《巻頭言》「デジタル・シフトとデジタル日本研究の未来」

ポーラ・カーティス

Translated into Japanese by Michihiko Aono, with Kiyonori Nagasaki

[English-language version]

The "Digital Shift" and the Future of Digital Japanese Studies

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The year 2020 brought an unexpected and rapid turn towards the digital. In the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, education and research institutions have had to pivot to remote learning and online engagement, leaving many people to wonder what kind of impact this sudden change will have on the humanities and social sciences. Without a doubt, what many call "the digital shift" has been accelerated by this global emergency. Around the world, digital pedagogy, digital inquiry, digitization, and the digital humanities more broadly have become part of a larger conversation about the importance of innovative and accessible methods for teaching and research. What does this "digital shift" mean for the intersection of digital humanities and Japanese Studies? Although the past year has brought many personal and professional challenges for academics, this shift also presents opportunities to generate more collaborative and international connections in the growing digital Japanese Studies field. I would like to take this opportunity to identify some of the challenges these changes have brought, highlight recent opportunities to grow our burgeoning communities, and offer insights into where we might go from here.

My own experience in digital humanities is as a historian of premodern Japan, though I only began thinking through digital methods in 2016 after participating in "The Impact of the Digital on Japanese Studies" symposium organized by Hoyt Long (University of Chicago), Molly Des Jardin (University of Pennsylvania), and Mark Ravina (University of Texas at Austin). At the time, I had doubts as to whether not I could successfully use digital tools to work with medieval documents. These doubts were at the core of my presentation for this event, and I taught myself network analysis in order to determine if it was useful to pursue digital methods in my research. Ultimately, the process of creating a dataset based on my documents and exploring social connections through tools like Cytoscape and Palladio offered new insights into the traditional historical sources I use. I was able to hypothesize about missing networks of documentary

communication in medieval Japan, and these revelations were incorporated into my final research product. Yet, digital analyses have not been at the forefront of my work and publications, merely processes working in the background. So am I a "digital humanist"? What does it mean to participate in the "digital humanities"? These are the questions I asked myself at the time, and with the digital shift now taking place faster than ever, many people forced to work primarily online are asking themselves the same thing. The inherent ambiguity of what "digital humanities" is and can be only exacerbates their unease.

As my skills and experience have grown, I am less troubled by this question. But for many people this anxiety results from a lack of basic knowledge about and training in digital humanities. These perceptions of DH as inaccessible are in part based on what Stephen Ramsay considered the early evolution of digital studies into "DH 1," or "humanities computing," which is geared towards advanced coding such as TEI or analysis of massive, often literary corpora, versus "DH 2," what many consider now to be humanistic inquiry using digital methods without the "nitty gritty" expertise in programming. For those who lack experience in digital humanities, they often imagine it to be DH 1, that is, something esoteric and resulting from specialization in the computer science field. And yet, digital humanities encompasses a wide variety of skill sets, tools, and research methods. Those who work in Japanese Studies face twice as much apprehension about using digital methods, feeling not only hesitant to break into the DH field because it might require too much time and training, but also because they face another hurdle to success and confidence: uncertainty about how to tailor certain tools to the unique needs of non-Western languages.

However, precisely because Japanese Studies is a comparatively niche field, particularly where it intersects with digital humanities, we have a unique opportunity to support one another, overcome these obstacles, and create an environment that welcomes scholars of all skills and experience levels. In recent years, there have been signs that the Japanese Studies community is prepared to grow its digital scholarship, collaboration, and engagement.

Since the 2016 Chicago symposium, the small group that participated in the event has worked to create more venues to foster interaction and the exchange of ideas among Japanese Studies scholars, including a Japanese Language Text Mining workshop in 2017 at Emory University, and a workshop, "The Impact of the Digital on Japanese Studies, Redux" at University of Chicago in 2018. With the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) increasingly looking to support researchers of East Asia who are digitally engaged, there was a working group session at AAS 2019 to discuss digital humanities that was attended by 50+ people, though only two scholars of Japan (including myself) attended. This solidified for me the need to actively create community spaces for digital scholarship in Japanese Studies, and we have since worked to maintain an online presence through the Digital Humanities Japan initiative, which maintains a wiki for digital resources and a mailing list. The 2020 AAS conference featured a Digital Technology

Expo for the first time, where applicants could apply to run workshops, present roundtables, or give lightning talk presentations. Of the submissions, about 12.5% were exclusively related to Japan, compared to 37.5% related to China (which was in the majority). As Hoyt Long pointed out in his previous article, digital Japanese Studies has been a field that is slow to expand; nevertheless, there has been a definite growth in interest from the Japan research contingent. Generally speaking, the number of overseas scholars attending AAS has also been on the rise, which is encouraging.

Still, the field cannot and should not grow only within the North American context. We need more international collaboration to sustain innovative research and fruitful projects. There is a great deal of interest among graduate students and junior researchers in creating these connections. However, in addition to their personal anxieties about how their work will be received, they are not sure how to initiate contact with Japanese researchers (what language to use, whether they will be seen as rude, if they will be misunderstood, etc.), or they do not know what the most important digital humanities conferences are and what the expectations are of participants there. Much like Japanese scholars visiting overseas conferences, overseas scholars worry that they may not understand the conference culture in Japan.

