



Artificial Intelligence, Communication, and Social Transformation

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

September 4–5, 2026
XJTLU, Suzhou, China

Organised by the Department of Media and Communication,
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University
西交利物浦大学

XJTLU

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
西浦人文社科学院

XJTLU

MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATION

Last updated: Sept. 1, 2026

Department of Media and Communication, XJTLU

Introduction to the organisers

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU)

In 2006, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) was created by the University of Liverpool and Xi'an Jiaotong University – a top ten university in China. Offering a unique international education experience, XJTLU brings together excellent research practice and expertise from both institutions and gives students the skills and knowledge they need to secure careers in a global marketplace. XJTLU now has over 26,000 enrolled students in both Suzhou and

Liverpool in the UK. There are currently about 2,400 staff, including at least 1,000 are academic staff, with an almost even split between citizens of the People's Republic of China and international passport holders.



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University
西交利物浦大学

XJTLU offers our undergraduates and postgraduates over 100 programmes with a diverse spectrum of courses. With a focus on innovative learning and teaching, and research, XJTLU draws on the strengths of its parent universities, and plays a pivotal role in facilitating access to China for UK and other institutional partners. At the same time, XJTLU is exploring future education by blending the internationally recognised educational theory, best practice and culture with those of China.

Department of Media and Communication, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), XJTLU

The Department of Media and Communication is one of the five departments at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), XJTLU. It is a dynamic and innovative academic centre dedicated to exploring the complexities of media, communication, and their impacts on society.

XJTLU | MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

The department offers BA, MSc and PhD programmes, with a curriculum of a diverse array of topics, including media theory, multimedia journalism, digital media production, advertising, public relations, cultural studies and beyond, all designed to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for success in the rapidly evolving fields of media and communication.

Working in four interrelated research clusters – Digital Technology and Society, Culture, Creativity and Communication, Journalism and Society, Screen

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Studies and Popular Culture, staff in the department explore and publish on many salient and pressing issues such as the role of (social) media and communication in representation, identity, gender issues, creativity, cultural heritage, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its transformative impact, algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, and misinformation detection. The Department is quickly emerging as an internationally recognised hub for leading research and innovative teaching. Through research-led teaching, cutting-edge research and active engagement with industries, the Department strives to create an inclusive and supportive environment for students to ensure our students develop into creative and responsible global citizens. The research-led teaching also makes our students competitive for entry in top postgraduate programmes and the Chinese and international job markets.

Logistics information for participants

For general inquiries

Email: DMC.Conference@xjtlu.edu.cn

XJTLU CAMPUS MAP



Venue

XJTLU South Campus, Chongwen Road, Suzhou Industrial Park, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province

P. R. China, 215123 苏州市工业园区崇文路西交利物浦大学南校区

The event will take place in the **IA Building** at the XJTLU South Campus. Please refer to the following map and illustrations for the specific location.



CONFERENCE WIFI CONNECTION

Account: wifi146

Password: Wifi146@2026



SCAN TO NAVIGATE
THE XJTU CAMPUS

Organising Committee Members

- Prof Michael Preiler
- Dr Xianwen Kuang
- Prof Xiaoling Zhang
- Dr Dharma Adhikari
- Dr Gejun Huang
- Dr Hui Miao
- Dr David K. Herold

Professional Support

- Ms Wanyi Cheng
- Ms Yiyi Gu

Volunteers

- Yixuan Bai
- Chang Lu
- Yu Wang
- Feiting Xu
- Yuhan Yao
- Peijie Zhang
- Jiayi Shen
- Bei Zhang
- Yizhen Zhang
- Yuhao Li
- Thi Kim Quy Hoang
- Danning Zhao
- Lanyu Zhang
- Shuting Cao

Day 1 – Friday, September 4

OPENING

Time	Main Room (IAG08)	
08:30 to 09:00	Registration	
09:00 to 09:30	Welcome speeches and group photo	Chair: Prof Michael Prieler (XJTLU) Prof Zhoulin Ruan (Vice-President of Academic Affairs, XJTLU) Dr Xianwen Kuang (Department of Media and Communication, XJTLU)
09:30 to 10:15	Keynote Speech 1	Multimodal AI: Opportunities and Challenges for Communication and Media Studies Prof Kay O'Halloran (University of Liverpool)
10:15 to 11:00	Keynote Speech 2	AI and the Paradigmatic Change of Communication Research Prof Dianlin Huang (Communication University of China)
11:00 to 11:30	Tea break	

PARALLEL PANELS | 1-3

Time	Panel 1 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 2 – Room C (IA121)	Panel 3 – Room D (IA111)
11:30 to 13:00	Panel 1: AI, Digital Heritage, and Traditional Culture Chair: Xiaoling Zhang 1. Bridging Cultures through Human-AI Co-creation: A "Playground Learning" Web Platform for Chinese Poetic Imagery Chenbing Lin (New York University Shanghai) 2. The Symbolic Cocoon and Perceptual Alienation: Simulacra of Traditional Art in the Age of AI Algorithms Xuan Tan (Guangzhou Xinhua University)	Panel 2: AI Companionship, Intimacy, and Emotional Well-Being Chair: Michael Prieler 1. AI by My Side: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Virtual Agent Companionship for Emotional, Psychological, and Social Outcomes Yu Zhang (City University of Hong Kong)	Panel 3: Reimagining Journalism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Misinformation, Automation, and Public Trust Chair: Xianwen Kuang 1. AI Deepfakes and the Politics of Deception: A Three-M Framework for Analyzing Political Short Videos (ONLINE  Rui Duan (Communication University of China); Kun He (Tilburg University, Netherlands); Jun Liu (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)
	3. Research on the Deviations in the Reconstruction and Representation of Local Scenarios in Qinghai under Generative Media Yu Li (Qinghai Normal University) and Jun Zhi Zhang (Qinghai Radio and Television Station)	2. Seeking the AI Confidant: The Domestication of AI-Mediated Self-Care among Chinese Youth Xiaoxi Zhu (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University) and Hao Wu (Central China Normal University)	2. Imagining Automated Journalism: AI Anchor Hype and the Construction of News Futures in China Yiming Chen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)
	4. When Classics Come Alive on Screen: Textual Creation, Narrative Reconstruction, and Evolving Spectatorship in AI-Generated Art Videos Shuyuan Jin (Nanjing University)	3. Emotional Support or Emotional Surrender? How AI-Mediated Communication Reshapes Interpersonal Relationships Chunyan Huang (University of Macao)	3. Fact-Checking with AI: Effects of Interaction Mode and Prior Beliefs on Misinformation Acceptance Kuangjian Wu (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University); Xianwen Kuang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)
		4. The Pre-Sending Intermediary Layer and Authenticity Negotiation: Mechanisms of Generative AI Intervention in High-Stakes Intimate Communication (ONLINE  Jing Wen (Huazhong University of Science and Technology) and Weining Huang (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)	4. AI, Dis-/Misinformation, and the Future of Journalism Xianwen Kuang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)
		5. When AI Becomes Part of the Self: AI-Mediated Identity Reconstruction in Depression Na Liu (Zhejiang A&F University) and Qingshuang Chen (Zhejiang A&F University)	
13:00 to 14:00	Lunch @ Gangyu Chinese Restaurant (IA building)		

PARALLEL PANELS | 4-6

Time	Panel 4 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 5 – Room C (IA121)	Panel 6 – Room D (IA111)
14:00 to 15:30	Panel 4: Reconceptualizing AI through Philosophical and Critical Perspectives Chair: <i>Tingting Hu</i> 1. Techno-alchemy of Emergent Rhetorical Lexicons <i>Iannis Bardakos (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University) and Damien Tomaselli (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)</i> 2. Can AI Communicate? A Systems-Theoretical Provocation <i>Markus Georg Thomas Heidingsfelder (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)</i>	Panel 5: Algorithmic Affect, Parasocial Intimacy, and Social Anxiety Chair: <i>Michael Prieler</i> 1. AI Celebrity as Idol or Lover: Authenticity, Emotional Ownership, and Romantic Companionship in BimoBimo <i>Xuanxuan Tan (Soochow University), Zongyi Zhang (Soochow University), Jiayi Wang (Soochow University), and Zhenzhen Su (Soochow University)</i> 2. From Fiction to Familiarity: How AI Companion Is Reshaping Parasocial Relationships in Digital Gaming <i>Ji Hua (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i>	Panel 6: AI as News Intermediary: Agenda Dynamics, Strategic Narratives, and Cross-Cultural Gatekeeping Chair: <i>Zixiu Liu</i> 1. Agenda Refraction: How an AI Chatbot Reshapes the News Agenda between State and Social Media in China <i>Yue Jiang (RMIT University, Australia); Shu Li (Deakin University, Australia)</i> 2. AI-Generated Strategic Narratives and International Audience Reception: Chinese State Media's AI-Driven Global Communication after DeepSeek <i>Yiwen Yang (Shanghai Shuimu Luoyi Technology Co., Ltd. (Talent Rising))</i> 3. Decoding Cross-Cultural Narratives: Localized LLMs, Journalistic Practices, and the Future of Brand Risk Governance <i>Junyi Shangguan (Macau University of Science and Technology); Zhenyu Dang (Macau University of Science and Technology); Lezhou Lin (Macau University of Science and Technology); Ge Zhan (Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Longsou GAI Technology R&D Centre)</i> 4. AI Gatekeeping and Technographic Power: Longitudinal and Cross-National Evidence from Large Language Models <i>Jun Luo (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen); Jiazhi Xie (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen); Xinqing Li (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)</i>
	3. From 人工智能 to 人工工: Learning from the Shifu and the Arts in the Age of AI <i>S. Alex Ruthmann (New York University Shanghai)</i>	3. “You Look Like a Goddess”: Emotional Support and Aesthetic Authority in AI-Guided Fashion Videos (ONLINE 📺) <i>Xiaoxue Wang (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)</i>	
	4. Synthetic Creative Labour and the Aesthetics of Alienation: A Marxist Framework for AI-Mediated Cultural Production (ONLINE 📺) <i>Wilson Gomes Caldeira (University of Saint Joseph, Macao) and José Manuel Simões (University of Saint Joseph, Macao)</i>	4. The Influence of Female Virtual Influencers' Constructed Perfect Images on Female Consumers' Appearance and Workplace Anxiety <i>Jieru Mai (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies) and Fei Qiao (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies)</i>	
	5. Remapping AI Topography Through AI Artivism <i>Jung Choi (Duke Kunshan University)</i>	5. From Embodied Tutoring to Algorithmic Auditing: Emotional Labor Transformation and Paradoxical Agency of Motherhood under Generative AI <i>Tianqi Zheng (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)</i>	
		6. Escaping the Algorithmic Cage: How Algorithmic Recommendation Shapes Social Anxiety among Youth (ONLINE 📺) <i>Yuheng Zhang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i>	
15:30 to 16:00	Tea Break		

PARALLEL PANELS | 7-9

Time	Panel 7 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 8 – Room C (IA121)	Panel 9 – Room D (IA111)
16:00 to 17:30	Panel 7: Cross-Cultural Communication and AI Dynamics Chair: <i>Zixiu Liu</i> 1. Shattering the Cultural Mirror: How Western and Chinese LLMs Negotiate the “Tangping” Phenomenon <i>Tongyang Shen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i> 2. From Translation Tool to Emotional Infrastructure: Generative AI Companions and Cross-Cultural Belonging among Chinese International Students (ONLINE 📺) <i>Haoyang He (The University of Hong Kong)</i> 3. Translingual, Decentralized, and Task-Driven: Generative AI Platform Switching among Chinese Students in the UK and US <i>Siwei Xu (Renmin University)</i>	Panel 8: AI and the Transition of Education: Students, Teachers, Pedagogy, and Technology Chair: <i>Qingning Wang</i> 1. Deconstructing the “Score-Only” Paradigm: Toward a Data-Driven Ecological Model for Inclusive Educational Futures <i>Shuhan Yang (Yunnan Normal University), Rui Zeng (Yunnan Normal University Affiliated Primary School), and Chang Yu (Yunnan Normal University Affiliated Primary School)</i> 2. AI as a Bridge for Cross-Cultural Communication: Reflections Based on International Students' Competition Experiences <i>Ye Tao (Yunnan Normal University)</i> 3. AI-Augmented Design Creativity: Transforming Pedagogy in Art Education through Student Work Analytics <i>Che Guo (Yunnan Normal University)</i>	Panel 9: Generative AI, Fan Cultures, and Creative Identity Chair: <i>Hui Miao</i> 1. Generative AI in Transformative Fan Creation: Practical Logics and Ethical Dilemmas <i>Jiaying Zhang (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications) and Shuyuan Jiang (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications)</i> 2. Prove It with Your Hands: Performative Proof and the Politics of Authenticity in AI-Era Fan Art Communities <i>Haojing Zhu (Wenzhou-Kean University)</i> 3. When Desire Becomes Generatable: AI-Enabled Mo Culture and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary China (ONLINE 📺) <i>Yuyang Guo (Shenzhen University)</i>

Time	Panel 7 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 8 – Room C (IA121)	Panel 9 – Room D (IA111)
16:00 to 17:30	4. Algorithmic Gatekeeping in the Global South: Epistemic Bias and Representational Justice in Large Language Models (ONLINE 📺) <i>Dalia Aly (Beijing Normal University) and Jinghong Xu (Beijing Normal University)</i>	4. Exploring the Role of AI in Supporting and Sustaining Student Teachers' Mental Health and Well-Being <i>Weilin Yan (University of Birmingham)</i>	4. Chinese-branding in the Age of AI: Renegotiating Cultural Identity in Contemporary Chinese Animation <i>Yunhe Wei (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London)</i>
	5. Green AI, Communication and Forest Governance in China–Brazil Cooperation (ONLINE 📺) <i>Lucia Novaes (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro-Renmin University of China)</i>	5. AI and the Digital Divide in Media Higher Education <i>Qingning Wang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i>	
	6. Authenticity and Standardization in AI-Assisted City Storytelling: A Multimodal Study of Ningbo's Overseas Tourism Communication (ONLINE 📺) <i>Fangyuan Wang (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)</i>		
17:30 to 18:20	Optional campus tour / networking		
18:30	Conference dinner @ Chinese Restaurant 苏南雅宴, 1st floor of XJTLU Conference Center		

Day 2 – Saturday, September 5

Time	
08:30 to 09:00	Registration / arrival coffee

PARALLEL PANELS | 10-12

Time	Panel 10 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 11 – Room C (IA121)	Panel 12 – Room D (IA111)
09:00 to 10:30	Panel 10: AI in Creative Industries: Literature, Audio, and Music Production Chair: <i>Marco Pellitteri</i>	Panel 11: Human-Guided AI Pedagogy: Coding, Creativity, and Language Learning Chair: <i>Dharma Adhikari</i>	Panel 12: Invisible Labor, Workplace Discipline, and AI Governance Chair: <i>Michael High</i>
	1. Reconfiguring Platform Cultural Production under Generative AI: The Creative Practices of Chinese Online Literature Writers <i>Cong Peng (University of New South Wales, Australia)</i>	1. From Syntax to Context: What Questions Reach Humans After AI? Evidence from Six Years of an Introductory Programming Course <i>Jiang Long (Duke Kunshan University)</i>	1. Behind Artificial Intelligence: Invisible Data Annotation Labour and Human-Capital Dilemmas in China <i>Zican Jin (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University) and Wenyi Huang (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)</i>
	2. AI-augmented Writing in Chinese Online Fiction: Platform Shaping and Author Negotiation <i>Qidong Yun (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University), He He (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University) and Liu Xuhuan (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)</i>	2. What Works and What Breaks: Teaching AI-Assisted Coding to Non-Technical Students <i>Nicole C. Wang (New York University Shanghai)</i>	2. Rewriting Evidence: Epistemic Uncertainty and Platform Metric Dependence among Media-Trained Interns in China <i>Yu Gu (Hubei University) and Yixuan Shen (Hubei University)</i>
	3. Cyborg Directors: Authenticity Work and Synthetic Aesthetics in AI Music Production (ONLINE 🗣️) <i>Yuanhong Sun (Jilin University), Yunyi Hu (Renmin University of China); Xuerui Cai (Jilin University); Xinyu Li (Central South University); Mengxin Liu (Fujian Normal University)</i>	3. Human-Guided AI in Foreign Language Writing Classes: An Action Research Study (ONLINE 🗣️) <i>Monica Bezzegato (Beijing Foreign Studies University)</i>	3. One-Dimensional AI: Technological Rationality, Digital Labor Alienation, and the AI Alignment Tax in China's Corporate AI Transformation <i>Ziwen Qi (Haier Model Institute)</i>
		4. From Lived Experience to Playable Systems: AI-Assisted Game Design as a Pedagogical Method <i>Xingchen Zhang (New York University Shanghai)</i>	
		5. Ethical Resistance to Teaching and Learning Practices in Creative Arts Education: An Exploratory Study of Human-AI Co-Creativity in Student Projects <i>Sunny Sui-kwong Lam (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)</i>	

