



# Current Changes in Digital Anthropology and Literacy in Higher Education

**Karta Jayadi<sup>a</sup>, Amirullah Abduh<sup>b</sup>**, <sup>a</sup>Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia, <sup>b</sup>Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia, Email: <sup>a</sup>[Kartajayadi@unm.ac.id](mailto:Kartajayadi@unm.ac.id), <sup>b</sup>[amirullah@unm.ac.id](mailto:amirullah@unm.ac.id)

The aim of this article is to explore changes in the digital anthropological arts and literacy within the higher education milieu. This research draws from a number of current literary and conceptual themes using a qualitative research design. The qualitative research applied in this study is descriptive qualitative with purposive sampling. The key participants of this study are five respondents who work at the university both as lecturers and as anthropological researchers. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews and analysed through qualitative thematic analysis approach. The key findings of the study are that the current change in digital anthropology has brought new issues: new literacy, new digital culture and a continuing change the mindset. These fresh insights provide debates and add to knowledge development on the issues of anthropology, digitalisation and literacy. The implication of this study is that the shift has affected the higher education curriculum, policy, the method of teaching, and the philosophy of people who work in higher education.

**Key words:** *Changes, Digital Anthropology, Literacy, Higher Education.*

## Introduction

There is a current important debate about digital anthropological art and literacy in higher education especially in the digital era. The reason for this change is to meet the current demand of globalisation, the shift in the use of technology for anthropological art and the language expression for arts and literacy and finally the need for higher education to meet the need of local art and artists both regionally and globally.



There are a number of international studies about innovation and change of digital anthropological art according to western perspectives. Kahn (2018) investigated the meaning of change in the current digital era; Saviotti and Pyka (2017) explored the change, innovation and the demand of art evolution; Fitzgerald, et. al., (2016) studied the pivotal centrum of innovation engagement in higher education; Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz (2015) portrayed the importance of change from social perspectives and the way it contributes to the construction of fresh social and anthropological art theory; and Lumby and Foskett (2016) investigated the current culture and change in arts and literacy in higher education. These studies reveal that anthropological arts and literacy studies have concentrated more on western perspectives.

The research on changes on digital anthropological art and literacy in higher education particularly within the Indonesian context has gained little attention from art researchers. Consequently, not much academic information or published studies are found internationally. Therefore, this study provides new perspectives on changes in anthropological art and literacy within the Indonesian context. This article contributes to the knowledge extension on art, anthropology and literacy within higher education.

### **Change, Digital Anthropology and Literacy**

Meissner, Polt, and Vonortas (2017) explain the meaning of change as part of the importance attribute in any policy making. They believe that change relates to understanding the complexity of innovation. In addition, Kahn (2018) provides definition of change in three domains: change as a form of outcome, change as process, and change as mindset. According to these authors, change is repeated complex action that involves both physical and non-physical activities, which produce an outcome for a better situation.

Miller (2018) maintains that digital anthropology relates to a particular impact on certain populations due to the current rise in technological innovation, which affects humans and shifts the anthropological discipline within global communities. The authors define digital anthropology as the computerisation of human activities in numerous sectors (Cui, 2017). Based on these definitions, digital anthropology relates to the multiple effects of current technological changes on humans through digitalisation and computerisation.

According to Montoya (2018) literacy relates to the ability to identify, comprehend, decipher meaning, innovate, disseminate, and compute physical and non-physical materials across different contexts. As a result, there is a strong correlation between digital anthropology and literacy. For example, the terminology and phrases used within current digital anthropology are categorised as digital anthropology literacy.



Previous investigations indicate that innovation and change in digital anthropology and literacy impact on many structural elements of higher education including the curriculum (Edler & Fagerberg, 2017), policy research (Armstrong, 2016), methodology of teaching and evaluation of anthropology in education.

### **Research Method**

This study follows the concept of qualitative description design. Sandelowski (2000) describes qualitative descriptive study as the holistic description of a detailed theme or activity documented systematically. In this study, the theme description relates to current changes in the field of anthropology literacy in higher education.

