

DH2026 OPENING KEYNOTE

Teaching AI, Training Ourselves: A New Mission for Digital Humanities

36th Annual Conference of the Alliance of Digital Humanities
Organizations



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A Journey Realized: From Mexico City to Daejeon



A Personal Quest Across Four Decades

- A candid reflection of a classical humanist navigating four decades of digital evolution.
- Striving to find a sustainable path through a rapidly changing technological landscape.
- Bridging traditional East Asian classical scholarship with digital technology.

"This is the story of a classical humanist who has spent a lifetime striving to find a path through a rapidly changing digital landscape."

Part 1. Digital Technology and the Classical Humanities: A Shared Journey

- 1.1 The Vast Heritage of East Asian Classics: The First Frustration and the Beginning of an Adventure
- 1.2 Classical Humanities Data Archives: The Second Frustration and Preparing for Tomorrow
- 1.3 The Emergence of AI Fluent in Classical Chinese: The Third Frustration and Today's Challenge

1st Frustration (1980s): Scarcity of Scholars

- **Vast Classical Heritage:** Massive quantity of East Asian Classical Chinese texts.
- **Scarcity of Human Scholars:** Far too few researchers available to interpret ancient writings.
- **The Faint Hope:** Seeking a new assistant in technology.

"Could computers become a partner in classical scholarship?"

The Breakthrough (1995): CD-ROM Veritable Records

- **Exploring Digital Technology:** Training in databases, text archives, and information retrieval technology.
- **The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty on CD-ROM (1995):** Cutting-edge digital media of its time.
- **Impact:** Proving to society that computers can serve humanities research & education.



2nd Frustration (2000s): Massive Archives Built

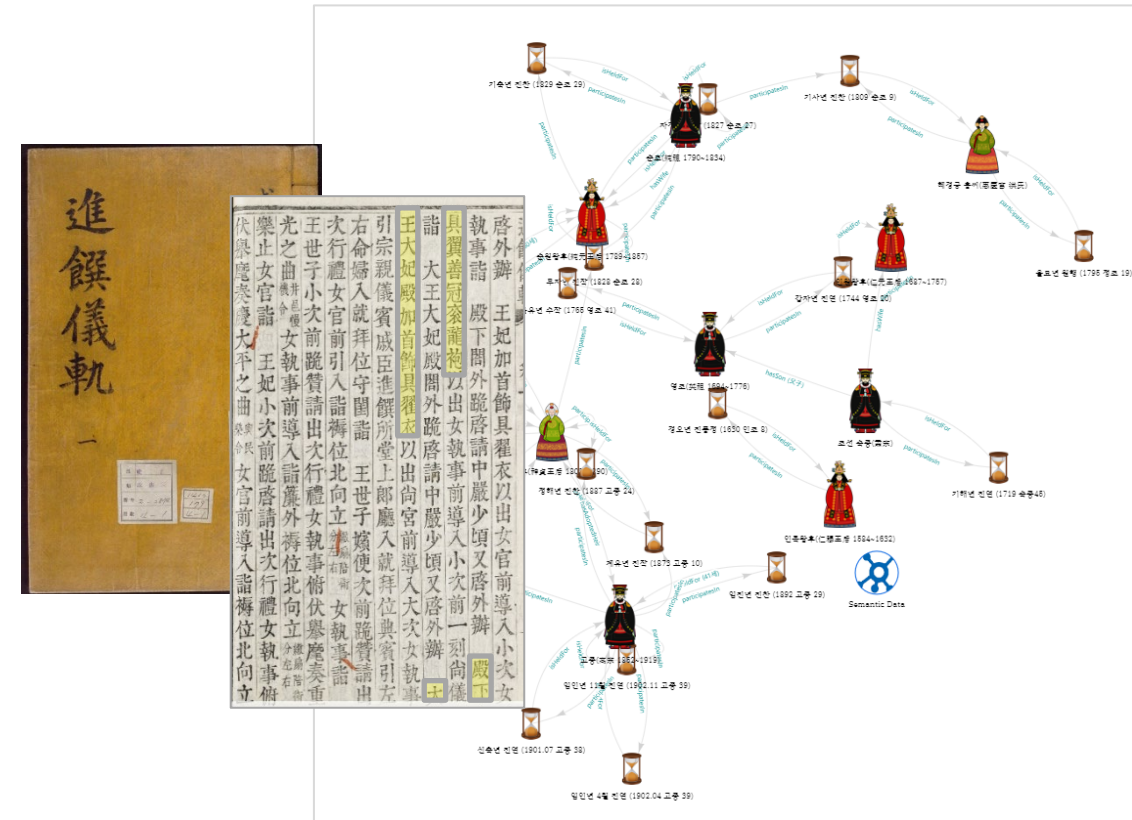
- **Government Influx:** Massive financial investments in digital humanities databases.
- **Accessibility Improved:** Digital archives became the new libraries.
- **The Unresolved Dilemma:** Actual time reading texts did not decrease at all. Scholars used only a tiny fraction.

