

AI News Digest

08/24/2026 - 08/30/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: HUMANITIES & CULTURAL STUDIES

Balancing AI Innovation and Human Critical Thinking

Recent developments in AI are transforming the humanities and cultural studies, with applications in archival research, education, and artistic collaboration. However, concerns are being raised about the impact of AI on critical thinking skills and the need for more inclusive digital futures. New tools and platforms are being developed to support human-AI collaboration and promote diverse perspectives. The intersection of AI, humanities, and culture is a rapidly evolving space.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ AI-powered tools are being used to assist with archival research, such as organizing images of archival documents into structured text.
- ✓ There are concerns that the increasing reliance on AI tools may be eroding students' critical thinking skills, particularly in tasks that require analysis and evaluation.
- ✓ A new digital platform, CB-Essay, has been launched to support the publication of long-form, multi-modal essays and monographs.

IMPLICATIONS

- The integration of AI in humanities and cultural studies will require careful consideration of the potential risks and benefits, including the impact on critical thinking skills.
- New tools and platforms will be needed to support human-AI collaboration and ensure that the benefits of AI are equitably distributed.
- The development of more inclusive digital futures will depend on the involvement of diverse perspectives and voices in the design and implementation of AI systems.

Key Metrics: Multiple data scrapes in August resulted in the theft of millions of images from the social media platform Cara.; Submissions for the Fall 2026 issue of The Undergraduate Journal of Digital Humanities are due on October 1st, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time.

1. Editors' Choice: AI in the Archive: Saving Time by Turning Photos into Structured Metadata

Category: Research
Departments: History, Computer Science
Topics: AI for Archival Research, Document Image Analysis, Metadata Extraction, Large Language Models

Impact Score: 20.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 3	Educational Value: 4	Innovation / Novelty: 3
Practical Impact: 4	Interdisciplinary Potential: 4	Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

A PhD candidate in history has developed a workflow utilizing AI to assist with archival research. The method leverages Zotero and the large language model Claude to organize images of archival documents into text-searchable PDFs with structured metadata. This approach aims to streamline the process of extracting data from large collections of images, while acknowledging that AI is not a substitute for critical analysis and close reading by historians. The workflow may facilitate more efficient data extraction and organization in archival research.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/08/ai-in-the-archive-saving-time-by-turning-photos-into-structured-metadata/>

2. Protecting Student Cognition in the Age of AI

Category: Education
Departments: Educational Leadership, Computer Science, Teacher Education, Counseling and Special Education, Philosophy
Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Cognitive Offloading, Critical Thinking

Impact Score: 18.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2	Educational Value: 4	Innovation / Novelty: 1
Practical Impact: 3	Interdisciplinary Potential: 4	Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

A high school English teacher expresses concern that the increasing reliance on AI tools, such as ChatGPT, may be eroding students' critical thinking skills. The teacher notes that students are struggling to analyze and think critically about literary texts, instead relying on AI to complete assignments and provide answers. Researchers have identified this phenomenon as "cognitive offloading," where individuals rely on external tools to reduce mental effort, potentially undermining the development of essential cognitive skills. A 2024 study by Microsoft Research and Carnegie Mellon University found that workers who relied heavily on generative AI reported less critical evaluation and independent reasoning at work.

<https://edsurge.com/news/protecting-the-student-mind-in-the-age-of-ai>

3. He Scraped All of Their Art for AI. Now He's Collaborating on a Tool to Help Them

Category: Policy & Ethics

Departments: Computer Science, Political Science & Public Administration, Art, Communication, Philosophy

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Data Protection, Content Authentication

Impact Score: 14.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 1

Educational Value: 2

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

The social media platform Cara, which was created to protect artists from unauthorized use of their work to train AI models, experienced multiple data scrapes in August, resulting in the theft of millions of images and user data. Despite efforts to filter out AI-generated content and protect user work, the platform's vulnerabilities were exploited by multiple individuals, who scraped and shared user data on various platforms. The scrapes have sparked debate about the ethics of data harvesting and the need for stronger protections for artists, with Cara's founder launching a GoFundMe to support legal efforts to defend the platform. The incidents highlight the challenges of protecting user data and intellectual property in the age of AI.

<https://www.wired.com/story/he-scraped-art-from-cara-for-ai-now-he-is-collaborating-on-a-tool-to-help-them/>

4. Tool: CB-Essay

Category: Applications

Departments: Computer Science, Communication, English, Creative Writing, Educational Leadership

Topics: Multimodal AI, Digital Publishing Platforms, Interactive Content Creation

Impact Score: 13.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 2

Ethical / Policy Implications: 1

A new digital platform, CB-Essay, has been launched for publishing long-form, multi-modal essays and monographs. Built on the CollectionBuilder framework, CB-Essay enables the creation of connected, long-form content while supporting media embeds and customizations. The platform aims to facilitate the publication of scholarly works in a flexible and interactive format. CB-Essay combines front-end essay features with back-end CollectionBuilder capabilities.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/08/github-collectionbuilder-cb-essay-cb-essay-is-a-platform-for-publishing-long-form-multi-modal-essays-and-monographs-built-on-collectionbuilder-the-framework-features-longform-content-connected/>

5. Weekly Highlight: HD Lab

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Communication, English

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Humanities AI Applications, Open Science Principles

Impact Score: 13.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 1

The HD LAB, a research space in Digital Humanities in Argentina, integrates a laboratory model with Humanities research. The lab's projects aim to engage multiple audiences, both within and outside academia. HD LAB offers training in digital humanities methods, digital scholarly editions, and coding tutorials, grounded in Minimal Computing and Open Science principles. The lab's work promotes accessible and collaborative approaches to digital humanities research.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/08/weekly-highlight-hd-lab/>

6. CFP: Fall 2026 Issue of The Undergraduate Journal of Digital Humanities

Category: Education

Departments: Communication, English, Creative Writing, Theatre & Dance, Art

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Digital Humanities Research, Undergraduate AI Education

Impact Score: 10.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 1

Interdisciplinary Potential: 2

Ethical / Policy Implications: 1

The Undergraduate Journal of Digital Humanities (UJDH) is accepting article submissions for its Fall 2026 edition. The journal aims to promote undergraduate research and learning in digital humanities. Submissions are due on October 1st, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. The journal focuses on showcasing undergraduate work in this field.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/08/submissions/>

7. Report: From language patterns to digital possibilities: Tanja Gaustad's Journey in computational linguistics

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Mathematical Sciences, Communication, Chicano Studies, Languages & Linguistics, English

Topics: Natural Language Processing, Low Resource Language Support, Language Inclusion in AI

Impact Score: 10.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 1

Educational Value: 2

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 2

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

Women in science and research in South Africa are contributing to the development of a more inclusive digital future. Their work aims to ensure that technological progress represents diverse languages, knowledge, and communities. Tanja Gaustad, driven by an interest in language patterns, is one such researcher working to promote the presence of South Africa's languages in the digital age. This effort seeks to prevent any language from being left behind in technological advancements.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/08/from-language-patterns-to-digital-possibilities-tanja-gaustad-s-journey-in-computational-linguistics/>