

# Research on Construction Paths of Digital Textbooks on British and American Literature under the Background of the Digital Transformation of Education

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## Abstract

Against the backdrop of the digital transformation of global higher education, digital textbooks on British and American literature, as core resources in university foreign-languages education, hold significant importance for improving teaching quality, cultivating students' digital literacy, and promoting educational equity.

Presently, the development of digital textbooks on British and American literature confronts multi-dimensional challenges. Therefore, this research points out that drawing upon an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates educational technology, comparative literature, and curriculum theory, this research utilizes literature analysis, case studies, and empirical research to put forward solutions. These methods include establishing a writing standard system based on the principle of "standards first", surmounting the limitations of single-text formats by constructing an integrated resource architecture, and designing platforms with a closed-loop system integrating teaching, management, and feedback. Universities should collaborate with multiple stakeholders to formulate evaluation standards for textbook development, construct dynamic digital resource repositories based on national resources, promote the integration of textbook platforms and smart teaching platforms, and develop interactive functional modules.

Theoretically, this research enriches the framework of digital textbook development in foreign-language disciplines and presents a novel interdisciplinary paradigm for digital education research. Empirically, it provides implementable strategies for the development and iteration of digital textbooks on British and American literature, which contributes to the enhancement of course quality and the cultivation of students' competencies. Moreover, it offers valuable perspectives for the development of digital textbooks in other humanities disciplines and the extensive digital transformation of humanities education in higher education.

**Keywords:** digital transformation of education, digital textbooks on British and American literature, digital literacy

## I. Introduction

The profound integration and development of information technology with education and teaching are propelling systematic innovations in educational concepts, teaching paradigms, and evaluation systems. Amidst the global digital-intelligent revolution, higher education is experiencing a profound transformation. Digital textbooks, as a crucial product of this transformation, have emerged correspondingly. Upon reviewing the developmental trajectory of digital textbooks, three major iterations have been accomplished to date: from the initial basic form centered on reading functions, to an intermediate stage highlighting teaching interactivity, and ultimately evolving into the current third-generation products characterized by multimodal presentation, diversified applications, multi-level interactivity, and multifunctional integration.

The latest generation of digital textbooks places emphasis on intelligent interactivity. By leveraging digital education platforms and big-data analytics, they are reconfiguring the knowledge organization and the educational ecological environment within university courses. As a crucial element in the cultivation of higher-education elites, the quality of university textbooks directly influences the efficacy of elite development. It is especially noteworthy that the development of digital textbooks in higher education not only pertains to the enhancement of educational quality but also functions as a significant catalyst for strengthening the nation's cultural soft power, highlighting its strategic importance.

Notably, in comparison with the rapid development of intelligent education, the relatively sluggish progress in the construction of digital textbooks on British and American literature has become increasingly prominent. In the aspect

of content compilation, there are issues such as uneven text digitization, insufficient integration of multimedia and textual content, and the absence of unified standards. Concerning publishing and distribution, the cooperation between publishers and technology providers is weak. The update cycles are long-drawn-out, and copyright clearance is complex. In the field of teaching application, platform compatibility is poor, and teachers lack adequate digital skills.

Based on this context, this research systematically explores construction paths of digital textbooks on British and American literature and aims to create new digital educational carriers, promote the iterative upgrading of digital textbooks, reconstruct the knowledge system and educational ecology of British and American literature courses, and ultimately achieve a comprehensive improvement in the digital literacy of both teachers and students.

## 2. Literature Review

Existing domestic and international research predominantly centers on the functional development, practical applications, publishing models, theoretical construction, technological innovation, and pedagogical implementation of digital textbooks. Nevertheless, current research still demonstrates distinct limitations. Firstly, it persists in adhering to the paradigm of traditional textbook research, excessively emphasizing compilation formats and knowledge presentation methods. Secondly, systematic research on digital textbooks on British and American literature courses is still largely lacking, presenting a fragmented nature.

Foreign scholars, including Tony Wagner (2009), Allan Collins and Richard Halverson (2009), as well as Curtis J. Bonk, Mimi M. Lee, Thomas C. Reeves, and Thomas H. Reynolds (2015), were pioneers in identifying the relationship between modern information technology and the development of digital textbooks. They elucidated the redefinition of teaching and learning in the information age. Morrison, G.R., and Lowther D.L. stressed that teachers should appropriately address the substantial influence of the information technology revolution on education, offering crucial perspectives for optimizing curricula based on digital textbooks.