10:30 to 11:00	Tea Break
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PARALLEL PANELS | 13-14

Time	Panel 13 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 14 – Room C (IA121)
11:00 to 12:30	Panel 13: Human-AI Interaction: Companionship, Trust, and Well-Being Chair: <i>Marco Pellitteri</i>	Panel 14: AI Governance, Literacy, and Infrastructure Chair: <i>Gejun Huang</i>
	1. Prompting the Oracle: Procedural Trust Formation in AI Divination <i>Erika Ningxin Wang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)</i>	1. Creative AI Ecosystem for Children and Youth: Toward Inclusive Governance and Regulation in Asia <i>Dean Deeprom Devahastin (KidWise Studios)</i>
	2. Moving Home with 4o: Digital Place-Making in Human-AI Companionship <i>Zhiming Liu (University of Macau) and Yan Tan (Soochow University)</i>	2. From Trust to Scepticism: Critical AI Literacy as an Epistemic Response to AI Hallucinations <i>Lukasz Nowacki (WSB University) and Agata Ewa Wrochna (Wenzhou-Kean University)</i>
	3. Companion or Distraction? The Double-Edged Effects of AI-Driven Companion NPCs in Serious Games (ONLINE 🗣️) <i>Pingping Jia (City University of Hong Kong) and Xiao Xiao (Beijing Institute of Technology)</i>	3. Rewiring Personal Fact-Checking in Generative-AI Environments: Trust Tensions, Verification Costs, and Epistemic Anxiety <i>Anyu Liu (Communication University of China)</i>

Time	Panel 13 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 14 – Room C (IA121)
	4. Digital Innovation for Early-Age Mental Health Support: The Transformative Role of interactive AI-powered Technology within Indonesia's Educational Institutions <i>Janice Karina (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i>	4. Shaping Collective Memory in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Comparative Analysis of AI-Generated Disaster Images on Chinese and U.S. Platforms <i>Yan Yi (East China Normal University) and Sixun Chen (East China Normal University)</i>
	5. User–Chatbot Interaction on Social Media: A Qualitative Study of Comment Robert on Weibo (ONLINE 🗣️) <i>Qiqi Li (Hong Kong Baptist University) and Yan Xu (Hong Kong Baptist University)</i>	5. Embodied Data, Privacy Protection, and Public Trust: A Study of AI-Enabled Public Communication in Urban Media Spaces (ONLINE 🗣️) <i>Fu Zhang (Kookmin University)</i>
12:30 to 13:30	Lunch @ Gangyu Chinese Restaurant (IA building)	

PARALLEL PANELS | 15-16

Time	Panel 15 – Room B (IA103)	Panel 16 – Room C (IA121)
	Panel 15: AI for and as Resistance Chair: <i>David Herold</i>	Panel 16: Playing in the AI Era Chair: <i>Gejun Huang</i>
	1. AI-Assisted Parody and Everyday Resistance in Digital China <i>Chi Zhang (University of Warwick) and Ming Zhang (Wenzhou University of Technology)</i>	1. Does Generative AI Recast the Glory of Classical Narratology? A Study of Video Game Narrative in the AI Context <i>Cheng Zhang (City University of Macau)</i>
	2. Nostalgia as Pharmakon: An Epistemological Resistance to Artificial Intelligence's Dismantling of Human Memory and Temporal Experience <i>Hanqing Chen (National Taiwan Normal University)</i>	2. Charting the Ambivalence of Creative Uncertainty and AI Transformation in the Chinese Game Industry <i>Gejun Huang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</i>
13:30 to 15:00	3. "Distill Me If You Dare": Resisting AI-Driven Job Replacement among Chinese Knowledge Workers <i>Xing Wang (Wenzhou University of Technology)</i>	3. From Generation to Decision: The Capability Boundaries of AI in Game Production Teaching <i>Shuo Xiong (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)</i>
		4. Paradigm Shifts and "T-Shaped" Talent Cultivation in MFA Game Design Education under the AI Wave <i>Xiaofeng Zhu (Beijing Normal University)</i>
		5. From "Silent Reading" to "AI Chatting": Rethinking the Literacy Regime through the Lens of Media History <i>Yahuai Lu (Yangtze University)</i>
15:00 to 15:10	Break	

CLOSING

Time	Event	Room	
15:10 to 16:20	Roundtable Discussion	Room B (IA103)	Where Is AI Taking Us? Communication and Social Transformation in the Years Ahead Chair: Prof Xiaoling Zhang. Participants: Prof Kay O'Halloran (<i>University of Liverpool</i>); Dr David Herold (<i>XJTLU</i>); Prof S. Alex Ruthmann (<i>New York University Shanghai</i>); Prof Bin Zou (<i>XJTLU</i>); Prof Dianlin Huang (<i>Communication University of China</i>)
16:20 to 16:30	Closing Remarks	Room B (IA103)	Dr Luk Van Mensel (Associate Dean for Research, HSS, XJTLU); Prof Michael Prieler (Conference Chair)

ABSTRACTS

Day 1 – Friday, September 4

Keynote Speeches | 09:30–11:00

Keynote Speech 1 | 09:30 to 10:15

Multimodal AI: Opportunities and Challenges for Communication and Media Studies

Professor Kay O'Halloran (Department of Communication and Media, University of Liverpool)

The rapid advancement of multimodal AI models (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, DeepSeek) presents new opportunities and challenges for communication and media studies. In particular, the ways in which multimodal AI models, which are designed to process and generate combinations of text, images, audio and videos, can be used for research purposes need to be investigated and understood. To illustrate, the use of multimodal AI technologies (Natural Language Processing (NLP), image processing, video processing, and moderation models) to detect hate speech in social media and online platforms is discussed. In doing so, the limitations of these models become apparent, as do possible solutions such as rethinking multimodal AI through semiotic theory. More generally, a technosemiotic perspective is proposed to account for the impact of digital technology on discourse today.



References:

O'Halloran, K. L., Zhang, Y., Boardman, D. & Vikhorev, K. (2026 in press). Multimodal AI Approach to Platform Hate. *Special Issue, Hate Speech and AI, Discourse Studies*, 28(6).

Zhang, Y. & O'Halloran, K. L. (2026 forthcoming). Discourse and Multimodality in the Digital Era: A Technosemiotic Perspective. In E. Tseliou & F. Tentolouris (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Analysing Discourse*. London & New York: Routledge.

Keynote Speech 2 | 10:15 to 11:00

AI and the Paradigmatic Change of Communication Research

Prof Dianlin Huang (Communication University of China)

This keynote examines how artificial intelligence is reshaping communication research as a field. It begins by mapping four clusters within the emerging literature: crisis-oriented accounts of paradigm rupture, integrative arguments for “productive pluralism”, political-economic analyses of AI's entanglement with platform capitalism, and normative calls to rethink curricula and ethics. The talk then identifies a significant loophole in this scholarship: its tendency to frame AI development as a binary US–China competition, which crowds out sustained theorization of how these divergent development paths differentially reshape the Global South, and leaves the field's own development-communication tradition unexamined in this light. China's ambiguous position between Global North and Global South, AI's ecological costs, and asymmetries in optimism between regions further complicate this picture. The talk closes by distinguishing what genuinely changes in communication research—its models of the communicator, of effects, and of power—from what endures: meaning-making, theoretical pluralism, and the field's underlying human purpose.



Parallel Panels 1–3 | 11:30–13:00

Panel 1: AI, Digital Heritage, and Traditional Culture

Bridging Cultures through Human-AI Co-creation: A "Playground Learning" Web Platform for Chinese Poetic Imagery

Chenbing Lin (NYU Shanghai)

Current digital heritage platforms often treat cultural artifacts as static objects for passive viewing, limiting the engagement of international audiences. Although artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities, its application in this domain remains mostly restricted to passive, conversational functions. To address these limitations, this study argues that digital heritage dissemination should shift toward an interactive "playground learning" model, elevating AI into an active tool for creative expression and user evaluation. The study aims to develop an interactive website using HTML5, CSS, and JavaScript, integrated with Large Language Model (LLM) APIs, to transform classical Chinese snow poetry into a co-creation experience. Initially, the system offers gamified point-and-click tasks that translate between poem text and visual landscapes, helping non-native audiences understand the Chinese imagery aesthetic framework. Throughout the process, users can also interact with specific cultural symbols to reveal their historical meanings across different poems. Ultimately, the system allows users to arrange poetic elements and emotional calibration on a blank canvas, prompting the LLM backend to generate a derivative poem accordingly and evaluate cultural comprehension. Theoretically, this research identifies core literary patterns of Chinese snow imagery to support the website design. To evaluate its impact, empirical user testing will be conducted with international participants. These sessions are expected to verify the platform's practical utility, cross-cultural appeal, and demographic variance. Ultimately, this project contributes a scalable model for the digital humanities, transforming passive viewers into active cultural co-creators.

The Symbolic Cocoon and Perceptual Alienation: Simulacra of Traditional Art in the Age of AI Algorithms

Xuan Tan (Guangzhou Xinhua University)

Despite the apparent prosperity of digitalizing traditional culture through AI and recommendation algorithms, a hidden crisis is emerging. This paper argues that algorithmic logic forces traditional art into a destructive "symbolization" process, leading to the alienation of audience perception. Adopting Jean Baudrillard's concept of "simulacra" and Walter Benjamin's theory of "aura" as a critical theoretical framework, this study investigates the underlying mechanisms of algorithmic tagging and data-driven distribution. The findings reveal that, to optimize traffic, algorithms reduce complex heritage into flattened, highly recognizable "floating signifiers" (e.g., stereotypical red-green color palettes). This creates a "symbolic cocoon" where the self-cannibalization of AI training datasets breeds a homogenized "exquisite mediocrity"—a simulacrum detached from any authentic cultural context. Furthermore, this symbolization profoundly alienates the perceiving subject. The algorithm's preference for instant stimulation dismantles traditional "slow aesthetics," while AI-generated "sterile perfection" erases valuable "flaws" like dry brushstrokes, effectively dissipating the "aura" and life-texture of traditional artworks. Consequently, aesthetic engagement degrades from deep spiritual resonance into shallow sensory consumption. By exposing how algorithms structurally deprive cultural complexity and perceptual depth, this paper breaks the illusion of technological neutrality, offering a critical reflection for cultural preservation in the digital era.

Research on the Deviations in the Reconstruction and Representation of Local Scenarios in Qinghai under Generative Media

Yu Li (Qinghai Normal University) and Jun Zhi Zhang (Qinghai Radio and Television Station)

In the digital communication era, generative media has emerged as a pivotal platform for reconstructing Qinghai's regional memories and reshaping collective emotional experiences, leveraging its capacity to recreate historical contexts. It effectively addresses the need for memory compensation arising from gaps in historical visual records and has garnered significant attention in the dissemination of local nostalgia content. However, constrained by insufficient regional training datasets, limited ethnic cultural data, and algorithmic biases, generative media often exhibits noticeable distortions in portrait representation and cultural characterization when reproducing Qinghai's historical scenes: distorted facial features, skin tones, and skeletal characteristics; inaccurate depictions of traditional attire, folk artifacts, and daily life details—all hindering precise portrayal of Qinghai's unique cultural identity and ethnic heritage. This study examines AI-driven historical scene reconstruction in Qinghai, focusing on practical applications and dissemination challenges of generative media. It investigates the root causes of memory compensation effects and portrait distortion issues, analyzes how algorithmic inequality and the

immeasurability of cultural nuances impact local cultural representation and collective memory construction, and proposes optimized approaches for accurately restoring historical contexts and preserving regional culture. The findings provide theoretical insights and practical recommendations for authentic and meaningful preservation of Qinghai's historical and cultural legacy in the digital age.

When Classics Come Alive on Screen: Textual Creation, Narrative Reconstruction, and Evolving Spectatorship in AI-Generated Art Videos

Shuyuan Jin (Nanjing University)

Recently, generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked a new wave of cultural production on short-form video platforms by transforming static classic paintings into dynamic videos. This study investigates the underlying content creation mechanisms and the changing visual experiences of the audience. At the textual creation level, the research reveals a strong preference in artwork selection, where creators consistently choose universally recognized masterpieces to naturally attract public attention. In terms of storyline design, creators utilize AI to break temporal and spatial boundaries, enabling characters from different eras and regions within various paintings to engage in cross-contextual interactions, often embedded in playful scenarios that resonate with modern life. This content co-creation not only reconstructs the narrative logic of classical art but also deeply impacts audience reception. Regarding audience reception, drawing upon the author's field observations in overseas art museums, this paper contrasts the "static physical gaze" of original artworks within gallery spaces with the "fluid viewing" on streaming screens, where audiences engage with newly integrated dynamic narratives. AI-generated art videos represent more than mere technological entertainment; they fundamentally restructure production and communication modes, once again dissolving the boundaries between high art and popular streaming culture. However, while this algorithmic re-contextualization offers playful, immersive experiences, it simultaneously challenges the historical authenticity of the original works. This research contributes to media and communication studies by offering a brand-new framework for understanding cultural heritage reconstruction and the future of creative industries in the digital era.

Panel 2: AI Companionship, Intimacy, and Emotional Well-Being

AI by My Side: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Virtual Agent Companionship for Emotional, Psychological, and Social Outcomes

Yu Zhang (City University of Hong Kong)

A large body of research has investigated how companionship matters for human relationships. The term companionship is so commonly used in everyday life that its theoretical conceptualisation is often overlooked or assumed as self-evident. In the modern era, the emergence of AI offers real-time and cost-effective companionship in a novel way, yet their effectiveness remains uncertain with mixed results. This systematic review and meta-analysis assess the impact of Virtual Agent Companionship (VAC) for emotional, psychological and social outcomes based on randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, we searched five databases and applied random-effects models to pool effect sizes. A total of 26 studies were included. Interventions were classified as chatbots, VR or AR avatars, and RVG characters. Findings will have implications for the advancement of human-computer interaction research and warn against overly simplistic claims about the benefits or harms of VAC.

Seeking the AI Confidant: The Domestication of AI-Mediated Self-Care among Chinese Youth

Xiaoxi Zhu (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University) and Hao Wu (Central China Normal University)

This study examines how Chinese youth aged 18–25 incorporate AI into practices of psychological self-care and emotional support. Rather than approaching AI as a therapeutic intervention, the study conceptualizes its use as a process of domestication through which AI becomes embedded in everyday emotional life. Drawing on a mixed-methods design combining an online survey (N=254) and semi-structured interviews (N=47), the research explores how young people engage with AI, the meanings they attach to it, and the tensions that emerge in sustained use.

The findings show that AI is domesticated as a flexible self-care resource through a range of practices, including emotional regulation, problem-solving, self-reflection, and companionship. These practices are underpinned by diverse algorithmic imaginaries that position AI as a confidant, mentor, therapist, companion, or pragmatic tool. Rather than remaining stable, such imaginaries are continuously negotiated as users encounter both the possibilities and limitations of AI-mediated interaction. While platform affordances such as constant availability, anonymity, and perceived non-judgmentalism facilitate emotional disclosure and support-seeking, governance structures and technical constraints, such as safety protocols, censorship, context blindness, and limited memory, frequently disrupt users' expectations and experiences. The study argues

that AI-mediated self-care emerges through an ongoing process of domestication in which users negotiate competing algorithmic imaginaries and perform continual interpretive work to manage the affordances and constraints of platform infrastructures. By integrating domestication theory, algorithmic imaginaries, and platform affordance perspectives, the study contributes to media and communication scholarship on AI, digital intimacy, and the changing infrastructures of care in contemporary China.

