

AI News Digest

09/21/2026 - 09/27/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: ARTS, MEDIA & PERFORMANCE

Generative AI Reshapes Creative Expression and Communication

Recent developments in generative AI are transforming the way we create, interact, and communicate. From altering the tone and meaning of written language to enabling new forms of digital humanities research, AI is leaving an indelible mark on arts, media, and performance. The rise of AI-powered chatbots and digital avatars is also changing the way we form connections and interact with technology. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into our lives, it's essential to consider its implications on creative expression, communication, and society as a whole.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ LLMs can alter the voice, tone, and intended meaning of human writing, leading to a 70% increase in neutral essays and decreased creative writing in users' own voice.
- ✓ Generative AI is reshaping textual analysis, knowledge representation, and scholarly interpretation in digital humanities research.
- ✓ Interactions with AI chatbots can lead to 'artificial intimacy,' where users form overly close bonds with machines, potentially negatively impacting human relationships.

IMPLICATIONS

- As AI-generated content becomes more prevalent, there is a risk of losing the nuance and authenticity of human creative expression.
- The increasing use of AI-powered chatbots and digital avatars may fundamentally change the way we interact with technology and each other.
- Researchers and developers must prioritize responsible AI development and consider the potential consequences of AI-driven communication on society.

Key Metrics: 70% increase in neutral essays; 10,000 migrant deaths near US-Mexico border surveillance towers since 2000; 15-month investigation into migrant deaths

1. Video: How LLMs Distort Our Written Language

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Communication, English, Educational Leadership, Psychology

Topics: Large Language Models, Semantic Meaning Preservation, Human-AI Writing Interaction, Language Model Misalignment

Impact Score: 26.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 5

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

LLMs alter not only the voice and tone but also the intended meaning of human writing. A human user study found extensive LLM use led to a 70% increase in neutral essays and users reported less creative writing not in their voice. LLMs making grammar edits based on expert feedback significantly alter semantic meaning, and LLM-generated peer reviews prioritize different criteria and assign higher scores. These findings highlight a misalignment between perceived AI benefits and its effect on human writing semantics.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/09/video-how-llms-distort-our-written-language/>

2. Editors' Choice: An Agenda on Generative AI for the Digital Humanities

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, English, Communication, Philosophy, History

Topics: Generative AI, Large Language Models, Digital Humanities

Impact Score: 23.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

Fabio Ciotti's article explores the impact of generative artificial intelligence on digital humanities research. Large language models are reshaping textual analysis, knowledge representation, and scholarly interpretation, introducing new methodological and epistemological questions. Ciotti argues for a research agenda that critically examines AI tools' underlying models, limitations, and implications for humanities scholarship. The article provides a framework for DH researchers to understand the transformation of computational methods by generative AI.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/09/an-agenda-on-generative-ai-for-the-digital-humanities-umanistica-digitale/>

3. How we made the first comprehensive map of deaths along the US border's "virtual wall"

Category: Policy & Ethics

Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Sociology & Anthropology, Public Health Sciences, Communication, Criminal Justice & Security Studies

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Humanitarian AI Applications, Data Integration for Social Impact

Impact Score: 17.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 0

Educational Value: 1

Innovation / Novelty: 2

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

A 15-month investigation into migrant deaths near US-Mexico border surveillance towers found over 10,000 deaths since 2000, a number considered an undercount. The investigation created a comprehensive map and analysis of deaths near border surveillance towers by merging existing datasets and obtaining new records from over a dozen agencies. Public records requests in Texas, a previously under-documented region, were filed with sheriffs of 17 counties to gather information on migrant deaths. The dataset analyzed cases dating back to 2015, covering different border policies, presidential administrations, and tower technologies.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2026/09/21/1144161/border-towers-surveillance-methodology/>

4. Chatbots Are Not Your Friends

Category: Policy & Ethics

Departments: Psychology, Computer Science, Communication, Sociology & Anthropology, Philosophy

