

Preserving Humanistic Inquiry in the Age of Generative AI

The rapid integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence or AI into higher education and scholarly research has brought upon a period of never seen before efficiency, allowing for the rapid summarization of texts, generation of outlines, and assistance with writing. However, this technological shift poses a distinct threat to the humanities fields such as literature, history, philosophy, and cultural studies which are fundamentally concerned with human experience, nuance, and critical thought. Because AI tools are trained on vast, often biased datasets and operate through predictive algorithms rather than genuine understanding, they risk eroding the very foundations of humanistic investigation. Therefore, it is imperative that academic institutions and publishers establish strict ethical guidelines for AI use in the humanities, prioritizing transparency, intellectual accountability, and the preservation of human creativity.

The most pressing risk AI poses to humanity is the potential for bias and the integration of thought. Humanities research thrives on sidelined voices, diverse interpretations, and the context of lived experience. Generative AI on the other hand excels at creating average mainstream responses. A study on AI risks indicates that the overreliance on these tools can erode individual voice, resulting in the content that is shallow. If scholars rely on AI to analyze historical documents or literature, they risk silencing the diverse perspectives and promoting a sanitized, western centric narrative that reinforces existing societal prejudices.

Furthermore, ethical AI guidelines are crucial to maintain academic integrity and authentic authorship. The core of humanities education is learning to synthesize information, engage in critical thinking and form original arguments. When AI is used to produce entire essays or research findings, students and researchers alike miss out on the productive struggle needed for intellectual development. The Brookings institution warns that this cognitive load can lead to a decline in critical thinking skills, reducing education to a transactional task. To combat this, institutions must adopt policies that enforce the disclosure of AI usage, distinguishing between using AI for brainstorming and presenting AI generated work as one's own.

Another critical aspect of ethical guidelines involves verification and transparency. AI models, particularly Large Language Models, are notorious for hallucinating, fabricating facts, citations, and data. In humanity where accuracy and historical context are vital, fabrications such as this can determine the validity of scholarly research. Ethical guidelines should require researchers to treat AI as a cognitive partner, not have narrative control, and verify every claim.

Critics might argue that restricting AI prevents innovation and efficiency. However, the goal of ethical guidelines is to ban technology, but to ensure that it acts as a tool for human empowerment, not the end of human creativity. By embedding transparency such as citing when AI was used into academic workflows, we can leverage the efficiency of AI while maintaining accountability for the final output.

In conclusion, humanity must approach AI with intentional, human centered governance. Without rigid ethical guidelines, the field risks replacing deep intellectual engagement with superficial, algorithmic output, losing the very empathy and human perspective it seeks to protect. By establishing standards that prioritize human oversight, diversity, and academic honesty, the humanities can responsibly harness AI while ensuring that technology serves as a tool for human enhancement rather than a substitute for it.

Reflection

The integration of Generative AI into the humanities presents a paradox that offers unprecedented efficiency while threatening the critical thinking and human nuance that define the field. As the text suggests, the risk isn't just technical, but foundational. If we outsource the productive struggle of writing and analysis to predictive algorithms, we risk a sanitized academic landscape dominated by mainstream biases and hallucinated facts.

The call for strict ethical guidelines is essential. Treating AI as a cognitive partner rather than an author ensures that transparency and human oversight remain central. By mandating disclosure and verifying AI-

generated claims, the humanities can guard against the erosion of diverse perspectives and original thought. Ultimately, technology should amplify human creativity, not replace it. Protecting the empathy and depth of humanistic inquiry requires intentional governance to ensure education remains a transformative process rather than a transactional task.