

An Outline of Humanistic Information Science

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Abstract: *The authors of this paper put forward an idea that humanistic informatics is a new science besides natural informatics and social informatics. Then an outline of humanistic informatics is explained.*

Keywords: *humanistic information science; information process; signal; symbol*

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The information process in human practice, including in scientific research, deal with natural and social information. From the perspective of the research object, information science can be divided into two main categories: one is Natural Informatics that deals with natural information; the other is Social Informatics which deal with social information. From the point of view of information carrier, the natural information is a set of signal, while social information has something more than signal, which is symbol.

Comparing symbol with signal, we find that symbol contains some subjective meaning but signal does not. It is because there is the precisely difference between signal and symbol, that the research of natural iInformatics and the research of social informatics distinguish greatly one from another.

The process of information can be divided into signal information process and symbolic information process due to its object; from the perspective of whether the aim of information process can be achieved by the object which uses, the process can be divided into qualified purpose information process and unqualified purpose information process. Natural Informatics has most of its research done in signal information process, qualification purpose information process; Social Informatics research process includes not only the two processes, but also a number of symbolic information procedures, unqualified purpose information process.

The Social Informatics is a concept draw from the comparison with Natural Informatics; actually it can be further divided into narrow Social Informatics and informatics. The former one mainly do research on social signal information and the signal information within symbols, the research process of which is limited to information processes; while the latter mainly do research on symbol information, which is a non-restrictive purpose information process.

We can say the research object of Humanities Informatics is mainly symbolic information; its essence is to understand and translate the meaning of the symbols. Humanities Informatics

research has three features: first, the Humanities Informatics use symbolic information as its object, the existence of symbolic information relies on human's subjective consciousness, and varies from person to person, and symbols can only be meaningful when put into a symbol system, which makes the research actually the research of the whole symbol system. Second, the regulations of Humanities Informatics research not only come from the signal information of the object itself, but also from the common ground of the cognitive parties, which also know as Inter-subjectivity. Third, the Humanities Informatics, the human creativity is subject to the Inter-subjectivity, while at the same time facilitate the mutual understanding between the cognitive parties.

Humanities Informatics Research objects can be divided into three categories: symbols of signal information, the ontology meaning of symbol and the epistemology meanings of symbol.

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