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Archival Anchoring and Academic Reflection at the Forefront of Technological Innovation: A Critique of Ouyang Youquan's *Chinese Network Literature Yearbook 2024*

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Abstract: As the only authoritative annual chronicle of network literature continuously published in China, *Chinese Network Literature Yearbook 2024*, edited by Ouyang Youquan, continues its team's compilation philosophy of "historical materials preservation, academic analysis, and industry guidance", and systematically records the full landscape of Chinese network literature development in 2024 from a panoramic perspective. For the first time, this yearbook takes the integrated development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AIGC) and network literature as its core annual theme, accomplishing the full-chain preservation of historical materials on industry practices amid technological transformation, an in-depth analysis of technology's enabling value, and a dialectical reflection on relevant risks and dilemmas. Taking this yearbook as the core object of critical analysis, this paper sorts out its compilation logic and overall positioning, focuses on the innovative breakthroughs in its AIGC-related content, explores its academic value and room for improvement in the disciplinary construction of contemporary literature and network literature research, and provides a reference for the high-quality development and academic research of network literature in the AIGC era.

Keywords: *Chinese Network Literature Yearbook 2024*; Ouyang Youquan; network literature research; AIGC; literary historical materials

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标题：技术前沿的史料锚定与学术观照——评欧阳友权《中国网络文学年鉴 2024》

摘要：作为国内唯一连续出版的网络文学权威年度志书，欧阳友权主编的《中国网络文学年鉴 2024》（北京出版社，2025）延续了其团队“史料留存、学术分析、行业引导”的编撰理念，以全景式视野系统记录了 2024 年中国网络文学的发展全貌。这部年鉴首次将生成式人工智能（AIGC）与网络文学的融合发展作为年度核心命题，完成了技术变革下行业实践的全链条史料留存、赋能价值的深度分析与风险困境的辩证反思。本文以这部年鉴为核心评析对象，梳理其编撰逻辑与整体定位，重点聚焦 AIGC 相关内容的创新突破，探讨其在当代文学学科建设、网络文学研究中的学术价值与可完善空间，为 AIGC 时代网络文学的高质量发展与学术研究提供参考。

关键词：《中国网络文学年鉴 2024》；欧阳友权；网络文学研究；AIGC；文学史料

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1. Panoramic Portrayal of the Annual Landscape: Compilation Logic and Fundamental Positioning of the 2024 Yearbook

The year 2024 marks a critical juncture for online Chinese literature as it enters a phase of in-depth transformation, and equally, a pivotal moment when generative artificial intelligence (AIGC) became truly embedded in the processes of literary creation and production. Driven by relevant policies, the Chinese state has continuously supported innovative exploration in the digital cultural industry and encouraged deeper integration between artificial intelligence and the cultural sector, providing external support for the technological and modal upgrading of online Chinese literature. After more than two decades of rapid growth, online Chinese literature in China has entered a new phase where the core focus shifts from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement. Nevertheless, the industry cannot avoid pressing practical challenges, including content homogenization, an excessively long cycle for IP commercialization, and high barriers to creation. To a certain extent, AIGC's advantages in text generation efficiency and scenario adaptation have addressed the practical needs emerging amid the industry's transformation. At the same time, the scope of contemporary literary studies has continuously expanded into emerging fields such as digital literature and online Chinese literature. The new phenomena and issues arising from the integration of AIGC and online Chinese literature have already become one of the most dynamic and cutting-edge research directions in current academic circles.

Against this backdrop, China Online Literature Yearbook 2024 (Beijing Publishing House, 2025), edited by Ouyang Youquan, was published. As the ninth consecutive annual yearbook on online Chinese literature

compiled by his team since 2016, this work serves both as an authoritative annual archive of the development of online Chinese literature in 2024 and a pivotal achievement in the development of digital historical materials for contemporary literature. From the perspective of the academic history of online Chinese literature studies, this continuously published yearbook series has long transcended its positioning as a mere “compilation of industry data” to become core documentary support for the disciplinary development of online Chinese literature. Furthermore, the 2024 edition’s focus on the cutting-edge theme of AIGC has realized an upgraded positioning from an “annual recorder” to an “academic pioneer”.