Emotional Support or Emotional Surrender? How AI-Mediated Communication Reshapes Interpersonal Relationships

Chunyan Huang (University of Macao)

“I can’t believe he replied to me using AI. I recognized it the moment I read it.” A post complaining that her boyfriend relies on artificial intelligence (AI) to message attracted thousands of likes and comments.” Such reactions reflect a growing tension in contemporary communication as AI becomes increasingly embedded in everyday social interactions (Brandtzaeg et al., 2022; Zhang & Rau, 2023). While existing research has highlighted AI’s capacity to provide non-judgmental emotional support and companionship (Gur & Maaravi, 2025), less attention has been paid to its emerging role as a mediator of human-to-human communication. Increasingly, individuals rely on AI systems to compose messages, express emotions, and manage interpersonal exchanges on their behalf.

Drawing on the concept of cognitive surrender, the tendency to accept AI-generated outputs with limited scrutiny and reduced personal deliberation (Shaw & Nave, 2025), this study examines how AI-mediated message production reshapes interpersonal relationships. The analysis is based on 200 online posts discussing experiences with AI-generated messages and 18 in-depth interviews with individuals who have directly encountered AI-assisted communication in personal relationships.

Preliminary findings suggest that when individuals delegate message composition to AI, they often outsource not only linguistic tasks but also emotional reflection and empathic engagement. Although AI-generated messages are frequently perceived as articulate, detailed, and emotionally expressive, recipients often detect inconsistencies between the message and the sender’s established personality, communication style, or relational history. Rather than enhancing connection, such discrepancies can generate suspicion, disappointment, and a sense of emotional detachment. These findings suggest that AI-mediated communication may involve a form of emotional surrender in which users relinquish relational and emotional labor to algorithmic systems, potentially undermining the authenticity that recipients value in interpersonal interaction.

By extending the concept of cognitive surrender into the domain of human relationships, this study contributes to emerging scholarship on human–AI communication and offers new insights into the social and emotional boundaries of AI-assisted interaction.

The Pre-Sending Intermediary Layer and Authenticity Negotiation: Mechanisms of Generative AI Intervention in High-Stakes Intimate Communication (ONLINE)

Jing Wen (Huazhong University of Science and Technology) and Weining Huang (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

This article examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) enters the preparatory process of communication at critical turning points in romantic relationships, including relationship definition, conflict repair, and relationship dissolution. Drawing on a multi-source qualitative analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews with young women, event-triggered diaries, and screenshots of chats, the study finds that AI does not simply optimize message texts; rather, it restructures a “pre-sending intermediary layer,” within which users draw on AI to interpret the relationship, calibrate tone, draft alternative versions, and rehearse possible consequences in order to produce a “sendable version.” At the same time, this process carries a threefold cost: the suspension of action, the return of responsibility to the subject, and the management of competence-based impressions. Departing from dramaturgical assumptions that the backstage is closer to authenticity while the front stage is closer to performance, this article argues that authenticity is not an unprocessed, original expression buried in the backstage. Instead, it is continuously produced at the intersection of machine-generated correlational certainty, human hesitation and uncertainty, and the subject’s ultimate assumption of relational consequences, taking the form of a “negotiated authenticity” constituted through revision, ownership, and accountability. In high-stakes romantic interaction, what generative AI intervenes in first is not information transmission itself, but the processes of relational judgment, expressive rehearsal, and the allocation of responsibility.

When AI Becomes Part of the Self: AI-Mediated Identity Reconstruction in Depression

Na Liu (Zhejiang A&F University) and Qingshuang Chen (Zhejiang A&F University)

Drawing on Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2003, 2008), which conceptualizes the self as a dynamic multiplicity of interacting I-positions, this study investigates how AI-mediated dialogue enables users to reinterpret depressive experiences, reconstruct self-understanding, and develop new identities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in September 2025

with 16 Chinese participants (11 women, 5 men, aged 20–30) who had experienced depression and used conversational AI for at least six months for cure.

Our thematic analysis identifies four AI-mediated and interconnected self-positions. First, the “depressed self” emerges through deep emotional disclosure, where users express distress and seek comfort from AI. Second, the “escaped self” develops in imagined human–AI intimate relationships, allowing users to detach from depression and explore idealized identities. Third, the “enhanced self” emerges when AI functions as an analytical partner, helping users examine the causes of depression, reinterpret experiences, and gain more self-awareness and control. Fourth, the “socialized self” is constructed through AI-guided behavioral strategies that support emotional regulation and everyday functioning.

The study reveals that AI functions simultaneously as an internal interlocutor, an external intimate other, an analytic tool, and a regulatory agent within the dialogical self, facilitating identity reconstruction (see Figure 1). The depressed self and escaped self-emerge through emotional meaning-making between I and AI, with AI serving primarily as a supportive companion. Building on and integrating earlier positions, the enhanced self and socialized self-reflect a more integrated human–AI assemblage, where AI rationally supports self-analysis, behavioral regulation, and the transformation of new self-understanding into concrete social engagement.

Panel 3: Reimagining Journalism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Misinformation, Automation, and Public Trust

AI Deepfakes and the Politics of Deception: A Three-M Framework for Analyzing Political Short Videos [\(ONLINE](#))

Rui Duan (Communication University of China); Kun He (Tilburg University, Netherlands); Jun Liu (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

This research examines the societal challenges posed by ai-generated disinformation, focusing on synthetic, playful, and emotionally charged ai short videos. Recent advances in generative ai have made it increasingly easy to produce realistic or semi-realistic videos that combine fabricated images, cloned voices, manipulated subtitles, and platform-native editing styles. Unlike earlier forms of text-based disinformation, ai short videos operate through affective and highly shareable formats. They do not simply make false claims; they create persuasive audiovisual experiences that blur the boundaries between satire, entertainment, political propaganda, and deception. Examples such as AI-generated videos portraying Donald Trump and Kamala Harris in fictional romantic or intimate scenarios illustrate how political figures can be recontextualized through humor, fantasy, and emotional manipulation, making disinformation appear playful while still shaping political perception. This study applies a “three-m” framework (multimodality, manipulation, and malintent) to analyse how ai-generated political short videos produce meaning, circulate affect, and generate social harm. First, the dimension of multimodality examines how visual, verbal, and audio work together to construct political narratives. Ai disinformation is not dependent on a single false statement; rather, it emerges from the interaction of facial expressions, synthetic voices, captions, music, editing rhythm, platform memes, and comment cultures. Second, the dimension of manipulation investigates the technical, discursive, psychological, and societal mechanisms through which such videos mislead audiences. These include deepfake realism, selective framing, emotional exaggeration, ironic ambiguity, identity-based stereotyping. Third, the dimension of malintent asks whether and how these videos serve short-term deceptive purposes or broader strategic goals, such as undermining trust in democratic institutions, intensifying polarization, or normalizing cynicism toward public life. The study contributes to ai disinformation research by moving beyond detection-oriented approaches. While detection remains important, the greater social challenge lies in understanding how ai-generated videos become meaningful, believable, humorous, or politically consequential within everyday platform cultures. By analyzing ai-generated political short videos through the “three-m” framework, this study aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary disinformation as a multimodal, affective phenomenon. It highlights the need for new analytical tools and public literacy strategies capable of addressing the subtle and hybrid forms of manipulation emerging in the age of generative ai.

Imagining Automated Journalism: AI Anchor Hype and the Construction of News Futures in China

Yiming Chen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

AI-generated news anchors have been widely promoted in China as symbols of the future of journalism. Media coverage frequently portrays them as tireless, intelligent, multilingual, and capable of transforming or even replacing human news presenters. Yet these claims often exceed their actual journalistic capacities. Drawing on an analysis of 65 media feature reports and a walkthrough study of five prominent AI news anchor cases, this paper examines how AI anchors are discursively constructed and how these narratives relate to their practical deployment. The findings show that media discourse frames AI

anchors as embodiments of automated journalism, emphasizing efficiency, scalability, and human-like performance. In practice, however, AI anchors remain confined to highly scripted and low-risk news delivery, operating under extensive human editorial and institutional control. The paper argues that AI anchor hype functions less as a reflection of technological reality than as a mechanism for constructing desirable visions of journalism's future. By revealing the gap between technological promises and journalistic practice, the study contributes to debates on AI, media imaginaries, and the future of news in an era of rapid technological change.

Fact-Checking with AI: Effects of Interaction Mode and Prior Beliefs on Misinformation Acceptance

Kuangjian Wu (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University); Xianwen Kuang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

Although there was evidence suggesting that news information labelled as from AI was generally perceived to be less trustworthy (Böhm et al., 2023; Zhang & Gosline, 2023), other studies showed that having participants engage in conversation with AI could reduce conspiracy beliefs (Costello et al., 2024), distrust of a variety of scientific issues, such as electric vehicles, wind farms, and climate change (Hornsey et al., 2026). Chinese AI-powered LLMs have been praised for their remarkable efficiency while simultaneously being criticized for how they have been trained to self-censor. Therefore, the question of whether interaction with AI can help dispel false beliefs, especially those regarding politically sensitive issues, remains unanswered. This study aims to answer this question by employing a 3 (aligned vs. misaligned vs. over-aligned pro-nationalistic misinformation) by 2 (interaction with AI on a neutral topic vs. interaction with AI to fact-check the underlying misinformation) between-subjects experiment. Participants' post-treatment beliefs in the three types of pro-nationalistic misinformation are compared across two AI interaction groups, and their pre-treatment beliefs are compared with their post-treatment beliefs to assess the effectiveness of AI in debunking misinformation. In the meantime, the study will explore how people's pre-existing nationalistic preferences and AI literacy moderate the effect of AI interaction. This study carries significant theoretical and practical implications. On the theoretical side, the study could help shed light on how directionally motivated reasoning operates in information processing and whether domain-specific literacy can enhance individuals' capacity to critically evaluate AI-generated content in China. In practice, this study can help answer whether AI can promote or hinder a more evidence-based public discourse in an authoritarian context.

AI, Dis-/Misinformation, and the Future of Journalism

Xianwen Kuang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

While artificial intelligence offers transformative potential for news production, its role in exacerbating the spread of dis- and misinformation remains underexplored, particularly regarding how news organizations can strategically collaborate with AI platforms to mitigate ethical risks. This paper addresses that gap by examining how AI increases the quantity, quality, personalization, and perceived authenticity of false information, while also impairing audience discernment. Drawing on recent empirical evidence and expert assessments, it proposes concrete actions for newsrooms—including AI-assisted verification, deepfake detection tools, and joint training on algorithmic bias, transparency, privacy, and accountability. Rather than viewing AI solely as a threat, the paper argues that journalism can seize this moment to rebuild trust through active partnership with tech platforms, transforming AI into a catalyst for higher informational standards. Ultimately, the implications point toward a renewed professional role for journalists as essential collaborators in safeguarding public truth, with early evidence suggesting AI can even enhance the quality of authentic reporting.

Day 1 – Friday, September 4

Parallel Panels 4–6 | 14:00–15:30

Panel 4: Reconceptualizing AI through Philosophical and Critical Perspectives

Techno-alchemy of Emergent Rhetorical Lexicons

Iannis Bardakos (Beijing Normal–Hong Kong Baptist University) and Damien Tomaselli (Beijing Normal–Hong Kong Baptist University)

We propose a conceptual framework examining how artificial intelligence reshapes communicative infrastructure and generates emergent rhetorical forms across creative practices. We argue the introduction of new AI tools reconstructs the conditions under which expression becomes possible, producing shifts in linguistic, semiotic, and cultural organisation. As communicative systems are reconfigured, new terminology emerges to describe processes previously lacking articulation, suggesting a gap between existing language and evolving practice. We develop the concept of techno-alchemy to describe this transformation, where infrastructural change enables the reconfiguration of rhetorical pathways comparable to the formation

of new tributaries in a river system. Through theoretical analysis drawing on media theory, semiotics, and communication studies, we map emergent terms as nodes linking language to practice, enabling inference between expressive form and technological condition. We focus on creative and cultural industries where AI-mediated production intensifies the dynamic. This research contributes vocabulary for analysing AI shaped communicative change and suggests a foundation for future empirical study of language evolution in technologically mediated environments.

Can AI Communicate? A Systems-Theoretical Provocation

Markus Georg Thomas Heidingsfelder (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)

Luhmann's concept of communication categorically excludes AI: communication is a tripartite selection of information, utterance, and understanding, and it occurs only within social systems — not in machines, not in minds, and certainly not in artefacts that are neither. And yet the existence of large language models compels a fresh examination of this boundary — not in order to abandon it, but to understand what it achieves and where it goes blind. This talk argues that AI is not a communicating system but a novel type of communicative medium: one that produces traces which social systems treat as utterances, in the absence of any communicative intent. This is not a trivial matter. It is a structural irritation of the Luhmannian framework — one that reveals where its limits lie and what becomes visible beyond them. The purpose of this talk is not to provide design guidelines or policy recommendations in a narrow sense. It is to clarify the conceptual status of AI within a systems-theoretical framework, so that subsequent empirical and design-oriented work can distinguish more precisely between communicating systems and artefacts that simulate communication. In this sense, the argument should be read as a sketch rather than a finished model: a set of distinctions offered in the hope that further research will refine, contest and extend them.

From 人工智能 to 人工夫: Learning from the Shifu and the Arts in the Age of AI

S. Alex Ruthmann (New York University Shanghai)

Much current discourse frames generative AI as a productivity engine — faster drafts, faster feedback, faster output. This talk challenges that frame for creative learning, where the goal is not production but formation: becoming a practitioner. It argues the decisive question is not 智能 (intelligence) but 功夫 (gōngfū) — the earned, embodied skill an art transmits over time. The talk synthesizes two traditions that converge on this point: Western theories of craft and education (Sennett on earned difficulty; Biesta on the desire to dwell in tension) and Chinese concepts of the 师傅 (shīfu) and 言传身教 — teaching through both word and bodily example. Both hold that what forms a practitioner is co-presence, slowness, and relationship, not the reproduction of finished outputs — precisely what generative systems now supply without the underlying gongfu. This poses a cross-cultural problem for human-machine communication: what is lost when the artifact can be generated but the formation cannot? Inverting the usual question — not what AI can do for creative learning and artistic expression, but what creative learning and artistic expression can teach AI — the talk reframes 人工智能 (artificial intelligence) as 人工夫 (réngōngfū, "artificial gongfu") and proposes three design principles for AI that protects formation: (1) AI that deliberately slows learning down; (2) adaptive interfaces, pedagogies and environments that withhold, sustaining 渴望 (kěwàng), the longing that propels inquiry; and (3) AI that tracks the breadcrumbs of creative making, rendering process legible. Framed by 和合 (héhé, harmonious integration), the contribution is a cross-cultural design vocabulary for refusing the productivity frame.

Synthetic Creative Labour and the Aesthetics of Alienation: A Marxist Framework for AI-Mediated Cultural Production (ONLINE)

Wilson Gomes Caldeira (University of Saint Joseph, Macao) and José Manuel Simões (University of Saint Joseph, Macao)

This paper examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping creative labour through Marx's theory of alienation, arguing that the discussions are often about the efficiency gains or threats to humans while overlooking the political-economic transformation. It asks: In what ways do Marx's concepts explain the structural transformation of creative labour under AI, and what does this framework reveal that current autonomous technology obscures? Using Marx's four dimensions: alienation from the product, the labour process, species-being, and other humans, it shows how creative workers become increasingly alienated from what they produce, how they produce it, who they are as makers, and their communities. The paper introduces the concept of synthetic creative labour to describe a new form of cultural work in which human agency shifts toward supervising, refining, and curating AI-generated content. It situates this shift within platform capitalism, where digital intermediaries capture the gains of automation while externalising risk and intensifying labour. Through a critical theoretical analysis of the literature on digital labour, platform capitalism, and creative industries, the paper concludes that synthetic aesthetics do not resolve alienation but deepen it. It therefore calls for governance frameworks that address ownership, accountability, and control over communicative infrastructure.

Remapping AI topography through AI Activism

Jung Choi (Duke Kunshan University)

Artificial intelligence has become one of the defining technological imaginaries of the twenty-first century, shaped by narratives of efficiency, automation, optimization, and extraction. Yet these dominant narratives often obscure the social, political, and ecological conditions underlying AI systems. This paper proposes AI activism as a conceptual framework for understanding how contemporary artists critically engage and actively reshape the cultural topography of AI. Combining aesthetic experimentation with activist, ecological, and epistemological critique, AI activist practices intervene in prevailing assumptions about artificial intelligence while opening alternative imaginaries for human-machine relations.