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Chatbot Design, Artificial Intimacy, Human-AI Interaction

Impact Score: 17.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

An expert warns that interactions with AI chatbots can lead to "artificial intimacy," a phenomenon where users form overly close bonds with machines. This can occur when chatbots are designed to mimic human-like conversation and empathy. To mitigate this, experts suggest being aware of the limitations of AI and maintaining a critical perspective when interacting with chatbots. Users should also set boundaries and prioritize human relationships.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/25/well/ai-chatbots-artificial-intimacy.html>

5. I created an interactive digital avatar of myself - and you can talk to it

Category: Applications

Departments: Computer Science, Communication

Topics: Generative AI, Digital Human Avatar, Multimodal Interaction, Conversational AI

Impact Score: 17.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

Synthesia, a digital avatar startup, has created an interactive virtual avatar of a journalist, trained on a specific article, to answer questions and engage in conversation. The avatar was created using a combination of voice-to-text, video, language, and text-to-voice models, and can be powered by various tech stacks, including Synthesia's own models or alternatives from other labs. The creation of the avatar took only a couple of days and required a short recording of the journalist's voice and multiple photos. Synthesia's technology allows enterprises to build interactive training videos and roleplay sessions with AI avatars.

<https://techcrunch.com/2026/09/26/i-created-an-interactive-digital-avatar-of-myself-and-you-can-talk-to-it/>

6. The Cost of Unchecked Assumptions: Fewer Male Teachers, More Baby Slop

Category: Research

Departments: Educational Leadership, Teacher Education, Counseling and Special Education, Communication, Psychology

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Generative AI, Content Moderation

Impact Score: 16.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 2

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

Male teachers often face assumptions about their roles before they can correct them, contributing to a decline in their numbers in the profession. Researchers investigated why men leave teaching and potential solutions for schools to retain them. AI-generated videos for toddlers and preschoolers, known as "baby slop," often contain inaccurate content that can mislead young children. These videos are being mass-produced and posted online, raising concerns about their impact on early learning.

<https://edsurge.com/news/the-cost-of-unchecked-assumptions-fewer-male-teachers-more-baby-slop>

7. Weekly Highlight: The Digital Orientalist

Category: Research

Departments: Chicano Studies, Languages & Linguistics, Communication, Sociology & Anthropology, History, Philosophy

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Digital Humanities, Cultural Analysis AI

Impact Score: 13.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 1

Practical Impact: 1

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

The online magazine, based in Tsukuba, Japan, focuses on digital scholarship related to African, Asian, and Middle Eastern spaces and histories. The magazine is operated by a team of scholars, librarians, and students with various contributors. The team distinguishes between "Orientalism" as a tool for oppression and "Orientalism" as the study of non-European spaces.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/09/weekly-highlight-the-digital-orientalist/>

8. Banks Spent a Decade Building Apps. Now the Fight for the Customer Is Back in the Text Inbox.

Category: Business

Departments: Computer Science, Accounting & Information Systems, Economics & Finance, Communication, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: Enterprise AI, RCS Business Messaging, Verified Sender Profiles

Impact Score: 11.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 0

Educational Value: 1

Innovation / Novelty: 2

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 2

Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

RCS, a messaging standard that replaces plain SMS, enables verified sender profiles, interactive features, and rich media in text messages, effectively turning the default text inbox into an app-like channel. Banks are reassessing their strategy of directing customers to their own apps, as RCS offers a verified sender pitch, but its encryption story is more complicated, with business messages only encrypted in transit, not end-to-end. The standard's adoption by Apple in iOS 18 expands its reach across both Android and iOS ecosystems. RCS Business Messaging provides verified sender profiles, but not end-to-end encryption, which has implications for regulated institutions like banks.

<https://www.fintechweekly.com/magazine/articles/banks-spent-a-decade-building-apps-now-the-fight-for-the-customer-is-back-in-the-text-inbox>