



Exploring the digital and AI-based transformation of Indonesian local literature

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Abstract

In the era of rapid technological advancement, the transformation of Indonesian local literature through digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI) has become an important cultural phenomenon. This study explores how digital technologies and AI are being utilized to preserve, revitalize, and creatively adapt local literary works rooted in Indonesia's diverse ethnic and regional traditions. Employing a qualitative library research method, this paper analyzes scholarly literature and digital resources that highlight innovations in multimedia storytelling, language preservation, and AI-generated narratives. The findings indicate that digital platforms such as mobile apps, social media, and webtoons have successfully increased accessibility and cultural relevance of traditional folktales among younger audiences. Furthermore, AI tools like Natural Language Processing (NLP) and generative models have been applied to generate culturally meaningful stories, support language education, and stimulate new creative outputs. However, challenges remain, including issues of authenticity, digital literacy gaps, and limited infrastructure in some regions. This study emphasizes the significant role of technology in shaping the future of local literature, encouraging further collaboration between technologists, educators, and cultural institutions to safeguard and reimagine Indonesia's literary heritage in the digital age.

Key Words: local literature, folktales, digital technology, artificial intelligence (AI)

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the transformation of local literature has become increasingly relevant as technology continues to permeate cultural and artistic spaces. Literature, once tied to oral and written traditions, is now experiencing a significant shift through the processes of digitalization and the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As traditional literary forms are digitized, new forms of storytelling arise, offering wider accessibility and preservation opportunities, especially for local or regional literary works. This trend is gaining attention globally, as scholars, technologists, and cultural activists explore the fusion of heritage literature with modern platforms.

Several recent studies have examined how digital archives, e-literature, and multimedia storytelling have enabled local literary forms to transcend geographical boundaries. For instance, (Saad et al., 2024) highlights how indigenous oral traditions such as folktales and legends in Malaysia are being preserved through collaborative

digital platforms. Similarly, (Kodriyah & Islamiah, 2025) found that digitizing local stories in Indonesia through interactive apps increased young readers' engagement and cultural awareness. These studies show that digitalization not only preserves literary works but also revitalizes their reception among younger audiences.

Meanwhile, the integration of AI into literary processes such as AI-generated poetry, automated translation of regional languages, and text-to-speech storytelling has opened new creative and preservation possibilities. Previous studies demonstrated how machine learning can recreate lost dialects in folk narratives (Gupta & Sharma, 2025; Lô et al., 2020), while (Li, 2025) emphasized the ethical dimensions of AI-produced literature in maintaining cultural authenticity. These findings suggest a growing academic interest in how AI may both support and challenge the integrity of traditional literature.

However, even though many studies have discussed the impact of digital technology and AI in literature, most of them focus on global or mainstream literary works. There is still limited research that explores how local literature especially from regions like Indonesia which is being transformed in the digital and AI era. Some studies talk about cultural preservation (Hestiyana, 2021), and others discuss the use of digital tools in education or creative writing, but very few combine these ideas in the specific context of Indonesian local literature. In particular, there is a lack of research that looks at how digitalization and AI can help preserve, revitalize, and give new creative meaning to traditional stories and regional literary expressions. This study aims to fill that gap by collecting and analyzing existing research about the transformation of Indonesian local literature through digital and AI-based approaches.

Indonesian local literature discussed in this study refers to literary works that originate from specific regions or ethnic groups within Indonesia, often written in local languages or infused with local cultural elements (Ifan, 2024). These works include oral traditions, folktales, legends, regional poetry, traditional drama scripts, and prose that reflect the values, beliefs, and identities of different communities across the archipelago. Local literature serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a cultural archive that preserves indigenous knowledge and collective memory. In this study, the term "local literature" will cover several types of literary forms, including (1) traditional folktales that have been orally transmitted, (2) written narratives that highlight regional customs or myths, and (3) modern reinterpretations or adaptations of these stories in digital or AI-based formats. These various forms will be analyzed to understand how digitalization and artificial intelligence have contributed to their preservation, transformation, and renewed relevance in contemporary Indonesian society.

By referring to the facts and explanations proposed on the previous paragraphs, the research questions discussed in this study are: (1) How are digital technologies and AI being used to transform Indonesian local literature? (2) What challenges and opportunities arise from the use of digital technology and AI in transforming local literature in Indonesia? These two research questions cover the process of transformation, the practical hurdles and benefits, as well as the deeper cultural meaning related to local cultures, values, traditions, and identities that have been put together along with technology or modernization such as digitalization and AI.

METHODS

This study was carried out using a qualitative library study method focused on reviewing and analyzing existing literature related to the transformation of Indonesian local literature through digitalization and AI. The study systematically collected secondary data from various academic sources including journal articles, books, theses, conference papers, and reputable digital media that discussed Indonesian local literature and the use of digital and AI technologies in literary preservation and transformation. This method suits the categorization of qualitative method using documentative study (Creswell, 2007; Wang, 2018).

