks necessary for responsible research.

Through brief presentations and moderated discussion, the panel will foster critical reflection on how computational approaches to text can advance our understanding of culture and discourse whilst remaining attentive to the methodological assumptions, data ethics, and interpretive frameworks that shape this work.

Panelists

Dr Naomi Wells

Dr Erik Ketzan

Dr Barbara McGillivray

Dr Megan Bushnell

Dr Mark J. Hill

Andrea Farina

(Moderator) Dr Antonina Puchkovskaia

Climate Futures in Digital Cultures

Centre for Digital Cultures, Leuphana University of Lüneburg

In this panel we propose a framework for researching the relation between climate futures and digital cultures along three dimensions. The first considers the way computing has contributed through its environmental footprint to the climate crisis, while the history of computing already entails a reckoning with the environmental. The second reflects the ways computing is today used to manage climate, either to mitigate the climate crisis or to provide resilient climate futures. The third highlights the way our very relation to climate futures is mediated through computing, such as through the simulation(s) of climate futures but also imaginaries distributed through computational media. In short, reflecting on climate futures in digital cultures involves understanding computing as a contributor to the climate crisis, as a potential mitigator, and as intimately involved in making climate futures. The panel involves four presentations. In a first presentation, Armin Beverungen and Jan Müggenburg will offer conceptual reflections on the relation between climate futures and digital cultures. Three further presentations will explore the three dimensions outlined above: Luca Scheunpflug will discuss water struggles around (water- and energy-hungry) data centres; Diego Arruda will explore how climate interfaces are enrolled making cities resilient towards climate effects; and Jana Hitziger will outline how digital disaster management tools, designed to empower governments to envision climatic changes, seek to pre-empt (catastrophic) climate futures. Overall, the aim of the panel is to map how thoroughly entangled digital cultures and climate futures are, and how urgent it is to reckon with the ways in which computing relates to the climate crisis (as contributing, mitigating and envisioning) and how our relation to climate futures requires us to work through the contradictions of digital cultures.

The participants are all involved in the Climate Futures in Digital Cultures Research Group at the Centre for Digital Cultures, Leuphana University Lüneburg. They have backgrounds in media studies, media history, sociology and science and technology studies.

Armin Beverungen
Diego Arruda
Jana Hitziger
Jan Müggenburg
Luca Scheunpflug

Beyond the binary: How informal practices sustain, subvert, and reshape digital systems

This panel investigates what happens at the edges of digitization; where algorithmic systems encounter social complexity, where cases do not fit, where certain types of knowledge or judgements exceed computational logics or codification through data. There is a long history of discussions within the humanities and social sciences about the limits of binary or rule based thinking (Dreyfus 1972; Polanyi 1958), classifications (Bowker and Star 1999) and datafication (Leoneli et al 2013, Collins 1991) yet these lessons are often forgotten as systems appear more seamless: when more and more of social life is 'born digital'. When formal digital systems break down or fail to account for the complexities of everyday life, they invite scams, and loopholes (Ziewitz 2017). They proliferate breakdowns than demand continuous repair, tinkering and patchwork solutions (Ruckenstein et al Lehtiniemi 2025; Räisänen 2025). They also give rise to imposters (Woolgar et al 2021), people forced to perform identities the system can recognise while others struggle to fit in these boxes. Rather than merely echoing familiar critiques of digitization, this panel focuses on how the limits of the digital are worked out in practice. We are particularly interested in practical role of human and non-human discretion in sorting out these edge cases; how street level bureaucrats or platform moderators police and re-make boundaries; how handling exceptions creates new rules, and how digital systems grow in complexity as new overflows (Callon 1998) breed new interventions. These practices do not just maintain or uphold systems but also transform them in the process. This panel will include papers on algorithmic systems in diverse contexts spanning sports adjudication, refugee processing, gaming economies, online marketplaces, and healthcare platforms. Across these fields, we highlight forms of discretion and negotiation that digital systems intensify rather than eliminate, bringing the informal practices and hidden labours that underpin automation to the foreground.

Dispossessed imposters: identity workaround and exploitation in the digital livelihoods of refugees.
Margie Cheesman & Andreas Hackl

From trust trades to exploiting glitches: Children's encounters with grey economies in Roblox.
Astrid Van den Bossche & Stefan Bernitter

Trust, Frictions, and Power at the crossroad of tradition and digital platforms: Myanmar jade traders and Chinese livestream ecommerce.
Thant Sin Oo & Elisa Oreglia

On the Line: Revisiting the Turing / Polanyi debate about the limits of rule based AI.
David Moats

Organised by Margie Cheesman and David Moats.

