

*Alternative metrics or tailored metrics:
Science dynamics for science policy*
Warsaw 9-10 November

JAN KOZŁOWSKI

**DISTANT CATALOGUING –
STEP TOWARDS DIGITAL AND
QUALITATIVE HUMANITIES**



Flight departure as a metaphor of emergence of a new research field

Often to get off the ground you need new data.

Once initiated, a field based on new data develops and diversifies.

If preparation of data for research consumes too much time and effort, field can't take off.

The digital era enables us to prepare data relatively quickly for emergent new fields.

In particular, the digital era turns our attention from individual to mass phenomena, objects, and institutions.

Is it time rip for manuscript metrics? Manuscript in the sense of handwritten papers of Middle Ages and Modern Europe kept today in libraries, archives and museums.



Prints and manuscripts as a an illustration of imbalances

Manuscripts in the printing era, in contrast to medieval manuscripts and printed books, have never become an important area of research into history books. This is inconsistent with the role they played.

In modern Europe, the functions of manuscripts were much wider than the functions of printed works. Manuscripts reflected various aspects of life and social communication better than printed books. Almost every type of printing had its counterpart in the manuscripts, but not vice versa. There is a “sociology of books”, but hardly a “sociology of manuscripts”.



See as a metaphor of impenetrability

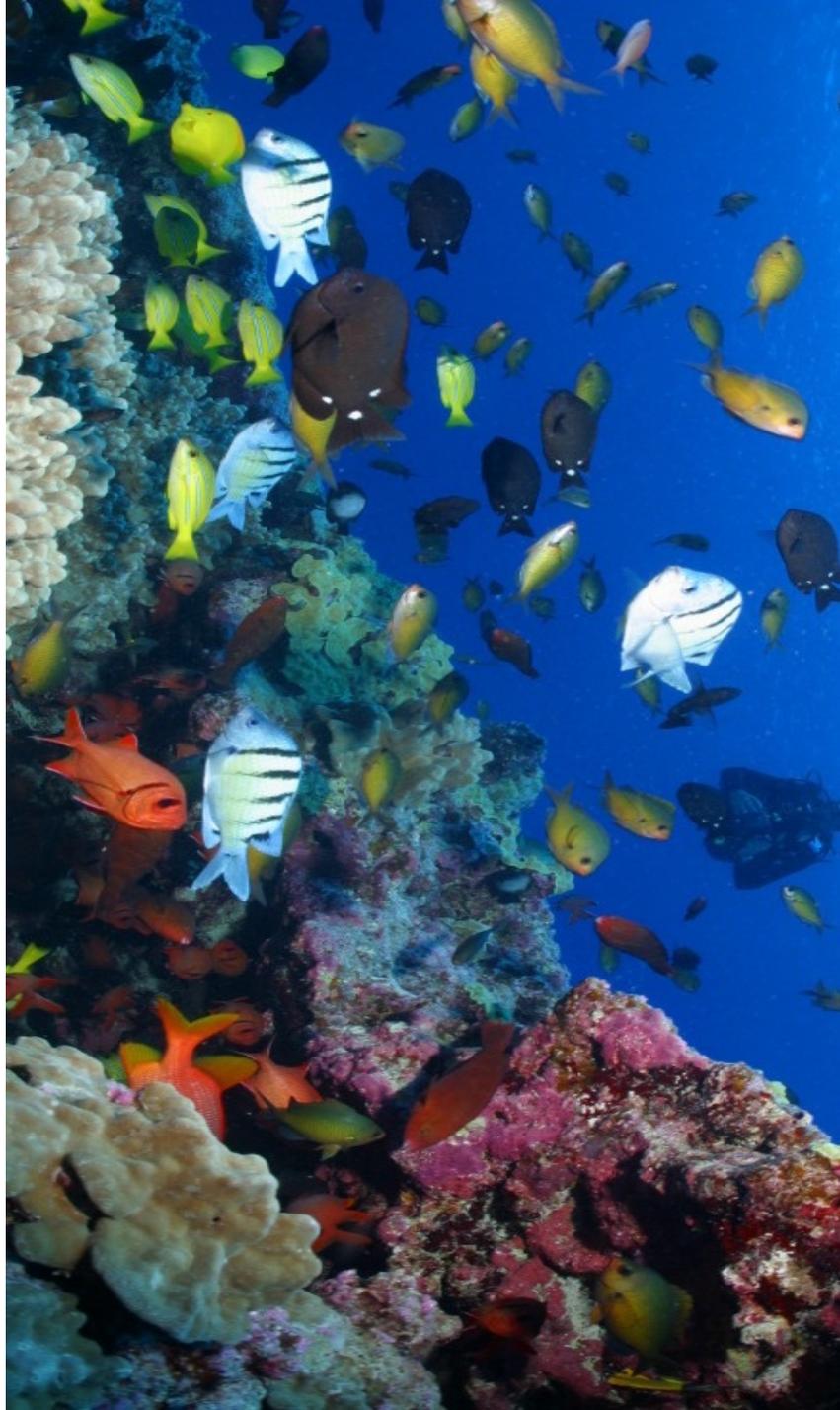
There are countless modern European manuscripts in public libraries; let`s say, tens of millions, if not more.

Manuscripts look like fishes in the sea; there`s a few sonar equipments that allows you to identify shoals of fish.