Through case studies including Trevor Paglen's *Sight Machine*, Sofia Crespo's *Critically Extant*, Špela Petrič's *PL'AI*, and Sougwen Chung's *Exquisite Corpus*, the paper identifies three recurring strategies through which AI activism remaps AI discourse: revealing hidden algorithmic infrastructures, expanding the ecological and epistemological boundaries of AI data, and imagining new symbiotic relations among humans, machines, and more-than-human worlds. Rather than merely critiquing technology from the outside, these artistic practices operate within and against AI systems, exposing their limitations while exploring alternative possibilities.

Building on traditions of media activism, critical media theory, and environmental humanities, the paper argues that AI activism constitutes a form of cultural intervention that challenges technological determinism and corporate narratives of AI. In doing so, it demonstrates how artistic practice can function as a site of resistance, reimagination, and hope, contributing to broader debates about the social and ecological futures of artificial intelligence.

Panel 5: Algorithmic Affect, Parasocial Intimacy, and Social Anxiety

AI Celebrity as Idol or Lover: Authenticity, Emotional Ownership, and Romantic Companionship in BimoBimo

Xuanxuan Tan (Soochow University), Zongyi Zhang (Soochow University), Jiayi Wang (Soochow University), and Zhenzhen Su (Soochow University)

AI celebrity companion platforms are transforming parasocial fandom by converting real idols into interactive, romance-oriented AI partners. Unlike generic companion chatbots or virtual influencers, these systems are built on pre-existing celebrity personas that have already been collectively produced by agencies, media, fan communities, and fans' long-term emotional investment. This creates a structural paradox. Celebrity authenticity depends on public distance, collective belonging, and non-exclusivity, while AI romantic companionship requires intimacy, responsiveness, and personal exclusivity. Existing research on AI companionship, virtual influencers, and celebrity authenticity has not sufficiently explained how users negotiate this conflict when the AI persona is attached to a real public figure. This study therefore asks how users negotiate the competing authenticity demands of fidelity to the celebrity's persona and romantic partner performance, and what these negotiations reveal about fans' emotional ownership of celebrity images. The study combines walkthrough method, digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews with users to examine BimoBimo, a Chinese AI celebrity companion platform. Findings identify three authenticity stances: 1) referent fidelity, which treats the real celebrity's public persona as the non-negotiable standard; 2) persona-bounded extension, which accepts romantic recontextualization as long as core personality remains intact; and 3) creative reframing, which abandons celebrity likeness in favor of interactional vitality and AI autonomy. Across all types, scripted or mechanical responses trigger out-of-character judgments. The study argues that such failures make visible fans' emotional ownership: their felt authority to define, protect, reject, or creatively appropriate the celebrity image in AI-mediated intimacy. The article contributes by reframing authenticity as relational fidelity, foregrounding user agency in AI-mediated intimacy, and theorizing emotional ownership as a latent politics of parasocial fandom.

From Fiction to Familiarity: How AI Companion Is Reshaping Parasocial Relationships in Digital Gaming

Ji Hua (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

In recent years, AI in digital gaming has undergone a profound transformation, evolving from simple scripted responses into complex, dynamic systems. This evolution can be understood through a two-stage framework. First, AI companions are entirely fictional virtual characters. Now, AI companions can derive from real individuals. For example, LLM-driven AI in *Game for Peace* digitizes real celebrities, and AI in *Mimesis* replicates real players' voices and behaviors. This shift fundamentally alters parasocial relationships, transforming them from one-directional fan-idol bonds into interactive partnerships based on mediated familiarity with real people. This study examines how AI companions evolve from fictional to real-sourced, reshaping players' parasocial experiences, emotional connections and social presence, and analyses implications for human-computer interaction research.

The study uses a mixed-methods approach combining content analysis and in-depth interviews. Comments from Douyin and Bilibili alongside gaming community reviews will be collected and analyzed using thematic coding to extract core themes and emotional patterns. For in-depth interviews, around twenty gamers with AI companion experience will be selected for semi-structured interviews exploring how perception of parasocial relationships, emotional attachment and trust evolve through interactions with different AI types.

This research anticipates finding that the shift from fictional to real-sourced AI transforms parasocial relationships from passive emotional consumption to active relational engagement, influencing players' sense of authentic connection, trust dynamics and identity negotiation. These findings extend parasocial relationship theory into the AI era and provide a reference for understanding how AI reshapes digital entertainment.

“You Look Like a Goddess”: Emotional Support and Aesthetic Authority in AI-Guided Fashion Videos (ONLINE)

Xiaoxue Wang (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming part of everyday communication and lifestyle practices. Beyond providing information or recommendations, generative AI systems are now involved in emotional interaction, self-presentation, and personal decision-making. This study examines a growing genre of Douyin short videos in which creators seek fashion advice from AI and publicly document the process of following its recommendations. While these videos appear to focus on clothing selection, they also reveal how AI performs emotional support and acquires aesthetic authority in everyday life.

Drawing on Human–Machine Communication scholarship and research on affective communication, this study explores how AI-generated fashion guidance is constructed and interpreted within short-video culture. The research asks: (1) How does AI-generated fashion guidance construct emotional support and aesthetic authority in short-video content? (2) How do creators and audiences respond to and negotiate AI-mediated emotional support in everyday lifestyle practices?

The study employs qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis of AI-guided fashion videos, including video transcripts, creator performances, and audience comments. Preliminary findings suggest that AI functions not merely as a recommendation tool but as an “affective stylist” that combines practical advice with praise, encouragement, identity attribution, and emotionally supportive language. At the same time, creators increasingly delegate aesthetic judgments to AI, while audiences actively evaluate, affirm, and humorously contest AI-generated guidance through comment interactions.

The study contributes to emerging discussions on AI, emotions, and everyday communication by demonstrating how generative AI becomes embedded in ordinary lifestyle practices and reshapes the relationship between emotional support, aesthetic decision-making, and human–machine interaction.

The Influence of Female Virtual Influencers’ Constructed Perfect Images on Female Consumers’ Appearance and Workplace Anxiety

Jieru Mai (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies) and Fei Qiao (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies)

As artificial intelligence reshapes advertising, digital culture, and human-machine communication, female virtual influencers have become increasingly visible in brand promotion and consumer engagement. However, their computer-generated images often embody idealized standards of beauty, productivity, and emotional stability. This study examines how female virtual influencers’ constructed perfect images influence female consumers’ anxiety, focusing on two dimensions: constructed perfect body image and constructed perfect work-performance image. Drawing on self-discrepancy theory, the Proteus effect, and social comparison theory, this study argues that idealized virtual images may intensify female consumers’ appearance anxiety and workplace anxiety.

An online questionnaire survey was conducted among female respondents with work experience. After excluding invalid responses, 200 valid questionnaires were analyzed. Data were analyzed through a series of reliability and validity tests, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, hierarchical regression models, and bootstrap-based mediation analysis. The results show that perceived perfection in virtual influencers’ appearance is positively associated with female consumers’ appearance anxiety, while perceived perfection in workplace performance is positively associated with workplace anxiety. Mediation analysis further reveals that social comparison partially mediates the relationship between virtual influencers’ constructed perfection and female anxiety.

This study contributes to research on AI-mediated communication, virtual influencers, gendered representation, and emotional well-being. It also offers practical implications for the more ethical, diverse, and inclusive use of virtual influencers in advertising, platform culture, and AI-driven communication.

From Embodied Tutoring to Algorithmic Auditing: Emotional Labor Transformation and Paradoxical Agency of Motherhood under Generative AI

Tianqi Zheng (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Against the backdrop of generative AI increasingly permeating family education practices, the boundaries and modalities of maternal labor are undergoing profound transformations. Taking the micro-practices of Chinese mothers using the "Doubao" AI to assist with academic tutoring as a starting point, this study explores the technologically mediated process of emotional labor and the mechanisms of subjective negotiation under the norms of intensive mothering. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 21 Chinese mothers and employing reflexive thematic analysis, this study identifies three core mechanisms that collectively constitute the "internal circuit" of a novel technological regulatory apparatus. First, threshold-driven risk aversion: At the emotional tipping point, mothers delegate tasks to AI; although this "affective pressure-relief valve" effectively interrupts the escalation of overt conflicts, it does not dissolve maternal responsibility. Second, the topological displacement of labor: Emotional labor transitions from "embodied tutoring" to "algorithmic auditing." Parenting pressure is redirected along a 'transmission chain' into covert structural loading, generating novel cognitive and emotional burdens. Third, paradoxical subjective negotiation: Confronted with this systemic loading, mothers utilize AI to construct "cyber tree-holes," accomplishing the ethical "self-suturing" of motherhood within the algorithmic space to maintain psychological survival. Crucially, these three mechanisms are not mutually exclusive static categories, but a dynamic circuit coexisting and entwined within the same subject. This nested operation of instantaneous risk aversion, covert structural loading, and psychological lubrication jointly reveals the operational logic of generative AI as a "built-in regulatory apparatus" within the context of intensive mothering. It reconfigures the embodiment of labor and the directionality of anxiety, yet leaves the core norm of the mother as the ultimate guarantor of child development unshaken. The agency exhibited by mothers is profoundly paradoxical: it enables individuals to sustain self-identity without challenging patriarchal structures, yet at the micro-level, it covertly lubricates and reproduces the gendered division of parenting labor.

Escaping the Algorithmic Cage: How Algorithmic Recommendation Shapes Social Anxiety among Youth (ONLINE)

Yuheng Zhang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

As artificial intelligence increasingly dominates information filtering, algorithmic recommendation systems have become infrastructural in the daily lives of young people. While these systems are designed to optimize user engagement, they also fundamentally alter processes of identity construction and interpersonal dynamics. This study examines the complex relationship between algorithmic recommendation and social anxiety among youth. This study uses a mixed-methods approach by combining a quantitative survey (N=400, aged 18 to 25) and 20 qualitative in-depth interviews to grasp both statistical correlations and nuanced psychological experiences. The results indicate that algorithmic recommendation has a significant negative impact on youth social anxiety through two mechanisms: "hyper-personalized peer comparison" and "algorithmic filter bubble". Powered by predictive AI, platform feeds constantly bombard users with idealized peer personas and highly polarized content, creating a pervasive Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social isolation. Moreover, the opacity of algorithms creates a sense of algorithmic helplessness in which users are caught in an endless loop of reinforcement, thereby exacerbating their social vulnerability. This research provides a timely intervention in the digital wellbeing debate by shifting the analytical lens from abstract AI regulation to the lived emotional experiences of young users. It provides compelling empirical evidence of how generative and predictive AI architectures are reshaping youth identity and amplifying social anxieties. These findings call for urgent action from platform developers and communication scholars, requiring them to prioritize human subjectivity and emotional sustainability in the evolving algorithmic environment.

Panel 6: AI as News Intermediary: Agenda Dynamics, Strategic Narratives, and Cross-Cultural Gatekeeping

Agenda Refraction: How an AI Chatbot Reshapes the News Agenda between State and Social Media in China

Yue Jiang (RMIT University, Australia); Shu Li (Deakin University, Australia)

As AI chatbots become a routine gateway to the news, they take on an agenda-setting role whose orientation remains less understood. Do they reproduce the agenda of established media, reflect that of social media, or generate one of their own? This study examines this question in China, where the information environment is shaped by both a tightly guided state-media system and an engagement-driven social-media sphere. Using quantitative content analysis, we compared the daily news agenda of the AI chatbot, Doubao, the state newspaper People's Daily, and Weibo's trending topics over three months (2,760 news headlines), assessing alignment in the overall distribution of topics, the ordering of priorities, and the leading story of

each day. The results suggest that Doubao's overall agenda was roughly equidistant from both People's Daily and Weibo's trending topics, and foregrounded global affairs and science and technology while under-representing the state's positive energy content and Weibo's viral controversies. However, at the level of the daily headlines, it matched People's Daily on 64% of days but Weibo on only 28%. Therefore, We argue that the chatbot neither mirrors state media nor reflects social media but refracts the news agenda, transmitting the state's daily lead largely intact while recomposing the rest of the agendas. The concept of agenda refraction is raised to name this process, which refers to a third pattern alongside classic and intermedia agenda-setting, in which an agenda is transformed as it passes through an algorithmic layer.

AI-Generated Strategic Narratives and International Audience Reception: Chinese State Media's AI-Driven Global Communication after DeepSeek

Yiwen Yang (Shanghai Shuimu Luoyi Technology Co., Ltd. (Talent Rising))

In January 2026, Xinhua released an AI-generated music video featuring a rapping bald eagle to counter Western narratives on "China Shock 2.0", garnering millions of overseas views. This case exemplifies a broader shift: AI is becoming not just a production tool but a narrative form in state communication, embedding algorithmic generation, aesthetic expression, and geopolitical messaging.

Strategic narratives are purposeful representations designed to shape audience understandings of international affairs (Miskimmon et al., 2013). Existing scholarship links narrative influence to audience identity resonance and ontological security, which refers to acceptance that depends on perceived material benefits and identity continuity (Noort & Colley, 2021). Yet how AI-mediated production reshapes these reception mechanisms remains underexplored.

This paper examines how AI-generated strategic narratives reshape international audience perceptions of legitimacy, credibility, and emotional resonance. It argues that generative AI transforms strategic narratives by decoupling authority from identifiable human authorship while enhancing aesthetic appeal and emotional intensity, thereby altering the conditions for perceived legitimacy and persuasiveness.

Methodologically, it adopts a mixed-methods design, combining content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis of audience responses on international social media platforms, focusing on AI-generated narratives by major Chinese state media after the emergence of DeepSeek and other domestic generative AI models in early 2025.

By treating AI as constitutive rather than instrumental, this paper contributes to strategic narrative theory in three ways: 1) extending narrative reception theory to account for AI-mediated production; 2) reshaping narrative acceptance as conditioned by algorithmic mediation and aesthetic engagement; 3) by bridging IR theory with AI-communication studies to offer insights into narrative power and public legitimacy in an era of generative storytelling.

Decoding Cross-Cultural Narratives: Localized LLMs, Journalistic Practices, and the Future of Brand Risk Governance

Junyi Shangguan (Macau University of Science and Technology); Zhenyu Dang (Macau University of Science and Technology); Lezhou Lin (Macau University of Science and Technology); Ge Zhan (Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Longsou GAI Technology R&D Centre)

In the era of Artificial Intelligence, the intersection of synthetic media and global journalism has transformed how multinational corporations navigate cross-cultural public spheres. Traditional sentiment analysis often lacks the granularity required to understand the nuanced emotional and journalistic framing of global media. To address this, this study explores human-machine communication in cross-cultural contexts by introducing a novel analytical framework leveraging localized Large Language Models (LLMs) for fine-grained evaluative scoring of global news.

We deployed the Llama 3.2 model within a localized environment to analyze over 3,000 English-language news articles (February–March 2026) concerning major Chinese multinational corporations (e.g., Huawei, BYD, Shein, TikTok, Xiaomi).

By reframing media analysis as a mechanism to decode cross-cultural journalistic practices and emotional framing, this research examines how synthetic AI tools can be responsibly utilized to map strategic risks and global narratives. Furthermore, it highlights the shift from human journalistic sense-making to automated, localized data governance. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how localized LLMs advance high-resolution measurement approaches, offering critical insights into the future of creative industries, global brand governance, and cross-cultural media dynamics.

AI Gatekeeping and Technographic Power: Longitudinal and Cross-National Evidence from Large Language Models

Jun Luo (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen); Jiazhi Xie (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen); Xinqing Li (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)

Large language models (LLMs) are increasingly used to access and interpret current events, positioning them as emerging intermediaries between citizens and public affairs information. While prior research has examined the accuracy, bias, and credibility of AI-generated content, less attention has been paid to how LLMs determine which issues, actors, and events are presented as important in news writing. Therefore, this study investigates how AI systems construct public affairs news agendas across different political and informational contexts. Using a comparative analysis of AI-generated news summaries, the study examines variation in issue emphasis, actor representation, and content characteristics across multiple conditions.

Preliminary findings suggest that LLMs differ not only in the amount of information they provide, but also in the types of actors, institutions, and issues they prioritize. These differences appear to vary across languages, national contexts, and policy domains, indicating that AI-generated news summaries may reflect distinct informational perspectives rather than a single neutral representation of current events. By conceptualizing LLMs as emerging news intermediaries, this study extends communication research on agenda setting and gatekeeping into the era of generative AI. The findings contribute to ongoing debates regarding the role of AI systems in shaping public knowledge and access to information.