Geospatial Micro-blogging: Dynamics, Politics and Economics of Building Digital Memory of Spatial Heritage with Hexology

Background: UK-based geospatial microblogging platform Hexology collaborated with King's College London (KCL) and Ternopil National Pedagogical University (TNPU) to produce 8 collections of geospatial content about Ukraine, to preserve its cultural heritage and identity from erasure.

Students from KCL, TNPU & The University of Edinburgh participated in a Global Digital Citizenship and Digital Cultural Curation of Cultural Heritage internship at Hexology. They researched, developed and published themed, historically accurate collections into real physical locations - in Ukraine.

Enhancing physical spaces with digital narratives, Hexology anchors micro-stories made of text, image and new immersive media into location - transforming public space into a living archive of collective memory.

This session draws upon Internship outputs to explore how geospatial microblogging influences politics, social inclusion, regional economies, and preserves cultural voices under conditions of displacement and war. The case study reveals how students and researchers co-created location-based digital media and new forms of experience design - audiences can view in the context of place and share online.

Discussion points:

1. digital internships and interdisciplinary mentorship as a pedagogical model
2. ethical and emotional dimensions of representing war-affected heritage
3. potential of Hexology as a medium to enhance culture, community and place.
4. citizen-driven archiving and place-based experiences that increase accessibility, individual participation, inclusivity and diversity
5. wider impact of geospatial digital culture on society and commerce, well being, social cohesion, quality of life, mental health and mindfulness
6. Social Diplomacy on the international stage

Panelists:

1. Darrel Butlin, Hexology CEO, Philosophy of Hexology Movement
2. Dr Oksana Yarema, KCL / TNPU, Internship as Cross-Border Collaboration for Culture Decolonising
3. Dr Gabriele Salciute Civiene, KCL, Dynamics and Politics of Building Digital Memory of Spatial Heritage
4. Yustyna Prystupa, TNPU Student representative sharing their internship experience

Ethics of Care and the 'Afterlives' of Digitisation Projects

This panel brings together scholars working across digital humanities, community heritage, and critical data studies to reflect on the 'afterlives' of digitisation projects, with a focus on African and African Diaspora communities. While digitisation is often framed in terms of access and preservation, less attention is paid to the longer-term conditions that shape what happens beyond initial project funding.

Drawing on a range of approaches and case studies, contributors will explore questions of care, sustainability, and responsibility in relation to digital infrastructures, archival practices, and community engagement. The session will consist of short provocations followed by an open discussion, inviting reflection on how we might rethink the ethics of digital work beyond moments of creation and towards its ongoing maintenance and use."

Kelly Foster is an open knowledge advocate and public historian, working both online, and "on road" as London Blue Badge Guide. Kelly is a chapter lead for Creative Commons UK and founding organiser of AfroCROWD UK, an initiative to encourage more people of African heritage to contribute to Wikipedia and its sister projects. Kelly has over 15 years of experience in the UK's community archives sector and is a founding member of TRANSMISSION, a collective of archivists and historians of African descent.

Laura Gibson is Senior Lecturer in Digital Content Management Education in the Department of Digital Humanities, where she has taught since 2019. Her research focuses on decolonisation and digitisation in cultural heritage contexts, with a particular focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on several years working in South African museums — including as Collections and Digitisation Manager at the Luthuli Museum national legacy project — her current work, part-funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, explores indigenous knowledge exchange and digital repatriation.

Hannah Ishmael is Lecturer in Digital Culture and Race in the Department of Digital Humanities. Prior to joining King's in 2023, Hannah was the Collections and Research Manager at Black Cultural Archives, where she worked with Google to provide an array of content for their Arts and Culture platform amongst other projects.

Hannah's doctoral research focused on the development of Black-led archives in London, and her current interests include the history of archives and technology, and the role of care and ethics within digital projects.

Etienne Joseph is a London-based archivist, educator, and co-founder of Decolonising the Archive (DTA), an initiative developing theory, practice, and training for communities of African heritage. Etienne's doctoral research explored the concept of the living archive, and his work engages critically with how digital tools can either reinforce or challenge colonial-era frameworks of collection and classification. Since joining Hackney Archives, he has championed a person-centred approach to making community heritage visible and accessible beyond institutional collections.