The Korea Education & Research Service (KERS), affiliated with the Ministry of Education and Technology, enumerated eleven functions of digital textbooks, namely: “teaching materials, multimedia, references, learning dictionary, data search, hyperlinks, interactive tools, learning management system, assessment tools, authoring tools, and external links to diverse information resources.” (Reguiera, N. R. & Rodríguez, J. R., 2019, pp. 9 - 50) Kai Pata et al. put forward the concept of the functional ecosystem of digital textbooks. In *Digitization of Publishing: Exploration based on Existing Business Models* (2014), Sara Øiestad and Markus M. Bugge indicated that the book-publishing industry is currently experiencing a transformation from traditional analog technologies and formats to digital ones. This transition not only poses challenges to existing business models but also impels companies to reevaluate their product structures and core competitive advantages. Gueudet et al. (2018) established a theoretical framework for analyzing the design of digital textbooks, with the core concept of employing connectivity as a crucial criterion in the design process. Nevertheless, the construction of British and American literature digital textbooks still requires more comprehensive investigations.

## 3. Challenges in the Current Compilation of Textbooks on British and American Literature

Since the 1980s, the development of British and American literature textbooks has experienced a paradigm shift from introduction and imitation to independent compilation. However, propelled by the strategic transformation towards educational digitalization, the new-generation textbooks are conspicuously characterized by interdisciplinary integration and digital empowerment. Nevertheless, bibliometric analysis and feedback from teaching practices indicate that traditional textbooks still present structural contradictions in compilation paradigms and pedagogical suitability, with the core problem being the systematic deficiency of textbook compilation standards.

As guiding documents for curriculum system construction, ideal compilation criteria should be grounded in the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). They should offer normative guidance regarding the Bloom’s cognitive levels of course objectives, the establishment of knowledge maps for modular teaching content, and the design of formative assessment mechanisms. Nevertheless, current textbook compilation practices manifest three academic predicaments:

First and foremost, the compilation system demonstrates the coexistence of three paradigms: the “linear narration of literary history”, the “interpretation of classic texts”, and the “inter - textuality between history and theory”. The textual analyses in these textbooks are frequently restricted to the close-reading approach of New Criticism. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks are unable to effectively incorporate contemporary literary theories, including cultural studies and post-colonial theory. Additionally, disparities in the academic backgrounds of editors result in inadequate theoretical coherence.

Secondly, the quality evaluation dimensions are devoid of a scientifically constructed index system grounded in the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). Current evaluations predominantly depend on expert judgment, failing to establish a quantitative assessment model incorporating crucial parameters such as the knowledge update rate (e.g., the proportion of 21st-century works), the degree of digital resource integration, and indicators for critical thinking cultivation. This situation results in a dispersed distribution of textbook quality.

Thirdly, at the level of teaching application, a chain reaction is observed, where classroom teaching has fallen into a linear transmission model of “author biography-text analysis-theme summary”. Contemporary literature accounts for less than 15% in this context, lagging behind the advancements in frontier fields such as “post-human writing” and “climate fiction”. This disparity between compilation and teaching renders it arduous for traditional textbooks to fulfill the requirements for cultivating students' critical thinking and cross-cultural competencies.

In contrast to traditional media, digital textbooks are reconfiguring the ecological landscape of British and American literature teaching through the innovative integration of “digital technology+teaching platforms”. However, apart from inheriting the existing problems from paper textbooks, the compilation of digital textbooks confronts distinct challenges. For instance, the design goals that are overly market-oriented and commercialized result in the utilitarian nature of the digital textbook ecosystem. Moreover, the laws, regulations, and policy frameworks related to digital textbook compilation are incomplete, and the systems for digital copyright protection and information security assurance are feeble.

#### 4. Construction Paths

##### 4.1 Standardizing the Compilation Guidelines

Knowledge transmission stands at the core of curriculum instruction and serves as the fundamental element in textbook compilation. Consequently, digital textbooks on British and American literature should closely tackle two classical inquiries in curriculum theory: Herbert Spencer's “What knowledge is of the greatest value?” and Michael Apple's interpretation of “Whose knowledge is of the greatest value?”

