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Mapping the field of digital literary studies: concepts, methods, and emerging directions

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A B S T R A C T

Background: The expansion of digital archives, computational tools, platform-based reading practices, and artificial intelligence has transformed literary studies into a field where texts are increasingly examined as data, networks, interfaces, and machine-mediated cultural objects. **Objective:** This study aims to map the field of digital literary studies by identifying its dominant concepts, methodological clusters, and emerging research directions. **Method:** Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative-dominant field-mapping design supported by bibliometric description, keyword co-occurrence mapping, bibliometric-oriented science mapping, and corpus-assisted thematic analysis of selected scholarly metadata, abstracts, keywords, and conceptual statements. **Results:** The findings show that digital literary studies is organised around five major formations: digital humanities and literary interpretation, computational and distant reading, electronic literature and digital textuality, cultural analytics and platform-based literary circulation, and AI-oriented literary analysis. **Implication:** The study also reveals that literary objects are increasingly conceptualised as archives, corpora, graphs, interfaces, platforms, datasets, and algorithmic outputs. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in its integrated mapping of concepts, methods, and future directions within digital literary studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The digitisation of cultural production has transformed literature from a print-centred object into a searchable, networked, platform-mediated, and computationally analysable field of textual practice. Literary works now circulate through digital archives, electronic literature collections, online reading communities, fanfiction repositories, social media platforms, interactive narratives, and AI-supported writing environments. This transformation is not merely technological; it reshapes how texts are produced, preserved, accessed, interpreted, and valued. UNESCO notes that digital technologies are changing how societies experience and access culture, while also creating new possibilities for documentation, preservation, and cultural participation. At the same time, large-scale scholarly infrastructures such as OpenAlex now index approximately 474 million scholarly works, indicating the unprecedented scale at which academic knowledge can be searched, linked, and mapped. In this context, digital literary studies becomes crucial because literary scholarship must confront a cultural environment in which texts operate not only as aesthetic artefacts, but also as data, metadata, interfaces, networks, and algorithmic traces.

(Duggan, 2023; Preeti et al., 2024). Literary studies in the digital age are assumed as a domain shaped by complexly interrelated topics in shifting media and scholarly practice (Vodola, 2022). Studies of distant reading show how computational and quantitative methods have expanded literary analysis from individual texts to large corpora, genres, patterns, and historical systems (Consilvio, 2023; Gius & Jacke, 2022; Gupta et al., 2025). Meanwhile, electronic literature research has foregrounded interactivity, interface, code, multimodality, and digital-born textuality. However, these strands are still frequently discussed in isolation (Hossain, 2025; Loebis et al., 2025; Ramya & Rukmini, 2021). What remains insufficiently clarified is how concepts, methods, objects, and emerging directions within digital literary studies can be mapped as an integrated field rather than as a loose collection of digital techniques or unrelated subfields.

This article therefore aims to map digital literary studies as an emerging interdisciplinary formation by identifying its dominant concepts, methodological clusters, and future research directions. It addresses three main questions: first, what conceptual formations define digital literary studies at the intersection of literary criticism, digital humanities, computational analysis, electronic literature, and media studies? Second, what methodological orientations are most visible in the field, and how do they reshape the object, scale, and evidence of literary interpretation? Third, what emerging themes—particularly artificial intelligence, platform reading, digital reception, multimodality, computational narratology, and ethical literary data—are likely to reconfigure the field in the near future? To answer these questions, this study adopts a qualitative-dominant field-mapping design supported by bibliometric description, keyword co-occurrence mapping, and corpus-assisted thematic reading of selected scholarly metadata, abstracts, keywords, and conceptual statements.

