

**Universität zu Köln –
Institut für Skandinavistik/Fennistik
Network partner of j o l n e s –
Joint Learning in Northern European Studies**



An interview with **Prof. Dr. Marja Järventausta** (Universität zu Köln – Institut für Skandinavistik/Fennistik)

Transcription

Prof. Dr. Marja Järventausta

Hey, my name is Marja Järventausta. I am a professor of Finnish Studies at the Department of Scandinavian Studies/Finnish Studies at the University of Cologne. The close connection with Scandinavian Studies is characteristic of Cologne's Finnish Studies. Our name speaks for this, of course, but not only that, we also have a joint Bachelor's degree programme in Scandinavian Studies/Finnish Studies - which does not mean, however, that you have to study Scandinavian Studies and Finnish Studies, you can of course, but actually you choose a Finnish or Scandinavian Studies specialisation and can then complete a full degree in Finnish Studies or Scandinavian Studies. In Cologne, we are the only university in the German-speaking regions to offer a two-subject Master's degree in Finnish Studies with language and literary studies components. This combination of Finnish and Scandinavian Studies makes it possible to study a broad range of Finnish studies, including literary and cultural studies and also qualification work. In my own research, I focus on the intersection of German-Finnish linguistic and literary relations, currently mainly in the 19th century. Recently, I have been working on early Finnish translations of German-language children's literature and on early German-language textbooks for Finnish Studies or for Finnish as a foreign language.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE j o l n e s NETWORK FOR FINNISH STUDIES AT THE DEPARTMENT AND FOR A RARE SUBJECT LIKE FINNISH STUDIES?

Yes, of course our department benefits from the j o l n e s network in many ways. Despite limited resources in our own department, we can offer our students a wider, broad range of courses and thus also better meet the interests of the students. For Finnish Studies in particular, it is a benefit that we also have a Finnish partner university in the network, which expands our range of courses in literary studies. And for our students, it is important to be able to establish contacts with students from other universities and other countries. You get to know other subject cultures this way, but you also see that there are others who are interested in "my" rare subject. And in the time of the pandemic, it was a great benefit for us, for our department, that we had j o l n e s at home with us, because we could then also rely upon the experience in digital teaching and that was, of course, almost a stroke of luck for us.

WHAT DOES THE NETWORK MEAN FOR A SMALL SUBJECT LIKE FINNISH STUDIES? IS j o l n e s WORKING SO WELL JUST BECAUSE IT HAPPENS IN RARE SUBJECTS?

Yes, for a subject as small as Finnish Studies, cooperations are, I would say, vital - whether within one's own department or faculty, one's own university or outside. And for Finnish Studies and Scandinavian Studies, cooperation with other Finnish and Scandinavian Studies departments, whether in German-speaking countries or in neighbouring countries or in Scandinavia and Finland, is, I would say, a matter of course, because in rare subjects people know each other. That is certainly a good prerequisite for a functioning network, but perhaps even more important is that we are dependent on each other in a certain respect and we all know that. And in my opinion, these are also the most important reasons why it works so well. Everybody is participating.

Yes, and perhaps I can add, so especially in the past COVID-19 semesters we have noticed how we miss face-to-face teaching, but we have also noticed how well digital teaching can work - have also perhaps marvelled at how well it can work. And we can build on this experience and continue to cultivate digital teaching as a supplement to face-to-face teaching, especially now in the j o l n e s network.

Credits

The interview was conducted on June 29 2021 via Zoom.

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