In light of the aforementioned theoretical deliberations, the compilation of digital textbooks on British and American literature urgently necessitates a systematic standardization framework, which clearly delineates guiding principles and core objectives. The formulation of digital textbook standards ought to consider content quality, application scope, interaction modes, and technical specifications. An attractive textbook should exhibit the characteristics of “novelty, diversity, aesthetics, and interest” (Cheng Xiaotang & Sun Xiaohui, 2011, p. 55). Specifically, “the content should be novel to students, emphasize diversity, feature aesthetically designed layout, and contain engaging elements” (Cheng Xiaotang & Sun Xiaohui, 2011, p. 55).

The technological attributes of digital textbooks offer diverse prospects for content presentation. It is advisable to employ a thematic modular writing approach to conduct a structural optimization of traditional literature textbooks, thereby attaining innovation in the textbook system via content reorganization and supplementation. Digital textbook compilers ought to focus on the academic adaptation design of multimedia resources to prevent “technology stacking”. Each category of multimedia resource must be associated with well-defined academic objectives. For instance, when integrating learning videos on Shakespeare's poems, annotations regarding sonnet rhythms should be incorporated.

Specifically, advanced media technology can be introduced to append extended sections such as “Authors' Anecdotes.” Meanwhile, state-of-the-art technologies like digital mind maps and virtual reality (VR) can be utilized to construct multi-dimensional and three-dimensional teaching content presentation models, which necessitate users to base their utilization on script scene descriptions. For example, in the realm of literary criticism, an “Academic Analysis” module should be established to offer multi-dimensional perspectives on literary criticism, guiding students to compose academic outlines by referring to academic literature. Meanwhile, the system should automatically match outlines with similar themes for peer review.

Secondly, leveraging the platform compatibility features of digital textbooks, endeavors should be made to enhance the concept of personalized design in the development of digital textbooks on British and American literature. In the context of intelligent education, textbook compilers must comprehensively take into account the individual differences among learners, encompassing cognitive characteristics and learning preferences. It is proposed to utilize educational big data analysis technology to establish accurate user profiles, thereby formulating differentiated textbook service strategies to meet diverse levels of teaching requirements. Specific implementation approaches include integrating rich text resources in the novel appreciation module and utilizing micro-lesson videos to achieve visual representations of literary scenes.

For policy makers in digital textbook writing, it is necessary to work with various universities and academic groups to clarify core requirements, develop “Digital Textbook Writing Standards”, ensuring copyright ownership and academic usage rights, avoiding non-academic entertainment content. For instance, multimedia resources (such as literary film clips) need to be annotated with sources (journals, publishers and archives). Interactive module designs should focus on cultivating students’ literary interpretation abilities, such as constructing dynamic graphs of characters from related literary works, while also annotating the academic theoretical basis (relevant literary theories). Text selection should follow the writing paradigm of “classic texts+frontier discipline texts+multicultural texts.” Regarding the safeguard mechanism of writing, policy makers should establish special publishing funds to prioritize funding for compliant writing projects, build an effective mechanism for copyright clearance, jointly sign bulk authorization agreements with national copyright bureaus and foreign literature databases (such as JSTOR, Project MUSE), reducing the cost of copyright acquisition for writers, incorporating the results of digital textbook writing into university teacher evaluations to stimulate teachers’ academic participation motivation.

Compared with policy makers, University teachers should also deeply participate in the connection between “teaching-academia” in writing, basing on course syllabi to complete academic guidance for digital textbook writing. For example, regarding South African white writers and works represented by Coetzee, it is necessary to clearly cover academic hotspots such as postcolonial issues in *Disgrace*, suggesting embedding relevant research videos by contemporary scholars (such as David Attwell) and promptly collecting student feedback information to complete “academic value of interactive modules” feedback, forming a “Teaching Adaptability Report”. Meanwhile, as the main force in digital textbook writing, university teachers should enhance their academic capabilities in digital writing and application, such as being familiar with methods of searching and evaluating academic multimedia resources, designing academic teaching in digital classrooms, etc.

#### 4.2 Building a Dynamic Digital Resource Database

The establishment of a dynamic digital resource database for British and American literature teaching materials is of core significance in overcoming the limitations of static traditional textbooks. By continuously updating the disciplinary frontiers, such as academic texts, scholarly critiques, and multimedia resources, the digital textbook can remain in sync with the latest advancements in British and American literary studies, guaranteeing academic timeliness. Moreover, by integrating authoritative textual editions, manuscript archives, and specialized research tools, the database supports a teaching model that combines “close reading” and “scholarly analysis”, enabling both instructors and students to conduct in-depth literary investigations and thereby enhancing the academic profundity of teaching. Additionally, through bulk copyright licensing and the integration of open-source resources, the database reduces the threshold for accessing high-quality literary materials, facilitating the equitable distribution of educational resources between regional universities and elite institutions, thus promoting educational equity. Finally, its design with a “teaching feedback-resource update” loop not only offers empirical evidence for the iterative development of textbooks but also enriches the digital resource ecosystem in British and American literary studies, supporting the integration of disciplinary research and digital education and driving the digital transformation of humanities education in higher foreign language education.