The fisherman as a metaphor of a librarian cataloging the manuscript

Cataloguer see the fish but not the shoals. He pays attention to the particular manuscript, dealing with it from one day to a whole year. Certainly, he is surrounded by rows of catalogues and other books, but it is *this particular manuscript* that attracts his attention. Not the shoals.



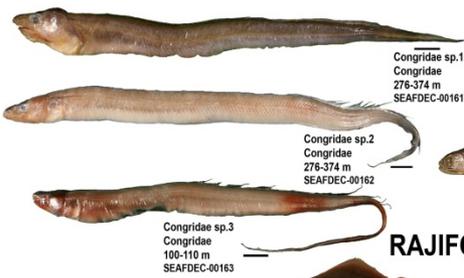
Golden fish as a metaphor of rare and exceptional object

Libraries truly appreciate only “golden fishes” – their own most precious manuscripts or collections. They are not interested in the whole fish ecosystem.

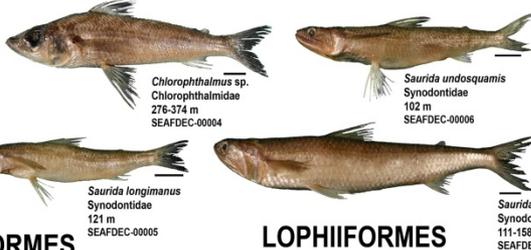


**Shoal of fish as a metaphor for the
distinct and recognizable category of
manuscripts**

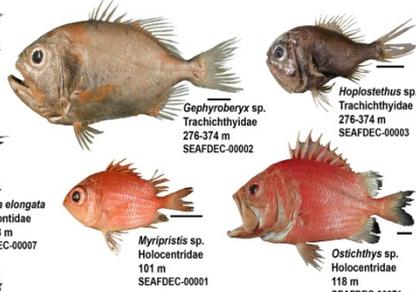
ANGUILLIFORMES



AULOPIFORMES



BERYCIFORMES



