

AI News Digest

05/11/2026 - 05/17/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: HUMANITIES & CULTURAL STUDIES

Exploring Historical Narratives in AI Development

Recent discussions in the humanities highlight the intersection of artificial intelligence and historical narratives. Nina Beguš's book emphasizes how literary narratives shape AI's evolution, while the emergence of 'Vintage LLMs' suggests a new humanistic field that views language models as historical texts. Additionally, research on enslaved fugitives in the Lesser Antilles and emotional expressions in Fatimid Geniza petitions showcases the diverse applications of AI in analyzing historical data. These developments underscore the importance of integrating cultural studies with technological advancements.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Beguš argues that literature fundamentally influences AI development.
- ✓ The 'Vintage LLMs' initiative positions language models as historical artifacts.
- ✓ A dataset on enslaved fugitives provides insights into historical dynamics.

IMPLICATIONS

- The integration of AI in humanities could redefine historical research methodologies.
- Emerging fields like Historical Language Models may attract interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Understanding emotional expressions in historical documents can enhance AI's interpretive capabilities.

1. Book review: Nina Beguš: Artificial humanities: a fictional perspective on language in AI

Category: Research

Departments: English, Computer Science, Philosophy, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: Natural Language Processing, Cultural Narratives in AI, Gendered Perspectives in AI, Nonhuman Dimensions of AI

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 5

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

Nina Beguš's book, *Artificial Humanities: A Fictional Perspective on Language in AI*, argues that the relationship between literature and artificial intelligence is foundational, with literary narratives shaping the ambitions and directions of AI development. She traces the influence of the Pygmalion myth on both technologists and writers, suggesting that this cultural narrative has historically informed the design and expectations of AI systems, particularly in the realm of language. Beguš emphasizes that the social meanings attached to AI's voice and functionality are deeply rooted in historical and gendered contexts, challenging the notion that AI's anthropomorphic qualities are a recent phenomenon. Additionally, she advocates for a broader understanding of AI that includes its nonhuman dimensions, moving beyond the traditional focus on human likeness in intelligent systems.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-03062-1>

2. Editors' Choice: Are "Vintage LLMs" the start of a new humanistic field?

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, History, Philosophy

Topics: Large Language Models, Historical Language Models, Model Effectiveness Ranking, Primary Source Engagement

Impact Score: 24.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 5

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

The article introduces the emerging field of 'Historical Language Models' (Vintage LLMs), highlighting the release of the Talkie-1930 model on April 27. The author posits that language models can be viewed as historical texts, emphasizing the inherent historical context within LLMs. The post discusses potential applications for historical LLMs and ranks their effectiveness for research purposes, while clarifying that these models should complement rather than replace traditional engagement with primary historical sources.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/05/are-vintage-llms-the-start-of-a-new-humanistic-field/>

3. Project: Enslaved Fugitives in the Lesser Antilles, 1760s-1860s

Category: Research

Departments: History, Sociology & Anthropology, Chicano Studies, Languages & Linguistics, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: Science & Research, Historical Dataset Compilation, Multilingual Source Integration, Colonial Interconnectedness, Fugitive Experience Documentation

Impact Score: 21.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

Researchers have compiled a dataset focused on enslaved fugitives from various empires in the Lesser Antilles, which includes islands from the Virgin Islands to Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. The dataset is informed by historical dynamics and emphasizes the interconnectedness of these islands during the slavery period, incorporating multilingual sources to reflect the movement of enslaved individuals across different colonial territories. It documents the experiences of fugitives from English/British, French, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish empires spanning the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. This work aims to provide a comprehensive resource for scholars studying the historical context of slavery in the Caribbean.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/05/project-enslaved-fugitives-in-the-lesser-antilles-1760s-1860s/>

4. Editors' Choice: The Affective Algorithm: Mapping the Emotional Architecture of Fatimid Geniza Petitions

Category: Research

Departments: Philosophy, Sociology & Anthropology, History

Topics: Natural Language Processing, Emotional Language Analysis, Rhetorical Phrase Tagging, Cross-Religious Communication

Impact Score: 21.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

This study analyzes the emotional expressions in Fatimid Geniza petitions from the 10th century, aiming to categorize their distribution across formal sections of the documents. The author identified and tagged 62 rhetorical phrases, mapping them to five emotional registers: Devotion, Humility, Neutrality, Hope, and Desperation. The findings indicate that emotional language played a significant role in the petitioning process, serving as a shared administrative tool that crossed religious lines.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/05/the-affective-algorithm-mapping-the-emotional-architecture-of-fatimid-geniza-petitions-part-2/>

5. DHNow Newsletter, May 13, 2026

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Educational Leadership, Philosophy

Topics: Natural Language Processing, Emotional Language Analysis, Older Language Models, Code-Free NLP Tools

Impact Score: 20.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

This issue of DHNow, curated by Colleen Nugent McLean, features a two-part post that employs text analysis to explore the emotional language found in Fatimid Geniza petitions. Additionally, it discusses the academic relevance of older language models, specifically Talkie-1930. The issue also includes various announcements related to conferences, job opportunities, and reports, alongside an open-source tool designed for code-free natural language processing (NLP). A new feature, Highlighted Feeds, has been introduced to showcase valuable but lesser-known sources in digital humanities scholarship.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/05/dhnow-newsletter-may-13-2026/>