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Lawyers Providing Legal Aid in Print: Legal Question and Answer Columns in Finnish Newspapers around 1900[1]

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Introduction

In nineteenth-century Finland, there was a growing notion that common people and the poor sorely needed access to legal aid and advice. While professional lawyers, who had graduated from the Helsinki Faculty of Law, tended to work in central positions in the town judiciary and were also available for advocacy, their fees were too high for the lower echelons of the society. As Marianne Vasara-Aaltonen discusses in this book, some towns appointed advocates for the poor and committees on the poor and workers' conditions. These started to provide legal aid to the lower classes in the late nineteenth century.[2] Although smaller and peripheral rural municipalities had few, if any, trained lawyers, they had a range of legal literates providing legal advice and services, including acting as lay advocates.[3]

Legal questions and answers (Q&A) columns were one such form of advice-seeking and -giving. Advice-giving has been described as a normative activity in which one (or several) person(s) "describes, recommends, or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action".[4] Naturally, the type of interaction is different for example whether it is solicited or unrequested, or whether it takes place in a face-to-face discussion between professionals and clients, impersonally on the pages of a newspaper, or – as nowadays – online on the internet. Indeed, as studies on contemporary professional advice-giving have observed, age-old consulting practices form an important sector of expert work, and its role is linked to increasing societal divisions of labour.[5] Nineteenth-century Finland was still a largely lay-dominated legal culture and lawyers were only beginning to become professionalised. Thus,

[1] I would like to acknowledge the very useful comments and suggestions of the editors of this book on a previous version of this chapter. I would also like to thank Marianne Vasara-Aaltonen for her literature hints and the participants of the conference "The History of Legal Aid in the Premodern and Modern World", 18–19 March 2019, arranged at the Faculty of Law of the University of Turku (Finland), for the feedback and discussions.

[2] See, e.g. Vasara-Aaltonen's article in this book; *Aura*, 7 Sep. 1893, pp. 1-2.

[3] E.g. Pihlajamäki (2011), pp. 387-394.

[4] Heritage and Sefi (1992), p. 368. For legal Q&A columns as legal aid, e.g. Nousiainen (1980); Vasara-Aaltonen (2020).

[5] Leppänen (1998), p. 209.

providing counsel for ordinary people in the Finnish language in legal Q&A columns became intertwined with emerging nation-building and nationalism.

This chapter will demonstrate how the Q&A columns in Finnish-language newspapers came to provide legal advice and increase the legal literacy of their readers beginning in the 1890s. There is little research on legal advice in newspapers in general in Finland although its relevance as legal aid has been acknowledged.[6] Thus, I will first sketch how regularly appearing legal advice columns in the Q&A format appeared in Finnish newspapers in the 1890s, focusing on what is known as the "conventional problem-page genre". This involves "an advice-seeker describing a problem and asking for advice in the form of a letter" while an expert answers questions advising the inquirer.[7]

I further explore which newspapers and periodicals published such columns in the 1890s and 1900s. Then, I analyse the types of questions commonly asked in these columns and the fields of law before turning to the actors and their motivation: newspapers, the inquirers and the experts responding to the questions. I also assess the relevance of legal advice columns for providing legal aid and increasing legal literacy in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Finland.

Background: National Awakening, Finnish-language Newspapers and Emerging Civil Society

Finland belonged to the Swedish Realm until 1809 and Swedish was the administrative and judicial language. When Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire, the overwhelming majority of the population, 87%, of more than 830,000 inhabitants were Finnish-speaking in 1812.[8] As Swedish remained the legal language, for most Finns, lacking language skills proved an obstacle for learning the law despite Finnish-language translations of the Law of 1734 and another hurdle for managing their legal affairs. Swedish legal formularies, books with model documents for the most common legal acts, started to be

[6] For the rest of the world, see e.g., the chapter by Hiroki Kawamura in this volume; Bradley (2014); 888-911; Black (2013); Michelson (2008), pp. 43-71. For Finland, Nousiainen (1980), esp. pp. 1, 73-129 – on the history of legal Q&A columns, 75-80; Landqvist (2010), p. 51.
[7] Locher (2006), p. 1.
[8] Tyynilä (2010), p. 138.

printed in the eighteenth century. These were bought and used also in Finland, before the first Swedish-language formulary written in Finland (1833) replaced them. It was translated into Finnish in two different versions in 1847 and 1849. In the later nineteenth century, an expanding selection of legal books for a lay audience also became available.[9]

Influenced by the nineteenth-century national romantic trends, Finland was awakening as a nation. The development of Finland's neglected majority language, Finnish, became a burning topic. The Finnish Literary Society (FLS, Finn. *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*) was founded in 1831 in order to further writing and publishing in Finnish, elevating it into "a language of civilization".[10] One of the aims of the FLS was providing even "ordinary people" access to useful and educational books.[11] This reflected increasing national romanticism and political activism improving the status of the Finnish language and increasing the political power of Finnish-speakers. The language strife started to emerge in the 1850s and 1860s, when the so-called Fennomans, favouring Finnish language, culture and national identity, formed the Finnish party. Petitions for increasing the status of Finnish also suited Imperial Russian policies, and the ensuing Language Decree (1863) granted people the right to submit Finnish-language documents to courts and the central administration. However, it took several decades before Finnish was used in the entire court system and the senate.[12] Consequently, Finnish was actively developed into an administrative and legal language.

The Diet of Helsinki passed numerous legal reforms after parliamentary work recommenced in 1863 after a standstill of several decades.[13] These included major legal reforms of communal administration and public law. Thanks to these, more people became involved in communal administration even if participation was still largely gendered and dependent on property in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Local administration that had largely been in the hands of the local clergy and major land-owning peasants became increasingly

[9] E.g. Björne (1998), pp. 227-228; Björne (2002), p. 207; Korpiola (2019), esp. pp. 173-175. Some were published by the FLS. Finnish translations of the 1734 Code appeared in 1865 (second ed. 1867) and 1877 (second ed. 1885), Swedish–Finnish dictionaries on administrative and legal terminology in 1866 and 1883, while Johan Philip Palmén's legal handbook for the education of everyman appeared in 1863, Sulkunen (2004), pp. 303-305.
[10] E.g. Sulkunen (2004), esp. pp. 17–34; Liikanen (1995), pp. 88-97.
[11] E.g. Sulkunen (2004), esp. pp. 17–34.
[12] E.g. Liikanen (1995), pp. 160-165; Sulkunen (2004), esp. pp. 121-129, 137-141, 169-179; Landqvist (2010), pp. 44-46; Tyynilä (2010), esp. pp. 142-145; Nieminen (1946), pp. 45-80, 306-344.
[13] E.g. Kekkonen (1987); Ahmas (2005).

complex and required record-keeping. As these norms were new, and there were few lawyers in the countryside, communal duties could become an avenue for social advancement for literate men outside the traditional rural elites.

Civil society was emerging in the latter part of nineteenth-century Finland. The Finnish Diet assembled relatively regularly and new legislation was drafted. This was also discussed in both Swedish- and Finnish-language newspapers and a growing public sphere.[14] The Fennoman movement aimed at educating responsible Finnish citizens. Popular education, public libraries and schools established in the countryside became important elements of the political agenda.[15] The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (*Kansanvalistusseura*, est. 1874) became a significant cultural marker.[16] However, the Fennoman movement split into competing factions based on individual rivalries and ideological disagreements in the 1860. Later in the 1880s, the Fennoman party was divided into the "Old Finns" and the Liberal Party or the "Young Finns" ("Jung Fennomans"), who in turn had sub-groups. The "Young Finns" emphasised programmatically social equality and justice. Moreover, they advanced enlightened ideas about education including non-formal adult education.[17]

This political development played a considerable role in the newspaper boom of the later 1800s and early 1900s. Indeed, the establishment of Finnish-language newspapers reflected the national awakening and Fennoman ideology. These papers aimed to create a civic society. Later, they had party-specific objectives and attempted to reach out to potential voters. Finnish-language newspapers were slower to build a sound economic base because they lacked clear target audiences having to appeal both to townspeople and country-dwellers. There had been some Finnish-language newspapers before the 1840s, but only the Helsinki-based *Suometar* (est. 1847) became successful and had a nationwide readership.

