Otaku Creations:
The Participatory Culture of Fansubbing

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Abstract

In recent years, Japanese media has become increasingly popular in North America. Whereas anime fandom was once considered a small, outsider community, mainstream networks like Cartoon Network in the United States and YTV in Canada now prominently feature blocks of English-dubbed anime as part of their lineup. As anime is enjoying more mainstream appeal, the underground community of fansubbing has also grown as fans gain access to the same digital equipment as professional producers. This paper offers an introduction to the online community of fansubbers, groups of fans that work together to create English-language subtitled versions of Japanese television programs. Their goal of producing new media from Japanese texts exemplifies the rising participatory culture that consumers are advancing with modern technology. Research for the paper was gathered from informants in the fansubbing community, who were approached using ethnographic methods of participant-observer field research. Through logged chat conversations and direct interviews, the informants offer their perspective on the meaning of fansubbing and the community of anime fans on the Internet. They have also brought forward records of public conversations between fans and commercial producers of anime. While there are many questions still to be addressed, this paper seeks to explain how the process of fansubbing works and some of the motivating factors that bring participants to the table. Through an understanding of fansubbing, we can see one way in which fans are taking a part in the creation of their favorite fictional universes. It can be expected that fans and producers will continue to struggle over the legitimacy of control over these media franchises for a long time to come.

Voir le résumé français à la fin de l'article

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> *Ichigo could hardly believe what was happening to him. First a mysterious girl in a black robe had appeared in his room, explaining that she was there to protect the souls of humans from the evil spirits that lurked around them. Now a monster had attacked his family, dragging his sister into the street out front. The monster bit into the mysterious girl as she hacked at it with her katana. Ichigo was no match for the evil spirit and could only watch the scene helplessly as his sister lay unconscious a few feet away. The swordswoman had said it was his fault that the monster attacked their house that night. It was his soul that the monster wanted to eat.*
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> *"Do you want… to save your family?" she asks. The mysterious girl in black was now too seriously injured to continue fighting. "Of course. Is there a way?" says Ichigo. "There's only one… You… must become a Death god." By stabbing her sword through his heart, he may be able to absorb her power. The power of the Shinigami – elite Death gods who fight evil – would pour into his soul. "I don't know if this will work," says the girl. "But there isn't any other way."*
>
> *As he thrust the sword into his chest, a burst of light fills the street. Suddenly, Ichigo is standing before the monster in the black robe of a Shinigami, with a huge sword in his hands. He attacks the monster, as if by instinct. The creature howls as the steel cuts through it. "Feel my wrath for having raised a hand at my family…" he screams as he goes in for the killing stroke. "AND GO TO HELL!!!"* ("Bleach 1" 2004)

The story of an ordinary person who has extraordinary potential is frequent throughout folk tales and commercial stories universally. From *Beowulf* to *Star Wars,* we can find the hero who will fight evil and take risks to protect the people around him. Ichigo, like Luke Skywalker, must take up his sword and endure the self-sacrifice necessary to gain the power to protect his sister and his friends.

While the story is universal, the way that many fans of the TV Tokyo

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anime *Bleach* enjoy the series is very different from the way they enjoy Hollywood movies. When the original *Star Wars* movie came out in 1977, the movie industry enjoyed a technological advantage over the general public that pretty much gave them exclusive control over the distribution of their products. For fans that spoke different languages, it took months or years for a local version to be produced and released in their area. Today, media has advanced to a degree where fans no longer have to wait for the studio to release a localized version; they can produce that version themselves. Even though *Bleach* is produced and aired in Japan, North American fans can watch the show with English subtitles about a day after new episodes premier. These consumers don't need to just thank "technology" for this opportunity; they need to thank the group of individuals who collaborate with one another to create the new media text.

It is because of the availability of professional quality video editing tools to the average consumer and the increasing number of high-speed Internet connections that fans can produce their own subtitles for the Japanese media and share it with each other through peer-to-peer file sharing networks. But the technology is worthless unless there are people who innovate new ways to use it. The practice of "fansubbing," is an example of the empowerment that modern technology offers fans to participate in the production of the media they enjoy. Through the practice of fansubbing, anime fans collaborate to produce a new media form, built on top of the original Japanese television program.

