ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Hyped or Helpful? Examining AI's Role in Archaeology and Heritage in Southwest Asia

NUGENT S. [1]*

[1] Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author

Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced computing is gaining momentum across academic fields, driven by national funding priorities and institutional pressures to embrace novel technologies. This paper examines the implications of this trend for archaeology and heritage studies in Southwest Asia, focusing on its impact on both practice and theory. Through a meta-analysis of published research and public records of funded projects, it examines how AI-driven methodologies are applied to Ancient Near Eastern research, particularly focusing on theoretical or practical relevance of the research design choices to archaeological inquiries.

Regional case studies illustrate how political and economic dynamics shape research priorities, potentially at the expense of methodological rigour. While these innovations offer the promise of new insights, their adoption often occurs in isolation from foundational debates in computing and science and technology studies—particularly regarding accuracy, reproducibility, and ethical responsibility. This disconnect risks sidelining archaeological scholarship in favour of technological novelty, widening the gap between practice and discourse.

By providing a counterpoint to critiques of institutional reticence toward innovation, this analysis highlights how uncritical enthusiasm for AI impacts scholarly engagement. The findings emphasise the need for a more balanced and theoretically grounded approach to integrating AI into archaeology.

Keywords

computing, AI, meta-analysis, Science and technology studies, technology

Session

1. Advances in Near Eastern Archaeology

Workshop

A16480SS - Is there really anything to be found there? Researching beyond the Established Frameworks of Near Eastern Archaeology

Type of paper

Oral presentation