Suometar's objectives included educating the people, giving a voice to common people and inviting readers to join in writing so that it would "fulfil its destiny among nations".[18] Thus, it is unsurprising that *Suometar* and its successor, *Uusi Suometar*, became the Finnish pioneers

[14] See, esp., Nieminen (2006), pp. 84-163.
[15] On this, see e.g. Liikanen (1995), pp. 151-158, 160-169; Mäkinen (2009a), pp. 73-150; Mäkinen (2009b), pp. 151-213
[16] E.g. Sulkunen (2004), esp. pp. 17–34; Inkilä (1960), esp. pp. 7-39; Liikanen (1995), pp. 166-174.
[17] E.g. Vares (2000); Nieminen (2006), esp. pp. 110-120, 124-125; Rytkönen (1940); Rytkönen (1949), pp. 141-175; Paaskoski (2002), esp. p. 63; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 54-70, 106-114.
[18] Tommila (1988), pp. 200-201. See also Louhivuori (1940), pp. 85-87.

of the so-called "rural correspondence" (Finn. *maaseutukirjeenvaihto*), letters from the readers. In 1854, such correspondence formed about a third of its contents, and at its peak (1855), it published 386 rural letters, about five or six per issue, emanating from all over the country. Such rural correspondence was also crucial for *Suometar*'s growing distribution, geographical expansion and overall success.[19]

After *Suometar*, Finnish-language newspapers were also published in Turku and Oulu. In the 1870s and early 1880s, many more new Fennoman newspapers were established, contributing to the emerging civil society and popular education.[20] Thus, the Finnish-language and popular education movements inspired novel newspapers. Their discussions helped to build the foundations of a developing civil society especially from the 1870s onward.[21]

Early Development of Legal Questions and Answers Columns, 1860s-1880s

For newspapers, creating a rapport with their readership was of paramount importance as a means of increasing distribution and influencing readers.[22] So-called "service-related material", catering to the needs of the readers as expressed by their spontaneous letters, could be published to consolidate this nexus. In addition, soliciting concrete questions from the readers and answering them can be classified under this heading.[23] Newspapers also published letters addressed to its editors and the answers of the latter.[24] Readers, at times, posed questions to the newspaper editorial staff, and printing these tended to invite answers from other knowledgeable readers. Occasionally, these questions were published together with answers that editors had written or requested from experts.

In the 1860s and 1870s, several newspapers and periodicals imitated *Suometar*'s successful model of rural correspondents and introduced columns called "Correspondence" (Finn. *Kirjeenvaihtoa*). Rural people sent the editors written texts in hopes that they would be published as articles. As researchers have observed, the newspapers received such an influx

[19] Nieminen (1946), pp. 231-240; Tommila (1988), pp. 200-201; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 44-45, 87.
[20] Louhivuori (1940), pp. 56-117; Tommila (1988), here esp. pp. 124-129, 156-171; Tommila (1963), esp. pp. 145-257; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 16-83; Stark (2016), pp. 42-43; Tommila (1970), p. 167.
[21] E.g. Liikanen (1995), esp. pp. 177-194, 205-275; Kinnunen (1982), pp. 58-68.
[22] E.g. Pietilä (2008), 1:127-133; Stark (2013), pp. 145–177.
[23] Pietilä (2008), 1:88.
[24] E.g. *Uusi Suometar*, 12 May 1884, p. 3.

of letters and texts that only a portion could be published. Consequently, the editors acknowledged the receipt of the texts and explained why these could not be published (e.g. too mundane/long/private).[25]

Newspapers also received occasional questions and queries from their readers and these could be published with or without answers written or procured by the editor(s).[26] In provincial newspapers, these could be of local interest, involving municipal or provincial administration and finances. As these could be answered on the pages of the newspapers, they could make visible local disputes and rivalries.[27] "Rural correspondents" tended to receive quite small fees if any. Some newspapers only remunerated their most regular contributors, while *Suometar* paid all its contributors a small sum.[28] Some later Finnish women's magazines used their more general questions and answers columns as a channel for collecting information on the interests of their readers that came to direct the paper's contents. When the editorial staff received certain types of questions, it responded by publishing longer articles on the topics in response to the perceived interest.[29] Thus, the editor-reader nexus was an important feature of successful journalism.

As for legal matters in newspapers, parliamentary work, administrative issues and the justice system were generally popular topics in Finnish newspaper editorials in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[30] Newspapers covered discussions in the Diet on legal issues but also published longer pieces on the topics under debate. For example, the Helsinki-based *Päivälehti*[31] [Eng. "Daily Newspaper"] published a long article on usury, credit, and rent in response to parliamentary discussions.[32] Other legal articles in *Päivälehti* dealt with joint-stock companies and vicarage tenants.[33] Even later, legal issues and the judiciary were popular topics in the editorials of some local newspapers.[34] However, background articles,

[25] E.g. Tommila (1988), pp. 201-204; Tommila (1970), pp. 122-123; Stark (2016), pp. 41, 47-48; Stark (2013), pp. 146-147, 157-158; Töyry (2005), pp. 194-196. See also e.g. *Suometar*, 17 Aug. 1865, p. 4; *Keski-Suomi*, 20 July 1872, p. 4; *Suomenlehti*, 13 Aug. 1872, p. 2; *Sanomia Turusta*, 4 Apr. 1873, p. 2; *Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia*, 24 Feb. 1877, p. 3.
[26] E.g. *Sanomia Turusta*, 12 Jan. 1882, p. 3; Töyry (2005), pp. 192-197.
[27] E.g. *Savo*, 9 Mar. 1883, p. 3; *Savo*, 5 Aug. 1881, p. 3; *Suomalainen*, 11 Apr. 1892, p. 2.
[28] Tommila (1963), p. 39; Vesikansa (1997), p. 45.
[29] Töyry (2005), p. 289.
[30] E.g. Landgren (1988), pp. 384-388.
[31] *Päivälehti* had been established in 1889, and it started to appear regularly six times a week in 1890. The journal was permanently shut down by censorship in 1904, *Suomen lehdistön historia* 6, p. 285.
[32] *Päivälehti*, 13 Jan. 1892, p. 2.
[33] *Päivälehti*, 5 Dec. 1890, p. 3; *Päivälehti*, 3 Jan. 1891, p. 2.
[34] Sappinen (1979), pp. 328-330.

leaders, and debates did not help answer the practical law-related questions that everyday people had.

To address this gap, the newspaper *Keski-Suomi* (Eng. *Central Finland*, est. 1871), introduced an experiment, a regular causerie series, for educating the reading public on legal matters in 1878. Fifty such short stories were published in "The Evening Causerie" (Finn. *Iltapakina*) before the series ended in 1881.[35] In these, "Jussi Kanervainen", a pseudonym for Johan Kristian Svanljung (1829-1891), long-time judge at the town court of Vaasa, educated readers through miniature play-like dialogues between an older experienced juror and his young neighbour, Matti of Ilpojärvi. Other characters occasionally appeared. Each vivid down-to-earth discussion revolved around a legal theme in which the juror did most of the talking. Occasionally the causeries even provoked questions from readers, some published on the pages of *Keski-Suomi* and answered by Svanljung.[36] Svanljung also wrote popular educational legal literature, and he actively developed Finnish as a legal language.[37] *Keski-Suomi* adhered to Fennoman policies, and its then editor-in-chief, schoolteacher K. J. Gummerus (1840-1898) was dedicated to popular education probably also explaining the column's publication.[38] However, the causerie-type of legal education and advice-giving was somewhat different from the Q&A columns investigated in this chapter.

Basically, any newspaper could receive occasional legal questions from the public that it could choose to publish – and even answer. For example in 1882, "G. R." asked the editors of *Rauman Lehti*, a regional west-coast newspaper, a question about which farms were freed from the costs of members of parliament. In the answer, the contents of the Parliament Act (*valtiopäiväjärjestys*) was explained on this point.[39] In 1884, a reader of the Tampere-newspaper *Aamulehti* (est. 1881), using the pseudonym "Inquirer" (Finn. *Kysyjä*) posed "a humble question to experts on the law". It involved suing a person under guardianship without the consent of the guardian and the municipal guardianship board.[40] In a further example from another newspaper, an anonymous reader sent a "small legal question" on the

[35] Tommila (1970), pp. 184-189; Rapila (1986), pp. 63, 122; Landgren (1988), pp. 396-397. On legal policy in causeries, see also Pietilä (2008), 1:585-586; Pietilä (2008), 2:585-586.
[36] The first appears to have been published in *Keski-Suomi*, 30 Jan. 1878, p. 1 and the last two I am aware of appeared in *Keski-Suomi*, 23 Apr. 1881, p. 1. For questions from the public, see, e.g. *Keski-Suomi*, 7 May 1881, p. 1.
[37] Forsström (2007), p. 498.
[38] Tommila (1970), pp. 108-127.
[39] *Rauman Lehti*, 21 Jan. 1882, p. 4.
[40] *Aamulehti*, 21 Feb. 1884, p. 2. On the paper's early history, see Arajärvi (1956), esp. pp. 35-81.

yearly fees to the local sacristan (Finn. *lukkari*), a form of ecclesiastical taxation, to *Hämeen Sanomat*.[41]

