

# The Emergence of Digital Humanities in Japan: Participating in a New and Contested Area of Inquiry

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## Abstract

Digital humanities is an area of inquiry which is gaining increased attention around the world and in Japan. In particular, it is rapidly becoming institutionalized within the academy in the North Atlantic countries. Institutionalization within Japan has been slower, but is now happening at the national level via The Japanese Association for Digital Humanities (JADH). Despite rapid institutionalization in some parts of the world, its status as a field is highly contested, and there is a competing vision of digital humanities as the future for the whole of the humanities rather than as just another emerging field. Issues related to the contested definition of digital humanities are discussed in this paper, as well as the contradiction evident in its rapid institutionalization despite this contested identity. The emergence of digital humanities, out of the earlier area of inquiry called humanities computing, is elaborated as the context for this view of digital humanities as the site for transformation of all of the humanities. It is argued that while some of these more audacious views may be somewhat adversarial toward the traditional humanities, they do indicate the basic contours of change which are arguably approaching the academy. It is argued that these should be satisfactorily absorbed and embraced, but without being swept up in them and without forgoing a critical posture.

Keywords: Digital Humanities, Japan, Japanese Association of Digital Humanities, Academy, Transformation, Humanities

## Introduction

The Japanese Association for Digital Humanities (JADH) was formed in 2011 with the stated purpose of redressing what the association refers to as hindered progress in digitization efforts within the humanities in Japan (JADH Purpose, 2015). The association goes on to cite “the basic difficulties with the digitization of the characters and texts that compose Japanese resources” and a lack of international collaboration as being tied up with this hindrance. More recently, and in the conference theme and call for papers for the fifth symposium (JADH Encoding

Cultural Resources, 2015), the association again points to limitations in Japan stating that digitization of cultural resources has only focused on the most treasured works and that encoding has predominantly been done through the provision of metadata rather than through full-text encoding; and here one presumes full-text encoding to mean encoding of text via the protocols represented in, for example, the guidelines of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI P5: Guidelines, 2015). While these criticisms offered by the JADH seem rather restricted to the text-encoding heritage of digital humanities, which came down through the earlier constituted field of humanities computing and which is now only a subarea of digital humanities, it is clear that there is a gathering perception in Japan of the country being somewhat left behind vis-à-vis the rising international interest in digital humanities. The constituting of the JADH clearly represents a professional call to arms, so to speak, in changing this state of affairs by expediting the participation of the humanities in Japan in the quite remarkable rise of interest in digital humanities in other parts of the world<sup>1</sup>.

While this increased participation is welcome, it also invites engagement with many associated issues which are a challenge for tertiary institutions, in any country, still operating predominantly under pedagogies and research epistemologies based on the primacy of text and reflective scholarship<sup>2</sup>. Even more than this, it invites change which is discomfiting for some whose notion of what distinguishes the academy has been schooled in service to this primacy. However, if digital humanities continues to transform or, at least, expand our notions of what it is that the humanities actually does, here in Japan, or anywhere else for that matter, then critical engagement with these issues will inevitably be required because the issues will be thrust upon us one way or another. To manage these challenges and benefit from them, as opposed to simply react to them, we need to situate and comprehend the emergence of digital humanities broadly, as well as in Japan more specifically. This inevitably involves engaging with the rather awkward and intractable issue of how to define what exactly digital humanities actually is, not to mention the issue of reconciling this awkwardness with its, nonetheless, rapid emergence within the organizational structures of many leading institutions, particularly in the North Atlantic countries; and this includes within certain national funding structures in some of these countries, for example, the National Endowment for the Humanities in the United States. While we may not want to set so ambitious, or perhaps bedeviled, a task as to try and offer the final clarification on what digital humanities is, which after all is developing so fast it represents a moving target (Cohen, 2011; Drucker, 2006), it is nonetheless necessary to sufficiently negotiate the body of thinking on this contested issue, in order to comprehend and critically engage with its implications for the future of the academy. This includes implications for pedagogy and our research epistemologies.

This article provides a brief overview of the relatively late emergence of digital humanities in Japan before engaging with the contested definition of digital humanities which any new participant in digital humanities cannot ignore. The apparent contradiction between the

intractable difficulties with respect to defining digital humanities and the nonetheless rapidly gathering pace of its institutionalization in important parts of the world is amplified. The article then situates the emergence of digital humanities against the backdrop of its progenitor, humanities computing, which it now subsumes; going on to distinguish between those who view digital humanities as a new field, if incoherent one, and those who view it as the front line in the transformation of all of the humanities. The case is made that while the more visionary and transformational conceptions of digital humanities might be somewhat adversarial towards the traditional characteristics of the academy, they do nonetheless, if this rhetorical positioning can be somewhat disregarded, provide the low-resolution contours of gathering change. This is necessary and helpful if we are to proactively adapt to and shape this coming change rather than simply react to it. Finally, the case is made, that while Japan's entrance to digital humanities has not been early, thus denying Japan a leadership position in it thus far, and while the definitional milieu for what digital humanities is seems somewhat confused and unsettling, it should nonetheless be embraced with enthusiasm; but not an enthusiasm to be swept up in and not an enthusiasm dislocated from criticism.