In the context of constructing the content for such a dynamic digital resource repository, developers ought to establish a classification system that is guided by disciplinary frameworks and tailored to pedagogical requirements. Firstly, academic criteria for resource selection need to be established, with the structure of British and American literary studies employed as an organizing framework to modularize digital resources. For example, in order to facilitate global access to and appreciation of rare manuscripts, the British Library has initiated several digitization projects, including the “Hebrew Manuscripts Digitisation Project”, the “Polonsky Foundation England and France Project” and so on. These projects have successfully digitized a substantial portion of its manuscript collections, thereby laying a digital foundation for the long-term preservation, dissemination, and utilization of these materials.

It is imperative that the textual resources module prioritize authoritative digital editions (e.g., *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* published by Oxford University Press), complemented by state-of-the-art scholarly works from the past five years (e.g., new writings in ecocriticism). Each resource should be annotated with “academic provenance” information, which encompasses the source edition, the basis of textual collation, and the scholarly value. Moreover, peer-reviewed literary criticism published in CSSCI/SSCI indexed journals should be curated, accompanied by abstracts, author affiliations, and research domains. The multimedia resources module should center on reconstructing literary contexts and deepening textual interpretation. It should incorporate author manuscripts and archival materials (e.g., Hemingway’s writing notebooks) and literary audiovisual resources (e.g., BBC adaptations of classic literature), with a clear indication of the scope of copyright permissions. Academic lecture videos featuring

influential scholars in the field (e.g., Yale University's public course "Introduction to Theory of Literature") should be selected, along with accompanying slides and bibliographies. The research tools module ought to integrate specialized digital tools for literary scholarship. For example, corpus-based tools (e.g., the British National Corpus, BNC), which facilitate keyword searches and stylistic analysis, and literary mapping tools (e.g., "Bloom's Literary Map"), which trace authors' life trajectories and fictional settings, should be incorporated. These tools should be embedded with academic findings regarding the relationship between geography and literary creation.

Regarding the methodology for constructing the dynamic digital repository, developers ought to stress the connection between resources and textbooks through the establishment of a precise mapping mechanism between textbook chapters and database content. For example, the works of Charles Dickens in the textbook can be directly associated with his original manuscripts, recent academic research, and relevant corpus-designed materials. The database content should be updated on a regular basis. The resources are recommended by a panel of database experts, which consists of more than five professors of British and American literature and eight front-line university instructors. These experts monitor the new additions to domestic and international databases. The professors on the committee mainly propose major updates (such as including new works and critiques of newly awarded Nobel laureates in literature), while university instructors gather timely feedback from students regarding database usage.

For instance, since its inauguration at the end of 2016, the National Center for Philosophy and Social Sciences Documentation (NCPSSD) in China has rapidly enhanced its influence. Currently, it hosts over 26 million academic resources, encompassing Chinese academic journals, collected volumes, foreign open-access journals and books, ancient Chinese texts, and early-view articles from selected Chinese journals. The content updates are provided by faculty members from institutions like Beijing Foreign Studies University, specifically resolving the issue of the delayed inclusion of frontier topics in domestic textbooks. The database contains 15,162 open-access journals from across the globe, with 2,734 indexed in DOAJ and 627 in SCI. It prioritizes titles in the humanities and social sciences while moderately expanding into interdisciplinary fields, and regularly incorporates the latest global literary research from the 21st century.

Evidently, the practical significance of digital textbooks on British and American literature primarily resides in their systematic optimization of traditional classroom models and the establishment of a diversified educational ecosystem. From the viewpoint of teaching practice, the compilation of digital textbooks should center on two core issues: firstly, exploring the mechanisms through which digital textbooks promote pedagogical innovation; secondly, clarifying the internal logic by which digital textbooks drive teaching research and educational reform. By constructing a multidimensional and integrated digital textbook system, a Pareto-optimal allocation of teaching resources can be realized. Consequently, the content review of the database should incorporate the opinions of British and American literature scholars from institutions other than the submitting ones, fully taking into account the pedagogical appropriateness of digital resources. Developers should design an "academic feedback module" within the database. Instructors can acquire feedback on students' utilization of database resources during the learning process and submit optimization suggestions, such as proposing comparative studies among 21st-century African writers. Students can put forward recommendations regarding both the content and the technical platform, regularly submitting online user experience reports. After being reviewed by an academic committee, these inputs will serve as crucial evidence for future resource updates.