Skeptical Question:

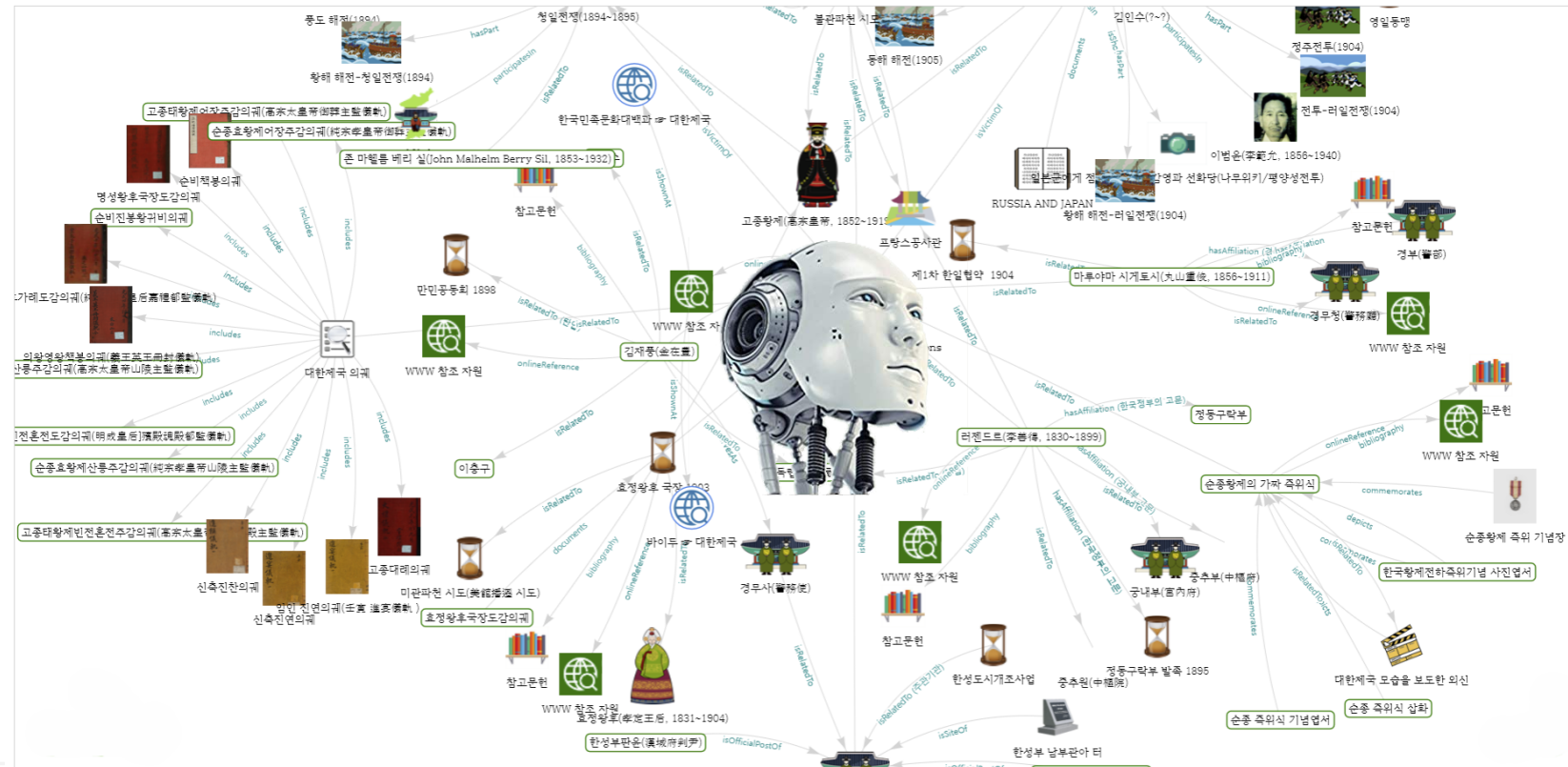
“Was building these foundational data archives really worth the massive effort?”

