



The conference keynote address was given by President Toomas Hendrik Ilves. Photo: Piret Noorhani

THE 25TH AABS CONFERENCE IN PHILADELPHIA

From 26-28, the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS) hosted its celebratory 25th conference at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Over 200 guests came together from over 100 different institutions and 15 countries.

The topic “Global, Glocal, and Local: Distinction and Interconnection in the Baltic States” allowed researchers from a wide range of fields to participate. These included historians, political scientists, linguists, literary scholars, art, theatre and music researchers, museologists, and archivists etc. Five parallel sessions took place at once, so it was not easy to decide which ones to participate in. The range of topics was also widespread, which, as is usually the case at these kinds of conferences, offered the chance for not only discussion, but also for silent reflection and placing one's own topic in a larger context.

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who spent a week in the USA with his wife on a working visit, gave the conference keynote address. President Ilves defended his Masters degree in Psychology at University of Pennsylvania in 1978. He recalled his time at his alma mater and how little was known about the Baltic countries then. The President's speech focused on Russian aggression politics and what role Baltic scholars should have in today's complicated political situation. He emphasised the importance of continuing to inform the world's politicians of our history and geopolitical experience. Thus, President Ilves wished the academic community strength for continuing in their everyday efforts.

BaltHerNet was represented by a number of members. Maarja Merivoo-Parro from the Tallinn University spoke on the topic of “Exploring the Cold War Estonian Diaspora through Popular Music.” Kristine Bekere's (Latvian Academy of Sciences) topic was “The Latvian Diaspora's Involvement in the Processes of Latvian State Independence Renewal, 1989-1991”. Laura Laurušaite from the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore spoke about relics of Soviet mentalities in contemporary Lithuanian and Latvian (e) migration literature.

The session “Museums in Dialogue with Society: The Baltic Diasporas Story in Museum Expositions” was dedicated to Baltic diaspora memory

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The Non-Profit Association Baltic Heritage Network was founded in Tartu on January 11, 2008. NPA BaltHerNet was established to foster cooperation between national and private archives, museums, libraries, and institutions of research, public associations and organizations collecting and studying the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora. It aims to facilitate the preservation and research of the historically valuable cultural property of the Baltic diaspora, as well as to ensure accessibility of these materials to the public.

NPA BaltHerNet is also committed to the organising of conferences, seminars and workshops, and to developing and administrating the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

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institutions. One of the initiators of the Latvians Abroad Museum and Research Centre, Maija Hinkle, spoke on the topic "Refugees and Emigrant: The Latvian Diaspora Story as Told by Latvian Abroad Museum and Research Centre." VEMU's Chief Archivist, Piret Noorhani, gave an overview of Tartu College, the Estonian Studies Centre and VEMU's Collections with a more detailed focus on VEMU's Cultural Program, especially on the work done with exhibitions. The independent Lithuanian researcher Audrius Plioplys' topic was "Hope and Spirit: Informing the Public of Stalin's Atrocities." The representative of Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, Irene Chambers, spoke on the topic of "Gathering Memoirs for Future History."

Many friends of BaltHerNet were also present at the conference. Maira Bundža from Western Michigan University, who has attended BaltHerNet conferences in Riga and Toronto, spoke about web archiving in the Baltic countries. BaltHerNet's old friend Valters Ščerbinskis was also at the conference and now works at the Latvian National Library. He spoke on the topic "The Educated Class and the University: Jewish Students and Their Societies at the University of Latvia Between the Wars." Marin Laak and Triinu Ojamaa from the Estonian Literary Museum, one of BaltHerNet's partner organizations, have also participated in a number of BaltHerNet events. This time their topics were "Global Networks of Local Literature: Estonian Literature in Books Abroad" and "Memoirs of an Exile Musician as a Source for Study of Cultural Contacts" respectively. The latter lecture was presented at the "Exiles as a Source of Knowledge and Action" session. The diaspora theme was also addressed in the sessions "Literature, Trauma and Healing", "Memory and Trauma in Baltic Literatures", "The Global Baltic Migration, Diasporas, Minorities", and "Politically Active Diasporas".

The cultural programme at the conference offered exhibitions and



Seminar for Young Diaspora Researchers. Photo: Lithuanian National Library

the presentation of work by Baltic filmmakers in addition to a party and reception. The AABS general meeting was also held, where the conference coordinators, Janis Chakars and Bradley Woodworth, were thanked. The new president of AABS was also announced; Giedrius Subačius will be taking over the organisation's directing role from Mara Lazda. At the meeting, a photo was taken of about 40 young scholars who had come to Philadelphia with stipends from AABS and Yale University. It was great to see a large number of young faces among the delegates. What else could this mean besides the fact that AABS will continue to bring together Baltic scholars from all over the world.

