Data-rich History for 19th Century Literature in Finland

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Abstract

Consortium *Digital History for Literature in Finland* (Research Council of Finland, 2022–26)[1] focuses on renewing current understanding of the literary history of the long 19th century – which, in Finland, covers the period of autonomy, 1809–1917 – by combining detailed historical analysis with a dedicated bibliographic data science framework, presented by Julia Matveeva, Osma Suominen and Leo Lahti in their abstract. Collaboration between researchers from the universities of Turku and Eastern Finland and the National Library of Finland makes it possible, for the first time, to build a data rich view of the history of Finland's publishing landscape. We will systematically mine the bibliographic metadata for all available published fictional works that are included in the National Bibliography Fennica and complement this by close reading of the Finnish and Swedish language literary texts in either digital or traditional paper format.

In this presentation, we are focusing on the research done in the WP1 (Literary history in the 19th century Finland, UEF) and WP 3 (Digital resources, The National Library of Finland). Based on the curated corpus – which is currently under development – of about 2800 first editions of the published fictional works that are included in the National Bibliography Fennica, we ask, what kind of fiction was published in Finland during the 19th century. What kind of changes and patterns rise above others? Which genres can be considered as prolific literary forms in the literary scene? The titles are of particular interest as *paratexts* (Genette 1987/1997), as they contain a wealth of genre terms: what do the titles tell us about the way contemporaries structured the genre?

This multidisciplinary project is framed in the field of digital humanities. It stems from the first wave of such initiatives in Finland; elsewhere, such digital or data rich literary

[1] https://sites.utu.fi/digital-history-literature-finland/en/frontpage/

history has been developed e. g. by Franco Moretti (2000/2013) and Katherine Bode (2018). The method used in the project is a combination of *bibliographic data science* (Lahti & al 2019), *data-rich literary history* (Bode 2018) as well as *meso-analysis* (Saint-Amour 2019, Parente-Capková, Launis & Westerlund 2023) or *resourceful reading* (Bode ja Dixon 2010), which combine the distant and close reading of literature. We use both new-empirical and eResearch techniques and put emphasis on empirical bibliographical study (Bode & Dixon 2010); our approach is defined by the use of digital methods and expertise in data science, bibliographic and library knowledge, and a solid knowledge of the literary history and the 19th century context.

Keywords: bibliographic data science, data-rich literary history, Finnish literature, meso-analysis, National Bibliography Fennica.

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