

## **PRESIDENT'S FOLKLORE AWARD AND THE YEAR 2012 AT THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES**

The past year at the folklore archives featured diversity and cooperation between the archives and folklore collectors was efficient.

Everyday life at the archives was also multifarious. A new extension with modern depository and studio facilities was completed at the Literary Museum. The folklore archives and hopefully also all our visitors enjoy the light and spaciousness of the renovated research hall, in which undigitised archival manuscripts can be scrutinised in old-fashioned dignified interior. Unfortunately, financing of the museum creates uncertainty among the staff, as it is project-based and inconsistent.

During the past year, the folklore collections were supplemented by materials from different regions of Estonia, in Estonian, Russian, and Votic languages, as well as Võru and Muhu dialects. The materials were collected by volunteers and professional lore collectors, schoolchildren and university students, and also participants of collection actions. In all, over 4000 pages of manuscript material, more than 4200 photographs, over 500 sound and 82 video recordings were added to the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) in 2012.



*View of the renovated research hall at the EFA on January 21, 2013. Photo by Alar Madisson.*

The President's Award for collecting folklore was given to real enthusiasts, whose primary aim is to record the lore of their native place. This time all the laureates focused on the life of fishermen, as their collection areas were situated by the sea or lakeside.

**Rosaali (Roosi) Karjam** received an award for long-term and consistent folklore collection. In addition to practising handicrafts, she has written down folklore. She has contributed to the archives since 1992, and the material she has collected amounts to 246 pages. She also earned a collection award in 1994. The materials donated to the museum by Rosaali Karjam are comprehensive and informative, including ethnographic descriptions of handicrafts and fishing on Kihnu Island, as well as folklore about signs of nature, birds, sowing dates, raising of children, food and funeral traditions, calendar customs and different beliefs. She has participated in the collection competitions organised by the folklore archives (incl. the years 2009 and 2012). Also, researchers from different fields have visited Roosi, filmed and recorded her, and been in correspondence with her.

**Kaie Humal** has continued the work she started in 2008, collecting material about village life as well as biographical lore (particularly, concerning fishermen) in her childhood neighbourhood on the northern shore of Lake Võrtsjärv. By today she has been accepted as local, which has opened more and more doors for her. Her activity has infected several generations of people in the region with a wish to ransack photo albums and their own memories. Reminiscences from the far past come side by side with those from the Soviet period as well as from the more recent life of fishermen. During 2011–2012, she donated to the EFA 50 hours of recorded interviews, 100 pages of notes and documents and 300 photographs, providing a deep insight into the life of one region throughout several decades.

**Triin Äärismäe-Unt** has collected lore on the opposite side of Estonia – at Jõelähtme, on the northern coast, leading a project concerned with oral heritage in the region. In the summer of 2011, a collection project was launched for the region's youth and culturally minded people, with a focus on place lore, and the material was arranged and handed over to the archives in 2011 and 2012. The recordings included 24 hours of interviews with 272 pages of audiotyped texts, as well as 45 photographs.

Photographer Olev Mihkelmaa donated to the archives 9663 digital photos taken in Kihnu. Jüri Roosmann's calligraphed collection of place lore, reminiscences and legends, as well as Ferdinand Mäe's reminiscences and place lore were mediated by Mari-Ann Remmel.

Twenty-two students from Tartu Kivilinna Gymnasium answered a questionnaire about school lore, which reached the museum through their teacher Pille Pärlin. In addition to schoolchildren's lore, kindergarten lore has also been studied on the initiative of Piret Voolaid. This time, 80 pages of materials from Russian-language kindergarten groups reached the archives.

Students of the University of Tartu under the supervision of Merili Metsvahi and Ergo-Hart Västriik collected lore in Põltsamaa. In the summer of 2012, students of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, supervised by Janika Oras and Ergo-Hart Västriik, carried out fieldwork in Votian and Izhorian villages in Ingermanland. They conducted interviews and participated in several village festivals.



*President's Folklore Award ceremony and honouring of EFA 2012 contributors on March 14, 2013. Sitting: Kaie Humal and Rosaali Karjam, standing: Triin Äärismaa-Unt and President Toomas Hendrik Ilves. Photo by Alar Madisson.*

Jaan Malin, a long-term contributor to the archives, handed over five song books from Muhu Island, as well as 72 pages of internet folklore; Valter Haamer donated two song books. Maria Parksepp handed over 100 pages of Setomaa lore material. Kadi Sarv and Kaido Kama recorded family reminiscences, Villu Talsi donated recordings of a musician from Miila village, and Kalev Järvela – video recordings with interviews on dance activities, conducted with representatives of the Estonian diaspora in Portland and Seattle.

Story writing contests were organised all over Estonia, which yielded 98 digital pages of contributions in Võro dialect; Kadri Tüür handed over to the archives materials of Muhu dialect contest.

We are grateful to all our contributors: Atilde Roosiväli, Kalev Järvela, Anni Oraveer, Ahto Raudoja, Kaleph Jõulu, Johannes Kuusk, Tiina Konsen, Age Esula, Fred Puss, Eva Sepping, Maimo Hõbessaar, Aado Lintrop, Pille Vahtmäe, Anu Korb, Andreas Kalkun, Ave Tupits-Goršič, Jüri Metssalu, Valdo Valper, Mari-Ann Rimmel, Taive Särg, Eda Kalmre, Helen Kõmmus, Jaanika Hunt, Mari Sarv, Janika Oras, etc.

Last summer, the *Pilkaja* (Mocker) magazine contacted the archives with a proposition to organise a joint contest of humorous stories. The contest was announced on September 24, the anniversary of the EFA, and it lasted until January 2013. The contest under the heading “Something Funny Happened to Me” was aimed at obtaining original comical stories from real life, which have also been passed on from one person to another, sometimes with smaller changes.

Altogether, 87 people participated in the collection contest, which yielded 791 pages of material. The participants came from different spheres of life and largely described working life and life in general during the Soviet period, revealing Estonians’ evaluation of the recent past through the prism of humour. However, there were also funny stories about the present day. Mall Hiimäe, a member of the jury, stated that on the basis of these stories we can observe how a unique case turns into folklore.

The authors were mainly elderly people; yet, there were also schoolchildren and youngsters among them. In addition to Estonian, the contributions were also in Russian, as well as in Võru dialect, with volumes from dozens of pages to messages sent by mobile phones. The materials included also stories heard from mothers or grandmothers about the preceding generations, which added a temporal dimension.

The past year proved that colourful language, good sense of humour and a skill to notice funny things around you and speak about them are values to be appreciated; especially when we lose the wish to work in the conditions of harsh everyday life and the sense of mission seems not enough to carry on. Hopefully in 2013, which is heritage year, the museum-, archive- and research workers’ mission and their need to survive will be recognised. This is necessary for the museum so that we could preserve our cultural heritage for the future generations.

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