As a leading scholar in the field of online Chinese literature research in mainland China, Ouyang Youquan has long been committed to the collation of historical materials and academic research on online Chinese literature. The China Online Literature Yearbook series he edits has become one of the indispensable authoritative references in contemporary literary studies. Leveraging the series’ mature compilation system, the 2024 Yearbook constructs a five-in-one, full-ecosystem content framework encompassing “creation, industry, research, dissemination, and governance”. The book comprises ten chapters, covering an annual overview of online Chinese literature, literary websites, active writers, popular works, online Chinese literature readership, the online Chinese literature industry, academic conferences and key events, internet regulations and copyright administration, theory and criticism, and the overseas dissemination of online Chinese literature. It concludes with an appendix documenting the chronicle of events in the online Chinese literary circle in 2024, forming a complete logical closed loop of “macro over view, me so ecosystem, micro text, and extended development”. Compared with previous editions of the yearbook and other industry reports of the same kind, the most prominent breakthrough of the 2024 Yearbook is its tight grasp of AIGC as the critical thread driving industry transformation. For the first time, the book places the integration of technology and literature at the core of its compilation, moving beyond the fragmented references to technological transformation in previous editions, and delivering systematic collation, in-depth theoretical analysis, and critical rational reflection on the practical forms of the integration between AIGC and online Chinese literature. This compilation approach not only addresses the shortfall of cutting-edge historical materials on online Chinese literature in the digital age, but also responds to the critical theoretical question of the mutual construction of technology and literature in contemporary literary studies, embodying the compilation team’s keen academic insight and real-world concern.

From the academic lineage of the studies of historical materials of contemporary literature, online Chinese literature, born of digital media, has long faced the inherent dilemmas of “ephemerality, fragmentation, and fluidity” in its historical materials. The rapid iteration of AIGC technology has further exacerbated the risk of the loss of digital literary historical materials. As Huang Fayou (2022) points out in his research on digital humanities and the study of historical materials of contemporary literature, the development of literary historical materials in the digital age is facing the core challenge that the speed of technological iteration far outpaces that of historical material preservation. A wealth of vivid industry practices and creative scenes quickly vanish with platform updates and technological iteration, which imposes brand-new requirements for the systematic preservation of historical materials of contemporary literature. The 2024

Yearbook's focus on the core theme of AIGC precisely addresses this academic dilemma. Its value lies not only in documenting the annual industry landscape, but more importantly, in exploring a feasible paradigm of "synchronous tracking of cutting-edge developments, systematic classified preservation, and simultaneous academic examination" for the development of literary historical materials in the digital age.

2. The Integrated Landscape of AIGC Technology and Literature

With the large-scale implementation and widespread application of AIGC technology, profound transformations have taken place in online Chinese literature across its production mechanisms, dissemination channels, and consumption patterns. The 2024 Yearbook does not confine itself to the simple collation and listing of industry phenomena. Instead, from a rigorous academic standpoint, it weaves AIGC-related issues throughout the core chapters of the book, conducting both an in-depth analysis of the practical value of technology-enabled development of online Chinese literature and a dialectical examination of the attendant risks and dilemmas. This is not only the core content of the yearbook that holds the greatest academic value and innovative significance, but also serves as a critical reference for postgraduate students majoring in contemporary literature to carry out relevant research.

2.1 Systematic Preservation of Historical Materials on AIGC Practices

Online Chinese literature originated from digital media, and its historical materials are inherently characterized by ephemerality, fragmentation and fluidity. AIGC-related industry practices feature rapid iteration, scattered application scenarios and diversified data dimensions, and have long remained in a state of "unpreserved practices and unsorted phenomena". Numerous platform tools, creative cases and industry data vanish rapidly amid technological updates, leaving a prominent gap in the construction of digital historical materials for contemporary literature. As an authoritative annual publication, the 2024 Yearbook has for the first time conducted full-spectrum and systematic collation of AIGC applications within online Chinese literature. It transforms scattered industry practices into preservable, verifiable and retrievable academic archives, filling the vacancy of cutting-edge technical materials in contemporary literary research. Shan Xiaoxi (2025) clearly states in relevant studies that the core goal of digital literary historiography is to convert decentralized, perishable and non-standard digital literary practices into authoritative academic historical materials capable of long-term preservation, academic verification and efficient retrieval. Nevertheless, existing research mostly focuses on sorting archives of canonical online literary works and writers, while lacking systematic collection of frontier practical materials brought by technological transformation.