### **The Emergence of Digital Humanities in Japan**

If one considers the formation of the professional apparatus around the emerging interest in digital humanities from a global point of view, one might infer that the formation of the JADH puts Japan among the early participants in digital humanities. For example, the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO) lists in its Mission Statement (ADHO Mission, 2015) six members of the alliance including five country or regional associations<sup>3</sup> of which Japan, under the auspices of the JADH, is one. However, the sixth member of the ADHO, and which is not a country or regional association, is the centerNet organization and closer inspection of information available on its website, indicates a different picture with respect to the level of Japan's participatory advancement in digital humanities.

The centerNet organization is essentially a collaborative, research network of digital humanities centers or digital humanities-related centers. These centers are typically the research-oriented groups, post-graduate programs, and other organizational apparatuses affiliated to universities and other institutional instantiations of the academy which actually pursue digital humanities-related research and activities. The global distribution of centers which comprise the membership of centerNet is strikingly uneven. In short, and according to information offered by the organization as recently as July 2015, the number of centers registered as members from around the world was as follows: North America (88); Europe (71); South America (3); Africa (1); Middle East and Russia (3); Australasia (8); and East Asia (5). For East Asia, three of the centers were in Japan and two in Taiwan.

This data obviously needs to be interpreted carefully and critically. For example, centers

registered with centerNet may be engaged in actual activities which could be considered as related to digital humanities to a greater or lesser degree. The organization has criteria for membership, but naturally some centers will more comfortably meet, or exceed, these criteria than others. Also, and as mentioned in the first footnote of this paper, there is a marked dominance of the United States and Europe in the distribution of these centers which forces one to question whether there is not something cultural in the rise of digital humanities; and if so, whether one part of the world should be taking its cue from another on the importance of all this, and should be seeking to, at least partially, reorganize its institutional boundaries along lines drawn by another. We should also be aware, of course, that the absence of centers under the label of digital humanities does not necessarily entail the absence of associated lines of research under different cover; i.e. under different labels and professional apparatuses including societies and so forth. For instance, there is a special interest group (SIG) in the Information Processing Society of Japan (IPJS, 2015) which concerns itself with computing in the humanities and there is the Japan Association for English Corpus Studies (JAECS, 2015), not to mention societies connected with natural language processing and so forth. These professional communities, and many others too, are notionally related to digital humanities, and so it would be a mistake to infer that nothing related to digital humanities has been occurring prior to the formation of a society under such name (i.e. prior to the formation of the JADH in 2011). Nonetheless, the deficiencies pointed to by the JADH with respect to the digital encoding of cultural resources in Japan, and the constitution of the JADH under this rationale, does still indicate a professional response to a real problem; and the hitherto aggregation of a variety of societies notionally related to digital humanities represents less than the rise of digital humanities itself.

While this information would suggest that Japan is not trailing in the emergence of digital humanities, it is nonetheless not an early participant. Furthermore, the formation of the JADH as a national academic society, as well as the recent emergence of three centers which do represent digital humanities in Japan, to one material degree or another, does nevertheless indicate that the trajectory is for more global participation and not less. If this be the case, then it befits us to grapple with what digital humanities actually is and the change it represents.

### **Issues of Contextualization and Contested Definition**

Contextualizing the emergence of digital humanities, whether broadly or in Japan specifically, is not, as suggested above, a simple matter and is a task which is rather hostage to the issue of defining it. In turn, defining digital humanities is a notoriously difficult issue which has emerged as a sort of problematic in its own right and which provokes a constant source of intellectual output; or as Kirschenbaum has noted, articles on defining digital humanities have become a genre (2012) in their own right. This attention to the issue of definition can be taken as either positive or negative. On the one hand, any emerging area of interest should indeed invite

reflection on its own boundaries as part of critical intellectual practice and the formation of a professional identity, and this quite arguably represents vitality (Hayles, 2012). On the other hand, however, excessive concern with the issue may reflect a problem which is more fundamental and quite possibly the source of anxiety and critical discomfort. If sufficient resolution cannot be brought to the issue of field definition, if field status is in fact being claimed, which is not always the case (see below), the question has to be asked as to whether a field is indeed emerging or whether a phenomenon of a quite different nature is occurring. For example in the case of digital humanities, the perception of an emerging field could really just be the mistake of nominalizing a wide-scale transformation of all aspects of the humanities as just this; i.e. a new field. Or even, as Alvarado (2011) has suggested, digital humanities “is a social category, not an ontological one” (p. 50) and the claim for field status is therefore a form of category error.