J. Emeka Nwankwo is Lecturer in Digital Media and Culture Education in the Department of Digital Humanities. His PhD, completed at Manchester Metropolitan University, examined the political economy of submarine cables as a lens onto digital coloniality, and his current research focuses on the governance and risks of communication technologies and infrastructure, with particular attention to developing countries and postcolonial thought. Emeka is also interested in how physical infrastructures shape culture — including language and visibility and his work sits at the intersection of digital politics, media studies, and the structural inequalities that underpin how digital access and digitisation are organised globally.

Governing Platforms, Shaping Work: Critical Perspectives on the State and its Role in Regulating the Gig and Platform Economy

The rapid expansion of digital labour platforms has brought about changes to the organisation and governance of work, with profound implications for labour markets and employment relations. While platforms often position themselves as borderless innovators, lobbying for customised rules that might exempt them from traditional employer responsibilities, their operations are, in reality, continuously shaped by a complex interplay of political actors at state, national, and local levels through existing laws and emerging regulations. Beyond official institutions, civil society organizations, labour unions, and new workers' associations also play a decisive role, actively shaping the state's approach and challenging the inherent power asymmetries within the platform model.

This panel aims to contribute to a critical examination of regulatory trends, contentions, and shortcomings within the gig and platform economy. We will focus specifically on the broader effects of these developments on employment relations systems and labour markets worldwide. By adopting transnational and comparative lenses, the panel will explore how regulation is unfolding in diverse contexts of gig and platform work, critically mapping the spectrum of state initiatives — from the introduction of new legal instruments and selective enforcement to broader re-regulation efforts — that are collectively shaping the future of labour protections.

To enrich this critical dialogue, the panel will leverage global perspectives, marking the recent launch of the ILO Digital Labour Platform Policy Tracker, a new global comparative tool. The discussion will deeply interrogate the multifaceted role of the state in governing platform work, particularly as it destabilizes conventional categories of employment. Drawing on established traditions in the sociology of work, industrial relations, labour studies, and labour geography, the panel will emphasize the crucial importance of linking regulatory frameworks to the lived experiences of platform workers and understanding the spatial embedding of these evolving labour regimes, ultimately offering a nuanced, critical, and comparative perspective on this transformative phenomenon.

Dr Uma Rani, ILO, "Global trends in the regulation of platform work"

Dr Luciana Zorzoli, University of Essex - "Regulatory Strengthening, Innovation, or Recoupling? State Strategies in Governing Platform Work in Latin America".

Dr Aditya Ray, UWE Bristol - "Bringing the State Back In? Gig and Platform Workers' Welfare Regulations - Few Lessons from India"

Forging Generative Philology: The Humanitext Project's Vision for Human-AI Collaboration in Classics

This panel introduces the Humanitext project, an initiative to establish "Generative Philology," a new research paradigm for classical studies centered on a collaborative ecosystem between scholars and Large Language Models (LLMs). Confronting the challenge of leveraging LLMs' power while ensuring scholarly rigor, our project

builds a comprehensive framework to transform how humanistic knowledge is produced, validated, and accumulated. This presentation will detail the three core components of our project, each covered by a panel member. The first part will focus on the "autonomous research agent," an AI designed to act as an intellectual partner. We will explain how this agent can formulate and execute research plans, navigate diverse information sources, and construct hypotheses in a continuous dialogue with human experts, augmenting the researcher's cognitive process. The second part introduces the "collaborative knowledge platform," a web-based environment where the scholarly community can collectively evaluate, refine, and augment AI-generated interpretations. This system facilitates a peer-review process for AI outputs and creates a dynamic, self-improving knowledge base. The third part details the foundational "high-definition textual infrastructure" that underpins these systems. We will discuss its design principles, focusing on the data integration required for the agent to access diverse information sources, and the sustainable data structure designed to support the collaborative platform. Together, these three pillars form an integrated ecosystem. Our project pioneers a new model of human-AI partnership and community-driven AI governance, contributing a critical perspective on the future of digital scholarship.

Naoya Iwata
Ikko Tanaka
Jun Ogawa

How is AI changing agency?