The central argument of this article is that digital literary studies should not be understood as a replacement for traditional literary criticism, but as an expanded epistemological framework for studying literature across multiple scales, media, and infrastructures. Its significance lies in showing that literature in digital environments may appear simultaneously as text, archive, corpus, graph, interface, platform trace, and machine-mediated cultural object. This perspective renews literary studies by connecting close reading with distant reading, corpus-assisted interpretation, media-specific analysis, platform critique, and algorithm-aware reading. The article's novelty lies in integrating three domains that are often treated separately: computational literary studies, electronic literature, and AI/platform-based literary culture. By clarifying their relationships, the article offers a more coherent framework for understanding how literary meaning, authorship, circulation, reception, and canon formation are being reorganised in an age of digital archives, data infrastructures, and intelligent machines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital literary studies

Digital literary studies refers to an interdisciplinary field that examines how literary texts, practices, institutions, and interpretive methods are reshaped by digital media, computational tools, and networked cultural infrastructures (Nistor, 2022; Zozulia, 2024). Its definition varies across scholarly traditions because some scholars use the term narrowly to describe the application of digital methods to literary analysis (Siby, 2025), while others use it more broadly to include born-digital literature, digital archives, platform-based reading, and online literary communities (Mischke & Ohge, 2023). In a narrow sense, it denotes the application of digital methods to literary analysis, including corpus analysis, stylometry, mapping, and visualisation. In a broader sense, it includes the study of electronic literature, digital textuality, online reception, fanfiction, social reading platforms, and the transformation of authorship and readership in digital culture. Price and Siemens position digital literary studies within digital humanities, but its specific concern remains literary interpretation, textual scholarship, and the changing materiality of literary objects.

The field may be understood through four interrelated aspects: digital objects, digital methods, digital infrastructures, and digital epistemology (Změlík, 2024, 2025). First, it involves digital objects, such as digitised texts, electronic literature, hypertext fiction, fanfiction, and literary archives. Second, it involves digital methods, including text mining, topic modelling, network analysis, and corpus-assisted interpretation. Third, it involves digital infrastructures, such as databases, repositories, platforms, metadata systems, and scholarly tools. Fourth, it involves digital epistemology, namely the question of how computational scale, platform mediation, and data visualisation alter the production of literary knowledge. These aspects show that digital literary studies is not merely a technical extension of literary criticism, but a reconfiguration of literary scholarship's objects, evidence, methods, and interpretive authority.

Computational literary studies

(Preeti et al., 2024). The concept is closely related to distant reading, a term popularised by Franco Moretti to describe the analysis of literary patterns beyond the limits of conventional close reading (Gupta et al., 2025). However, scholars differ in interpreting its epistemological status: some regard it as a quantitative challenge to traditional hermeneutics (Vanathi, 2023), while others understand it as a complementary method that expands the scale of interpretation (Amangazykyzy et al., 2025). This distinction is important because computational literary studies does not simply replace close reading with numbers; it converts textual features into analysable patterns that must still be interpreted critically. Recent debates therefore emphasise that distant reading is most productive when computational modelling is connected back to literary questions about form, genre, periodisation, canon, and historical change.

The main indicators of computational literary studies include scale, formalisation, modelling, pattern recognition, and interpretive return (John & George, 2024). Scale refers to the ability to analyse hundreds or thousands of texts rather than a few canonical works. Formalisation converts literary features into analysable variables, such as words, genres, topics, sentiments, characters, or networks. Modelling enables scholars to detect patterns across periods, authors, and traditions. Pattern recognition reveals repetitions, deviations, clusters, and historical shifts that may remain invisible in close reading, while interpretive return ensures that computational findings are reconnected to literary meaning, value, ideology, and cultural history.

E-Literature and digital textuality

Electronic literature and digital textuality form another crucial conceptual domain because they shift attention from digital methods for reading literature to literary forms that are produced within digital environments (Gupta et al., 2025). Electronic literature is commonly understood as literary work that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by stand-alone or networked computers, rather than merely transferring print literature into digital format. This definition distinguishes electronic literature from digitised literature, since its aesthetic form depends on interactivity, code, interface, navigation, and procedural behaviour (Patti, 2021). More recent debates suggest that electronic literature should not be limited to the category of "born-digital" texts alone, but should also be understood as an artistic engagement with digital media, language, code, interface, and intermedial expression (John & George, 2024). Thus,

electronic literature expands the object of literary studies by making technological affordance part of textual form and meaning.