In terms of content coverage, grounded in the actual development of the online literature industry in 2024, the 2024 Yearbook offers comprehensive documentation of diverse AIGC application scenarios across the sector. In its specific discussion of creative practice, it outlines the functional updates and practical application of mainstream AI writing tools such as Yuewen Miaobi, ERNIE Bot and Fanqie Assistant, and illustrates how artificial intelligence reshapes traditional writing through concrete cases. Addressing practical industrial concerns, the book draws on operational data from major platforms to examine the role of AI in IP adaptation, content production and derivative development, and acknowledges its positive effects in shortening

development cycles and reducing operational costs. Language barriers have long been a prominent bottleneck for the overseas dissemination of online Chinese literature. The yearbook also recognizes the vital role of AIGC multilingual translation in cross-cultural communication, and adopts empirical data to demonstrate how AI optimizes international communication outcomes. In addition, it collects AIGC-related copyright disputes, industrial norms and policy documents of the year, clarifying the evolutionary trajectory of technological governance and leaving valuable documentary resources for subsequent academic inquiry.

Notably, the 2024 Yearbook adheres to the principles of authority, systematicness and representativeness in compiling and archiving AIGC-related materials. All statistical data cited derive from official releases of major online literature platforms and research reports issued by authoritative institutions including the Online Literature Center of the Chinese Writers Association (Online Literature Center of the Chinese Writers Association, 2024). Selected cases have undergone rigorous screening and verification by the editorial team, effectively remedying the current problems of fragmentation, inaccuracy and fragility in available AIGC resources. Such rigorous archival work not only lays a solid documentary foundation for postgraduate research on AIGC and online literature, but also advances the improvement of the digital historical material system for contemporary literature, thereby highlighting the enduring core value of the yearbook as a credible academic archive.

2.2 The Value of Technological Empowerment in Online Literature

In contemporary literary research, the relationship between technology and literature has always been an indispensable core issue. The in-depth integration of AIGC and online Chinese literature has offered new perspectives and practical samples for exploring this subject. Beyond the systematic collation of annual materials, the 2024 Yearbook incorporates AIGC into the core logic of online literary development from an academic perspective. It focuses on the empowering effect of technology on the creative ecosystem and explores how technology intervenes in content production and to what extent it shapes literary development from the dual dimensions of literary ontology and industrial trends. Its in-depth response to how technology serves literature marks a fundamental distinction between this yearbook and ordinary material compilations.

The book clarifies that AIGC reconstructs the creative modes and expands the creative boundaries of online Chinese literature, echoing the developmental trends of universal creation and diversified expression in contemporary literature. Drawing on the research findings of scholars including Ouyang Youquan (2025), the editorial team emphasizes that the core value of AIGC lies not in replacing human creators, but in establishing a new human-machine collaborative creation model. Artificial intelligence undertakes repetitive and basic creative work such as scene description, plot foreshadowing, dialogue supplementation and grammatical polishing, allowing writers to concentrate on core literary creation links including conceptual design, character depiction and thematic deepening. This balance achieves simultaneous improvement in creative efficiency and innovative expression. Supported by authentic 2024 industry data, the book objectively demonstrates how AIGC optimizes creative efficiency and recognizes its role in expanding the boundaries of creative subjects. Regarding this trend, Tang Qiao (2024)¹ notes that texts independently generated by AI

¹Tang Qiao (2024, March 22): The rise of generative AI: What is its impact on online literature? URL:https://tech.cn.cn/techyw/kan/20240316/t20240316_526629416.shtml

often surpass the works of average writers, making it difficult to distinguish human writing from machine output. The rise of generative artificial intelligence signifies the strong involvement of technological rationality in literary and artistic creation. AIGC lowers the entry threshold for online literary writing, enabling ordinary users without professional writing experience as well as special groups such as people with disabilities to realize literary expression with technological assistance. It advances the realization of universal creation in online literature and provides a new research perspective for discussions on the diversification of creative subjects within contemporary literary studies.

