

# Encyclopedias and Nationalism in Denmark

## A Study of the Reception of Three Encyclopedias, from Print to Digital

Maria Simonsen

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Résumé de l'article

Le présent article porte sur les encyclopédies danoises et sur leur réception dans la presse. Il importe de mentionner qu'au Danemark, la publication d'encyclopédies passait rarement inaperçue : une fois la publication lancée, toute nouvelle livraison, chaque fascicule ou volume faisait l'objet d'un article ou d'une critique dans la presse nationale. Parmi les diverses questions sujettes à débat : La maison d'édition serait-elle en mesure de mener à bien un projet de cette envergure? Combien coûtait l'encyclopédie? Ce prix était-il suffisamment abordable?

Au-delà de ces questions ponctuelles, l'attention de la presse aura contribué à ce que les encyclopédies soient perçues à la fois comme des ouvrages littéraires et comme des marqueurs de l'identité nationale. Un dénominateur commun émerge en effet de l'analyse des écrits : la perspective nationale. L'article postule que cette perspective aura joué un rôle déterminant dans la reconnaissance de plusieurs encyclopédies en tant que publications significatives sur le plan national, à l'époque de leur publication et de manière durable.



# ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND NATIONALISM IN DENMARK: A Study of the Reception of Three Encyclopedias, from Print to Digital

Maria SIMONSEN

Aalborg University

ABSTRACT

The publishing of major encyclopaedias in Denmark seldom went unnoticed. Once a publication had started, every single instalment, volume and other anniversaries were reviewed or mentioned in the nationwide newspapers and several aspects were brought up for debate: Was the publishing house able to handle such a major undertaking? What was the price of the publication and who could afford it?

Attention from the press led to more than just debate of the various encyclopedias, it became an important factor in establishing the different encyclopedias as both literary works and markers of national identity. This article centres around Danish encyclopaedias and their reception in the press. The study finds that the reception was marked by one denominator in particular: the national perspective. It argues that this perspective played an important role in establishing several encyclopedias as significant national publications both of their time and legacy.

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article porte sur les encyclopédies danoises et sur leur réception dans la presse. Il importe de mentionner qu'au Danemark, la publication d'encyclopédies passait rarement inaperçue : une fois la publication lancée, toute nouvelle livraison, chaque fascicule ou volume faisait l'objet d'un article ou d'une critique dans la presse nationale. Parmi les diverses questions sujettes à débat : La maison d'édition serait-elle en mesure de mener à bien un projet de cette envergure? Combien coûtait l'encyclopédie? Ce prix était-il suffisamment abordable?

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comme des marqueurs de l'identité nationale. Un dénominateur commun émerge en effet de l'analyse des écrits : la perspective nationale. L'article postule que cette perspective aura joué un rôle déterminant dans la reconnaissance de plusieurs encyclopédies en tant que publications significatives sur le plan national, à l'époque de leur publication et de manière durable.

### **Keywords**

Encyclopaedias, reception, Denmark, nationalism, national identity

### **Mots-clés**

Encyclopédies, réception, Danemark, nationalisme, identité nationale

## **Encyclopedias and the Media**

On a Friday night in November 2021, the newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* announced that after a long debate a political majority at the Danish Parliament had decided to give the additional funding to save the website *lex.dk*.<sup>1</sup> The platform, which was founded in 2019, gives free public access to the digitized “national” encyclopedia *The Great Danish*, and to several other important cultural-historical, topographical, and biographical works in Danish.<sup>2</sup> The news came after weeks of intense debate both in the national newspapers and on social media about the national need for an online knowledge platform. The debate had actually started a few months earlier, when the Social Democratic government decided not to set aside funds in the budget to support *lex.dk*. In response, the association behind the website placed full-page ads in the nationwide dailies, stressing that without state subsidy the platform would be forced to close, making Denmark “the only country among those we normally compare ourselves with that does not have a national digital reference work.”<sup>3</sup>

This emphasis on the national perspective has recurred throughout the history of Danish encyclopedias. In this article, I will study how the press reviewed and discussed the major Danish encyclopedias from the late 1800s until today, and thereby investigate the significance that the publications were given from a national perspective. The primary focus will be on the reception and coverage in nationwide newspapers of three Danish publications: *Salmonsens* (*Salmonsens Konversationsleksion*, 1891–1956), a ground-breaking encyclopedia that appeared in five editions from the end of

the nineteenth century to the latter part of the 1950s; *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* (*Den Store Danske Encyklopædi*, 1994–2006), the last major printed encyclopedia in Denmark; and finally, its digital successor, *The Great Danish* (*Den Store Danske*), an online encyclopedia that replaced *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* in 2006. The platform was first behind a paywall but has, since 2009, become free and open to everyone, just like Wikipedia.

The publication of encyclopedias has been covered by the Danish press from the very beginning. After a slow start, the first modern Danish-language encyclopedias were published in the late nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> In the following 60–70 years, there was a veritable boom in the publication of encyclopedias and other reference works in Danish, which often targeted specific audiences: academics, people with limited education, women, or even children.<sup>5</sup> Some publications were more ambitious and had a more lasting influence than others. It was these encyclopedias in particular that captured the eye of the press, and these are also at the heart of the present study. The main forces driving the press’s interest were 1) a fascination with the encyclopedic genre, and 2) the status of encyclopedias as significant publications from a cultural-historical perspective.

Over the past 300 years, encyclopedias have played a central role as mediators of societal or political critique, as symbols of nation-building in some countries, and/or as a foundation for education (and amusement) on a personal level.<sup>6</sup> All of this has contributed to establishing the social and cultural significance of the encyclopedia as a form. The authority of the genre was another reason that the encyclopedia was deemed important. A powerful symbol of truth, it was expected to convey accurate, verified, and useful information. The role of the encyclopedia as a “knowledge authority,” a publication where we find (scientifically) verified information is still pertinent, and has been a great part of the Danish debate about the continued need for a “national encyclopedia” in the digital information age.

Reviewing the centuries-old history of encyclopedias, it is not difficult to understand why these great works have interested and fascinated generations of people. Whether one considers Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1751–1772)—the masterpiece of the Enlightenment—or the widely disseminated Conversations-Lexicon *Brockhaus* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1796–1808), the work that is put into these publications is impressive. Regardless of

production period and technical possibilities, the encyclopedia is a publication that stands out when compared to regular books. Everything in the communications circuit for a printed encyclopedia is longer, bigger, and more comprehensive, no matter when, where, and how it was published;<sup>7</sup> indeed, its production and publication is often a lengthy process in its own right. The same goes for the development of digital encyclopedias, which have continued to evolve at a rapid pace.

The publication of encyclopedias gained momentum in the early modern period, which saw encyclopedias appearing in all the major national languages.<sup>8</sup> These encyclopedias addressed a broad and common culture of learning and were associated with growing nationalism across Europe.<sup>9</sup> The connection between encyclopedias and national perspectives has lasted up until today, although there have been a few exceptions, such as the spread of German encyclopedias beyond German language areas, and of English-language encyclopedias after the Second World War, with *Encyclopædia Britannica* as the leading example.<sup>10</sup> Even Wikipedia, the most widespread digital encyclopedia of today, is rooted in distinct national identities, despite its transnational character. When it comes to the use of materials and a certain national quality, Wikipedia continues in the same vein as the printed works.

