

Petri Paju, Aalto University & University of Turku

## Drawing a Roadmap for Digital History in Finland?

In 2015, the nascent field of digital history in Finland saw a tremendous development, and in many ways this has continued ever since. This paper presents work by the project “Towards a Roadmap for Digital History in Finland: Mapping the Past, Present & Future Developments of Digital Historical Scholarship.” The ongoing project was awarded by the Kone Foundation in December 2015 and lasts for 12 months. Its Principal Investigator is professor Mats Fridlund (Aalto University). With the last third of its length left, the paper aims to discuss some key questions and challenges firstly in its own work and goals, and secondly in the field of digital history research in Finland in general.

The project work started in February 2016. Its information gathering, including interviews, are carried on from March onwards. To prepare historians for its inquiry, the project organized a public Opening Seminar titled “Digital History in Finland: Possible Futures” in Helsinki 15.4.2016. It featured expert speakers from history’s neighboring disciplines (archeology and historical linguistics) and presentations about computational history in Finland as well as about big data from a historians’ point of view.

The online inquiry was open from late April till end of June 2016. It was widely advertised with for example articles written in both Swedish and Finnish. Altogether seventeen (17) persons responded to the inquiry. This somewhat low number of respondents will be complemented by results from other recent surveys and user studies of which there are a few.

Based on these inquiry answers, the researcher of the project compiled a report and the report, called “Digitaalinen historiantutkimus kyselytuloksia” (12 pages, with an abstract and key results in English), was made public in the project’s blog 1.9.2016. Main results of the report centered on the complexity of defining digital history and researchers difficulties with such an identity. Several critical issues were identified, namely creating better, up-to-date information channels of digital history resources and events, providing relevant education, skills, and teaching by historians, and the need to help historians and information technology specialists to meet and collaborate better and more systematically than before. Meanwhile there is a lot happening in the field of digital history that should and will be somehow included in the mapping. But how do you map such a fast changing domain and what kind of a roadmap do we need or want?