Similarly, the editors of *Uusi Suometar*, *Suometar*'s successor, answered the question of Kaarlo Paturi of Janakkala by explaining what the Parliament Act §13 stated regarding counting the votes in the election of electors in 1884.[42] *Uusi Suometar* also answered in its "Correspondence" (*Kirjeenvaihtoa*) section legal questions from its readers, like the short statement in 1887 regarding a question about a power-of-attorney (Finn. *valtakirja*).[43] However, legal questions and answers became more regularly published in the early 1890s. On 28 March 1890, the editorial staff answered two local tax-related questions from two of its readers.[44] In 1891, J. Knuutila's question was deemed too private for a published response, and the editors referred him to a lawyer or surveyor, but other questions related to real estate mortgages, government loans for tar production and the sale of immobile property were published.[45] *Uusi Suometar* repeated again the following year that it did not answer anonymous or legal questions that were too private.[46]

Some questions in *Uusi Suometar* in 1892 involved communal administration and decision-making of the school board.[47] Others dealt with the field of inheritance law from apparently two different readers. A question from "T." related to the rights of a rural widow to her deceased husband's inherited land and the power of the husband to sell such property without the consent of his wife or children. The editor answered the question of spousal matrimonial rights to each other's property in different situations broadly. The nom-de-plume "Selitystä haluawa" received a short answer regarding the right of representation in succession.[48] Legal questions and answers appeared occasionally in the correspondence section in *Uusi Suometar* apparently without being a regular feature in the paper. In the Turku newspaper *Aura*, the publication of legal questions and answers was relatively rare. A question from March 1887 was addressed to *Aura*'s editors by pseudonym "— a—", and the editors were requested to explain an outdated point of law to the readers.[49] In the 1890s and 1900s, the provincial

[41] *Hämeen Sanomat*, 27 Oct. 1894, p. 3.
[42] *Uusi Suometar*, 6 Sep. 1884, p. 3.
[43] *Uusi Suometar*, 4 Nov. 1887, p. 4.
[44] *Uusi Suometar*, 28 Mar. 1890, p. 4.
[45] *Uusi Suometar*, 14 Jan. 1891, p. 4; *ibid.*, 17 Feb. 1891, p. 4, and *ibid*., 25 Feb. 1891, p. 4.
[46] *Uusi Suometar*, 25 Feb. 1892, p. 4.
[47] *Uusi Suometar*, 5 Feb. 1892, p. 4.
[48] *Uusi Suometar*, 22 Mar. 1892, pp. 3-4.
[49] *Aura*, 16 Mar. 1887, p. 1.

newspapers *Wiipuri*[50] and *Turun Sanomat*[51] also published such queries and replies occasionally, following the example of *Uusi Suometar*.[52]

These examples demonstrate that there existed a need for legal advice in the Finnish countryside especially and the "correspondence" or general Q&A columns were occasionally used to answer this need. For example, *Uusi Suometar* regularly received legal questions and provided answers among its other reader correspondence and inquiries, even though it did not have a fully devoted and regular legal Q&A column.

Regular Legal Question and Answer Columns, 1890s and beyond

The first specialised and regular legal Q&A column was probably launched in 1891. In December 1890, the editors of *Päivälehti* announced that it had acquired the services of many experts who would answer legal questions the following year. An embryonic legal "Questions and answers" ("*Kysymyksiä ja vastauksia*") column was started the following year.[53] In 1892, *Päivälehti* published over 40 questions and answers creating a regular legal Q&A column. Unlike *Uusi Suometar*, *Päivälehti* published the questions *and* the answers even though they might have been edited. By mid-March (nr. 13) the newspaper began numbering these questions and answers.[54] This gave the column a regular, systematic and consciously maintained image. The questions were published in irregular clusters so that none were published during five months (February, April, May, July, September and November). The numbering continued running [nrs. 47-51] in the first queries and answers published the following year, in January and February 1893.[55] However, the consecutive

[50] *Wiipuri*, a regional Carelian newspaper, was established in 1893 to compete with the more liberal newspaper *Viipurin Sanomat*. It appeared six times a week in the town and twice in the countryside, *Suomen lehdistön historia 7*, pp. 273-274. This position may have induced Wiipuri to use e.g. its legal "Questions and Answers" column as a means of competing with its bigger rival. Moreover, the new newspaper had to find readers in its first years: in 1894, its distribution was 2,000, in 1895, 1,913 and in 1896, 3,500 while the trend continued up, *Suomen lehdistön historia 7*, p. 274.
[51] *Turun Sanomat* was established in 1904, and started to appear regularly in 1905. It was established as a liberal alternative to compete with its older conservative rival, Kalpa (1984), esp. pp. 27-62; Ekman-Salokangas (1979), pp. 253-258, 262-263; *Suomen lehdistön historia 7*, p. 141. In 1905, its circulation was 5,000 to reach 8,000 five years later, *ibid.*, p. 143.
[52] E.g., *Wiipuri*, 21 Mar. 1896, p. 3; *Turun Sanomat*, 29 Dec. 1907, p. 3.
[53] *Päivälehti*, 22 Dec. 1890, p. 1; Hitherto, I have only found four questions and answers: *Päivälehti*, 25 Jan. 1891, p. 4 [unnumbered 1-2]; *Päivälehti*, 6 Feb. 1891, p. 4 [questions 3-4]; Rytkönen (1946), p. 112.
[54] Unnumbered: *Päivälehti*, 20 Jan. 1892, p. 4 and 3 Mar. 1892, p. 4; numbered *Päivälehti*, 16 Mar. 1892, p. 4.
[55] *Päivälehti*, 5 Jan. 1893, p. 4; *ibid*., 25 Feb. 1893, p. 4.

numbering was discontinued in later issues that same year, and each Q&A column became separately numbered suggesting some lack of coordination.[56]

One of *Päivälehti*'s first inquirers in 1892 wished to have an answer from "experienced lawyers". Some of the first questions dealt with the formalities of a letter of credit, hunting by poison on someone else's lands, the authorising of evening events and drafting of conscripts. This shows the hotchpotch of legal issues affecting rural people. The questions and answers were formulated in good clear Finnish, possibly edited by the paper as the Finnish language was not yet standardized. The questions were either completely anonymous, with initials, or a signature, while the answers were given anonymously.[57]

The liberal Fennoman *Uusi Savo*, whose precursors *Savo* and *Savotar* had been suppressed by censorship in 1891, was a quickly growing newspaper based in Kuopio until it too was shut down in 1903.[58] While *Uusi Savo* had answered some legal questions in 1891,[59] it evolved into an embryonic legal Q&A column two years later under the title "From the Public" ("Yleisöltä") and the subtitle "Questions and answers" where even non-legal questions from the public were published. In 1893, a total of eleven questions were answered in five issues, while two other longish legal questions of the readers were published, but without being immediately answered by the editors.[60] In 1894, eight questions were answered in five issues.[61]

There seems to have been a pause in 1895, while *Uusi Savo* advertised its legal Q&A columns in early 1896 and resumed it. The facts that the column was mentioned in marketing the paper and that 23 questions then were published demonstrates a conscious effort to create a Q&A column and to use it to attract readers. Indeed, the distribution of *Uusi Savo* increased in the 1890s: from 3,300 in 1894, to 3,810 in 1895, and to 4,660 in 1898.[62] However, only

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[56] E.g., *Päivälehti*, 9 Apr. 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, 22 Apr. 1893, p. 3; *ibid.*, 15 June 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1893, p. 4. Cf. *ibid.*, 15 June 1893, p. 4.
[57] *Päivälehti*, 20 Jan. 1892, p. 4.
[58] *Suomen lehdistön historia 6*, pp. 359-360; Kinnunen (1982), pp. 156-161.
[59] *Uusi Savo*, 24 Feb. 1891, p. 3; *Uusi Savo*, 2 July 1891, p. 3.
[60] *Uusi Savo*, 27 Apr. 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, 23 May 1893, p. 3; *ibid.*, 14 Oct. 1893, p. 3; *ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1893, p. 4; *Uusi Savo*, 23 Dec. 1893, p. 4.
[61] *Uusi Savo*, 1st Feb. 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, 3 July 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, 14 July 1894, p. 3; *ibid.*, 28 Aug. 1894, p. 3; *ibid.*, 13 Sep. 1894, p. 3.
[62] *Suomen lehdistön historia 6*, pp. 359-360.

sporadic legal questions and answers appeared in 1897 and 1898.[63] This may have been due to a lack of legal questions sent to the newspaper or a disinterest in maintaining and developing the column.

