

# Global Outlook :: Digital Humanities

## Introduction

The map at right is from Melissa Terras's infographic, *Quantifying the Digital Humanities* (Terras 2012).

The map shows the distribution of physical centres in the Digital Humanities (as this is defined by members of ADHO communities) across the globe. As Frederico Fiormonte has argued, it can also serve as a proxy for other types of activity in the field, including, broadly speaking, the residency of members of ADHO affiliated Digital Humanities societies (see Fiormonte 2012, fig. 1).

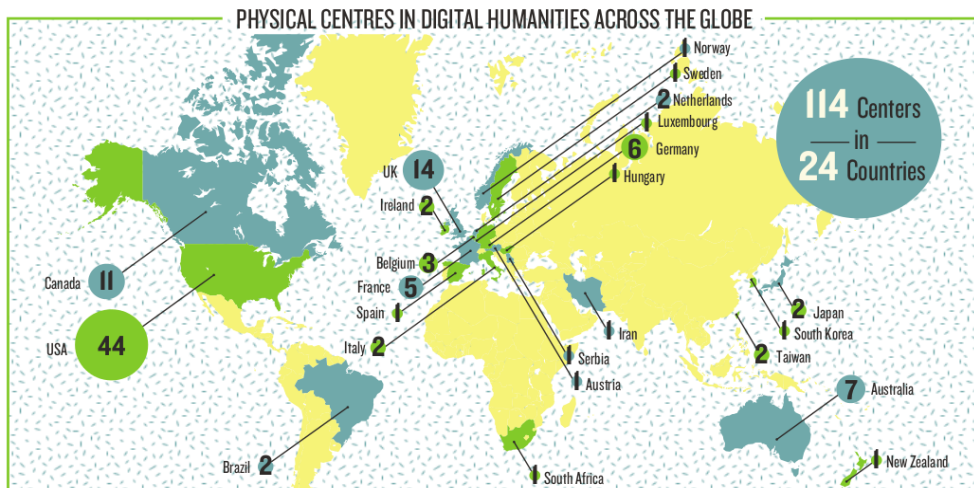


Illustration 1: *Physical Digital Humanities Centres* (Terras 2012)

But as Fiormonte also points out, the "blank" areas on Terras's map can serve as an inverse proxy for other data. Linguistic diversity, for example, or Gross National Income (Ahlenius and UNEP 2012).

This proposal is about these "blank" areas. Although the Digital Humanities as we define it is, relative to the humanities more broadly, a highly international and collaborative endeavour, it remains the case that our internationalisation and collaborative activity is primarily conducted on an East-West basis among a relatively small number of generally contiguous, high income economies: Japan, North America, Western and Central Europe, Brazil, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

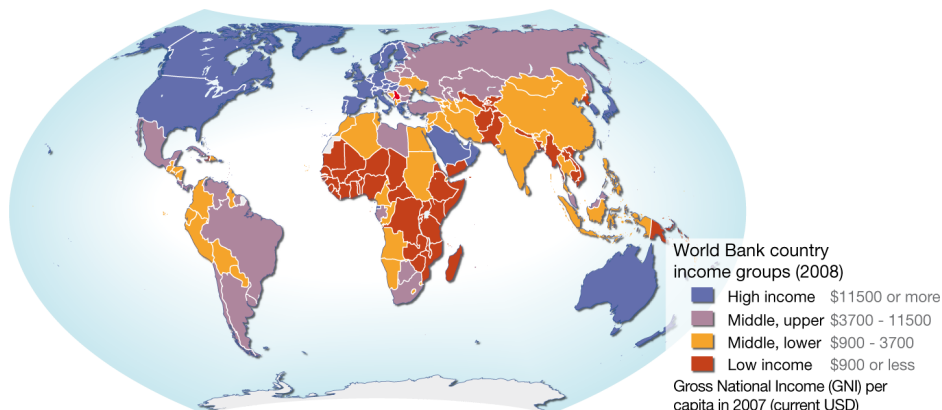


Illustration 2: *Gross National Income* (Ahlenius and UNEP 2012; *The World Bank*)

We can do better. The digital revolution that has made our field possible is also having a massive effect on mid- and low-income economic regions. Low and medium income economies outpace high income economies in growth in mobile phone subscriptions, broadband subscriptions, and, especially, mobile broadband subscriptions:

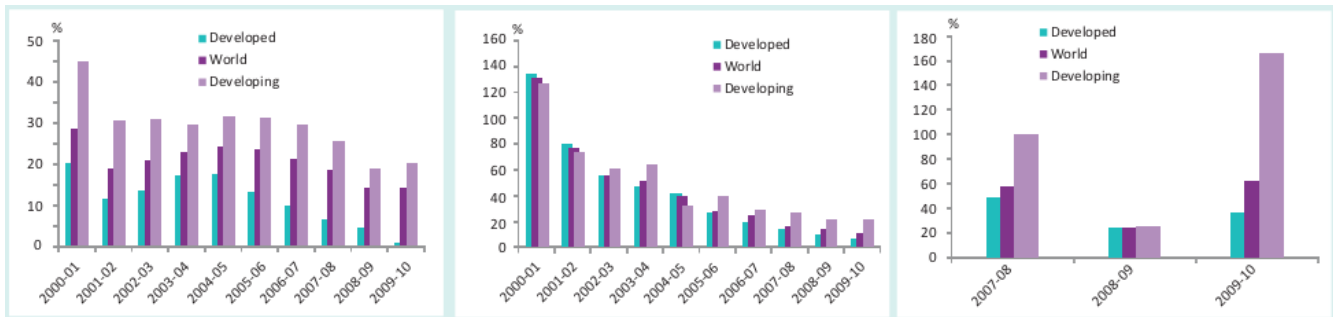


Illustration 3: Subscription growth for mobile telephone (left), fixed broadband (middle), and mobile broadband (right) by level of development (International Telecommunication Union 2011)

Perhaps more significantly for our purposes, while overall internet penetration remains relatively low in such economies, the gap narrows considerably among citizens with tertiary education (Illustration 4).