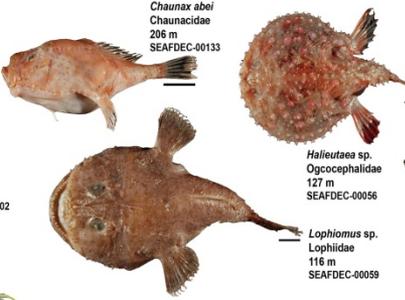
OPHIDIIFORMES



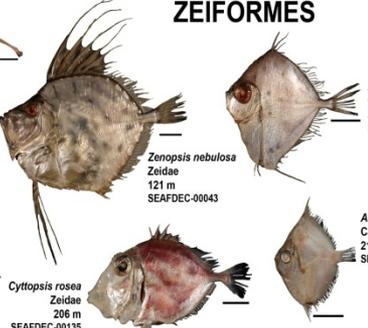
RAJIFORMES



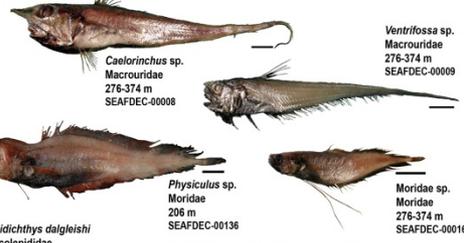
LOPHIIFORMES



ZEIFORMES



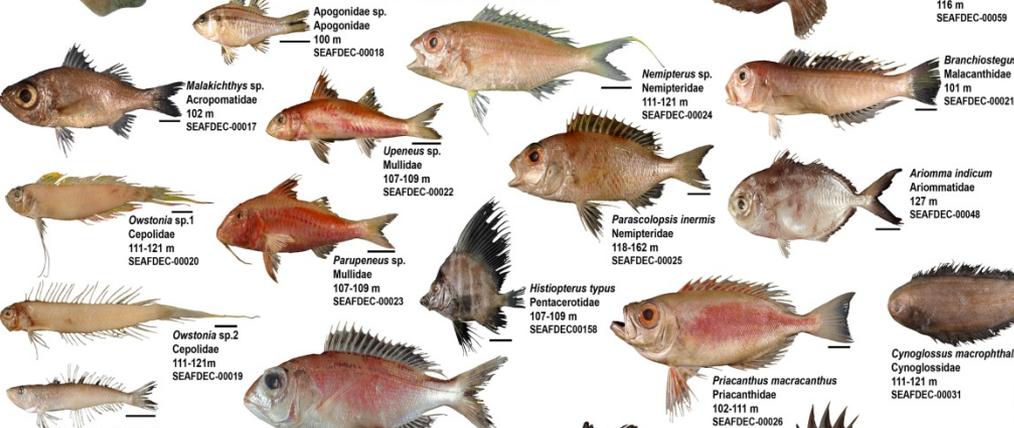
GADIFORMES



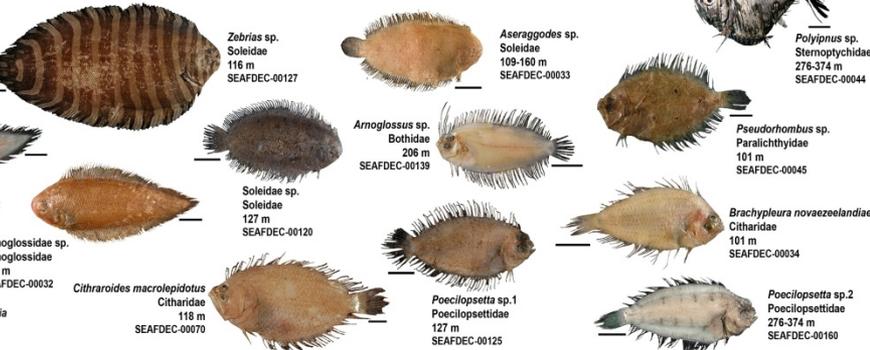
SQUATINIFORMES



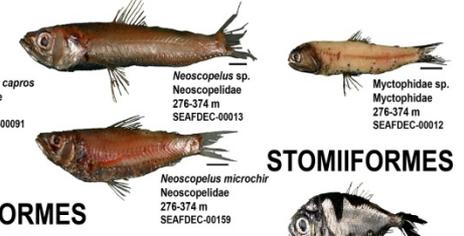
PERCIFORMES



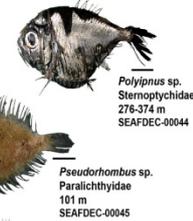
PLEURONECTIFORMES



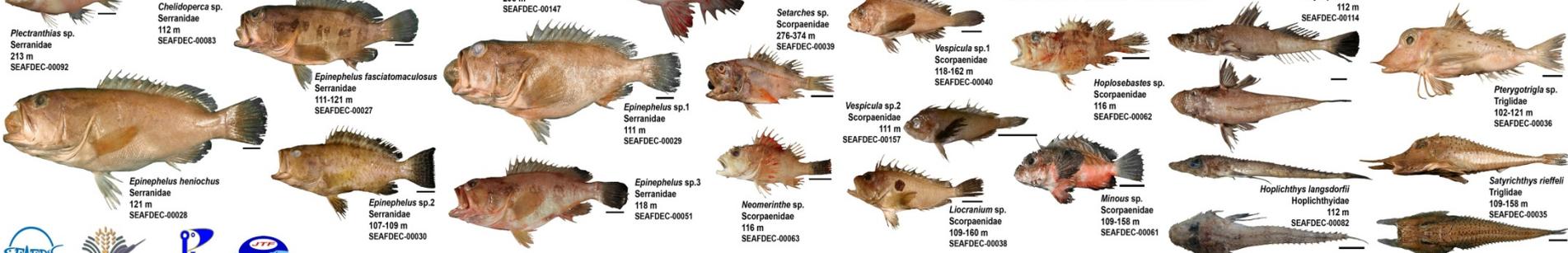
MYCTOPHIFORMES



STOMIIFORMES



SCORPAENIFORMES



Fish species as a metaphor of taxonomy

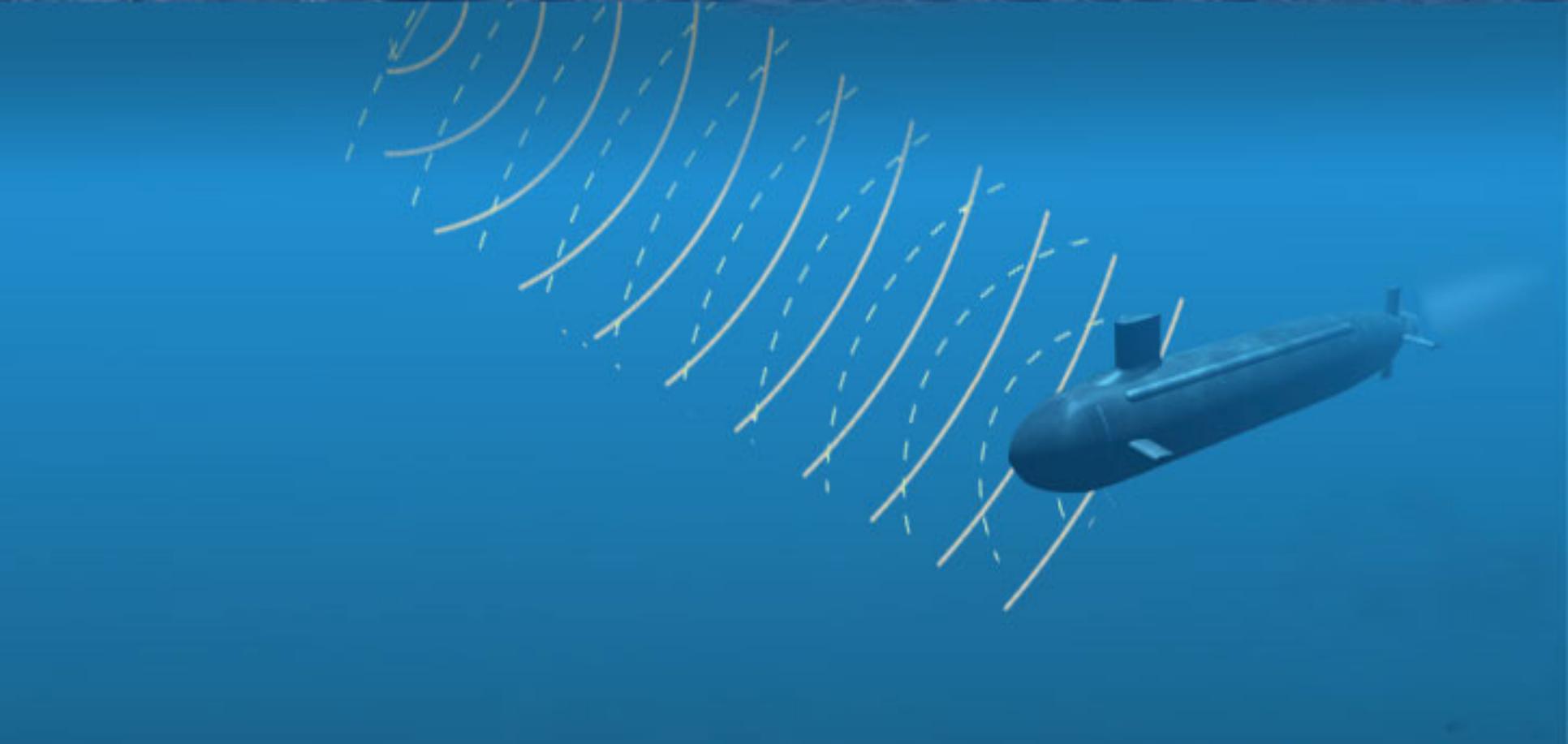
The main reason for the relatively faint interest in the manuscript as part of culture is the lack of taxonomy. Taxonomy, not only in biology, is the foundation and starting point for the study of the genesis, structure, evolution and influence of phenomena.