This panel brings together theoretical approaches to studying human agency in contexts where workers and learners use generative AI. Presentations are grounded in agentic expressions like judgment, learning, reflection, and mastery. In the context of their emergence, agentic expressions represent both a source of value and friction. Institutions may therefore aim to 'automate away' such expressions in the name of efficiency, affecting the kind of agency and value that can be exercised and produced. Further theoretical work is needed to unpack whether and when such automation results in a blunting of agentic expression through deskilling, or an augmentation of agentic possibilities through higher-order work and learning.

Mark Carrigan will discuss agency and generative AI tools from a relational and material sociological perspective. This perspective attends to the relationships between generative AI tools and its users through iterated engagement.

Helen Beetham will present research into critical judgement and reflection in higher education. She argues that memory and position-taking are key to the development of agency, and uses Bernard Stiegler's terms 'internalisation' and 'externalisation' to show how the use of AI by students is challenging pedagogic assumptions. Putting Stiegler in dialogue with Katherine Hayles, she suggests divergent possible futures for human agency if these capacities are substantially externalised to generative AI.

Morten Hansen will use Aidan Toner-Rodgers' infamous pre-print 'Artificial Intelligence, Scientific Discovery, and Product Innovation' to discuss the role professional judgment plays in various types of work, and the relationship between judgment, decision making, and generative AI.

Helene Friis Ratner will present her research on how generative AI unsettle prevailing figures of the human writer in higher education. Drawing on Lucy Suchman's (2007) concept of human-machine reconfigurations, she examines contemporary discussions about writing for assessment and learning, tracing how they position human agency in relation to writing technologies.

Speakers

Dr Morten Hansen, Lecturer in Digital Economy and Innovation Education, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London.

Dr Helen Beetham, Lecturer in Digital Education, Manchester Institute of Education, the University of Manchester.

Dr Mark Carrigan, Senior Lecturer in Education, Manchester Institute of Education, the University of Manchester.

Professor Helene Friis Ratner, Professor in Organization Studies and Technology, Department of Technology, Management and Economics, Technical University of Denmark

Co-Creating Digital Futures: Building Bridges Between Cultural Heritage, Open Knowledge, and Generative AI

As AI systems rapidly evolve, cultural, academic, governmental and civil society institutional data infrastructures face mounting pressure to engage with these technologies, both as potential accelerators of access, and as sources of new ethical and epistemic challenges. The ways in which AI systems represent, categorize, and re-use data are not abstract technical concerns; they shape what is remembered, cited, and valued in digital culture and academia.

This panel introduces *AI-BRIDGES* (AI-Driven Bridging of Resources and Integration of Data Governance in Educational and Cultural Heritage Systems), an interdisciplinary project funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship and hosted at the University of London's Digital Humanities Research Hub. *AI-BRIDGES* explores how various institutions, including educational and cultural heritage institutions (ECHIs), Linked Open Data (LOD) platforms such as Wikidata and Wikibase, and AI platforms tools can be meaningfully connected to promote transparent, equitable and sustainable data ecosystems.

The project is organized around three "bridges":

1. ECHIs ↔ LOD: Developing low-code/no-code tools to ease metadata publication and participation in open data ecosystems.
2. LOD ↔ AI: Experimenting with retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) models and advanced technologies that embed provenance and verifiability into GenAI workflows.
3. Users ↔ LOD: Designing participatory curation and literacy practices that treat data as a site of collective inquiry.

Rather than showcasing finished results, this panel invites critical discussion of how Scholarship, From Digital Humanities through Computer Science, to practitioners in cultural heritage institutions, can intervene in the design and governance of AI systems; How DH methodologies can foster reflexivity, care, and epistemic justice in data infrastructures; and how cultural and academic institutions might act not as passive data providers, but as co-authors of more equitable digital futures. The panel will be moderated by the AI-BRIDGES project lead, as well as representatives from partnering organizations, in order to allow a holistic discussion of the topic.

Panelists include:

Prof. Elena Simperl, Co-director of the King's AI Institute
Dr. Giota Alevizou, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London
Dr. Valentina Vavassori, Digital Curator, British Library
Dr. Caio Mello, Computational Humanities, University of Luxembourg.

Moderator:

Dr. Shani Evenstein Sigalov, AI-BRIDGES Lead at Digital Humanities Research Hub, University of London.

