



The Emergence of Finnish Book and Reading Culture in the 1700s

Edited by
Cecilia af Forselles and Tuija Laine

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P.O. Box 259

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Introduction

The radical transformation of the reading culture in Finland that took place during the 1700s was not simply a question of an increase in the number of literate or well-read citizens. What was revolutionary was that the quantity of available book titles and new literary genres grew unprecedentedly. Books began to influence people's awareness, worlds of ideas, and emotions in new ways, and reading became associated with significant cultural transformations at the personal and societal levels.

The purpose of the work *The Emergence of Finnish Book and Reading Culture in the 1700s* is to examine this pivotal phase in the development of Finnish reading culture. Drawing on new research, the book is for the most part based on the Finnish-language work *Kirjakulttuuri kaupungissa 1700-luvulla* ("Urban Book Culture in the 1700s") published by the Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

In recent years, book historical research has become an increasingly multidisciplinary field of science favoring new approaches in Finland as in many other countries. Owing to its interdisciplinary nature, it often approaches the phrasing of its questions and subject matter through the history of ideas, social structures, cultures, literature and communications. Its researchers' innovative attitudes towards the history of books, book culture, communications and reading have also led to new ways of treating research materials and sources that are presented in the book's first chapter.

Helsinki is used as a model city in several articles, with other cities' book ownership information supplemented based on the Helsinki materials. In particular, the latter half of the 1700s witnessed a dynamic development phase in the literary cultures of Finnish cities. Among the questions addressed in the articles are the following: What kinds of literature were typical of the city's different social classes? Who owned and read literature? For what reasons did people acquire certain books?

Predictably, the largest single literary genre, read also in 1700s Helsinki, was religious literature: hymnals, Bibles, catechisms, sermons, and devotional books. This pattern however changed substantially as secular literature began to proliferate, particularly as the end of the century approached. Religious literature continued to maintain its dominant status among the rural peasantry, but its position in cities among merchants, civil servants, and craftspersons was no longer as strong. Although Helsinki was not yet a seat of power, only a small coastal town, a resident of that city might be able

to read, either in the original language or a Swedish translation, the kinds of French-language works, that a French peasant, to say nothing of his Finnish counterpart, had never even held in his hands.

It is fascinating to note that the literary culture of the 1700s and our global age share certain common features: internationality and multilingualism. Secular literature, as well as the greatest part of the most popular religious literature, proliferated as translations of the original foreign-language works. The emerging popularity of fiction made Finnish readers a part of broader ideological, cultural and intellectual contexts that crossed national borders. The internationality of book culture is clearly in evidence when examining, for example, the literature that was known in Helsinki during the 1700s. Most books had been published abroad. Literature was read in its original languages as well as in a profuse number of Swedish- and German-language translations.

The city names mentioned in the articles are noted in the Finnish language form although the Swedish language forms were dominant in the 1700s. The fortress in front of Helsinki, was originally Viapori in Finnish and Sveaborg (Fortress of Sweden) in Swedish. Nowadays the entire island is called Suomenlinna (Fortress of Finland). Today, the Finnish language and place names prevail, although Swedish place names are also in use because Swedish is the other official language of Finland. After the separation of Finland from Sweden in 1809 and from Russia in 1917, the Finnish language became the dominant language of the nation. In the introductory chapter, however, the Swedish language forms of the cities' names are presented.

The book consists of seven separate articles. The introduction consists of the different views that the authors have expressed of book history as a part of cultural history, as well as a presentation of the source materials, including the HENRIK database, used to trace book ownership, but it does not present a joint standpoint or declaration of any kind. Ph.D. Jessica Parland-von Essen continues by treating the Helsinki of the 1700s from a cultural-historical perspective. Docent Tuija Laine examines the clergy as a transmitter, buyer and user of literature. The focus is on the representatives of the clerical estate who frequented Helsinki's auction houses as well as, on a broader scale, the clergy of the Uusimaa and Häme provinces during the latter half of the 1700s.

Master of Theology Minna Ahokas clarifies how the literature of the European Enlightenment reached the Finnish readership of the 1700s. Receiving close attention is the ownership and acquisition in Finnish cities of literature written by the Enlightenment philosophers. Ahokas also analyses the ways in which Enlightenment literature passed from one social class to another, and identifies the works of the Enlightenment that were most popular in the Finland of the 1700s.

Ph.D. Jyrki Hakapää's theme is the history of professional literature that supported and developed merchants' professional skills. Besides the book ownerships revealed in estate inventory deeds and auction catalogues, Hakapää also considers the history of the books' use.

The article by Ph.D. Cecilia af Forselles focuses on the new emerging literary forms – fiction, history, and travel accounts – that gained popu-

larity during the 1700s, as well as their significance as transmitters of new thoughts and values, and as tools for city dwellers' personal development and enhancement of the inner Self.

Docent Ilkka Mäkinen illustrates the breakthrough of a new literary genre – the novel – that took place in late 1700s Finland. In particular, he clarifies the reading preferences of the Viapori coastal fortress's officers as well as the arrival of loan libraries in Finland.

For the various types of assistance provided to us in the editing of this book, we would like to thank Riikka Kaasalainen, Milla Mäkelä and Sirpa Vasko at the Library of the Finnish Literature Society, D.Th. (h.c.) Anna Perälä, translator Roger Freundlich, copy editors Pauliina Rihto and Johanna Ilmakunnas, as well as the various archives and libraries whose materials were kindly made available for our editorial and photographic use. We would also like to warmly thank the Niilo Helander Foundation whose support facilitated the publication of this work in the English language.

