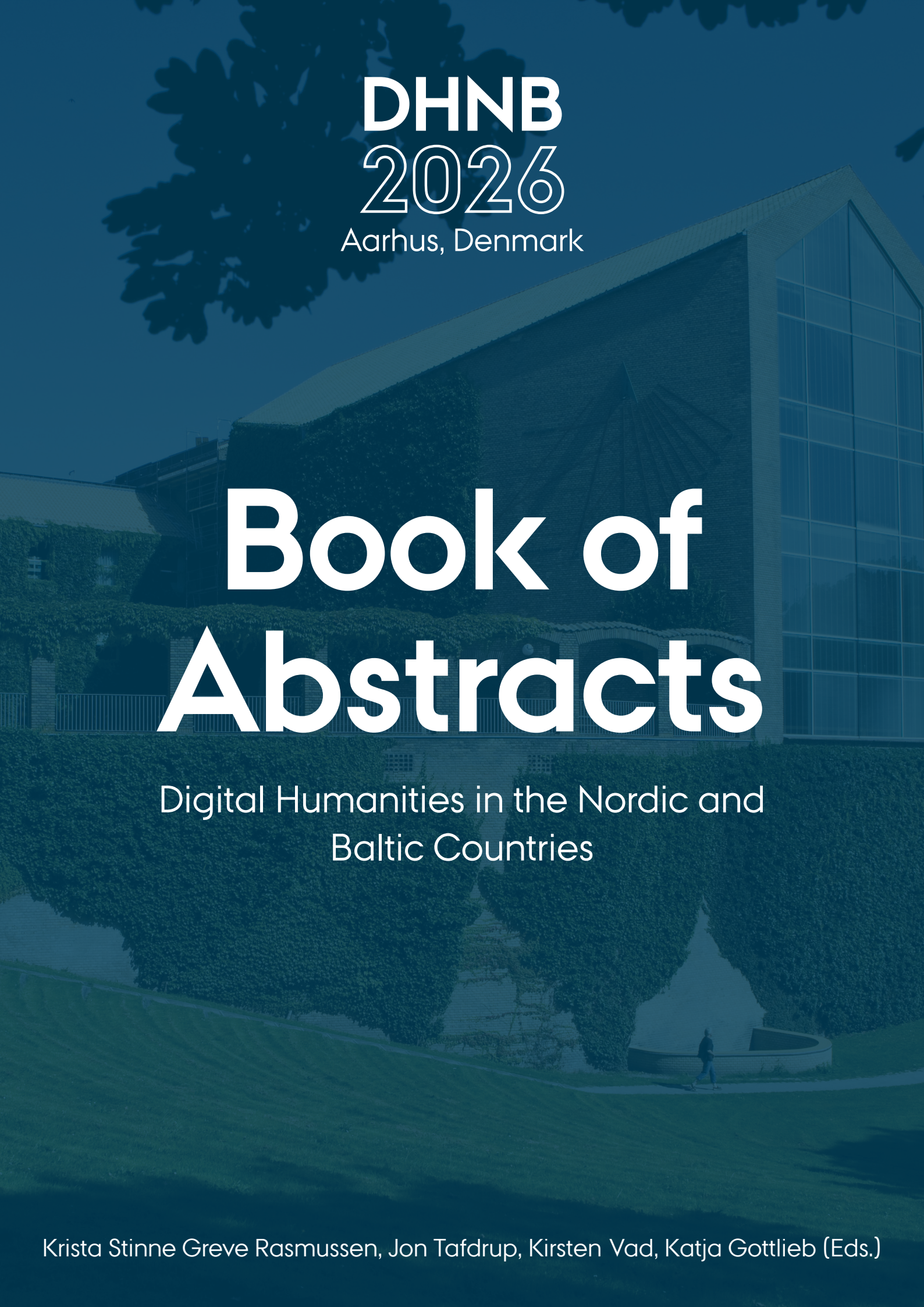




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Book of Abstracts

Digital Humanities in the Nordic and
Baltic Countries

Krista Stinne Greve Rasmussen, Jon Tafdrup, Kirsten Vad, Katja Gottlieb (Eds.)

DHNB 2026

Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries

Programme

Aarhus, March 11–13 2026

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Session 5B — 08:30–10:30

- 08:30–08:50 **Scattered throughout (Digital) Libraries: The Case of Old Writings in Baltic languages**
Ernesta Kazakėnaitė
- 08:50–09:10 **Lifting Local Treasures: Building Digital Access to Paper Sources from Danish Local Archives using Collaborative, Non-Profit Infrastructure**
Mia Gulvad Jørgensen, Andy Stauder
- 09:10–09:40 **Close reading, automation and cultural memory. Experiments with literary summarization through LLMs (Abstract)**
Alexander Conroy, Kirstine Nielsen Degn, Jens Bjerring-Hansen, Ali Al-Laith, Daniel Hershovich, Matthew Wilkens
- 09:40–10:10 **Annotation Fever! An Interdisciplinary Experiment Exploring the Image to Come in Generative AI**
Klara Källström, Thobias Fäldt, Bernard Geoghegan, Mats Fridlund
- 10:10–10:30 **Where the Machine Looks Away**
Teodora Crisan-Matcaboja

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Scattered throughout (Digital) Libraries: The Case of Old Writings in Baltic languages

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Keywords: 16th-17th Old Writings, Baltic languages, digital collections, bibliography

Due to historical circumstances, writings in the Baltic languages have dispersed across numerous libraries and archives, not only within the Baltic countries themselves but also far beyond their borders. The political, cultural, and religious transformations of the 16th and 17th centuries – together with migration, trade, and scholarly exchange – contributed to a remarkable diffusion of printed works. As a result, early books in Latvian, Lithuanian, and Old Prussian can now be found in unexpected locations across Europe and even overseas. For instance, Latvian books and pamphlets reached Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, and Germany, often through private collections, and later found their way into national and university libraries. A similar story can be told about Lithuanian and Prussian works, which were printed in various European printing centers and then distributed widely through church networks, academic institutions, and the activities of individual collectors.

