Preface

The first edition of *The Digital Humanities and Literary Studies* was published in only 2022. In the year since that publication, as ever in the world of technology (if not academia), things have evolved at speed. Some things I got right. But other elements were neglected in the book. I am grateful to the translators of the Chinese edition for the opportunity to write a few words about this.

To make myself feel better, I will start with one of the things I got right. In the past year, the evolution of artificial intelligence agents specialising in natural language generation has been extraordinary. ChatGPT and its ilk hold revolutionary potential for computing in the coming years, upending the way things have been done for decades. I think, therefore, that it was a correct decision to focus on natural language generation – and the study of such forms – in the book. That said, it is also likely that the ability and capacity of these agents will have advanced so much by the time you read this that parts of my analysis will no longer hold. Nonetheless, I repeat the call for the digital humanities to study and contextualise natural language generation agents – and their social and technological effects.

On a somewhat less self-congratulatory note, the translation of this book into Chinese also made me realise a deficiency in its construction. Had I the opportunity to rewrite the text, I would probably have placed more emphasis on multi-lingual DH practices. As readers will appreciate when they come to the section on Mark Blacklock's novel, *I'm Jack,* and the comparison I make to Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker,* the fact that I live in England and hold many of the cultural biases and blindnesses of my location is very clear. How, in translation, do you convey the phonetics of Sunderland or Kent accents? How do we negotiate between such local specificity and the global nature of and audience for (digital) humanities?

More broadly than this single example, the technological and critical challenges in dealing with multi-linguistic environments for the digital humanities are many. Fortunately, scholars such as Quinn Dombrowski and Alex Gil, among many others, have been making the call to take seriously such trans-lingualism for years. If our world is to become less conflicted, more harmonious – and if scholarly exchange is to flourish internationally – then we must work to make sure that our research can cross international bounds.

It is, then, on such terrain that I return to my initial words: my thanks to the Chinese translators of this volume. I am honoured by such attention. I hope, indeed, that readers of Chinese find this work interesting and worth their time. On the other hand, I would also like to make a call for our interplay to be mutual. As I write these lines, I am extremely conscious that I cannot remember the last time I read a Chinese scholar translated into English. Undoubtedly, this is to my detriment. But it reveals a critical flaw in our systems of cultural exchange. We must work in both directions, translating into and from each others' languages, for a conversation among peers that leads to worldwide conversation and intellectual dialogue.

Martin Paul Eve

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