New Perspective on the Future of Classical Data Archive

- **Expand Target Audience:** From a handful of scholars to *everyone* seeking wisdom.
- **The Need for a Mediator:** Raw texts require interpretation according to user levels.
- **Prophetic Vision (2004):** Structured XML and Semantic data curation for future AI consumers.



Reframing the Archive Paradigm



“The primary consumer of semantic data in our archives will be AI, rather than humans. And AI will help human audiences access humanities easily.”

3rd Frustration (2022~): 'AI Fluent in Classical Chinese'

- **Commercialization of LLM:** Astonishing fluency in Classical Chinese.
- **Rapid Evolution:** LLMs translating, comparing commentaries, and searching contexts instantly.
- **Initial Thrill:** AI-driven classical humanities environment within reach.

LLM CLASSICAL CHINESE CAPABILITIES

- ✓ Punctuation & Parsing
- ✓ Contextual Translation
- ✓ Multi-commentary Comparison
- ✓ Instant Literature Search

Anxiety and the Crisis Narrative

- **Humanist Anxiety:** *“Will human scholars ultimately be replaced by AI?”*
- **Threat of Extinction:** Occurs when *neither* humans nor AI engage in deep reflection.
- **Shift in Trajectory:** Prioritizing human agency and initiative in AI environments.

Top Priority:

Ensuring human researchers retain initiative and agency in their intellectual pursuits.

Part 2. Classical Humanities in the Age of AI

2.1 The Forgotten Essence of Classical Humanities

2.2 Practical Humanities: Restoring Practice (習) and Joy (悦)

The Core Question for Future Humanities

- Reframing the crisis beyond technical automation.
- Humanities is not merely fixed knowledge or answers to specific questions.
- The essence lies in unstoppable curiosity and critical awareness.

“In the age of AI, do humans still need to learn, explore, and study the classics?”

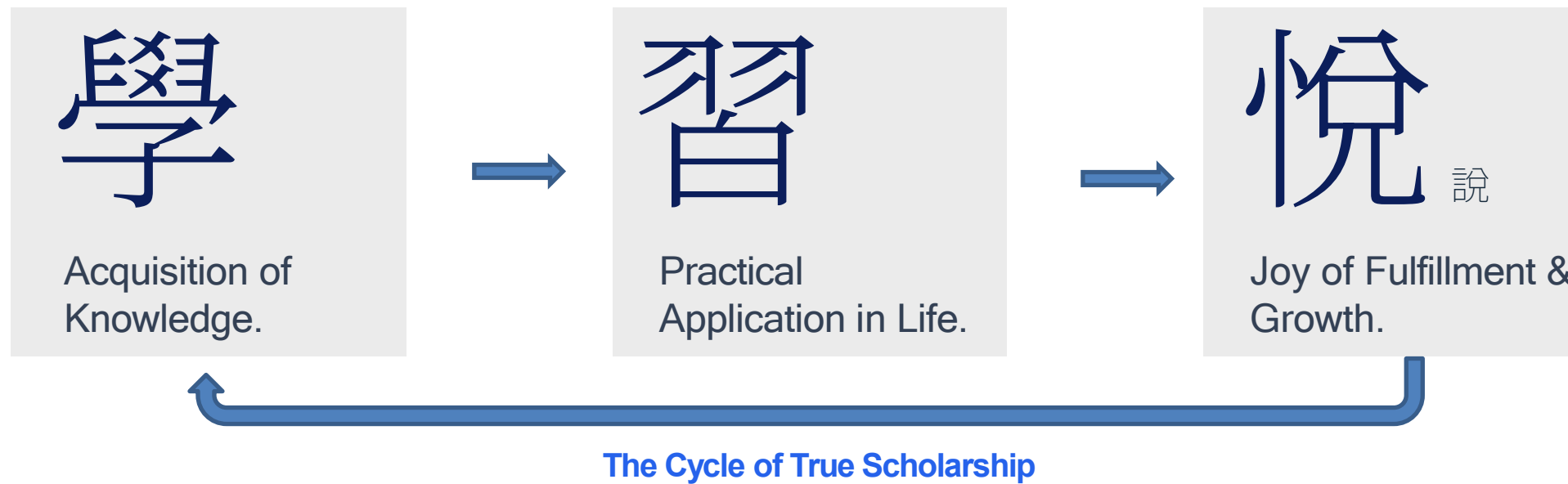
The Forgotten Essence of Classical Humanities

學而時習之，不亦說乎？

“To learn, and in time to practice what one has learned – is this not a joy?”