Building Critical AI Futures: The Role of DH Research Infrastructures

How is the emergence of artificial intelligence compelling digital humanities research infrastructures to reassess their missions, practices, and priorities? As the concept of "the digital" evolves to encompass AI-driven approaches, how are the labs, centers, and organizations that support DH scholarship responding to this rapidly-changing landscape?

This panel brings together representatives from DH research infrastructures in the UK, Europe and the US to share their experiences navigating the AI moment. Panelists include members of the University of Richmond's Center for Liberal Arts and AI, King's Digital Lab, Humboldt University's Interdisciplinary Center for Digitality and Digital Methods, and

Princeton's Center for Digital Humanities. The panelists also play leadership roles in national and international organizations including the Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities and the Association for Computers and the Humanities.

Each speaker will present a key activity - an initiative, project or strategy - that reflects their engagement with AI. Examples may range from curricula for critical AI literacies to building frameworks for AI application in humanities research, creating new forms of infrastructure for cultural data and computational resources, or processes to foster

responsible collaborations. These activities will connect to core values, positions and provocations crucial for the entire DH field: How do we foreground humanities methods—the hermeneutic, qualitative, nuanced, multilingual, and

context-sensitive—when dominant AI norms privilege scale, dichotomy, quantification, and standardization? How do we maintain interpretive authority, research integrity, and plurality of perspectives within an AI-saturated knowledge ecosystem? How do we align with an ethos of open, sustainable and responsible research when mainstream AI systems rely on big corporations models, embed high environmental costs and disregard harmful impact on communities? What must research infrastructures provide at the technical, social, and discipline-specific levels in order to support this new research area?

This panel will map potential futures for DH infrastructures and identify opportunities for meaningful intervention, initiating a conversation about coordinated responses across the international DH infrastructure community.

Panelists

University of Richmond (USA): Lauren Tilton is Professor of Liberal Arts and Digital Humanities and director of the Center for Liberal Arts and AI. She is co-President of the Association for Computing in the Humanities (ACH) and president of the Constituent Organisation Board of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO).

Humboldt University (Germany). Carolin Odebrecht is a Researcher and Managing Director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Digitality and Digital Methods, Campus Mitte (IC D2MCM).

Torsten Hiltmann (Professor of Digital History) and Roland Meyer (Professor of Linguistics) are Co-Directors of IC D2MCM.

Princeton University (USA): Natalia Ermolaev is the Executive Director of the Center for Digital Humanities at Princeton, and is an active member of DH national and international communities.

King's College London (UK): Arianna Ciula is the Director & Principal Research Software Analyst of Kings Digital Lab, and is an active member of the Research Software Engineers (RSE) and DH national and international communities.

Dr Mary Chester-Kadwell is the Principal Research Software Engineer of Kings Digital Lab, and is an active member of the Research Software Engineers (RSE) and DH national and international communities.

Moderator

DARIAH-EU: Toma Tasovac served as DARIAH-EU Director and President of the Board of Directors of DARIAH-EU from 2018-2024, and is currently the Strategic Advisor to the Board of Directors. He leads multiple large projects grants and directs the Belgrade Center for Digital Humanities (BCDH).

King's Digital Lab 10th Anniversary Retrospective

Alongside coinciding with the 25th anniversary of Centre for Computing Humanities (CCH) officially becoming a department and the 15th anniversary of being renamed as Department of Digital Humanities, the conference coincides with the 10th anniversary of King's Digital Lab (KDL)'s establishment.

A little over 10 years ago, KDL was split off from DDH to become the inheritor of much of the research software engineering production of CCH with over 100 projects to care for, alongside collaborating with researchers to design and develop new digital research across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities domains. The Lab formally launched in 2016.

This makes the conference an ideal opportunity to both celebrate achievements and reflect on that decade in operation, and to look forward to the future of KDL as well as Digital Humanities research infrastructure more widely.

The panel will aim to reflect on:

- the contexts and challenges that have shaped and will shape collaboration between what in the UK are increasingly referred to as digital Research Technical Professionals and other researchers, past and present and future;
- organisational and academic contexts that lead to the creation of a dedicated DH infrastructure like KDL, how these have shaped the Lab over the decade and might continue to do so in the future.