In this article, I will offer an introduction to the origins of fansubbing and the ways in which fans collaborate and work together within fansubbing groups. I will also explore what this means to the anime fandom and industry regarding the texts they produce. While the methods of collaboration can be different for various groups of fansubbers and spans across many languages, I will focus on a small group of English-language fansubbers. First I will talk about the history of anime fandom in North America and Otaku culture. Next I will deal with the collaboration process that fansubbers use. Finally, I will examine the community that is built around the fansubbing groups and interactions between producers and consumers of the text.

Since there has not been much study of this subject, the main purpose of this paper is to raise questions about the participatory culture of fansubbing. My data comes informants I met through ethnographic field research that I collected over a five-month period, while interacting with staff members of fansubbing groups and fans of anime. This research includes records of conversations fans

had with each other in chat rooms, discussion forum posts and fansubbed anime episodes. It also includes personal interviews I conducted with "Catoneko" and "Gakushi," pseudonyms I have chosen to represent two members of the Dattebayo fansubbing group staff. Catoneko and Gakushi are both native English speakers who were raised in the United States and had an appreciation for anime before they started fansubbing. I chose to study their group because of the longevity of their fansubbing experience and the large number of staff members that would be available to interview.

The second major source for background information is a video transcript of the "Producers and Fans" panel at a major anime convention. I will call this convention "BigAnime" when making references to it. This panel contained four fansubbers (including Gakushi) and four executives from North American anime companies engaging in a discussion of how fansubs affect the anime industry. Specific details about the subjects interviewed and other members of the panel will be deliberately obscured to protect the privacy of all parties.

Rise of the North American Otaku

Anime first became popular in North America among people interested in animation and Japanese culture. In his article on fansubs, Hatcher (2005) explains that in the early days there were very few media companies who were interested in localizing anime programs for English viewers to watch. Out of necessity, anime fans started forming groups that could produce subtitles and accept money for the distribution and production costs of fansubs on VHS tapes. Early collaboration was frequently found on university campuses. "Anime clubs at universities often worked together to produce fansubs, which they then copied between clubs and placed in a club library for member use" (Hatcher 2005, p. 549). This solution allowed English subtitled versions of the shows to be produced, but kept them limited since the equipment was specialized and quality degraded each time a VHS tape was copied.

As the popularity of anime grew, more companies started licensing Japanese programs for localization and official distribution in North American markets. This generally meant that the Japanese audio track would be replaced with an English track and scenes would be cut if they contained graphic violence or nudity. Fans also started establishing a larger infrastructure of institutions that

would support their community. Many fans started referring to themselves as "Otaku," a Japanese slang word for geek. A niche industry grew to import merchandise related to the localized and fansubbed series. Other grassroots networks of fans started collaborative events, such as weekly anime viewing nights or Otaku themed parties.

Fansubbing groups, companies from the industry, and fans started coming together at conventions that celebrated Otaku culture. "Arthur" (pseudonym), a media executive speaking during the panel at BigAnime explained that the conventions were a place for fans to collect media and merchandise. "They would collect everything," Arthur said. "The show was just part of the game. They would buy the posters, they would buy the books, they would buy the stuff." The Otaku had an appreciation for the entire franchise around the show that they watched, especially the Japanese cultural influences.

Conventions celebrating Otaku culture now take place in many cities throughout North America. The Anime Expo in Anaheim, CA has had more than 30,000 annual attendees in recent years and Otakon in Baltimore, MD has gone from 350 attendees in 1994 to more than 22,000 attendees in 2007. While these cons are specifically focused on anime, manga (Japanese comics) and other Otaku interests; broader geek-culture conventions like Comic-con will also have events that cater to the Otaku subset. Comic-con is an annual convention held in San Diego, CA that features comic book, sci-fi and gamer culture and had over 126,000 attendees in 2008. The convention featured three exhibition rooms solely for the purpose of continuously screening anime.