Indeed, it is often the case that reference to digital humanities as a “field” is accompanied by careful qualification in service to insufficient clarity on boundaries and identity, and this is quite apart from those who take digital humanities to be anything but a new a field (e.g. Schnapp & Presner, 2009; see discussion below). For example, the respected journal *Digital Humanities Quarterly* states that digital humanities “is a diverse and still emerging field” (About DHQ, 2015) which, of course, implies 1) that boundaries will become clearer once the field has finished emerging and 2) that they are not sufficiently clear at present (see Svensson, 2010, para. 21, 22). Similarly, Svensson (2010, 2012a, 2012b), in a series of articles including the aforementioned 2010 article, has made the case that “a better understanding of the landscape of the digital humanities is vital to the continued growth and consolidation of the field” (2010, para. 3), that “the digital humanities can be seen as a humanities project in a time of significant change in the academy” (2012a, p. 42), and that “the field has come to constitute a site for far-reaching discussions about the future of the field itself as well as the humanities at large” (2012b, para. 1). While these are all perhaps valid comments by themselves and summon no obvious rebuttal, what is notable about them is that they implicitly hedge or qualify the status of digital humanities as a field while still invoking the term. For instance, continued consolidation is referred to in the first quote suggesting it has still not fully constituted as field. Also, in the second and third quote respectively, the field is viewed as either a project or a site for discussion about the future of humanities itself. Can a field be a “project,” or is the discussion of the future of humanities in general a sufficient sphere of activity for a new field? There is the sense of digital humanities being treated as a field before the fact because its institutional presence is a *fait accompli*; and this is to discount, for the moment, the more radical voices which dispute the status of digital humanities as a field altogether. The question which begs from all this is: what does it mean to be a field anyway? Interestingly, debate on this issue in humanities computing, which is arguably the predecessor of digital humanities (Kirschenbaum, 2012; Svensson, 2009), prefigured some of the debate now occurring in digital humanities on precisely this issue; i.e. on the question of what it means to be a field or a discipline?

In a series of seminars under the title “Is Humanities Computing an Academic Discipline?” at the Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, Burnard (1999), who headed the Humanities Computing Unit at Oxford University at the time, argued that a discipline is a bureaucratic and organizational concept which is ultimately informed by socio-political concerns. He argued that “there is almost as much evidence of successful theory-free disciplines as there is of grand unifying theories that have failed to achieve institutionalization [as disciplines]” (para. 3), while going on to suggest that, at the most, theoretically underpinned activities were possibly more predisposed to institutionalization as a discipline. The series of seminars seem to observe no distinction between a field and a discipline, and while some scholars might want to rescue a distinction in this regard, it is arguable that Burnard’s broader point applies to either case anyway. The point is simply that theoretically coherent areas of knowledge inquiry often do not get institutionalized at the organizational level in the form of new bureaucratic divisions and aggregations of personnel, and the opposite is the case too; theoretically incoherent areas of knowledge inquiry with porous and contested boundaries sometimes do get institutionalized. So by this argument, while digital humanities might present as one of the “next big things” (Spiro, 2012; p. 16) so to speak, there should be no expectation that it should be theory-driven.

In this context, it helps to retrospectively reflect on an area of knowledge inquiry which has emerged in the past with significant impact and which settled very comfortably into its own new shoes, but failed to find institutionalization beyond, perhaps, the field specification stipulated as the requirement for the filling of an individual post. This provides a handle on the opposite case to that of digital humanities; i.e. the case where an important new area of inquiry emerges which is comfortably self-aware of what it does, or what it is there for, but which does not explicitly manifest itself within the typical institutional divisions and apparatuses of the academy. Chomsky’s critique of late behaviorism (Chomsky, 1957; Chomsky & Miller, 1958) presents a near-perfect opposite case. His work represented a theoretical quake involving a new object of study, namely universal grammar (UG), and an associated method, namely transformational-generative grammar (TGG), which quickly led to a new field of inquiry with very little ambivalence about purpose or place in the wider intellectual context. His theoretical solutions to the explanatory weaknesses of behaviorism were rather elegant foundations from which the new field could move forward and distinguish itself; which it indeed did. It was also rare to hear of intellectually-invested researchers ever caught up in hand-wringing self-reflection about what it was they were doing, or what it was that tied them together in a theoretical and empirical community of practice. And yet it was hard to find centers or departments emerging, or indeed post-graduate programs, with the namesake of TGG or UG and so forth. The new theoretical direction initiated by the Chomskyan critique of behaviorism created an explosion of activity, theoretical and empirical, which, no doubt at all, actively reoccupied the existing corridors of the academy already allocated to linguistics and psychology just as the behaviorist tenants vacated the

premises, but this activity did not reconfigure the corridors or add to them; the tenants simply changed.