The data collection instrument for this research is an online survey followed by semi-structured interviews. The interviews relates to the experiences of art educators and anthropological researchers in relation to the current impact and use of technology. For the purposes of this article, only data from five in-depth semi structured interviews are reported. There are five respondents (three female and two male) aged between their 30s and 50s including university lecturers,.

The data is analysed qualitatively as many other previous qualitative studies (Rosmaladewi & Abduh, 2017; Syam, et. al. , 2019; Dollah, Abduh, & Talib, 2017) . The qualitative approach used in this study is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involves the process of reading whole transcriptions, coding, identifying sub-themes and categorising major themes from the data.

### **Finding and Discussion**

Participants discuss the key themes of change in digital anthropology including new digital literacy.

The first theme appearing from the study is that digital anthropology provides new literacy for younger generation. New literacy include new terminologies , new hardware and software, new expressions and phrases. The evidence from participants is as follows:

**Table 1:** Participants' responses relating to new literacy

Participants	Responses
A	It is easier to introduce the new generation to new terms and new technological literacy
B	The meaning comes from developing local values to a broader level within the new digital era
C	It will build literacy for creators, observers, and anthropology reviewers based on contemporary values
D	More modern in accordance with the times
E	One of the cultural aspects that can be developed is the emergence of a cultural technological civilisation

Based on extracts in Table 1, the new technological revolution particularly in the area of digital anthropology provides new forms of literacy that enable younger people to create global impact for communities. The example from Participant E relates to the birth of new cultural digitalisation, which in turn will provide new ways of learning and new terms for technological and anthropological literacy.

The second important theme appearing from the participants of this study is that digitalisation of anthropology creates new cultural communities. The new cultural indicators include novel ways of doing things and various methods of managing factors such as people inclined to use technology for communication. In addition, there is a new culture of managing human interaction and work, which can be done through digital management where a manager may be available in a virtual environment rather than physically. The new culture of inviting others, which is commonly done manually, is now performed via digitalisation. Study participants provide for this:

**Table 2:** Participants' responses relating to new digital culture

Participants	Responses
A	It depends on the creator. The meaning of post-modern culture, cross-culture and diversity may be new for the younger generation
B	Digitalisation itself is the culture of an era
C	The value of external culture is what we influence to include in our cultural values in the anthropology of art and their art, that is a new digital culture
D	There may be intervention from outside art styles, but cultural values cannot be completely lost. They provide new digitalisation to facilitate between the old and new cultures
E	Anthropological study is an attempt to preserve culture, implying the maintenance of cultural values in accordance with religious laws and

	ancestral beliefs. The preservation of culture will be in the form of a new culture of digitalisation
--	---

The extract from Table 2 above provides explanation about the new digital era within the field of anthropology in creating a new digital culture within the global population. It is obvious that the new digital culture may create confusion and excitement for people. Confusion occurs when people are not able to cope with changes, on the other hand, people may get excited about digital changes when they can go hand in hand with digitalisation. In addition, digitalisation may remain meaningful because it may be a future learning method so that culture can be eroded due to technology.

The third important point from study participants is that changes in digital anthropology relate to a change in people's mindset. The indicator of a change in mindset is that people may no longer depend on old standards, but rather on the rapid change of the global community. Participants in Table 3 below describe these changes of mindsets.

**Table 3:** Participants' responses relating to changing of mindset

Participants	Responses
A	Anthropological studies, if digitised, still have cultural significance, because anthropological and cultural sciences are closely related to one another
B	The meaning of changes in the mindset of the people who no longer depend on the advice of cultural practitioners directly but who expect that cultural inheritance can be preserved through digitalisation
C	The physical form may change but the meaning is maintained, which may be interpreted as adaptation
D	The Indonesian generation must know Indonesia through cultural studies of art anthropology where culture will continue to develop and not be abolished in art using digitalisation
E	If you know of art and anthropology in detail, it can affect your mindset and local culture, so that it can become a type of conformity of needs in the industrial 4.0 or millennial era

The extracts in Table 3 above indicate that the digital anthropology study can change a person's culture and mindset in relation to the development of modernisation. Modernisation may not mean the loss of people's mindset, but the growth of curatorial activities and mindset and cultural awareness in relation to digitised indigenous cultures and artefacts. Consequently, digitalisation is slowly changing traditional lifestyles to modern ones.



