

## Preface

Electronic literature (e-lit) has advanced into a domain of inquiry that both inhabits and expands the methodologies of digital humanities (DH). E-lit has become central to DH as it synthesises cultural expression, computational media, and narrative form, modelling how literature might be reconceived in an *algorithmic age*. Contemporary scholarship emphasises that this situatedness pushes DH beyond data analytics and distant reading towards critical making, creative practice, and the lived experience of reading digital artefacts, practices now widely recognised in the field's major anthologies and pedagogical treatises (Grigar, D., & O'Sullivan, 2021). This ontological reframing has profound implications for how we understand format disruption and formalisation of literature in the digital era. E-lit disrupts the page-based syntax of print, foregrounding nonlinearity, multimodality, and interactivity as formal properties that must be theorised on their own terms. Hypertext and branching narratives, for example, unsettle assumptions about linear progression and authorial control by distributing agency to the reader-user in ways that challenge traditional hermeneutics. This shift continues to be theorised through concepts such as Aarseth's "ergodic reading", where navigation through the text involves nontrivial effort and decision-making that shape the meaning making process (Aarseth 1997). At the same time, the digital literary also raises questions about the lifecycle of the work and the rhetoric of preservation. Unlike print, where the artefact is relatively stable and static, many electronic texts are dynamic processes contingent upon particular hardware, software, and/or network conditions. Preservation in e-lit thus engages not only with the artefact as an object but also with its conditions of enactment including emulation of legacy platforms, migration of code, and documentation of interactive logic (Grigar 2023). Around above three aspects of canon formation, archival stability, and dissemination organisations such as the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) have attempted to develop infrastructures; yet questions remain:

- How are the boundaries of electronic literature constituted, and what criteria distinguish it from adjacent digital media practices?
- In what ways do notions of canon, institutional recognition, and archival legitimacy shape the formation of an electronic literature corpus?
- What epistemological frameworks inform decisions about preservation, curation, and inclusion of digital texts in literary histories?

- How do sociocultural, linguistic, and technological biases affect which works are archived, celebrated, or neglected within global and local e-lit ecosystems?
- To what extent should reader interactivity, algorithmic mediation, and software contingencies be considered integral to the literary status of digital works?

Upon placing these questions around the landscape of Indian electronic literature, the discourses remain comparatively sparse and fragmentary. Early critical reflection on this absence can be found in Souvik Mukherjee’s influential essay “No Country for E-Lit?” (2017), which reads India’s cultural and technological mobilisations against the conspicuous lack of a recognisable e-lit tradition within dominant global frameworks. Mukherjee also points to a wider problem of visibility, institutional support, and canonical inclusion in Indian digital cultures, noting that while nonlinear narrative practices have deep roots in indigenous narrative traditions (from *katha* to *dastangoi*), but they have rarely been recognised as part of electronic literary practice.

Following this early critique, more recent scholarship has begun to situate Indian practices in relation to global e-lit taxonomies. Shanmugapriya T and Nirmala Menon argue that Indian digital storytelling (social media narratives, SMS fiction, and other multimodal expressions) “deprovincializes and decentralizes notions of creativity, circulation, reception and publication” by engaging with the digital in culturally specific ways. Their idea of first and second waves of Indian electronic literature rethinks periodisation proposing indigenous trajectories of media engagement rather than uncritical adoption of Western schema (Menon & Shanmugapriya 2020; Nagpal, R. 2025). Joseph and Menon further articulate the institutional and canonical dimensions of Indian e-lit, emphasising both its presence and the structural invisibility it faces within the academy (Joseph & Menon 2022). Indian e-lit operates in a space between historical presence and institutional neglect. On one hand, digital narrative practices and multimedia experiments have circulated widely in social media, online platforms, and independent projects; on the other, they have often remained invisible to mainstream literary scholarship and excluded from formal anthologies and pedagogical narratives. In this sense, Indian e-lit typify what Samya Brata Roy (2022) has termed *Indian solo electronic writing*, a set of creative practices shaped not by institutional infrastructures but by informal networks, experimental communities, and ad hoc digital literacies.

It is against this backdrop that the *Indian Electronic Literature Anthology* emerged as a necessary intervention. Volume 1 of the anthology consolidated 17 works across English and

regional languages, representing digital literary forms ranging from generative poetry and frame narratives, interactive texts and multimedia narratives. By foregrounding diverse forms such as slam poetry, visual narrative, and social-media literature, Volume 1 challenged reductive accounts of Indian digital writing as mere “digital versions” of print and marked a first step toward a broader conversation about canon, form, and visibility (Joseph & Menon, 2023).

*Volume 2* both extends and complicates this project. Where Volume 1 addressed the need for documentation and visibility, Volume 2 foregrounds formal experimentation and pedagogical emergence. Many works in this volume originated in course-based creative explorations, workshops, and theory–practice engagements with tools such as Twine. This context is significant and it aligns with broader trends in e-lit pedagogy that treat platforms like Twine not merely as creative utilities but as theoretical instruments for interrogating interactivity, narrative agency, and reader participation, where students and creators learn through doing, and where creative output becomes a form of inquiry in itself.