Panelists

- Stuart Dunn (Professor of Spatial Humanities, Dept. of Digital Humanities; Head of Cluster, Humanities)
- Daniel Chavez Heras (Lecturer in Digital Culture and Creative Computing, Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL) - lead on the Sculpting Time with Computers and Intelligent Systems for Screen Archives projects, which KDL collaborated on
- Arianna Ciula (panel chair – KDL Director and Principal Research Software Analyst, KCL)

- Matt Penn (Head of Scientific Computing Infrastructure, e-Research, KCL) - co-lead on Federation of Compute and Infrastructures in the Arts and Humanities; NB: since 2024 KDL is a tenant on OpenStack infrastructure managed by e-Research; see <https://kdl.kcl.ac.uk/blog/migration-to-eresearch/>
- Harold Short (KDL Honorary Research Fellows and Emeritus Professor, Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL) - founder and director of the Centre for Computing in the Humanities, project owner for several projects in KDL estate; see <https://kdl.kcl.ac.uk/about/archiving-and-sustainability/>
- James Smithies (Professor of Digital Humanities & Director of the HASS Digital Research Hub, Australian National University) - founding Director of KDL 2015-2021; see <https://kdl.kcl.ac.uk/blog/smithies-departure/>

Digital Humanities histories and futures: Reflections from King's and Beyond – plenary panel

Join us as we reflect on the field of Digital Humanities and its evolution at King's and Beyond with special guests:

Mark Hedges
Paul Spence
Kate Devlin
Arianna Ciula
Harold Short
Marilyn Deegan
Barry Ife

This plenary session will be followed by the drinks reception to honour the 25th anniversary of Centre for Computing Humanities officially becoming a department of King's College London, the 15th anniversary of being renamed as Department of Digital Humanities in 2011, as well as the 10th anniversary of King's Digital Lab.

Tech And Body: plenary panel

Dr Rachael Kent is a leading researcher, author, consultant, and podcast host, and a Senior Lecturer in Digital Economy & Society in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. Her work examines how digital technologies shape mental and physical health, behaviour and everyday life.

Dr Dan Nicolau is a mathematician, engineer and physician based in the Peter Gorer Department of Immunobiology. His research focusses on using mathematics and computer science methods to better understand complex biological systems, particularly as they relate to disease states, inflammation and ageing.

They are joined by Associate Directors:

Dr Lili Golmohammadi (Research Associate in Digital Health Co-design)
Dr Ned Barker (Lecturer in Digital Culture and Technology).

Ecologies of Attention and Perception: plenary panel

Hosted by the Centre for the Ecologies of Attention and Perception at King's College London, the panel will consider how attention and perception are shaped by digital technologies and social infrastructures, while operating across human and more-than-human scales. The speakers will explore attention as a distributed, mediated and ecological phenomenon which is closely entangled with perception. Drawing on conceptual inquiry and creative practice, they will demonstrate how the complexities of attending to the world via vision and other senses, by humans and machines, can be studied, visualised and reimagined today.

Joanna Zylinska and Feng Zhu (King's College London): 'Ecologies of Attention and Perception: An Introduction'
Sasha Litvintseva (Queen Mary University of London), 'The Personal Equation'
Murad Khan (University of the Arts London), 'Convexity: A Commons'

Geoff Cox (London South Bank University), 'AI Vision Has No History'
Paolo Ruffino (King's College London), 'The Infinitely Small and Infinitely Large'

Speakers' abstracts and bios

Joanna Zylinska and Feng Zhu (King's College London): 'Ecologies of Attention and Perception: An Introduction'

The Directors of the Centre for the Ecologies of Attention and Perception at King's College London will outline the theoretical and creative parameters for thinking about how we attend to the world via multiple senses – and how those processes of attention and perception are mediated through multiple layers of our planetary ecologies, both digital and non-digital ones.

Joanna Zylinska is a writer, artist, curator and Professor of Media Philosophy + Critical Digital Practice at King's College London. An advocate of 'radical open-access', she is a co-Director of Open Humanities. Zylinska is an author of a number of books – including *The Perception Machine: Our Photographic Future Between the Eye and AI* (MIT Press, 2023), *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams* (Open Humanities Press, 2020) and *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018). Her own art practice involves experimenting with different kinds of image-based media. Zylinska is currently researching perception and cognition as boundary zones between human and machine intelligence, while examining various narratives of collapse, be it on the level of AI models or planetary systems.

