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Summer is vacation time. For those Balts who don't live in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, it's also a time to travel back home. During these visits, you have to balance both work and vacation plans. If there is a colleague or official you have to meet up with, you must plan those meetings according to their vacation time – your plans need to remain flexible. And so, it's difficult to answer questions from family and friends about whether you're working or on vacation. Of course, you're happily doing both.

Estonian summers are incredible, no matter what the weather is like. Time spent with family and loved ones, participating in cultural events, visiting, revisiting or discovering new places, meeting with old and new friends, and simply lazing about (you can't forget that!). All of this recharges your own depleted batteries and revitalises you.

Exchanging ideas with colleagues achieves the same result. You get a better idea of their everyday life, what people think about and discuss, and what they're working on. If you have lived abroad for a length of time, you begin to slowly lose a sense of what is and isn't possible to achieve in your homeland – whether that be financially or in terms of other resources. Amid these discussions, you get a better idea regarding those matters and discover new, interesting exhibits and other cultural products to showcase within the diaspora. New research and collection-related topics and ideas pop up, which you can start to dive into in your other home. You always meet new people and glean new ideas and information through them which energise you and life in general. These work meetings are also special because they tend to take place in cosy cafés or restaurants, where someone who lives abroad can reconnect with and enjoy the delicacies of the homeland. Sounds like a dream job? It sure can be.

For those that are true and loyal BaltHerNet members, summer also means that it's time, yet again, for the not-for-profit's summer school. This year, it took place in Värskä in Setomaa and was dedicated to our Estonian roots and identity. The overview of the summer school can be read in our newsletter. Let it be known: the next BaltHerNet conference will take place at the end of June 2024 in Vilnius. We

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The next deadline for submissions is 15 November, 2023. Please send all related enquiries and submissions to Piret Noorhane: [piretnoorhane@gmail.com](mailto:piretnoorhane@gmail.com)

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thank the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania for their willingness to accommodate us for this event! Since it will be the 80th anniversary of the 1944 Great Escape, the conference will be dedicated to that event.

I hope you all took the most from summer and recharged your batteries, took time to look into yourself and the world around you, met with inspiring individuals and emptied your mind of the unnecessary to make room for what's truly important. Happy new work year to all!

Piret Noorhani

## A BOOK DONATION TO THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA



*Donatas Januta stands beside the books he donated to the National Library of Lithuania.*

*Photo: National Library of Lithuania/Vygaudas Juozaitis.*

Several dozen books on Lithuanian and Judaica subjects were added to the National Library of Lithuania collections. All of them were donated by Donatas Januta, a Lithuanian-American lawyer, who visited the Library at the end of this summer.

This is not the first gift from Januta to Lithuanian readers. Almost thirty years ago, he donated to the Lithuanian libraries, including secondary schools, fifty sets of the Encyclopedia published in the USA and more than one hundred sets of the six-volume Encyclopedia Lituanica. Januta also supported the publication of the book “Draustosios spaudos pėdsakais” (Following the Traces of the Banned Press; 2011) by Silvija Vėlavienė, the long-time head of the Lituanica Department of the National Library of Lithuania.

Although Januta's gift is more modest this time, it is no less significant. Over half of the books donated to the Library

this time are on Judaica, a topic of interest to the Lithuanian American himself. According to Dr. Larisa Lempertienė, the head of the National Library's Center for Judaica Studies, all books are very much needed by the Center's Reading Room and will find a place on its bookshelves.

Januta is well known in the field of movable cultural heritage as well. In 2018, he presented the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania with a special gift—a portrait of Prince John Casimir Vasa (1609-1672), the future King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, painted by the Dutch Baroque painter Pieter Danckerts and bought at Sotheby's, followed a year later by a table clock made in Vilnius by the famous watchmaker Johannes (Hans) Klassen in 1638.

## BALTHERNET SUMMER SCHOOL 2023 – MY ESTONIAN ROOTS

The Baltic Heritage Network summer school, the eleventh which has been organised thus far, took place this year from June 26th-29th. Founded in 2008, the Baltic Heritage Network promotes collaboration between cultural institutions which focus on preserving and researching the cultural heritage of the Baltic Diaspora. This includes organising events such as conferences, seminars, and summer schools. Each summer school takes place in a different location with a different theme. This year's took place in Värskä, Võrumaa, investigating the theme of “My Estonian Roots”.

