Preface

In all of your deliberations in the Confederate Council, in your efforts at law making, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not over your shoulder behind you the warnings of the nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law which is just and right. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground – the unborn of the future Nation.

– Great Law of the Haudenosaunee[1]

Why a Book About Human Computation?

In the new techno-culture of buffered sociality, in which young people spend more time wearing earbuds and texting frenetically than having real live conversations in a café, we consider the mounting existential challenges that our children and subsequent generations will face. Though human computation may not be a panacea, it does represent an opportunity for us to draw together more effectively as a global people to address such challenges. However, there is a practical issue.

The problem that exists today is that human computation (HC) research is fragmented across isolated communities. That is, HC is developed and implemented in multifarious ways across diverse fields of inquiry and application; yet each of these efforts occurs as an offshoot of some other discipline or as a novel method in some

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[1] The Haudenosaunee league of Native American nations is known in Western culture as the Iroquois. However, "Iroquois" is a French transliteration of a derogatory name used historically by a competing tribe. The correct and proper name, "Haudenosaunee," means "people of the longhouse," which implies that member nations should live together as families in the same longhouse (Wikipedia 2013).

applied domain. But there is very little cross-fertilization, due to typical aversions to crossing community boundaries, philosophical differences, and terminology confusion. One even gleans cultural differences, such as an emphasis in Eastern cultures on systems that support collective rather than individual stakeholders. Thus, this book responds to the need for a clear, comprehensive, current, and interdisciplinary treatment of HC.

Rather than just reporting on the state of practice, we have challenged the confines of our conceptual comfort zones and engaged in bold analysis and risky ideation – something humans still do much better than machines. Ultimately, we have sought to collectively assess the state of the art and anticipate future directions, presenting the combination as a foundation and inspiration for future work and unlikely collaborations.

The Collaboration Has Already Begun

It has been both a tremendous honor and an exercise in humility to collaborate with such a talented, globally distributed (see Fig. 1), and remarkably genuine community of over 115 authors and editors. Perhaps it is the promise of human computation that draws out the humanity in us, that somehow echoes the mantra "we want to own our destiny." Indeed, the goals of this book have already begun to be realized as a consequence of its very development. Authors have formed new, respectful cross-disciplinary relationships, spawning new ideas, many of which appear on the pages of this book. From this chrysalis, we hope to nurture the emergence of human computation as a formal discipline, a charter for which is conveyed in the final chapter of the book.

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Fig. 1 Geographic representation of handbook contributors