– The Analects, Book 1 (『論語』學而)

The Essence of Learning: Confucian Perspective



Domain of **Xue** (學) vs. Domain of **Xi** (習) & **Yue** (悅)

Domain of “學” →

AI might be a far superior competitor:

Massive data accumulation,
instant search, translation,
and summary generation.

But

Domain of “習·悅” →

Only humans can do:

Practicing knowledge in real
life, experiencing self-worth,
growth, and joy.

Knowledge and Action Advance Together

學所以知也，習所以行也，學而時習者，知行兼進也。

後世之學，學而不習，所以無可悅也。

“Learning is for knowing; practice is for doing. To learn and in time to practice is to let knowing and doing advance together. The learning of later ages has no joy, because it learns but never practices.”

— Jeong Yak-yong, Noneo gogeumju (丁若鏞, 『論語古今註』)

Practical Humanities Redefined

Two Conditions for Practice
in the Age of AI

- 01 It must bring joy — a sense of achievement, and self-respect.
- 02 It must take place within AI — our new research, teaching, and living environment.

The Humanities of Practice
for the Age of AI

“A scholarly activity where individuals achieve the joy of accomplishment through self-directed effort in a world where AI is the environment.”

Part 3. AI Classical Translation Studies: An Experiment for Classical Humanities in the Age of AI

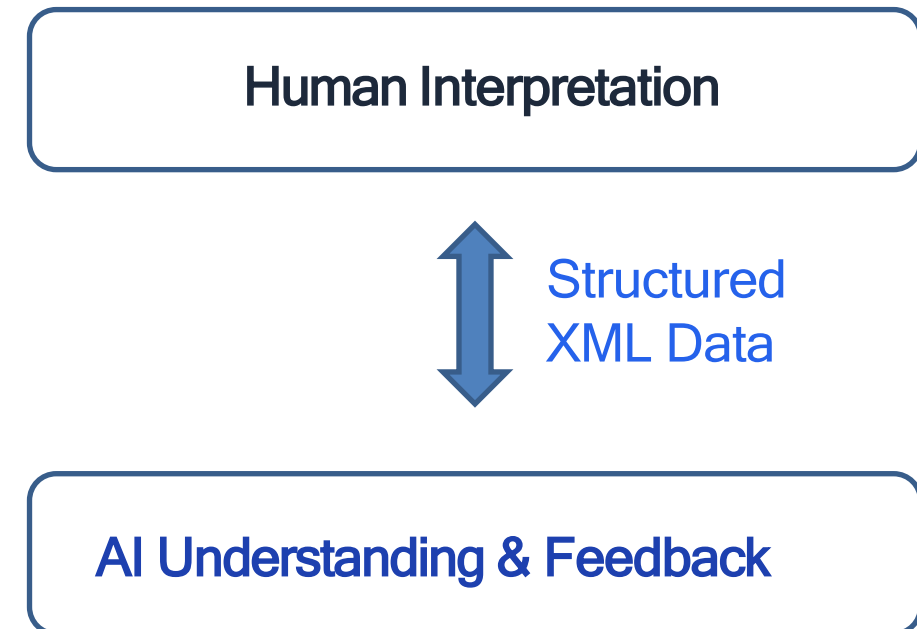
3.1 What is AI Classical Translation Studies?