The major aspects of electronic literature and digital textuality include interactivity, multimodality, programmability, networked circulation, and reader participation (Vodola, 2022). Interactivity allows readers to influence textual sequence, navigation, or narrative development. Multimodality combines verbal language with image, sound, animation, interface, and spatial design. Programmability means that textual behaviour may be shaped by code, algorithm, database, or procedural logic. Networked circulation situates literature within platforms, archives, and online communities, while reader participation changes the reader from a passive recipient into a navigator, performer, collaborator, or co-producer of textual meaning. These categories indicate that digital literary studies must address not only what literature means, but also how it operates technologically, materially, socially, and ethically within digital environments.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of scholarly metadata, abstracts, keywords, references, and selected conceptual statements from academic publications on digital literary studies. The material object is not a single literary text, but a curated corpus of research documents that represents the conceptual, methodological, and thematic formation of the field. The corpus was delimited to publications discussing digital literary studies, computational literary studies, distant reading, electronic literature, digital textuality, corpus-based literary analysis, cultural analytics, platform-based literary culture, and AI-assisted literary interpretation. This selection is appropriate because field-mapping research requires bibliographic and textual units that can reveal conceptual patterns, methodological tendencies, and emerging research trajectories without claiming to exhaust the entire field.

Table 1. Research corpus

No	Corpus Component	Data Unit	Estimated Scope	Main Source
1	Journal articles on digital literary studies	Title, abstract, keywords, references	30–50 articles	Scopus, Web of Science, MLA International Bibliography
2	Articles on computational literary studies	Abstract, keywords, methods	15–25 articles	Scopus, Web of Science, OpenAlex
3	Publications on distant reading	Concepts, citations, methodological terms	10–15 works	Google Scholar, Scopus, DH journals
4	Studies on electronic literature	Abstract, keywords, conceptual definitions	10–15 articles	Electronic Literature Organization, DHQ
5	Digital humanities review articles	Metadata, abstracts, references	10–20 articles	Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, DHQ
6	Corpus/cultural analytics studies	Keywords, methods, tools	10–15 articles	Journal of Cultural Analytics, Scopus
7	AI and literary analysis articles	Abstract, keywords, key arguments	5–10 recent articles	Scopus, OpenAlex, recent journal databases

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant field-mapping design (Thapliyal & Professor, 2023) supported by descriptive bibliometric procedures, keyword co-occurrence mapping, and corpus-assisted thematic reading. The design combines conceptual review, bibliometric description, methodological clustering, and thematic interpretation of abstracts and keywords. It does not claim to conduct a full-scale systematic review or exhaustive bibliometric census; rather, it constructs a purposive and theoretically informed corpus to clarify the intellectual structure of digital literary studies. Such a design is suitable for an emerging interdisciplinary field whose boundaries are distributed across literary studies, digital humanities, media studies, corpus linguistics, computational analysis, and electronic literature. The method therefore balances descriptive

mapping with interpretive synthesis in order to avoid reducing digital literary studies to either purely quantitative indicators or purely conceptual commentary.

The information sources were selected from reputable academic databases, field-specific repositories, and scholarly publication platforms relevant to literary studies and digital humanities. Scopus and Web of Science were prioritised for bibliographic metadata because they provide structured information on titles, authors, affiliations, keywords, abstracts, citations, and references. Bibliometrix supports the import of bibliographic data from Scopus and Web of Science for science mapping and descriptive bibliometric analysis. MLA International Bibliography was used to strengthen the literary-studies orientation because it is a major database for research in modern languages and literature, with more than three million records. Additional sources, including OpenAlex, Digital Humanities Quarterly, Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, Journal of Cultural Analytics, and the Electronic Literature Organization, were used to complement database records with field-specific publications and conceptual materials.

Data collection was conducted through four sequential stages to ensure that the corpus was transparent, relevant, and methodologically manageable. First, search strings were formulated using combinations of "digital literary studies," "computational literary studies," "distant reading," "electronic literature," "digital textuality," "corpus stylistics," "cultural analytics," and "AI literary analysis." Second, inclusion criteria were applied by retaining publications that explicitly addressed literature, literary interpretation, literary data, digital textuality, computational methods, or platform-based literary practices. Third, metadata and abstracts were exported or manually recorded into a corpus spreadsheet containing author, year, title, source, abstract, keywords, method, object of study, and conceptual focus. Fourth, duplicate records, marginally relevant texts, and purely technical studies without clear literary relevance were excluded to maintain the conceptual coherence of the corpus.

