The Karjala database
– challenges and solutions for digitizing heterogeneous, old genealogical documents for internet use
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What is ceded Karelia

- Because of the wars, about 410,000 people from Karelia had to move to other parts of Finland.

- Finland had to cede Karelia to the Soviet Union as a result of the Paris Peace Treatment in 1947.
Backgroud of the documents digitized

- The Swedish regime begun 12th century
- Finland got an autonomous position in Russia in years 1809-1917
- An independent nation since 1917
- Finland lost Karelia after two wars against the Soviet Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Age of Sweden Years 1100 - 1809</th>
<th>The Age of Russia Years 1809 - 1917</th>
<th>The Age of Independence Since 1917</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Swedish county</td>
<td>An autonomous position in Russia</td>
<td>The independence declaration on 6.12.1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Finns in the army</td>
<td>In Karelia Swedish, Deutsch and Russia</td>
<td>An independent nation since 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many years of famine</td>
<td>The land begun to develop many ways</td>
<td>Two wars against the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807 France gave Finland to Russia</td>
<td>The Russians tried to increase their influence</td>
<td>Finland lost Karelia</td>
</tr>
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- The Swedish regime begun in the 12th century.
- Finland gained an autonomous position in Russia between 1809 and 1917.
- Finland achieved independence since 1917.
- Finland lost Karelia after two wars against the Soviet Union.
Functions in the parish life of Finland

- The Church Act 1686, the parishes had to keep registers
- The parish records since 18th century
  - Births Records
  - Marriage Records
  - Death Records
  - Records of Migrations
  - Catechetical Lists
  - Lists of Children
- The evacuation of the Karelian church books finished to Mikkeli

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<td>Years 1100 - 1809</td>
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<tr>
<td>1530 - 1550 the protestant reformation in Sweden and Finland</td>
<td>1883 Decree: Finnish language got official position</td>
<td>The Karelian parish records were saved</td>
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<td>1686 the Church Act, all parishes had to keep parish registers</td>
<td>1895 Finnish Orthodox church founded an own diocese</td>
<td>The Karelian documents were transported to Finland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1720 – 1750 the parish records system was stabilized</td>
<td>Orthodox church had own parish records</td>
<td>The Karelian church books transported finally to Mikkeli</td>
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South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences
Resources for the database project

• The annual sum of workers was over 30 in 2005-2010, together already 600 workers

• The annual sum of data entries was about 700 000 in 2002-2010, by now 10.3 million entries digitized
The financial resources of the project

- The Karjala database project has got support since 1988, the sum of money will grow up nearly to 9 million euros by the end of 2019.

- The main sponsor is the government, the support of the ministries of Employment and Education is about 82% of the funds.
The difficulties of recording parish records

- The scripts vary from time to time and from parish to parish

- Several languages – Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Latin, German

- The church registers are handwritten with ink and a pen, the texts are difficult to read

- To help the reading of these old handwritten records, we have begun to examine if it is possible to exploit the international READ (Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents) – project.
Digitization process

• The data was stored from the original books (1988-1991)

• The source material was on microfilms (1992-2010)

• The handwritten copies of the parish registers were used (2011-2012)

• The source material is on internet (2013-)
Database for research and information use

- **Migration study**
  Loehr, John: Learning from our past – The effect of forced migration from Karelia on family life.  

- **Human life history**

- **Genealogical research**
  Malmi, Eric: AncestryAI is an application which uses machine learning to infer family trees and enables visualizing and searching the inferred trees.  
Technical evolution of the database

- The Karjala database was made with dBase program and the User Interface (UI) for Windows was ready in 2004 (UI with a picture)
- The first internet version was created in 2008 (UI with sheet tabs)
- The second net version was made in 2013 (UI also in Swedish)
- The modern net version was developed in 2015 (UI also in English)

The Karjala database access