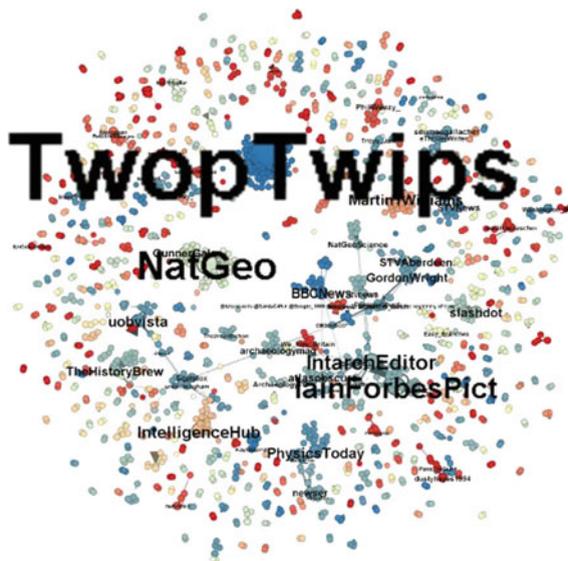# Part IV
Onwards and Upwards
The Never-ending Paradigm of Digital Heritage

The end of history was, as it turned out, much exaggerated (Fukuyama 1992) and the future histories of digital heritage may well be viewed in a similar light. As emphasised in the introduction (Fig. 1), digital heritage has witnessed a series of revolutions that show no signs of stopping or even stalling. It appears that enhanced or novel digital data sources, distributed storage and analysis, pervasive and mobile technologies and social media contribute to this position. Whilst the development of existing and future technologies remains central to the development of the discipline it may yet be the case that the spread of social media in its multifaceted guises will prove to be of the greatest significance to the advance of digital heritage. This does not simply reflect growing access to data, although that is a critical change. Rather this reflects attitudes to digital ownership and the

sophisticated manner in which digital heritage is both produced and recombined in a multitude of user-defined states and permutations. To demonstrate this point, the illustration above is a map of tweets responding to the publication of a single digital article over a 5-hour period (Gaffney et al. 2013). A detailed understanding of the manner in which such data are cascaded and the nature of communities who apparently see academic events as significant or worthy of comment is something that heritage practitioners rarely understand or currently consider. An appreciation of such data and the provision of responding strategies may well be our next great challenge.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Penguin, London.

Gaffney V., Fitch S., Ramsey E., Yorston R., Ch'ng E., Baldwin E., Bates R., Gaffney C., Ruggles C., Sparrow T., McMillan A., Cowley D., Fraser S., Murray C., Murray H., Hopla E., & Howard A. (2013). *Time and a place: a luni-solar 'time-reckoner' from 8th millennium BC Scotland*. Internet Archaeology (http://www.dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.34.1)