In the 20th century, bibliographers and historians made significant efforts to record and catalogue these materials. Their work, published in bibliographies and catalogues (see Binkytė et al.; Daugaravičienė et al.; SLV), became the foundation for research in Baltic linguistics, literature, and cultural history. However, the transition to the digital age has brought new challenges and opportunities. Today, we face the task of reassembling this dispersed written heritage once again – this time in a digital environment. The question is no longer only *where* these books are physically located, but *which* of them have already been digitized, in what quality, and with what level of accessibility.

This task is far from simple. European libraries and heritage institutions are undergoing rapid and continuous digitization processes, but their pace, priorities, and metadata standards vary greatly. It is therefore difficult, and sometimes impossible, to know when a specific work will be digitized or how it will be made available to the public. In addition, digital collections are often scattered across different platforms, portals, and repositories, each with its own search interface and descriptive conventions. Researchers interested in Baltic studies are thus faced with a fragmented digital landscape that requires considerable time and expertise to navigate.

In order to address these difficulties and to facilitate access to early Baltic writings, a new initiative has been launched to compile a comprehensive bibliography of digital publications from the 16th and 17th centuries. This bibliography will bring together bibliographic data and links to digital copies of books in Baltic languages available in different libraries and archives, both within and beyond the Baltic region. The goal is to create a single, reliable, and regularly updated resource that enables researchers, linguists, and cultural historians to locate and consult these rare materials more easily.

In this presentation, I will discuss the ongoing work of identifying and cataloguing such books, as well as the development of the accompanying database (see <https://www.kazakenaite.com/old-lithuanian>). Special attention will be given to the methodology of data collection, the criteria for inclusion, and the variety of digital resources currently in use. I will also highlight the challenges and unexpected discoveries that have emerged during the project, including cases where books previously thought lost have resurfaced in digital form. Finally, I will consider how collaboration among libraries, scholars, and digital humanities initiatives can help sustain and expand this effort, ensuring that the written heritage of the Baltic languages continues to be accessible for future generations.

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08:50–09:10 SHORT PAPER

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Lifting Local Treasures: Building Digital Access to Paper Sources from Danish Local Archives using Collaborative, Non-Profit Infrastructure

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Keywords: *Keywords: local archives; Denmark; digitisation; HTR/OCR; cooperative infrastructure; decentralisation; metadata interoperability; volunteer engagement; democracy.*

Keywords: local archives; Denmark; digitisation; HTR/OCR; cooperative infrastructure; decentralisation; metadata interoperability; volunteer engagement; democracy.

Background & Aim: This project aims to make previously inaccessible local historical sources in Denmark available for research and public use. Hundreds of local and town archives hold photographs, association minutes, and private papers vital for community history, democratic accountability, and practical needs (e.g., property boundaries, climate documentation). However, many collections remain invisible due to limited budgets, volunteer-run operations, and inconsistent digitisation. The project proposes a pragmatic approach by combining the national association **Sammenslutningen af Danske Lokalkarkiver (SLA)**, the cooperative, non-profit-oriented digital infrastructure of **READ-COOP SCE** and its **Transkribus** platform, and workflows tailored for very small archives. Transkribus, developed from EU-funded research, offers text recognition (HTR/OCR), semantic extraction, layout analysis, and APIs for integration (READ-COOP SCE 2025a).

Research Questions:

1. How can a volunteer-heavy, resource-constrained network coordinate digitisation, transcription, and description at scale without imposing technical burdens?
2. What minimal, reusable building blocks (training, policies, tooling) move small archives from box-level backlogs to item-level public discovery?
3. What are the sustainability and governance advantages/risks of cooperative, non-profit infrastructure compared to commercial platforms, especially for decentralised cultural heritage?

Context & Materials: SLA's ecosystem feeds **arkiv.dk**, a national portal built on the **Arkibas** cataloguing system (Arkibas ApS 2025), aggregating 580+ local archive collections. Millions of records are queryable, but much material remains uncatalogued or undigitised. Target materials include property/fire marshal records, council minutes, school boards, unions, associations, clubs, alms-houses, and hospitals.

Motivation (democracy, decentralisation, equality): Direct, decentralised access to primary sources strengthens local democracy, reduces centre-periphery inequalities, and enables evidence use in current administrative or environmental cases. Cooperative infrastructure aligns with community governance and public-interest stewardship, as documented in recent READ-COOP/Transkribus analyses (Terras et al. 2025).

Methods & Workflow (for “even the smallest archive”): The pipeline is designed for feasibility (2–3 volunteer hours/week) and low cost:

Selection & intake: A triage rubric prioritises “high-impact/low-effort” series and flags rights-sensitive material → **Digitisation:** Deploy **ScanTent** smartphone kits (READ-COOP SCE 2025b) for affordable, quality scanning. Volunteers receive checklists, safety guidance, and training. → **Text, layout, and named-entity recognition:** A core team of up to 35 volunteers, guided by SLA staff and READ-COOP, uses Transkribus models, fine-tuning for Danish/collection-specific needs. Automatic segmentation and annotation extract key fields for description → **Access to infrastructure:** SLA's large-scale membership in READ-COOP would enable co-ownership, unlimited processing for a set number of accounts, co-determination rights, privileged information, and reduced financial contributions. This is feasible with a modest one-time and annual fee per archive (two-to-three-figure € amounts). → **Collaborative**