The fact that the Anime industry rose with the advancement of new technology is not coincidental. Satellite and Cable television companies were able to offer a much wider variety of programming for consumers. With more options to choose from, viewers were able to choose niche channels like Cartoon Network who could specialize in animated programming. The Sci-Fi Channel, Canada's YTV and other networks also featured anime programming, which exposed more people to the genre. As viewers became familiar with anime, the fandom grew and more people became a part of the Otaku culture. This not only led to more people purchasing merchandise and localized productions of anime, but also to rising interest in fansubs.

While localized versions of anime series are available on English-language television networks, they often air more than a year after the series appears in Japan. Some Otaku also feel that the localization process removes

essential Japanese elements from the cultural artifact. When dubbing a new audio track, script writers may change jokes that only make sense in Japanese culture and English voice actors will use a different style of speaking to develop their character. Some production companies find it necessary to edit out nudity, explicit violence or other scenes that would be frowned upon by North American censors. Part of being Otaku is having an appreciation for the Japanese culture that produces anime. While most members of the North American Otaku community aren't fluent in Japanese, they enjoy the different perspective that anime is able to give them and want it to remain as close to the original production as possible.

"Phebos" (pseudonym), who explains that he mostly fansubs older anime programs, was another member of the "Producers and Fans" panel at BigAnime. He is very critical of the heavy editing of shows that were localized for North American audiences in the 1970s and 1980s and works to produce fansubbed versions of some of them. "It makes me feel good to be able to present the shows in the way it originally was," Phebos says. He believes that his particular role in the fansubbing world will always be needed, since productions would probably not find it worth the investment to produce subtitles for the series that he works on. His group fansubs these shows because they enjoy them and have a community that appreciates their efforts.

The increase in technology has not been limited to official channels, as any company that has to deal with copyright issues knows well. Video production programs and high-speed Internet connections give fansubbers the ability to get a digital copy of the television program from Japanese sources and add the subtitles with their personal computers. According to Hatcher, "[Modern fansubs] offer a quality comparable to official (DVD) releases and the ability to make limitless copies. Broadband connections mean that now otaku can easily get fansub releases from the comfort of their home—no waiting on the mail and someone with a day job to get around to sending your cassette" (Hatcher 2005, p. 550).

Technological Shifts

With the ability to match localization companies on the quality of subtitled videos, fansubbers are taking part in a larger struggle between corporations and culture. Not only do members of the fansubbing community

want to see their favorite anime series faster than localization companies offer the media, they also want to see it in a style that is closer to Japanese culture. Jenkins describes "Convergence" as the process in which consumers adopt new ways to process information and enjoy media wherever they are. "Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift," he says. "Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, genres and audiences" (Jenkins 2006, p. 15).

If the technologies exist to take part in the community surrounding media, consumers are going to want to be a part of it. Jenkins (2006) also describes the way that new media technologies allow for participation in groups that is similar to the ways communities of people interacted in the nineteenth-century. He says, "Like the older folk culture of quilting bees and barn dances, this new vernacular culture encourages broad participation, grassroots creativity, and a bartering or gift economy" (Jenkins 2006, p. 132). Barn dances featured local musicians playing popular songs, perhaps adding their own riffs or improvisations. After a while, one set of musicians would retire and another set would take their place.

The audience wasn't just taking in the performance, however, since the dancing itself was part of the performative act. Participants could choose to dance along with their partner, or perhaps retire to a quiet corner to rest their feet and discuss their opinions on the way the artists played, the composition of the songs, the way their friends danced, or another matter completely off topic. This participatory folk culture was very different from the passive acceptance of media that was practiced for radio and television in the twentieth century. While fan fiction and parody did exist, the technology of the time didn't allow them to become as easily distributed as fansubs.

When anime fans use new media in the fansubbing community, they are engaging in a hybrid between the old participatory folk culture and the more recent media consumption model. While they are still reliant upon the Japanese production companies to provide them with cultural artifacts, it is the fans who choose how to translate and present the new text for consumption. Forums and chat rooms allow for instant feedback to the fansub producers, so that they can respond to fan requests and suggestions. One example of this is the Anime Database (AniDB) website, which allows users to rate the quality of various fansubbing groups, read reviews of anime series, and keep track of their digital anime collections. Even if a member of the fansubbing community isn't

producing new texts, he can still contribute something to the discussion. Jenkins points out, "Within convergence culture, everyone's a participant – although participants may have different degrees of status and influence" (Jenkins 2006, p. 132).