### **Research on Nationalism and the Danish Context**

Research on nationalism has become incredibly extensive within the field of history, especially since the 1980s. The works on nations and nationalism written by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and E.J. Hobsbawm have placed great focus on the national and its importance to the study of history. Even though there are many differences in the three scholars' research, common to their approach is their view of nationalism as a fairly young process, linked to the phenomenon of nineteenth-century nation building. However, other research on nationalism, and perhaps especially research by European scholars, has argued that nationalism is a much older phenomenon, and that features of nationalism (in the form of, for example, patriotism) existed long before the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

In this article, the theoretical starting point will primarily be Benedict Anderson's study on how the national community came into being

and is bound together.<sup>12</sup> According to Anderson, the emergence of nationalism was a product of specific historical circumstances and actors.<sup>13</sup> Nationalism developed in response to the interplay between capitalism and the development of printing, which resulted in the production of large quantities of books, and later on also newspapers, journals, and other print materials. The various publications contributed to the development and spread of common ideas, and thereby formed the foundation of a “national community.” In brief, the circulation of printed media made it possible for individuals to relate to each other and to develop a common awareness of events, narratives, and ideas.<sup>14</sup>

Anderson’s perspective can also tell us much about the emergence of national identity in Denmark. However, Danish nationalism also departs in subtle ways from Anderson’s model. Denmark is an old state with roots in the early Middle Ages. Due to its many struggles and wars, with neighbouring countries in particular, the Danish state apparatus was well developed. Therefore, even before the nineteenth century, there was a clearly defined Danish state—although it would be more accurate to describe Denmark as a multi-kingdom. The empire of Denmark was most powerful during the Kalmar Union (1397–1520), consisting of Norway (with Greenland), Iceland and the Faroe Islands, as well as Sweden and thus also Finland.

As the kingdom waned due to ongoing national crises throughout the nineteenth century, a long and extensive discussion about the idea of nationhood took place in Denmark, as it did elsewhere in Europe, and nationalism gained more and more ground in all sectors of society. The national crises began at the turn of the century, when Denmark found itself on the wrong side of the Napoleonic Wars (1802–1815). The loss in 1864 of Southern Jutland, which constituted two-fifths of the kingdom’s population and its land area,<sup>15</sup> is also important in understanding the development of nationalism in Denmark.<sup>16</sup> Danish nationalism thus developed out of two starkly contrasting positions: Denmark’s period as a great European political and military power, and its later reckoning with its status as a small country.

A central figure of nineteenth-century thinking and discourse on nationalism was the author and vicar N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872). According to Grundtvig, there was a close connection between democratization and

nationalism. If the Danes gained a more developed sense of their national history and character, they would be able to pursue the democratic project that was spreading across Europe.<sup>17</sup>

As in other parts of Europe, printed media was central in disseminating ideas (and ideals) about nationalism. The expansion of the book trade and publishing market coincided with the spread of nationalist ideas. However, as mentioned above, the national crises that Denmark experienced during the nineteenth century had a significant influence on the development of nationalism in the Danish context. Thus, the struggles and wars with neighbouring countries before and after the nineteenth century, must be included in considerations of what influenced nationalism in Denmark.

Following the general European pattern, the development of nationalist ideas in Denmark was characterized by several key phases. Nationalism was initially the domain of a few elite intellectuals, but became common political practice toward the middle of the nineteenth century, and was finally by the end of the nineteenth century adopted as a kind of mass ideology.<sup>18</sup> The “national” became commonplace through practices and symbolic reminders of the national community such as the increasingly widespread use of the national anthem, the appearance of national symbols on coins, banknotes, and stamps, and the frequent use of the Danish flag.<sup>19</sup>

Questions about nationalism have to a large extent been studied in relation both to Danish identity and folklore, and to Scandinavianism. These subjects have been at the centre of comprehensive research conducted by Inge Adriansen, Uffe Østergaard, and Rasmus Glenthøj.<sup>20</sup> Different meanings and understandings of “the national” are also discussed at length in *Danske identitetshistorie* (“Danish identity history,” 1991–92).<sup>21</sup> The extensive research on N.F.S. Grundtvig and his work makes an important contribution to this field as well.<sup>22</sup>

## Research on Encyclopedias

Research on encyclopedias was for a long time limited to studies of major European works such as the *Encyclopédie*, *Brockhaus*, or *Larousse*.<sup>23</sup> Jean-Yves Mollier’s work on *Librairie Larousse* and Anja zum Hingsts’s research on *Brockhaus* are both impressive studies of the major encyclopedic publishing

projects.<sup>24</sup> The past decades have seen an increased interest in the history of all kinds of encyclopedias: their interrelationships, and their significance for different readers and users. In this overview, I would like to emphasize two important and very different studies of encyclopedias. In a recent thematic study of the encyclopedic tradition in Europe, *The European Encyclopedia* (2019), Jeff Loveland stresses the continuity throughout the history of encyclopedias, and he shows that despite differences in printing technique and the changing book market, several commonalities among publications can be found, regardless of the publishing year.<sup>25</sup> While Loveland focuses on the more practical aspects of encyclopedia production, Richard Yeo turns our attention to encyclopedic knowledge in *Encyclopedic Visions* (2010). From a cultural-historical perspective, he investigates the eighteenth-century English dictionaries of arts and sciences. Yeo aims “to show that a cultural history of Enlightenment encyclopedias must confront some important ideas about the organisation and communication of knowledge—especially scientific knowledge.”<sup>26</sup>

The scholarly interest in encyclopedias has also seen a shift in focus from the history of production and publishing to the materiality and the physical design of the books. In these studies, the focus has been on (among other issues) the layout of the pages or the significance of the transformation from print to digital for the authority and status of the genre.<sup>27</sup>

Although research remains limited, the publication and production history of several Danish encyclopedias has been covered in a number of studies over the past decades.<sup>28</sup> The same goes for the study of unfinished, abandoned encyclopedias, which have also received greater attention in recent years.<sup>29</sup> However, the question of the relationship between encyclopedic publications and nationalism has not previously been examined thoroughly—with some exceptions. Though his approach is not systematic, Loveland touches upon the question from time to time in *The European Encyclopedia*. Also, the recent anthology *Translation and Transfer of Knowledge in Encyclopedic Compilations 1680–1830* (2021) addresses this subject in relation to eighteenth-century encyclopedias. The more specific topic of the reception of Danish encyclopedias has also often been omitted, or only lightly treated, in previous studies.<sup>30</sup> We know little about how these works were discussed in the national and regional press, what significance was



attached to them, and why. This article is therefore a first step in the direction of a study of the reception of Danish encyclopedias.

