The consortium Computational History and the Transformation of Public Discourse in Finland, 1640–1910 (COMHIS) is based on the cooperation of four partners, The Faculty of Humanities at the University of Helsinki, the Departments of Cultural History and Information Technology at the University of Turku and the Centre for Preservation and Digitisation of the National Library of Finland. This brings together relevant complementary expertise on the research subject (eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history), methodology (computational sciences and language technology) and data (the preservation and enhancement of digital resources). The consortium establishes national collaboration in a key research area that is further linked with the very best international research centers via already existing collaborations.

The objective is to reassess the scope, nature, development, and transnational connections of public discourse in Finland, 1640–1910. Two complementary approaches will be utilized, one based on the use of library catalogue metadata and the other based on the full text-mining of all the digitized Finnish newspapers and journals published before 1910. In previous research, public discourse in Finland has been largely approached from the perspective of the breakthrough of the Finnish language, the role of elite discourse at the university, early Swedish-language newspapers, and book history. COMHIS combines all these perspectives, and analyzes further how language barriers, elite culture and popular debate, text reuse as well as different publication channels interacted. Earlier historians have not been able to analyze, for example, the entire record of Finnish publications, including newspapers. The point of this undertaking is to begin to fill this gap with multidisciplinary collaboration and identify overlooked moments of transformation in Finnish public discourse. Such extensive materials as Finnish newspapers and journals do not exist in digitized form in many other European contexts. COMHIS has thus a unique opportunity to carry out pioneering work. To conduct its research, COMHIS introduces the concept of open data analytical ecosystems which represents a key methodological innovation in the field of digital humanities.