Taxonomy lies at the heart of almost all sciences. One can't imagine Darwin without his forerunner Linnaeus. How can we follow Linnaeus in the world of modern European manuscripts?



Packages of food as a metaphor of manageable units

Thanks to taxonomy, the vastness of millions of modern manuscripts impossible to comprehend could (virtually) be divided into manageable units.



Sonar as a metaphor of metaphor for "device to detect"

If we place manuscripts in these categories (in the form of bottom-up "open thesaurus"), instead of in "the unexplored depths of the sea", we get manageable units of manuscripts. A sonar beep serves to detect a shoal of fish. What we have now is a need to build a sonar for a shoal of written documents.

Manuscripts speak for themselves

In contrast to silent plants and animals, modern European manuscripts suggest the categories to which they are to be included. This is because now, unlike during the nineteenth and twentieth century, prints and manuscripts informed about their features, such as writing or literary genre, topic, field or institution.

More often than not they have all necessary meta-data.

Writing genre	Literary genre	Field of knowledge	Theme, issue, topic	Author or Institution	Language	Time and place
Annotations	Aphorism	Alchemy	Astrolabium	Royal office	French	Ghent
Antiquitates	Apology	Areometrics	Atheism	John Smith	German	Antwerp
Monastery chronicle	Carol	Calligraphy	Cabal	Court	Italian	Paris



Nu laest mael was op strandt Enre gepaerde Waeghen
 Men siet Egn Vloot nu van de Winde adragen.

191

den binn
 niet ter ge
 Boet bij Jacob
 geint van
 Engen.

doese waeghen se in Hollandt gemaect
 om trent t jaer 1603 by tyden prins
 Mauris van Nassau tot overland gesuonden
 daer de prins selven was van vloed
 ring tot Letten synde 14 Mylen in vorten
 by de haven van strandt gepaerde binnen 2 uren



“Album Amicorum” and “Materia Medica” as an illustration of writing genres

Despite all reservations, genre should be our sonar in the ocean of manuscripts. We cannot rely on any taxonomy of genres, and because of the above reasons, such taxonomy is hardly feasible, and even if it were feasible, it would be impractical, because defining the genre of several million manuscripts is pure fantasy.

To define genre, we must rely on their titles.

Title as a key to the genre

Although there's no theory of the functions of titles in Modern Europe manuscripts, one can state that at that time titles played a greater role than today: nowadays, no research paper indicates that it is a research paper, or any novel announces that it is a novel.

These 'species' have diversified. The need for information about anything that becomes evident for readers (and also more specialized) has disappeared.

Title/ genre	Materia Medica	Album Amico- rum	Historia Litteraria	Antiquita- tes	Bulla	Castrum doloris	Codex diploma- ticus	Diarium	Enchiri- dion
NUC	7 136	37 943	44	404	1 351	36	217	295	622
WorlCat	29 738	46 319	427	6 812	7 782	326	3 147	3 149	9 634



Sorting and making inventory

Genre as a form and as a social action

Since mid-1980. genre studies has transformed “from a descriptive to an explanatory activity, one that investigates not only text-types and classification systems, but also the linguistic, sociological, and psychological assumptions underlying and shaping these text-types.”

Those breakthroughs – from genre as form to genre as action – “have been achieved through shifting attention from genre as predetermined form, even formulae, to genre as social action, acting in social and cultural contexts to achieve rhetors’ aims and fulfil groups’ functions”.



JAN VERMEER VAN DRECHT: WOMAN IN BLUE READING A LETTER, C. 1668





Genre as a response

Genres and types are concentrated around certain basic human events, feelings, relations and practices, such as birth, death, love, power, economic activity, religion and so forth. “As concerns death, in our culture “we have elegies, eulogies, obituaries, epitaphs, requiems, even greeting cards.”

