

Changes in the Manga Industry Due to Digitalization

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1. The Current State of the Publishing Industry

1-1. The Division of Labor Among Publishing Media

Currently, digital media is generating higher sales than print media in the publishing industry. In particular, sales of e-books surged significantly due to stay-at-home demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the industry is now facing a difficult situation where sales of both print and digital media are declining due to rising inflation. Under these circumstances, publishers are developing sales strategies tailored to the characteristics of each title. For example, works aimed at young adults or BL (boys' love) titles—which are often difficult to display at home—are sold via digital media, while regionally focused works are sold in print through partnerships with local bookstores.

1-2. Use of AI in the Publishing Industry

Even as digitization rapidly spreads, the industry as a whole places a high value on direct human-to-human communication. Consequently, systematic AI adoption across the entire company has not yet progressed significantly among publishers. Currently, AI is used only in a limited capacity, primarily to assist with individual creative tasks such as proposing titles for special features. On the other hand, some companies are producing manga entirely generated by AI, and the adult-oriented title **Wife, Won't You Be My Lover?** has garnered attention as a commercially successful example.

However, the industry as a whole remains deeply rooted in an “old-fashioned mindset” that values close, face-to-face relationships with authors, distributors, and bookstore staff. Consequently, the industry is in a “wait-and-see” mode, waiting for major companies to take the lead and establish successful precedents. While publishers are generally indifferent to the source of production as long as sales are generated, there is emotional conflict and debate over whether it is acceptable for AI-generated works to turn a profit while works painstakingly created by human authors fail to sell.

2. The Current State of AI-Generated Manga

2-1. Differences in Creative Domains

It has been suggested that there are genres in which AI excels and genres in which humans excel when it comes to AI-produced manga. First, formulaic genres are cited as areas where AI excels. Currently, AI is particularly adept at producing disposable works that prioritize immediate gratification, and it is predicted

that its use will expand in the future to include works with established story templates, such as “isekai” (alternate world) and “young lady” (reijou) stories. Therefore, it can be said that AI can easily make inroads into these genres. On the other hand, works featuring deep psychological depictions are cited as genres where humans excel. In particular, BL works, where the author’s individuality is highly valued, are a field where the bond between the author and fans is extremely strong; in such genres, human touch holds significant value. Consequently, it is considered difficult for AI to penetrate this area. However, possibilities for collaboration with humans are currently being explored, such as generating illustrations based on the text of novels.



This image was generated by AI.

2-2. Fan Fiction and Copyright

Do works created by AI qualify as fan fiction? First, fan fiction refers to the creation of original works using the worldview and characters of existing works. Strictly speaking, this constitutes a copyright infringement; however, it serves as a breeding ground for discovering new talent, and the current reality is that publishers have tacitly allowed it to the extent that it does not undermine the potential of authors or the passion of dedicated fan communities. Furthermore, works created by AI are clearly distinguished from fan fiction. The act of using AI to generate artwork by extracting the artistic style and techniques of a popular author—especially by someone who does not draw—is considered a direct infringement of the individual author’s rights. Since protecting authors’ rights is fundamental to the publishing industry, this issue is taken very seriously. Consequently, even if publishers appear to be open to AI on the surface, they maintain an extremely cautious stance toward copyright infringement, making it a shared concern across the industry.

3.Future Considerations

From a revenue perspective, there is no objection to utilizing AI. However, it can be said that a deep-seated emotional resistance to the idea of AI surpassing the efforts of human writers remains within the industry. Furthermore, while it is expected that the number of works created by AI will increase in certain genres, more careful measures will likely be required in the future to address copyright infringement caused by AI. Furthermore, since many of the works currently popular with fans—even those centered on combat—feature meticulous psychological depictions, it is considered difficult for AI to create works of the same caliber as those produced by fans. At this stage, precisely because this is an industry that places great

importance on emotion, the scenarios in which AI can be fully utilized are limited. However, by effectively leveraging AI's strengths, there is potential for improved efficiency and new creative possibilities.



This image was generated by AI.