## The Establishment of a Tradition

Denmark boasts a long tradition of publishing encyclopedias.<sup>31</sup> Compared to other European countries, Denmark was early to translate the German *Konversations-Lexikon* and was the first Nordic country to publish an edition of *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*. In general, the German *Konversations-Lexikon* played a central role in the development of the encyclopedic genre throughout Scandinavia, and the first major encyclopedias were largely modelled on German works.<sup>32</sup>

In the history of Danish encyclopedias, one publisher in particular stands out. Historically, Schultz Publishing House has been the foremost publisher of Danish encyclopedias.<sup>33</sup> The company was a family business which for generations had been a central player in the Danish publishing industry. Its founder, Johan Frederik Schultz (1756–1817), was appointed both university printer and royal printer and acquired the economically advantageous “almanac privilege” from Copenhagen University.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1891 and the second half of the 1940s, Schultz Publishing House published four editions of *Salmonsens*.<sup>35</sup> The extensive second edition, consisting of 26 volumes (completed by a supplementary volume in 1930), became a key source of knowledge and the country’s most important encyclopedia, although it was primarily embraced by the well-educated.<sup>36</sup> In its time, *Salmonsens* was the most comprehensive Danish encyclopedia ever published, and the fact that the entries were prepared almost exclusively by Danish and Norwegian experts certainly helped to establish its status. However, *Salmonsens*’s prestige did not arise from the quality of the text alone. I argue that the daily press’s positive treatment of *Salmonsens* played a central role in forming its reputation both in its own time and for posterity.

Besides Schultz, a multitude of other Danish publishers also tried their hand at publishing encyclopedias.<sup>37</sup> The results of these efforts varied widely in both their content and their form. These encyclopedias appeared sometimes in a single volume and sometimes in many; sometimes their pages were dense with small print, and sometimes they were richly illustrated with

pictures, graphs, and diagrams.<sup>38</sup> The period leading up to the 1950s was the heyday of Danish encyclopedias. Thereafter, the number of new publications dropped, and what publications there were appeared at a slower pace and were less ambitious in scope.<sup>39</sup> Some initiatives, such as the book club encyclopedia *Lademanns Leksikon* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1971–1978), remained successful. With this book club, the enterprising publisher Jørgen Lademann had found a new audience for encyclopedias. In the 1970s, *Lademanns Leksikon* had around 100,000 subscribers, an impressive number for any encyclopedia, particularly since Denmark had a population at the time of only around five million.

Nevertheless, *Salmonsens*'s successors in the mid-twentieth century failed to achieve the same status and recognition that it had enjoyed. More than 60 years would pass before a new encyclopedia comparable with *Salmonsens* would see the light of day in Denmark.

### **A Successor for *Salmonsens***

The success in neighbouring Sweden of an encyclopedia called *Nationalencyklopedin* (1989–1996) gave new life to Danish publishers' dream of an updated Danish-language "masterpiece" comparable to the old *Salmonsens*. Their idea soon found support among the politicians at the Danish Parliament. There was hope that, at least if the government offered support, as the Swedish government had done, a new, comprehensive Danish encyclopedia could become a reality, despite the country's small population. Apparently the publishers did not consider the fact that Sweden had a language area almost twice the size of Denmark's, however.<sup>40</sup> "If the Swedes can do it, so can we," one of the editors of the new publishing project Torben Frandsen recalled that he had stated.<sup>41</sup>

Publishing a new encyclopedia was expensive. "Salmonsens's replacement will cost 300 million DKK," the daily newspaper *Politiken* reported in 1989.<sup>42</sup> On the conservative Prime Minister Poul Schlüter's table lay a 25-page prospectus for a national encyclopedia, for which the government and the traditional publishing house Gyldendal were negotiating a funding arrangement.<sup>43</sup> In time, the two parties were able to reach an agreement. Together with a major Danish foundation, The Augustinus Foundation, the government supported the work financially with a deficit guarantee.<sup>44</sup>

In 1991, the project was initiated. To work on the encyclopedia, Gyldendal established a huge editorial office: no fewer than 3,500 authors, 500 consultants, and 100 editors were employed. The press followed the publication closely and reported diligently on various aspects of the editorial work. Gyldendal was aware of the great interest in the project and once a month the editorial office issued a small magazine, which continuously updated subscribers (and the public in general) on the development of the work.

The publication of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* was intended to take 10 years, and the editors managed to meet the deadline.<sup>45</sup> In 2001, volume 20, *Vandrebog – Åver*, was published, and over the following years, Gyldendal published several supplementary volumes. In 2006, 35,000 copies of the work had been sold, and the buyer of the complete set of 24 volumes could frolic through the 13,000 pages, 115,000 entries, and 20,000 illustrations on every topic under the sun. The price of the encyclopedia varied between DKK 18,500 for the regular edition and DKK 22,500 for the luxury edition. The Danes had finally received a worthy successor to *Salmonsens*.

The technical preconditions for encyclopedias changed fundamentally at the same time as *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* was being produced. When the project was launched, neither digitization nor the internet was part of everyday life for most people, but by the beginning of the new millennium, when the encyclopedia was completed, both were permanent fixtures in the publishing industry and the wider culture alike.<sup>46</sup>

Digital encyclopedias had begun to emerge as part of this widespread digital shift, signaling that another change in the encyclopedic dissemination of knowledge was on the way: the move from print to online forms of publication. Although an electronic edition of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* had been planned, the new digital reality caught up with the publishing house. Three years after the publication of the last volume, Gyldendal put the printed encyclopedia on CD-ROM. We do not know what the encyclopedia's 35,000 subscribers thought of the digitized version, but as one newspaper remarked, "Had it not been for the subscribers, the encyclopedia would probably never have come to anything."<sup>47</sup> Later a DVD

was launched, but both media turned out to be transitional, and they were quickly overtaken and subsumed by the internet.

Gyldendal therefore took the project online in 2006, launching a subscription-based online edition of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*. Three years later, in 2009, it was made free for everyone, and the title was abbreviated to *The Great Danish*. For almost 10 years, *The Great Danish* functioned as a digital version of the printed encyclopedia, until in August 2017, Gyldendal announced that the digital encyclopedia would not be updated anymore.<sup>48</sup> Gyldendal defended the decision by saying that for several years they had tested “different business models, including user fees and advertising financing,” but they had failed to break even financially. According to Gyldendal, it was simply not possible to run an online encyclopedia in an economically responsible way. *The Great Danish* was no longer updated, and for several years the work gathered dust on its digital bookshelf.<sup>49</sup>

Just when everyone thought that the days of Denmark having its own encyclopedia—a national encyclopedia compiled by Danish experts—were gone for good, a collaboration among several Danish publishers, with financial support from a number of Danish foundations, facilitated a large new knowledge platform: lex.dk. The idea behind the platform was to provide free access to the major national publishing projects that for generations had collected, preserved, and disseminated Danish culture, history, and science.<sup>50</sup> With the establishment of lex.dk, a new era in Danish encyclopedia history began.

### **The Press and the Reception of Danish Encyclopedias**

Since the Danish press has always followed the publication of the major encyclopedic projects with great interest, the newspaper archives are an excellent source for studying the reception of encyclopedias. Whether one examines newspapers in the late nineteenth century or around the turn of the millennium a hundred years later, it is evident that encyclopedias received great attention and that the press played a part in establishing the different encyclopedic works as significant publications. The more column space given to an encyclopedia, the better known it became.

