

Digital Humanities in the Covid Era: The Perspective of a Historian of Modern Indonesia from Northern Japan

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Abstract: The covid-19 era has changed the world, including more “open access” publications, the increasing importance of digital research materials, and engagement in digital interactions of increased importance in the humanities. Perspectives of isolated scholars, in this case, working on the history of Indonesia during World War II from a small national university in a remote city in northern Japan, provide an essential perspective on conducting research and creating digital archives. Far closer to Indonesian students and researchers than researchers in major universities in the West, such practical perspectives are urgently needed to achieve the full potential of digital humanities. Some archives and public library collections have developed digital collections for readers and researchers, however smaller collections of materials made by scholars in the course of their research are also of significant importance but present a large number of unique problems, including dependence on low-budget efforts by individual scholars in their “spare time” to do all the planning and digitizing of their research materials. A coordinated effort by a group of scholars in northern Japan to digitize materials on Indonesian history is making progress but faces different problems than those of large institutions. These problems include long-term support, determining and coding materials for their accessibility, depending on the nature of the material and the rights involved. None-the-less, it is hoped that innovative collaboration will allow some of these materials to be made available to the general public and outside researchers while minimizing the disadvantages.

Abstrak: Era covid-19 telah membawa perubahan bagi dunia, termasuk lebih banyak publikasi “akses terbuka”, semakin pentingnya bahan penelitian digital, dan keterlibatan dalam interaksi digital yang semakin penting dalam humaniora. Perspektif sarjana yang terisolasi, dalam hal ini, bekerja pada sejarah Indonesia selama Perang Dunia II dari sebuah universitas nasional kecil di kota terpencil di Jepang utara, memberikan perspektif penting dalam melakukan penelitian dan membuat arsip digital. Jauh lebih dekat dengan mahasiswa dan peneliti Indonesia daripada peneliti di universitas-universitas besar di Barat, perspektif praktis seperti itu sangat dibutuhkan untuk mencapai potensi penuh humaniora digital. Sejumlah arsip dan koleksi perpustakaan umum telah mengembangkan koleksi digital untuk pembaca dan peneliti, namun koleksi bahan yang lebih kecil yang dibuat oleh para sarjana dalam perjalanan penelitian mereka juga sangat penting tetapi menghadirkan sejumlah besar masalah unik, termasuk ketergantungan pada rendahnya sumber daya. upaya anggaran oleh para sarjana individu di “waktu luang” mereka untuk melakukan semua perencanaan dan digitalisasi bahan penelitian mereka. Upaya terkoordinasi oleh sekelompok cendekiawan di Jepang utara untuk mendigitalkan materi tentang sejarah Indonesia sedang mengalami kemajuan tetapi menghadapi masalah yang berbeda dari masalah lembaga besar. Masalah-masalah ini termasuk dukungan jangka panjang, penentuan dan pengkodean materi untuk aksesibilitas mereka, tergantung pada sifat materi dan hak-hak yang terlibat. Meskipun demikian, kolaborasi yang inovatif diharapkan akan memungkinkan beberapa materi ini tersedia untuk masyarakat umum dan peneliti luar sambil meminimalkan kerugian.



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INTRODUCTION

There is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder. Naturally, his existence is tied to many other things as well: to a very mysterious relationship to ownership...also to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. ... For him, not only books but also copies of books have their fates. (Benjamin, 1985, pp. 60-61)

Libraries and archives collect; researchers collect as well—while they differ from Benjamin's collectors, there are significant similarities and hints which we can draw from Benjamin's words. Since research collections are the base for scholarship and digital humanities, this image of books having a utilitarian value—shall we say the contents—AND something more—we can say a life of their own—seems to be a good image to start with, and we will return to it again later. Similarly, Benjamin's reference to order and disorder is significant: we make our best discoveries when we achieve disorder and then struggle to return to order.