Feng Zhu is Senior Lecturer in Digital Games and Culture in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. His research focuses on the significance of gaming practices as ways in which players carve out habits, dispositions, modes of perception, and relations to self. He is interested in understanding such processes as informing us about how we have always worked on ourselves and in exploring the possibilities for a "critical ontology of ourselves". He is the Lead for the Digital Humanities Game Lab, which provides an experimental space where digital games are used for both research and teaching, and is Associate Director of the Centre for the Ecologies of Perception and Attention.

Sasha Litvintseva (Queen Mary University of London), 'The Personal Equation'

As part of my talk I will show a short clip from my film *Constant*, which describes the creation of the meter during the French revolution by measuring the distance between the pole and equator and dividing that by 10 million (in order to base it on a universal non-subjective constant such as the size of the earth). I will demonstrate how their measurement contained a mistake based on the astronomers not yet knowing to calculate their perceptual subjectivity out of their results, and how to this day we use the meter with this mistake baked in — and speak to the digital imaging technologies we used in making the film, such as the 360 camera, which precisely calculates the observer (itself) out of the image when it mathematically stitches it together.

Sasha Litvintseva is an artist, filmmaker and writer. She is a Reader in Film Practice at Queen Mary University of London and the 2024 winner of the Philip Leverhulme Prize. She is the author of *Geological Filmmaking* (Open Humanities Press, 2022), and the co-author, with Beny Wagner, of *All Thoughts Fly: Monster, Taxonomy, Film* (Sonic Acts Press, 2021). Her films have been exhibited worldwide including at Tate Modern, the Berlinale, Seoul Mediacity Biennale, CPH:DOX, and won numerous awards.

Murad Khan (University of the Arts London), 'Convexity: A Commons'

Drawing on Peter Gärdenfors' theory of conceptual spaces and Paul Churchland's neurocomputational realism, this talk develops convexity as a shared manifold-level grammar of human and machine concept formation, arguing that the differential addressability of these substrates is an emerging design surface within the cognitive ecology we now share with our models.

Murad Khan is Course Leader and Senior Lecturer for the Diploma in Creative Computing at UAL, where he also co-leads the Experimental Infrastructures research hub. His work explores cognitive science, machine learning, research architecture, and the philosophy of mind. As a researcher and practitioner, he has contributed to publications by MIT Press, Open Humanities Press, and e-flux Journal, and presented at xCoAx, the Serpentine Galleries, and Unsound Festival. He continues this work as the co-founder of SCENE, a cognitive research lab, and the sociotechnical design studio Unit Test.

Geoff Cox (London South Bank University), 'AI vision has no history'

The provocation 'no history' is not meant literally (since AI clearly has a history), nor is it a reference to a browser state in which a user's viewing cache has been wiped. Instead, it is used to emphasise how both human and machine perception are determined by historical circumstances. If both humans and AI systems are trained to

perceive over time, what are we to make of the parallels between their training sets? The training set becomes a kind of optical unconscious: not a collection of neutral data, but a sedimented archive of historically conditioned ways of seeing whose ideological assumptions are reproduced at scale to perpetuate the logic of authoritarian visibility.

Geoff Cox works across the fields of computational culture, contemporary art, and image politics, expressed through numerous projects, published works and editorial roles including *The Contemporary Condition* (Sternberg Press), and *DATA browser* (Open Humanities Press). He is currently Professor of Art and Computational Culture at London South Bank University where he is Director of the Digital x Data Research Centre and co-Director of the Centre for the Study of the Networked Image, as well as Adjunct Professor at Aarhus University.

Paolo Ruffino (King's College London), 'The Infinitely Small and Infinitely Large'

In this talk, I will argue that by paying attention to the infinitely small we can find directions for dealing with the infinitely large. More specifically, I will discuss how videogames, a trivial entertainment medium, could offer unexpected suggestions for rethinking scale and agency in the Anthropocene.

Paolo Ruffino is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Curation and Computational Creativity at the department of Digital Humanities, King's College London. His research explores the aesthetics and production cultures of videogames. He is the author of *Unplayable: Videogames for the Post-Anthropocene* (MIT Press 2026) and *Future Gaming: Creative Interventions in Video Game Culture* (Goldsmiths Press 2018). He is the editor of *Independent Videogames: Cultures, Networks, Techniques and Politics* (Routledge 2021) and author of articles for *Games and Culture*, *Convergence*, *Television and New Media*, and *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. He is a founding member of the artist group IOCOSE.



The Digital Conference