3.2 Educational Case Study of AI Classical Translation Studies

3.3 Challenges and Future Tasks

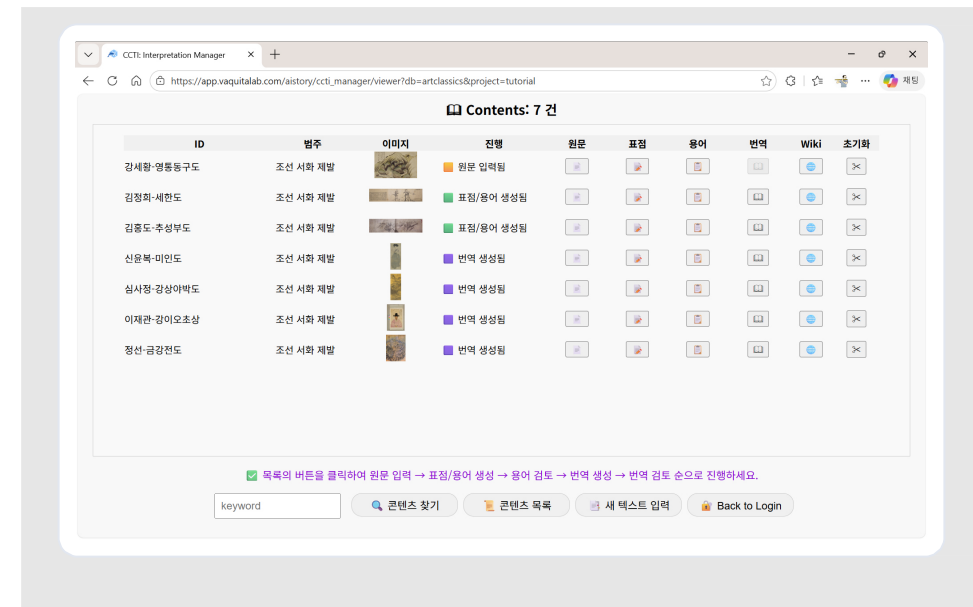
What is AI Classical Translation Studies?

- **Beyond Translation:** Reorganizing classical knowledge into structured formats that AI can understand
- **Structured Data:** XML, semantic data
- **Two-Way Interaction:** Conveying human interpretation to AI & reflecting on AI's feedback.



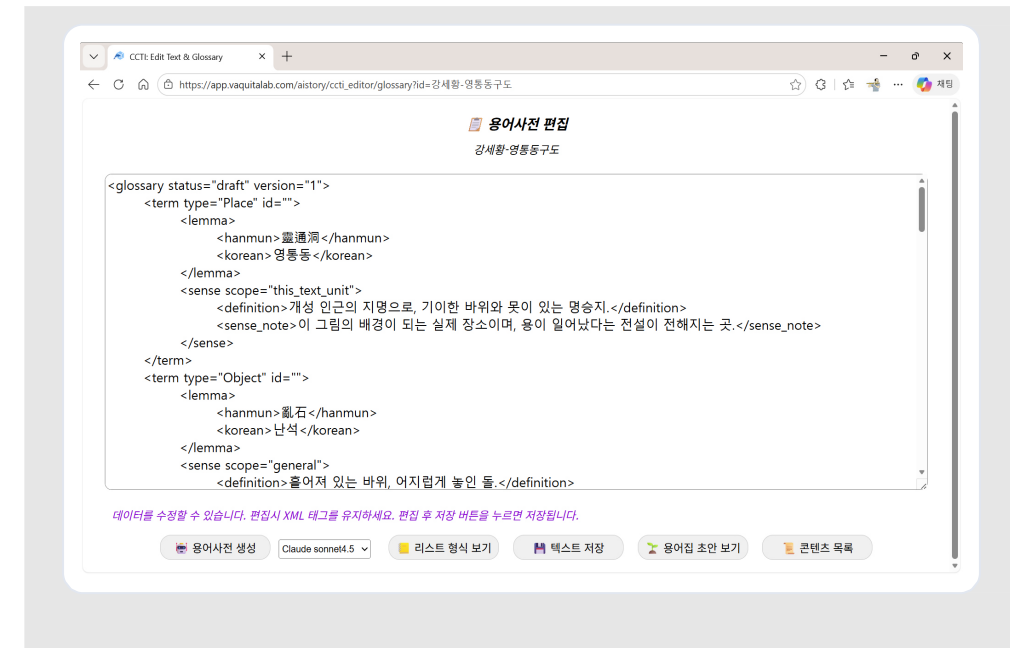
The CCTI Platform

- **Classical Chinese Text Interpreter (CCTI):** LLM API-powered workspace.
- **Guided Process:** Step-by-step punctuation, glossary, and draft translation.
- **Wiki Workspace:** Digital extension of classical reading culture (講讀).