Fansubbers who provide the most popular media will have the highest status in the fansubbing community. Much of Dattebayo's popularity comes from the fact that they release DVD quality videos within 24 hours of the show airing in Japan. The fansub viewer can also gain recognition, however, if she does a good critique of the show in her blog. A consistent critic who is known for offering constructive feedback on discussion forums will obviously be more highly considered than the random comment on the AniDB website. Unlike the traditional media, however, where there is a very clear line between producer and consumer, a fansub viewer can become a fansubber by learning one of the skill sets needed in the production process.

The Collaboration Process

Robert Burnett and David Marshall (2003) equate the collaborative nature of the Internet with user empowerment in their book on web theory. "The term 'user' also captures another clear defining characteristic of the Web: it is as much about looking, reading, observing and browsing as it is about a kind of empowerment to produce," they say. "The Web provisions the user to eliminate the natural divisions between production, distribution, and exhibition as the network makes these divides meaningless" (Burnett and Marshall 2003, p. 73). With empowerment to produce, individuals are able to create new texts that other users are free to consume. By combining their various talents, groups of users can collaborate to produce a text that could be beyond the skills of just one person. Fansubbing uses this collaboration concept to produce media that is on par with commercial releases of subtitled products and the networking inherent in the Web to seamlessly distribute throughout the community.

In order to produce new media, different groups of fansubbers will emerge and establish a solid brand with which to identify themselves. They generally choose a group name, adopt a logo or other identifying markers, and set up a website to provide fans with news and links to their works. Sometimes they will primarily specialize in fansubbing one genre of anime, such as futuristic space operas or school life comedies. Each group may have a different style, but

that is only a reflection of the collaboration process that takes place between the fans that are involved.

Jenkins says, "Fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants" (Jenkins 2006, p. 131). This "full participation" concept is taken to the extreme by fansubbers, since they actually produce the texts that the other members of the community consume. Members of fansubbing groups divide up responsibilities for video production into specific tasks. While some people may handle more than one task or multiple people will work together on a task in the process, it is rare that a single person will do the entire process himself. Hatcher (2005) identifies the steps as: raw acquisition, translation, timing, editing, typesetting, quality control and distribution.

For Dattebayo, an individual in Japan does the raw acquisition. A computer is used to capture the digital television broadcast of the shows that they sub, including the closed caption feed. This feed is very useful to the translator, who watches the show and writes an English script for the dialog. If any point in the dialogue is unclear, a translator usually has the ability to contact another fansubbing colleague through chat programs or he can use reference materials to answer his questions.

Once the script is written, it is passed off to an editor to clean up the text. She makes sure that the translation has good grammar and phrasing, "turning Engrish into English" as Catoneko explained. A careful balance is kept between making sure the lines are proper English, but also keeping the Japanese influence of the original cultural artifact. The next step is to have a "timer" add timing cues to the script, so that digital video software will know the proper time to show each subtitle line. The timer ensures that the English subtitles appear and disappear as the Japanese lines of dialogue are spoken.

The "typesetter" adds stylization to the script, choosing the screen placement of subtitles, which fonts to use, and karaoke effects for songs. Most groups also have typesetters create custom signs to accompany written text on the screen, such as newspaper headlines or building signs. The typesetting can become the most technically demanding part of the process with some groups using professional-grade visual effects programs like Adobe After Effects to seamlessly insert user created graphics into the video.

Members of the quality control team watch the video to make sure that no errors were missed by other members of the collaboration. They make notes

of anything that needs to be fixed and send it back if necessary. Finally, the "encoder" uses digital video software to save the video file in a manner that will make it easy to share in peer-to-peer networks. While many anime episodes are available for direct download on the Web or are hosted on private servers, the most popular way to download media is through the BitTorrent network that allows every computer downloading the file to also upload it to other users.

Through this collaboration, the members of the fansubbing team create a new text for their fellow anime fans and Otaku to consume. While this text is based upon the Japanese cultural artifact that they added the subtitles to, the way in which they choose to translate and present the show will change the experience of the viewer. The only way to be a full participant of the original Japanese television program would be if the fan understood Japanese, so that she could view the text in its original context and then join in whatever fan culture exists in Japanese society.