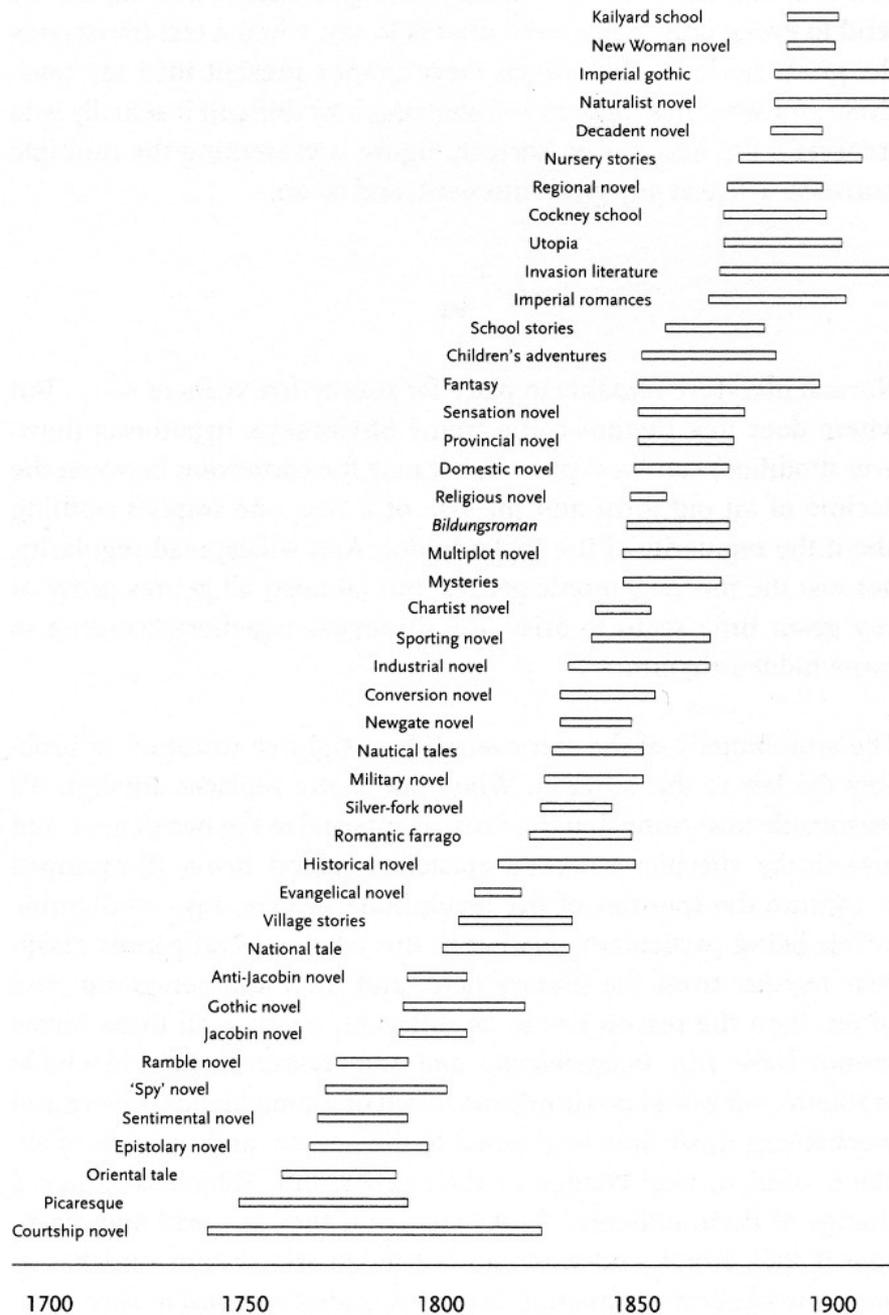
The genres we have become directly related to the ways we construct, respond to, and make sense of recurring situations, even similar situations.



Genres evolution seen in a timeline

Writing genres might be seen as a series, with their *life cycle – birth, bloom, and fall*, as Georg Kubler suggests and as Franco Moretti did for novels. Comparing series from the same or different categories will raise many research questions, to which the collective effort of history of culture, science, demography, geography might provide an answer.

FIGURE 9: *British novelistic genres, 1740–1900*



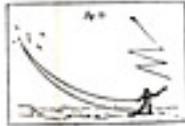
For sources, see 'A Note on the Taxonomy of the Forms', page 31.

AUSTRALIA.
TRANSITION FROM THE WEDGE TO THE BOOMERANG.



