

# IS1404 E-READ: Evolution of Reading in the Age of Digitization

## Position paper

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WG(s): WG3

[Total length: 300-500 words]

### 1. **Potential research contribution** in light of, or linked to

#### A. WG interest and Scientific programme:

In my research program, the digitization of literary artefacts and readers' engagement with them plays a crucial role. My research is situated at the interface of literary text processing and digital humanities. I have two main topics of interest that in my opinion can be very neatly related to WG3 ("Experiential and emotional aspects of reading"). These are (1) "style" and (2) "empathy".

- (1) My digital-stylistic research assesses the formal textual features of literary texts as well as readers' actual processing behavior when engaging with selected stylistic features (such as modal particles, narrative perspective, and sentence length and complexity) across different authors, genres, and epochs. The applied methods are quantitative stylistic (NLP, MD-analysis, topic modeling) and psychological measures (such as questionnaires, reading time, and eye-tracking, and psycho-physiological methods), as well as literary close reading. This line of research is relevant to WG3 in two ways: Firstly, as basic research that investigates the textual *and* behavioral dimensions of literary style and therefore can be used as a baseline for studies of e-reading; Secondly, as research that directly assesses textual and behavioral dimensions of e-reading, investigating the formal features of "born-digital" or digitally adapted editions of literary texts as well as readers' associated processing behavior.
- (2) With regard to empathy, I am interested in gauging social-psychological and emotional effects of reading literary texts across (analog/digital) modalities in readers of different age groups. Specifically, I assess how specific textual features (such as use of spatial prepositions, meta-cognitive commentary, "Leerstellen", and narrative perspective) may foster reader's abilities of perspective taking, Theory of Mind, and empathetic concern. Applied methods are social psychological questionnaires and on-line measures as well as quantitative and qualitative text analytical methods. The direct relevance to WG3 again consists in basic research as a baseline, as well as in the direct assessment of the medium of presentation (analog/digital) as a contributing factor to expected effects.

Finally, in this line of research, one special interest of mine lies in developing research methodologies and research designs that combine quantitative and qualitative methods tailored to the digital analysis of literary texts that are intertwined with studies of readers'

attention to stylistics features (eye-tracking, questionnaires) previously extracted at the text level.

In sum, my research dealing with the textual basis and socio-cognitive dimensions of literature may very well inform the research planned on digital interface features on emotional and experiential aspects of literary reading.

#### B. Action objectives (pages 7-10 in the MoU):

- My research contributes to the conceptualization of an integrative model of reading.
- Focusing on specific features of the textual basis of literary texts, it contributes to developing an aggregate measure of reading on paper and screens.
- In being already transdisciplinary at heart, my research engages in prompting more systematic interdisciplinary enquiry transgressing established boundaries between disciplines involved in the study of reading. This extends to offering new methodologies and integrated research designs implementing quantitative and qualitative methods on textual and behavioral dimensions.
- The digitization of reading on different levels is one of the most pressing - and simultaneously interesting – research questions of our present time, with implications for education, political welfare, health, and active citizenship worldwide. In supporting exchange between scholars and networking, the COST action helps matching relevant projects and taps into scientific potential across national boundaries.

#### 2. Interest in

##### A. organizing and/or participating in a **short-term scientific mission (STSM)**.

*Optional:* pursuing what research questions/projects; where to/with whom; linked to what objective(s) of the Action:

I have already started collaborating with Massimo Salgaro and Michael Burke on a pilot study on the emotion potential and aesthetic value of prose texts.

Generally, I am interested in collaboration on any of the above-mentioned topics. Specifically, I am interested in the form and functions of stylistic features of literary (and non-literary) texts as mediated by analog/e-reading devices, and their potential cognitive and emotional impact.

##### B. organizing and/or participating in a **Training School** (please indicate what kind of training [theoretical; methodological; technical]).

*Optional:* linked to what objective(s) of the Action:

Interested in both. [Together with others (e.g., Moniek Kuijpers) I plan to set up Training Schools, also bi- and trilaterally by the Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL) and the MPI Empirical Aesthetics.]