Data analysis proceeded through three integrated but analytically distinct stages. First, descriptive bibliometric analysis was used to identify publication tendencies, dominant sources, recurring keywords, influential references, and the general intellectual distribution of the field. Second, keyword co-occurrence mapping was used to visualise conceptual clusters and to identify how terms such as digital humanities, distant reading, electronic literature, corpus analysis, platform reading, and AI-assisted interpretation are relationally organised. Third, corpus-assisted thematic reading was applied to abstracts and keywords through frequency, concordance, collocation, and cluster-oriented procedures. The resulting patterns were then interpreted qualitatively to explain how digital literary studies is structured through concepts, methods, objects, and emerging directions rather than through a single disciplinary or methodological paradigm.

RESULTS

Bibliometric landscape of digital literary studies

The bibliometric landscape of digital literary studies reveals a field that is methodologically plural, institutionally dispersed, and conceptually still in formation. Rather than appearing as a single discipline with stable boundaries, the field emerges through the convergence of literary criticism, digital humanities, computational analysis, media studies, cultural analytics, and platform-oriented inquiry. The curated corpus indicates that digital literary studies has developed through overlapping phases: early attention to electronic literature and hypertext, subsequent consolidation of distant reading and computational literary studies, and more recent engagement with artificial intelligence, multimodality, digital reception, and platform-based reading practices. This section maps these tendencies by examining publication development, keyword clusters, disciplinary distribution, methodological orientation, and emerging research directions. The aim is not merely to count publications, but to clarify the intellectual architecture through which digital literary studies has become a recognisable yet evolving scholarly formation.