Piret Noorhani

A THIRD SEMINAR FOR YOUNG DIASPORA RESEARCHERS

The Lithuanian Studies Research Department (former Lituanica Department) of the National Library of Lithuania hosted the third interdisciplinary seminar for young diaspora researchers on 28 April 2016. This year, the event took place at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences.

Jolanta Budriūnienė, the head of the Department, reminded us of how the idea to organise such seminars by the Library came into existence. It was borrowed from the Baltic Heritage Network, of which

the National Library of Lithuania is a member. BaltHerNet has been organising similar international seminars for young researchers for quite some time now. The main goal of such seminars is to provide young researchers with an opportunity to share their thoughts and problems about their research and to help them locate the sources needed.

There were five presentations this year. Dr Kęstutis Raškauskas, a researcher at the Lithuanian Studies Research Department of the National Library of Lithuania, talked about problems encountered while searching for sources about the history of Lithuanians in London, UK. Ina Vaisiūnaitė, a graduate student at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, who researches audio-visual Lithuanian media in the United States, presented the findings of her recent trip to the Lithuanian American archives in Chicago.

Dr Neringa Lašaitė-Markevičienė, of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore read a presentation about the writer Balys Sruoga and his archives housed at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture (Chicago) and the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center in the US. A Ph.D. student Akvilė Šimėnienė, who is writing her thesis on one of the most important figures of Spanish literary criticism, Professor Birutė Ciplijauskaitė, further developed some of the topics she introduced at previous seminars and also expressed her concern

regarding a very low interest in Lithuanian diaspora living outside the Anglophone world.

Dr Laura Laurušaitė, a researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, discussed the depiction of the Balts, Latvians, and Lithuanians in 21st century Lithuanian and Latvian prose about emigration. Dr Giedrė Milerytė-Japertienė, a senior researcher at the Lithuanian Studies Research Department of the National Library of Lithuania, gave the last presentation. She presented recent projects in the field of diaspora studies carried out by the Lithuanian Studies Research Department.

THE LITHUANIAN PROJECT "CONVERSATIONS ABOUT EMIGRATION" TO BE PRESENTED AT IFLA

An educational project "Conversations about Emigration", carried out by the National Library of Lithuania last year will be presented at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference held in Columbus, Ohio, 13-19 August 2016.

A display, introducing the Project and its activities, will present the participants of the conference a new method, aimed at fostering citizenship and national identity, encouraging young people to know better the origins, cause, course and consequences of the (e)migration phenomenon.

IFLA, organised every year in a different part of the world, attracts over 3,500 participants from more than 120 countries. This huge international event provides the delegates with an opportunity to get acquainted with the library and information science situation of the hosting country and to share positive experiences. This year's IFLA conference is dedicated to connections, collaboration and community.

A MONOGRAPH ABOUT LITHUANIAN MUSIC CULTURE IN THE US, 1870-1990

At the end of 2015, Vilnius Academy of Arts Publishing House published a monograph "Lithuanian Music Culture in the United States, 1870-1990" by Professor Danutė Petrauskaitė. The book, written in Lithuanian, is impressive for its encyclopaedic scope and rich content. "There were times, when I felt like I was drowning in this ocean of material", admits the author of the book, which covers 120 years of American-Lithuanian music life. Professor Petrauskaitė, not only researched many different written sources (e.g. American-Lithuanian press, abundantly quoted in the monograph), but also visited museums, including Ellis Island.

The book consists of three main sections. The first chapter is an overview of the causes and consequences of emigration. The second chapter analyses the Lithuanian music culture at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. And finally, the third chapter is dedicated to the American-Lithuanian music culture in the second half of the 20th century. The monograph also contains few

annexes, which provide very detailed information about Lithuanian parishes, choirs, and orchestras in the US.

YEAR OF SEA CULTURE CELEBRATED IN TORONTO



*Marko Matvere and Peep Raun.
Photo: T. Tamtik*

On 23 April, the Museum of Estonians Abroad, VEMU hosted its 5th Fundraising Dinner, where the musician/actor, Marko Matvere (Estonia) performed. The event was dedicated to the Year of Sea Culture in Estonia, as were Matvere's other two performances.