Data Sources and Selection. Literature was selected based on the following criteria: relevance to Indonesian local literature (such as folktales, oral traditions, regional poetry, and modern digital adaptations), discussion of digitalization processes (digitization, digital archives, e-literature, multimedia storytelling), AI applications in literature (AI-generated content, machine learning in language preservation, automated translation), and publication within the last ten years to ensure up-to-date perspectives.

Data Analysis. Collected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis. This involved grouping findings into major themes reflecting the roles of digital technology and AI in preserving, revitalizing, and creatively transforming Indonesian local literature. Challenges and opportunities in the application of these technologies were also identified, as well as their impacts on cultural identity within literary works.

Procedure. First, Identification of relevant databases and repositories for literature search (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Indonesian academic databases). Second, Application of search keywords combining terms such as “Indonesian local literature,” “digitalization,” “artificial intelligence,” “folktales,” and “cultural preservation.” Third, Screening and selection of literature based on inclusion criteria. Fourth, Extraction of key information from selected studies focusing on methodology, findings, and relevance to research questions. Fifth, Thematic categorization and synthesis of data to address the research questions comprehensively.

This method ensures that the study is reproducible by following a clear, systematic literature search and analysis procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How are digital technologies and AI being used to transform Indonesian local literature?

By analyzing numerous previous studies, the author found that digital technologies and AI can transform Indonesian local literature in several aspects.

Transforming Indonesian Local Culture through Digital Technology

The transformation of Indonesian local culture through digitalization are found in several aspects. First, the digitization process through the use of digital technologies has enabled the preservation of local literary works that were previously available only in oral or physical manuscript form. Through digital technology, folktales, legends, and oral traditions are being recorded and made widely accessible in durable formats. For example, in 2023 Indonesian government through Ministry of Education and Culture has launched digitization projects that archive regional stories in various local languages

(Denty et al., 2023; Denty & Meryna, 2023). In addition, the local library such as Museum of Radya Pustaka located in South Sulawesi had put extra efforts in digitalizing ancient manuscripts and literary works (Kuswati, 2021).

Second, digital technology allows local literature to be presented in multimedia formats, including videos, animations, and interactive apps to ignite people's interest in local literature and local culture. This enhances audience engagement, particularly among younger generations. For example, several apps called "*Cerita Snak Nusantara*", "*RIRI Dongeng*", "*Kisah 25 Nabi*", "*Buku Cerita Dongeng Anak Indonesia*", and "*Dongeng Anak*" (Ramadhani, 2022). These apps deliver Indonesian folktales through engaging animations. Another young researcher named Nabila Ramadhani Putri analyzed an influencer named Nadia Omara who regularly posted about local stories which circulate in South Kalimantan on her personal accounts such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Putri found that the contents posted by Nadia Omara which are related to local folk tales successfully introduced local culture, beliefs, and wisdom to the viewers of her contents (Putri, 2025).

Additionally, the use of multimedia in promoting local culture and folktales can be found on the existence of webtoon (digital colorful comics). In Indonesia, a webtoon called "*7 Wonders*" by an artist called Metalu successfully portrayed the folk tale named "*Jaka Tarub*" (Safitri & Krismayani, 2023). This webtoon introduced Javanese folk tale to the young readers as well as Javanese numerous designs of "*batik*" (particular fabrics with specific designs) through the characters' attires portrayed in the webtoon (Mufidah & Wulandari, 2022). These clarify that the utilization of multimedia and interactive story telling help the transformation of Indonesian local culture through digitalization.

Third, digitalization can save the endangered local languages. In fact, Indonesia is home to more than 700 regional languages (Nurakhir, 2016), many of which are endangered. Digital tools are being used to document and teach these languages through mobile apps, online dictionaries, and social media platforms. A previous study reported and highlighted various digital tools such as Android-based dictionaries for Lampung and the *BASAbali Wiki* for the Balinese language, which have proven effective for language revitalization (Sihite & Sibarani, 2024). In addition, it is also reported that the digitalization of local folk tales or local literary works are able to preserve both local culture and local languages since the local folk tales are primarily written in local languages (Rahmat Sewa Suraya et al., 2021; Savitri, 2019).

Transforming Indonesian Local Literature through AI

The utilization of AI in transforming Indonesian local literature are implemented in several aspects. First, AI powered digital storytelling in language education. AI technologies like Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning can be used to generate or adapt stories in local languages. These stories can be customized for different learning levels, making them useful tools in education. AI-driven digital storytelling supports language learning by generating culturally relevant stories. It helps students develop vocabulary, comprehension, and creative writing skills

in Bahasa Indonesia and regional dialects. It also offers personalized feedback, making literature more interactive and learner-centered (Tarigan et al., 2024).