I am currently based in Akita, in Northern Japan. Akita is a remote province at the end of a four-hour shinkansen ride from Tokyo. It is the final station, the end of the main track. For much of 2020-2022, as a response to Covid-19, faculty and students have effectively been banned from traveling outside the province, or rather the return to campus has been made extremely difficult, making the physical and intellectual isolation particularly significant. Regardless of the situation in the destination country, faculty and students have also been banned from overseas travel except in extraordinary circumstances. In such a remote, isolated location, the normal lack of materials becomes more critical due to Covid-19, as movement from place to place to obtain or examine materials becomes impossible, and collaborative work becomes much harder. Scholars' semi-orderly worlds have been disrupted, and new solutions must be found. Working on Indonesian history from such a location provides an intense opportunity to consider changes in our "world," our efforts in pursuing digital humanities here in Japan, and the future of digital humanities and the study of Indonesian history. Equally, however, it means practical challenges in engaging in the digital humanities.

OUR PROJECT(S)

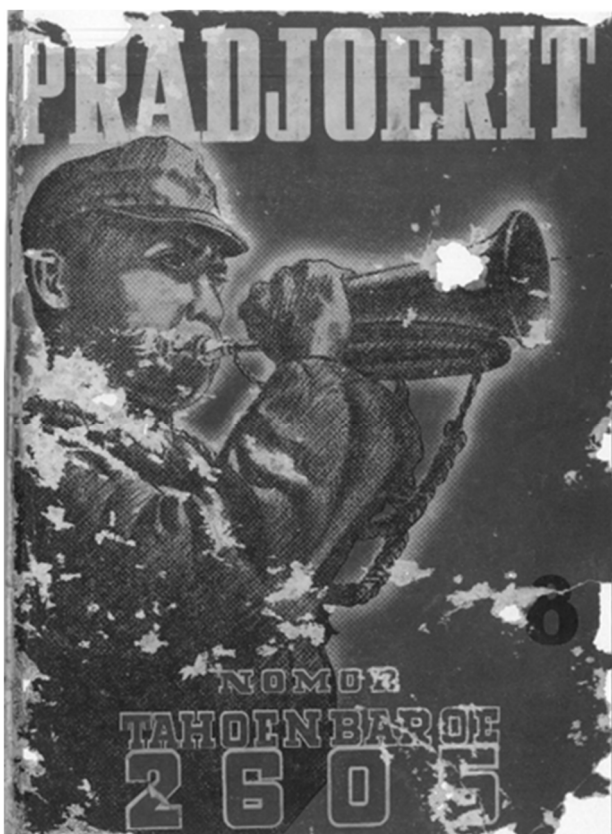
I currently participate in a research project on pre-

and post-war networks connected to the Japanese occupation administration in Indonesia and leading a second project related to malaria in Indonesia during World War II. Besides myself at Akita University, two critical collaborators, Mayumi Yamamoto and Kaoru Kochi are based in other cities, at Miyagi University in Sendai and Kanda University of Foreign Studies in Chiba. In our projects—and the longer careers of ourselves and associated researchers like Prof. Aiko Kurasawa, Prof. Ken'ichi Goto, and Prof. Isao Yamazaki—we have collected essential materials related to Indonesian history: photocopies and photographs of documents and publications, original books, magazines, newspapers, and even recordings and photographs. Some original items are scarce. Others are merely difficult to obtain, especially in Japan.

Additionally, the reorganization of archives in the Netherlands over the last 30 years has made some archival materials challenging to find, increasing the value of old photocopies of archival documents. Naturally, all these materials can be beneficial in conducting research. However, with materials scattered to multiple locations in Akita, Sendai, and the Tokyo area and stored in cramped offices or apartments, access and use are difficult. Insects, mold, and poor storage facilities have badly damaged many items, making examination difficult. They were even determining what is held and where can be a problem. We need to make that material available to ourselves and our project's researchers and ensure that this material is preserved and made available for researchers in the future. We also want to support and encourage new research on related subjects.

What this means is some form of digitization, including both systematic cataloging and some means of sharing materials via the internet. As we attempt to do this with limited time and resources—we are, after all, professors trying to teach and research, not technical staff or administrators—we confront numerous problems and difficulties, as well as conundrums which are the subject of this article.