Regarding the copyright protection of dynamic databases, developers ought to establish a multi-stakeholder collaborative copyright protection mechanism. They should enter into bulk licensing agreements with authoritative institutions. Specifically, they should collaborate with the Teaching Advisory Committee for Foreign Language Majors. Moreover, they should cooperate with organizations like the U.S. National Humanities Center, thereby reducing the cost of obtaining individual copyrights. Open-access resources that comply with the CCBY (Creative Commons Attribution License), such as those from WikiScholar, should be incorporated. The resource pages should clearly label the license types (e.g., "CC BY 4.0") to ensure compliance with copyright regulations. Each resource category must have a dedicated "Copyright Information" section that specifies the rights holder, permitted uses (e.g., "solely for university teaching and textbook development; commercial redistribution is prohibited"), and the license duration, thus minimizing the legal risks for textbook authors resulting from ambiguous copyright status. Developers are required to comply with *The Personal Information Protection Law* and *The Educational Data Security Guidelines*. They should encrypt user data (e.g., instructors' resource access logs, students' learning trajectories) and restrict access to only authorized database administrators and academic committee members. Such data can only be utilized for resource optimization and textbook iteration and must not be exploited for commercial purposes.

#### 4.3 Integrating Textbook Platforms with Smart Teaching Platforms

In the context of the profound integration of new-generation information technology and education, new media technologies and their associated resource systems are reconfiguring the teaching paradigms of British and American literature courses in universities. The utilization of digital textbooks can notably promote the two-way optimization of teaching efficacy and learning efficiency. Nevertheless, practical issues such as low application rates and monotonous application models still exist in the field of digital textbooks. The root cause lies in the fact that the existing application models have not yet overcome the constraints of technology-assisted teaching in the 2.0 era and are unable to meet the requirements for the systematic restructuring of the educational system in the digital intelligence age.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to integrate advanced technologies, including big-data analysis, artificial intelligence platforms, and VR virtual reality, to develop scenario-based teaching models, construct intelligent teaching platforms, and achieve the dynamic publication of modular teaching content. Simultaneously, a resource-sharing mechanism ought to be established to support homework management and the reconstruction of textbook content systems. This dual-driven model of “technology empowerment-theoretical innovation” presents a systematic solution for the in-depth application of digital textbooks on British and American literature and provides a practical paradigm that is worthy of reference for the digital transformation of higher education.

It is worthy of noting that digital textbooks are fully digitized teaching resources, and their content presentation and functionality implementation must rely on specific online platforms. At present, the majority of digital textbooks published in China’s higher education sector, particularly those launched in recent years, adopt a platform-based construction model primarily operated by professional institutions. This indicates that the development of digital textbook platforms hinges on the optimization and integration of educational resources, a systematic review of the existing course resources on the platform, and their scientific reorganization and optimization. Teachers should comprehend the technical characteristics and service models of various digital teaching platforms, concentrating on the optimization and innovation of teaching content without engaging in underlying development, so as to enhance the quality and effectiveness of digital textbooks.

To tackle the problems of homogenization and resource waste existing in traditional printed textbooks, the development of digital textbooks on British and American literature should center on the systematic integration of teaching resources, the organic combination of digital activities and teaching content, and the structural reconfiguration of instructional design. To prevent knowledge fragmentation, a resource-sharing mechanism based on students’ learning circumstances should be established. Professional technical teams should formulate standards for digital platform development, carry out market-oriented technology selection (such as artificial intelligence and cloud computing), and guarantee the stable operation and maintenance of technology platforms. Additionally, endeavors should be made to strengthen the capacity development of technical personnel, especially improving textbook editors’ capabilities in integrating educational technology, comprehending subject-specific teaching, and ensuring platform operation and maintenance. Technical staff should master the core technologies supporting current digital textbook development, including content visualization technology (e.g., audio-video editing, augmented reality and virtual reality), converged media dissemination technology, platform application technology, intelligent analysis and recommendation technology (based on cloud computing and big data analysis), digital interaction technology, digital publishing technology, and frontier technologies such as the metaverse, knowledge graphs, and artificial intelligence.