Meanwhile, in terms of industrial development, the 2024 Yearbook systematically sorts out the all-round empowering impact of AIGC on the entire industrial chain of online Chinese literature, adding a brand-new dimension to the research on online literary industrialization. Based on the industrial practices of 2024, the editorial team argues that AIGC has broken the traditional industrial boundaries of online literature and built an intelligent full-chain empowerment system covering content production, IP adaptation, multimodal development and global communication. In IP adaptation, AI accelerates the industrial remodeling process of online literature. It facilitates rapid text conversion for film and television scripts, comic storyboards and game narratives, shortening the adaptation cycle and optimizing cost management. In the field of multimodal development, AI helps online literature break away from the single textual form and expand into audio books, dynamic comics and interactive narratives. This enriches content presentation methods and diversifies commercialization channels. For overseas markets, AI multilingual translation gradually breaks down language barriers for online literature going global. Through efficient localized adaptation, it enables Chinese online literature to reach readers across diverse cultural backgrounds. It is evident that AI is reshaping the online literary industrial chain from content production and form innovation to cross-border communication, and provides vivid practical references for the research on the integration of literature and cultural industries in contemporary literary studies.

2.3 Dilemmas and Ethical Reflections in the Development of AIGC

Faced with the technological dividends brought by AIGC, the 2024 Yearbook does not indulge in one-sided celebration. Instead, it maintains the prudence and balance required by academic research. While documenting technological empowerment, it does not avoid the profound problems arising from AIGC's intervention in literary creation—from ambiguous copyright authorship and risks of content homogenization to algorithmic bias and ethical dilemmas in human-machine collaboration. The yearbook addresses these issues one by one in thematic sections, presenting the real tensions of technological development and leaving room for critical reflection in subsequent research. This dialectical attitude, which acknowledges both technological potential and hidden risks, distinguishes the yearbook from general industry reports and endows it with genuine academic weight.

In its annual overview, the 2024 Yearbook devotes a special thematic section to confronting the core dilemmas in AIGC development, drawing on the research perspectives of scholars such as Wang He (2025) and Ouyang Youquan (2025)¹. These dilemmas also constitute key concerns for the critical reflection on

¹Ouyang Youquan (November 3, 2025): Exploration on the artistic ethics of artificial intelligence creation. URL. http://www.cssn.cn/zx/mx/202601/t202601_5970280.shtml

technology-literature integration in contemporary literary studies: First, the risk of intensified creative homogenization. Over-reliance on AI-generated content among some creators has led to formulaic plots, templated language, and flat characters, eroding the originality and individuality of online Chinese literature and violating the essential laws of literary creation. Second, the risk of diminishing creative subjectivity. Under the human-machine collaborative model, some creators have gradually lost the ability to conceive independently and refine texts, becoming mere “reviewers” and “splicers” of AI output. This phenomenon raises the profound question: Where does the subjectivity of literary creation lie? Third, the challenges of copyright attribution and infringement governance. The copyright ownership of AI-generated content lacks clear legal definition. Infringements related to AI training data and widespread piracy of AI-generated works pose new challenges to copyright governance in online literature, forming an important dimension of digital literary copyright research in contemporary literary studies. Fourth, risks in content moderation and value orientation. AI-generated content carries potential problems such as deviant values, vulgarity, and historical nihilism, imposing new pressures on content security management in online literature. This aligns with the core demand of reflecting on literary value orientation in contemporary literary studies.

Based on the above analysis of dilemmas, the 2024 Yearbook puts forward clear academic guidance for the integrated development of AIGC and online Chinese literature. It emphasizes the core principle of “technology as the form, literature as the soul”, insisting that online literature must uphold its aesthetic value and spiritual core while embracing technological innovation. This responds to practical anxieties in industrial development and offers clear value guidance for research on technology-literature integration, demonstrating the editorial team’s academic responsibility and ethical commitment. Notably, current academic discussions on AIGC-literature integration are trapped in a binary opposition between “technological determinism” and “technological alienation.” Some studies overemphasize the empowering effects of technology while neglecting its erosion of literary ontology; others completely reject the literary value of AI and treat it as an adversary to literary creation. The principle of “technology as the form, literature as the soul” proposed by the 2024 Yearbook transcends this binary trap. It affirms the empowering value of technology while upholding the aesthetic essence of literature, providing a realistic and theoretically grounded compromise for this academic debate.

3. Comprehensive Evaluation and Reflection on the 2024 Yearbook

The value of the 2024 Yearbook is reflected in multiple dimensions. It not only provides a continuously accumulated documentary foundation for the disciplinary development of contemporary literature, but also plays a supporting role in the standardization of the online literature industry and cultural communication. More closely aligned with the academic frontline, it responds to the practical needs of postgraduate students in the compilation process—whether sorting out the annual development context, focusing on cutting-edge issues, or presenting industrial changes brought about by technological variables such as AIGC, it provides reliable first-hand materials and clear research entry points for young scholars engaged in research on online

literature and digital literature. For them, this yearbook serves not only as a reference book at the initial stage of academic research, but also as an important reference for understanding the development logic of this field.