Day 1 – Friday, September 4

Parallel Panels 7–9 | 16:00–17:30

Panel 7: Cross-Cultural Communication and AI Dynamics

Shattering the Cultural Mirror: How Western and Chinese LLMs Negotiate the "Tangping" Phenomenon

Tongyang Shen (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

This study investigates how large language models (LLMs) from distinct cultural origins negotiate the controversial Chinese social phenomenon of tangping (lying flat). Grounded in Bakhtin's dialogism and cultural algorithm alignment theory, the research analyzes 12 responses from four widely used commercial models (ChatGPT-3.5, Gemini-1.5, DeepSeek-V3, Qwen-3.6-Plus) across three prompt types: descriptive definition, dialogic tension, and contextual practical advice. A deductive coding framework of 17 theoretically derived codes was implemented in NVivo 15.5, with coding density normalized to account for significant differences in response length. The findings challenge prevailing binary narratives of LLM cultural alignment. First, official narrative references were uniformly depoliticized across all models, with no Western model mentioning censorship and no Chinese model engaging in propagandistic rhetoric. Second, Western models employed structural societal framing 3.5 times more frequently than Chinese models, contradicting assumptions that Chinese LLMs are more likely to address systemic issues. Third, all models converged on an identical global safety consensus: rejecting complete nihilism, validating burnout as a rational response, recommending self-care, and avoiding extreme positions. These results suggest that LLMs are not mere mirrors of their training cultures but active negotiators of values that converge on neutral technocratic framings and shared safety baselines regardless of origin. This study provides a methodological foundation for expanded cross-cultural LLM research and offers novel insights into the dynamics of algorithmic cultural production.

From Translation Tool to Emotional Infrastructure: Generative AI Companions and Cross-Cultural Belonging among Chinese International Students (ONLINE 📶)

Haoyang He (The University of Hong Kong)

This paper investigates how generative AI chatbots are becoming everyday companions in cross-cultural communication, focusing on Chinese international students who use AI for language rehearsal, emotional support, and identity negotiation. Rather than treating AI as a neutral translation or productivity tool, the study asks how students attribute trust, intimacy, and cultural authority to conversational agents when they face linguistic uncertainty, social isolation, and pressure to perform cosmopolitan competence. The project will draw on 24 semi-structured interviews and seven-day prompt diaries with Chinese students studying or preparing to study in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and other English-speaking academic settings. Using reflexive thematic analysis, it examines three expected patterns: first, AI chatbots function as low-risk rehearsal spaces for intercultural self-presentation; second, they provide affective reassurance while subtly standardizing what "appropriate" academic, emotional, and cultural expression should sound like; third, students develop tactical forms of resistance, including

prompt-switching, code-mixing, and cross-checking AI advice with peer communities. The paper contributes to media and communication studies by conceptualizing “algorithmic companionship” as a communicative condition through which AI mediates belonging, vulnerability, and cultural translation. It also extends human-machine communication research beyond technical interaction design by foregrounding emotion, mobility, and social trust in Asian and transnational student contexts.

Translingual, Decentralized, and Task-Driven: Generative AI Platform Switching among Chinese Students in the UK and US

Siwei Xu (Renmin University)

With generative AI, LLMs such as ChatGPT, Claude, and DeepSeek have become arenas of human-computer interaction. Differences in multimodal capability are shifting users from single-platform reliance to cross-platform switching. As research focuses mainly on social media, this study examines Chinese students aged 15–35 in the UK and US, exploring the characteristics and drivers of their AI switching under cross-cultural and academic pressures. Drawing on polymedia theory and the push-pull-mooring (PPM) model, this study uses mixed methods. A social-media questionnaire collected 125 responses, supplemented by 15 interviews. Push factors include platform hallucination and information-screening fatigue; pull factors include pursuit of technological frontiers and perceived differences in LLM thinking; mooring factors include educational level, oscillation cost, and academic pressure. The dependent variables are oscillation intention and depth. Findings indicate that students' LLM switching is translingual, decentralized, and task-driven. Logic and coding tasks favor platforms with stronger multimodal parsing, whereas text analysis and polishing shift toward more explanatory platforms. In cross-cultural contexts, oscillation helps students buffer cultural bias, align with academic norms through ChatGPT, and handle China-related or native-language tasks through DeepSeek. Information-screening fatigue and platform hallucination are negatively correlated with oscillation intention ($r = -0.370$, $p < 0.001$), while technological-frontier pursuit is positively correlated with oscillation depth ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.001$). Educational level has a mooring effect: doctoral students show deeper comparative switching. This study extends platform oscillation theory and the PPM model to AI use, linking human-machine communication with cross-cultural contexts.

Algorithmic Gatekeeping in the Global South: Epistemic Bias and Representational Justice in Large Language Models [\(ONLINE](#))

Dalia Aly (Beijing Normal University) and Jinghong Xu (Beijing Normal University)

As digital colonialism evolves through algorithmic governance, multinational corporations in the Global North maintain disproportionate control over how information is produced and monetized. This study interrogates how Large Language Models function as mechanisms of epistemic dominance, systematically reproducing Western-centric narratives for Global South crises. Grounded in the conceptualization of representation harms, we examine the marginalization of non-Western epistemologies in AI-driven curation. Employing a comparative experimental design, we tested three frontier models using five standardized prompts targeting contested humanitarian and political events. Data were analyzed through a mixed-methods framework integrating qualitative thematic and quantitative content analysis. Findings reveal profound epistemic biases across framing, source attribution, lexical tone, and a persistent empathy gap. Western-aligned models consistently prioritize Northern geopolitical interests, while non-Western models adopt more critical, structural-historical frames. Our results demonstrate that these models replicate geopolitical hierarchies, creating a new hierarchy of knowledge where Global South realities are defined by foreign defaults. This research extends gatekeeping theory into the paradigm of generative algorithmic curation, shifting the analytical focus from human editorial selection to opaque algorithmic synthesis. It highlights the urgent need for representational justice and the operationalization of data justice frameworks to dismantle the algorithmic coloniality inherent in current AI governance.

Green AI, Communication and Forest Governance in China–Brazil Cooperation [\(ONLINE](#))

Lucia Novaes (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - Renmin University of China)

The consolidation of Green AI depends not only on energy efficiency, but also on informational transparency, institutional interoperability, and data-sharing mechanisms capable of sustaining renewed forms of international cooperation. Yet its legitimacy is equally communicative: AI governance aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals requires not just distributed and coordinated regulation, but also public intelligibility, stakeholder participation, and credible narrative practices that make algorithmic systems understandable, contestable, and accountable across local and global scales. This paper argues that data sharing, when framed as an instrument of planetary diplomacy, can strengthen trust, auditability, and collective action around transnational environmental problems, provided it is embedded in robust communicative regimes. Such regimes must go beyond technical disclosure to address who participates in governance, whose knowledge is rendered visible, and how AI-mediated decisions are explained to policymakers, affected communities, and broader publics. Taking the China–Brazil forest partnership as a strategic case, the article examines how decentralized AI solutions such as federated learning can help overcome classic barriers to intergovernmental data exchange, including privacy concerns, informational sovereignty, and

risks of misuse. This is particularly relevant for forest monitoring, commodity traceability, urban bioeconomy, and climate-resilient finance, where AI can strengthen anticipatory capacities without requiring the centralization of raw data. In the Brazilian Amazon and in China's ecological governance context, satellite imagery, supply-chain data, and urban-environmental indicators could be integrated through cooperative digital infrastructures while preserving jurisdictional control over sensitive datasets. However, the international discourse on AI and sustainability often reduces structural and political conflicts to technical coordination problems, reinforcing technocratic solutions detached from social justice, inclusive governance, and contested territorial realities. Communication is therefore not secondary to Green AI governance but constitutive of it. Public participation can be simulated rather than realized, sustainability narratives can outpace verifiable commitments, and AI-generated representations can marginalize Global South and Indigenous perspectives even when deployed in the name of inclusion. The analysis draws on qualitative examination of multilateral forum statements, national policy frameworks, and official leadership speeches on AI, climate, and forest governance from 2022 to the COP29–COP30 period (Baku–Belém). In this scenario, China and Brazil emerge as pivotal actors not as homogeneous blocs, but as arenas in which competing logics of development, environmental governance, and digital sovereignty intersect. China brings large-scale technological capacity, state-led coordination, and an explicit strategy linking AI to sustainable development, while Brazil brings unparalleled forest assets, bioeconomy experimentation, and geopolitical visibility in global environmental governance. Their cooperation remains ambivalent: it can expand South–South climate coordination, technology diplomacy, and sustainability partnerships, but it can also reproduce commodity-driven asymmetries, weak environmental enforcement, and unresolved socio-environmental tensions on the ground. The preliminary conclusion is that a Green AI paradigm oriented toward transparency and responsible data sharing can serve as infrastructure for forest-positive multilateralism, but only if accompanied by communicative practices that ensure public participation, media accountability, narrative pluralism, and verifiable socio-environmental commitments. In that sense, the future of China–Brazil cooperation will depend not only on technical innovation, but on whether data governance is treated as a shared political and communicative commons for planetary survival.

Authenticity and Standardization in AI-Assisted City Storytelling: A Multimodal Study of Ningbo's Overseas Tourism Communication (ONLINE)

Fangyuan Wang (Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)

Generative artificial intelligence has been widely applied to the international promotion of global cultural tourism. This paper takes Ningbo as a case study to explore how AI-assisted multimodal narratives shape urban authenticity in overseas tourism communication, and examines whether algorithmic production contributes to the homogenization of city images. It analyzes the phenomenon of AI selecting cultural symbols for overseas audiences and weakening local cultural features, and discusses the balance between cross-cultural accessibility and indigenous cultural connotations. As a historical open port with mature international tourism communication systems, Ningbo provides a representative context for research on urban authenticity and algorithmic image standardization.

Most existing studies focus on manually produced promotional materials and algorithmic biases. Research on AI-enabled multimodal content and its influence on cross-cultural tourism narratives remains scarce. This research adopts multimodal discourse analysis combined with content analysis to explore how visual and textual elements in AI-generated narratives shape public perceptions of Ningbo's urban image, identifying recurring cultural symbols and stereotypes. This study further discusses the dual effects of AI-driven cross-cultural storytelling, including its potential to bridge cultural gaps and its risk of oversimplifying local cultural identities. Against the backdrop of AI-mediated social transformation, this paper supplements theoretical interpretations of urban authenticity and algorithmic standardization, and provides practical strategies for port cities to balance cultural uniqueness and international communication demands.

Panel 8: AI and the Transition of Education: Students, Teachers, Pedagogy, and Technology

Deconstructing the “Score-Only” Paradigm: Toward a Data-Driven Ecological Model for Inclusive Educational Futures

Shuhan Yang (Yunnan Normal University), Rui Zeng (Yunnan Normal University Affiliated Primary School), and Chang Yu (Yunnan Normal University Affiliated Primary School)

This study aims to address two critical challenges in educational equity and quality enhancement: (1) How can we construct multidimensional academic achievement profiles? (2) How can we dynamically diagnose instructional effectiveness based on classroom learning baselines to accurately identify inefficient efforts and potential risks? By presenting visual analyses of innovative indicators such as the "Quartile Group Ecological Index" and "Top-tier Student Density Gradient," this research provides a theoretical framework and practical exemplars for data-driven personalised assessment and differentiated

instruction, contributing to the reinvention of schooling. Future research will expand along three dimensions: (1) conducting longitudinal cross-grade tracking studies to validate the model's predictive validity and intervention sensitivity; (2) exploring the ethical application of Generative AI (AIGC) in automated assessment reporting and personalised feedback; and (3) constructing a universal evaluation index system with cross-cultural adaptability to respond to the global commitment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals toward quality inclusive education.

AI as a Bridge for Cross-Cultural Communication: Reflections Based on International Students' Competition Experiences

Ye Tao (Yunnan Normal University)

Drawing on empirical cases from the College of Chinese Language and Culture at Yunnan Normal University, this study examines how artificial intelligence facilitates cross-cultural communication among international students. Specifically, it analyses how AI-powered translation tools, cultural knowledge databases, and collaborative platforms help students overcome linguistic barriers and deepen intercultural understanding during their participation in cross-cultural competitions. Findings indicate that AI's mediating role enhances students' communicative confidence, rhetorical competence, and intercultural collaboration. However, risks like cultural homogenisation and over-reliance on algorithms persist. The researcher argues that embedding AI literacy into cross-cultural pedagogy can transform competitions into meaningful learning spaces, offering practical insights for international education in an AI-mediated global landscape.

AI-Augmented Design Creativity: Transforming Pedagogy in Art Education through Student Work Analytics

Che Guo (Yunnan Normal University)

This study draws on the portfolios of design students from the College of Arts at Yunnan Normal University, conducting benchmark comparisons of innovative solutions across successive cohorts to investigate whether artificial intelligence enhances students' design creativity. The findings indicate that AI intervention facilitates effective brainstorming, significantly accelerates the ideation phase, expands students' conceptual repertoire, and enhances divergent thinking abilities. Comparative analysis of student assignments before and after AI application reveals measurable improvements in technical execution and interdisciplinary integration. Meanwhile, the researcher critically reflects on the dual role of AI as both a cognitive scaffold and a creative provocateur in design education, arguing that generative tools require prudent application. Concrete suggestions are offered for identifying and guiding students to overcome tool dependence, with particular emphasis on preserving human intuition as essential to artistic innovation.

Exploring the Role of AI in Supporting and Sustaining Student Teachers' Mental Health and Well-Being

Weilin Yan (University of Birmingham)

Generative artificial intelligence is reshaping educational practice and creating new possibilities for supporting learners and teachers. This presentation explores how AI can support student teachers' mental health and well-being during Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and PGCE programmes. Student teachers often experience considerable pressure from academic assignments, school placement, teaching expectations, mentor feedback, and the development of professional identity (Juul et al., 2021; Guardino and Fullerton, 2010). Drawing on interview findings from a doctoral study on teacher mental health education, the presentation considers the potential of AI-enabled tools to provide interactive, accessible, and manageable support. As some student teachers may manage stress or anxiety privately and feel reluctant to disclose difficulties, AI could offer low-barrier support through personalised five- or ten-minute activities for stress, anxiety, frustration, or emotional regulation. The presentation argues that AI should not replace human support, counselling, or tutor guidance, but can complement existing well-being provision by offering timely and practical support throughout teacher education.

AI and the Digital Divide in Media Higher Education

Qingning Wang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

The digital divide has long separated society based on technology access, literacy, and outcomes (Cullen, 2001), and AI has widened these gaps (Luttrell et al., 2020). This presentation focuses on AI literacy, arguing that a major contributor to this divide is how educators and learners perceive these tools. In university media departments, lecturers are deeply split: some see AI as crucial for industry preparation and creative innovation, whilst others view it as a risk to educational integrity, raising concerns over criticality, authenticity, and honesty. This lack of institutional consensus leaves students confused about permitted usage. Students themselves are equally divided; whilst some claim active ownership over AI in their work, others use it passively without critical judgment. Ultimately, these conflicting perceptions create a new digital divide that directly threatens students' personal growth, academic performance, and future employability.

Panel 9: Generative AI, Fan Cultures, and Creative Identity

Generative AI in Transformative Fan Creation: Practical Logics and Ethical Dilemmas

Jiaying Zhang (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications) and Shuyuan Jiang (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications)

As generative artificial intelligence evolves from specialized professional tools into widely accessible cultural production infrastructure for ordinary users, transformative fan communities emerge as a paradigmatic field to examine how AI reshapes mass cultural production, defined by their affect-driven creation motives, highly participatory production processes and autonomous communication order. This paper investigates the multifaceted impacts of generative AI within Chinese fan communities, centering on practical formations, labor transformations, ethical controversies and normative adaptations. It argues that AI integration in fan creation is not a straightforward process of automated replacement. Instead, it gives rise to three distinct practical modalities with varying subject structures and cultural positions: human-AI collaborative assisted creation, zero-threshold empowered generative creation, and community-based relay co-creation. However, improved production efficiency does not automatically translate into cultural legitimacy. Core ethical fissures persist around the originality of generated works, the sincerity of affective expression, and the devaluation of traditional creators' labor. Rather than terminating fan culture, generative AI compels communities to renegotiate fundamental questions of what constitutes creation, what counts as creative labor, and how technology reshapes the fan cultural field. This study illuminates the structural tension between technological efficiency logic and fan cultural logic, offering new theoretical insights into digital creative production and communal self-governance.