Before travelling to Värskä, summer school participants gathered at the Noora, the new National Archives of Estonia building in Tartu. There, the group heard a lecture by Tõnis Tärna, who spoke about conducting genealogical research and any restrictions one might run into when requesting materials. Birgit Kibal then gave a tour of the building before the group began their bus journey to Värskä. When the group arrived in Värskä, there was a screening of the show “8 mm elu”, which investigates film footage of the Estonian diaspora, along with a Zoom discussion with the show's editor, Maarja Merivoo-Parro. A clip was also shown examining the legacy of Estonians on the island of Gotland in Sweden.

The Baltic Heritage Network Annual Meeting kicked off the second day, followed by a packed schedule of presentations and discussions. While new members are joining BaltHerNet, financial opportunities and support have decreased simultaneously. Nevertheless, the BaltHerNet team always manages to tackle any work that comes their way, the results of which we can be proud.

The morning presentations investigated Estonian diaspora archives. Though unable to attend in person, Maie Barrow spoke with the group over Zoom about the work done within the Estonian-Australian community and its archives. There was also a presentation by Keila Kopvillem on the Estonian-Canadian archives of VEMU and using the collections for genealogical and personal research. Madli Wiiburg







Walfridsson spoke about the Estonian archives in Sweden and efforts being made in preserving and gathering data about the photo collection.

After lunch, Fred Puss from the Estonian Biographical Centre spoke about genealogical research, sharing examples from his work and his family history. Tiina Tael from the Estonian National Museum investigated letters from Setomaa in the museum collections. Marin Laak from the Estonian Literary Museum shared material from Ilmar Laaban, Gunnar Neeme, and Abel Lee collections. Janis Tobreluts from the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church archives discussed transferring church archives from the Estonian diaspora to the Saaga collection of digitised archives.

A discussion regarding cooperation in Estonian cultural heritage in diaspora followed these lectures. Participants included Kadri Linnus and Marin Mõttus from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Heidy Eskor from the Estonian Institute, and Piret Noorhane from Baltic Heritage Network and



VEMU. Many organisations pursue similar projects and programming, and the project leaders are often the same cultural workers. Collection campaigns could be organized through competitions in supplementary schools and educational institutions in the Estonian diaspora to create connections between different generations and communities. BaltHerNet could also greatly benefit from new, young energy. There are many exciting possibilities for meaningful collaboration in the future.

Programming for the evening was a viewing of the television show “Sinu uus sugulane” (Your New Relative) and a discussion with the show consultant Fred Puss. The series is similar to the British show Who Do You Think You Are, which has been on the air for several decades. In each episode of “Sinu uus sugulane”, a public figure in Estonia finds new relatives – other well-known people – that they did not know about before.

The third day of summer school investigated the collection of stories. Mari-Ann Rimmel from the Estonian Literary Museum spoke about local lore and its role in shaping identity. Tiina Kirss from the Association of Estonian Life Stories introduced the association’s collection and explored how a biography is not just the story of an individual but a story about the individual, ancestors, and family. Marju Meschin from the Institute of Estonian Memory talked

about the work of EMI and the plans to celebrate the upcoming anniversary of the Great Escape. Piret Voolaid, the director of the Estonian Literary Museum, spoke about collecting Estonian school lore in Canada and how former and current students and teachers across generations in Toronto remember their school days.

After lunch, VEMU’s Piret Noorhane screened the film *Meie Tartu*, and, following the film discussed VEMU’s plans for the future. Aune Valk from the University of Tartu presented findings from a survey investigating Estonian identity. Following this presentation was a discussion about Estonian identity in the diaspora, moderated by Aune Valk with Riina Kindlam, Tiina Kirss and Lea Kreinin.

On the last day of summer school, the group was taken on a tour of Setomaa, thanks to tour guide Helen Külvik, beginning in Värskä’s orthodox church. After learning more about traditions and history at the Seto Farm Museum, the group was treated to a performance by a Leelo choir. Although time was running short, the bus was still able to make quick stops at Vana Jüri Seebikoda (soap store) and at Seto Atelier Gallery in Obinitsa, where the group was treated to a singalong with Evar Riitsaar and Kauksi Ülle.