As an important practice in preserving cutting-edge historical materials of online literature in the digital age, the 2024 Yearbook fills the gap in relevant historical materials in the AIGC era. Its systematic record of the integrated practice of AIGC and online literature not only provides vivid and authoritative annual historical materials for related research, but also explores a feasible paradigm for the collation and preservation of digital literary historical materials. Based on the industrial development and the academic needs of postgraduate students, the yearbook accurately captures the development context of online literature in 2024, and discusses issues such as the industry status quo, core characteristics, existing dilemmas and future trends. At the same time, combining the core issues of contemporary literary research, the book balances the dual characteristics of historical data and academic nature, and conducts an in-depth analysis of the integration path of AIGC and online literature on the basis of systematically preserving historical materials of industry practices.

Of course, when viewed against the higher standards of contemporary literary academic research and combined with the detailed needs of postgraduate academic research, the 2024 Yearbook still has room for further optimization, improvement, deepening and expansion in the compilation of AIGC-related content. Regarding the theoretical debates, paradigm innovations and core differences in the academic circle in 2024 on AIGC and online literature, this yearbook has not carried out sufficient in-depth evaluation. The integration and interpretation of the relevant research perspectives of scholars such as Shao Yanjun (2025) and Zhou Zhixiong (2024)—which focus on the production mechanism and genre characteristics of online literature and are highly relevant to the development issues of online literature in the AIGC era—can be further strengthened.

By deepening this part of critical summary, it can better meet the academic research needs of contemporary literature postgraduates and further enhance the academic leading power of the yearbook. In terms of recording AIGC application practices, the current focus is more on top platforms, top creators and benchmark cases. There is still considerable room for expanding the collection of AI application practices of small and medium-sized vertical platforms, niche circle creators and even county-level online literature creation groups. Only by further enriching the coverage of cases can we more comprehensively present the diverse ecology of AIGC applications in the field of online literature and improve its comprehensiveness as historical materials. Faced with the transformation of literary ontology brought about by AIGC, the discussion on relevant in-depth theoretical propositions can also be further deepened. Content such as the essence of literature in the AI era, the subjectivity of creators, and the reconstruction of literary aesthetic standards can be thoroughly explored by enriching the collection and analysis of relevant academic viewpoints and combining core contemporary literary theories, thereby enhancing the ideological depth of the yearbook.

Conclusion

The publication of China Online Literature Yearbook 2024 establishes an authoritative, systematic and comprehensive annual academic archive for the development of online Chinese literature in 2024, and also

injects new vitality into contemporary literary research. The most groundbreaking value of this work lies in its keen academic insight into AIGC, the core driving force of industrial transformation throughout the year. It achieves full-chain preservation of practical materials concerning the integration of technology and literature, in-depth analysis of technological empowerment, and dialectical reflection on inherent risks and dilemmas. While filling the gap in the construction of cutting-edge historical materials for online literature, it responds to contemporary challenges brought by technological changes with steady academic judgment and keeps pace with the frontier trends of contemporary literary research.

In the digital age marked by continuous AIGC iteration, the development of online Chinese literature constantly faces the essential tension between technological innovation and literary persistence, which will remain a long-term core issue in contemporary literary studies. As a continuously published serial work, the China Online Literature Yearbook series acts not only as a chronicler of online literature development, but also as an academic guide for industrial progress. Its sustained compilation and publication have facilitated the integration of online literature into the mainstream vision of contemporary literary research and expanded the connotation and boundary of relevant academic exploration. As a highly innovative volume in this series, the 2024 Yearbook sets a solid archival anchor for the industrial changes of 2024, offers clear value guidance for the high-quality development of online literature in the AIGC era, and provides authoritative and systematic documentary support for postgraduate research on online literature and digital literature.

Looking ahead, with the deepening integration of AIGC and online Chinese literature, it is expected that the China Online Literature Yearbook series will continue to archive cutting-edge materials on technology-literature integration and deepen theoretical interpretation, so as to provide stronger support for disciplinary construction, industrial upgrading and cultural communication. Meanwhile, it is anticipated that the yearbook will help Chinese online literature realize the coordinated advancement of literary merit and industrial value in the digital era, and promote innovative breakthroughs in the future development of contemporary literary research.

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