In other words, while the distribution of physical Digital Humanities centres on Terras's map closely reflects both the distribution of high income vs. medium and low income economies and the distribution of internet penetration among the general population, it would not reflect maps showing either the penetration of internet usage among those with a tertiary education or the rate of change in various forms of ICT connectivity. Maps showing these figures would have far fewer and much smaller "blank" spots. They would almost certainly present a truer picture of the use of digital technology by humanists across the globe.

## GO::DH

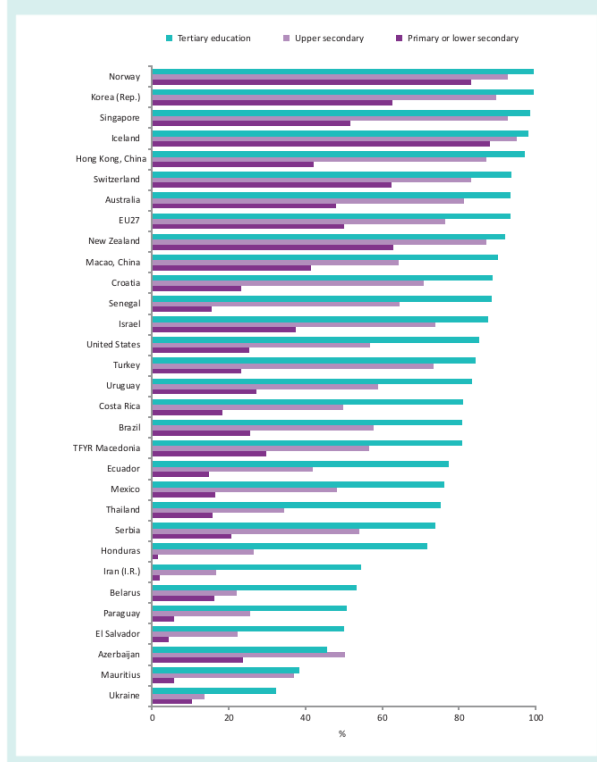
**Global Outlook::Digital Humanities (GO::DH)** is a proposal to bring the map of the Digital Humanities into into closer alignment with actual practice. It would do this by taking advantage of the personal and institutional connections between researchers in the ADHO community and researchers who are less well represented in our networks.

Working as a Special Interest Group under the ADHO Admissions Committee, GO::DH would focus primarily on engaging with digital humanities researchers and institutions in geographical areas not currently involved with ADHO: bringing people, projects, and institutions together and fostering engagement with and by ADHO and other members and institutions in our community.

This work fits in with little modification under the Admission Committee's latest Terms of Reference, particularly, 5 and 6:

- 5. Outreach and Advice.** To initiate as well as respond in discussions with associations whose interests overlap with or are complementary to those of ADHO, in order to explore the

Chart 5.5: Percentage of individuals\* using the Internet, by highest educational level attained, latest available year (2008-2010)



Note: \* Age scope varies across countries, see Annex Table 3.1. Source: ITU World Telecommunications/ICT Indicators database.

Illustration 4: Internet use by educational level (International Telecommunication Union 2011)

suitability and desirability of a formal relationship with ADHO, whether as a CO or AO.

6. **Support for new or emergent associations.** To offer advice and support for groups who have recently formed a digital humanities association or who are planning to do so. Where potential COs are concerned, the emphasis will be on geographical regions where no such organisation yet exists, or where there is not yet a CO within the ADHO family.

While an important part of this work would involve discussions about "admissions" in a broad sense (i.e. working with institutions in the relevant regions that are interested in joining ADHO or working with it in some other capacity), the SIG would also work to foster more personal and institutional connections networks and communities including the Constituent Organisations and individual researchers and projects. In addition to this liaison work, the SIG would also promote activity associated with these connections: organising conference sessions, special issues of journals, collections of essays, and the like as the opportunities arise. In other words, the main purpose of this SIG is to foster communication, engagement, and sharing among networks and communities that, currently, seem to have little contact with each other. ADHO will be the better organisation as a result of this work.

## Structure

As a Special Interest Group, membership in GO::DH would be open to anybody with an interest in the issue. The SIG would be overseen by a smaller executive drawn from its membership and with *ex officio* representation from the Constituent Organisations and representatives co-opted from relevant committees. The SIG would be led by a chair, elected from its membership who would participate as an observer on the SC.

## Resources

The project does not require any significant ADHO resources. As with other ADHO activities, opportunities may arise from this project where access to ADHO funding would be useful or desirable, but no such activities are currently foreseen and any future request for resources would be subject to the usual procedures and negotiation. The University of Lethbridge is currently looking into funding the initial administration of the project with cash and in-kind resources. But this funding is not essential to the success of the project, which can function whether this funding becomes available or not.

## Works Cited

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