And yet, the digital shift has made both sides more receptive to interaction online in order to create opportunities for international collaboration and exchange. For example, between June and December 2020, I was invited to participate in the *Historians' Workshop* of the University of Tokyo as a part of a 「日本史史料英訳ワークショップ」 for medieval documents. Working with Japanese scholars over email and Zoom, we arranged three workshops aimed at early career researchers in Japan on the translation and interpretation of medieval documents, using examples from 醍醐寺文書, 御成敗式目, and 金沢文庫文書. Thanks to the great experience of collaborating and meeting online, we will be working on future publications together and planning translated materials to integrate into the Kanazawa bunko archive website. Before the pandemic, it was highly unlikely that this type of workshop would have been held virtually, and we need to invest more energy in creating these opportunities for networking and scholarly exchange.

This does not mean that other opportunities to bridge the divide between Japanese and overseas researchers have not already been taking place. On June 3-7, 2019, six scholars, Kiyonori Nagasaki (International Institute for Digital Humanities), Taizo Yamada (Historiographical Institute The University of Tokyo), Tatsuki Sekino (International Research Center for Japanese Studies), Asanobu Kitamoto (Joint Support-Center for Data Science Research, Research Organization of Information and Systems, Center for Open Data in the Humanities), Yuta Hashimoto (National Museum of History), and Satoru Nakamura (University of Tokyo Information Technology Center) conducted a course entitled "Digital Humanities for Japanese Culture: Resources and Methods" at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) at the

University of Victoria. This event was cosponsored by the [Japanese Association for Digital Humanities](#) (JADH) and [人文科学とコンピューター](#). There were eleven participants including graduate students, tenured faculty, and librarians. The course covered topics such as IIIF, TEI, [Minna de Honkoku](#), archives and mapping projects at Shiryohensanjo, [HuTime](#), and more. It became very clear that there is no core instruction on Japan-centric tools in North America, and that few Japanese Studies scholars interested in digital humanities have opportunities to interact with one another to learn about new projects and scholarship or form collaborations.

For this reason, it is more important than ever to use the digital shift as an opportunity to enhance our communication with one another. DHSI demonstrated that our worlds can still be quite separate. This was made abundantly clear when I held a [virtual roundtable on the future of Japanese Studies for AAS 2020](#) this past summer. Only one native Japanese scholar (who works at a US-based institution) participated. In other words, even in a virtual setting that created opportunities to engage digitally, it was difficult to solicit input on Japanese Studies from its representatives in Japan, and their voices were not heard. Presently, digital humanities scholars of Japanese Studies are encouraging more students and faculty to take digital scholarship seriously. Another Text Mining for Japanese Studies workshop is tentatively planned for June 2021 at the University of Chicago, and in the same month, I will co-teach a course for University of Pennsylvania's Dream Lab digital humanities workshop, "[Digital Humanities & East Asian Studies](#)," with the Chinese literary specialist Paul Vierthaler (William & Mary College). Our course is aimed at graduate students and contingent faculty who are new to digital humanities and can most benefit from this DH training in the context of East Asian Studies. The entire event will be held virtually. Though we can accommodate only 20 students, we have already received nearly three times the number of applications we can accept from people around the world. As I write this, the application deadline is still a month away, and we are bound to receive even more applicants who want to make these critical connections through digital means.

The digital shift has also had an impact on North American academic hiring. In recent years, job advertisements in a wide variety of disciplines have emphasized that they want new faculty to have expertise in digital humanities, or they are explicitly hiring digital specialists. This year, for example, George Mason University advertised a "Digital History" position, hoping to find a historian or art historian who can teach digital humanities methods while also working with the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, while the University of Washington has advertised a "Humanities Data Science" position that is a 25% appointment in digital studies, 75% appointment in another discipline (History, Classics, Asian Studies, etc.). Presently, Harvard University offers a 2-year postdoctoral position, the [Reischauer Institute Japan Digital Fellowship](#) to lead and facilitate digital scholarship initiatives. However, academia in the West has not yet caught up with DH. The relatively small number of digital scholars in Japanese Studies and elsewhere is in part because systems of tenure evaluation were not designed for this type of cutting-edge research, and it is difficult for administrative committees to evaluate their

work. As Tristan R. Grunow (Pacific University) wrote in his article "[Making it Count": The Case for Digital Scholarship in Asian Studies](#)," with academia and Asian Studies currently in crisis because of larger threats to higher education, we now have an opportunity to rebuild our values with the future in mind; digital scholarship, and collaborative scholarship, should be a part of that vision and recognized by our academic institutions.

Since 2016, I have been thinking about these intermittent connections digital Japan scholars have been making with one another and how many have struggled to create innovative work in these difficult environments. We need to be bolder about crossing oceans and national boundaries and articulating the importance of the work we are doing. Over ten years ago [Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Michigan State University) wrote](#) that "the key problems that we face again and again [in the digital humanities] are social rather than technological in nature: problems of encouraging participation in collaborative and collective projects, of developing sound preservation and sustainability practices, of inciting institutional change, of promoting new ways of thinking about how academic work might be done in the coming years." And yet, these problems still persist.

If the digital shift is a turning point, we should be careful not to treat digital humanities and Japanese Studies specializations as two discrete fields in different countries or continents, but see their crossroads as a place to forge new directions together. I hope that despite the hardships we have faced in the last year we can use this turn toward the digital humanities to embrace these changes without hesitation as the "digital Japanese Studies" subdiscipline. Through these efforts we can become more open to intellectual exchange, find new modes of collaboration on scholarship, and enhance our communication across linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary borders.