From a technical standpoint of platform construction, developers ought to establish standardized interfaces and academic data linkage mechanisms. They should unify interface specifications to guarantee cross - platform compatibility and encourage digital textbook platforms and smart teaching platforms (such as Moodle) to adopt a “RESTful API+LTI (Learning Tools Interoperability)” dual-interface architecture. This design enables the direct retrieval of basic resources (e.g., text, audio) from the former and supports the cross-platform embedding of academically comprehensive interactive modules (e.g., text annotations, corpus analysis tools) from the latter. Technology interfaces must ensure the seamless integration between digital textbook platforms and smart teaching systems, supporting functions such as the one-click insertion of textbooks.

For example, Beijing Foreign Studies University, based on the major research project of China’s Ministry of Education, “Research on Functional Standards of Foreign Language Digital Textbook Publishing Platforms”, adheres to principles such as “closed-loop design, dynamic iteration, global perspective”, conducts in-depth research on topics including the application of artificial intelligence in digital textbooks and publishing platforms, content review on publishing platforms, and the positioning of functional standards. It utilizes corpora to formulate personalized

learning trajectories for students and undertakes translation work in six languages (Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian) for the overseas versions of the national smart education public service platform website resources. Developers also need to construct an academic data sharing model, clearly defining the core academic data to be shared between the two types of platforms. The textbook platform outputs “resource usage data” (e.g., the frequency of students’ consultations on Dickens’s research papers, the duration of using corpus tools to analyze *An American Tragedy*), while the smart platform outputs “teaching interaction data” (e.g., the number of times classroom discussions cite textbook resources) and provides relevant data.

From the perspective of platform resource utilization, university faculty and students should clarify the frequency and duration of platform use, conducting teaching in stages. For example, before class, teachers can precisely push academic preparatory resources. Smart teaching platforms can personalize the push of preparatory materials based on past learning data (e.g., browsing records on postcolonial criticism). During class, teachers and students can engage in deep academic interactions, leveraging the connection between the two platforms to achieve real-time resource retrieval and academic discussion. After class, teachers can generate personalized academic expansion paths. Smart teaching platforms combine student performance in class with data on the use of textbook resources to generate academic extension suggestions. For instance, if a platform identifies that a student lacks understanding of transcendentalist characteristics, it can automatically recommend relevant digital textbooks, guiding students towards deeper research.

## 5. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the paradigm shift in “Internet Plus” education, digital textbooks, capitalizing on their technical compatibility, mobile portability, and pedagogical interactivity, are significantly propelling innovative transformations in university-level literature courses. The development and application of digital textbooks on British and American literature not only offer a vital opportunity for fostering students’ digital literacy and critical thinking but also establish novel theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for pedagogical innovation in university literature education. Nevertheless, in comparison with the progress of digital textbooks in other disciplines, the current digital textbooks still encounter practical challenges, including an inadequate volume of resources, uneven content quality, and a low actual adoption rate. Moreover, deeper issues regarding their role in value guidance and exemplary educational influence urgently demand further exploration.

The precondition for the optimization and sharing of educational resources is to dispel the fallacy of “technological determinism”, which requires the establishment of specialized textbook development teams. At present, there is a techno-utopian inclination in the academic community. Some scholars (e.g., Arne Duncan, 2010) over-emphasize the disruptive potential of digital technology and predict the “inevitable extinction of printed textbooks”. Neil Postman’s (1992) theory of “technopoly” even posits technology as dominant over culture. Nevertheless, the core value of British and American literature courses lies in cultivating students’ humanistic literacy and aesthetic sensibilities, and the teaching process emphasizes the interactive agency between teachers and students. As a pedagogical support instrument, the functional role of digital textbooks should be to supplement, rather than supplant, traditional printed textbooks. This technology-centered cognitive bias must be rectified.

In addressing future educational requirements, the development of digital literature textbooks in higher education ought to concentrate on promoting the following pivotal domains: firstly, systematically integrating digital teaching resources to construct specialized digital education platforms; secondly, establishing comprehensive evaluation frameworks and long-term support mechanisms. During this process, universities should establish in-depth collaborative partnerships with publishing institutions to jointly develop high-quality, discipline-specific digital teaching resources and promote the standardization of digital textbook development, thus comprehensively improving the quality of digital textbooks. This systematic initiative not only pertains to the optimization and upgrading of digital textbooks themselves but also serves as a crucial impetus for advancing the digital transformation of higher education.

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