So a new aggregation or network of activity subsumed under a coherent new theoretical direction, even if highly productive in terms of research output, does not necessarily lead to institutionalization at the bureaucratic or organizational level; and perhaps the example provided above instantiates Burnard's (1999) point rather nicely. So what then of digital humanities which looks like anything but a field driven by coherent new theoretical developments, and despite all this seems to be finding institutional representation at the organizational level of the academy at a quite remarkable rate, at least in the North Atlantic countries and at least at the level of interdisciplinary centers? And what of all the hand-wringing concern about what it actually is that defines digital humanities? There clearly is an emerging community of practice, which could be characterized as humanities computing with significant additions, and practitioners participating in this community of practice experience a sense of affiliation and are invested in creating the professional and organizational apparatus to represent it.<sup>4</sup> If this community of practice is not broadly underpinned theoretically—which it is not because were this the case the theoretical contours would be clearer by now and debates about field definition would have died down in a consensus marked by silence—then what is the nature of the underpinning? Perhaps it is best to approach this question in two stages, first with respect to humanities computing, and then with respect to what emerged out of it in the later discursive shift (Svensson, 2009), that is, the discursive shift to the term “digital humanities.”

### **The Underpinnings of Humanities Computing and Digital Humanities**

With respect to humanities computing, which foreran digital humanities, the absence of a clear theoretical underpinning to unify activity was substituted for by a clear convergence of intellectual activity around method, namely, computational method, which enabled a more empirical and quantitative approach to text as opposed to the more reflective approach traditionally associated with scholarly activity in the humanities (Burnard, 1999). The problematic or theoretical issue might have varied quite widely, as it always had in the humanities, but the method employed to grapple with the issue was almost always quantitative and empirical which was in turn enabled by text digitization, encoding, and computation. We could add that the object of the computational method was also stable and clear, and this object was text (Fitzpatrick, 2012). The rationale was not so much to replace the reflective scholarship, and deep and linear reading, distinctive of the humanities, but rather to augment it with a new method which relied on a more distributed analysis of text from a more detached vantage point; what has been referred to as a distant rather than close reading (Moretti, 2000)<sup>5</sup>. This rationale was associated with the far-sighted perspective that computation and digitization offered more than the mundane benefit of making old tasks easier to cope with, especially at scale, and that

what it really offered was fundamentally new eyes for well-known objects of knowledge<sup>6</sup>; objects of knowledge which were at this time, while still under the cloak of humanities computing, almost always text-based or literary.

The discursive shift (Svensson, 2009) from humanities computing to digital humanities and the associated expansion of activities laying claim to the new label subverted the coherence around method which humanities computing had enjoyed (Fitzpatrick, 2012). This is not to suggest that the activities formerly designated by humanities computing were subverted, nor the methodological coherence of these activities, only that these activities now became a subset of activities under digital humanities which included a lot more besides. The swing from a relatively more circumscribed research effort and direction to a vastly expanded one, associated with the discursive shift from humanities computing to digital humanities, has been referred to by Schnapp and Presner (2009) as the first and second waves of the emergence of digital humanities. Alternatively, humanities computing has been characterized as Humanities 1.0 and the expanded area of inquiry, represented in the discursive shift toward the term digital humanities, as Humanities 2.0 (Davidson, 2008). However, whatever the nomenclature we choose to characterize this shift, the more important characterization is the substantive one, and in terms of humanities computing (pre-shift) it assists to view its substantive coherence as centered on method (computation) and the stability of the object of the method (text). We can view the institutionalization which occurred around digital humanities as either grounded in this substantive coherence or, at the very least, not troubled by it. These points of coherence though, did not survive the significant changes associated with the discursive shift to the term digital humanities and the envelopment of humanities computing under this new designation.

Turning to the second stage then, signaled by this discursive shift from the term humanities computing to the term digital humanities, Porsdam (2011), in a paper for the Arcadia Project at Cambridge University, neatly identifies two relevant issues in this regard. The first concerns an expanded and, in fact, inverted remit, which became appended to the earlier remit for humanities computing. The second concerns a turn toward visionary discourse which we could also think of as the transformational ambitions some proponents imagine for digital humanities with respect to the humanities in its entirety.