In this section of my study, I will focus on the reception of *Salmonsens*, *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*, and *The Great Danish*. The analysis is based on reviews of the finished publications, and also on other kinds of newspaper articles, such as discussions of the editors, the publishing houses, and the editorial process from beginning to end. The newspaper articles have mainly been located through the Danish database Mediestream.dk, an online collection belonging to the Danish Royal Library, and the database Infomedia.dk, which contains articles from 1990 until today. Mediestream's older material is freely available, while digitized materials younger than 100 years old are only available at the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen and Aarhus. The newer articles have been located through Infomedia.dk. Taken together, the two databases provide access to virtually all digitized Danish newspapers, except for the daily *Politiken*, which has its own digitized newspaper archive.

By the time the first instalment of *Salmonsens* was published at end of the nineteenth century, Denmark had a well-developed press, an active publishing market, a network of public libraries, and a high level of literacy. The many players in the press and the publishing industry produced and circulated literature and reading material which appealed to the different layers of society and advanced the general education (*folkeoplysningen*) of the populace.<sup>51</sup> The newspaper articles covering Danish encyclopedias are extensive. In studying the reception of Danish encyclopedias, I will therefore mainly (but not exclusively) focus on the two major newspapers: firstly, *Berlingske*, a nationwide conservative newspaper founded in 1749; and secondly, the cultural radical *Politiken*, established in 1884.<sup>52</sup> Both newspapers covered all three encyclopedias and remain to this day central voices in the public debate in Denmark.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the nationwide newspapers in Denmark were organized according to the “four-leaf system” (*firbladssystem*), which alluded to the fact that each of the four major political parties had its own newspaper where it could convey its political program.<sup>53</sup> In addition, there existed a wide range of local newspapers lacking political affiliation.<sup>54</sup> After the First World War, the “four-leaf-system” became increasingly diluted, and the major newspapers detached themselves from the political parties.<sup>55</sup> Today, most Danish newspapers characterize themselves as

politically independent, but their traditional political affiliations still leave their mark, primarily in the opinion pages.

So, how did the newspapers review and discuss these encyclopedias? When the publishing houses first announced an encyclopedic project, the newspapers issued articles discussing the publishing projects in detail: Who was the editor-in-chief? Could the publishing house handle such a major task? What was the price and the market for the encyclopedia? Despite the time gap of more than hundred years between the three publications, many of the same questions recur in the articles. Whether they were printed or digital, the encyclopedias were described as works of particular significance.<sup>56</sup> Once publication had started, every single instalment and volume was reviewed in the nationwide press—and often in the regional newspapers—and other red-letter days for the encyclopedia were sometimes mentioned as well. This was particularly the case with *Salmonsens* and *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*, where the completion of each individual volume generated great publicity and debate.<sup>57</sup>

*Berlingske* and *Politiken* have provided relatively extensive coverage of Danish encyclopedia publishing over the years—though their focus has been limited to the major works. Among other things, *Berlingske* praised the individual entries (especially those about Danish history and culture) and the authors' way of communicating their content.<sup>58</sup>

At first glance, *Berlingske* seems to have had a greater interest in the first edition of *Salmonsens* than *Politiken*. One reason for this interest was that a personal connection existed between the newspaper and the encyclopedia. The editor-in-chief of the two first editions of *Salmonsens*, Christian Blangstrup, was also editor-in-chief at *Berlingske* during the period 1902–1912, and several employees from the newspaper participated in the work with *Salmonsens*. It is important to remember that at the time Copenhagen was a relatively small city, and that social contacts and social networks, above all in the cultural and intellectual circle, overlapped.

However, the positive and enthusiastic tone characterizing the reviews and other articles about *Salmonsens* in *Berlingske* was also found in other Danish newspapers, including *Politiken*. “It does not happen twice in one’s life that one is offered a book that will provide one with so much real joy and

knowledge as this work. It should be found on every educated Man's Bookshelf," a reviewer remarked in *Politiken* in May 1893.<sup>59</sup> "The largest work in Danish book production,"<sup>60</sup> a local newspaper wrote. In the early mentions of *Salmonsens*'s first edition, the Danish perspective was repeatedly stressed. The economically oriented newspaper *Kjøbenhavns Børs-Tidende* emphasized that established Danish scholars were behind the work, and that many of the entries had been written especially for this encyclopedia.<sup>61</sup> These are just a few examples, but they are all telling of the way in which *Salmonsens* was received in the Danish newspapers in general and in *Berlingske* and *Politiken* in particular.

Some 60 years later, in 1994, the newspapers used almost the same wording in their coverage of the publication of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*. The articles were described as both "captivating" and "entertaining."<sup>62</sup> Following the publication of the first volume, *A–Armøy*, in November 1994, *Berlingske* wrote that "the work is set to become a historical monument"<sup>63</sup> that drew on a substantial intellectual legacy. The new publication was also lauded in *Politiken*, although some critical voices, while acknowledging its 'monumental' stature, accused it of being a 'monument' to the past.<sup>64</sup> These minor complaints did not change the fact that the *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* was the subject of enormous attention throughout the publishing process. The press scoured all aspects of the encyclopedia, and many column inches were devoted to the journalists' analysis of the publication. The editor-in-chief, Jørn Lund, also often had features about the project in the major dailies.

The study of the reception of *The Great Danish* is less straightforward than that of the printed encyclopedias. The ever-changing digital media brought about new publishing conditions, and each change can be seen as a new beginning for the online encyclopedia. As mentioned earlier, *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* had existed as CD-ROM and DVD format and in 2006 it was launched as an online platform. In 2009, the title was abbreviated to *The Great Danish*. The press coverage must thus be seen in the light of the many changes in the format. When the online platform was launched back in 2006, the encyclopedia received considerable attention. As early as January 2006, six months before the encyclopedia was published online, newspapers began writing about the event. "The whole world on the computer," a headline in *Berlingske* exclaimed.<sup>65</sup> The fact that another online

encyclopedia in Danish—the international Wikipedia—was growing larger day by day, did not seem to concern Gyldendal. “We are not in competition with Wikipedia. We have five times as many articles in Danish,”<sup>66</sup> stated Lars Boesgaard, the director of Gyldendal. As previously mentioned, the platform was first behind a paywall, but three years later, in 2009, it became free and open to everyone.

Compared to the printed works, the beginning of the free access to *The Great Danish* received less attention in the press. Half a year after access was opened up, the paucity of media coverage was brought up for discussion in *Berlingske*. The newspaper wondered why the launch of the platform, “one of the biggest publishing events in post-war Denmark,”<sup>67</sup> had received so little attention from the media. The newspaper described the free access to the online encyclopedia as a gift from the publishing house Gyldendal on a par with the spectacular Copenhagen Opera House that had been recently donated by The A.P. Moller Foundation.<sup>68</sup> The limited press coverage in 2009 can be attributed to at least two factors. First and foremost, *The Great Danish* was not a new encyclopedic publication in 2009, but rather a new platform for the encyclopedia. Seen from that perspective, *The Great Danish* did not have the same news value as the launch of its printed equivalents had. Secondly, the media landscape of 2009 looked markedly different than it had when *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* was published 15 years earlier, and therefore the preconditions for media coverage were different, too.