After *Päivälehti* was abolished through Russian censorship in 1904, its successor *Helsingin Sanomat* made its legal questions and answers column a recurrent and important feature of the paper starting in 1905. On 10 January that year it published two questions and answers regarding communal taxation. These two unnumbered questions were followed by others so that soon a regular legal Q&A column was established. While the question published on 10 February was still unnumbered, consecutive numbering commenced the following day with questions 13 to 18.[64] Soon, this column and the legal experts answering questions was used in advertising the paper.[65] For example in 1909, *Helsingin Sanomat* published 132 (mostly consecutively numbered) legal questions and answers in 27 issues. Kaarlo Juho [K. J.] Ståhlberg (1865-1952) answered about four-fifths of them and Frans Oskar [F. O.] Lilius (1871-1928) the rest.[66] Both had previously acted as the paper's legal experts for several years and would continue to do so in the future.

Yet, the range of newspapers receiving legal questions suggests the strong need for inexpensive advice amongst the public. As Marianne Vasara-Aaltonen discussed in her chapter, the legal problems of (female) workers were seminal in establishing legal aid in Finland. Although the emerging Socialist Party had some distrust towards the bourgeois legal system and lawyers, they came to observe that even workers needed legal aid. The Socialist party established in September 1912 its Workers' Legal Advice Bureau (Finn. *Työwäen lakiasiain neuwonantotoimisto*). Between 1st September 1912 and 15 January 1913 the bureau verbally advised 351 persons and gave written advice 46 times.[67] Similarly, Socialist newspapers, such as the leading Helsinki-based newspaper *Työmies* (Eng. "Working Man") answered occasional legal questions on its pages.[68] However, the Viborgian periodical *Työ* (Eng. "Work") attempted to establish a regular legal Q&A service in 1914. The first

[63] *Uusi Savo*, 20 Mar. 1897, p. 3; *Uusi Savo*, 15 Oct. 1898, p. 3.
[64] *Helsingin Sanomat*, 10 Jan. 1905, p. 4; *ibid.*, 21 Jan. 1905, p. 4; *ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1905, p. 5; *ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1905, p. 5; *ibid.*, 11 Feb. 1905, p. 5.
[65] *Turun Sanomat*, 29 Dec. 1907, 3.
[66] The index of the issues of *Helsingin Sanomat* in which Ståhlberg answered questions in 1909, listed by Laurila [(1940), 305].
[67] Vasara-Aaltonen (2019), pp. 52-54; *Työ*, 4 Feb. 1913, p. 3.
[68] *Työmie*s, 3 Apr. 1913, p. 4.

questions and answers were published on 10 February, while apparently the last were issued on 3 June.[69] The newspaper for teachers *Opettajain lehti* answered eighty questions between January and December in 1907.[70]

The enthusiasm for regular legal Q&A services was such that even *Kurikka* (est. 1904), a Socialist political magazine of humour and satire, joked about establishing one of their own in 1913. Claiming that they had employed with much expense a lawyer who had without cause been imprisoned in a mental institution, they invited only the most difficult questions as the legal counsellors of especially the dailies were not to be trusted.[71] That year *Kurikka* even published several satirical legal questions with their answers under the pseudonym "Lainoppinut" ("Jurist", lit. "Learned in Law"). Some of these were quite silly and non-legal, others had a serious background, like the case of a man who had died as a result of excessive police force.[72] These may have had entertainment value, but the popularity of legal Q&A columns suggests strongly that the reading public embraced the possibility of gratis expert advice.

Actor Perspective: The Experts

Competent experts, who wrote lucidly, were crucial for the success of a Q&A column. For some newspapers such as *Helsingin Sanomat* in which the legal column was a permanent feature, the identity of its top legal experts, Senator, Professor K. J. Ståhlberg and LL.D. F. O. Lilius, was of paramount importance and constantly emphasised. Both used their initials after their answers identifying which of the two had answered each question. For example, Ståhlberg (K.J.S.) answered the first legal questions in *Helsingin Sanomat* in 1905.[73]

Similarly, when the agricultural periodical *Pellervo* was established, it publicised that it had recruited many experts from various fields as its contributors.[74] Its policy of using experts answering questions became more systematic and ambitious, while the identity of the persons

[69] *Työ*, 10 Feb. 1914, p. 3; *Työ*, 3 June 1914, p. 5.
[70] E.g. *Opettajain lehti: kansanopetusta käsittelevä kuvallinen viikkolehti* 1907:2, p. 22; *ibid.*, 1907:51, p. 510.
[71] *Kurikka*, 1913:14, p. 7.
[72] E.g. *Kurikka*, 1913:15, p. 11; *Kurikka*, 1913:15, p. 6; *ibid.*, 1913:19, p. 5.
[73] *Helsingin Sanomat*, 10 Jan. 1905, p. 4.
[74] *Pellervo* 1889:0, p. 2.

answering questions and their skills became more pronounced in marketing *Pellervo* with time. For example in 1902, some legal answers had only been signed "J. K. P." and the identity of the expert answering a question on land tenancy was disclosed by the signature "Ph. S." in 1904.[75] Some years later, several lawyers were listed among over 20 of its experts, each having specific fields of expertise. The list of all experts was headed by K. J. Ståhlberg who answered questions related to the Land Tenancy Act and municipal taxation. Onni Karhunen (1881-1937), secretary of the Pellervo-Society, specialised in cooperatives, Kyösti Haataja (1881-1956) in land surveying and border disputes, while Arvo Haveri's (1881-1934) expertise lay in norms on ditches and fences. Ecclesiastical taxation was the field of the clergyman K. N. Karilas (1852-1911).[76]

Wiipuri, which only occasionally published questions and answers, entrusted some answers to the local advocate, Johan Viktor Falck (1862-1949, after 1906 Havu), who used his initials J.V.F.[77] *Wiipurin Sanomat* announced in December 1892 that its contents were diversifying. It would follow legal cases in the town's courts and administration as much as possible. Moreover, the lawyer J. Zitting – probably August Johannes Zitting, official at the Viborg Court of Appeal – would answer legal questions in the newspaper.[78] *Turun Sanomat* was published by the liberal advocate Antti Mikkola, who also answered some of the questions using his initials (A.M., probably also A.).[79] Due to Mikkola's long association with Turku both as an advocate and a politician, his identity through his initials was probably known to readers. Similarly, the pseudonym "E.J.A." probably the young official Eino Johannes Ahla (1888-1961), later judge and president of the Supreme Administrative Court, managed the legal Q&A column of *Uusi Suometar* between 1913-1916.[80] Twenty-four of the 25 answers in *Työ* were signed by R.J. [or R.I.] and one by W.S.[81] W.S. may have been Wilho Sarkanen (orig. Vasili Subrinsky, 1884-1940), who regularly advertised in *Työ* that spring. However, none of the three other Viborg lawyers, who advertised in *Työ*, bore these initials, and there is

[75] *Pellervo 1902:12*, pp. 389-391; *Pellervo* 1904:3, p. 88.
[76] The names of the experts were listed in an advertisement in *Laatokka*, 5 Jan. 1911, p. 4.
[77] *Wiipuri*, 12 Apr. 1896, p. 2.
[78] E.g., *Wiipurin Sanomat*, 30 Dec. 1892, p. 1. On Zitting, see *Finlands jurister år 1898*, p. 116.
[79] *Suomen lehdistön historia 7*, p. 141; *Turun Sanomat*, 15 Feb. 1914, p. 5; *Turun Sanomat*, 20 May 1914, p. 5; *Turun Sanomat*, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 6; *Turun Sanomat*, 11 Feb. 1915, p. 4; *Turun Sanomat*, 16 July 1915, p. 7.
[80] E.g., *Uusi Suometar*, 21 Dec. 1913, pp. 11-12; *Uusi Suometar*, 25 Jan. 1914, pp. 8-9; *ibid.*, 5 Mar. 1914, p. 6; *ibid.*, 30 Apr. 1914, p. 5; *ibid.*, 23 July 1915, p. 4; *ibid.*, 1st Dec. 1915, p. 6; *ibid.*, 8 Mar. 1916, pp. 4-5; Kekkonen (2003), pp. 112–113.
[81] The only time W.S. answered a question was in *Työ*, 6 Mar. 1914, p. 5.

no obvious link between them and the short-lived Q&A column.[82] The expert consulted by the teachers' periodical *Opettajain lehti* also used initials (K.G.A.), but later the answers were signed "Editors" ("*Toimitus*").[83]