Second, AI assisted narrative generation for Indonesian folktales. AI, especially models like GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformers) or BERT or sometimes is categorized as GPT-2, can be trained on Indonesian folktale corpora to generate new narratives, variations, or modern retellings of local stories. This enables revitalization and re-imagination of traditional literature in a way that responds to modern tastes while preserving cultural essence (Santoso et al., 2024). The study found that the fine-tuned GPT-2 models on a dataset of Indonesian folktales. The AI was able to generate coherent and culturally relevant new stories based on traditional narrative structures. Some outputs mimicked tales such as *Malin Kundang* or *Timun Mas* with modern twists, while preserving the moral themes. This information suggests that AI does not just preserve but actively creates new literary content inspired by traditional forms. This act supports creative industries such as children's books, educational material, and gamification that are rooted in local storytelling traditions.

Third, the existence of local language AI models. AI models trained on *Bahasa Indonesia* and regional languages like Javanese, Sundanese, or even Minahasan can generate and translate literary content. This helps preserve local literature and make it accessible across culture and languages. AI models are used to stimulate human-like intelligence and automate complex tasks by learning from data. It can create modern retellings of folktales, translating traditional stories, or even generating poetry in local dialects. It is able to analyze large collections of texts to identify patterns, themes, motifs, or moral structures based on the data that it learns. The example of this project is *Sahabat-AI*. It is also reported that a collaboration between *Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison* and *Go To* will use developed LLMs (Large Language Models) that understand and process Indonesian languages. It can be used also to auto-generate or translate local folktales and offering global access to regional or local literature (Widianto & Freed, 2024).

Fourth, AI promotes micro-literature via AI algorithms and social media. AI recommendation algorithms on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, or Wattpad influence which literary content gets read, liked, and shared. These systems indirectly shape trends and help emerging writers of local literature gain visibility. Platform such as "Fiksimini" (Sari & Setiawan, 2022), an Indonesian Twitter-based flash fiction community is an example of how the posts regarding flash fiction are posted, read, liked, shared, and became trend (Amrinsyah, 2018). Algorithms on AI analyze user behavior to promote specific literary microtexts. It encourages creative production of short stories in *Bahasa* and occasionally in local dialects. It also cultivates literary culture among digital natives (Liliani et al., 2022). Social media algorithms function as agents that both drive transformation and maintain continuity, thereby participating in the evolution and transmission of folk culture. The objective is to construct a theoretical framework that explains the algorithm's role in communication processes regardless of users' awareness so as to enhance our understanding of how traditions are formed and preserved within environments shaped by algorithmic systems (Flinterud, 2023).

What challenges and opportunities arise from the use of digital technology and AI in transforming local literature in Indonesia?

By analyzing numerous previous studies, the author found that digital technologies and AI possess both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges and Opportunities offered by Digital Technology

First, Challenges. The challenges faced by the transformation of Indonesian local literature through the implementation of digital technology can be divided into two. The first is Digital Divide, and the second is the Lack of Contextualization. To begin with, the Digital Divide allows us to know that not all communities have access to the internet or digital devices (Jayanthi & Dinaseviani, 2022; Kuputri, 2020; Sutrisno et al., 2024). This is leading to unequal opportunities in preserving and accessing digitalized literature. this disparity can result in the marginalization of certain cultural narratives from specific regions. A study conducted in 2013 stated that Digital Divide was a regular phenomenon in Indonesia when technologies were found in Java provinces and other big cities while other regions were left behind (Ariyanti, 2013). Sadly, a decade later, Indonesian's condition regarding Digital Divide is still the same (Afrina et al., 2024).

Next, the lack of contextualization refers to the potential of misinterpretations. Digital platforms may present stories without the cultural or ceremonial context in which they originally appeared and caused misleading information which is far from the originality. Simplification or animation of local stories might be entertaining and amused to see, read, or watch, however, it risks misrepresenting traditional values and structure (Kotsis, 2024). For instance, a legend namely *Nyi Roro Kidul* was described as respected and wise queen from the Southern Ocean. However, some media portrayed her as evil queen who harms humans. In addition, *Nyi Roro Kidul* was always described by the Javanese folk tale as a queen who wears Javanese traditional attire. On the other hand, some authors drew in with European style long dress (Mustika & Syarifah, 2020).

Second, Opportunities. The opportunities or advantages offered by digital technology can be divided into two aspects: The Preservation of Oral Traditions and Increased Accessibility and Outreach. Initially, despite the two main challenges stated in the previous paragraphs, digital technology enables the recording, transcription, and storage of oral narratives that were previously passed down through generations (Anggini & Harmoko, 2019). Indonesian local literatures mostly consist of local folk tales, legends, and myth, and all of them were presented orally. Something which is not recorded in writings, recordings, or other forms of multimedia will be gone sooner or later. That is why the digital technology helps humans in preserving their culture. Importantly, the culture represents the identity of a community, especially the country (Ogbonna-Oluikpe, 2021).