Overall, the reviews and discussions of the three works were wide-ranging and predominantly enthusiastic. When covering *Salmonsens*, it was clear that the minor news outlets from time to time copied the wording of the promotional material in their mentions of the work, whereas the major newspapers published more original and longer articles with varying themes. The fact that the newspapers repeatedly emphasized the national perspective in their reviews was clearly connected with the publishers’ marketing strategy. In the advertisements, the significance of “the national” was raised frequently, and this undoubtedly influenced the coverage in the newspapers.<sup>69</sup>

It is important to mention that, of course, there were critical voices too. The last two editions of *Salmonsens* especially had been criticized for being too concise, while *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*, among other things, was



accused of being left-leaning, with its entry on communism taken to reflect that point of view. However, even in a somewhat critical review of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia*, *Politiken* deemed the publication indispensable and referred to it as a supplement to the old *Salmonsens*.<sup>70</sup> *The Great Danish* did not escape criticism either, though the material on communism was re-written. The online encyclopedia was also criticized for not being as comprehensive and rapidly edited as Wikipedia.

Despite the criticism, the overall picture of the reception of all three encyclopedias was positive, and the amount of interest and attention from the newspapers shows that the publication of encyclopedias was seen as important. Although there was more than a century between the publication of the first volume of *Salmonsens* and the launch of *The Great Danish*, several common denominators can be found in their reception. One thing in particular stands out: the national perspective. As I will show in the next section, the term “national” was used frequently in articles that described, discussed, or reviewed the encyclopedias.

### **“The world seen through Danish eyes”**

Nationalism was a recurring theme expressed in several different ways in the newspapers’ coverage of the various encyclopedias. The reviews and articles concerned the encyclopedias’ significance for *Bildung*, the dissemination of Danish history and culture, and, more generally, they emphasized the dissemination of information and knowledge from a Danish perspective repeatedly as one of the encyclopedias’ most important tasks. Why has the national perspective been so central to the reception and discussion of Danish encyclopedias, not only in the late 1800s but all the way up to today? The continuity of the national emphasis is interesting. To understand this perspective, we need to have a brief insight into the historical development of Danish nationalism—and above all, how it has affected the cultural life of the country.

The publication of *Salmonsens* took place in the last year of the nineteenth century, a period that saw nationalism leave its mark on Danish politics and cultural life. At the time of publication of the first edition of *Salmonsens*, Denmark was still recovering from the Second Schleswig War in 1864, which saw Denmark lose a sizeable and important part of its kingdom. The

evolution of Danish nationalism in this period can be characterized as “a shift from politically based nationalism to ethnic-based nationalism.”<sup>71</sup> In Denmark, these shifts have traditionally taken place following confrontations with German influence: in the early 1840s, with the National Liberals’ formulation of the slogan “Denmark to the [river] Eider,” which meant the National Liberals would abolish all communion between the Duchies, incorporate Schleswig into Denmark, and separate Holstein from the Kingdom; in 1848, at the outbreak of the ‘Three Years’ War; in the 1920 post-First World War reunification of a part of Schleswig; and in the German occupation between 1940 and 1945, which saw a new kind of nationalism develop in Denmark. Later, even newer forms of ethnic and cultural Danish nationalism have also emerged as reactions to Denmark’s integration into the European Community, and, from the 1970s to the present, to immigration into the country.<sup>72</sup>

Whatever the reason for nationalist sentiment, the printed word played an important role in advancing the self-understanding of the nation, and thereby also played a role in the construction of the Danish national community. As Mikkel Flohr elegantly put it: “The explicit and implicit nationalistic literature gradually spread the notion of a specific national community that formed the basis of the popular breakthrough of nationalism.”<sup>73</sup> A key genre in this context was poetry—for example, poems that have become national anthems, or other songs that are closely linked to national identity. The Danish folk high school tradition (*folkehøjskoletradition*), which was established by Grundtvig, has been an important carrier of songs that for generations have had an impact on Danish identity and self-understanding.<sup>74</sup> Songs that are sung on national holidays or in connection with national crises such as the Second World War have a place in this tradition.<sup>75</sup> I would also argue that there are many examples of literature in other forms that have been important in terms of building and supporting national identity, including dictionaries in the vernacular, biographical reference works such as the *Danish Biographical Lexicon* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1887–1902) (*Danske Biografiske Leksikon*), and major historical works. In my view, the encyclopedia also belongs to the category of literature that plays a role in the creation of the nation as, in Benedict Arnold’s words, an imagined community.<sup>76</sup>

Although the character of Danish nationalism varied over the years, the newspapers continued to relate the encyclopedias to the national perspective in remarkably similar ways, whether it was around the turn of the twentieth century, in the mid-1990s or in the first part of the twenty-first century. The publication of a new encyclopedia was treated, some might even say celebrated, as a national event. That said, however, class considerations are relevant here. It was above all the cultural elite that celebrated the publication of encyclopedias as events of national significance.

The newspapers took at least three different approaches to the “national” in relation to encyclopedias. Firstly, they stressed the social significance of the encyclopedia as a genre. Reading the articles in an encyclopedia could be an entertaining activity, the newspaper stated, but most of all it had to have an educational function. From this perspective, the encyclopedias’ treatment of Danish history, events, and personalities was important.<sup>77</sup> One reviewer in *Berlingske* from April 1917 lauded *Salmonsens* for including 300 pages of Danish content—than would be contained in an ordinary book. And he continued: “In other words, [here] we have a whole work with the latest research and the foremost knowledge about our country.”<sup>78</sup> Secondly, the newspapers emphasized that these encyclopedias were publications the Danes should be proud of. A real “nation” must have its own encyclopedia: a national encyclopedia. Already in its review of *Salmonsens*’s second instalment in February 1892, *Politiken* concluded that several entries demonstrated both a high degree of scientific expertise and high entertainment value, and therefore the newspaper highly recommended “this encyclopedia, which promises to be a uniquely good handbook of useful knowledge for all Danes.”<sup>79</sup> Last but not least, as mentioned before, the newspapers emphasized that Danish experts were behind the entries. The encyclopedia entries were not just translations of “foreign knowledge,” but original entries prepared and written from a Danish perspective.<sup>80</sup>

The importance of the Danish perspective was repeated in the articles about *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* and *The Great Danish*. With the discontinuation of the latter it became a politically charged question, which soon turned in to a debate about the extent of the state’s obligation to support the dissemination of information and knowledge in Danish. Both *Salmonsens* and *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* received financial support from individuals and major foundations, and in the case of the latter, the Danish state was also

involved. When the first volume, *A–Arnoy*, was published, *Berlingske* commented on the state subsidy. The newspaper’s editor-in-chief, Hans Dam, felt that the Danish state should have supported the project even more in order to bring the total price down to a level that would allow more Danes the opportunity to acquire a copy.<sup>81</sup> The discussion about state support for major publishing projects such as encyclopedias continues to this day, with *lex.dk* as just the latest example.

