

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

Position paper

Name: Christine Angela Knoop

WG(s): WG3

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

A. WG interest and Scientific programme:

My main research background is in the humanities. However, after 6 years of research experience in the empirical (mostly experimental) study of literature, I also have some knowledge regarding rating studies, online surveys, EEG, and peripheral psychological measures (heart rate, skin conductance).

My research (published or forthcoming) includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Authorship theory and authorial self-representation: How do contemporary authors represent themselves (in the text, discursively)? How do they want to be read, and what means do they have to enforce their wishes?
- Empirical aesthetics: the experimental analysis of particular literary forms (folk tale, proverb, folk stanza, metaphor); as well as the experimental analysis of repetitive patterns and their variations in literary texts (poetic hyme/ metre, prose rhythm).

I also have an ongoing interest in:

- The role of typescript in the processing of emotional and aesthetic text features;
- The role of the palpable medium (paper book vs. e-book) and its impact on the assessment of content;
- Social acceptance of the e-book by readers, publishers, and particularly authors.

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

My overarching research interest in this project pertains to the affective potential of formal aesthetic features of literary texts as read on paper or electronically. How does it impact the reading experience if the reader can change certain features of text presentation which used to be part of the artifact (font, font size, margins,...)? To what extent does e-reading change the rhythm of reading? How do these changes affect the perception of the literary work? How does the increase of choices change the reader's emotional reaction to a text (e.g., downloading a single poem rather than buying an entire anthology)? And finally, what is the effect of always using the same medium, but getting different texts from it (e-reading), rather than changing the medium while changing the text (paper reading)?

Combining my theoretical research on authorship and my empirical research on aesthetic objects and their affective valence, I am furthermore interested in the views of literary authors regarding the emotional and aesthetic effects of e-reading. To that end, I would like to conduct a questionnaire study directed at a number of contemporary literary authors to obtain a better sense of their own reaction to the new medium. Do they publish e-books and why/why not? Do they read e-books? Do they feel that they write differently, or for a different audience, if they publish electronically? How does that affect them aesthetically/ emotionally? How do they feel about font, font size, margin width, paragraph length, paper quality etc. as

distinctive features of the artifact book – and how do they see the interaction between artifact/medium and content?

At the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, where I am currently employed, I have the opportunity to a) make use of laboratories including EEG, pupillometry, heart rate and skin conductance measures; and b) conduct larger-scale questionnaire studies. However, all studies conducted here depend on prior individual approval by the institute's directors, and need to have a bearing on the institute's overarching topic of Empirical Aesthetics.

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:

Any participation and organizational duties regarding STSMs on my part will have to be approved by my institution.

Location: Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt

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:

Yes (participation), again on condition that my institution approves.

Focus: theoretical (preferably: (a) aesthetic and emotion theories, and regarding possible hypotheses that can be won from these theories regarding (literary) e- vs. paper reading; (b) formal influences on literary reading, such as typescript; or (c) historical development of paper and e-reading).