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The interdependence of measurable positive effects of reading literary fiction and an independent book selling infrastructure: what's the role of an FBP system ?

NOVEMBER 15th, 2019, GIESSEN – WORKSHOP ON THE ECONOMICS OF FIXED BOOK PRICE (FBP) SYSTEMS



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Not all books are equal / ly in need of protection – automated decision support is an option

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FIXED BOOK PRICE (FBP) SYSTEMS*



Introduction



- Recent study by Götz and colleagues, findings by Rønning and Slaatta, etc.:
- **FBP system -> more bookshop outlets -> more conversations between potential customers and booksellers -> more purchases of less known = more diverse (literary fiction) books**

But: what is / should exactly be the objects of the protection by a FBP ?

- The insight mentioned is talking about bookshop outlets and less known / more diverse, (probably printed) literary fiction books ...
- This raises a few questions ...
 - Printed books ?: why then also support ebooks ? (well, certainly not least to prevent undue substitution ...)
 - 'Quality' books ?: why then also support 'me-too' genre fiction, for example yet another easy-reading regional crime story ?

Before we go on: a word about the sender book / publishing studies

- particularly with respect to its (contemporary) publishing studies arm a very small humanities discipline, ...
- ... with the potential for an integrating view on the medium as a cultural and economic good, across humanities, social sciences, neurosciences, ...
- ... and in the given context particularly with links to the philologies, Digital Humanities, and psychology

The analytical ...

- help to configure tools to operationalise measures of diversity, measures of quality – for research endeavours of the ‘before and after the fall of a FBP system’ type (some problems you solve do with the help of metadata alone, for others you need fulltexts)
 - tension curves, the share and distribution of direct speech, the topics can be identified (cf. German QualiFiction product) -> diversity
 - „e-rater“ still miss narrativity issues (e.g. the identification of narrative levels), but there is research -> quality

The interventional ... (see title)

- help to provide arguments to formulate up-to-date criteria for the objects of protection – and there are in fact reasons to support *printed* books and *literary* fiction (aka 'good books') [over digital and genre ones] ... !

Reading from paper is better – particularly Singer / Alexander (2017)

- BEFORE: Maryanne Wolff, Nicolas Carr and others had said similar things for many years – but now there is clear empirical (meta-)evidence (**similar: Salmeron et al. 2018**)
- **BOTTOM LINE:** „[W]hen questions were more detailed or specific in nature (e.g., identify the supporting points), readers performed significantly better when reading in print.” (1033), „ In effect, when longer texts are involved or when individuals are reading for depth of understanding and not solely for gist, print appears to be the more effective processing medium (1033)“ – combined with hard criticism on a whole range of methodological details, though
- Method: metastudy on studies that typically expose and have readers answer questions about the text read
- AFTERWARDS: The Stavanger Declaration

Reading from paper is better – particularly Singer / Alexander (2017)

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Reading on Paper and Digitally: What the Past Decades of Empirical Research Reveal

Lauren M. Singer and Patricia A. Alexander
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This systematic literature review was undertaken primarily to examine the role that print and digitally mediums play in text comprehension. Overall, results suggest that medium plays an influential role under certain text or task conditions or for certain readers. Additional goals were to identify how researchers defined and measured comprehension, and the various trends that have emerged over the past 25 years, since Dillon's review. Analysis showed that relatively few researchers defined either reading or digital reading, and that the majority of studies relied on researcher-developed measures. Three types of trends were identified in this body of work: incremental (significant increase; e.g., number of studies conducted, variety of digital devices used), stationary (relative stability; e.g., research setting, choice of participants), and iterative (wide fluctuation; e.g., text length, text manipulations). The review concludes by considering the significance of these findings for future empirical research on reading in print or digital mediums.

KEYWORDS: reading, comprehension, digital reading, medium

Reading from paper is better – particularly Singer / Alexander (2017)



COST E-READ Stavanger Declaration Concerning the Future of Reading



We live in an era of ever more swift and pervasive digitisation. Digital technologies offer tremendous opportunities with respect to the production, access, storage and transmission of information, at the same time as they challenge a number of long-established reading practices. Over the last four years a group of almost 200 scholars and scientists of reading, publishing, and literacy from across Europe, have been researching the impact of digitisation on reading practices.

