Trial and Error - Experiences of a Digi-curious Humanist

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Who’s Talking?

• Historian, expert in medieval & early modern Nordic history (docent at the University of Turku)
• Learning by doing: from ”hand-written” html to testing persistent identifiers
• Editor in Chief of Ennen ja nyt web journal
From Hyper Articles to Crowd Sourcing

• "Nanne Kärling" – a "hyper article" about a runaway munk, 2002


• Penchant for digitalizing medieval and early modern archival document projects: Diplomatarium Fennicum, Codices Fennici

• Trying to grasp possibilities of Medieval multimedia, enriching e-books & some reports
The Ultimate Challenge: Ravages of Time

- Time span for historical research: 50, 100, 500, 1000 years
- Archived documents on paper & parchment crumble away
  - and so do many digital solutions
- Extreme efforts go down the drain
- From pilot project of the 1990s to a cripple to be revived: Diplomatarium Fennicum
Testing Persistent Identifiers

• Trying to solve the "page not found" problem
• Persistent Identifiers tested by National Archives
  & Ennen ja nyt:
  ttp://www.ennenjanyt.net/?p=705
Original sources

Sources selected by contemporaries

/”natural selection”

Sources selected by archivists

Sources selected by editors of source books

Sources selected for databases &c.
Is the Time Right?

• Early html pioneering and lousy OCR scanning took a lot of time, there are projects that took ages in the 1990s, now only days

• However, one can’t wait for perfect solutions forever...

• Decision makers may have right understanding about the situation – or not (”hey, let’s demand that everybody builds a database / wiki / open source system”)
What Should I Master myself?

• ”Humanists need to learn to compute” – I have got some other stuff to do as well...

• What is absolutely necessary (Endnote, good databases), what is necessary (PID), what is maybe nice (georeferereed maps Enriched e-books)

• Try this and try that... 3 SoMe platforms for one project
What Is Worth Paying for?

• I’ve got 30 000 euros - shall I pay to several historians for research or to one digi-expert for an interactive map? (What is the right price?)

• How do I find the experts I need?
  One solution: projects for students?
  (does it make me a slaveholder?)