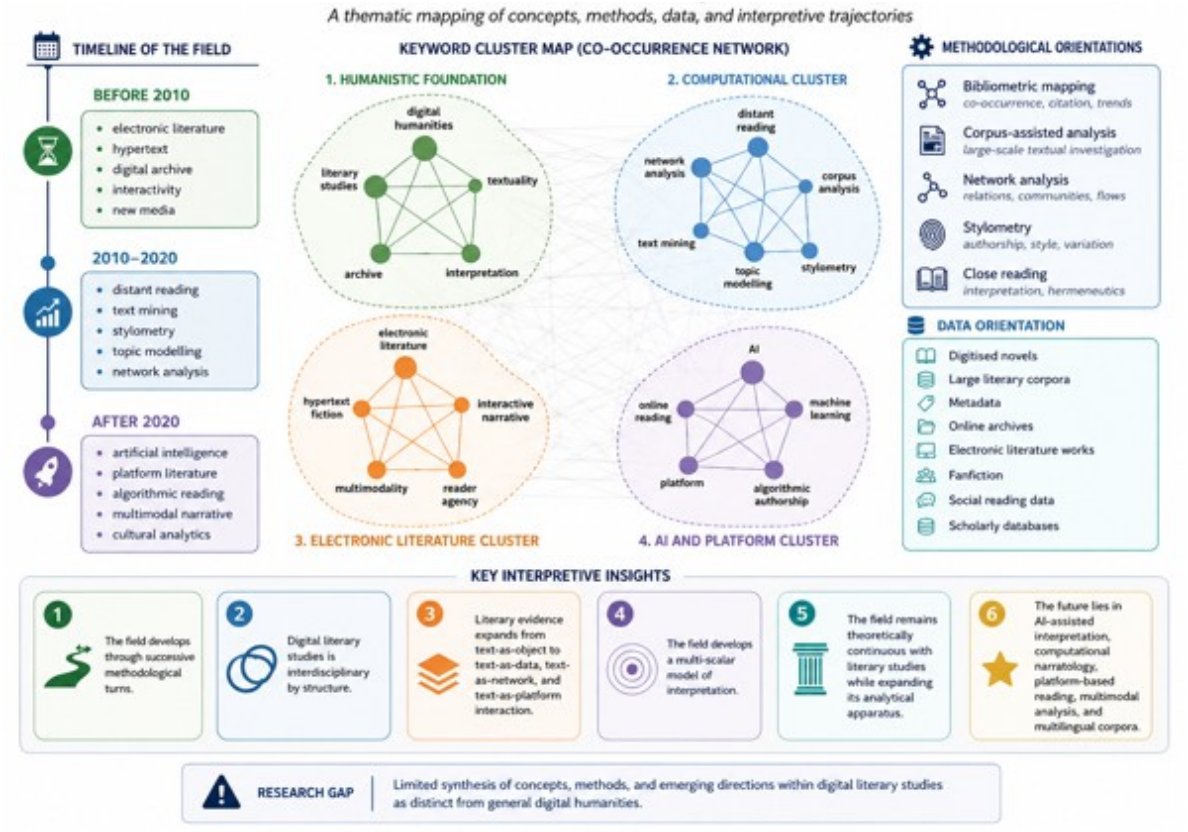

Figure 1. Bibliometric landscape of digital literary studies based on curated scholarly corpus

Figure 1 identifies four major thematic clusters within the curated corpus. The first cluster concerns digital humanities and literary interpretation, represented by keywords such as digital humanities, textuality, archive, metadata, and interpretation. The second cluster centres on computational and distant reading, including corpus analysis, stylometry, topic modelling, text mining, and network analysis. The third cluster is formed by electronic literature and digital textuality, with terms such as hypertext fiction, interactive narrative, multimodality, interface, and reader agency. The fourth cluster relates to cultural analytics and platformed literary circulation, while the fifth and newest cluster concerns AI, machine learning, algorithmic authorship, and computational narratology. Across these clusters, the strongest pattern is a gradual movement from medium-specific concerns toward method-driven, infrastructure-aware, and algorithm-conscious literary scholarship.

These findings suggest that digital literary studies should be understood as a multi-scalar and multi-methodological formation rather than a simple technological extension of traditional literary criticism. Its development demonstrates that digital methods do not replace interpretation; they reorganise the scale, evidence, and visibility of literary phenomena. Early electronic literature foregrounded interactivity and medium specificity, whereas computational literary studies introduced large-scale pattern recognition into literary history. More recent AI- and platform-oriented studies further complicate the field by placing algorithms, infrastructures, reader data, and machine-generated texts within the domain of literary analysis. Therefore, the field's central theoretical contribution lies in expanding the ontology of literature from printed artefact to data, archive, interface, network, platform trace, and computationally mediated cultural object.

Conceptual and methodological clusters in digital literary studies

The conceptual and methodological mapping indicates that digital literary studies is organised through multiple, overlapping clusters rather than through a single disciplinary paradigm. The field brings together archival scholarship, computational analysis, distant reading, corpus stylistics, electronic literature, cultural analytics, platform studies, AI-assisted interpretation, and critical data studies. Each cluster offers a different answer to what literature becomes in digital environments: an archive, a dataset, a network, an

interface, a platformed cultural object, a pedagogical medium, or a machine-mediated text. This result demonstrates that the coherence of digital literary studies does not depend on methodological uniformity, but on its shared concern with how digital infrastructures transform literary production, preservation, analysis, circulation, reception, and interpretation.



Figure 2. Conceptual and methodological clusters in digital literary studies

Figure 2 identifies 18 conceptual-methodological clusters, which can be reorganised into six macro-categories. The first macro-category, text-as-archive, includes digital humanities, digital archives, and canon formation. The second, text-as-data, covers computational literary studies, distant reading, corpus stylistics, stylometry, and topic modelling. The third, text-as-network, includes network analysis, cultural analytics, and platform-based literary culture. The fourth, text-as-interface, consists of electronic literature, digital textuality, and multimodal narrative. The fifth, text-as-machine-mediated object, includes AI-assisted literary analysis, generative AI, and computational narratology. The sixth, text-as-global and ethical data, includes multilingual digital literary studies and critical data studies. This distribution shows a broad methodological spectrum, ranging from archival critique and corpus modelling to platform analysis, interface reading, AI-assisted interpretation, and ethical data critique.

These clusters suggest that digital literary studies expands the ontology of literature by relocating literary objects across several epistemic forms. Literature is no longer approached only as a stable verbal artefact, but also as metadata, corpus, graph, interface, platform trace, algorithmic output, pedagogical resource, and ethical dataset. This expansion does not abolish traditional literary interpretation; rather, it multiplies the conditions under which interpretation takes place. Close reading remains important, but it is now supplemented by distant reading, machine reading, platform reading, interface reading, and corpus-assisted reading. Therefore, the field's major theoretical implication is that literary meaning emerges not only from language and form, but also from infrastructures, tools, datasets, algorithms, platforms, and modes of digital circulation.