On 24 April, Matvere shared his experiences from traveling around the world on the catamaran "Nordea" in 2010-2012. On 26 April, he gave a concert, I Like the Land!, with accordionist Peep Raun. The concert featured old seafaring tunes and ballads, along with stories about the golden age of sailing. This golden



From the left: Dr Dalia Cidzikaitė, Prof. Danutė Petrauskaitė. Book presentation. Photo: Lithuanian National Library

age is considered the time between the 16th and 20th centuries. During this time, ships with large sails transported travellers and goods all around the world.

Throughout the events at Tartu College, a model of the Manni sailboat, donated to VEMU by Leida Sepp, was on display in the great hall. This model is a replica of the sailboat on which Leida and her family fled from Kihnu Island in autumn of 1944.

Piret Noorhani

A BUSY SPRING OF VISITORS AT VEMU

This spring VEMU has had a number of researchers come visit the archives. Each one has had a different project to work on; some of them are collaborative projects with VEMU.

Jarmo Kauge came to us from the Estonian Architecture Museum in Tallinn. He is in Toronto working on an exhibition dedicated to the Estonian architects in Toronto, which will be finished in time for Canada's 150th birthday. This is Jarmo's second trip to Canada. The exhibition will be opened in the fall of 2017 in Toronto. In 2018, it will travel on to Estonia as a joint gift from the Estonian Architecture Museum and VEMU for Estonia's 100th birthday.

Around the same time of Jarmo's arrival, two dance researchers, Karl Toepfer from the US and Heili Einasto from Estonia arrived at VEMU. Professor Toepfer was visiting VEMU's archives for the second time. This time he was still interested in the dancer Ella Ilbak. Heili Einasto, who defended her PhD this spring, focused on Estonian ballet masters, ballet pedagogy and the dancer Rahel Olbrei's archive.

Liisi Rohumäe came as the ambassador of the Rakvere Theatre to interview Toronto-Estonians and do research in the archives. The final product of this research will be another joint gift for Estonia's 100th birthday, a play about Canadian-Estonians and their relationships with the homeland. The play will be

performed in both Estonia and North America in 2018.



*From left: Kristi Leps and Ülle Kraft.
Photo: P. Noorhani*

Ülle Kraft and Kristi Leps from the Estonian War Museum also came to visit VEMU. The visitors arrived via the USA where they had been visiting the Lakewood Estonian archives. Their project involves the Aleks Kurgvel catalogue. In Toronto, Ülle and Kristi were searching for correspondence with the Estonian Officers Corporation in the USA. They also took note of other important material in the VEMU archives for potential research projects in the future.

Triinu Ojamaa from Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu arrived in Toronto at the end of the May. Triinu will be lecturing at the symposium "The Grand Old Man of Estonian Music: Roman Toi 100" held at VEMU on 17 June. Prior to the symposium, Triinu will be researching for material and memoirs of Juhan Aavik who was living in Sweden after World War Two. In addition, Triinu will be researching the Estonian Days event that took place in North America in 1957, which was a precursor to ESTO.

Piret Noorhani

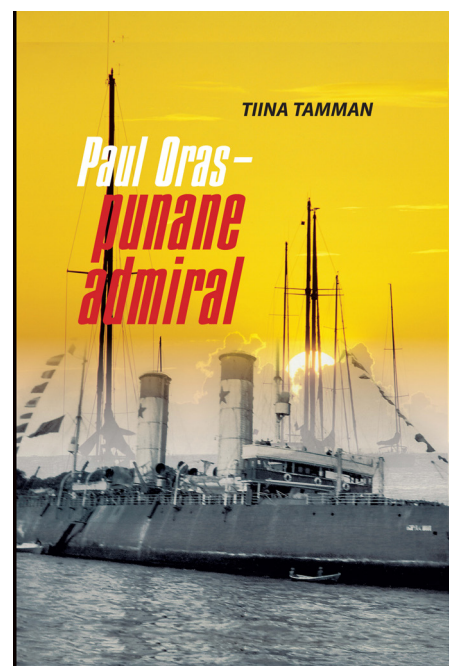
END OF THE ROAD

When I embarked on a PhD ten years ago, I had no idea how much I would grow to love archives and how one thing would lead to another. I completed my research in 2010, it was then published as a book ("The Last Ambassador: August Torma, Soldier, Diplomat, Spy", 2011), but things did not stop there.

August Torma, whose life I had been researching, was the Estonian

ambassador in London. Deeply unhappy because his country had been stolen from him by the Soviets in 1940, he kept the flame of Estonian independence alive for decades. He, however, was a retiring man who left few personal papers behind. That meant that for a proper biography I had to study all the people he had come across, in the hope that they might reveal something of the man I was focused on. I wrote down a great number of names, some incomplete at that stage, and then worked through the list. Among them was Brian Giffey, an eccentric British intelligence officer who had spent eleven years (1929-40) in Tallinn. Gradually I learnt that, while in Estonia, Giffey had fallen in love with a local girl and married her. And that Anni Oras, as her maiden name was, had a cousin, Paul Oras, who had worked for Soviet intelligence.