With respect to the first issue, and citing Hockey (2004), Porsdam suggests that two broad cultures, or, put another way, remits of inquiry, can be discerned within the new digital humanities set of practices. The first would include those who have for some time been using computational approaches to engage with old humanities questions, roughly coextensive with practitioners of the earlier humanities computing one might say, and the second would include those who have more recently begun to ask humanities-type questions of computing technologies and digital objects. The more recent remit effectively represents an inversion of the first making the two quite hard to square.<sup>7</sup> Porsdam goes on to draw attention to Hockey's (2004) dismissal of the latter remit. Hockey identified the first remit with those who "do it," and the second with

those who “talk about it.” To some extent Hockey’s posture toward the additional remit within digital humanities could be characterized as something of a rear-guard action by the humanities computing legacy, and the criticisms underlying the posture resonate with Unsworth’s (2002) similar ring-fencing of humanities computing, somewhat earlier, in the face of what he perceived as an accumulating permissiveness in what counted as part of the area of inquiry of humanities computing.

With respect to the second issue identified by Porsdam in the discursive shift, i.e. the turn to visionary discourse, one of Svensson’s papers (2012b) is cited in making the point that the new digital humanities includes a spectrum of scholarship which views its activities as more than something additive or new, but rather as transformational and, in fact, activist. Another paper of the same year (Svensson, 2012a) is in fact equally relevant to the turn to visionary discourse though it is not cited by Porsdam. Both of these papers (Svensson, 2012a, 2012b) support a view of digital humanities as the site of a wider transformation of the humanities itself rather than as a newly-constituting field busying itself with elbowing its place into the existing humanities and its institutional structures and apparatus.

So overall there is the case to be made that humanities computing, by virtue of the coherence around method, which was computational, as well as the predominant focus on text from distance, enjoyed a less contested claim to field status and a more comfortable marriage of conception and representation in the institutional apparatus and divisions of the academy. With the discursive turn to digital humanities, however, humanities computing, for better or worse, found itself absorbed into something much larger; potentially as large as, at the most loosely-defined or permissive end of the spectrum, an area of inquiry restricted to nothing less than anything to do with the digital. The potential looseness of the new remit within which humanities computing was now situated made coherence, whether this be around the theoretical, the methodological or the object of knowledge itself, far more elusive; but this did not slow the process of the institutionalization of this enlarged concern within the academy, and in fact institutionalization gained even more traction. It is within this situated contradiction that one gets the first inkling of something much more ambitious than a new field finding its place in the ordered structures of the academy. While some proponents of digital humanities retain the contemplative and taxonomical drive to describe digital humanities and restrict it, in short to define it and thus sign-post its place in the structures and corridors of the humanities, others prefer to associate it with transformation; i.e. transformation to a new humanities for a new human condition, the digital condition. For these others, entitlement to field status is beside the point, and if anything undesirable, because for them such status would represent the subjugation of digital humanities into the prevailing order of the academy. Legitimization on these terms is akin to the manner in which ruling classes turn insurgent forces over to the ruling order by offering them a place in it; i.e. rule and containment by absorption and indeed by official recognition itself.

## Digital Humanities as Transformation and Sketching the Contours of Change

These views with respect to the transformative agenda of digital humanities, and particularly with respect to an attitude of intellectual activism among some voices for it, are perhaps most brazenly stated within the “The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0” (Schnapp & Presner, 2009) which often takes on an adversarial tone with respect to the traditional corridors of the humanities<sup>8</sup>; even verging into a form of activism centered around the person, including pejorative references to Stanley Fish and Stephen James Joyce<sup>9</sup>. The manifesto, somewhat couched in the disruptive rhetoric of hacktivism, is elaborated in such fashion as to emblazon a zeitgeist, perceived at least by proponents of this vision, if not by everyone, for revolution within the humanities, and perhaps the overall provocation of the piece prompts the disclaimer<sup>10</sup> with respect to association with the institution (UCLA) on whose website it is published. If one discounts, for whatever reason, the manner in which the manifesto is delivered, it does still circumscribe, quite nicely, even if at low resolution, some of the contours of digital humanities as a force for change. Support is stated for a digital humanities which is tolerant of copyright but naturally or spiritually inclined to its limitation rather than its celebration, and which is therefore allied with open access and information abundance rather than scarcity. Support is also stated for a digital humanities comfortable with distributed authorship, for the convergence of mind and hand in pedagogy and research, and for building (see also Ramsay & Rockwell, 2012) and collaboration as central to the re-tooling of a new humanities. Curation is also elevated from a role performed by a service-arm of the institution to one situated at the very center of a new humanities, because in an era where abundance rather than scarcity of resources is the problem (JAH, 2008; Rosenzweig, 2003), curation becomes a different order of activity and the foundation of a new humanities. Associated with curation, the expansion of audiences and a new compact of collaboration between expert and the wider public<sup>11</sup> are underscored. The document is a manifesto emphatically staking out a set of values, beliefs, and agendas for a new humanities, i.e. a digital humanities, rather than an appeal for a circumscribed field called digital humanities finding its place in the existing humanities. The outlook is ambitious, perhaps even audacious, and it presents digital humanities as the frontline, or tip of the spear, in a transformation of the humanities itself; whereby all of the humanities will become the digital humanities.