Moreover, Increased Accessibility and Outreach is a beneficial factor performed by digital technology for the preservation of Indonesian local literature. Digital libraries

and online platforms allow local literary works such as folk tales, novels, poems, and short stories to be accessed by wider audiences, including the Indonesia diaspora. Another interesting point is the literary works can be accessed anywhere and anytime through digital technology by anyone as long as they have access to digital devices. Increased accessibility here means making traditional stories easier to reach, understand, and more enjoyable by a broader audience. It involves its medium transformation in turning oral or written folktales into other media such as comics, animated videos, mobile apps, or audiobooks which are easier to be understood by younger generation. The influencers who posted local culture content-related also play a vital role in promoting it (Bidilica, 2024; Bloomingdale, 2023). Meanwhile, expanded outreach refers to the extent and diversity of the audience that the stories reach. It is about spreading cultural stories beyond their origin and promoting awareness. For instance, folktales are adapted into global media formats such as Netflix short film (Lobato, 2022) or Tiktok storytelling (Hewlett-Hall, 2023) and these may introduce Indonesian legends and culture to foreign audiences. In addition, the outreach offers diaspora engagement. For instance, the Indonesian living abroad can access their cultural heritage more easily through digital adaptations. Interestingly, the local literature can be used for tourism campaigns, local museums, or village revitalization projects.

Challenges and Opportunities offered by AI

Fisrt, Challenges. The challenges faced by the transformation of Indonesian local literature offered by AI faces three challenges. First, loss of cultural authenticity. Second, bias and data scarcity. The last, ethical concerns. The loss of cultural authenticity through the AI performances that mainly contain Western datasets, it might misrepresent or dilute the essence of specific local culture. For example, the dominance of English in AI models like ChatGPT or Gemini are hindering their effectiveness in other languages, potentially leading to cultural misrepresentations (Dave, 2023). Meanwhile, bias and data scarcity can be resulted to the essence of AI that requires large datasets for training, unfortunately, many local stories are either under-documented or inconsistently formatted, creating disparities in representation (Min, 2023). On the other hand, ethical concerns and ownership is mainly discussed since questions arise regarding the ownership of folklore generated by AI and the potential for cultural appropriation when local narratives are used by commercial AI without permission from the authorities (García de Torres et al., 2025; Laakasuo et al., 2021).

Second, Opportunities. AI provides three opportunities or can be considered as advantages in managing Indonesian local literature. First, dynamic storytelling and cultural engagement. Second, linguistic revitalization. Lastly, cultural analysis and pattern recognition. The dynamic storytelling and cultural engagement focused on the roles of AI in generating interactive folklore experiences using Natural Language Processing (NLP) and generative models. For instance, researchers have explored how

AI-enhanced chatbots can serve as digital tutors, enhancing language acquisition through interactive storytelling (Luckyardi et al., 2024). Furthermore, linguistic revitalization is performed by AI because its models trained in low-resource language that can assist in translating, transcribing, and even generating content in local languages. For instance, Google Translate has expanded to include 110 new languages using AI that can support the survival of oral stories in mother tongues (Caswell, 2024). Interestingly, AI can serve as cultural analysis and pattern recognition since it can analyze numerous folktales to uncover recurring motifs, archetypes, or linguistic patterns, contributing to comparative literature studies and building understanding of cultural interconnectedness (Suryani et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the transformative impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) on Indonesian local literature. Digital platforms have played a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing traditional literary forms by converting oral narratives and written manuscripts into accessible, enduring digital formats. These technologies facilitate the presentation of local literature through engaging multimedia modes, such as animated videos, interactive storytelling apps, and webtoons, thus enhancing its appeal among younger audiences. AI further contributes by enabling language learning based on local stories, generating new literary works inspired by folklore, and supporting the development of local language models aimed at preserving endangered regional dialects.

While these developments offer promising opportunities for cultural preservation and literary innovation, several challenges persist. The limited digital infrastructure in remote areas, which are often the custodians of rich literary traditions, poses a significant barrier. In addition, the scarcity of experts capable of developing culturally sensitive AI models restricts the depth and accuracy of literary transformation. There is also a growing concern about cultural homogenization if digital and AI-driven initiatives neglect the unique contextual values of local traditions. Therefore, an inclusive and collaborative approach involving policymakers, scholars, technologists, and local communities is essential to ensure that the digital and AI-based transformation of Indonesian local literature not only sustains its cultural authenticity but also fosters its relevance in a globalized digital era.

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