INDIAN BOOMERANGS

Figure 4



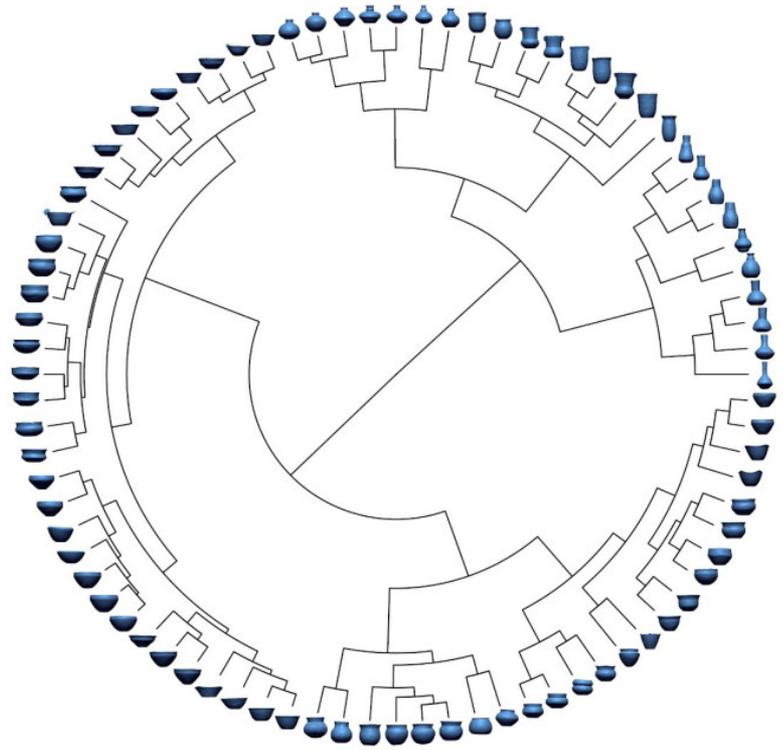
AUSTRALIA.
TRANSITION FROM WACCHET TO THE BOOMERANG

Figure 5



AFRICAN BOOMERANGS

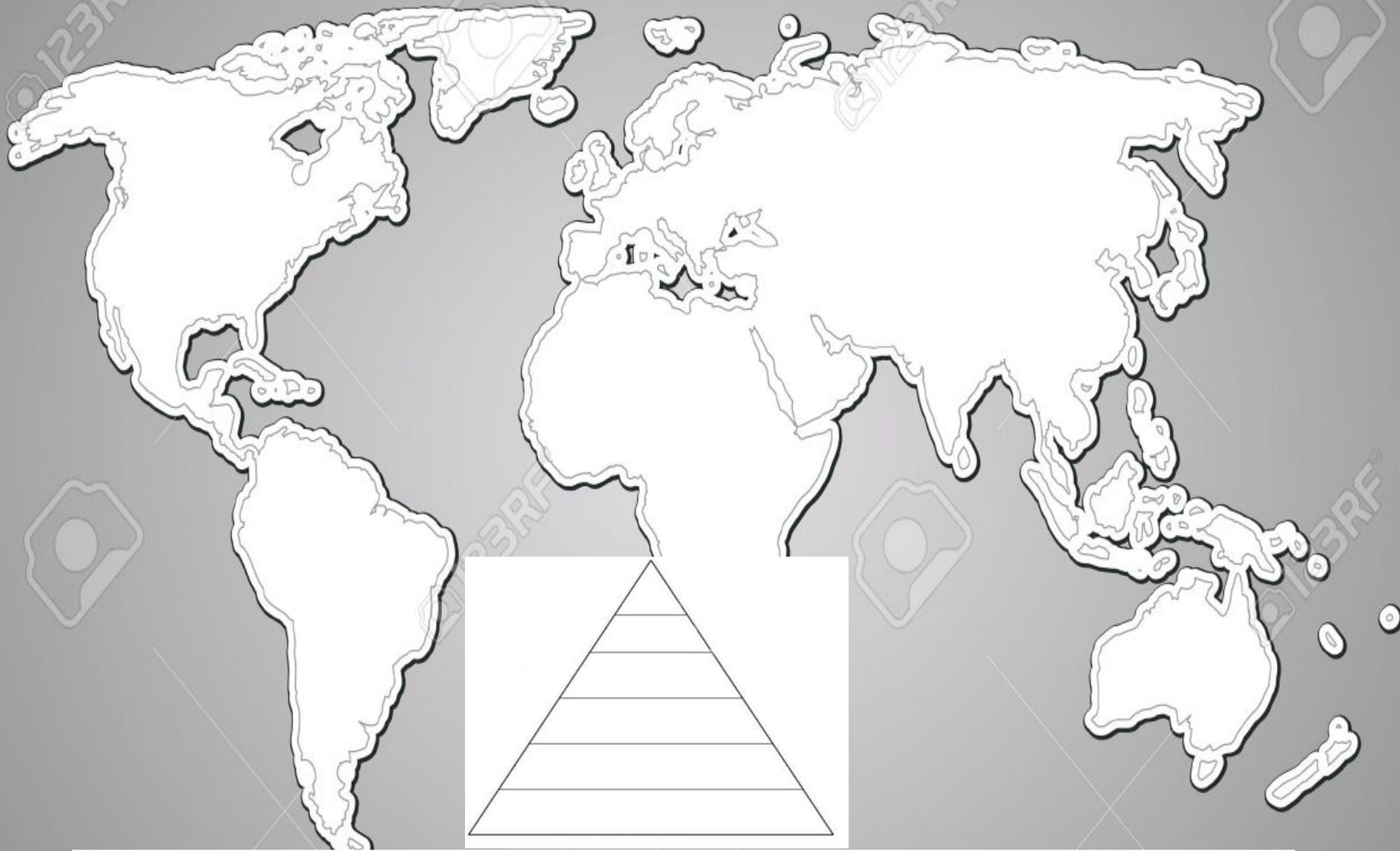
Figure 7



Genres seen from the angle of time, place and social strata

Collected data should be thrown on the maps, graphs and trees, to cite the title of influential Moretti's book.