## Epilogue

*Each nation has its own particular encyclopedia because each nation has its own language, has its own ideas, has its own maxims, has its own arts, has ... its own prejudices .... [A] European encyclopedia ... is impossible.*<sup>82</sup>

In 1771, an Italian observer commented on a description that described Moréri’s *Grand Dictionnaire historique* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1674) as a book “of all nations.”<sup>83</sup> Apparently he found that there was an obvious connection between several national circumstances and the different countries’ encyclopedias. In many ways, he was right, and his perspective has rung true not only for his own contemporaries but throughout the history of the modern encyclopedia. However, although an encyclopedia such as Wikipedia manages to embrace both “the whole world” and the perspectives of individual countries, national interests still leave their mark on the entries—for example, when it comes to which topics are covered in the different languages or how comprehensive particular entries are. For example, the French and English entries about “Codex Holmiensis” (*Jyske Lov*) from 1241 are naturally shorter than their Danish equivalent. Thus, the national circumstances have always been central to the content of encyclopedias.

The nationalism of the encyclopedia finds expression in many different ways—including in its reception, as I have clarified in this study of three modern Danish encyclopedias. Regardless of the period or medium, encyclopedias in Denmark have received a generally enthusiastic reception in both the regional and nationwide press, and this reception played an important part in giving the encyclopedia a certain significance, especially in the context of emerging Danish nationalism. This study has shown that the reception of the three different Danish encyclopedias has the national

perspective as a common denominator. Across time and within diverse cultural and political contexts, the national perspective played a central part in the rhetoric of the encyclopedias' reception.

State support also signalled the significance of these publications on a national scale. Over the years, the two printed encyclopedias in particular have been closely linked to national identity and self-understanding. *Salmonsens* and *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* have both been referred to as national treasures that convey information and knowledge about historical events or important personalities from a uniquely Danish point of view.<sup>84</sup> It is important to emphasize that while not all encyclopedias share the same level of cultural-historical significance, major works such as *Salmonsens* and *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* played an important role in adding to the historical narrative of the Danish nation state. The encyclopedias' contribution to Denmark's story of itself, its own cultural history, and the newspapers' recognition of that contribution, were key factors in establishing these ambitious volumes as significant—and nationalist—publications.

One remaining question is whether the newspapers' focus on the national perspective is a particularly Danish phenomenon or whether it is a general characteristic of the reception of encyclopedic publications in other countries. The answer to that question requires a major systematic study of the reception of encyclopedias in the press in countries across the globe, and while my brief mention earlier of the history of encyclopedism in Denmark's neighbouring countries may offer some insights, a proper treatment of that topic is for another project. However, the comment from the Italian observer suggests that there is a high probability that the media from other countries, too, see major encyclopedias as both tools and indicators of nation-building and national identity.

Maria Simonsen (born 1978) is Associate Professor in History at the Department of Politics and Society, Aalborg University, and part of a three-year talent program for younger researchers at the Faculty of Social Sciences. She earned her PhD in Book History from Lund University in December 2016. Her research interests include the history of book, history of knowledge, university history, and digital history. She has published widely on the history of Scandinavian encyclopedias and the history of knowledge. She is currently conducting a three-year research project entitled “Knowledge for the World: The History of Aalborg University, 1974–2024”. E-mail: [simonsen@dps.aau.dk](mailto:simonsen@dps.aau.dk)

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Morten Mikkelsen, “Politisk flertal redder nationalleksikon,” *Kristeligt Dagblad*, November 19, 2021 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>2</sup> “Om Lex.dk,” [https://om.lex.dk/Om\\_lex.dk](https://om.lex.dk/Om_lex.dk) (accessed April 15, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> “Danmark [bliver] det eneste land blandt dem, vi normalt sammenligner os med, der ikke har et nationalt digitalt opslagsværk.” Here and below, all translations are my own. The ad was inserted in, among others, the three nation-wide newspapers *Politiken*, *Berlingske* and *Weekendavisen*, November 19, 2021, but it was also shared diligently on social media like Twitter and Facebook (Informedia.dk and *Politikens’* Digital Archives).

<sup>4</sup> On the publication of Danish encyclopedias before the nineteenth century, see Maria Simonsen, *Det store leksikon* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2021), 60–64.

<sup>5</sup> The Danish publishing pattern can also be observed in the other Scandinavian countries. In the database “Den skandinaviske encyklopædi,” I have compiled an overview of all published encyclopedias in Denmark and Sweden for the period 1870–1970. The database is located in the Svensk Nationell Datatjänst, SND. <https://snd.gu.se/sv>. From here on, I will refer to the database as “Database: Den skandinaviske encyklopædi.”

<sup>6</sup> An example of the significance of encyclopedias is the comparison with, for example, the Bible (or other influential publications). In *The European Encyclopedia*, Jeff Loveland gives an example from Germany. At the turn of the twentieth century, “a German newspaper identified the *Konversations-Lexikon* ... as the most influential book of the preceding century, ahead of the Bible and the naturalist Charles Darwin’s writings.” Jeff Loveland, *The European Encyclopedia: From 1650 to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1.

<sup>7</sup> When I refer to the book’s communications circuit, my point of departure is Robert Darton’s model of a book’s life cycle in his “What Is the History of Books?,” *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65–83, and “What Is the History of Books? Revisited” *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 3 (2007): 495–508.

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<sup>8</sup> The publication of encyclopedias in Latin became more and more sparse. An example, however, was the *Lexicon Universale* (1677), “a vast endeavour carried out by one man,” Johann Jacob Hoffmann (1635–1706), as Robert Collison has described it. A few examples of encyclopedias on the major national languages in the early modern period are Louis Moréri’s *Le grand dictionnaire historique* (1674), Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), John Harris’s *Lexicon technicum* (1704) or Johann Heinrich Zedler’s *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* (1731). Robert Collison, *Encyclopedias: Their History Throughout the Ages* (New York & London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1964), 89.

<sup>9</sup> See Clorinda Donato and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, eds., *Translation and Transfer of Knowledge in Encyclopedic Compilations 1680–1830* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Besides *Encyclopædia Britannica*, works such as *Collier’s Encyclopedia* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1949–1951) and *Compton’s Encyclopedia* (1922–1968) became widespread outside their countries of origin.

<sup>11</sup> For an introduction to nationalism see Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson, eds., *What is a Nation: Europe 1789–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially chapter 10, Mary Hilsen, “Denmark, Norway and Sweden,” 192–209; and John A. Hall, Ove Korsgaard, and Ove K. Pedersen, eds., *Building the Nation: N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish National Identity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015). On pre-modern nationalism in Scandinavia see Patrik Hall, *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Sweden as an Example* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1998); Patrik Hall, *Den svenskeaste historien: nationalism i Sverige under sex sekler* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2000); and Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk: nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Eslöv: Symposium, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). The Danish journal and publisher *Baggrund* has made a short but very readable summary of the main points in *Imagined Communities*. See Mikkel Flohr, “Forestillede fællesskaber. En meget kort introduktion til Benedict Anderson,” *Baggrund* (February 7, 2016). <https://baggrund.com/2016/02/07/forestillede-faellesskaber-en-meg-et-kort-introduktion-til-benedict-anderson/> (accessed April 15, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4, 6–7; E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ole Feldbæk, ed., *Danske identitetshistorie*, vol. 4 (København: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36, 37–46; Flohr, “Forestillede fællesskaber”; Walter J. Ong, *Muntlig och skriftlig kultur. Teknologiseringen av ordet* (Gothenburg: Bokförlaget Anthropos, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Erik Strange Petersen, “Enevældens og helstatens fald – 1864,” in *Danmarks historie – i grundtræk*, eds. Steen Busck et al. (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2011), 261–63.