Instead of summer school next year, Baltic Heritage Network will be organising a conference in Vilnius – which means our Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts will also join in. Keep up with BaltHerNet news via the newsletter: <https://www.balther.net/balthernet/balthernet-newsletters/>

**Keila Kopvillem**

**Birgit Kibal**

### A TALK ON HOW TO SEARCH FOR LITHUANIAN DATA IN US ARCHIVES

This summer, the National Library of Lithuania hosted a talk on how to search for Lithuanian data in US archives and genealogical websites presented by Karilė Vaitkutė, head of the Genealogy Department at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago (USA).

Vaitkutė shared her experience with how to search for Lithuanian material in



*Vaitkutė gave a talk on the search of Lithuanian data in US archives.*

*Photo: National Library of Lithuania/  
Vygaudas Juozaitis*

various US archives, as well as paid and free-of-charge genealogical websites, how to decipher the documents found, how to determine whether they belong to a family member under consideration, and how to overcome the obstacles that occur during the research. In her talk, she also answered more specific questions concerning the search for Lithuanian relatives in the USA and gave an overview of the different sources available.

For the past ten years, Vaitkutė has been working in the field of genealogy, helping Lithuanian Americans whose grandparents and great-grandparents came to the USA before World War I or after World War II to find their roots in Lithuania and Lithuanians who are looking for their relatives in the USA.



*The signing of the document.*

*Photo: National Library of Lithuania/  
Vygaudas Juozaitis*

## HISTORICAL LETTERS HANDED OVER TO THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA

This year, Lithuanian American Nijolė Bražėnaitė-Lukšienė-Paronetto turned a hundred years old. On this occasion, the National Library of Lithuania invited Nijolė's friends and all those interested to an evening to

commemorate this anniversary. The event featured a presentation of the book "Apie anuos nepamirštamus laikus: Juozas Lukšos-Daumanto ir Nijolės Bražėnaitės susirašinėjimas" (About Those Unforgettable Times: The Correspondence between Juozas Lukša-Daumantas and Nijolė Bražėnaitė) compiled by Laima Vincė.

During the event, the author of the book handed over a valuable gift to the Library—letters written by Bražėnaitė to Juozas Lukša-Daumantas, which testify not only to the romantic love story of the two young people but also to the great sacrifice they made in the name of their homeland, Lithuania.

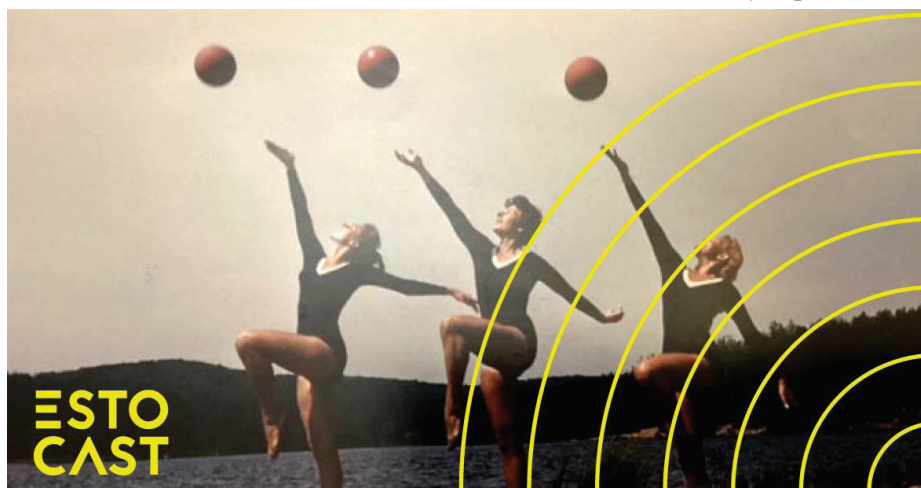
On July 18, the formal handing over of the letters and the signing of the documents occurred. The document was signed by the donor, Laima Vincė Sruoginis, and Aidas Sinkevičius, Deputy Director General of the National Library of Lithuania.