Emerging terms and thematic directions in digital literary studies

The corpus-assisted thematic mapping shows that the emerging vocabulary of digital literary studies is increasingly organised around algorithmic mediation, platformisation, multimodality, datafication, ethical accountability, and global linguistic diversity. These terms indicate that the field is moving beyond its earlier concern with digitised texts, hypertext, and electronic literature toward a broader investigation of literature as a socio-technical formation. In this formation, texts are produced, circulated, interpreted, and valued through interactions among human readers, machine systems, digital platforms, archives, interfaces, datasets, and institutional infrastructures. This section therefore identifies not only the most visible emerging terms, but also the thematic directions they indicate for the future development of the field. The emphasis is placed on how new terms reorganise the conceptual boundaries, methodological priorities, and ethical responsibilities of literary research.

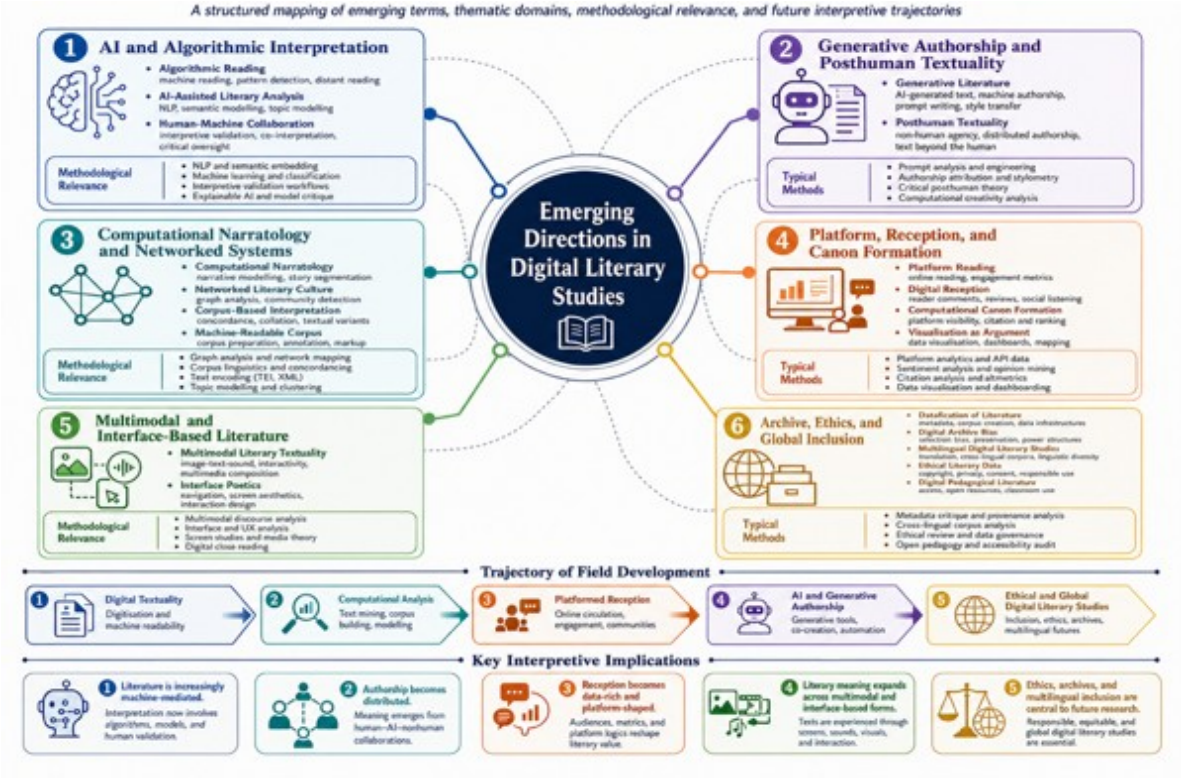

Figure 3. Emerging terms in digital literary studies based on corpus-assisted thematic mapping