The core of our collection contains originals of the following publications of the Japanese occupation period: (1) Significantly more than 200 different books and pamphlets published in Indonesia (or published in Japan for use in Indonesia) during the Japanese occupation of 1942-45 in Japanese, English, Indonesian, Javanese, and Sundanese; (2) Wartime magazines such as *Djawa Baroe*, *Soeara MIAI*, *Pandji Poestaka*, *Pradjoerit*, *Kan Po*, *Indonesia Merdeka*, *Berita Radio*, *Poestaka Radio*,



Figures 1. Covers of two wartime periodicals from Java, *Pradjoerit* (1945) and *Pandji Poestaka* (1942). (Personal collection)

Moeslimin Soematra Baroe, *Kodomo Shinbun*, *Taiyo*, and *Hikari*. None of these are complete runs; (3) More than 1844 issues of newspapers from the Japanese period from Java. These include newspapers like *Asia Raya*, *Pembangoen*, *Kung Yung Pao* (Malay edition), *Soeara Asia*, *Sinar Matahari*. While very substantial material, none are complete runs; (4) Additional Japanese language publications from the metropole related to Indonesia during the occupation.

These materials are in addition to copies of the recently republished *Jawa Shinbun*, *Borneo Shinbun*, and *Sumatra Shimbun*, or the older republished editions of *Kan Po* and *Djawa Baroe*.

In response to availability and each researcher's particular interests, we also have collected Indonesian medical journals, books, and some general newspapers and magazines from before and after the occupation. We have even collected some related Japanese materials. Prewar materials provide context for the occupation, and postwar materials show changes and provide explanations and information. This material, connected to the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia, covers an extensive subject range, allowing research on diverse subjects like literature, culture, education, medicine, politics, publishing, the military, and the economy. Just about anything.

This material is critical because until very recently, the Japanese occupation period was a blank space—or rather a black space—which was very poorly covered by historians (Horton 2016). It is also broadly *not* available online, and there are few collections with this amount of material anywhere in the world.

COVID-19 ERA AND INTERNET RESOURCES

The Covid-19 era has encouraged dramatic changes in our increased internet utilization for collaboration and teaching. It is also excellent for intellectual exchange—to give just one example, an earlier version of this paper was presented via Zoom at the 6th International Conference on Education & Social Sciences (ICESS 2021), conducted by Universitas Negeri Semarang in April 2021. Almost every day, some lecture, conference, or symposium is held online. Besides the significantly increased online conference activities, there also have been substantial increases in the use of online research materials.

Researchers working on the colonial era, the Japanese occupation, or the Indonesian revolution are probably familiar with many of the changes that have taken place in the availability of primary sources over the last two decades. However, it is probably worth mentioning some of the critical sources and changes—for some certainly have not



Figure 2. A selection of Japanese language books from 1942-45. Personal collection.

been one way or lasting.

In the early 2000s, one of my favorite resources was the Australian National Archive's online database. As I was researching Timor and neighboring islands in Southeastern Indonesia during World War II as part of a Toyota Foundation-supported collaborative Japanese effort to support the new nation of Timor Leste intellectually, Australian collections and their early efforts at digitalization were important. The main archive in Canberra would digitize five files per year on request by any patron! This was incredibly helpful as a supplement to limited and very costly research trips to Canberra, and materials then remained available online for other researchers. The online system was a clumsy database organized by physical archival files, but it thus remained close to the original archive. The resulting annotated bibliography on Timor in World War II identified some significant documents and their locations within each archive, including Australian archives (The Forum for Historical Documents on *East Timor*, 2008). Digitalization rules changed within a few years, but larger and larger amounts of archival materials are available online.

For a few years, a favorite source was the NIOD database of newspaper articles from the Japanese occupation. Consisting of a substantial but apparently random selection of the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies' vast collection of Indonesian language newspapers from the immediate prewar period through the revolutionary period, the admittedly faulty OCR allowed searching for tidbits of data that would otherwise almost certainly not be discovered except by those



Figure 3. An article from the NIOD database.

with the time to read through each periodical of the period, day by day, article by article. This is now gone. Access to the database was partially eliminated due to legal concerns, which may have been insignificant. The NIOD database is expected to reappear at the Leiden University Library, but it is unclear when this will happen or if it will be available off-campus. Similarly, materials that had been available online from the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) and the KIT (Royal Tropical Institute) were physically transferred to Leiden University Library, resulting in mixed outcomes with respect to availability to outside researchers.