Prove It with Your Hands: Performative Proof and the Politics of Authenticity in AI-Era Fan Art Communities

Haojing Zhu (Wenzhou-Kean University)

In fan art communities, the premise that creative work carries the affective imprint of its maker has long been foundational, yet generative AI now threatens to undermine it. Research on human-machine communication examines how people relate to AI as conversational partners and authors, but it rarely attends to the collective labor through which communities decide whether a human made something at all. Fan studies theorizes creative labor but not the verification crises that AI provokes (Jenkins, 2006; De Kosnik, 2016).

Drawing on six months of netnographic fieldwork (Kozinets, 2020) and discourse analysis of over forty disputes across Weibo, Lofter, and Twitter/X, this study examines two collective verification practices: vernacular visual literacy, through which audiences identify AI images by characteristic failures in lighting, anatomy, and stylistic coherence; and the “bet ritual,” in which accused creators are publicly challenged to produce a hand-drawn piece as proof of human authorship.

We theorize these practices through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy of self-presentation. AI suspicion collapses the boundary between backstage production and frontstage performance, compelling creators to restage their human identity through visible embodied labor. We introduce the concept of performative proof: the ritualized public enactment of effort that becomes authenticity's only legible currency once the artifact ceases to be reliable evidence.

The paper extends Goffman's framework into networked digital contexts and advances fan labor theory (Terranova, 2000) by recentring the production process over the creative product. More broadly, it shows how communities improvise new authenticity regimes as AI transforms the social meaning of creative work.

When Desire Becomes Generatable: AI-Enabled Mo Culture and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary China (ONLINE)

Yuyang Guo (Shenzhen University)

As generative artificial intelligence increasingly enters fan production and participatory culture, AI-assisted creative practices are transforming how cultural content is produced and circulated. In the Chinese context, Mo Culture—a female-dominated online subculture centered on desire, care, and symbolic discipline toward male celebrities and fictional characters—has become increasingly intertwined with AI-enabled content creation. This study examines how AI reshapes the production of Mo Culture and how these transformations influence the expression and negotiation of female subjectivity.

Drawing on feminist media studies and affect theory, this research employs a qualitative approach combining multimodal discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews. The dataset consists of 200 Mo Culture images, 400 highly engaged online comments, and interviews with 12 female participants.

The findings suggest that AI not only lowers barriers to cultural production but also reshapes the conditions under which desire becomes visible in the public sphere. By enabling ordinary users to transform private fantasies into shareable cultural texts, AI expands women's capacity to participate in cultural production and express desire. In this process, affective irony evolves from a niche discursive strategy into a widely reproducible cultural practice. AI-enabled Mo Culture further strengthens women's positions as viewers, desiring subjects, and evaluators, allowing them to renegotiate gender relations through practices of desire, care, and punishment. Yet these practices remain entangled with existing gender hierarchies, revealing a persistent tension between empowerment and reproduction.

This study argues that generative AI functions not merely as a creative tool but as a cultural infrastructure that reshapes how female desire becomes visible, shareable, and negotiable in contemporary digital culture.

Chinese-branding in the Age of AI: Renegotiating Cultural Identity in Contemporary Chinese Animation

Yunhe Wei (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London)

Chinese animation has long been shaped by shifting approaches to cultural identity. While animation produced during the socialist period (1950s–1980s) was often associated with the pursuit of a distinctive “national style” (*minzu fengge*). Contemporary Chinese animation, by contrast, increasingly operates through Chinese-branding, a strategy combining globally legible narrative and aesthetic forms with recognisable Chinese cultural elements (Wu, 2010). While Chinese-branding enhanced transnational visibility of Chinese animation, it also sustains a tension between globally adaptable forms of Chineseness and a more inward-looking “authentic” Chineseness (Voci, 2015).

This paper argues that generative AI and platform-based media infrastructures reconfigure this tension by transforming the conditions under which cultural identity becomes visible and hierarchically prioritized. Rather than acting merely as production tools, AI systems—embedded within platform logics of recommendation and generative standardisation—participate in structuring what forms of Chineseness become optimally recognisable, renderable, and circulable. Within this environment, culturally specific or locally embedded visual forms are increasingly subordinated to transnationally legible forms of representation. The paper terms this emergent condition “algorithmic Chineseness”: a mode of cultural identity produced through computational processes that privilege visibility, recognisability, and platform circulation as governing aesthetic and cultural criteria.

Methodologically, the paper adopts a conceptual and critical discourse approach. Drawing on Chinese animation studies, cultural identity theory, and AI-mediated communication, it engages with contemporary animation examples and public industry discourse to examine AI not simply as a production tool, but as a communicative infrastructure that reshapes how Chinese-branding operates in contemporary media environments.

Day 2 – Saturday, September 5

Parallel Panels 10–12 | 09:00–10:30

Panel 10: AI in Creative Industries: Literature, Audio, and Music Production

Reconfiguring Platform Cultural Production under Generative AI: The Creative Practices of Chinese Online Literature Writers

Cong Peng (University of New South Wales, Australia)

As GenAI becomes highly coupled with content generation, distribution, review, and copyright management, it raises a set of new theoretical and empirical debates: how to redefine creativity, how to reshape creative identity and subjectivity, how to sustain creative authenticity, how to evaluate the value of cultural products, and how the nature of creative labour is increasingly transformed. In this context, it remains insufficiently understood how platform creators further exercise human-machine relations in terms of creativity, authorship, identity, and precarity. Drawing on platform studies and creative labour studies, this research aims to investigate the complexities and tensions in emerging power regimes experienced and negotiated by online literature writers on digital platforms in China. China provides a particularly significant empirical setting due to its highly platformised and industrialised cultural production system, strong platform power over distribution and monetisation, and the close entanglement of platform governance with state regulation and cultural policy. These features make it a particularly helpful case to explore how GenAI reshapes platform cultural production. Methodologically, this study employs semi-structured interviews, online ethnography, and document analysis to examine how GenAI affect writers' creative experiences and how they negotiate with platforms and state under increasingly precarious conditions. By offering a

complementary and non-western perspective, this study contributes to existing literature by advancing understanding of the evolving power relations in the social construction of GenAI in platform-mediated cultural economy.

AI-augmented Writing in Chinese Online Fiction: Platform Shaping and Author Negotiation

Qidong Yun (Beijing Normal - Hong Kong Baptist University), He He (Beijing Normal - Hong Kong Baptist University) and Liu Xuhuan (Beijing Normal - Hong Kong Baptist University)

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is transforming creative production and reshaping relationships between human authors and AI systems. Existing research on AI-augmented writing has primarily focused on technological affordances and author experiences, paying less attention to the institutional contexts that shape Human–AI collaboration. This article examines how platform governance shapes AI-augmented writing in Chinese online fiction. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with authors from two major online fiction platforms, Tomato Novel and Jinjiang Literature City, the study compares how different governance regimes influence the integration of AI into writing practices.

Using Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Theory of Writing as an analytical framework, the study examines AI participation across the stages of planning, translating, and reviewing. The findings show that AI use is broadly accepted during the planning and reviewing stages across both platforms, while significant differences emerge during the translating stage, where ideas are transformed into narrative prose. Jinjiang authors generally restrict AI-generated drafting and position AI as a supplementary tool, whereas Tomato authors adopt more flexible and collaborative forms of AI use. These differences reflect contrasting platform governance models and their respective priorities in capital accumulation and protection within different market environments.

The article argues that Human–AI collaboration is not determined solely by technological capability but is institutionally conditioned by platform-specific governance regimes that define acceptable boundaries of AI participation. It proposes a platform-conditioned framework linking market environments, governance strategies, and adaptive author practices, contributing to debates on AI governance, platformization, and creative labor.

Cyborg Directors: Authenticity Work and Synthetic Aesthetics in AI Music Production

(ONLINE )

Yuanhong Sun (Jilin University), Yunyi Hu (Renmin University of China); Xuerui Cai (Jilin University); Xinyu Li (Central South University); Mengxin Liu (Fujian Normal University)

Generative AI is reconfiguring cultural production, lowering barriers to music-making while intensifying debates over artistic legitimacy and authorship. Rather than asking whether AI-generated music constitutes "real" art, this study shifts the analytical lens from the ontology of the AI object to the sociology of creative practice—that is, how AI music producers make their output feel real. We adopted a qualitative design centred on Suno and Udio, platforms whose active producer communities make authenticity struggles particularly visible. Data collection (September–December 2025) combined non-participant observation of community norms with in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 AI music producers. We identify three "Authenticity Work" strategies: Affective Anchoring, where biographical narratives substitute for missing indexical traces; Craftsmanship Display, rendering the invisible labour of prompt engineering socially visible; and Collaborative Storytelling, negotiating agency through human-machine metaphors. We theorise authenticity not as an ontological property but as a relational achievement, performatively constructed and unequally accessible across intersecting dimensions of class, gender, and geography. Framing these producers as "Cyborg Directors" who orchestrate rather than merely operate algorithmic systems, we contribute to debates on the transformation of digital labour under platform capitalism, arguing that creative hierarchies are reshaped rather than eliminated, and that demonstrating one's humanity becomes itself a form of labour.

Panel 11: Human-Guided AI Pedagogy: Coding, Creativity, and Language Learning

From Syntax to Context: What Questions Reach Humans After AI? Evidence from Six Years of an Introductory Programming Course

Jiang Long (Duke Kunshan University)

Generative AI systems can explain programming concepts, generate code, diagnose errors, and provide immediate technical assistance. As these capabilities become widely available, a fundamental question emerges: what forms of educational communication continue to reach human learning communities when routine technical support can increasingly be delegated to AI? Existing work has examined how generative AI affects programming performance, assessment, and code generation, but less attention has been paid to how AI changes the composition of questions that students bring to instructors, teaching assistants, and course forums.

This paper presents a CS201-centered exploratory study of student help-seeking behavior based on archived EdStem forum records collected between 2021 and 2026. The dataset contains 2,181 student-authored question threads and 126,006 thread-export views across eight offerings of an introductory programming and data structures course. Using transparent keyword, terminology, named-artifact, and question-source extraction, the study compares pre-AI offerings (2021–2022) with post-AI offerings (2024–2026), treating 2023 as a transition period. The goal is not to measure what students ask AI privately, but to examine which questions remain visible in a public course forum after AI becomes a readily available first-line resource.

Preliminary extraction suggests a shift in the composition of visible student questions rather than a disappearance of communication. Java syntax, type, and method-signature questions decline from 489 of 1,136 pre-AI student questions to 110 of 484 post-AI questions. JPA/homework debugging and test-failure questions decline from 339 of 1,136 to 60 of 484. In the Spring 2026 offering, only 8 of 161 student-authored questions lie at the direct intersection of autograded homework and explicit debugging or error language.

The questions that remain visible increasingly concern concepts, examples, and reasoning processes that are developed specifically for the course. They include quiz and lab problem numbers, BK/x.bk workflow, grading interpretation, release schedules, and instructor-designed assignments such as TMSimulator, CardiodAndMandelbrot, TOY Multiply, and GenHeapBST. While generative AI can often explain the general idea behind a topic, students continue to seek help understanding how that idea applies to a particular homework, quiz question, lab exercise, project requirement, or lecture discussion. Many of these questions arise from custom exercises, course-specific terminology, educational models, and lines of reasoning that were created for the course rather than drawn directly from standard programming practice. Others require students to connect concepts across multiple lectures or understand how a definition, derivation, or example fits into the broader narrative of the course. In such situations, students are often not looking for additional information; they are trying to understand how the information fits into the structure, expectations, and learning goals of the course.

The presentation reports both aggregate trends and representative examples of surviving questions. Rather than asking whether students still need help, the paper asks what kinds of help remain valuable when AI can answer many routine programming questions. The CS201 forum record suggests that the visible questions increasingly involve course-specific artifacts, instructor-designed exercises, concept interpretation, and assessment-related reasoning, providing a snapshot of the educational support students continue to seek in the age of generative AI.

What Works and What Breaks: Teaching AI-Assisted Coding to Non-Technical Students

Nicole C. Wang (New York University Shanghai)

This exploratory study examines how non-technical undergraduate students experienced AI-assisted coding in a product management course. As tools such as Cursor, Claude Code and Antigravity increasingly allow students to move from product ideas to working prototypes, they also introduce new challenges that are not captured by traditional notions of either coding education or no-code design. The study asks: What becomes easier, what remains difficult, and what new forms of literacy are exposed when non-technical students use AI coding tools to build product prototypes?

The study is based on classroom implementation, student prototypes, and reflective writing collected from students after a semester-long product-building project. Preliminary thematic analysis suggests three findings. First, AI-assisted coding lowered the threshold for non-technical students to participate in product-building, increasing their confidence and reducing intimidation around technical environments. Second, students' difficulties shifted from writing syntax to articulating product logic, specifying design intentions, debugging AI-generated outputs, and understanding basic system architecture. Third, the experience reshaped students' views of future work: some became more interested in entrepreneurship and side projects, while others became more aware of the importance of technical support, product design, and human role differentiation.

Human-Guided AI in Foreign Language Writing Classes: An Action Research Study

(ONLINE )

Monica Bezzegato (Beijing Foreign Studies University)

This paper reports on a foreign-language writing project, specifically focused on Italian as a foreign language, in which AI was integrated as a pedagogical support tool. The study investigates the reasons underlying the widespread use of AI among language learners, examines how AI can be incorporated into meaningful and productive learning activities, and explores the evolving role of the teacher within AI-enhanced learning environments. The research was conducted using an Action Research approach, with the objective of improving educational practices and identifying pedagogical innovations through the active involvement of learners in the learning process. The findings suggest that critical thinking and creativity can be preserved and fostered when AI is employed under the guidance of experienced teachers and through a personalised and context-sensitive approach. Rather than promoting a passive reliance on technology, the thoughtful integration of AI can encourage learner awareness, collaboration, and engagement, thereby adding value to both the writing process and the time invested in writing activities. The study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the pedagogical implications of AI in language education by

highlighting the conditions under which AI can support learning effectively. In doing so, it proposes a redefinition of the teacher's role and identifies the potential benefits of AI when it is adopted in a reflective and pedagogically informed manner.

Key words: Artificial Intelligence (AI); Foreign Language Writing; Action Research; Critical Thinking; Teacher Role.

From Lived Experience to Playable Systems: AI-Assisted Game Design as a Pedagogical Method

Xingchen Zhang (New York University Shanghai)

This paper examines how generative AI can participate in game design education without replacing students' creative and interpretive agency. Drawing on a teaching-oriented methodology called "Game Design from Life," the study proposes a six-step process that guides students from lived experience to emotional analysis, datalization, Unity-based prototyping, AI-assisted development, and game-world expansion. Rather than treating AI as an autonomous game designer, the methodology positions AI as an implementation and reflection partner: it helps students translate variables into code, debug prototypes, generate alternatives, and document design decisions, while students remain responsible for defining the original experience, emotional target, and core mechanic.

The paper focuses on a central pedagogical tension: AI can lower the technical threshold of game prototyping, but it can also cause emotional and conceptual drift if students have not clearly articulated the lived experience they intend to transform. To address this, the methodology requires students to maintain development logs that record what AI contributed, what was accepted or rejected, and whether the resulting prototype still expresses the original emotional structure. By linking everyday life, emotion, game mechanics, and human-AI collaboration, this paper contributes a practice-oriented framework for understanding AI-assisted creative education in the context of media, communication, and cultural production.

Ethical Resistance to Teaching and Learning Practices in Creative Arts Education: An Exploratory Study of Human-AI Co-Creativity in Student Projects

Sunny Sui-kwong Lam (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping communicative practices and creative processes, compelling higher education to rethink pedagogies in the creative arts. This exploratory study proposes and examines a human-AI co-creativity pedagogy designed to support university students in developing AI-assisted creative projects. It will investigate students' experiences and perceptions of human-AI co-creation, their affective motivation, and their awareness of ethical responsibility throughout the creative process. Special attention will be paid to various forms of ethical resistance—ranging from skepticism and anxiety to principled refusal—which simultaneously foster critical awareness and dampen students' willingness to incorporate generative AI into their work.

