

# 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 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 national institutional affiliations of the most prominent national and international Digital Humanities societies (see Fiormonte 2012, fig. 1).

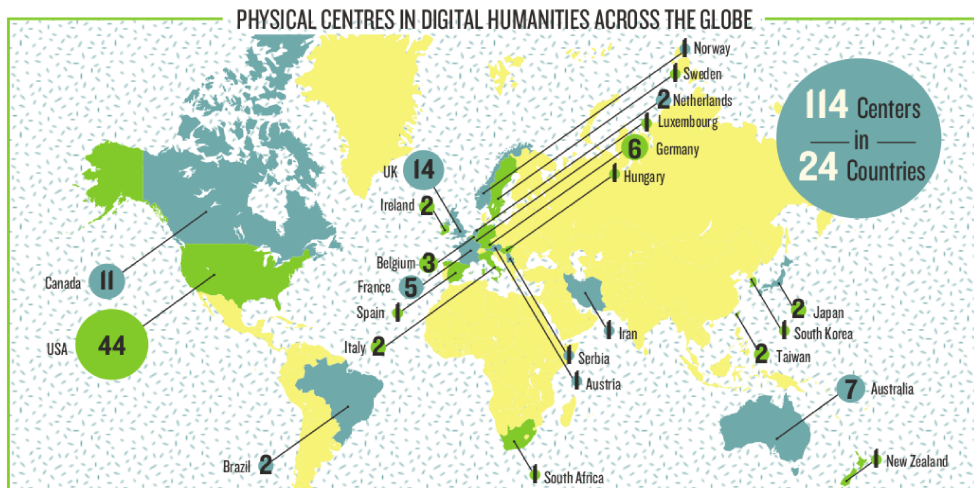


Illustration 1: *Physical Digital Humanities Centres* (Terras 2012)

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 on the Digital Humanities map. Although the Digital Humanities 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 contiguous, high income economies: Japan, North America, Western and Central Europe, Brazil, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

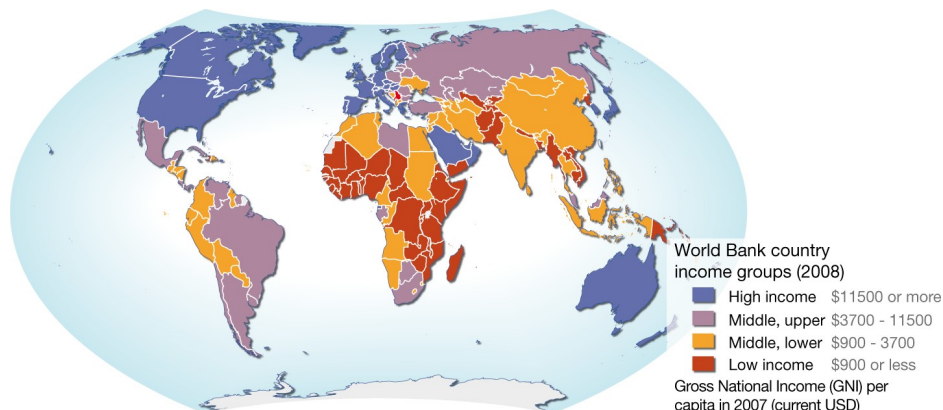


Illustration 2: *Gross National Income* (Ahlenius and UNEP 2012; *The World Bank*)

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:

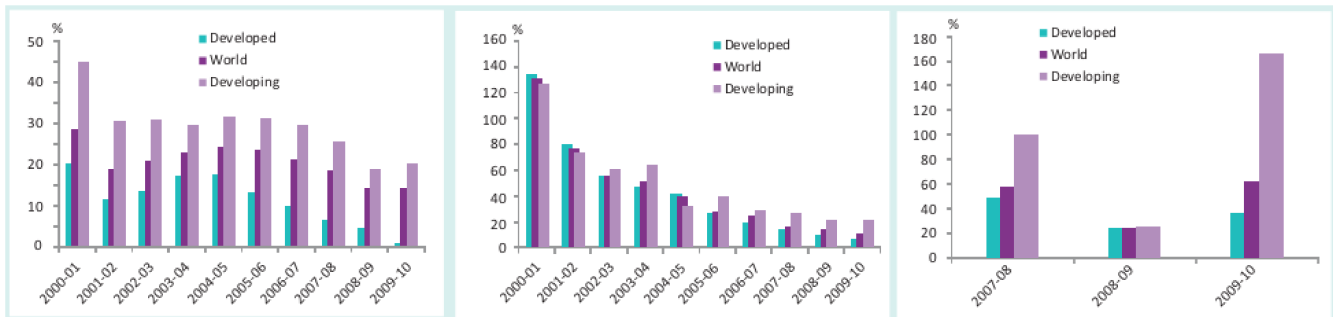


Illustration 3: Subscription growth for mobile telephone (left), fixed broadband (middle), and mobile broadband (right) by level of development (International Telecommunication Union 2011)

Perhaps more significantly for our purposes, while overall Internet penetration remains relatively low in low and moderate income 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. Those maps would have far fewer and much smaller "blank" spots.

## GO::DH

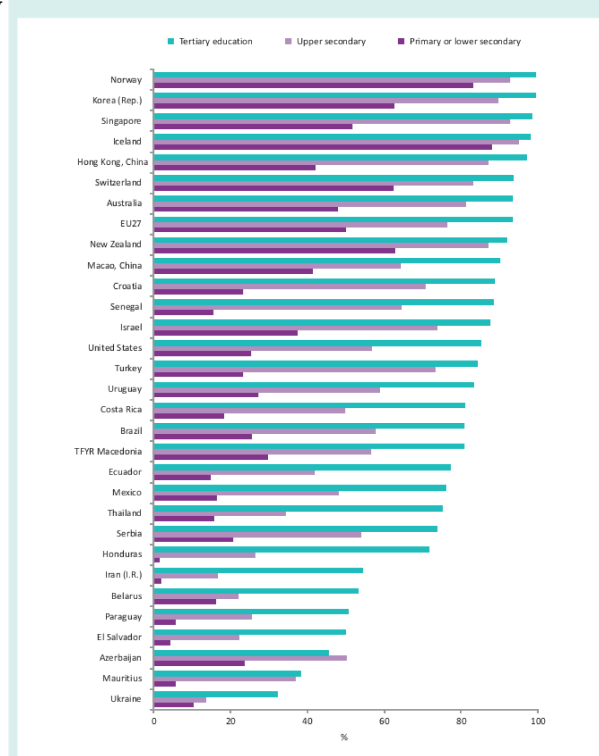
Global Outlook :: Digital Humanities (GO::DH) is a proposal to bring the map of Digital Humanities Centres (and Researchers) into closer alignment with the map of internet penetration among the tertiary educated. It would do this by taking advantage of the personal and institutional connections between researchers in the DH community and researchers in low and medium income economies who are less well represented in our communities and societies.

Working as a Special Interest Group under the ADHO Admissions Committee, GO::DH would focus primarily locating DH activity in particular geographical areas not currently involved with ADHO, surveying that activity, identifying key contact people and institutions, ascertaining their interest in engaging with 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

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 Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database.

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

interests overlap with or are complementary to those of ADHO, in order to explore the 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 connections and connections with Constituent Organisation 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.

## Structure

As a Special Interest Group, membership in GO::DH would be open to anybody with an interest in the issue(s). The SIG would be overseen by a smaller executive drawn from its membership and with ex officio representation from the Constituent Organisations.

## 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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