The National Library of the Netherlands' website Delpher, an immense database of Dutch language newspapers, journals, and books, has been launched and expanded, providing an even more tremendous amount of material. Searchable, with downloads of pdf files and OCR texts available, Delpher also allows anyone to locate minor references in very diverse publications. Numerous rare books

and journals have also become available to researchers. By way of example, Delpher was useful in supplementing a medical journal collection in a study of the advertising for malaria medicines in the 1930s and early 1940s (Horton, 2021). An interesting new player in digital humanities is the Corts Foundation, which has been active in supporting the translation of key materials from Japanese about the war, but also digitizing archives and publications from old periods and making these available free online. For one of these important translated works, see National Defense College (2015).

The National Archives of the Netherlands has made many documents related to Indonesian history available to the public in the last few years through their online website. The National Library in Jakarta (Perpusnas) also provides access to research publications that are otherwise hidden behind paywalls and digital copies of some periodicals and many Balai Pustaka publications. Sadly for researchers like myself, most of this Indonesian material is not available to non-residents.

Finally, Japanese sources are pretty scattered, but some crucial resources exist. For example, the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR) provides access to government archives' military and foreign affairs documents, which are almost entirely Japanese. One affiliate researcher, Prof. Emeritus Takashi Sakata of Ishinomaki Senshu University, has used this material well in his research about quinine and other anti-malarial drugs during World War II. See, for example, Sakata (2021). Asahi Shinbun has its newspapers available through an online database. Unfortunately, these are behind a paywall. For much of 2020-2021, post-1945 newspapers were made available to the general public, paralleling many academic publishers worldwide who briefly made materials available to the public. Other smaller collections are available online, like the Tokogawa Collection at IDE (JETRO Institute of Developing Economies), but they are more challenging to locate.

This is only a small selection of online materials, but this does provide us with a picture of many important sources for history. Most of these online materials were already available before Covid-19. There are few new online materials, as most archives either closed for long periods or have worked short-handed, preventing new projects from the beginning. One exception was the National Archive of the Netherlands, which brought new materials online in mid-2020, but these were scanned before the Covid crisis (International Heritage Cooperation 2020). Above all, utilization has

changed—these resources became more critical when visits to archives and libraries, even domestically, became impossible. More of us have become dependent on digital humanities for our research work.

COMPLICATIONS IN THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Certainly, by now, it is clear that digital resources are good. However, is it better? The answer is, of course, sometimes. What are some of the problems? (1) Resources behind paywalls benefit an elite group, especially those in Europe and America or those at the most prominent elite universities worldwide. Privately financed digitization is almost always behind paywalls, and many of us are left out; (2) Making everything freely available online, in easily searched databases risks decontextualization, which I will discuss below; (3) Making *everything* available in an easy, decontextualized form makes it possible for some researchers to quickly produce (relatively superficial) papers and books on a subject, and damage the careers of dedicated scholars who spend years working through archives or discovering other materials, meticulously examining them and developing important insights on society. This is an extremely serious issue, as it rewards shallow work and penalizes more careful scholarship; (4) Unbalanced access to Dutch source materials as access to Indonesian material decreases (e.g., Delpher's introduction, NIOD's demise, and restrictions on Indonesian national library material access).

DIGITAL DECONTEXTUALIZATION AND BEYOND

This paper was opened with a quote from Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library." In this essay and elsewhere, Benjamin attempts to describe not just the relationship of a collector to the things he collects but also to convey a sense of the uniqueness of each item. This uniqueness was a given in the pre-modern world when books needed to be reproduced by hand. The book then collects meaning as it travels from hand to hand and from place to place. Although each copy of a mechanical work still carries layers of meaning with it, beginning with mechanical reproduction centuries ago, we have lost this uniqueness, bit by bit.

To give but one contemporary example, a copy of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's very rare *Kranji dan Bekasi Djatoeh* from 1947 was once in my collection. I bought it with a box of Pramoedya's books from the legendary Jakarta bookdealer Djaja Laras