However, several newspapers did not disclose the identity of their expert lawyers. The answers were sometimes anonymous or signed "Lawyer" ("*Lakimies*"). For example, *Laatokka* advertised that its questions were answered by competent lawyers, but it did not reveal his/their identity.[84] The same applies to *Päivälehti* that had published the first regular legal Q&A column since 1892; its answers were anonymous. Many well-known Helsinki lawyers were associated with *Päivälehti*, e.g. as its treasurers (advocate F. Emil Snellman) or chairman of its board (advocate John Svanljung), or in other capacities (advocate Kaarlo Castrén). Moreover, other eminent lawyers wrote articles for it: Emil Forsström [E.F.], Heikki Renvall [H. R. or H. R-ll], Einar Böök, Edvin Castrén, Hugo Lilius, Kaarlo Ignatius, Antti Mikkola, Albert Luoma, K. J. Ståhlberg and E. W. Walldén.[85] The occasional legal answers in *Uusi Suometar* in the 1880s and 1890s were anonymous even though we know that some distinguished lawyers wrote articles for the newspaper.[86] The same is true of the nameless legal expert(s) of *Uusi Savo*.[87] Others used pseudonyms. For example, the occasional answers in the Socialist *Työmies* were signed "Lawyer".[88]

There are probably several explanations as to why many experts remained anonymous. Editors may have answered some questions themselves or consulted different lawyers. Some lawyers may have preferred that their names and identity were not disclosed as their answers and advice occasionally provoked controversies among readers. Moreover, the experts answering the questions of readers were probably inspired to contribute by a mixture of reasons. Naturally, financial remuneration was important as experts as well as other

[82] R.J. is not included in the list of Finnish literary pseudonyms, Hirvonen (2000). In addition to Sarkanen, lawyers advertised regularly on the front page of *Työ* (e.g. *Työ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 1; *ibid.*, 3 June 1914, p. 1) were Eino Nyyssölä (orig. Eino Stenlund, 1877-1937), Otto Tanner (orig. Otto Evonen, 1872-1928) and Martti Pitkänen (1883-1946). All were experienced advocates.
[83] E.g. *Opettajain lehti* 1907:6, 63; *ibid.*, 1907:51, p. 510. It is unlikely that Kaarlo Ahtiala (1867-1949), one of the two editors, was answering the questions as his whole name was Kaarlo Evert Ahtiala.
[84] The identity is not mentioned, for example, in the long feature article on the newspaper's history, *Laatokka*, 30 Nov. 1911, p. 2.
[85] Rytkönen (1946), pp. 418-422; Jensen-Eriksen and Kuorelahti (2017), pp. 24-27, 33.
[86] Nieminen (1946), pp. 36-37, 300-301, 304-305: F. Forsström, Jaakko Forsman, Wilhelm Lavonius and Johan Kristian Svanljung, author of the "Evening Causeries" of *Keski-Suomi*.
[87] Kinnunen (1982), p. 203: these were e.g. the lawyers Ukko Andersin, L. Guseff, A. W. Gyldén, J. Kyander and T. Könönen.
[88] *Työmies*, 3 Apr. 1913, p. 4.

contributors to newspapers were often paid for their answers. The fees varied in time and place. However, these tended to be modest.[89] As *Päivälehti* struggled economically in the early 1890s, the treasurer was stingy with the contributors' fees, and it was often late in paying. By contrast, *Uusi Suometar* was financially sound and paid its contributors regularly in the 1890s.[90]

In addition to actual fees, those experts who were practicing lawyers received visibility in newspapers and gratis advertisement for their legal services. Johan Viktor Falck, who answered questions for *Wiipuri* in 1895-1896, was an official at the Viborg Court of Appeal and a practicing advocate. He also acted as the advocate of the poor in the town even though he was politically more traditional, later representing the Finnish Conservative Party (*kokoomus*). Moreover, certain issues of *Wiipuri*, where Falck answered legal questions, contained advertisements for his own law firm in which he "gave legal advice and practiced advocacy". Falck also needed the income to provide for a growing family: he had married in 1894 and his son had been born the following year.[91]

In addition, several of the lawyers, known to have given legal aid on the pages of newspapers, had political careers. Some even became MPs. Answering legal questions provided visibility in local newspaper and gave them popular outreach. Antti Vilho Mikkola (orig. Anders Vilhelm Mikkola, 1869-1918), who answered some questions in *Turun Sanomat*, was a farmer's son. He took first his MA in 1894 and then a law degree in 1899. After that, he acted as an advocate in Turku until 1918. While practicing law, he became involved in local politics becoming a councilman in Turku in 1903. However, he aspired to national politics and it was hardly coincidental that he established the newspaper *Turun Sanomat* in 1904, the same year he was elected to the Diet as representative of the Bourgeois Estate, later as a member of the Finnish Liberal Bourgeois party (*nuorsuomalainen puolue*). Mikkola was editor-in-chief of *Turun Sanomat* in 1904–1905 and then became the chair of its board.[92]

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[89] Tommila (1963), p. 39; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 45, 88, 113, 136-137.
[90] Jensen-Eriksen and Kuorelahti (2017), p. 45; Rytkönen (1946), pp. 56-61; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 120-122, 136.
[91] E.g. *Wiipuri*, 21 Mar. 1896, pp. 2-3; *Suomen lakimiehet*, pp. 51-52; *Uusi Aura*, 2 Apr. 1924, p. 2; *Aikalaiskirja* (1933), p. 186.
[92] Hanski (2005), pp. 704-705; Kalpa (1984), pp. 63-75.

As mentioned above, *Helsingin Sanomat* published 132 questions and answers in its column in 1909. K J. Ståhlberg answered about 70 per cent (93 questions) of these, F. O. Lilius about 30 per cent (38 questions), while "H. H." answered one very particular question on life insurance. Both Ståhlberg and Lilius had acted as the paper's legal experts for several years and continued to do so in the future. What motivated them?

The prolific K.J. Ståhlberg, later professor of administrative law, had a long political career. He started as an MP, progressed to senator (minister) of trade and industry and ended up as the first President of the Finnish Republic. Ståhlberg had written his doctoral dissertation on vagrancy (*Irtolaisuus Suomen lain mukaan*, 1893) and in the early 1900s, he wrote commentaries on the decree on rural communal administration (1901) and the Act on Rural Land Tenancy (1903).[93] However, Ståhlberg's background was modest: having no inherited wealth, he had to work to help support his widowed mother and siblings and later his growing family. He married in 1893, and between 1894 and 1908, he and his wife had six children whom all lived to old age. He held some consecutive university and administrative positions before he became professor of administrative law in 1908. Ståhlberg started his political career as councillor of the Helsinki town council 1901–1903, after which he represented the Bourgeois Estate 1904–1905 at the Diet. In 1908, he was first elected to the Parliament and he would be reelected several times. Ståhlberg belonged to the moderate centre of the Liberal Fennomans.[94]

Ståhlberg had written his first article on a legal topic for *Päivälehti* in 1890, and began to contribute more regularly in 1894. His newspaper articles increased in frequency beginning in 1904.[95] The fact that Ståhlberg was a frequently-used expert in answering legal questions largely pertaining to the interests of the countryside in both *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Pellervo* made him a household name across party-lines and enhanced his political career. He was extremely assiduous in answering legal questions in newspapers: in *Helsingin Sanomat* in 1905-1912 and, as mentioned above, in 1909, he penned about 70 per cent of the published legal answers. Ståhlberg also published a book *Lakiasioita* ("Legal Matters") (1912) that

[93] Blomqvist (1969), esp. pp. 58-383. On Ståhlberg's legal career and thinking, Inha (2004), esp. pp. 12-68.
[94] Blomqvist (1969), esp. pp. 16-19, 37-258; Vares (2000), esp. pp. 77-79, 149-193.
[95] Blomqvist (1969), pp. 47, 67, 74-78, 162-164.

contained 417 questions and some articles, most previously published in *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Pellervo*.[96]

Like Ståhlberg, F.O. Lilius was also involved in politics as a Liberal Fennoman. He had a long career as an official in the Judicial Department of the Senate, i.e. the Supreme Court, drafting laws, and as a senator. He was elected to the Finnish parliament in 1911 and he acted as an MP until 1917. Later, he also acted briefly as minister of justice in three governments in the 1920s.[97] The visibility obtained by regularly appearing as a legal expert in the national Liberal Fennoman newspaper may have helped pave Lilius's path to the Finnish parliament.