At first I tried to write these two men, Brian Giffey and Paul Oras, into one book because I was so struck by the coincidence and symmetry that I perceived. What a find! Two men related by marriage were both working for the secret service, but on the opposing sides! This seemed too good to be true. With time, however, it became clear that my idea would not work. The men had never met, had not influenced each other's work – they had in fact not that much in common. There was much more personal information on Giffey and,



by comparison, he emerged as the more colourful man, overshadowing Oras.

In the end I decided to separate the men and rewrite their biographies as two books: one on Giffey in English ("Portrait of a Secret Agent", 2014) and the other on Oras in Estonian ("Paul Oras – punane admiral", 2016). Oras was born of Estonian parents, his father was a banker in Tallinn, but the son became an ardent communist who had a fantastic career as a Soviet negotiator and naval attaché in several countries. His career, however, was cut short in 1937 by Stalin's wave of repressions, but even when imprisoned he was useful to the Soviet Union as a naval engineer. It's quite a story.

Now that the books have been published, this is where my road ends. The three men who knew each other, or knew of each other, have finally had their life stories published. I am well pleased I have been able to do something for them because they all deserve to be better known. Now, however, I have to start afresh and find a completely new lead if I am to go back to archival research and work on another unsung hero. I am thinking of Nikolai Köstner who worked in Switzerland and Egypt for years. No known intelligence connection, not yet.

Tina Tamman

NANCY BUSH HANDICRAFT WORKSHOP AT VEMU IN TORONTO



*From the left, Jane Olvet, Nancy Bush.
Photo: Piret Noorhani*

Nancy Bush is a well-known and highly respected American handicraft

artist with a special interest in Estonian knitting traditions. As a knitting specialist, she has owned a craft shop in Utah, and has written at least five books about knitting. She continues to contribute articles to craft magazines such as *Piecework*. She conducts workshops all over the world. In April, Nancy was invited to visit the Museum of Estonians Abroad (VEMU) in Toronto.

Her interest in Estonian folk knitting began when she was preparing a book about general folk knitting and went to Estonia to continue her research. Since then she has visited Estonia many times.

Nancy has become particularly interested in the history and technique behind Haapsalu shawls. She has a large collection both bought by her and given to her. There is currently a group of about 50 people who knit and sell shawls there. Nancy is now leading tours to Haapsalu.

The focus of Nancy Bush's workshop at Tartu College on 3 April 2016 was to introduce the technique of knitting a three sided miniature Haapsalu shawl. Each of the 20 participants received several pages of instructions and a small ball of lace yarn. The knitters had varying levels of experience, but Nancy was very kind and patient with everyone. I think just one experienced, dedicated knitter finished her shawl during the afternoon.

A delicious light lunch of soup, meat pies and bread was also included. Of course there was kringel to have with coffee.

I have been a fan of Nancy Bush for many years and was delighted to meet her. We have two important things in common. Although neither of us is Estonian, we have a deep love and respect for Estonian crafts, and we are both passionate knitters. It was a wonderful day.

On 6 April, Nancy Bush gave the lecture "How I Found Estonia Through Knitting".

Jane Olvet

VEMU'S THIRD JANE'S WALK INTRODUCED THE BLOOR ST. CULTURE CORRIDOR



Tour leader Eric Sehr and the founder of the Bloor St. Culture Corridor Heather Kelly. Photo: P. Noorhani

On 6 May, Eric Sehr led the third VEMU Jane's Walk titled "From the ROM to VEMU: Exploring institutions, architecture, and stories of Toronto's Bloor St. Culture Corridor". If for the first two walks, we introduced buildings in downtown Toronto designed by Estonian architects, then this time we explored the history, architecture, and stories of Toronto's most diverse arts and cultural district.

Arts and culture organisations along Bloor St. West have come together in partnership to create the Bloor St. Culture Corridor (BCC), a uniquely Torontonians arts and culture district. Each year, more than three million members of the public go to BCC exhibitions, performances, and events. This year, the Jane's Walk explained how this cultural corridor emerged, how it's changing, and discover the wide variety of accessible cultural experiences offered by the 19 organisations affiliated with the BCC. This past April the BCC celebrated its second birthday. VEMU has been a member of BCC since autumn 2014.

Piret Noorhani