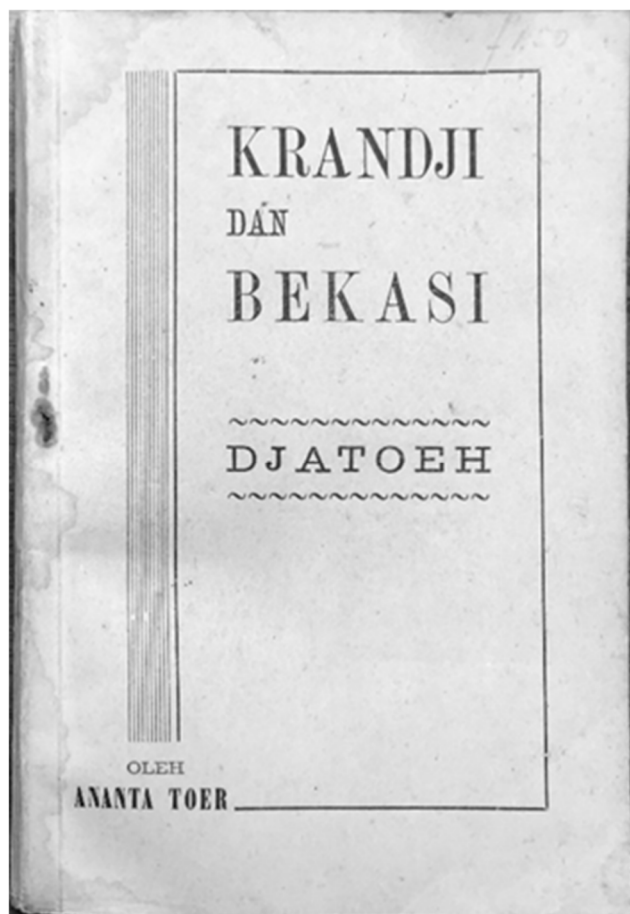


Figure 4. *Krandji dan Bekasi Djatoeh*.
(Personal collection)

in the 1990s. Some time ago, it passed from my hands in exchange for several special books from the Japanese occupation. This has its own story, of course. Recently, this copy has been spotted online in the collection of yet another collector. The history of this one copy continues, meaningful to perhaps only those who once held it. The efforts of Didi Kwartanada and a group of Indonesian *aficionados* in identifying and tracing the “dozen” copies of Tjamboek Berdoeri’s 1947 *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* produced more fascinating results—a signed copy that fell into my hands was the 13th identified copy, and more have been discovered. This history of particular books or documents can sometimes become significant, for example, in explaining how a particular copy of a rare work could survive through the revolution, through the turmoil of 1965–67, or just through long periods. Pramoedya’s works, like those of well-known communists like Aidit or Njoto, were both banned and dangerous to keep. How could copies survive? Even library stamps tell us of forgotten libraries and potential readers. Each copy has a story, and these stories could lead to new questions.

Archival sources are similar. Documents



Figure 5. *Tjamboek Berdoeri* (1947).
(Personal collection)

from the past were created for special reasons and then preserved for other reasons. Scholars need to learn these reasons when using the archives, for this helps locate particular documents or desired information, helps us understand and interpret what we do not find, and exposes us to many unexpected documents. With digitalization and the creation of searchable databases, various meanings are emptied from the works. We are left with a document that seems to have been dropped magically from the sky into our hands to answer our devout prayers. The result is a quickly compiled history, but also one which is shallow and empty. Naturally, we are probably all happy when such a document “falls from the sky,” as surely having a document is better than not having a document, but the emptiness is a fact.

Another critical element of digital decontextualization and databasing is more practical. Since the 1950s, we have gradually moved away from the old colonial histories towards histories that are more autonomous or Southeast Asia-centric and more inclusive of ordinary people and their lives. The success of the efforts of the Dutch National Archives and, even more, the National Library of the Netherlands (KB) with its Delpher could lead to a revitalized new colonial history built around Dutch bureaucratic visions structured and conveyed in

Dutch. It is not just the rebirth of colonial perspectives, but they may also seem invisible as many of the “users” of Delpher will be Indonesians! There is no balance in these archives, though I love them. Theoretically, it is possible that the vision of the military bureaucrats at the top of the Japanese government hierarchy could become dominant in the history of the Japanese occupation. However, it is *extremely* unlikely even in Japan, given the dominance of histories constructed by the winners and the lingering difficulties and fear of using Japanese language sources.

Finally, if historians no longer travel and experience different places—whether the sites of events, as changed as they may be, or the final repositories of historical documents—history writing will be impoverished. Benjamin would undoubtedly agree. Documents also pick up something from where they were housed: romantic though it may be, I often feel that the ghosts of archivists like A. M. Templaars of the National Archive in Den Haag and history-archive lovers like A. M. Fischer haunt my work. Even more importantly, the division of each document, each newspaper article into a separate file, leaves the historian with something much closer to the picture with which he or she started—the historian will more often discover what they wanted to see, not what is objectively more important or complete. These are all risks of decontextualizing digitalization.

DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF INSTITUTIONS VS. DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF INDIVIDUALS

Most of the digital archives I mentioned are archives created by large institutions with broad coverage, large staff, and relatively large budgets. On the other hand, those of us at smaller universities, especially in remote parts of northern Japan, are only individual scholars. We work alone or with small groups of other scholars whose principal jobs are not digitization but teaching and research. Our collections are smaller and generally more focused. The contributions, methods, and limits of our contributions are thus quite different.

As mentioned earlier, the core group of researchers working on the Japanese occupation period comprises three full-time faculty members at universities in Chiba, Sendai, and Akita, with a larger group of around six collaborating scholars scattered around Japan. Together we have worked to collect both original materials and copies of materials we need for our research. The core of our collection is the set of original newspapers, but the runs of magazines like *Djawa Baroe*, *Pandji Poestaka*,



Figure 6. Full-sheet newspaper reading at Akita University.

Indonesia Merdeka, *Soeara MIAI*, and *Poestaka Radio* are extremely important, as are the hundreds of books. Each researcher has photocopies, photographs, scans, and even videotapes, sometimes no longer available in the original.

Small, researcher-created archives actually do serve important functions. In a large online archive created by major research institutions, you may be able to find items you want if you know what you want. However, it is harder to find what you do not know about. These limited archives can provide very different benefits if brought online. A collection focused on the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, for example, makes it more likely a researcher would discover something they did not expect to find, partially mimicking the archive. Such smaller archives also serve as a kind of teacher to student researchers, providing them with guidance and primary sources with which they can more critically read academic texts.

The main researchers in our group are unanimous in feeling a responsibility to preserve materials related to the history of Indonesia for the next generation. We are also concerned about the materials’ condition and unanimous in our hope to use such materials for better history writing.

Preliminary efforts to scan newspapers had been started on and off again for ten years, primari-



Figure 7. Asia-Raya (2-11-2602), scan of the damaged newspaper made with A3 scanner and Microsoft IME. (Personal collection)

ly by this author. This effort was critical, as the badly damaged and tightly bound sets made using the newspapers for research extremely difficult. How do we digitize these extra-large or fragile materials? This is a large part of our material and a major problem that had plagued me for years since at least 2013 when I bought an A3 scanner and an edge scanner (which never worked properly). Naturally, more time for scanning and problem solving was needed—but not easy to find. Additional problems were found in conflicting needs for lower resolution for effective use and higher resolution for the preservation of the newspapers (a problem given my low technological skills), as well as in the use of an A3 scanner, far too small for oversized and partially bound newspapers. The last problem was partially resolved with sets of four scans at 90° and merging the images with Microsoft IME. Far from perfect, this low-budget technique did produce usable images, but only if each page was separate from the others.

Under the leadership of Mayumi Yamamoto and her colleague in information science, Hiroki Suguri, at Miyagi University, a new digitalization project was begun with a team of graduate and undergraduate assistants. These efforts have been described in Ishiyama, Sato, and Suguri (2022). Ini-

tially supported with a three-year Miyagi University Presidential Grant and the use of a large project room, efforts are now underway to obtain ongoing outside funding. The first effort was to begin scanning newspapers—obviously the most urgent work for our research projects and preservation. The available A2 sheet-feed scanner was rejected, and many newspapers were outsourced to a professional scanner. By agreement, pages were separated with a razor to allow proper scanning. The high-resolution images were then renamed systematically and then held for resolution of other issues, including the preparation of an online system of access for our researchers and the development of a system to provide differentiated access based on rights issues and consent of the owners. Due to the high cost, efforts to scan newspapers have been postponed.