Fans who don't speak Japanese may not be able to engage in the Japanese fan culture, but they are able to form a new culture around the fansubbed media that is provided to them. No translation can perfectly convey the nuances of the original Japanese cultural artifact because of the differences and limitation in language. This gives the fansubbers the responsibility of choosing what stylistic elements they will use in their production of the translation. As various fansubbing groups choose different ways to present the new text, members of the Otaku community will decide which production of the show they will download and watch. Issues related to this choice are often a topic of discussion in fan forums and chat rooms.

Fans who remember the first episode of *Bleach* as translated by Lunar Fansubs (which was described in the beginning of this paper), may discuss the way urban slang in subtitles enhances the gritty feel of the story. Other fans, who watch fansubbed episodes from Dattebayo, may enjoy the fact that this group goes to great lengths to preserve as much Japanese cultural influence as possible, leaving Japanese honorifics and words specific to the series untranslated. Instead of saying "Mr. Urahara," the dialog is left as "Urahara-san." Ichigo's little sister will address him as "nii-chan," a Japanese term of endearment for older brothers. Fans can make their own connections to words like "Shinigami" and "Zanpaktou," instead of being burdened with the connotations that translations like "Death god" and "Soul Cutting Sword" would bring to mind. A Shinigami in Japanese folk culture does not have the same kind of standing as a "god" in the

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Western traditions.

Creating a Community

The ways in which a fansubbing group can choose to establish a community is as open to them as the new media in which they operate. Dattebayo is one of the largest and most popular fansubbing groups. According to the Anime List on AniDB, Dattebayo is the largest source for fansubs of *Naruto* and *Bleach*, two popular anime series. *Bleach* is the most frequently collected anime series currently running. The leaders of Dattebayo parody a corporate website for their home page, using "press releases" to share group news with their fans. While the press releases are the main way that the staff of Dattebayo communicates with their fans, the tone of the posts usually ranges from snarky to verbally abusive. One press release dealt with a series of fan questions regarding the release date for the upcoming *Naruto* movie:

> AS ANYONE WITH SIMPLE MATH SKILLS CAN FIGURE OUT, THE NEXT NARUTO SHIPPUUDEN MOVIE IS NOT DUE TO BE RELEASED FOR MONTHS. SO STOP FUCKING ASKING.
>
> As you can probably guess, anyone asking about the release date of the next Naruto Shippuuden movie (or any other release date) will be banned.
>
> -Your friendly DB Staff   ("Press Release 99" 2008).

Other posts are referred to as "trolls" by the staff and are meant to elicit a strongly negative reaction. These joke postings may give false details on how a staff member had been fired from the "company" or that the group will be abandoning the production of a favorite series because they are sick of the fans. These are generally followed up with edits after a few days, poking fun at the idea that anyone would believe the made-up story. According to Catoneko, the jokes and satire give Dattebayo a "special atmosphere." She says, "we have a lot of funny/sarcastic people… those are my favorite kinds of people." Many fans also seem to enjoy the jokes, either congratulating the staff for a clever prank or playing along by expressing over-the-top outrage in the public chat room. Even though staff members often threaten to ban fans who annoy them

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from the site and the public chat room, they seem to actually care quite a bit about reading the feedback that comes in from their website. Catoneko and other staff members take time to at least glance at each response and sometimes answer them. "We really get a lot of nice messages," she says and shares an example: "I've been touched by certain moments of Naruto and Bleach, and realize it is all because of you. Thank you for those moments of relaxation and enjoyment that are independent of traffic, schedules, meetings and whatnot."

On occasion the staff will even drop their sarcastic façade and thank the fans for being a part of the community. On the fourth anniversary of the date the Dattebayo team started fansubbing, they put out a press release detailing the group's history. Even if a bit snarky they showed real gratitude for their fans at the end by saying: "The staff at Dattebayo Fansubs would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the last four years by downloading, sending us entertaining comments, or defending us on random anime forums. Although you don't really make it all possible, subbing would definitely be a lot less amusing without you" ("Press Release 85" 2008).

