



Vetenskapsrådet

Beredningsgruppens yttrande

2018-06064 Fredrik Thomasson Beredningsgrupp: HS-KUL

Utlysningsnamn: Projektbidrag Digitalisering och tillgängliggörande av kulturarvssamlingar 2018 (Humaniora och samhällsvetenskap)

Bidragsform: Projektbidrag

Sökt inriktning: Digitalisering och tillgängliggörande av kulturarvssamlingar

Projekttitel (svenska): Svensk karibisk kolonialism 1784–1878. Ny forskning genom integration, klassifikation, publikation av spridda och utforskade svenska koloniala arkiv

Novelty and originality

6

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very Good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

The project addresses variety of new, interesting, socially and historically important and topical questions within the research areas. The ordering of archival material is a traditional archival task, but doing so by metadata related to a digital version of the archive represents a considerable degree of novelty. It is likely to develop and/or respond to a variety of concepts and theories related to Swedish colonial history. It will make available and searchable a large amount of previously inaccessible data. It will also reflective develop appropriate metadata schemes for a colonial archive which is still poorly understood in order to permit research into populations (slaves, free blacks and women) that are typically under-reflected in traditional metadata schemes

The project builds upon prior work (principally undertaken by the applicants) but greatly extends it, in terms of data volume, complexity and research questions. It has very significant potential for scientific impact (in terms of understanding Sweden's colonial history, and the creation of virtual online archives from multiple sources), as well as societal impact, by addressing issues of topical and current political concern, and replacing abstract theorising with material evidence.

Scientific quality of the proposed research

7

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very Good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

This is a well-prepared application and excellent overview of the research situations internationally. The project is very well designed with a broad range of important questions. These are separated into three workpackages, each led by one of the applicants, but all are based on the same virtual archive. The three topical areas of deepened knowledge are perhaps at first view rather conventional themes, but the recent political situation and requests from CARICOM justifies that especially the quantifications, legal aspects, and trade are being investigated in order to be able to provide exact and research based answers. The proposal explains clearly the potential of merging the archival data more systematically and the new fields that will emerge and become possible to explore. Methods for data collection and analysis all seem well suited to the tasks.

Merits of the applicant(s)

7

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very Good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

The participants are all at relatively early stages of their careers (Thomasson less than the others) and all have focussed closely on this research field and engaged in digital humanities. The team have a history of working together and overall responsibility for the project lies with Thomasson who was formerly the PhD supervisor of the other two. The project team have displayed a significant ability to open up new avenues of research in this area through their earlier work digitizing the FSB archival material. Thomasson's publication record is very good. Pålsson and Wilson's are reasonable for their career stage. Thomasson is in a fixed term research position but also has an extensive record of project funding management both prior to, and after his PhD. He is also heavily involved in the Caribbean history community. Each team member is a historian with experience in digital methods.

Feasibility

3

1 - Not feasible, 2 - Partly feasible, 3 - Feasible

The project time plan looks realistic, and has a logical progression. Equipment and software will largely be re-used from the earlier FSB scanning project, supplemented by Uppsala University. Data will be hosted Uppsala's ALVIN repository. The materials and methods all seem essential to the research questions and the data management plan seem both realistic and well considered given the theoretical and ethical challenges they present. All data will be made available under a CC-BY license. French material will have a Non-commercial clause for legal reasons. Permissions are confirmed through the applicant's signature.

Synergy and added value

7

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

The cooperation and synergies between the researchers seem necessary for reaching the goals of the proposed research, given their individuals specialisms in the field. Arguably, the principle benefit of working collectively is in the creation of the virtual archive, and with this in place the research questions could be addressed as individual projects. However, the panel finds that the team do bring a unique set of skills and experience to the project and it is hard to conceive of another group as capable of carrying out the same tasks. The diverse array of interrogative approaches to the virtual archive will also greatly help to increase the profile of its scientific value. It presents an excellent opportunity to collaborate with other historians of colonies, and exchange knowledge on digitising these international archives, in e.g. Denmark.

Overall assessment of the application's scientific quality*

7

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

Overall, the panel finds that this is an outstanding application that will carry out important timely and novel work. The results will be of interest to Swedish history, school education, and forms a significant Swedish contribution to colonial and postcolonial studies. It seems highly appropriate that the scholars who were associated with the digitalisation of the FBS should now provide the systematic and internationally recognised scaffolding so that it becomes compatible with other archives.

Relevance for Digitisation and accessibility of cultural heritage collections

7

1 - Poor, 2 - Weak, 3 - Good, 4 - Very good, 5 - Very good to excellent, 6 - Excellent, 7 - Outstanding

The project is very relevant to the call - it is directly focussed on a specific set of research questions, but in addressing them it will both advance the state of the art of digitization by developing best practice for distributed colonial archives, and will enormously increase the accessibility of an important but understudied series of documents.