So from a critical perspective, sought in advance of an actionable perspective (Meeks, 2011, Siemens, 2015), what should be made of all this? How does a faculty at any unnamed institution, for example, thus far not very collectively aware of the accelerating interest in digital humanities, begin to take action and participate in something which lacks a coherent conceptual foundation or a consensus on itself, but nonetheless gains in presence all the time? Not easily it would seem. There is a constituency which would still support field status for digital humanities within the wider humanities, a place within as it were, but this does not presume agreement within the constituency on the credentials for membership of this new field. Thus representing the field

institutionally is not a clear cut task, unless of course one simply copies other institutional representations. And then there is also a constituency which envisages digital humanities as transformational of all of humanities. For these people, we could presume that once this transformation or new understanding has occurred digital humanities will, in fact, be the new humanities and success will be signified by redundancy<sup>12</sup>. For this latter group, transformation is grounded in practice, and participation means adopting sets of practices rather than intractably wrestling with their theoretical coherence (see again Schnapp & Presner, 2009). Indeed, the authors of the Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0 would find the current article outside the spirit of the document. The last three paragraphs comprise the following one-line statements: “Find a better label or phrase” (para. 67), “We’ll rename the manifesto” (para. 68), and “In the meantime, let’s get our hands dirty” (para. 69). These statements eschew reflective engagement with the label “digital humanities” and scholarly attempts to restrict the area of inquiry and intellectually corral it, especially if this effort compromises the effort to actually engage in practice, and instead they advocate plunging into actually “doing it” or “getting ones hands dirty” as it were; a view which harks to Hockey’s (2004) distinction, referred to above, between those who do it and those who talk about it.

Nonetheless, there is no sense in feeling browbeaten by the caricatures offered up here, or indeed forced to choose rivalrous camps; and we should be careful not to forgo our natural cautions and be swept up in something because we perceive it to be the spirit of the times. After all, if the academy is there to be swept up by the times, then what really is it for? If anything, the distinguishing characteristic of the academy is to do anything but be swept up by the times; rather it is there to offer criticism on the times assisted by a certain level of scholarly detachment from them. This does not imply putting a break on the times, with the further implication of being regressive rather than progressive, but it does imply a level of caution toward popular sentiment. And, in fact, some scholarly reflection on the nature of the transformation arguably occurring under the title of digital humanities might help to dissolve, rather than resolve, the rhetoric of rivalry. It may perhaps also rescue what seems to be of substantive value in the positions of both the visionaries of change and those who take an austere posture with respect to the long traditions of the academy and its associated epistemologies.

If we return to the Chomskyan event in linguistics, there is still more which is both historically and analytically helpful in understanding the nature of change which is arguably underway. The Chomskyan revolution was initiated by the intervention of a single intellect, that of Noam Chomsky, and these kinds of interventions are usually attended by greater coherence, and in fact the very impact of these kinds of interventions resides in their theoretical coherence; that kind of “a ha” feeling where something is explained in a manner which outdoes the explanations of the past, satisfying the thirst for economy of understanding. The conception is offered first, and then the practices of those who become theoretically invested falls in line as the new direction is fully elaborated. Digital humanities, however, seems to take on the character

of something born in practice (cf. Kuhn & Callahan, 2012) rather conception, and because of this, practice always outstrips our ability to fully come to grips with what it is. Thus the intellectual appetite for overview of oneself, or self-awareness, is therefore constantly present but never satiated. Perhaps this is why the views of change, represented in documents like the Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0, fight shy of scholarly reflection and bold on practice-rooted change, because this is preferable and tactically advantageous ground given that the source of change is grounded in practice rather than the passageways of the mind.<sup>13</sup> They recognize that what has changed, and is changing, is not so much our minds as the human condition, a human condition now embedded in the digital condition; and if the humanities is to have something, or indeed anything, to do with the human condition, then it must change too. They are essentially descriptions of emerging practice wrapped up in advocacy, offered up by early adopters, or even, by the manufacturers of change. However, and as descriptions, they often do also offer us useful low-resolution foresight of the contours of approaching change, and in scoping these contours, a state of mind needs to be adopted which is comfortable with such. If change is grounded in practice rather than the mind, then the contours of this change will be moving, will be messy, and will be hard to grasp in high-resolution.