Figure 3 identifies 20 emerging terms, which are grouped into 6 thematic directions and reorganised into 5 stages of field development. The most prominent terms relate to AI and algorithmic interpretation, including algorithmic reading, AI-assisted literary analysis, machine reading, semantic embedding, and human-machine collaboration. A second group concerns generative AI and authorship, represented by generative literature, prompt writing, machine authorship, synthetic fiction, and posthuman textuality. Other recurring directions include computational narratology, platform-based literary circulation, digital reception, multimodal textuality, datafication of literature, digital archive bias, multilingual digital literary studies, ethical literary data, visualisation as argument, and digital literary pedagogy. These results show that recent developments are concentrated around machine mediation, platform infrastructures, corpus construction, archival visibility, and ethical-global critique.

These emerging terms suggest that digital literary studies is entering a phase in which literature can no longer be understood solely as text, discourse, form, or representation. It must also be approached as data, interface, platform trace, algorithmic output, digital archive, reader interaction, and machine-mediated cultural practice. The rise of AI-related terms challenges human-centred assumptions about authorship and interpretation, while platform-based terms shift attention from isolated texts to infrastructures of circulation,

visibility, and reception. At the same time, ethical, archival, and multilingual terms function as critical correctives, reminding the field that digital literary data is shaped by access, language, ownership, institutional selection, and technological power. Thus, the future of digital literary studies depends on balancing computational innovation with interpretive depth, ethical accountability, archival justice, and global inclusivity.

DISCUSSION

The bibliometric landscape indicates that digital literary studies matters because it provides literary scholarship with a framework for understanding its transformation under digital, computational, and platform-mediated conditions. The field does not merely add digital tools to existing literary criticism; it changes the scale, visibility, and organisation of literary evidence. Earlier literary scholarship often privileged individual texts, authors, periods, or national traditions (Amangazykyzy et al., 2025; Andalas et al., 2026), while digital literary studies introduces metadata, corpora, networks, archives, and platforms as legitimate units of literary analysis. This expansion functions productively because it enables scholars to detect large-scale genre development, citation structures, thematic clusters, circulation patterns, and transnational literary relations that are difficult to identify through close reading alone. However, it also produces a potential dysfunction: literary interpretation may become overly dependent on measurable data, visualised patterns, and tool-generated outputs. Therefore, the main implication is that digital literary studies must balance computational visibility with hermeneutic depth, ensuring that data-driven patterns remain accountable to literary meaning, historical context, and critical interpretation.

This bibliometric configuration emerges because digital literary studies is structurally located between several intellectual traditions: literary criticism, digital humanities, corpus linguistics, information science, media studies, and cultural analytics. Its fragmented publication venues and dispersed keyword clusters are not signs of methodological weakness, but evidence of an interdisciplinary field still negotiating its conceptual boundaries. The rise of distant reading, for instance, is historically connected to the broader circulation of quantitative and computational text analysis in literary studies (Consilvio, 2023; Duggan, 2023; Zozulia, 2024), while digital humanities provides the institutional and technical infrastructure for such work. The correlation between technological development and methodological expansion is therefore clear: as texts become digitised, searchable, linkable, and processable, literary scholarship develops new analytical procedures. Yet this structure also explains the field's instability, because digital literary studies borrows concepts, methods, and evidence from multiple disciplines. For this reason, the field must constantly clarify how computational evidence contributes to literary interpretation rather than simply producing technical description or visually attractive maps.

The conceptual and methodological clusters show that the field's strongest contribution lies in redefining what counts as a literary object and what counts as literary evidence. Literature is no longer confined to printed works or digitised versions of canonical texts; it also includes electronic literature, interactive fiction, online reading practices, platform-based literary circulation, AI-generated writing, and datafied textual archives. This expansion is productive because it enables literary studies to address contemporary forms of textuality that are already embedded in digital culture, including interface-based narratives, algorithmically visible texts, reader-generated responses, and machine-mediated writing (Gius & Jacke, 2022; Gupta et al., 2025; Změlík, 2025). The dysfunction, however, is that such expansion may blur the distinction between literary object, cultural data, platform content, technological artefact, and pedagogical material. Thus, the field requires clearer conceptual categories to avoid treating all digital textual phenomena as equivalent forms of literature. A more precise taxonomy is needed to distinguish digitised literature, born-digital literature, platform-native writing, computationally modelled corpora, and AI-generated textual production.