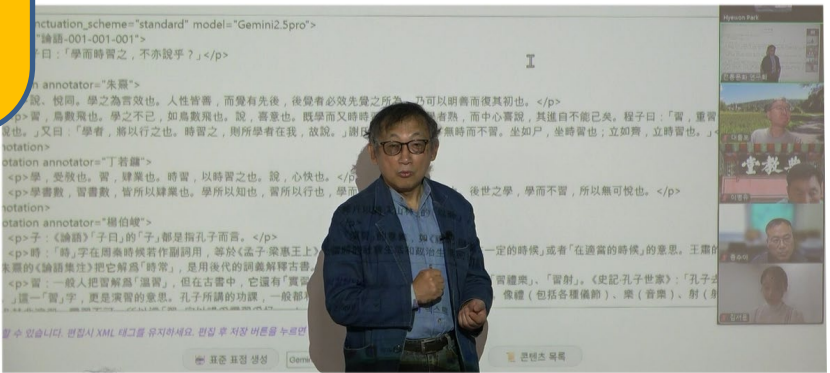
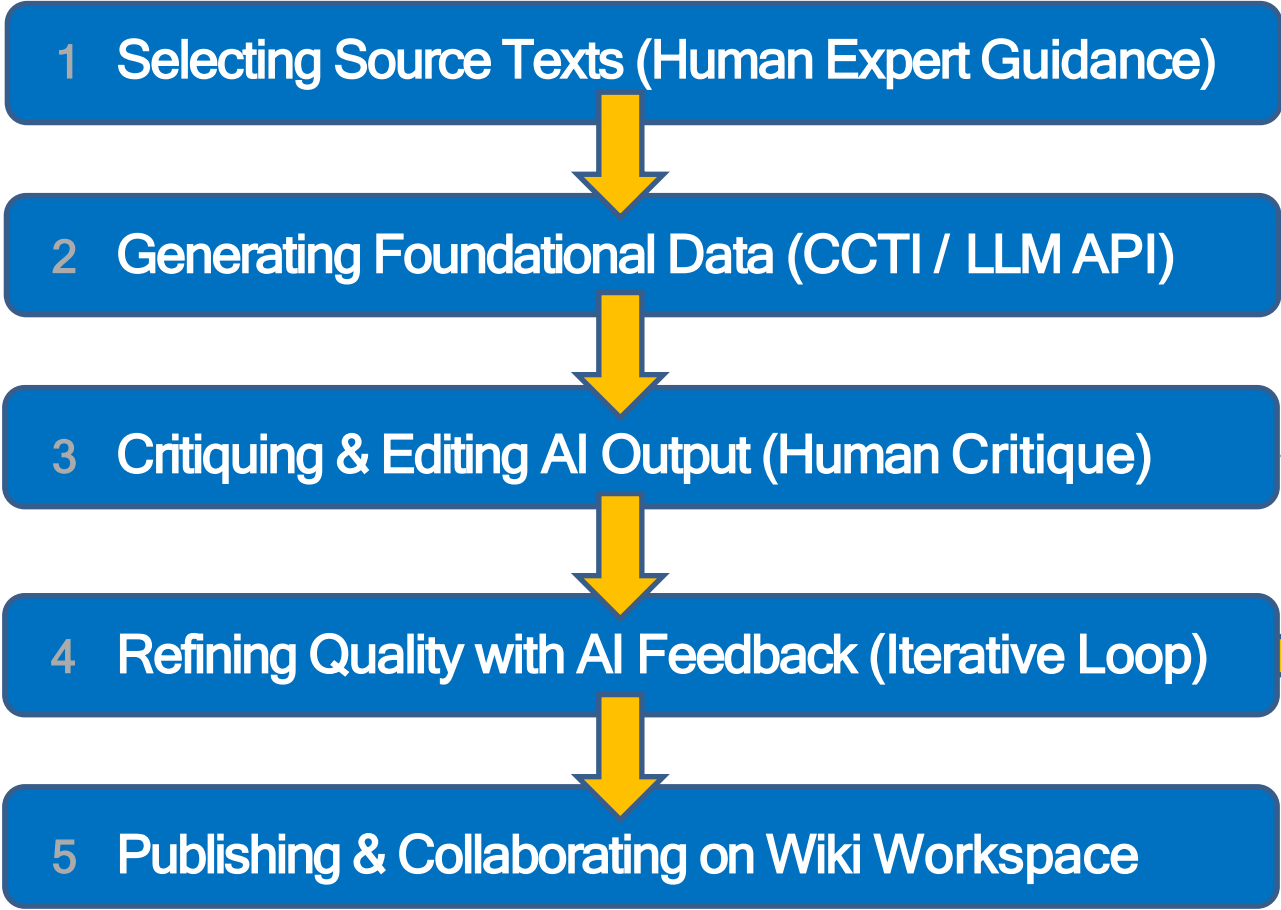


Educational Practice (Spring 2026)

- **Institute of Traditional Culture:** 2 specialized courses launched in Spring 2026.
- **Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching:** Classical Humanities Professor + Digital Humanities Professor.
- **Core Focus:** Close reading of Classical texts, Understanding of “data-driven AI collaboration”.