Paper and screens each afford their own types of processing. In today's hybrid reading environment of paper and screens, we will need to find the best ways to utilize the advantages of both paper and digital technologies across age groups and purposes.

Research shows that paper remains the preferred reading medium for longer single texts, especially when reading for deeper comprehension and retention, and that paper best supports long-form reading of informational texts. Reading long-form texts is invaluable for a number of cognitive achievements, such as concentration, vocabulary building and memory. Thus, it is important that we preserve and foster long-form reading as one of a number of reading modes. In addition, as screen use continues to

Reading literary fiction is better – Kastano / Kidd 2013

- **BOTTOM LINE:** Reading literary fiction makes readers more empathetic than reading popular fiction, nonfiction or not reading at all
- Method: expose and have readers do the reading the mind in the eye test afterwards

Reading literary fiction is better – Kastano / Kidd 2013

Scienceexpress

Report

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2:00 PM US ET THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2013

Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind

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Understanding others' mental states is a crucial skill that enables the complex social relationships that characterize human societies. Yet little research has investigated what fosters this skill, which is known as Theory of Mind (ToM), in adults. We present five experiments showing that reading literary fiction led to better performance on tests of affective ToM (experiments 1 to 5) and cognitive ToM (experiments 4 and 5) compared with reading nonfiction (experiments 1), popular fiction (experiments 2 to 5), or nothing at all (experiments 2 and 5). Specifically, these results show that reading literary fiction temporarily enhances ToM. More broadly, they suggest that ToM may be influenced by engagement with works of art.

The capacity to identify and understand others' subjective states is one of the most stunning products of human evolution. It allows successful navigation of complex social relationships and helps to support the empathic responses that maintain them (1–5). Deficits in this set of abilities, commonly referred to as Theory of Mind (ToM), are associated with psychopathologies marked by interpersonal difficulties (6–8). Even when the ability is intact, disengagement of ToM has been linked to the breakdown of positive interpersonal and intergroup relationships (9).

Researchers have distinguished between affective ToM (the ability to detect and understand others' emotions) and cognitive ToM (the inference and representation of others' beliefs and intentions) (7, 8). The

Although readerly texts, such as most popular genre fiction, are intended to entertain their mostly passive readers, writerly, or literary, texts engage their readers creatively as writers. Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin (19) defined literary fiction as polyphonic and proposed that readers of literary fiction must contribute their own to a cacophony of voices. The absence of a single authorial perspective prompts readers to enter a vibrant discourse with the author and her characters.

Bruner (20), like Barthes and Bakhtin, has proposed that literature engages readers in a discourse that forces them to fill in gaps and search “for meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings” (p. 25). Bruner argues that to elicit this writerly stance, literary fiction triggers presupposition (a focus on implicit meanings), subjectification

[depicting reality “through the filter of the consciousness of protagonists in the story” (p. 25)], and multiple perspectives (perceiving the world simultaneously from different viewpoints). These features mimic those of ToM.

Our contention is that literary fiction, which we consider to be both writerly and polyphonic, uniquely engages the psychological processes needed to gain access to characters' subjective experiences. Just as in real life, the worlds of literary fiction are replete with complicated individuals whose inner lives are rarely easily discerned but warrant exploration. The worlds of fiction, though, pose fewer risks than the real world, and they present opportunities to consider the experiences of others

JG|U

Conclusions

- Stating the object of protection more precisely might result in not all books belonging equally into the scope of a FBP
- A FBP system will not take part in the scholarly discourse about literary quality – but intelligently configured digital tools can help to measure the effects of a FBP analytically in a more complete fashion
- Once the objects of protection are stated more precisely, intelligently configured digital tools can help to identify books / long-form narratives that instantiate those; we – and colleagues from Digital Humanities – are ready to explore this in a pilot project
- There are robust reasons to prefer printed books over digital ones and literary fiction over genre fiction ones – and it is not unreasonable to want to see this mirrored in book policy measures

Thank you !

