

CALL FOR PAPERS

Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity

20–22 August, 2014

Helsinki, Finland

Papers are invited which seek to contribute to the study of the **social history of literacy** and its connection to the advent of modernity. *Modernity* is here understood to have taken place anytime from the 17th to the 20th centuries, depending on the context. *Literacy* is meant not just as the ability to read and write but rather as the totality of processes and practices involved in the production, dissemination and reception of written texts, while the perspective ‘from below’ indicates that the focus is on non-privileged people, their experiences and points of view.

Studying the literacy practices of people with little or no formal education from the lower strata of society challenges traditional dichotomies such as manuscript vs. print, oral vs. written and centre vs. periphery. This *from below* perspective also changes the ways in which the processes of literacy education, acquisition and appropriation have previously been understood, and thus invites a revision of social, cultural and literary history.

The language of the conference is English. Participants are welcome from disciplines such as folklore studies, history, linguistics and literature. The proposed papers should focus on literacy and involve a ‘from below’ perspective. Suggested themes:

- Interface between the oral and the written
- Print cultures and scribal communities
- Sponsors of literacy
- Genres and source materials
- Conventions and traditions of reading and writing
- Early media and the public sphere
- Reading experiences
- Artefactual philology
- Popular prints

The programme will include plenary lectures held by **Jan Blommaert, Archie Dick and Margaret Ezell** as well as paper sessions. Each paper will be allocated 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for discussion. Abstracts of no more than 2000 characters (including spaces) should be sent to reading-conference@helsinki.fi by **October 1st, 2013**.

Notifications of acceptance will be communicated in November 2013. Please include your name, affiliation and contact information in your abstract, in addition to a brief biography (max. 1000 characters).

The conference is organised by the research project *Reading and writing from below: Toward a new social history of literacy in the Nordic sphere during the long nineteenth century* (financed by the NOS-HS, 2011–2014).

Organising committee:

Anna Kuismin, Senior Fellow, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies

Tuija Laine, Professor of Book History, University of Helsinki

Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Academy Research Fellow, University of Helsinki

Laura Stark, Professor of Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä

Kristiina Anttila, Conference Assistant

<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/nord-corp/conference-helsinki-2014-3/>