With this limitation conceded, the approaching contours of change should be grasped as bound up with the principle problem of information being abundant rather than scarce (Rosenzweig, 2003). In this radical new environment, close reading or engagement with very narrow spectra of literary or non-literary cultural objects is, while not at all redundant, also not at all sufficient. In the face of so much cultural information, such an approach risks a neglect of monumental proportions as vast tracts of information sink beneath the purview of humanities scholars still grounded in close readings of increasingly rarified cultural and literary inheritances. Dealing with information abundance forces us toward new methods (Wilkens, 2012) and new epistemologies in the humanities and new modes of doing the humanities. To cope with information abundance, we have to become comfortable with the additional eyes afforded to us by technology and digitization, and we have to recognize that curation of cultural resources in a world of information abundance is not the same problem as curation in a world of information scarcity; and of course how we curate abundant information is central to how we remember ourselves. In this process, we need to struggle with the essential and perpetual challenge of machine-leveraging our cognitive scope in the face of information abundance but without handing over; i.e. without forgoing the scholarly criticism which puts the human into the humanities and which is part of the legacy of the academy.

## **Conclusion**

While the issue of what digital humanities actually is presents as a constant challenge, this is not reason to throw our hands up and abandon the chase to understand it and what it means

for the humanities, especially here in Japan; the practices and associated academic communities and apparatuses rapidly evolving under its banner are far too significant for such neglect. On the contrary, we should embrace it, and in spite of not being seduced to an attempt at a high-resolution and emphatic definition of a moving target, we should still settle for the more modest ambition of moving toward an actionable grasp of the low-resolution contours of change it represents, with these being predominantly grounded in practice rather than theory. For many institutions already participating in digital humanities this has been enough, and in fact the definition of digital humanities is being constructed through practice, after the fact, rather than being imposed through intellect before the fact.

Just as we adjusted from monastic curation of extremely rare codices to curation of the mass production of text via the printing press, so must we re-adjust once more. This time the readjustment is to the further ramping up of the volume, dissemination and availability of textual information in the digital era, and also to completely unanticipated capacities to handle much more than just text, and to index, read and manipulate information through computation. This readjustment is an act of creative construction and is central to a new humanities, and with change in this area will come change in how we teach, change in what counts as contribution to the academy, and change in how personnel aggregate and distribute to make these contributions. Within the area of pedagogy, issues will arise with respect to inherited distinctions between education and training of the mind and education and training of the hand, or between finding out and making. These issues require radical reconsideration of, for example, what our expectations should be for the work submitted as a “thesis”<sup>14</sup> at the end of an undergraduate or postgraduate program. Indeed, they require radical reconsideration of what our expectations should be for the academic contributions made by teaching and research staff. And associated with this is the issue of how credit for work is operationalized in the face of the sometimes extensively collaborative nature of digital humanities projects (Ramsay & Rockwell, 2012).

Then there is the issue of how we make the case for these changes to interfacing institutions, like ministries and funding bodies, who essentially evaluate us and who may also still be hostage to past epistemologies; being in front of change involves, also, convincing those behind to change too. These are not easy issues, but being open to critically-informed change in areas such as these will allow us to actively situate ourselves within the larger trajectory of change occurring internationally as the academy in all its forms around the globe evolves in a new and digital human condition. It will allow us to participate in this broader context of change, and perhaps even lead it in important ways, rather than be tossed about in a turbulence we don’t understand and are therefore predisposed to resist. Above all, we need to be open to critically informed change at the local level, i.e. at the level of our own faculties and what we do in them, even with respect to our most cherished ideas of what distinguishes the humanities and the academy.

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- 1 While it would be fair to say that interest is rising around the world, it has also to be said that thus far the major area of expansion for digital humanities has been in the North Atlantic countries. See this map at the centerNet organization (collaborative organization for digital humanities centers around the world); <http://dhcenternet.org/>. Most of the digital humanities centers are in Europe and North America. This issue is raised again later in this article in the section concerning the emergence of digital humanities in Japan.
  - 2 It should be noted that there is no intention in this comment to indicate that these epistemologies are archaic or obsolete and begging to be discarded; indeed this article is itself very much within the tradition of reflective scholarship. The comment does however intend to convey that epistemologies associated with the digital revolution are emerging which are not so closely associated with the primacy of text.
  - 3 These include: The European Association for Digital Humanities (EADH); the Association for Computers and the Humanities (ACH); the Canadian Society for Digital Humanities (CSDH); centerNet; the Australasian Association for Digital Humanities (aaDH); and the Japanese Association for Digital Humanities (JADH). The ACH is based in the US but also comprises a significant international membership.
  - 4 This is occurring with tertiary institutions in the form of degree programs and centers, and across institutions in the form of national societies associated with DH, and even across countries in the form of virtual centers of collaboration such as the centerNet (centerNet, 2015). This is not to neglect of course important developments like the National Endowment for the Humanities in the US establishing an office for digital humanities in 2006.
  - 5 This was the rationale, and in line with comments below in the final section of this paper, that we do not forgo our critical posture in embracing the digital humanities, it is worth noting that this was the rationale; i.e. to augment rather than replace. But nonetheless, in practice, and in spite of the rationale, there is still the danger of sacrificing the deep and linear reading characteristic of the scholarship associated with the traditional academy, and the traditional training of the mind, to an increasingly distributed but superficial, and under-interpreted engagement with text. See Dowling (2014) for perspectives on the rescue or recovery of deep reading in the digital age.
  - 6 McCarty (2012) offers a useful critical analysis of this perspective on the impact of computation, digitization and digital humanities, and cites Masterman (1962) as one of the early proponents of this vision.
  - 7 It also represents a quite significant overall expansion of the remit, and more so because there is potential for greater diversity in method in terms of asking humanities-type questions of computing technologies and digital objects.