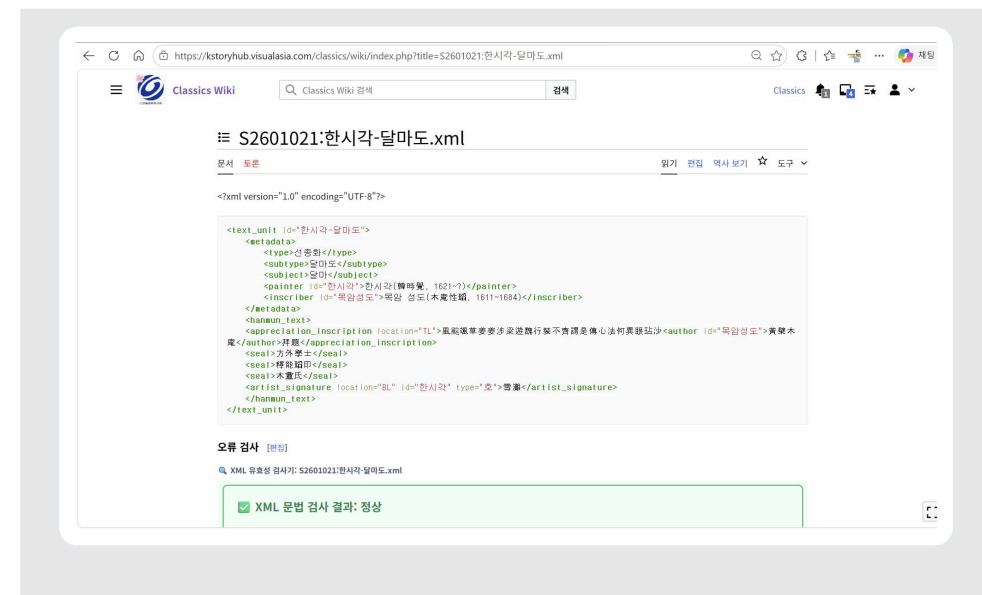
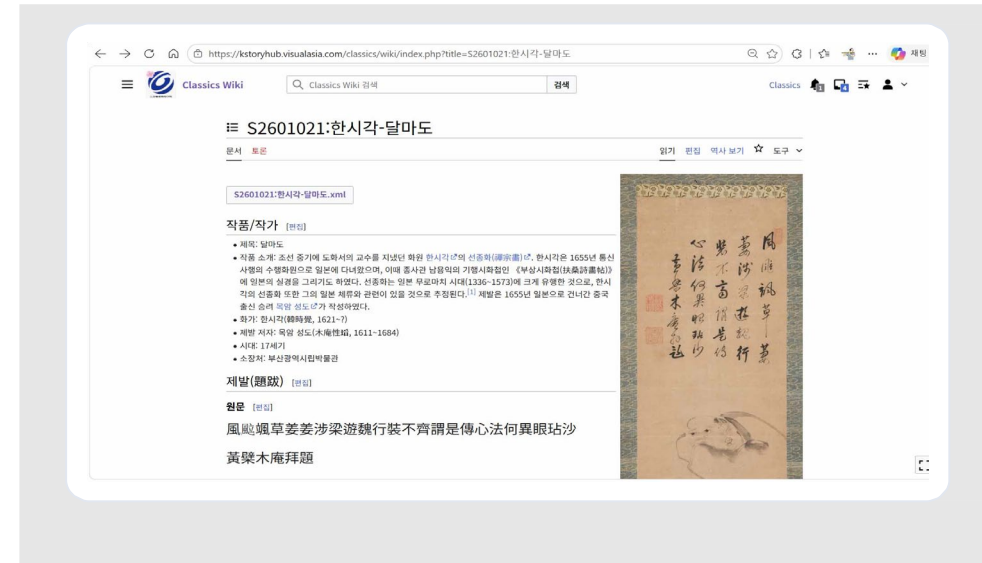


The 5-Step Human-AI Workflow



Key Educational Outcomes

- AI recognized as a **collaborative partner**, not an authority to delegate to.
- Empirical proof of the **irreplaceable role** of human judgment.
- Efficiency and accuracy of communicating via **structured XML data**.