However, for both Ståhlberg and Lilius the ideological reasons may have been even more significant than the financial or political boost. Both shared the same progressive bourgeois ideologies believing in educating the public, and both wrote legal articles for newspapers and periodicals.[98] Ståhlberg had practiced advocacy in 1889 at the law firm of Castrén & Snellman before practical training on the bench. Fifteen years later he had been hired as secretary of the Helsinki Committee of Workers' Affairs. His duties included counselling workers seeking legal advice in matters related to employers or public officials two evenings a week beginning in January 1904. Later, he advanced to the chair of the Committee until it was abolished in 1913.[99] This indicates Ståhlberg's long association with legal aid and counselling. A fellow Liberal Fennoman, Lilius was active in the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation as board member (1908-1928) and treasurer. Lilius also left considerable sums for educational purposes in his will.[100] Thus, several legal Q&A experts demonstrated a lasting commitment to making the law accessible to ordinary people in various ways. Joel E. Black has observed that similar ideological reasons lay behind attorney Richard Westbrooks' Q&A column in the *Chicago Defender* in the 1910s.[101]

What Kind of Legal Questions Were Being Asked

[96] Ståhlberg (1912).
[97] E.g. *Suomen lakimiehet*, ed. Holmberg, pp. 146-147.
[98] Esp. Inha (2004), pp. 251-253; *Suomen lakimiehet*, ed. Holmberg, p. 147. E. J. Ahla, who managed the legal Q&A column of *Uusi Suometar*, also wrote frequently legal articles, Kekkonen (2003), p. 112.
[99] Blomqvist (1969), pp. 45-47, 162-164; *Kertomus Helsingin kaupungin kunnallishallinnosta 1903*, Työväenasiain lautakunta XII:2-3; *Kertomus Helsingin kaupungin kunnallishallinnosta 1913*, Työväenasiain lautakunta XV, 414-415; Vasara-Aaltonen (2019), p. 52.
[100] *Suomen lakimiehet*, ed. Holmberg, p. 147; Inkilä (1960), pp. 112, 114, 294.
[101] Black (2013).

The design and style of advice columns were decided by newspaper editorial staffs. They were also influenced through the interaction of many parties: in addition to the expert-advisor(s) and the advice-seekers, publishers, editors and the reading audience.[102] Thus, it is understandable that the formats of Q&A columns varied from newspaper to newspaper. While some questions were in a personalised letter form between advice-seekers and experts,[103] it became the standard that the so-called "problem letters" were truncated so that identity markers were largely omitted notwithstanding the pseudonyms which could for example contain initials. To what extent the core questions were reformulated, shortened and their language revised cannot be determined without comparing published queries with the originals. It is obvious that the fact-oriented legal Q&A columns differed in many regards from advice-asking and advice-giving in certain other newspaper columns and oral advising.[104]

The questions asked ranged widely across various fields of law. However, they tended to relate more generally to private law: land law, laws governing tenants, debt and life in countryside (hunting, natural resources). The other main group was related to public law: municipal administration, laws governing elections, duties and rights of local officials and tax law. In 1909, Lilius answered questions related to general private law, while Ståhlberg's specialty lay in the fields of law of tenancy and public law. In Ståhlberg's book *Lakiasioita*, a collection of 417 questions and answers, a fourth (26 per cent) dealt with land tenancy, 23 per cent with communal taxation, and a fifth contained communal administration. Parliamentary elections, ecclesiastical administration, and land law were the next biggest group in addition to miscellaneous questions.[105] A much smaller percentage of questions were related to family law as a survey conducted in Finland in the mid-1970s demonstrated.[106]

[102] Locher (2006), pp. 46, 153.
[103] Cf. Locher (2006), pp. 1-2; *Päivälehti*, 1 Aug. 1893, p. 2.
[104] Sociolinguistic research has observed that advice-asking can take the form for example of direct questions, proposing courses of action or "detailing untoward states of affairs", e.g. Heritage and Sefi (1992), 370-376; Leppänen (1998), pp. 214-216, quotation p. 216. Advice-giving may include suggesting action in the imperative or modal (should/should not) form or by proposing something as requested/allowable alternatives or descriptions of advice-seekers' future actions, e.g. Heritage and Sefi (1992), p. 410; Leppänen (1998), pp. 223-225. See also Locher (2006), pp. 21-49.
[105] Ståhlberg (1912).
[106] Nousiainen (1980), p. 91.

Occasionally, answers were composed of only a yes or no. For example, when asked whether a farm owner had the right to hire part of his or her farm without the consent of the mortgage holder, R.J. curtly answered "yes" in *Työ*. R.J. gave a similar answer to a question on whether a foreign woman marrying a citizen thereby acquired citizenship.[107] Regardless of the length of the answer, the legal information was probably welcome.

The readership of a particular newspaper influenced to some extent the type of questions it received. The 25 questions published in the Socialist *Työ* in the spring of 1914 generally addressed a wide variety of topics from how to seek patents and the citizenship of married women to the permissibility of using sales assistants in the marketplace and the inspection of private hospitals in the countryside.[108] However, three topics stand out: questions related to land and its use (3), workers and their rights (4) and municipal taxes and duties (6).[109] Thus, it is not surprising that almost a fifth of the questions answered in *Työ* in the spring of 1914 dealt with work. This was a higher percentage of work-related questions than for example in *Helsingin Sanomat*. Newspapers made known their special fields of expertise. For example, in 1907, *Helsingin Sanomat* specifically invited legal queries related to municipal or central administration.[110]

The periodical of the peasant population *Pellervo* observed that in 1910 the experts answered legal questions related especially to the new Land Tenancy Decree of 1909 (*maanvuokra-asetus*), road building and maintenance, boundary disputes, and fencing and ditching duties.[111] Ståhlberg, who answered questions related to the topic in *Pellervo*, and Lilius were joint secretaries of the law and economy committee of the Finnish Diet and thus responsible for much of the law drafting. One of these law proposals was for the 1902 Land Tenancy Act (*maanvuokralaki*), which made Ståhlberg one of the country's top experts of the topic.[112] In *Lakiasioita*, Ståhlberg gave as his reason for writing the book that as so many laymen were involved in legal matters for example in communal administration, in committees regulating

[107] *Työ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 3; *ibid.*, 3 June 1914, p. 5.
[108] *Työ*, 9 Feb. 1914, p. 5; *Työ*, 3 June. 1914, p. 5; *Työ*, 17 Apr. 1914, p. 4; *Työ*, 10 Feb. 1914, p. 3.
[109] The questions related to land were *Työ*, 13 Feb. 1914, p. 4; *ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1914, p. 5; *ibid.* 23 Apr. 1914, p. 4; workers were *Työ*, 10 Feb. 1914, p. 3; *ibid.*, 9 Mar. 1914, p. 5; *ibid.*, 7 May 1914; municipal taxes and duties, *Työ*, 10 Feb. 1914, p. 3; *ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1914, p. 4; *ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1914, p. 5; *ibid.*, 9 Mar. 1914, p. 5; *ibid.*, 2 Apr. 1914, p. 3; *ibid.*, 23 Apr. 1914, p. 4.
[110] *Turun Sanomat*, 29 Dec. 1907, p. 3.
[111] *Laatokka*, 5 Jan. 1911, p. 4.
[112] Blomqvist (1969), pp. 104-105, 161, 240.

tenancy (Finn. *vuokralautakunta*), that they could benefit from the collection. The same questions cropped up repeatedly, according to him.[113]

Parliamentary reform in the early 1900s was another field which caused new legal problems. In 1906, the four-estate diet was replaced with a modern one-chambered parliament with universal suffrage even for women. The first elections were organised in March 1907. Thus, the reform and how elections were to be organised could and did cause practical problems that Ståhlberg addressed in his answers in 1909 and later in his book. In fact, several questions in the book mention the 1909 or 1910 elections suggesting that the advice was specifically requested for such elections; and making the expert's answers all the more topical.

As expected, newspapers and periodicals focused on answering questions that were relevant for their readership. Consequently, the American *Chicago Defender* addressed queries largely connected to urban Black life, the Finnish *Pellervo* rural questions and *Opettajain lehti* teaching- and school-related legal questions.[114] However, that *Helsingin Sanomat*, a newspaper situated in the capital, largely answered questions dealing with rural administration, taxation, elections and tenancy can be interpreted as a conscious effort to reach out to the countryside and provincial readers. Thereby, it successfully and rapidly increased its circulation.

Actor Perspective: The Inquirers

Due to the legal and administrative reforms of the late nineteenth century, a larger number of rural male tax-payers had been elected to manage administrative duties on the municipal and parish level. They needed guidance in their task. The questions published in the newspapers may naturally have been invented by the editors of the newspapers. However, considering the necessity to sell newspapers and create a rapport between readers, it is reasonable to assume that most questions were genuinely sent by the subscribers. Moreover, the legal reforms made advice on the new legislation direly needed as the advice-seekers' pseudonyms also suggest.

[113] Ståhlberg (1912), p. 3.
[114] For the Chicago Defender, see Black (2013), esp. pp. 899-907.

The newspaper subscribers received legal advice at the price of the subscription and postal fees, but if and when the advice was received depended on the newspaper and its publication frequency.[115]

We do not generally know the identity of those asking legal questions to the newspapers. However, the subscribers of the bourgeois and rural newspapers probably mostly belonged to the wealthier segments of society and the "middling sort", and newspapers emphasised that they only answered questions of their subscribers.