Even as they joke around, implying that the fans are not important, most members of the Dattebayo staff are the first people to point out that it is because they themselves are *fans* that they are producing fansubs. While many fans see Dattebayo as an essential part of the English subtitle version of the anime they watch, they don't lose sight of the fact that TV Tokyo and the Japanese production companies are even more necessary for the show to exist. Staff members also realize they are indirectly in competition with Viz Media, the official North American localization company for both *Bleach* and *Naruto*. Profits from international sales are important to the Japanese studios to sustain the franchises they produce.

Jenkins argues that while fan culture can help make a media franchise profitable, the production companies have just as much difficulty as the fans do in defining the relationship between producers and consumers. "This contradiction is felt perhaps most acutely when it comes to cult media content. A cult media success depends on courting fans constituencies and niche markets; a mainstream success is seen by the media producers as depending on distancing themselves from them," he says (Jenkins 2006, p. 138). While Viz has never officially recognized Dattebayo's existence, or attempted to contact them so far as can be seen, they have also chosen to ignore the fact that the group is violating their copyrights to the *Bleach* and *Naruto* franchises. Many companies that own the

distribution rights for anime will send Cease and Desist (C&D) letters to members of groups fansubbing their series.

The fact that Viz has never sent a C&D is seen as an implicit blessing to the work of Dattebayo. So long as Viz doesn't serve them legal notice, the group feels that they have an unspoken understanding with the company. Dattebayo will produce the fansubbed version of the show and Viz will produce the official subtitles and English audio for DVD release. Gakushi from Dattebayo talks about this implied relationship when speaking at the BigAnime panel. "We at Dattebayo make an attempt… to keep [the fansubbed media] under our control" so that if they are ever asked to end their fansubbing projects by Viz they can stop distributing the unofficial productions. He adds that maintaining a high quality production of the fansubbed media is also important to maintaining the popularity of the franchise. Staff and community members chastise other fan groups who re-encode the Dattebayo episodes into lower quality formats and regularly request YouTube and other video distribution sites to remove the videos.

Gakushi says, "In the end, the good work we do on the show is a promotional tool for viz. If the work wasn't good, the show would lose some popularity." This gives Viz an incentive to leave Dattebayo alone, since the popularity of Dattebayo's fansubs effectively crowds other fansubbers out of the market who might have lower standards. It is because the show is popular that Cartoon Network and YTV pay Viz the licensing fee for broadcasting English dubs, but it would be against their interests to recognize any small part that Dattebayo may play in the matter. Jenkins points out, "The fans' labor in enhancing the value of an intellectual property can never be publicly recognized if the studio is going to maintain that the studio alone is the source of all value in that property" (Jenkins 2006, p. 138).

Members of Dattebayo stress the fact that they don't have an adversarial relationship with Viz, TV Tokyo or any of the other producers of *Bleach* and *Naruto*. On the contrary, they are fans of the media and want to see the franchises become more popular internationally. They simply exist to fulfill a specific niche that is not otherwise being addressed. They provide a high quality English-language subtitled version of the show that attempts to preserve the unique characteristics of the Japanese cultural artifact and is available immediately after the show airs in Japan. Gakushi says, "I think the best way to compete with what Dattebayo does is to do it just as well, but legally. I mean there's an audience for that."

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Conclusion

Fansubbing is a time consuming and potentially expensive activity for the people who take part in producing the new media. If these individuals worked for an anime company that produced the localized media professionally, they would be paid well for their efforts. Or if they were willing to just wait until the DVDs were released, they could buy the series for less than their time is worth.

For the staff members of a fansubbing group, the collaborative act is what makes the activity meaningful. The quilting bees of the nineteenth century were a chance to make bedspreads that were needed to keep people warm at night, but the reason they were done in a participatory setting was because of the simple fact that people enjoy doing things with their friends. The participatory nature of fansubbing allows group members the opportunity to get to know each other while engaging a subject they find stimulating. "I really like most of the people I've met," Catoneko said. "I think that's actually one of the best parts of fansubbing."

The appeal of fansubs to consumers isn't just about having the media. It is also about having the anime in the way they want to have it. Translation style, aesthetics of the subtitles, and timing of release are important components of the fansubs, but the collaborative nature of the media and the knowledge that this work comes from members of the fandom also plays a role. When fans express their opinions to the producers of fansubs, they know that they are talking to someone like them. They download the video because they enjoy the story, and fansubs allow them to participate in interpreting it.