The underlying structure of these clusters can be explained by the changing status of textuality itself. In print-based literary studies, the text is commonly approached as a relatively stable verbal artefact, whereas in digital literary studies the text may appear as archive, corpus, graph, interface, code, platform trace, or machine-readable dataset. Each methodological cluster emerges from a different transformation of textual form: corpus stylistics arises when literature becomes analysable as language data; network analysis emerges

when literature is modelled as relation; electronic literature becomes visible when code, interface, and navigation shape textual experience; and platform studies becomes necessary when literary value is mediated by visibility, ranking, and reader engagement (Hossain, 2025; John & George, 2024; Vodola, 2022). This explains why the field cannot be unified by one method or one theoretical vocabulary. Its coherence lies instead in the shared recognition that digital mediation changes the material, social, institutional, and epistemic conditions of literary interpretation. Consequently, digital literary studies should be read as a field of methodological translation between literary meaning and digital infrastructure.

The emerging terms and thematic directions indicate that digital literary studies is entering a more complex phase shaped by artificial intelligence, algorithmic reading, generative authorship, platform visibility, digital reception, and ethical data governance. This development is significant because it moves the field beyond the earlier question of how to digitise or computationally analyse literature toward the more difficult question of how machines, platforms, and data infrastructures participate in literary production, circulation, interpretation, and valuation (Loebis et al., 2025; Mischke & Ohge, 2023; Vanathi, 2023). The shift functions productively by opening new research agendas in computational narratology, AI-assisted criticism, platform-based reception, multilingual corpus construction, and digital archive justice. Yet it also creates serious risks: algorithmic opacity, biased datasets, copyright uncertainty, uneven access, and the possible reduction of literary creativity to prompt-output mechanics. The implication is that future digital literary studies must be technologically literate, theoretically reflexive, and ethically critical at the same time. Without this balance, the field risks confusing methodological novelty with genuine literary insight.

The emergence of AI, platformisation, and ethical data concerns is not accidental; it reflects a deeper structural shift in contemporary literary culture. Literary texts now circulate in environments governed by recommendation systems, search algorithms, digital archives, social reading platforms, metadata standards, and increasingly generative AI systems. As a result, the boundaries among author, reader, critic, platform, archive, and machine are becoming less stable. This instability explains why emerging terms such as algorithmic reading, machine authorship, digital archive bias, computational canon formation, multilingual digital corpora, and ethical literary data appear together (Preeti et al., 2024; Ramya & Rukmini, 2021; Siby, 2025). They are symptoms of the same transformation: literature is increasingly produced, accessed, classified, valued, and preserved through computational infrastructures. Consequently, the future of digital literary studies depends on integrating computational innovation with interpretive accountability, archival justice, multilingual inclusion, platform critique, and responsible data practice.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital literary studies is best understood as a plural and evolving field rather than a single method, theory, or technological extension of literary criticism. Its most important lesson is that literature in digital environments must be examined simultaneously as text, data, archive, interface, network, platform trace, and machine-mediated cultural object. The study contributes to scholarship by offering an integrated field map that connects concepts, methods, and emerging directions within one analytical framework. It renews the perspective of literary studies by showing that interpretation now operates across multiple scales: close reading, distant reading, corpus-assisted reading, platform reading, and algorithm-aware reading.

However, this study is limited by its reliance on a curated corpus rather than a fully exhaustive bibliometric dataset extracted directly from Scopus or Web of Science. Its findings therefore provide a structured conceptual and methodological synthesis, but not a definitive measurement of the entire field. Future research should expand the dataset, include multilingual and non-Western corpora, apply full-scale bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, and conduct deeper corpus-assisted analysis of abstracts, keywords, and citation networks. Further studies should also investigate how generative AI, digital archives, and platform algorithms reshape authorship, canon formation, literary value, and reader participation.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Achmad Fawaid: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, data curation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing (all lead, sole author).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible AI-generated short stories and platform metadata.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible AI-generated short stories and reader-ranking metadata, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus/data analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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