The Infrastructure Dilemma

“When this course ends, where can I continue this work?”

“Must I independently set up and finance my own digital research infrastructure?”

The Urgent Need:

**Public AI Research Environment
for the Humanities**

PART 4. PATH TO FUTURE

Part 4. The Path Toward Future Humanities

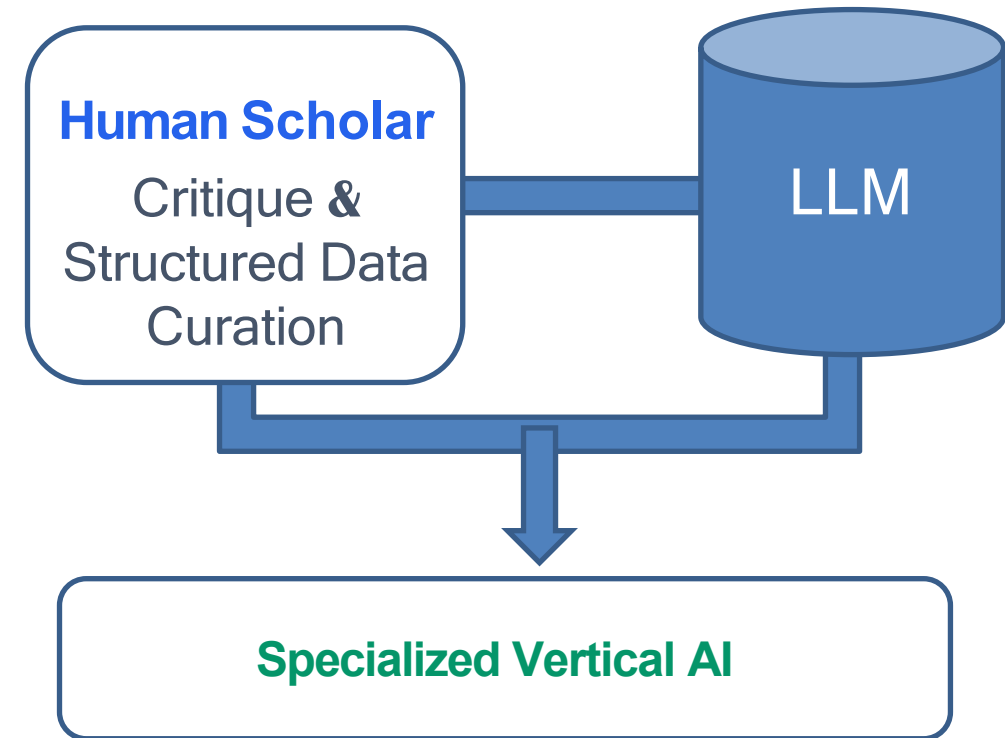
4.1 Humanities that Teaches AI: Mutual Growth of Human and Machine (教學相長)

4.2 Tasks for Future Humanities

4.3 The Mission of Digital Humanities for the Future

Humanities Teaching AI

- The scholar builds data grounded in their own judgment.
- “*I see this differently*” → seek more, think deeper, refine.
- That effort remains as data — and raises AI's knowledge in turn



Mutual Growth (教學相長)

教學相長

(교학상장, Jiao-Xue-Xiang-Zhang)

“Teaching and learning foster each other.”

— The Book of Rites (『禮記』 「學記」)

→ To teach AI is, in truth, also to train ourselves.

The Challenge of Future Humanities

- Risk of automation: Extreme convenience leading to passivity.
- Human agency is maintained through hands-on decision-making and practice.

Fundamental Agenda:

**How can humans remain truly
human in an age where AI
performs much of human
activity?**

The Persistent Role of Classics

Even when AI generates information, humans must still choose:

- *What do we value?*
- *What do we remember?*
- *How shall we live?*

Classics are time-tested educational materials for training self-reflection, direction, and self-directed spirit.

A Call to Action for Digital Humanists

3 Missions for Digital Humanists

- 1.Design AI-collaborative humanities research methodologies.
- 2.Build public AI research environments for humanists.
- 3.Establish new educational frameworks for future scholars.

**Be Mediators of
Transformation
Connecting Traditional
Humanities with AI**

Closing



“Among all humanists, digital humanists have come closest to the digital world.”

- We can connect traditional humanities scholarship with AI.
- We can help humanists teach AI.

Teaching AI is also training ourselves. And in this shared process of teaching and learning, both our technologies and our humanity may continue to grow.

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Thank you very much!