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Qualifiction



Qualifiction

The screenshot displays the Qualifiction LiSA web application. The browser address bar shows 'christoph@blaesi.com'. The navigation menu on the left includes 'Themenanalyse', 'Sentimentanalyse', 'Stil & Statistik', 'Figuren & Beziehungen', and 'Leserpotenzial'. The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail: '1 Genre-Zugehörig...' > '2 Top-50 W...' > '3 Top-10 The...' > '4 Themen-Konzentr...' > '5 Thematische Vertra...'. The current view is 'Genre-Zugehörigkeit', which displays a table of genre attribution percentages:

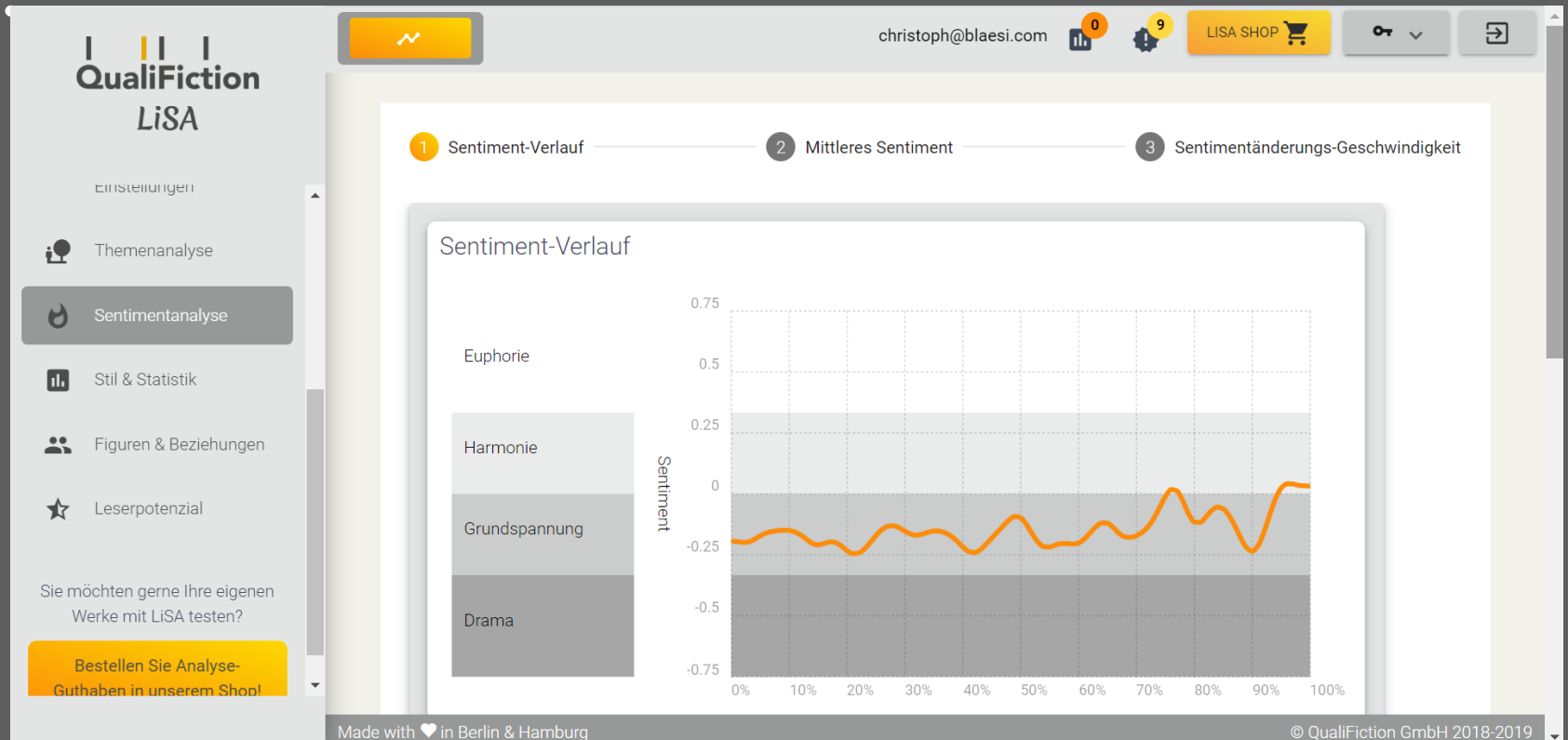
Belletristik (F)	100 %
Liebesroman (FR)	99 %
Kriminalroman (FF)	0 %
Thriller & Spannung (FH)	0 %
Science Fiction (FL)	0 %
Fantasy (FM)	0 %
Erotischer Liebesroman (FRX)	0 %