The next sets of materials were photocopies of archival documents from 20-40 years ago, often of unknown origin. The deteriorating condition of some copies made this work urgent, but providing public access is legally questionable. Where these documents are reproduced through photocopies or photographs from originals held in other libraries or archives or by collectors, can we make digital copies available to the public? In many cases, no. However, what if the original material has vanished? The annual floods in Jakarta resulted in many old materials being destroyed at the old National Archive building, which is only one of the problems. Many scholars know of materials from the National Library in Jakarta, which have vanished over the years. I can tell you stories of the piles of broken paper, the remnants of ancient books swept into a corner in the old national library in Salemba decades ago. What if we have old photocopies of books that have vanished? Can those be shared? This is a difficult question, but the answer *must be* that we digitize these copies and allow some researchers to use them, even if it is not public. It is our responsibility. Another troublesome set of materials are documents copied from archives, especially ones that have been reorganized, like NIOD or the National Archive in Den Haag (which now houses materials from the Foreign Ministry Archive). Naturally, this is a potential legal problem as we do not own the originals, but actually very helpful for researchers who would not be able to follow references to documents in the new archival system. There are also special cases. For example, although they would unlikely admit it, the Dutch Foreign Ministry almost certainly “cleaned up the files” and destroyed documents or photographs they found too sensitive before sending their ar-

chives to the National Archives. This makes any photocopies or notes potentially even more important.

Old cassette recordings of interviews made during fieldwork in Indonesia 30-45 years ago, now in deplorable condition, have also been digitized and refined to allow future use. Eventually, such interviews should be made available to the public, but the consent of the individuals is difficult to obtain, making putting these recordings online an open question.

As the number of materials prepared in digital form increases, the importance of a coding system increases—a system allowing the coding of access to different materials based on the origin of the materials (whether it is held in original form or whether it was copied), its legal status (copyright, etc.), as well as the consent of the contributing scholar, who naturally had collected the materials primarily for their research. Some efforts to ensure that available materials cannot be simply copied and reproduced without acknowledgment or permission are also necessary if a wide range of materials are to be made publicly available.

Another form of sharing materials involves writing articles filled with various information as part of an effort to bring materials to readers. “Open access” publications are critical in this effort and constitute a growing percentage of citations in scholarly and student works. Two examples of such efforts to bring both archival data and photographic documentation into the public sphere can be seen in an article on the Timor area in the aftermath of World War II (Horton, 2009) and in a graphic argument for reconsidering “propaganda” publications during the Japanese occupation of Java (Horton 2021a). In a very different way, in another free article, Yamamoto (2016) provides information about and references to digital sources being systematically eliminated by the related UN organizations as rules change. Japanese universities still publish “Bulletins,” “Memoirs,” or similar journals, which are now mostly online and all available for free. Complementing these traditional free-access journals, large Euro-American publishers have moved to reduce criticisms of their (unethical) use of paywalls to block access to up-to-date research by researchers outside the major Western universities. Their solution is to “allow” authors to pay to have their articles freely available online or to be reviewed and published faster. These efforts also move more of our secondary humanities research online and make us digital humans.

CONCLUSION

While this article has focused on digitization and the provision of digital research materials on the history and the humanities, the Covid era has also led to a greater amount of intellectual interaction via the internet: internet conferences, online teaching, guest lectures to give, and attend, and other forms of discussion. A fantastic boon in linking scholars in remote places with other scholars in distant places, it also seems to result in unsustainable demands on scholars’ time. None-the-less, these increased digital interactions, many open to the wider public, are of great importance in sharing knowledge and links to efforts in digitization. We face numerous issues and challenges in our part-time work as scholars trying to preserve rare materials and create online resources. When can materials photocopied from other libraries, archives, or private collections be converted into digital copies for the public? This is a difficult question, but in some cases, the answer *must be* that we digitize these copies and allow some researchers to use it, even if it is not public. It is our responsibility. How do we digitize extra-large or fragile materials? What form of data do we use, where do we host it, and if it is on a university server, what happens when we retire or change jobs? Who does all this work, and can it be done in the covid-19 era, with social spacing and limited contact between people?

Moreover, who provides the money to cover these costs? Miyagi University has provided limited but significant funds, but it is a constant struggle with no guarantees. Finally, how can we retain at least a portion of the context of documents, a sense of place? However, our dream to make more materials available remains. Perhaps in creating an online archive, we will find a way for these wartime materials to find a permanent home, their fate, but also a way for them to be useful in creating a more complete history of Indonesia and to allow future generations to experience a little more holistically that period of Indonesian history. In the end, there is a narrow path that we must pass down in this extremely important process of expanding the digital humanities. While original paintings will still hold a draw for many, the impact of digitalization in the field of history is even more important and will shape our future history of the Indonesian past.

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