Usually, the questions were completely anonymous or with initials or a pseudonym. There were certain particular types of pseudonyms that were repeated more often than others. One group referred to the need of knowledge – e.g. "Needing information" ("*Tiedon tarvitsija*") or "Ignorant" ("*Tietämätön*"),[116] while another referred to the letter writer's position(s) or situation – e.g. "Landlord" ("*Wuokranantaja*") or "Municipal citizen" ("*Kuntalainen*").[117] The former type of penname emphasised the status imbalance between the non-knowledgeable information-seeker and the legal expert. The latter types of pseudonyms indicate the instrumental and positional reason for the question: a person was in a certain role or had certain duties related to a task or job requiring such knowledge.

The questions printed in the Viborg Socialist newspaper *Työ* were short and anonymous. Only 9 out of 25 questions had a pseudonym and the most common of these was "Ignorant" ("*Tietämätön*", "*Tietämätöin*") adopted five times, while one had "Wanting information" ("*Tietoa haluawa*"). Three referred to the writer's situation, e.g. "Fooled" ("*Narrattu*") or "Itinerant" ("*Kiertäjä*"). The tenth pen name actually may have been the querier's whole name and village (Jalmari Ruokonen Typpölä). If so, this was the only letter-writer who was identifiable.

The information on the law in legal Q&A columns could also be transmitted to other members of the household where newspapers were read aloud. However, they did not have as much entertainment value as the causerie-formed legal education in *Keski-Suomi* 1878-1881.

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[115] An inquirer actually complained to the newspaper that the question(s) had not been answered and that receiving the advice took too long, *Uusi Suometar*, 7 Feb. 1889, p. 4.
[116] E.g. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 17 June 1909, p. 7.
[117] E.g. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 12 May 1909, p. 7.

They left indelible memories on their audience that were remembered even when everything else about the newspaper was forgotten.[118]

Although we do not have access to the identity of advice-seekers, it is fair to assume – based on the questions – that most of them were men who occupied positions of trust in municipalities, local government and local courts as jurors. At least the writers of "rural correspondence" were normally men, largely either belonging to the clerical estate (priests, sacristans, teachers) or land-owning peasants. Even if the role of the latter grew in the later nineteenth century, landless men and women were grossly underrepresented. Under two per cent of "rural correspondence" were penned by (peasant) women.[119] However, occasional legal questions may have been posted by women as the questions relate to female activities or the status of women. Examples of such questions were, for example, whether women's nationality changed through their marriages to foreigners.[120]

In some cases public visibility may have been one of the aims of the inquirers. The question may have been linked to a local controversy and airing it on the pages of a newspaper was a sort of trial by newspaper, "to excite a reaction of public opinion in their favour" as Roger Foster coined it in 1887.[121] It may also have been an attempt to attract wider attention to a local dispute. If there was a local lawsuit, one party could get legal advice for it, but sending a signal locally may also have been intended.

Few questions reveal the place that it dealt with, but some did. The pseudonym "Orimattilalainen" suggests the inquirer came from Orimattila, a rural commune close to the town of Lahti.[122] The pseudonym "J.K." gave many details such as the price of the farm (s)he had bought in Isokyrö in Ostrobothnia two years previously. "J.K." also named the agronomist who had surveyed the farm for the mortgage (s)he had applied for.[123] A question suggesting a potential local ongoing conflict was published in *Päivälehti* in 1892. It dealt with the crown's regalian fishing rights and how they were applied in practice according to the Statute of Fishing (*kalastussääntö*). The anonymous inquirer's question on fishing rights

[118] Nom-de-plume "Ura", "Keski-Suomi kaupanpäälliseksi: Pieni muistelma", *Keski-Suomi*, 19 Nov. 1911, p. 4; Tommila (1970), p. 119.
[119] Stark (2013), pp. 159-171.
[120] *Työ*, 3 June 1914, p. 5.
[121] E.g. Foster (1887), p. 524.
[122] *Päivälehti*, 13 Mar. 1892, p. 4.
[123] *Päivälehti*, 26 Oct. 1892, p. 4.

identified a certain river (possibly Lieksanjoki) in Pankakoski in Lieksa (Northern Carelia) flowing into Lake Pielinen.[124]

One example of such a local dispute was the wine money dispute in the rural parish of Korpilahti. Using the pseudonym "Several municipal citizens" ("Useat kuntalaiset"), a "humble question" was asked in *Keski-Suomi* in March 1892 regarding the proper procedure for increasing the "wine money" (*wiiniraha*), a sum paid for the communion wine by every parishioner attending communion. Was a vicar entitled to raise the "wine money" from the traditional six pennies to ten without communal consent? The question also raised another grievance that the vicar married couples on the vicarage porch, considered a mundane place for matrimony, instead of one of the vicarage rooms.[125] The relatively innocent-seeming legal question about the wine money masked a local conflict. The question received an ironical riposte in a letter from the public in *Suomalainen*. What was the point of such questions, the writer(s) asked, as no vicar in the whole country had done something similar and the question had an obvious monosyllabic answer.[126] *Keski-Suomi* resented this attack against it in *Suomalainen* and requested that criticism towards it rather be levelled on its own pages.[127]

Later, several letters and notices in *Keski-Suomi* discussed the dispute explaining its background and that it partly revolved around the question of whether lawful procedures had been followed in decision-making. Consequently, the decision was appealed to the authorities.[128] Korpilahti's new vicar Gustaf Adolf Rydman (1845-1900) was also accused in *Keski-Suomi* for recovery of ecclesiastical fees owed to him, but also fees that had already been paid. According to the title of the news, this created bitter resentment – and caused the vicar to send a rejoinder to the newspaper correcting errors with the help of testimonies from local officials. Consequently, the vicar started to give printed receipts for payments.[129] However, complaints of his local initiatives and undiplomatic behaviour solicited many other letters and notices in the newspaper. This case indicates that occasional questions in legal Q&A columns, like here, appeared as innocent question of ecclesiastical taxation in the form

[124] *Päivälehti*, 2 June 1892, p. 4.
[125] *Keski-Suomi*, 29 Mar. 1892, p. 3.
[126] *Suomalainen*, 11 Apr. 1892, p. 2.
[127] *Keski-Suomi*, 12 Apr. 1892, p. 2.
[128] *Keski-Suomi*, 17 Sep. 1892, p. 2; *ibid.*, 1st Oct. 1892, pp. 3-4; *ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1892, p. 2. Also, *ibid.*, 7 June 1892, p. 2.
[129] *Keski-Suomi*, 15 Sep. 1892, p. 3; *Keski-Suomi*, 27 Sep. 1892, p. 3; *Keski-Suomi*, 12 Nov. 1892, p. 2. See also *Keski-Suomi*, 2 Jan. 1892, p. 4.

of "wine money", but were the tips of icebergs of local conflict strategically made public. In the case, substantive law, lawful proceedings and authority proved important issues.

Actor Perspectives: The Newspapers

After the Fennoman split, both the Old and New Finns established their own newspapers that competed against each other, vying for readers in the same provinces and towns. They naturally also sought to make a profit. The liberal Fennomans established *Päivälehti* in 1889 in the capital to compete against the *Uusi Suometar*, and this rivalry became known as the "press war of 1889".[130] The progressively political 1890s were a period of rapid growth also for newspapers. In 1890, 60 newspapers were published in Finland – two-thirds in Finnish. In 1900, there were 85 papers reflecting a major increase.[131] Consequently, the 1890s and 1900s were a turbulent and competitive period for newspapers, and not all new papers survived.[132] Legal Q&A columns became weapons of attraction in these newspaper wars.

As the Q&A column was a way of strengthening the interaction of readers and the periodical,[133] legal questions mostly flowing in from the countryside were a means of making the Helsinki newspaper relevant for rural Finland as well. Its rapport with readers may well have helped to make *Päivälehti*'s successor *Helsingin Sanomat* so successful in the early 1900s and 1910s. *Helsingin Sanomat*, established in 1904 after *Päivälehti* had been suppressed for political reasons, grew quickly from a circulation of 5,800 in 1904 to 15,600 in 1911.[134] The Finnish Agrarian League (*Maalaisliitto*) was established in 1906 which intensified the competition for the support and votes of the agrarian population between it and the two Fennoman parties.[135] Yet, the Conservative Fennomans had more members, about 10-15,000, while the Liberal Fennomans had 9,389 members in 1911.[136] However, as the political tides turned in the 1910, *Uusi Suometar* started to suffer because of competition with *Helsingin Sanomat*. The former's new editor-in-chief worked to improve circulation, the

[130] E.g. Rytkönen (1940), esp. pp. 179-251; Landgren (1988), pp. 319-342; Leino-Kaukiainen (1998), pp. 462-498; Vesikansa (1997), pp. 106-113; Jensen-Eriksen and Kuorelahti (2017), pp. 15-40; Paaskoski (2002), pp. 58-66.
[131] Leino-Kaukiainen (1998), pp. 443-444.
[132] Leino-Kaukiainen (1998), p. 445.
[133] Töyry (2005), p. 289.
[134] *Suomen lehdistön historia 5*, pp. 71-77.
[135] Salokorpi (1988), pp. 81-92.
[136] Salokorpi (1988), p. 77.

contents of *Uusi Suometar* changed and new contributors were recruited.[137] Apparently, this was why *Uusi Suometar* followed the example of its intense rival and established a short-lived legal Q&A column. Eight such columns with several questions and answers each appeared between 1 December 1913 and 8 March 1916.[138] However, their relevance for circulation was apparently not sufficient as the column was discontinued.

