

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Interdisciplinary and Inter-Institutional Approaches to AI Research and Pedagogy

Teaching with AI Across Institutions: The Cultural Data Collective

Panelist: Gabriel Hankins, Associate Professor, English

Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean You Should: Grappling with AI and Ethics for Humanities Scholars

Panelist: Douglas Seefeldt, Associate Professor, History

A Vision for a Center for AI and Graduate Humanities Research and Pedagogy

Panelist: David Blakesley, Professor of Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design; Campbell Chair in Technical Communication; Interim Director RCID

The panel presents diverse perspectives on the intersection of AI and humanities, exploring its implications, challenges, and opportunities. Gabriel Hankins examines the Cultural Data Collective, a collaborative effort among scholars from multiple institutions, to analyze cultural data using AI. Douglas Seefeldt delves into the ethical considerations surrounding AI applications in humanities research, emphasizing the need for scholars to engage with its implications critically. He highlights the risks and responsibilities of employing AI for archival data analysis. Finally, David Blakesley envisions a Center for AI and Graduate Humanities Research and Pedagogy, aiming to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and address the ethical, social, and pedagogical dimensions of AI. Blakesley emphasizes the importance of harnessing humanities expertise to navigate the complex implications of AI, particularly in terms of persuasion and ethical considerations. Together, these presentations underscore the multifaceted nature of AI's impact on humanities scholarship, from collaborative data analysis to ethical reflection and interdisciplinary collaboration.

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They call for a nuanced understanding of AI's potential and pitfalls, as well as proactive engagement with its ethical and societal implications in academic and pedagogical contexts.

1. Gabriel Hankins is Associate Professor of English at Clemson University and a series co-editor of the Cambridge Elements in Digital Literary Studies. Email: ghankin@clemson.edu

What kinds of cultural data are best taught between and across institutional contexts, in collectives and collaborations -- and how is that work happening now? This paper will take up the case of the Cultural Data Collective, a scholarly collaboration between literary and cultural studies scholars at Emory, University of Washington, Princeton, Temple, and Clemson. It will discuss the kinds of cultural data being analyzed, the specific uses of AI in that analysis, and the advantages and drawbacks of such interdisciplinary collaborations in relation to intra-institutional collaboration.

2. Douglas Seefeldt is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Digital History PhD program at Clemson University, and Senior Digital Editor of the Papers of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Email: wseefel@clemson.edu

Since 30 November 2022, when OpenAI launched ChatGPT the generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, most humanities scholars have been seeking ways to get their minds around just how revolutionary, and disruptive, this new technology will be. The National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) 2023 Humanities Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence initiative states that "[q]uestions about the ethical, legal, and societal implications of AI are fundamentally rooted in the humanities," and goes on to note that the "NEH's founding legislation tasks the agency with making the American people 'masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants.'" No humanities professional today would dispute that the vast technological developments that have occurred in the nearly sixty years since that legislation was drafted and the emergence of ChatGPT makes the confident tone of that statement appear laughable when faced with the now obvious potential of AI to transform the very ways we think about and conduct our research and teaching.

For example, AI can be, and clearly is being, applied to archival data created by government, cultural heritage organizations like galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAMs), and other institutions to address the ever-expanding "Digital Heap" of disorganized data in an attempt to make these data more accessible without the financial costs associated with the human labor that would be necessary to perform similar tasks. This work, however well-intentioned, is not without risk when AI is applied

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to describing digitized and born-digital records. The AI revolution brings with it any number of ethical problems that must be identified and understood as part of our advanced training in research methods for using archival data. Therefore, it is prudent at this moment, at this institution, to ask, “how prepared are humanities scholars to play a role in mitigating these risks?” Further, it can be argued that today’s digital humanities scholars must draw from emerging research in human-AI interaction in order to be prepared to engage in the inherently collaborative work of designing responsible AI systems.

As part of their professional training, today’s digital historians should be encouraged to seriously engage with the kinds of questions posed at a recent Past Meets Future: Workshop on Human-AI Interaction for Digital History and Cultural Heritage, including: “Can digital historians use GenAI to reconstruct and narrate compelling historical events with factual accuracy?”; “Can we use AI to generate historically accurate images or animations from textual descriptions?”; “Can we develop AI-driven simulations or games that allow users to experience historical events?”; Can we leverage large Vision Language Models (GPT4-v, LLaVa) to aid in creating historical photo annotations?; “How might large language models (LLMs) and advanced visualization techniques work together to uncover new insights from historical texts”; and, “In what ways can explainable AI (XAI) contribute to the field of digital history, ensuring that AI’s interpretations and analyses of historical data are transparent and understandable to historians?”

In my presentation, I will discuss the approach that the digital history PhD program in the Department of History and Geography, now in its second year, is taking to include these important issues surrounding AI in its graduate curriculum.

3. David Blakesley is Campbell Chair in Technical Communication and Professor of Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design at Clemson University. Email: dblakes@clemson.edu

What can the humanities teach us about AI as a superhuman persuader? Last October, Sam Altman tweeted that he expects AI “to be capable of superhuman persuasion well before it is superhuman at general intelligence, which may lead to some very strange outcomes.” No one is quite certain what those strange outcomes might be. Or what superhuman persuasion or general intelligence are, for that matter. Still, researchers across disciplines can speculate, predict their impact, and understand their social, political, economic, ethical, and human consequences. Growing interest among faculty and students in generative AI creates incentives and opportunities to connect and

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collaborate across the broader Clemson community, including areas with vastly different research agendas. Interdisciplinary collaboration, however, sometimes takes superhuman effort, not because people are unwilling or preoccupied, but because we speak specialized languages, approach problems with distinct methods, and sometimes disagree about what counts as knowledge.

We need superhuman persuaders to help us make these connections, to show us what we have in common and why our shared values and languages will matter more than ever as we confront the strange outcomes of AI. Where can we find them? While maybe not superhuman, researchers in the humanities who study rhetoric, the history and emergence of new technologies, digital histories and humanities, and the ethics of human-AI interaction and the pedagogies that support them have important questions to ask about generative AI. These questions reveal points of contact and overlapping interests in AI research and teaching.

In this short presentation, I'll present a vision for a Center for AI and Graduate Humanities Research and Pedagogy that will help us identify our margins of overlap and connect AI researchers and students across the disciplines.