At the bottom of the interface, it says 'Made with ♥ in Berlin & Hamburg' and '© Qualifiction GmbH 2018-2019'.

Genre attribution with the help
of thematic word lists



Qualifiction



Sentiment development with the help of the sentiments of sentences from „The sun was shining and I was happy“ to „The murder struck brutally“



Qualifiction

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Also: by share and distribution
of direct speech



Qualifiction

The screenshot displays the Qualifiction LiSA web application interface. The top navigation bar includes the user email 'christoph@blaesi.com', notification icons for 0 messages and 9 alerts, and a 'LISA SHOP' button with a shopping cart icon. The left sidebar contains navigation options: 'Themenanalyse', 'Sentimentanalyse', 'Stil & Statistik', 'Figuren & Beziehungen', and 'Leserpotenzial' (highlighted with a star icon). Below the sidebar, there is a prompt: 'Sie möchten gerne Ihre eigenen Werke mit LiSA testen?' and a yellow button: 'Bestellen Sie Analyse-Guthaben in unserem Shop!'. The main content area is titled '1 Leserpotenzial' and is divided into several sections:

- Profil-Auswahl:** Three radio button options: 'Self-Publishing', 'Professionelles Self-Publishing / Online-Verlag', and 'Verlagspublikation (alle Vertriebskanäle)' (which is selected).
- Erwartetes Basis-Leserpotenzial:** A large white box displaying '607.200 Leser' in orange text.
- Vertrauensbereich:** A white box stating: 'Mit sehr hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit (>90%) liegt das Basis-Leserpotenzial zwischen 184.500 und 1.117.600.'
- Profil-Details:** A grid of four boxes. The top-right box is highlighted in orange and contains the text: 'Professionell publiziert mit Budget für Lektorat, Layout, Marketing usw.'. The other boxes are: 'Selbstpubliziert ohne weiteres Budget', 'Erhältlich als Ebook', and 'Nicht erhältlich als Softcover-Print (Taschenbuch, Paperback)'. The bottom-right box contains: 'Erhältlich als Softcover-Print (Taschenbuch, Paperback)'.
- Wahrscheinlichkeitsverteilung:** A graph showing a probability distribution curve with a yellow shaded area under the curve. The y-axis is labeled 'Wahrscheinlichkeit'.

At the bottom of the interface, there is a footer: 'Made with ♥ in Berlin & Hamburg' on the left and '© Qualifiction GmbH 2018-2019' on the right.

Expected reader potential, using
historic data (and a typical price)



Qualifiction

- Frankfurt Bookfair 2019: Qualifiction is the winner of the ‘Content Start-Up of the Year’ competition by the CONTENTshift accelerator of the ‘Börsenverein’
- Frankfurt Bookfair 2019: a publishing house called “Kirschbuch Verlag” has announced a manuscript competition and will publish the winner – which is the manuscript with the highest Qualifiction rating – as a book next year

Qualifiction

- Typical publishing house application: support of the decision, whether to publish a manuscript
- Place: editorial department
- Approach: mixed
 - the software compares a manuscript to a large corpus of pre-analysed texts that had developed to be bestsellers, with respect to a number of features like average sentence length, topics, tension curve, etc., partly rule/feature based, partly neural, i.e. in a combination