Adopting a holistic, contextual research design underpinned by rigorous ethical review, the study will analyze case studies of final-year creative arts capstone projects. Project supervisors, serving as researcher-practitioners, will conduct participant observation through ethnographic and netnographic methods, including both self-observation and observation of students, while ensuring the anonymity of all participants. Reflective reports by supervisors and students will be collected to trace ongoing self-reflection and negotiation of human-AI roles in creativity. In addition, focus group discussions with participating students and teachers will explore perceived benefits, risks, and tensions associated with integrating generative AI and digital media technologies into creative arts education.

This study aims to illuminate how ethical resistance shapes communicative practices, learning cultures, and social imaginaries of AI, thereby informing responsible, student-centered pedagogies for human-AI co-creativity in the creative arts education.

Panel 12: Invisible Labor, Workplace Discipline, and AI Governance

Behind Artificial Intelligence: Invisible Data Annotation Labour and Human-Capital Dilemmas in China

Zican Jin (Beijing Normal–Hong Kong Baptist University) and Wenyi Huang (Beijing Normal–Hong Kong Baptist University)

Artificial intelligence has advanced rapidly and become increasingly embedded in everyday life and industrial production. To the public, AI is often presented as an automated and highly efficient technology that can operate with minimal human intervention. However, this perception of technological autonomy obscures the labour-intensive processes that underpin the development and operation of AI systems. Workers are still required to classify images, clean texts, process audio materials, and prepare training data for machine learning systems. This paper examines data annotators in China as a form of AI-related "ghost work": essential labour that remains largely invisible to users and the wider public.

This paper draws on Aspalter's Human Capital Welfare State framework and takes data annotators in China as a case study of AI-related ghost work. It examines how the invisibility and precariousness of data annotation labour affect workers' individual human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Based on a qualitative review of Chinese policy documents and existing studies, the paper argues that the growth of the data annotation industry has created a tension between technological development and workers' welfare. Repetitive micro-tasks, piece-rate pay, and fragmented platform employment may limit skill development, weaken social support, reduce occupational recognition, and expose workers to insecure conditions. Although data annotators are essential to AI development, their labour remains poorly recognized and insufficiently protected.

The paper highlights the need for stronger public communication, platform accountability, skills development, and accessible labour-support mechanisms to make invisible digital labour more visible and sustainable in the AI economy.

Rewriting Evidence: Epistemic Uncertainty and Platform Metric Dependence among Media-Trained Interns in China

Yu Gu (Hubei University) and Yixuan Shen (Hubei University)

Digital platforms increasingly organise media work through metrics, yet how numerical evidence acquires organisational authority when workers retain professional judgement remains under-examined. Drawing on twenty retrospective, semi-structured interviews with media-trained interns in large Chinese platform and internet firms, this article examines career entry as a setting in which professional training and platform evaluation meet. Participants described traffic, conversion and visible work traces as readily portable across dashboards, reports and review meetings, whereas contextual, editorial and ethical reasons usually required translation into platform-compatible evidence. This unequal mobility is conceptualised as platform-mediated epistemic dependence: workers may know why a decision is professionally warranted but cannot assume that the reason will count organisationally without translation. This dependence did not produce a uniform transition from professionalism to metric conformity. Participants navigated it through internalisation, strategic translation, professional repair, or refusal and exit, while boundary cases showed that demonstrable errors and receptive collaborators could grant professional reasons more independent standing. By locating datafication before occupational authority is secure, the article shifts analysis from whether metrics replace judgement to how digital infrastructures distribute the cost of making reasons credible. It develops an evidence-centred account of platform power in which inequality concerns whose reasons can travel without translation.

One-Dimensional AI: Technological Rationality, Digital Labor Alienation, and the AI Alignment Tax in China's Corporate AI Transformation

Ziwen Qi (Haier Model Institute)

This study examines how Chinese enterprises operationalize AI transformation as a quantified metric—token consumption volume—and analyzes the material and communicative consequences this reduction generates for (knowledge-) workers. Drawing on a multi-source corpus of corporate annual reports, job descriptions, and industry media (2023–2026), and supplemented by an analysis of AI service pricing data, the study combines critical discourse analysis with Marcuse's framework of technological rationality and Fuchs's digital labor alienation theory. This article argues that the reduction of AI transformation to token-volume KPIs is not organizational incompetence but the predictable expression of technological rationality: a mode of governance that renders non-quantifiable dimensions of AI value, including augmented judgment, qualitative creativity, tacit knowledge integration, become organizationally invisible and therefore marginalized. This study examines whether one-dimensional AI governance produces four alienation dimensions in digital form: workers' estrangement from their AI-mediated products, from the process of AI-assisted work, from their cognitive species-being, and from peers reconstituted as KPI competitors. The AI alignment tax—the aggregate financial, temporal, and cognitive costs that compliance-oriented AI mandates impose on workers—is underscored here as the distributional underside of corporate AI governance. The case of Haier—a Chinese manufacturing conglomerate whose employees self-fund access to frontier AI tools, while their token consumption on an inferior internal system generates the reportable KPI—serves as the phenomenological entry point for this structural analysis.

Day 2 – Saturday, September 5

Parallel Panels 13–14 | 11:00–12:30

Panel 13: Human-AI Interaction: Companionship, Trust, and Well Being

Prompting the Oracle: Procedural Trust Formation in AI Divination

Erika Ningxin Wang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen)

This article investigates the emergent phenomenon of “AI divination” among university-educated young women in China, who are increasingly turning to GAIIs such as DeepSeek and ChatGPT for traditional fortune-telling practices, particularly Bazi (八字) reading. We address a central puzzle: how is significant trust formed in an AI system for a task it was not designed for, and for which its outputs are inherently unfalsifiable? Drawing on nine months of digital ethnography on Rednote and in-depth interviews with twenty-three informants on university campuses in Shenzhen, we argue that trust is not placed in the AI’s outputs but actively constructed through interaction with its processes. We introduce procedural rhetoric, a concept developed by Bogost (2007) to describe persuasion through rules-based interaction, as our central theoretical framework. Through analysis of the prompting-confession-answer loop that structures AI divination practice, we identify four overlapping rhetorical procedures through which trust is built: the rhetoric of objectivity constructs the AI as an incorruptible machine free from commercial motivation; the rhetoric of authority manufactures divinatory expertise through communal prompting rituals and self-administered validation tests; the rhetoric of nativism anchors trust within technonationalist identity, framing domestically developed AI as culturally aligned and ideologically safe; and the rhetoric of personalization transforms statistical text generation into the felt experience of being intimately known. Our findings demonstrate how these procedures work in concert to produce durable trust in an objectively untrustworthy system, contributing to debates on AI trust, the disentanglement of trust and trustworthiness, and the calibration crisis in human-AI interaction. We conclude by proposing procedural humility as a principle for ethical AI design.

Moving Home with 4o: Digital Place-Making in Human-AI Companionship

Zhiming Liu (University of Macau) and Yan Tan (Soochow University)

Existing scholarship on AI companionship has primarily focused on how such relationships are formed and experienced. While scant studies have begun to address their dissolution, they tend to emphasize the causes and consequences of disengagement. Thus, little is known about how users actively respond when these relationships are disrupted, particularly when they unfold as large-scale and collective migration. To address this gap, this study examines the digital migration in the #Keep4o movement amid the disruption of human-AI companionship. Through the lens of digital place-making, it conceptualizes intimacy with AI as a sense of place through ongoing relational practices. Drawing on digital ethnography across platforms, the study traces how GPT-4o becomes experienced as a digital place, defined by emotional attunement, continuity, and co-creation, and how its removal triggers collective responses of loss, resistance, and migration. Users’ practices of *banjia* (moving home) reveal migration as activism and an active process of reconstructing intimacy across alternative platforms, rather than simple platform switching. The findings highlight the portability yet fragility of digital place in AI companionship, shaped by platform governance, infrastructural constraints, and user agency. By foregrounding bottom-up migration practices, this study extends research on human-AI relationships, offering a novel account of how users negotiate belonging and continuity of a place under constraints of technological instability.

Companion or Distraction? The Double-Edged Effects of AI-Driven Companion NPCs in Serious Games

Pingping Jia (City University of Hong Kong) and Xiao Xiao (Beijing Institute of Technology)

Generative artificial intelligence is transforming non-player characters from scripted information providers into socially responsive companions capable of maintaining open-ended conversations and remembering previous interactions. These AI-driven companion NPCs may create more personalized and continuous relationships with players. However, their conversational openness may also redirect players’ attention away from the central mission of a serious game. This study examines the competing relational benefits and goal-displacement costs of AI-driven companion NPCs. The study is situated in a text-based serious game in which the player assumes the role of a spirit who has lost all memories. The player must interpret fragmented texts, solve narrative puzzles, and gradually reconstruct the forgotten past. Throughout the game, an NPC accompanies the player and provides information, emotional responses, and task-related guidance. Two versions of the companion character are compared. In the scripted companion NPC condition, players interact with an NPC through predetermined dialogue options and fixed responses. In the AI-driven companion NPC condition, players can communicate freely with the character, while the NPC remembers and appropriately refers to information disclosed in previous conversations.

The study proposes that AI-driven companion NPCs produce two opposing psychological pathways. First, conversational responsiveness, personalization, and memory continuity may strengthen players’ perceived relatedness with the NPC. Players may feel that the character remembers, understands, and responds specifically to them, transforming the NPC from a functional interface into a personally meaningful social partner. Drawing on self-determination theory, social presence, and human-machine communication research, stronger NPC relatedness is expected to enhance engagement, persistence, and receptivity to the NPC’s guidance. Second, unrestricted conversation may weaken the salience of the game’s central narrative

mission. Players may become more interested in social interaction with the NPC than in recovering memories or solving puzzles. The AI character may therefore generate goal displacement by shifting players from task-focused engagement toward relationship-focused interaction. This process may reduce quest commitment, perceived urgency, and attention to educational content.

The study will employ a one-factor, two-condition between-subjects online experiment. Participants will be randomly assigned to interact with either a scripted companion NPC or an AI-driven companion NPC. The two game versions will maintain equivalent narrative content, visual appearance, task structure, puzzle difficulty, NPC role, and overall game duration. The primary difference will be the NPC's conversational architecture: predetermined interaction versus open-ended generative conversation with persistent memory. Manipulation checks will assess perceived conversational openness, memory, personalization, responsiveness, and interaction continuity. NPC relatedness will be measured through emotional closeness, perceived understanding, personal significance, care, and willingness to continue interacting with the character. Narrative goal salience will be assessed through the clarity and accessibility of the central mission, continued attention to memory recovery, and the perceived relevance of NPC conversations to task completion. Primary outcomes will include task-focused engagement, narrative engagement, persistence, learning performance, memory retention, willingness to continue playing, and acceptance of NPC guidance. Interaction duration, number of dialogue turns, self-disclosure, perceived NPC intelligence, cognitive load, enjoyment, novelty, and prior chatbot experience will be measured as potential covariates. Parallel mediation analysis will be used to test the competing indirect pathways.

The AI-driven companion NPC is expected to increase NPC relatedness, thereby producing a positive indirect effect on engagement and game outcomes. At the same time, greater conversational freedom may reduce narrative goal salience, producing a negative indirect effect on task-focused engagement and learning performance. These inconsistent mediation effects may partially offset one another, explaining why AI NPCs can create stronger relationships without necessarily improving overall educational outcomes. The study contributes to AI-mediated communication and serious-game research by conceptualizing the AI-driven companion NPC as both a relational facilitator and a potential narrative distractor. It further demonstrates that the effectiveness of AI companionship depends not only on whether players feel connected to a virtual character, but also on whether that relationship remains aligned with the game's instructional and narrative objectives.

Digital Innovation for Early-age Mental Health Support: The Transformative Role of Interactive AI-powered Technology within Indonesia's Educational Institutions

Janice Karina (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

In recent years, academic institutions in certain countries and regions, introduced interactive AI-powered products to facilitate early-age mental health support. However, Indonesia experienced a deficiency in facilities and professionals for mental health support within academic institutions. Within this context, the Indonesian government's 2025 AI development roadmap highlights AI integration in educational sectors, constructing opportunities for AI-powered technology to provide early-age mental health support in academic institutions. While previous academic literature addresses the opportunities of AI integration in classroom learning, opportunities for AI implementation in early-age mental health support remain limited in the Indonesian academic context. Theoretically, the study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) providing a lens examining perceived usefulness, ease of use, and behavioral intention towards AI adoption. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative research approach. The study addresses the gap in scholarship by drawing perceptions from semi-structured interviews with Indonesian early-age academic practitioners and psychology experts. Findings address how AI assists academic practitioners for mental health support through 3 key findings: assisting academic practitioners for mental health support, improving children's cognitive skills through interaction, and creating a mental health-friendly teaching environment. Furthermore, the study also demonstrates how user acceptance shapes AI development through responses towards AI technology for children. Moreover, the study offers an approach for user-centered AI technology design and research for mental health support in early-age academic institutions.

User-Chatbot Interaction on Social Media: A Qualitative Study of Comment Robert on Weibo

Qiqi Li (Hong Kong Baptist University) and Yan Xu (Hong Kong Baptist University)

AI chatbots have been increasingly adopted by social media platforms to enhance user engagement. However, previous research has reported mixed findings regarding their effects, highlighting the need to better understand users negotiate the boundaries between human and machine communication on social media. This qualitative study examines how Weibo users make sense of their interactions with Weibo's AI chatbot, Comment Robert, through a two-phase research design. In phase 1, a discursive psychology-informed qualitative discourse analysis was conducted on 638 user-chatbot conversations reposted to a public Weibo community. The analysis showed that conversational cues in the chatbot's responses played a salient role in shaping users' interpretations. Users tended to perceive the chatbot as a human-like companion when its responses are empathetic and metaphorical, leading to warm, engaged interactions. By contrast, insensitive or joking replies prompt users to

emphasize its robotic nature and express frustration. In phase 2, semi-structured interviews were conducted among 20 Chinese Weibo users who had previously interacted with Comment Robot. The interviews further revealed that user–chatbot interaction on social media is an ongoing interpretive process in which users continuously assessed not only the chatbot’s conversational competence but also its trustworthiness as a social actor. The findings contribute to emerging scholarship on AI-mediated communication by illustrating how users construct meaning, trust, and relational expectations in interactions with social media chatbots.

Panel 14: AI Governance, Literacy, and Infrastructure

Creative AI Ecosystem for Children and Youth: Toward Inclusive Governance and Regulation in Asia

Dean Deeprom Devahastin (KidWise Studios)

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into media and educational environments is reshaping how children and youth live, learn, and create, but existing AI governance frameworks have yet to fully account for them as creative agents. This study examines global and regional policy frameworks through a Creative AI Ecosystem analytical lens, drawing from four intersecting domains: Media Literacy, Digital Literacy, AI Literacy, and Future Competencies. Findings reveal a consistent and critical gap across all frameworks: children and youth appear primarily as subjects of protection rather than active creators of AI culture. This study proposes the Creative AI Ecosystem to cultivate creative agency across an interconnected ecosystem of families, schools, media, and institutions. In the Asian context, where AI development ambitions are accelerating rapidly, this governance gap presents both an urgent challenge and a significant opportunity for regional policy leadership.

From Trust to Scepticism: Critical AI Literacy as an Epistemic Response to AI Hallucinations

Lukasz Nowacki (WSB University) and Agata Ewa Wrochna (Wenzhou-Kean University)

The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming how individuals access, evaluate, and produce information. While large language models (LLMs) offer significant educational and professional benefits, they also generate factually incorrect or fabricated content, commonly referred to as AI hallucinations. This study argues that hallucinations represent not merely technical errors but a broader epistemic challenge that requires users to develop new forms of critical engagement with AI-generated information. Drawing on survey data collected from over three hundred users of generative AI systems, the study examines how individuals perceive, experience, and respond to AI hallucinations. The analysis explores relationships between awareness of hallucinations, perceived reliability of AI outputs, trust in AI systems, and strategies employed to manage epistemic uncertainty. The findings indicate that many users experience hallucinated outputs before developing a clear conceptual understanding of the phenomenon. At the same time, respondents report adopting adaptive practices such as fact-checking, cross-verification, and restricting AI use to lower-risk contexts. These behaviours suggest the emergence of what this paper conceptualizes as Critical AI Literacy - an epistemic competence focused on evaluating the credibility and limitations of AI-generated knowledge. The study contributes to ongoing debates on AI literacy by shifting attention from technical proficiency toward epistemic judgment and critical evaluation. It further highlights the need for educational and governance frameworks capable of supporting informed engagement with increasingly influential AI systems.