A regular series of legal Q&A columns could attract readership and help sell newspaper subscriptions in a competitive situation between liberal and conservative Fennoman newspapers.[139] Indeed, Q&A columns were special features of the newspaper enticing potential readers to preorder it. As early as 1883, the newspaper *Laatokka*, published in southeastern Finland, announced in *Uusi Suometar* that even if people had raised legal questions few experts had answered them in their pages. Consequently, the editors of *Laatokka* announced that from the next year on, they would use the services of an experienced lawyer to answer such questions. (However, the identity of this lawyer remains unknown.) This was repeated in *Laatokka*'s own subscription advertisement in 1886.[140] The same applied to the liberal Fennoman newspapers *Wiipurin Sanomat* and *Uusi Savo*: legal questions and answers were expressly mentioned as a reason to subscribe.[141]

The public may have started to expect them. *Itä-Suomen Sanomat*, a liberal Fennoman newspaper, established in 1894, also announced in December 1897 that "competent lawyers" answered legal questions in its Q&A column.[142] For example, *Helsingin Sanomat* invested heavily in its legal Q&A columns for many years hiring two important Helsinki lawyers to answer over a hundred yearly questions. This was also used as a marketing strategy. In addition, *Helsingin Sanomat* notified its readers in December that the regular legal Q&A column with its renowned experts would continue the following year as well.[143] Having the best experts was obviously worth emphasising for marketing reasons.

Another paper that invested heavily on dozens of expert contributors from various fields was the agricultural periodical *Pellervo*. Since its establishment in 1899, its mission was to sow

[137] Vesikansa (1997), pp. 159-187.
[138] *Uusi Suometar*, 21 Dec. 1913, pp. 11-12; *Uusi Suometar*, 8 Mar. 1916, pp. 4-5.
[139] On advice columns increasing interest in the publication, see Locher (2006), p. 153.
[140] *Uusi Suometar*, 18 Dec. 1883, p. 4; *Laatokka*, 5 Jan. 1886, p. 1. Also *Laatokka*, 8 Dec. 1885, p. 1.
[141] *Wiipurin Sanomat*, 30 Dec. 1892, p. 1; *Uusi Savo*, 18 Jan. 1896, p. 1; ibid., 25 Jan. 1896, p. 1.
[142] E.g. *Itä-Suomen Sanomat*, 11 Dec. 1896, p. 1. For the newspaper, see *Suomen lehdistön historia 5*, p. 141.
[143] E.g., *Helsingin Sanomat*, 16 Dec. 1909, p. 4.

"seeds of knowledge and skills" for Finnish farmers thereby improving their position. As *Pellervo* wanted to become the newspaper of choice of all its readers, it welcomed their questions and promised to answer them.[144] However, demonstrating that the use of experts in legal Q&A columns was by no means cheap, *Pellervo* had to refrain from starting a special section for communal administration and other communal matters with questions being answered by specialised lawyers. As this was both relatively expensive and outside *Pellervo*'s actual scope, the editorial staff had appealed to the communes asking their willingness to contribute with a yearly ten-mark fee in exchange of their getting legal advice for free. However, the project was not realized because of insufficient interest.[145]

Even with a more generalist approach, *Pellervo*'s strategy in creating a rapport with its readers was so successful that within the decade, it had become the biggest agricultural newspaper in the Nordic Countries with its over 33.000 subscribers. In 1911, *Pellervo* demonstrated using statistics that it had been answering its readers' questions more than ever in 1910: in 1906, it answered 77 questions, in 1910, the number of answers had increased to 230. Only a fraction of these queries were legal. Still, *Pellervo* observed that in 1910 the experts answered several legal questions related especially to the new Land Tenancy Decree of 1909 (*maanvuokra-asetus*), road building and maintenance, boundary disputes, fencing and ditching duties.[146] Even other specialist journals, such as the teachers' *Opettajain Lehti*, provided a Q&A column on professional teaching-related legal questions.[147]

The Socialist newspaper *Työ* advertised the "Workers' Calendar" – which was going to include a short legal dictionary and also came to contain e.g. legal formularies.[148] Its editors obviously knew that workers needed more legal advice and knowledge than there was available. In its new column, *Työ* claimed to answer only such questions that it perceived to be of general use to its readers. Moreover, it emphasised that only questions from its subscribers would be answered. Soon after it lamented that such questions were too numerous, private and detailed to be answered, it stopped its column altogether.[149] The newspaper probably reacted to a genuine need among the readers, but readers apparently

[144] *Pellervo* 1889:0, pp. 1-2.
[145] *Pellervo*, 1901:12, p. 390.
[146] *Laatokka*, 5 Jan. 1911, p. 4.
[147] E.g. Vasara-Aaltonen (2020); *Opettajain lehti* 1907:6, 63.
[148] See also Vasara-Aaltonen (2019), p. 54. The first part of this law dictionary for workers, written by lawyer, Socialist politician and future minister Väinö Tanner, was published in 1915, Tanner (1915), pp. 209-237.
[149] *Työ*, 23 Apr. 1914, p. 4; *Työ*, 3 June 1914, p. 5.

embraced the legal Q&A column too fervently, inundating the editors with their letters. Consequently, *Työ* discontinued the column as running it properly would apparently have required more resources than it had.

Mixtures of ideology and commercial interest lay behind the topical legal Q&A columns in Finnish newspapers and journals. However, as a regular legal Q&A column required both human and financial resources, several columns were discontinued after a period. Yet, they could form an important channel of interaction between editors and readers which helped boost circulation as did the "Legal Helps" column in the Chicago Defender in the 1910s.[150] Some legal questions and answers provoked many letters from readers and lively debates ensued as in *Opettajain lehti* in 1907.[151] Such reactions indicate interest from the readership, and they helped to forge the relationship between editors and subscribers as well as sell the periodical.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there was a pent-up need for legal advice and aid especially among groups such as country-dwellers that could not afford to consult professional legal experts or such experts were not locally available. In towns, the question of access to legal aid for women and the poor in general was raised in the later nineteenth century. Even if advocates for the poor were hired in some larger cities at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the countryside lacked such legal aid. Local administration became more complex and many important legal reforms had an effect on the life of people in the countryside. New laws raised many practical questions relating to their implementation on the local level. Newspapers, increasing in number, catered to this demand both out of economic and ideological reasons.

The legal "questions and answers" columns in Finnish newspapers apparently began spontaneously with random legal questions from the public, answered by newspaper editors or referred to experts. Quickly, some newspapers (e.g. *Päivälehti* and *Helsingin Sanomat*)

[150] Black (2013), pp. 898-899.
[151] E.g. *Opettajain lehti* 1907:51-52, pp. 508-510, 521-522.

made such regular columns special features of the paper in the 1890s and 1900s. So did other journals such as the agricultural *Pellervo*. The Q&A columns provided its users with access to legal expertise, a possibility to consult faraway experts that would otherwise have been unavailable because of the distance and costs. For example, *Helsingin Sanomat* employed top experts, living in Helsinki, who were beyond the reach of the great majority of the national newspaper's readers. The ability to consult them for basically the price of a postal fee provided an important channel of legal counsel. On the downside was the uncertainty that the question would be answered, possible problems of misunderstanding either the question or answer without face-to-face communication and the possible delay in receiving the advice.

Newspapers had an interest in strengthening the nexus between their editorial staff and their readers. The Q&A columns provided a platform for ordinary people from all over the country and experts to interact. Many of the newspapers were also on a mission to instruct the Finnish reading public in legal matters and new legal language. The columns disseminated legal knowledge adding to the public's education and benefit. In addition, newspapers had an economic incentive. The existence of such columns was used in commercial advertisements, sending the public the message that the paper was worth preordering. Several Finnish newspapers used their legal Q&A columns to attract subscribers as did some U.S. newspapers.[152]

The question and answer columns do not indicate how the advice provided was understood, received or whether it was followed. Yet, the value of Q&A columns went beyond the inquirers, their local communities, experts and newspapers. They provided its readers with much needed legal knowledge – as did similar columns in the U.S. and Germany – and contributed to the legal literacy of the Finnish people all over the country. Law helped people govern the country at the local level and thus, legal advice in the newspapers served the nation-building processes in Finland.

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[152] Black (2013).

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