- 8 The style and tone of the document are also associated with hacktivism. For further reference to this see Losh's (2012) paper on "Hacktivism and the Humanities" and Scheinfeldt and Cohen's (2010) edited volume "Hacking the Academy." The latter was a project of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University.
- 9 Stanley Fish is a prominent American public intellectual, who the authors of the Digital Humanities Manifesto clearly take as one personification of the traditionalist, and Stephen James Joyce is the grandson of James Joyce and who, as executor of Joyce's estate, has attempted to restrict access to his grandfather's work in a manner seen by some as antithetical to fair-use principles.
- 10 The disclaimer reads "The content of the manifesto represents the view of the authors and does not claim to represent the views of UCLA, the UCLA Humanities, Division, and the Digital Humanities at UCLA."
- 11 Digital humanities is closely associated with public humanities in this sense. Internet archiving and publishing platforms such Omeka, developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University are important contributions in this respect. For example, the Center for Public History and Digital Humanities at Cleveland State University uses this platform.
- 12 Fraistat (2012) frames precisely this issue with respect to digital humanities centers in his paper entitled "The function of digital humanities centers at the present time" where he considers the question, on which he argues the jury is still out, as to whether digital humanities centers are fomenters of change and a "transitional model" which help to "produce their own obsolescence" (p. 290).
- 13 Of course, this is not to neglect that this document is after all a manifesto, and manifestos are there to outline positions rather than argue for them, and the statement should also not be read as insinuating that there is nothing to do with the passageways of the mind in this change; only that this change is primarily driven by praxis rather than conception or theory.
- 14 The word "thesis" is put in inverted commas because the term itself reflects the primacy of text in the academy. It essentially points to a major piece of work conducted by the student as a form of intellectual collateral for the degree being awarded, but the term "thesis" implies that this work be a text; probably either conforming to the protocols of scientific reporting or the protocols of monolog underpinning critical scholarship. Could a computer program, for example, for geographically mapping literary influence be a thesis?

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## The Emergence of Digital Humanities in Japan: Participating in a New and Contested Area of Inquiry

イアン アイズマンガー

### 要約:

デジタル・ヒューマニティーとは、世界において高い注目を集めつつある研究分野である。特に、北大西洋諸国の研究機関ではこの分野の研究の体系化が飛躍的に進んでいる。日本ではまだ萌芽したばかりであるが、The Japanese Association for Digital Humanities (JADH) を介して、国際レベルに達しつつある。しかし、世界各国でこの研究への取り組みが飛躍している一方で、日本ではまだ研究分野として確立しているとはいえない。多くの研究者が、デジタル・ヒューマニティーを、単なる新規の分野の一つではなく、今後全ての人文学に応用され得る分野であると考えている。しかし、このような考えに対しても様々な意見が混在しているのは事実である。本研究ではデジタル・ヒューマニティーの異なる定義を考察し、多用な独自性が指摘されるなかで研究分野としての体系化が進む現在に存在する矛盾点を指摘する。ヒューマニティーズ・コンピューティングという研究分野から生まれたデジタル・ヒューマニティーは、人文学関連全ての分野において適用できる可能性を探るものである。なかには伝統的な人文学に対し挑戦的な視点を提示する議論もある。しかし、このような議論からも、デジタル・ヒューマニティーが受けた批判や迎った変遷を理解する事ができる。デジタル・ヒューマニティーの本質や可能性を十分に把握するためには、たとえ議論を醸し出すような定義であっても、慎重に分析しなくてはならない。

キーワード: デジタル・ヒューマニティー、The Japanese Association for Digital Humanities、学会、変遷、人文学

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