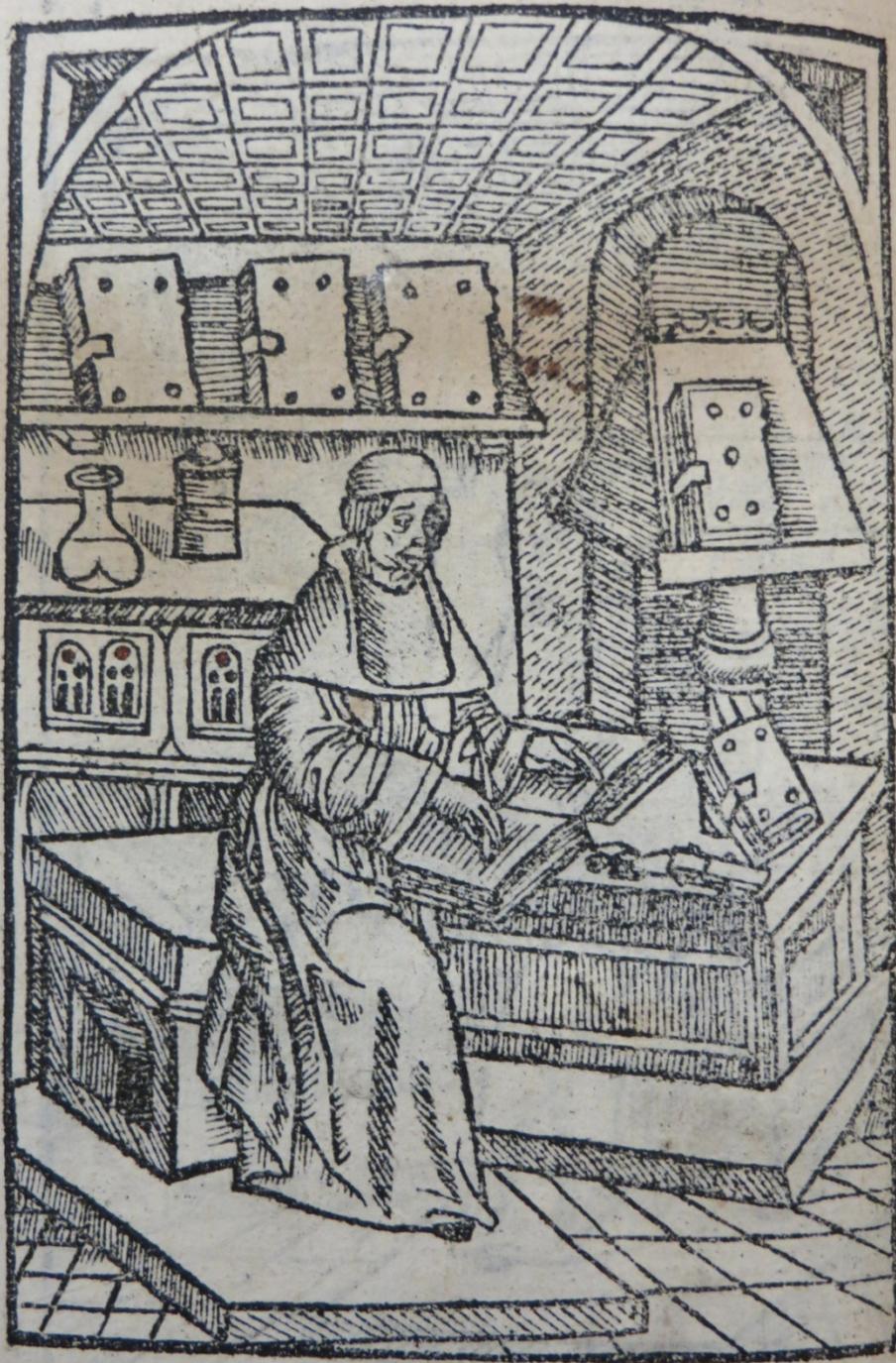
The distribution of data over time, countries, social strata, institutions and languages will give a preliminary overview of the history of a genre, and also topics, ideas, concepts..., even if we are aware that what survived does not necessarily faithfully represent what was created in the past.