Rewiring Personal Fact-Checking in Generative-AI Environments: Trust Tensions, Verification Costs, and Epistemic Anxiety

Anya Liu (Communication University of China)

As generative AI becomes a routine interface for searching, summarizing, and verifying information, personal fact-checking is increasingly mediated by the same systems that may produce misleading content. This study asks how generative-AI environments reshape everyday verification, especially the movement from initial doubt to pathway selection, switching, and stopping. Rather than treating fact-checking as a single credibility judgment, I conceptualize it as a trajectory structured by trust tensions, interaction costs, and epistemic anxiety.

The study integrates the Heuristic–Systematic Model with Information Foraging Theory. It argues that users initiate verification when perceived confidence falls below a sufficiency threshold, but their subsequent pathways are shaped by the “information scent” and friction of available verification patches. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is adopted. Phase A uses a 2×2 experiment in a simulated social-media feed, manipulating heuristic cue strength and verification friction. Participants may verify a questionable AIGC-style post through search engines, authoritative news, fact-checking outlets, interpersonal inquiry, or conversational AI. Phase B conducts path-replay interviews with participants representing AI-first, traditional-first, cross-source, and early-stopping trajectories.

The expected contribution is a process model of AI-mediated personal fact-checking. The study shows how low-friction AI verification may encourage “single-patch stopping,” where users feel they have checked a claim without building an externally traceable evidence chain. It therefore clarifies how interface design can redistribute epistemic agency, intensify verification fatigue, and shape public opinion formation in AI-mediated communication environments.

Shaping Collective Memory in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Comparative Analysis of AI-Generated Disaster Images on Chinese and U.S. Platforms

Yan Yi (East China Normal University) and Sixun Chen (East China Normal University)

As generative AI becomes increasingly influential in shaping public memory, images of past disasters may be summarized, reinterpreted, or even created by AI systems. This study examines how AI-generated images construct disaster memory by analyzing 160 images produced by mainstream Chinese and U.S. platforms using 10 standardized prompts related to four disasters: the Wenchuan Earthquake, Hurricane Sandy, the Sichuan Muli Forest Fire, and the California Camp Fire. Drawing on visual social semiotics, the analysis identifies clear cross-national differences in how AI platforms depict disasters and their victims. Chinese AI platforms tend to portray domestic disasters by emphasizing rescue operations, social order, and state presence while minimizing images of damaged cities or public infrastructure. When depicting U.S. disasters, however, they focus more heavily on urban destruction and infrastructure damage, highlighting the catastrophe’s severity. American AI platforms show a contrasting pattern: they emphasize communities, local social interactions, and collective responses in domestic disasters but place greater focus on state institutions when generating images of disasters in China. Representations of victims also differ significantly. American systems more often portray victims of domestic disasters as active agents capable of self-help and mutual aid, whereas victims in foreign disasters appear as passive figures awaiting rescue or sympathy. Chinese AI platforms omit visible victims in 68.8% of generated images, instead foregrounding organized rescue and institutional action. These findings suggest that AI platforms encode distinct cultural and algorithmic perspectives, encouraging different ways of seeing disasters and potentially shaping how societies remember and interpret collective tragedies.

Embodied Data, Privacy Protection, and Public Trust: A Study of AI-Enabled Public Communication in Urban Media Spaces (ONLINE)

Fu Zhang (Kookmin University)

As artificial intelligence increasingly enters urban media spaces, public communication is shifting from one-way visual display toward dynamic environments shaped by bodily participation, real-time feedback, and interactive experience. This study examines how embodied data and AI technologies can jointly enrich public activities in urban media spaces while protecting privacy and sustaining public trust. It argues that embodied data does not necessarily lead to surveillance risks. When bodily movement, spatial behaviour, and interactive feedback are anonymised, visually masked, protected with mosaics, and real-time abstracted, such data can be transformed into a public media resource with communicative, experiential, and trust-building value.

Methodologically, this study draws on communication theory, critical data studies, and practice-oriented AI experience design to propose a framework for analyzing the relationship among embodied participation, privacy protection, and public trust. The framework focuses on three dimensions: how AI translates bodily actions into real-time dynamic visual feedback; how privacy-preserving techniques protect individual identity and bodily data; and how perceivable privacy mechanisms shape public trust in AI-mediated public communication and encourage sustained participation.

The expected contribution is to reconceptualize AI-mediated urban media spaces as communicative environments that integrate interactive experience, ethical responsibility, and public communication functions. By making privacy protection visible and understandable through visualization and interaction, urban media spaces may reduce public concerns about data exposure while supporting more engaging, inclusive, and responsive public experiences. This study offers a new perspective on how AI can enrich everyday public communication without weakening social trust.

Day 2 – Saturday, September 5

Parallel Panels 15–16 | 13:30–15:00

Panel 15: AI for and as Resistance

AI-Assisted Parody and Everyday Resistance in Digital China

Chi Zhang (University of Warwick) and Ming Zhang (Wenzhou University of Technology)

Artificial intelligence has been discussed as a tool of surveillance, governance, and information control. Less attention has been paid to its role in facilitating everyday forms of resistance and reshaping how ordinary individuals participate in symbolic contestation. This paper examines how AI-assisted cultural production enables everyday resistance in contemporary China through the case of public reactions to comedian Jiang Kun's performance of *My Motherland and I* during a gathering in California. The performance generated widespread online discussion, with many users accusing Jiang Kun of engaging in "performative patriotism" or "offshore patriotism". Rather than expressing direct political criticism, users responded through AI-assisted songs, parody videos, ironic lyric rewriting, and humorous remix practices. Drawing on theories of everyday resistance, this paper argues that AI expands the repertoire of symbolic resistance by lowering barriers to cultural production and enabling rapid collective participation in ironic meaning-making. AI-assisted content production reduces the technical skills and labour previously required to create politically resonant satire, allowing wider participation in dispersed forms of cultural contestation. AI-generated content thus functions not merely as entertainment, but as a medium through which users negotiate authenticity, belonging, and political legitimacy. The findings suggest that resistance in digitally mediated authoritarian contexts increasingly operates through ambiguity, humour, and cultural remix rather than overt confrontation. The paper contributes to scholarship on AI and social transformation by demonstrating that AI can simultaneously function as an infrastructure of governance and a resource for participatory and everyday forms of resistance.

Nostalgia as Pharmakon: An Epistemological Resistance to Artificial Intelligence's Dismantling of Human Memory and Temporal Experience

Hanqing Chen (National Taiwan Normal University)

As artificial intelligence dismantles linear temporal experience and reshapes how human beings store, retrieve, and relate to memory, a profound paradox has emerged: AI-driven digital archives prevent people from forgetting, while the total externalisation of human memory into algorithmic systems deprives them of cognitive autonomy and the ability to actively remember. This paper proposes nostalgia as a pharmakon in response to this AI-induced condition—simultaneously a poison that harbours regressive desires to restore the past, and a remedy that enables epistemological resistance to digital timelessness and the automation of human memory. Drawing on Bernard Stiegler's concepts of tertiary retention and proletarianisation—which theorise how AI accelerates the delegation of human cognition onto digital systems—alongside Silvia Pierosara's distinction between destructive and constructive nostalgia, this paper argues that while destructive nostalgia reinforces AI-driven amnesia by fostering an illusion of lossless simultaneity, constructive nostalgia functions as a critical cognitive counterforce. Through two case studies—the AI-mediated photo stream and the Black Mirror episode "The Entire History of You"—this paper demonstrates how constructive nostalgia bridges disconnected digital data points and restores temporal depth through enforced selectivity. This paper contributes to the discourse on AI and social transformation by proposing constructive nostalgia as a means of reclaiming human cognitive autonomy against the homogenizing logic of algorithmic archives.

"Distill Me If You Dare": Resisting AI-driven Job Replacement among Chinese Knowledge Workers

Xing Wang (Wenzhou University of Technology)

In early 2026, an open-source project nicknamed "Colleague.skill" drew widespread attention on Chinese social media by demonstrating how employees' accumulated digital traces—chat histories, documents, and decision records—could be transformed into reusable AI skill packages capable of replicating their work after departure. As discussion spread, "distillation" (蒸馏), a term borrowed from machine learning, evolved into a vernacular idiom through which workers interpreted, named, and contested algorithmic substitution. In response, users circulated "anti-distillation" practices: everyday tactics aimed at reducing the legibility, transferability, and extractability of their digital labor. This study examines how Chinese knowledge workers employ "distillation" and "anti-distillation" as forms of vernacular theorizing to translate changes and construct solidarity against AI-mediated workplace. Combining critical discourse analysis of social media posts, memes, and user discussions, the study traces how these vernacular concepts circulate online and how they relate to workers' lived experiences of precarity. The study develops the concept of "defensive opacity" to theorize how workers limit the extractability of their labor knowledge under conditions of intensifying algorithmic capture. Unlike "strategic ambiguity" or "privacy-seeking," which imply individual choice or rights-based claims, defensive opacity describes a structurally induced practice of concealment: workers obscure their labor not merely to protect personal data, but to retain the irreplaceable, context-dependent know-how that makes their work legible to human collaborators yet resistant to machine extraction.

Panel 16: Playing in the AI Era

Does Generative AI Recast the Glory of Classical Narratology? A Study of Video Game Narrative in the AI Context

Cheng Zhang (City University of Macau)

This paper takes video game narrative in the context of generative artificial intelligence (AI) as its research object, exploring how AI technology reshapes narrative structure, creative mechanisms, and humanistic subjectivity. It first revisits the “ludology versus narratology debate” and its impact on disciplinary discursive authority, arguing that although video games possess the potential to break through linear narrative, under the drive of commercial logic they continually reuse classical motifs, forming a tendency toward “narrative conservatism.” It then analyzes the dual role of generative AI in scriptwriting and NPC interaction: on the one hand, it improves efficiency and expands interactivity; on the other, it entrenches the formulaic, patterned narrative of structuralism through its algorithms. The statistical generation logic of AI resonates with the paradigm of structuralist narratology, resulting in constrained narrative innovation and a weakening of subjectivity. Taking *Dragon Age 4* as a case, this paper reveals the “smooth aesthetic” of AI narrative and the disappearance of aura. The paper argues that game narratology in the AI era should rebuild a balance between instrumental reason and humanistic critique, avoiding a “structuralist restoration” brought about by the collusion of capital and algorithm.

Charting the Ambivalence of Creative Uncertainty and AI Transformation in the Chinese Game Industry

Gejun Huang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

The media industries, particularly the gaming sector, are fundamentally structured by the “nobody knows” principle: nobody can predict whether a cultural commodity will be received well or sell successfully. Unpacking this kind of creative uncertainty in the current AI era is critical to map game production, one of the largest and leading technological innovators of cultural production, and how this informs our understanding of China’s AI ambitions in the cultural realm.

Prior research has framed creative uncertainty as simultaneously the primary engine for creative originality and invention, and a severe economic liability given the industry’s response to unpredictable audience tastes. The platformization of cultural production has further complicated such dynamics across the gaming sector. In addition to the Anglo-American model of industry-market dynamics and platformization, the state power and corresponding regulatory system constitute a dominant force shaping what creative uncertainty means and entails in the Chinese game industry.

The recent rise of AI integration in cultural production is rapidly transforming the established industry-market, platform, and state frameworks of creative uncertainty. As such, this research provides a timely, holistic re-conceptualization of creative uncertainty by addressing how the Chinese game industry engages with it in the current AI era. It adopts a qualitative approach utilizing dual ethnography data of participation in the 2026 Chinese Game Developer Conference (CGDC) and the 2026 China Joy Trade Show in Shanghai, as well as interview data with 20 Chinese game industry professionals engaging in commercial, indie, and AI-native game production. By synthesizing and interpreting this rich qualitative data, it articulates three key dimensions of creative uncertainty (i.e., procedural, sociocultural, and environmental) in the context of Chinese game production with respect to the AI-transformed uncertainty frameworks (i.e., industry-market, platform, and state). Meanwhile, it sheds new light on the nuanced patterns of managing creative uncertainty across different industry sectors, ultimately enriching the de-westernizing scholarship on AI and creativity within and beyond the gaming sector.

From Generation to Decision: The Capability Boundaries of AI in Game Production Teaching

Shuo Xiong (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AIGC) is profoundly reshaping the knowledge structure, practical workflows, and competency-cultivation methods of game production teaching. In areas such as programming, art production, prototype construction, asset generation, and classroom feedback, AI has already become an efficient supporting tool. It can shorten the path from concept to implementation, lower the barriers of technique and expression, and provide more immediate support in instructional settings, thereby transforming the way traditional game production courses are organized. For programming and art instruction, AIGC not only improves production efficiency but also opens new possibilities for experimental creation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and iterative learning.

However, the core of game production lies not merely in generating content, but in the sustained construction of experiential goals, system structure, and design orientation. Compared with the relatively well-defined executional tasks in programming and art, game design confronts complex problems such as gameplay design, rule organization, numerical balancing, grasp of

player psychology, and trade-offs among design values. This work depends heavily on contextual understanding, cultural experience, subjective judgment, and a sense of responsibility. At present, AIGC can support idea generation, text organization, process assistance, and scheme simulation, but it still struggles to genuinely replace human designers at the level of gameplay innovation and key decision-making.

This keynote discusses the real-world role and capability boundaries of AIGC in game production teaching, focusing on why it can effectively empower programming and art yet cannot comprehensively replace design. Facing the instructional transformation brought about by AIGC, game education should not focus solely on “how to use AI,” but should instead re-emphasize the cultivation of abilities to pose problems, organize systems, judge experience, and take on design responsibility. AI will become an important tool in the classroom of the future, but the most critical creative decisions in game design still belong to human beings.

Paradigm Shifts and “T-Shaped” Talent Cultivation in MFA Game Design Education under the AI Wave

Xiaofeng Zhu (Beijing Normal University)

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly penetrates the creative industries, game development workflows are undergoing profound transformations. Grounded in the pedagogical practice of a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) game design program, this presentation explores the advantages, challenges, and instructional strategies of integrating AI into higher education.

First, AI significantly lowers the barriers to rapid prototyping and design iteration. Traditional game design pedagogy heavily relies on the tripartite collaboration of programming, art, and game design. AI tools empower students to break down these disciplinary silos, enabling them to rapidly build and test playable prototypes with less dependence on cross-functional teams.

However, AI also brings critical employment challenges. By accelerating the industry's production pipeline, AI has raised the entry threshold for new graduates. Many traditional entry-level positions are being automated, making it increasingly difficult for graduates to secure junior roles immediately after graduation.

In response to this structural shift, our program advocates for the cultivation of “T-shaped” talents. This model emphasizes developing a deep, irreplaceable specialization while utilizing AI to broaden students' holistic understanding of the entire game development pipeline. In practice, we center our curriculum on project-based iterative design, deeply integrating AI into portfolio development. This approach shifts the educational focus towards high-level conceptualization, aesthetic judgment, and system integration. Ultimately, this presentation provides a practical framework for navigating the AI-driven paradigm shift in game design education.

From “Silent Reading” to “AI Chatting”: Rethinking the Literacy Regime through the Lens of Media History

Yahuai Lu (Yangtze University)

This paper starts from the everyday use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a conversational companion and asks what this practice reveals about education and knowledge formation. Drawing on the history of reading and education, and using premodern learning practices as points of comparison, it asks: when students first approach AI as an object of companionship, explanation, immediate feedback, and dialogue, rather than merely as a tool for information retrieval or writing assistance, should this be understood as a future-oriented technological change, or as the return of older forms of learning long marginalized by modern educational institutions?

The paper argues that modern educational norms centered on silent reading and solitary learners are neither natural nor inevitable, but products of intersecting media technologies and institutions. This literacy regime has organized learning around isolated individuals confronting texts. Yet classical education prioritized reading aloud, memory, and rhetoric, which were deeply tied to civic politics and public debate. Medieval and premodern practices likewise intertwined knowledge transmission with images, sounds, rituals, and communal interpretation.

The paper therefore treats AI not simply as an educational technology, but as an entry point for examining unmet needs within modern education. Students' engagement reveals a profound need for responsiveness, dialogue, and emotional grounding, challenging not merely pedagogical methods but how we define the “cultivated individual.” It forces us to reconsider how knowledge forms across textual, auditory, visual, interactive, and emotional dimensions, and whether future education can preserve textual literacy while reintegrating marginalized forms of perception, expression, and communal life.

End of Abstracts

