

**NORDIC AND BALTIC DIGITAL HUMANITIES CONFERENCE
“DIGITAL DREAMS AND PRACTICES”, MARCH 3–7, 2025,
IN TARTU**

Conferences of the Nordic and Baltic Digital Humanities organization (DHNB) focus on research, education and communication in the interdisciplinary field of digital humanities in the Nordic and Baltic regions and beyond. The series of yearly conferences that began in 2016 has a history of bringing together academics, researchers, students and professionals with an interest in applying digital methods to research relevant to the humanities, social sciences and arts. With the special theme of DHNB2025, ‘Digital Dreams and Practices’, the organizers aimed to delve into the synergy between dreams in digital humanities and their practical applications, seeking to maximize value for both academia and society at large.

1. Integrating traditional humanities and computation. DHNB has long been committed to the importance of both domain expertise and methodological precision in research excellence. Digital humanities begin with explorations of data with a humanities lens, but the strongest impact is achieved when solid computational methods are applied to questions important to established fields with long research traditions. Contributions that were theory-driven, question-focused, and that advanced open cases of interest in the humanities and related fields were expected.

2. Coming down from the ‘Ivory Tower’. Digital humanities research is highly relevant to the modern world, extending from practical uses of data in the humanities to offering perspectives on societal issues. This requires deliberate efforts to step outside academic discourse and actively engage with non-academic entities, including state institutions, NGOs and private companies. Here, contributions that emphasize and develop the societal relevance of digital humanities and actively cultivate collaborations between academic researchers and non-academic organizations were invited, with particular interest in papers that showcased these partnerships, highlighting the tangible outcomes and lessons learned from such collaborations. By emphasizing practical applications and societal impact, the conference aimed to showcase research whose value extends beyond academic circles.

3. Artificial Intelligence and the humanities. In recent years, Artificial Intelligence has become a household topic with increased power of large language models, user-friendly accessibility in apps like ChatGPT and profound societal impact, raising concerns about data privacy, fair use of data and the future of jobs. AI has increasingly shown the capacity to assist in or even automate tasks that have previously relied on human creativity. This encompasses a wide spectrum, from the generation

of visual art and the creation of research reports to conducting qualitative readings of texts. We especially invite contributions that deal with aspects of AI in practice. Papers exploring the interplay between digital humanities and emerging Artificial Intelligence, including introducing innovative use cases, discussing ethical frameworks, or examining societal implications were called for.

Each of the highlighted thematic foci were opened up and scrutinized by keynote speakers: Maciej Eder, professor at the brand-new Center for Digital Text Scholarship at the University of Tartu; Andrea Kocsis from the University of Edinburgh; and Meelis Kull, the head of the Estonian Centre of Excellence in AI, from the University of Tartu. The links to the recordings of plenary speeches can be found on the conference homepage <https://dhnb.eu/conferences/dhnb2025/keynote-speakers/>.

The organization of the conference was initiated by the team of the Estonian Literary Museum (Mari Väina, Kadri Vider, Liisi Laineste, Olha Petrovych) that since 2013 has substantially contributed to the organization of the yearly Estonian DH conferences series. The conference took place at the Estonian National Museum (with the local team of Agnes Aljas, Pille Runnel, Piibe Nõmm), which added a stronger accent of GLAM section developments to the conference, as well as offering great facilities and cultural environments for the guests. The other institutions contributing to the organization in one way or another were Tallinn University (Andres Karjus), the University of Tartu (Joshua Wilbur and Liina Lindström), the Institute of Estonian Language (Martin Eesalu) and the Estonian Society for Digital Humanities. The conference was supported by projects funded by Estonian Enterprise and the Estonian Cultural Endowment, as well as by the organizing institutions.

The presentations included four panels (1,5 hour thematic sessions with discussion), 26 long presentations, 50 short presentations, and 36 poster presentations. All the submissions were carefully reviewed by 133 reviewers. The rich pre-conference programme included a new strand of the DHNB doctoral consortium, and 14 workshops/tutorials, some of them in the form of thematic mini-conferences, others as practical hands-on learning laboratories. The conference gathered 230 registrants from Estonia, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Denmark, Norway and 16 other countries, the furthest away being Japan.

DHNB decided to acknowledge the authors of the best papers in three categories. On the basis of the submission review scores and presentations the prize of best paper was awarded to:

- Maria Skeppstedt, Magnus Ahltop, Gijs Aangenend, and Ylva Söderfeldt for their paper “Further developing the Word Rain text visualisation technique in a digital history project” in the category of long papers;
- Antti Kanner and Veronika Laippala for their paper “Exploring modal syntax across the written–spoken language continuum” in the category of short papers;

- Veronika Laippala, Petri Paju, Valtteri Skantsi, and Hannu Salmi for their paper “Imagined Homelands: Analyzing the Finnish-language Press in North America 1876–1923 with Artificial Intelligence” in the category of posters.

19 papers were published in the DHNB2025 Conference Proceedings in the DHNB Publications series: <https://journals.uio.no/dhnbpub/issue/view/DHNB2025> and there will soon follow a call for papers for the post-proceedings.

Three pre-conference workshops were also connected to the field of folklore. (1) “Tradition Archives Meet Digital Humanities II” was configured by Sanita Reinsone together with colleagues from tradition archives in Nordic and Baltic countries to facilitate the exchange of insights, identify challenges and promote innovative practices while mapping the current landscape of developments in this field. (2) Mark Mets led the workshop “Explorations of the dynamics of cultural phenomena in text corpora” together with colleagues from the Estonian Literary Museum and Katrine F. Baunvig from Aarhus University. The workshop gathered researchers sharing their methodological discoveries in tracing how cultural phenomena emerge, distribute, spread, and transform within a society in a series of academic presentations and mini-hands-on-tutorials. (3) Edward Gray from DARIAH-EU invited the representatives of DHNB countries to co-organize a seminar “How to Structure and Organize a National Digital Humanities Research Infrastructure: Realizing the Digital Dreams of Tomorrow”, where the question of what is necessary to build an effective national research infrastructure for the digital humanities community was discussed. At the same time, the seminar gave an overview of what is going on in the field in DHNB countries. The Estonian new roadmap object Estonian Research and Cultural Data Infrastructure that is about to launch this year was introduced by Mari Väina.

The digital presence of large folklore collections in the region and the ever-growing body of documents from online environments and publications clearly call for large-scale analyses, where computational power and social environments can be of help in gathering and processing the material. Thus it is no wonder that initiatives from folklore studies have been in the forefront in developing digital humanities in several DHNB countries. The whole conference encompassed as many as 19 submissions related to the keyword folklore, ranging from discussions on archival work-flows and management of digital archives to the AI-based analysis of violence in fairy-tales, and applying quantitative methods in multinational humour data. The wide scale of folklore-related presentations at the conference highlighted advancements in digital folkloristics.

The organizers hope that the conference sparked many relevant discussions, updated participants on the latest developments and trends in the field of DH within the region, offered inspiration for further research and provided seeds for future collaboration. DHNB, with its conferences and publications, has established itself as a reputable

platform for knowledge exchange, bringing together researchers from this interdisciplinary field and fostering research in many ways.

DHNB2026 will be organized by the Center for Digital Textual Heritage and Center for Humanities Computing at Aarhus University. I wish good luck and strength (“Jõudu!” in Estonian) to the main organizers, Kristoffer Nielbo and Katrine F. Baunvig.

Mari Väina