I believe that further research into the culture of fansubbing should follow the work of Jenkins, and other media researchers who focus on the social forces behind consumer demand. "Corporations imagine participation as something they can start and stop, channel and reroute, commodify and market," says Jenkins. "Consumers, on the other side, are asserting a right to participate in the culture, on their own terms, when and where they wish. This empowered consumer faces a series of struggles to preserve and broaden this perceived right to participate" (2006, p. 169). Consumers and fans feel empowered by the ability to share their favorite media in a way that makes it accessible to others through creating translations, discussing plot developments, or simply describing their favorite scenes in a new narrative.

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At the last minute, Ichigo was able to stop the attack of his enemy. It had been a long time since he had first gained his Shinigami powers, but he still had to learn to hone his skills if he wanted to master these abilities. This power would be of no use unless he had the self-discipline necessary for improvement.

"I'm sorry, Nel," he said, as he protected his friend from the line of fire. "I made you suffer because I was being stubborn over something so stupid." His enemy, Dordonii, taunted him to draw upon the "Hollow" force inside him, the dark side of his soul that was powerful but difficult to control.

Ichigo had been determined not to use this power… but that was before Nel had been targeted. He wasn't sure if he could win the fight and still protect his friend. "Are you angry, niño? What's there to be mad about?" Dordonii asks. "Your goal is to protect your friends and mine is to defeat you when you're at full strength."

Ichigo sends Nel to safety and begins to draw on his dark power. The reiatsu spirit energy fills him as an evil mask forms around Ichigo's face. His opponent laughs with delight as the room begins to shake. "Wonderful! What wonderful reiatsu! I never expected I'd be able to fight against such a wonderful opponent, niño!" Dordonii cries. "Now, let's go at it with our full power, niño!"

But there was no more fighting. There was only a flash and Dordonii lay bleeding on the floor. Ichigo had kept control of his power and unleashed it in an instant. He remains determined to overcome any danger that may threaten his friends. ("Bleach 152" 2007)

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Bio

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Keywords

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The Participatory Culture of Fansubbing
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Résumé

Ces dernières années, les médias japonais sont devenus de plus en plus populaires en Amérique du Nord. Considérant que la communauté de fans d'animation japonaise (*anime*) était autrefois considérée comme une petite communauté isolée, les réseaux de télévision grand public tels que Cartôon Network aux États-Unis et YTV au Canada dédient des plages horaires à des séries d'*anime* doublé en anglais dans le cadre de leur programmation. Comme l'*anime* jouit d'un intérêt plus commercial, la communauté de *fansubbing* sous-jacente augmente également, alors que les fans accèdent au même équipement numérique que les producteurs professionnels. Cet article propose une introduction à la communauté en ligne des *fansubbers*, des groupes de fans qui travaillent ensemble afin de créer de versions sous-titrées en langue anglaise de programmes de télévision japonaise. Leur intérêt à produire de nouveaux médias à partir de textes japonais illustre la croissance d'une culture participative que les consommateurs font progresser grâce à la technologie moderne. Les données pour cette recherche furent recueillies auprès d'informateurs de la communauté de *fansubbing*, qui furent approchés en utilisant des méthodes ethnographiques de recherche (participant-observateur) sur le terrain. Par le biais de conversations en ligne et d'entretiens directs, les informateurs offrent leur perspective sur la signification du *fansubbing* et la communauté de fans d'*anime* sur Internet. Ils ont également fourni des enregistrements de conversations publiques entre les fans et les producteurs commerciaux d'*anime*. Bien qu'il existe encore de nombreuses questions à traiter, cet article souhaite expliquer le processus de *fansubbing* et certains facteurs de motivation des participants. Grâce à une meilleure compréhension du phénomène, nous pouvons constater une nouvelle manière pour les fans de prendre part à la création de leurs univers de fiction favoris. On peut dès lors s'attendre que les fans et les producteurs continueront pour longtemps encore à lutter pour la légitimité du contrôle sur ces franchises médiatiques.