<sup>16</sup> The war of 1864, also known as the Second Schleswig War, was a war between Denmark on one side and Austria and Prussia on the other. The cause of the war was a conflict about the affiliation of the nationally mixed duchy of Schleswig. The Second Schleswig War ended with The Treaty of Vienna, which was signed on October 30, 1864. The result of the peace treaty meant that Denmark lost the Southern Jutland—the duchies

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of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg. With the loss of the three duchies, Denmark was reduced to a small European state, and for many years to come, both the war and the loss played an important role in Danish identity and self-understanding. A full overview in English of the German-Danish War and the Schleswig-Holstein question can be found at <https://www.britannica.com/event/German-Danish-War> (accessed April 11, 2022). Peter Yding Brunbech, “Krigen I 1864 (2. Slesvigske Krig),” Danmarkshistorien.dk: <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/krigen-i-1864/> (accessed April 11, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> See “N.F.S. Grundtvig ‘Folkeligheden’ 1848,” Danmarkshistorien.dk: <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/nfs-grundtvig-folkeligheden-1848/> (accessed April 11, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> Bertel Nygaard, “Nationalisme,” Danmarkshistorien.dk (accessed April 15, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> About the history of the Danish flag as a symbol of nationalism see for example Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen, *Dannebrog* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> See Inge Adriansen, “Mor Danmark,” *Folk og kultur. Årbog for Dansk Etnologi og Folkemindervidenskab* 16, no. 1 (1987): 105–63; Inge Adriansen *Nationale symboler i Det Danske Rige 1830–2000* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2006); Uffe Østergaard, “Hvad er det ‘danske’ ved Danmark?,” *Den Jyske Historiker* 29–30 (1986): 85–137; Rasmus Glenthøj, *På fædrelandets alter: national identitet og patriotisme hos det danske borgerskab 1807–1814* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2007); Rasmus Glenthøj “Skandinavismen som en politisk nødvendighed: Politisk skandinavisme i et teoretisk og komparativt perspektiv,” in *Skandinavismen: Vision og virkning*, eds. R. Hemstad, J. Fabricius Møller, and D. Thorkildsen (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag), 227–55.

<sup>21</sup> See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*; Feldbæk, ed., *Dansk identitetshistorie*, vol. 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Glenthøj, *På fædrelandets alter*; Glenthøj, “Skandinavismen som en politisk nødvendighed”; Lorenz Rerup, “Grundtvig and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nationalism,” *Grundtvig-Studier* 44, no. 1 (1993): 16–26.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979); Anja zum Hingsts, *Die Geschichte des Großen Brockhaus. Von Conversationslexikon zur Enzyklopädie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995); Jean-Yves Mollier, *Histoire de la librairie Larousse (1855–2010)* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Anja zum Hingsts, *Die Geschichte des Großen Brockhaus*; Jean-Yves Mollier, *Histoire de la librairie Larousse*.

<sup>25</sup> Loveland, *The European Encyclopedia*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xvi.

<sup>27</sup> Maria Simonsen, “(Bog)sidens manifestationer. Et boghistorisk studie af informations- og kundskabsidealer i tre danske encyklopædier,” *Temp – tidskrift for historie*, no. 14 (2017): 127–50; Anthony Grafton, *La page de l’Antiquité à l’ère du numérique: histoire, usages, esthétiques* (Paris: Hazan, 2012). See also Katharine Schopflin, *The Encyclopaedia as a Form of the Book*



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(London: Department of Information Studies, University College London July 2013); Katharine Schopflin, "What Do We Think an Encyclopaedia Is?," *Culture Unbound*, vol. 6 (Linköping: 2014), 484–503.

<sup>28</sup> In my book about two Scandinavian encyclopedias, I give an overview of the research on Scandinavian encyclopedias up to 2016: Maria Simonsen, *Den Skandinaviske encyklopædi. Udgivelse og udformning af Nordiske familiebok og Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon* (Lund/Göteborg: Makadams förlag, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Jacob Christensson, *Lyckoriket: studier i svensk upplysning* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1996); Linn Holmberg and Maria Simonsen, eds., *Stranded Encyclopedias, 1700–2000: Exploring Unfinished, Unpublished, Unsuccessful Encyclopedic Projects* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Simonsen, *Den Skandinaviske encyklopædi*.

<sup>30</sup> In *Den skandinaviske encyklopædi*, I briefly describe the receptions of the different editions of *Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon*. Apart from that, there are no studies of the reception of Danish encyclopedias.

<sup>31</sup> This overview of the history of Danish encyclopedias is very briefly told. I would like to emphasize that the actual history is long, more detailed, and not uncomplicated. There exists no comprehensive account of Danish reference works, but the story is partly told in various publications. For a more complete description of the history of Danish reference works, see for example Simonsen, *Den Skandinaviske encyklopædi*; Andre Nicolet, *Encyklopædier og Konversationsleksika gennem tiderne* (Copenhagen: J.H. Schultz A/S, 1946); Hans Hertel, *Litteraturens vanebrydere: Kritikere, forlaggere og lyslæsere gennem 150 år*, (Copenhagen: Foreningen for Boghaandværk, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> The history of the German influence has already been told partially in Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias, 1891–2017," Holmberg and Simonsen, eds., *Stranded Encyclopedias*, 287–322. See also Nicolet, *Encyklopædier og Konversationsleksika gennem tiderne*.

<sup>33</sup> The different editions of *Salmonsens* have already been subject to study in several publications, so I will only give a brief outline of its more than 60-year history. See for example Simonsen, *Den skandinaviske encyklopædi*, 65–195; Maria Simonsen, "Schultz eller Salmonsens," *Bogvennen* (2010), 64–93; Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias, 1891–2017." The history of the much younger work *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* has not been described with the same level of detail, which calls for a more in-depth description of its origin and production history. Since the production history of *The Great Danish Encyclopedia* is not the main purpose of this article, my account is not exhaustive, and an in-depth analysis of the encyclopedia's publication history is still needed.

<sup>34</sup> Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias," 293.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>36</sup> The Schultz publishing house published several different editions of the *Salmonsens*: *Salmonsens store illustrerede Konversationsleksikon. En nordisk encyklopædi* (19 vols., 1891–1911), *Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon* (26 vols., 1915–1939), *Den lille Salmonsens* (12 vols., 1940), *Den nye Salmonsens* (1 vol., 1949; it later became available in 2 vols.), and finally *Salmonsens*

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*Leksikon-Tidskrift* (1941–1956). Because the different editions of the *Salmonsens* vary so much in both form and size, it can be debated whether the two last publications, *Den nye Salmonsens* and *Salmonsens Leksikon-Tidskrift*, should be considered part of the *Salmonsens* tradition. However, I consider them as part of the tradition, not least because of the publisher's marketing, where they are put in direct relation to the first editions. See also Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias," 288.

<sup>37</sup> See *Den skandinaviske encyklopædi*.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias," 314.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Torben Frandsen, May 11, 2015: "Hvis svenskerne kan, så kan vi også!" This part of the history has also been told in Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias," 314–15.