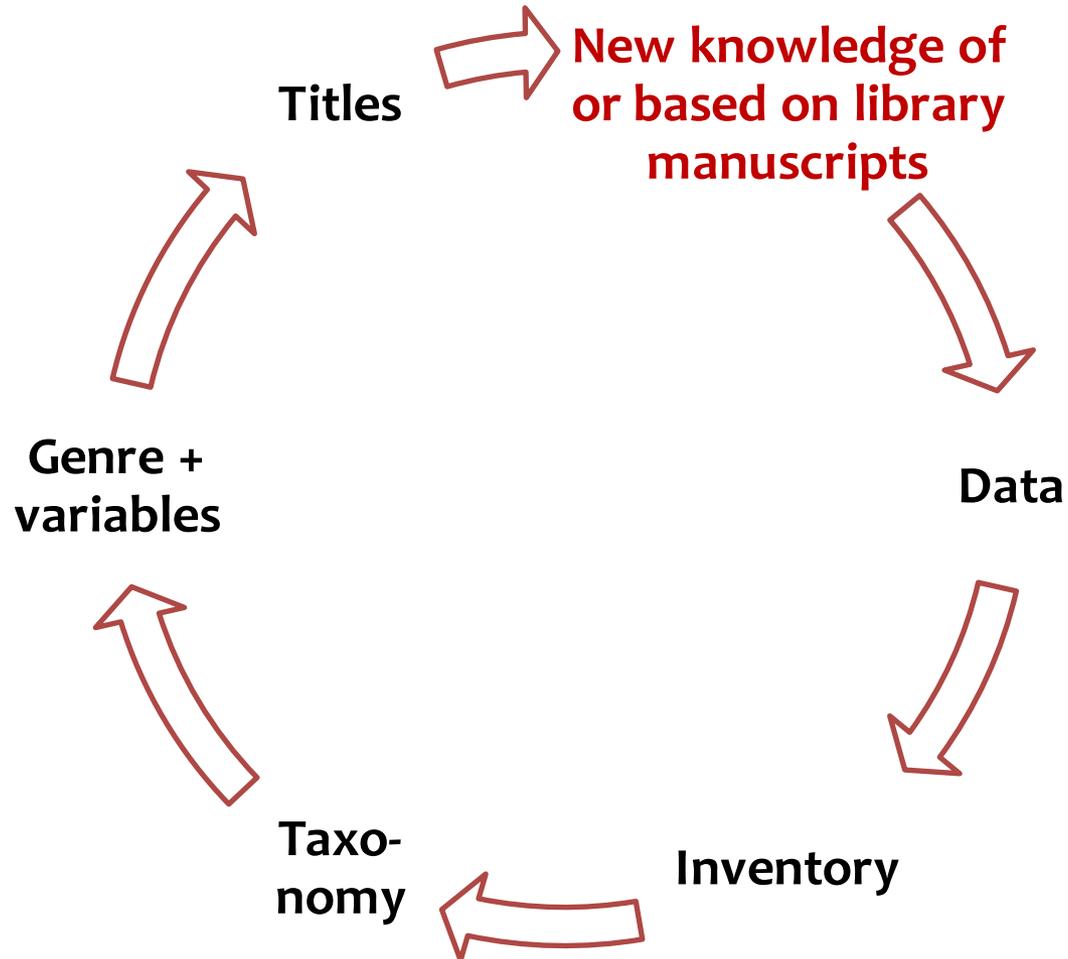
Dichotomy deep-distant cataloguing

Apart from “deep cataloguing” introduce “distant cataloguing” (to borrow the phrase from Moretti's famous “deep reading” – “distant reading” dichotomy).

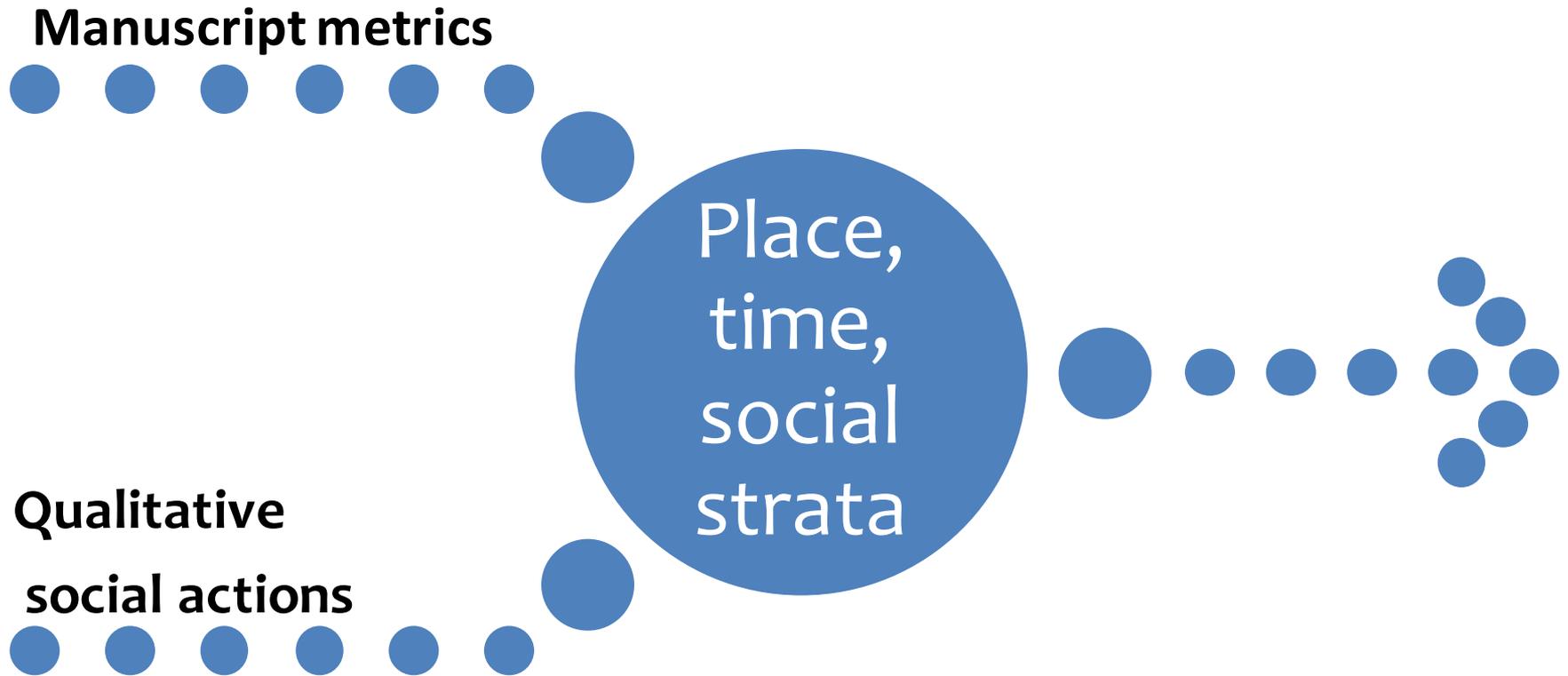
Distant cataloguing means stepping back from the contents of specific manuscript to look at set of other manuscripts of the same genre in order to find broader patterns.



The road, which we passed



New knowledge of or based on manuscripts







**Let`s start
(library) manuscript
research and metrics...**