Helsinki 1 December 2010

Cecilia af Forselles Tuija Laine

MINNA AHOKAS, CECILIA AF FORSELLES, JYRKI HAKAPÄÄ,
TUIJA LAINE, ILKKA MÄKINEN AND JESSICA PARLAND-VON ESSEN

Book Ownership Sources in Finland During the 1700s

Reception research in the study of book history

Recent trends in book history research, besides focusing on the book itself as a technically manufactured object, have also generated an interest in a book's cultural and societal significances.¹ Understanding the semiotics of books requires a mapping of wide-ranging linkages, for example the study of the books' publication, marketing, circulation, and reception. These bring far-reaching interpretive possibilities to book history, including the opportunity to document printed products' social impacts and analyze fundamental cultural transformations.²

An understanding of books' influences also requires a knowledge of their origin and use. A book is not created in a vacuum; it is a product of its society, civilization and culture. Already at the dawn of the Early Modern Era, there was usually, besides the author, also a printer, seller, binder, and reader. Generally a book had one or several owners, consecutively or even simultaneously because the more expensive books might also be owned jointly. Rarely are we able to discern what books private individuals read, or how they read them. Tracking the ownership histories and circulations of books, however, enables us to gain a picture of the thoughts, values, and information that were available to the readers of the 1700s.

In Finland, the acquisition and reading of literature became increasingly common, particularly beginning from the 1700s, as an increase in the number of literate citizens coincided with the growing importance of an emerging bourgeoisie. As we study the 1700s, we find an era in which a reader's spiritual freedom and opportunity to personally influence the quality and level of his or her own education broadened. That an interest in a certain subject or literary genre could channel a person's reading habits was a novel concept. A central part of the new reading culture was the possibility

1. Darnton 1984, 1987; Svedjedahl 1994; Laine 1996; Björkman 1998.

2. Chartier 2000, 61–133.

to deepen, put one's soul into, and contemplate one's own solitary reading experience in the comfort of tranquil surroundings.

The incipient phases of the HENRIK database and its use in book history research

In the Finnish context, the most important sources for tracing the ownership of books are the book lists in estate inventory deeds, as well as book auction catalogues. The wide-ranging collection and organization of the book information contained in these sources was nothing less than the life's work of the librarian at the National Library of Finland, Ph.D. (h.c.) Henrik Grönroos, who expended considerable time and effort on this task over a period of several decades. Concentrating on Finland during the Era of Swedish Rule, he assembled information contained in cities' estate inventory deeds and book auction catalogues concerning ownership, literature that was bought and sold, and clarified questions related to the owners' social status. The material provides an excellent basis for various types of book history-related further research. The estate inventory deed material assembled by Henrik Grönroos was published in 1996 in his *Boken i Finland*, co-authored with Ann-Charlotte Nyman. The more comprehensive, and more productive from the research standpoint, book lists are contained in estate inventory deeds from the cities of Helsinki/Helsingfors, Hämeenlinna/Tavastehus, Kaskinen/Kaskö, Kokkola/Karleby, Loviisa/Lovisa, Naantali/Nådendal, Oulu/Uleåborg, Pietarsaari/Jakobstad, Porvoo/Borgå and Tornio/Torneå.

Now the book mentions in estate inventory deeds and book auction catalogues – for the cities of Helsinki and Oulu – have also been entered into the open HENRIK database (<http://dbgw.finlit.fi/henrik/index.php>) maintained by the Finnish Literature Society (SKS). The materials collected by Grönroos have also been partially supplemented from other sources. The intent will be to eventually augment the database with the book information recorded in the estate inventory deeds and book auction catalogues of all other Finnish cities during the Era of Swedish Rule.

The book indications in the sources are generally rather cursory; often only the title of the book, if even that, is mentioned. Owing to the paucity of information, the identification of books is often difficult; the same marking appearing in many sources may refer to several different works. For this reason, the book mentions in the original sources have been intentionally retained in the database.

Book culture has emerged as an extremely dynamic and border-crossing field of research, internationally and in Finland. The editors and most of the writers of this book were members of the organizing and program committees of the 18th Annual Conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), *Book Culture from Below*, that took place in Helsinki in 2010. This book provides, for the first time in English, an overview of an important epoch in Finnish book and reading history. Besides depicting book culture at the periphery of Europe, it contributes to our understanding of the power of the urbanized European literary world of the 1700s.

The new reading culture that emerged in Finland during the 1700s affected readers and all levels of society in many ways. Along with other trends, the arrival of translated fiction and Enlightenment literature from Europe opened and irrevocably altered the Finns' world view. The change was especially pronounced in cities. Scholars, merchants, craftspersons, as well as military officers stationed at Helsinki's offshore Sveaborg fortress, acquired world literature and guides intended for professionals at, for example, book auctions.

In this book, researchers from different fields examine the significance and influence of that era's books from cultural, historical, ideological, and social perspectives. What kinds of books did the citizens of Helsinki really buy, loan, and read during the 1700s? What topics and ideas introduced by the new literature were discussed in salons and reading circles? Who were the books' large-scale consumers? Who were the literary opinion leaders of their times? Why did people read? Did the books change their readers' lives?



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