<sup>42</sup> "Salmonsens afløser vil koste 300 mill. kr.," *Politiken* December 31, 1989 (*Politiken's* newspaper archive).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid; Simonsen, "The Rise and Fall of Danish Encyclopedias," 314.

<sup>44</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Pernille Stensgaard, *Selveste Gyldendal – en historie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2020), 279.

<sup>46</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*, 91.

<sup>47</sup> *Jyllands-Posten*, August 27, 2004 (Infomedia.dk).

<sup>48</sup> Gyldendal, "Leksikonet denstoredanske.dk lukkes" (press release), August 24, 2017: <https://presse.gyldendal.dk/en/PressReleases/Leksikonet%20denstoredanske.dk%20lukkes>.

<sup>49</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*, 97.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Hans Hertel, *Den daglige bog. Bøger, formidlere og læsere i Danmark gennem 500 år* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 1983), 30–31, 38–41.

<sup>52</sup> *Berlingske* has changed its title several times. The newspaper was founded with the title *Kiøbenhavnnske Danske Post-Tidender* in 1749. For an in-depth description of the history of the Danish newspaper see Klaus Bruhn Jensen, *Danske mediehistorie*, vols. 1–4, (Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Jensen, *Danske mediehistorie*, vol. 2, 26–49.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*, 99.

<sup>57</sup> See for example *Berlingske Tidende*, July 14, 1891; *Politiken*, July 14, 1891; *Ribe Stifts-Tidende*, March 16, 1915; “Encyklopædi og litteratur,” *Information*, July 28, 1993; “Alverden skal beskrives,” *Kristeligt Dagblad*, December 31, 1993 (Mediestream.dk and Informedia.dk); “Encyklopædi og ideologi,” *Politiken*, June 29, 2001 (*Politiken’s* newspaper archive).

<sup>58</sup> “Litteratur,” *Berlingske*, August 2, 1898 (Mediestream.dk).

<sup>59</sup> “Det hænder ikke to Gange i Ens Liv, at man bydes en Bog, som vil skaffe En saa megen reel Glæde og saa megen Kundskab som dette Værk. Det bør findes i hver dannet Mands Boghylde.” ”Et monumentalt Værk,” *Politiken*, May 25, 1893. The review was originally published in *Bergens Tidende* the week before.

<sup>60</sup> “Det største værk i dansk bogproduktion,” *Herning Avis*, July 24, 1929 (Mediestream.dk).

<sup>61</sup> “Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon,” *Kjøbenhavns Børs-Tidende*, November 3, 1891 (Mediestream.dk); see also “Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon,” *København*, September 8, 1891 (Mediestream.dk); ”Salmonsens store illustrerede Konversations-Leksikon,” *København*, February 25, 1892 (Mediestream.dk).

<sup>62</sup> See among others, “Encyklopædi holder den høje standard,” *Politiken*, May 30, 1995 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>63</sup> “Allerede nu tegner værket til at blive et historisk monument for bogfolket, der trækker på vægtige intellektuelle renter.” *Berlingske*, November 15, 1994 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>64</sup> A few examples of the very positive reviews are “Et stilmøbel til reolen,” *Politiken*, November 13, 1994; “Så langt, så godt,” *Politiken*, December 16, 2000 (*Politiken’s* newspaper archive).

<sup>65</sup> “Hele verden på computeren,” *Berlingske*, January 27, 2006 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>66</sup> “Vi ligger ikke i konkurrence med Wikipedia. Vi har fem gange så mange artikler på dansk.” “Encyklopædien på nettet fra i dag,” *Berlingske*, November 3, 2006 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>67</sup> “Man kan argumentere for, at der var tale om en af de største udgivelsesbegivenheder i efterkrigstidens Danmark.” “Den store danske dyst,” *Berlingske*, July 26, 2009 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>68</sup> “Den store danske dyst,” *Berlingske*, July 26, 2009 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>69</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*, 86–99.

<sup>70</sup> “En blandet fornøjelse,” *Politiken*, November 15, 1994 (*Politiken’s* newspaper archive).

<sup>71</sup> Bertel Nygaard, “Nationalisme,” *Danmarkshistorien.dk* (accessed April 15, 2022).

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Den eksplicit og implicit patriotiske litteratur spredte gradvist forestillingen om et specifikt nationalt fællesskab, der dannede grundlag for nationalismens populære gennembrud.” Flohr, “Forestillede fællesskaber”; see also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 224.

<sup>74</sup> See Adriansen, *Nationale symboler i Det Danske Rige 1830–2000*; Tine Damsholt, “Jeg ser de bøgelyse øer – og dette folk er vort. Om emotionalisering, subjektivering og danske sange,” *Tidsskriftet Antropologi* (2000), 49–68.

<sup>75</sup> The Danish tradition of singing together during crises, known as “common song” (da. *fællessang*), was most recently taken up during the Covid-19 pandemic. Every morning from Monday to Friday, as well as on Friday nights, people gathered over national television for an hour of community singing.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*; Feldbæk, *Dansk identitetshistorie*, vols. 1–4.

<sup>77</sup> Reading the biography (*levnedbeskrivelse*) of the editor-in-chief Christian Blangstrup, it is clear that one of his objectives with this project was to create a national encyclopedia: “My intention is to create an original Danish-Nowegian encyclopedia” (“Min hensigt er at skabe en virkelig original dansk-norsk encyklopædi”). Archives of the Royal House, Ordenskapitlet, Copenhagen, *Levnedsbeskrivelser: Blangstrup*, September 1902.

<sup>78</sup> “Dansk Stof optager altsaa ca. 300 sider ... og dette Stof vilde i en almindelig Bog fylde ca. 800 Sider. Med andre Ord det er et helt Værk vi har faaet med de nyeste Forskninger og den bedste Viden om vort eget Land.” *Berlingske Tidende*, April 9, 1917 (Mediastream.dk).

<sup>79</sup> “Vi anbefaler særdeles dette leksikon, der tegner til at blive en enestående god håndbog i nyttig viden for danske.” “Salmonsens store illustrerede Konversationsleksikon,” *Politiken*, February 12, 1892 (*Politiken’s* newspaper archive).

<sup>80</sup> “Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon,” *København*, September 8, 1891 (Mediastream.dk); “Salmonsens store illustrerede Konversations-Leksikon,” *København*, February 25, 1892 (Mediastream.dk).

<sup>81</sup> “År 1 efter encyklopædien,” *Berlingske*, November 15, 1994 (Informedia.dk).

<sup>82</sup> I have taken this wonderful quotation from Loveland, *The European Encyclopedia*, 3. The original reads, “Ogni nazione ha la sua particolare enciclopedia perché ogni nazione ha il suo linuaggio, ha le sue idee, ha le sue massime, ha le sue arti, ha ... I suoi pregiudizi; ed in conseguenza che un’enciclopedia europea ... è impossibile.” Guido Abbattista, “La ‘Folie de la raison par alphabet’: Le origini settecentesche dell’ *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1768-1801),” *L’enciclopedismo in Italia nel XVIII secolo*, ed. Guido Abbattista (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1996), 428.

<sup>83</sup> Loveland, *The European Encyclopedia*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Simonsen, *Det store leksikon*.

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