## **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that the current change in digital anthropology has created new perspectives in three important aspects: a) changes bring about new digital literacy; b) changes cause the creation of new local and global digital culture and c) the change in digital anthropology has contributed to a shift in people's mindset from a traditional and conservative paradigm to digital modernisation. These findings have significant implications for the understanding of how change in digital anthropology has bolstered a new understanding of the digital literacy.

Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample, this work offers valuable insights into debates and fresh insights into the trend of modernisation of digital innovation that occurs in daily routine. Further research needs to examine more closely the links between digital technology and humans. It may also include the mechanism of digitalisation which influences human interaction, philosophy and the meaning of life. The study findings have a number of important implications for future practice including the digital industrial revolution era and the innovation of digital modernisation. The implications include change creating innovation in higher education policy, curriculum and assessment in tertiary levels.

## **Acknowledgement**

This research article is based on the research grant of Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia, with the contract number: 736/UN36.9/PL/2018. We thank the Rector of Universitas Negeri Makassar for the research grant.

Correspondence regarding this article

If you have any questions or comments about this article, please feel free to contact Dr Amirullah Abduh. Email: [amirullah@unm.ac.id](mailto:amirullah@unm.ac.id)



## REFERENCES

- Armstrong, L. (2016). *Barriers to innovation and change in higher education*. TIAA-CREF Institute. California: University of Southern California.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Cui, J. (2017). Research on Digital Painting Art and Its Diversified Performance. In *3rd International Conference on Economics, Social Science, Arts, Education and Management Engineering* (Vol. 119, pp. 1429–1432). Guangdong: Atlantis Press.
- Dollah, S., Abduh, A., & Talib, A. (2017). Intercultural Sensitivity in English Department Students of An Indonesian Higher Education Institution. *International Journal of Language Education*, 1(2), 38–43.
- Edler, J., & Fagerberg, J. (2017). Innovation policy: what, why, and how. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 33(1), 2–23.
- Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2016). The centrality of engagement in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 20(1), 223–244.
- Howaldt, J., Kopp, R., & Schwarz, M. (2015). Social innovations as drivers of social change—Exploring Tarde’s contribution to social innovation theory building. In *New frontiers in social innovation research* (pp. 29–51). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Kahn, K. B. (2018). Understanding innovation. *Business Horizons*, 61(3), 453–460.
- Lumby, J., & Foskett, N. (2016). Internationalization and culture in higher education. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(1), 95–111.
- Meissner, D., Polt, W., & Vonortas, N. S. (2017). Towards a broad understanding of innovation and its importance for innovation policy. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 42(5), 1184–1211.
- Miller, D. (2018). Digital Anthropology. In F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez, & R. Stasch (Eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (pp. 1–16). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Montoya, S. (2018). Defining literacy Defining literacy : UNESCO. In *UNESCO GAML Fifth Meeting*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.



- Rosmaladewi, R., & Abduh, A. (2017). Collaborative Teaching Cultures of English Lecturers in Indonesian Polytechnics. *International Journal of Language Education*, 01(01). Retrieved from <http://ojs.unm.ac.id/index.php/ijole/article/view/2868>
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340.
- Saviotti, P.-P., & Pyka, A. (2017). Innovation, structural change and demand evolution: does demand saturate? *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 27(2), 337–358.
- Syam, H., Basri, M., Abduh, A., & Patak, A. A. (2019). Hybrid e-Learning in Industrial Revolution 4 . 0 for Indonesia Higher Education. *International Journal on Advanced Science Engineering Information Technology*, 9(4), 1183–1189.