This leap of faith in putting an e-lit Anthology Vol 1 and Vol 2 was a journey and a challenge. In a way of speaking, these volumes were an experimental design to understand the materiality of the digital in the technological context of access. As Katherine Hayles and Joanna Drucker have already shown, the meaning of a work “cannot be separated from its physical manifestation”; the physicality of the book we now take for granted (even though publishers will attest to the myriad decisions that involve in the production of a book, that include the economics of printing, the material for the cover and the sequence of pages and so on) has been for a long period now a stable and reliable technology. One can imagine similar conversations about technology during the transition from the scroll to the book. E-lit today is manifestly aware that the algorithms and media are inseparable from the constraints of the output- further, the pace of technology change is much faster that does not have the luxury of the “book period” to settle down and stabilize. So preservation is simultaneous with production and technological compatibility is closely tied to code and contexts and of course, access. These were all questions and challenges for us in the building of the interface for Vol 2.

Across the volume, we see works that engages with memory and identity, speculative narratives, ecological crises, AI-generated poetics, affective relationships, and institutional critique. The first work featured in the volume, Simran Bhimjyani’s *Blue Is My Favourite Colour* is as a reflective digital narrative structured through fragments of memory, where the

colour blue becomes a symbolic thread linking childhood recollections, domestic spaces, and affective experience. The work relies on the associative logic allowing images, objects, and sensations to accumulate into an emotional archive. In doing so, it demonstrates how electronic literature can translate the nonlinear operations of memory into a navigable digital form, using colour symbolism, and subjective recollection within a minimal yet evocative interface. The Second work, Sabarno Niyogi's *The Dream of an Insomniac* is an interactive fiction project that explores the relationship between personal memory, narrative, and archival practice. Structured as a semi-fictional archive, the work incorporates sketches, drawings, and music produced by the author across childhood and adolescence, which the reader encounters through a nonlinear first-person narrative unfolding within a dreamscape. The piece demonstrates how classroom engagements with tools can facilitate experimental approaches to digital archives, and multimodal storytelling. Further, *Zara's Odyssey: Echoes of Belonging* by S. Anas Ahmad situates the reader within the lived experience of migration, memory, and identity formation. Through a branching narrative structure, the work invites readers to make choices that shape Zara's movement across spaces, reflecting on the affective and ethical dimensions of belonging and displacement. This work is a clear example in understanding contemporary postcolonial subjectivities within Indian electronic literature. *The Sacred Sap* by Mehulkumar Desai is a hypertext fiction that interweaves choice, and ecological consciousness into the narrative. The work's branching allows readers to navigate the intersections of human and forest life, where every decision is based on the dynamic interplay between survival, and responsibility taking us back to the theoretical framework of ergodic reading. Similarly, Arundhathi Padmanabhan's *Gadwal: A Short Visual Narrative of the Town Submerged in a Climate Catastrophe* is an interactive climate fiction that narrates the lives of those affected by a catastrophic flash flood in a fictional Indian town. Using letters, audio, photographs, artworks, and animation, the work constructs a multimodal, affective narrative that navigates memory, grief, and trauma, in the backdrop of impact of climate change on the subaltern. Evolving from classroom-driven experimentation, this work represents a significant step toward the emergent field of Indian climate-focused electronic literature. Next in the collection, *PoemXReader* by Andrea Fernandez is a Twine-based piece that engages critically with questions of authorship, cognition, and literary form in an era of Natural Language Processing, allowing readers to navigate 25 passages where GPT generates poems in response to user prompts, which is presented by the author through hyperlinks structured around recurring lexical anchors reflecting on the formal and semantic contingencies of AI-assisted poetic production. Further, *Purrfectly Intertwined* by Aaron George and Dr Richa Srishti is a Twine-based poem that

explores the emotional rhythms of feline companionship, using fragmentation and interactivity to mirror the interplay of presence, absence, trust, and care. Stanzas are initially incomplete and distributed across hyperlinks, inviting readers to reconstruct the poem gradually allowing personalized pathways through the text. The final work of this volume, *Boogy at DU* by Akansha Goswami is an interactive fiction that looks at the affective realities of doctoral study and contemporary academic life at the University of Delhi's North Campus. Through non-linear hyperlink narrative fragments, and meme-inspired character names, the work explores emotional labour, informal hierarchies, and the tensions of scholarly life, drawing readers into a reflective, participatory engagement with academic spaces. By blending humour, repetition, and choice-based interactivity, *Boogy at DU* effortlessly shows how electronic literature can both critique and imaginatively reframe lived experiences.

In Volume 2, Indian electronic literature becomes not only a subject of archiving but an object of ongoing creative and pedagogical practices in both classrooms and research. It articulates new forms of ergodic engagement, reflects on local cultural ecologies, and contributes to a translocal dialogue about the poetics of the digital. As such, Indian e-lit today exists not on the margins of global practice but as a site of theoretical urgency at the intersections of postcolonial critique, media archaeology, formal experimentation, and emerging digital pedagogies. Volume 2 of the *Indian Electronic Literature Anthology* thus calls for a literary ecosystem that is polyphonic and inclusive, where emerging forms of algorithmic creativity, and multimodal expression expand not only the narrative structures of the digital but also the very practices of teaching, research, and knowledge-making.

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