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From Tiny Use Cases to JVMG Labs

An iterative approach to infrastructure development and training in the Japanese Visual Media Graph project

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The Japanese Visual Media Graph project

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- Based at **Stuttgart Media University**
- Currently in cooperation with **University of Tübingen** and **University Library of Tübingen**
- Funded by the **German Research Foundation** (DFG), 6 years duration

Introducing the JVMG project

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- Databases by enthusiast communities are often the **most up-to-date online resource for checking information**

- Project aim: Make these databases available for **large-scale quantitative research, in collaboration with the communities**

Key characteristics of the JVMG project

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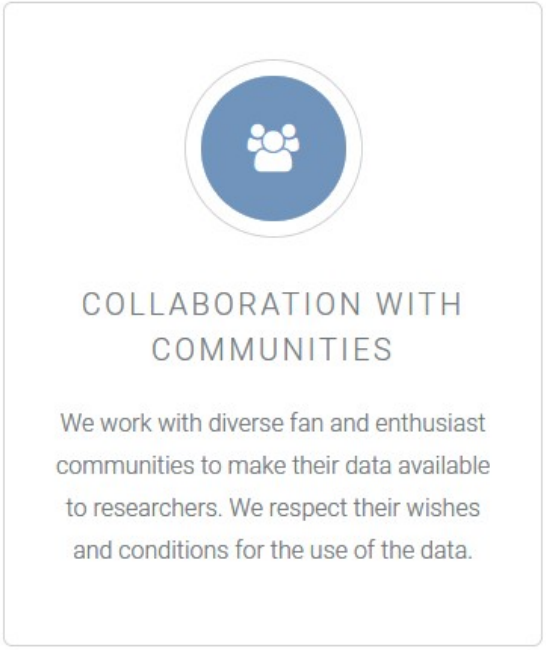
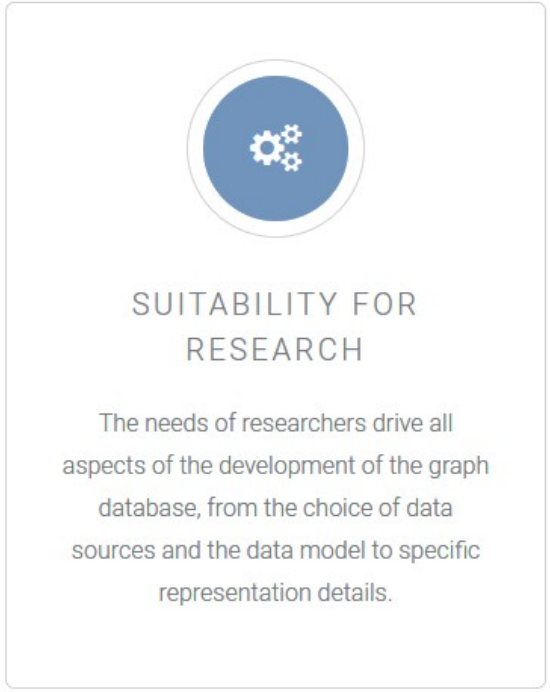
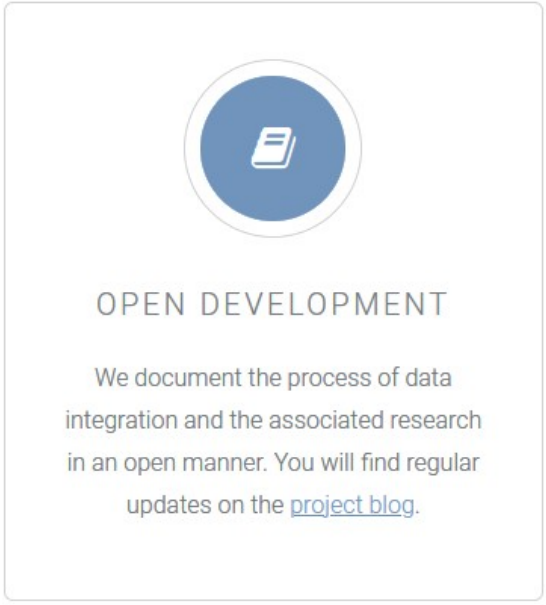


Alt Text:
Collaboration with communities



Alt Text:
Suitability for research



Alt Text:
Open development

Source databases

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Fan/enthusiast community databases:

- **AnimeClick:** Wide interest in Japanese visual media and culture
- **The Visual Novel Database** (VNDB): Focused on visual novel games only
- **Anime Characters Database** (ACDB): Focus on one aspect of the domain

Other databases:

- **Wikidata:** Not focused on Japanese visual media
- **Media-Arts Database:** Collects information on manga, animation, games and media art from institutions, creators and publishers in Japan

General idea for the Tiny Use Case (TUC)

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- Pioneered by the **diggr** (Databased Infrastructure for Global Games Culture Research) research project team
- Inspiration from **agile** software development principles
  - Cycle of continuous incremental innovations and assessments
- Each TUC is **3-4 months** long
- Each TUC confronts the data with a **specific question/aim**

The purpose of TUCs

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- Exploring of the **data's usability and adequacy for research**
  - **Limits**, **quality** issues and **fit**
- **Empowering** the researcher
  - Needs of the researchers in relation to the **frontend**
- Finding a **common language**
  - Bridging disciplinary boundaries between library and computer science on the one hand, and humanities and social science on the other

Pitfalls of the TUC process

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- “not so tiny after all!”
  - **Overambitious** use cases are the biggest threat
- **Vagueness is the enemy** of data
  - **Inadequately defined** use cases (remaining undetected)
- The rabbit-hole of data exploration
  - Or, **how to close** a use case

Examples of Tiny Use Cases

1. **Exploring recurring patterns in character creation** in visual novel games
2. **Examining the concept of media mix** by looking at networks of co-appearing characters
3. Do **character personality traits** follow ideas about the connection between **blood type** and personality?
4. **Census of characters** in Japanese visual media

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Lessons learned from our TUCs

- Research **potentials**: What is the data good for?
  - Corroborating prior findings, generating new hypotheses, identifying connections across data sources
- Scope: Limits to the **available data**
- Logical: Limits to the **types of questions** that can be asked
  - Strong need for creative problem formulations and adjustments
- Literacy: Working with data is **not intuitive**
- Technology: **Graph data vs. Excel table, hardware limits**

JVMG Labs built around TUCs

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- **JVMG Lab events**
  - In-person hands-on training with the knowledge graph
  - Small number of participants
- Using **mini-TUCs as the focus**
  - Pre-discussed mini-TUC research questions
  - Active discussion around the mini-TUCs

Thank you for your attention!

Get in touch at: pfeffer@hdm-stuttgart.de

Visit our project website:
https://jvmg.iuk.hdm-stuttgart.de/

Visit the JVMG database:
https://mediagraph.link/