## ESTOCast HAS CONTINUED SUCCESS

During the long, hot summer days, EstoCast has kept up its pace by bringing you the latest scorching interviews and discussions with fascinating individuals. If you're new to our podcast, EstoCast is also ideal for those simply curious about many topics and searching for something fresh, exciting, inspiring, and educational to listen to. If you've ever wanted the latest Estonian books, music, art, history, science, and other key news and cultural topics in a convenient on-the-go format, EstoCast is perfect. VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), Estonian Music Week, and Eesti Elu (Estonian Life) newspaper have continued success with

their joint venture, published biweekly. EstoCast alternates between English and Estonian every other episode so that there's something for everyone; those wanting to learn or practice either language also have the perfect chance for that!

EstoCast's journey to success continues steadily, with our listener base consistently growing with each episode as we branch out into an even wider variety of topics. We have both an established fanbase and also new listeners biweekly. The podcast is now a year and a half old and well past the halfway point in our second season. In the past few months, we've upgraded our recording gear and technology to bring our followers an even better and more immersive listening experience. We have 33 live episodes ready for your listening pleasure, spanning topics from literature to music the latest cultural issues to world-class athletes. Over the past few months, we've expanded our discussion topics to include professional athleticism and sports, exercise, local history and urban planning, and the fascinating world of improvisational music. We've had great, fun guests in the studio, such as Kirke Karja Trio, who touched upon how trust functions in music and the importance of it following their stint at Estonian Music Week 2023, Estonian-Canadian athlete Aleksa Gold, who discussed the stress of top-level competition and the mindset of a professional athlete, established rhythmic gymnast and former trainer Siina Kasekamp who talked about the path to becoming a trainer and what it entails, and urban planner Eric Sehr who discussed local Toronto history, the future of the local cityscape and





much more. We also continue to focus on bringing the stories of people in our diaspora Estonian communities in Canada and worldwide. There is never a dull moment with EstoCast!

A good portion of our listener base is in Canada. It continues to grow steadily, with the United States, Estonia, Brazil, and Sweden continuing to round out the top 5 countries. We've gained more listeners in all corners of the earth, mainly Australia, Spain, the Philippines, and Norway. EstoCast is taking over the world, one listener at a time! Our current most popular episode remains "Chef Paul Lillakas Shares His Path to Becoming a TV Chef", followed by "An Interview With a Bookworm - a discussion with VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada chief archivist Piret Noorhani," and "The Sonic Universe of Kara-Lis Coverdale." As for platforms, our listeners have been tuning in essentially via Spotify, followed by Apple Podcasts and our very own podcast website. We're proud of how far we've come and continue working hard to grow our reach in the vast sea of podcasts!

As mentioned, Season 2 is well underway, and we have many more exciting and captivating guests. The next English episode will feature Estonian-Canadian traveller and athlete Markus Pukonen, who will detail his amazing 8-year-long trip around the world, and the next Estonian episode will include local Estonian-Canadian marathoner and fitness educator Elli Kipper with her discussion of her road to exercise and where she is today. There's a lot to tune



*Estonian Independence Restoration Day picnic at Queen's Park in Toronto on August 20th. L-R: Kerly Ilves, BaltHerNet honorary member Andris Kesteris, Piret Noorhani, Tiiu Kravtsev, Riina Reinvelt, and Kaia Ivask.*

in for; check us out!

Hosts Vincent Teetsov and Kati Kiilaspea, along with occasional guest hosts, will continue to take you through the exciting world of Estonian culture. You can find EstoCast here on major streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music and at our website: <https://estocast.buzzsprout.com/>

Happy listening!

**Kati Kiilaspea**

## A PRODUCTIVE END TO THE SUMMER AT VEMU



*Krislin Kämärä speaking with guests from Montréal. L-R: Krislin Kämärä, Hille Viires, Gary J. Kirchner.*



*(L-R): the editor-in-chief of Estonian Life newspaper Kai Kulaspea, Marge Tiidus, and Aimar Altosaar.*

August brought diligent helpers, once again, from Estonia to Toronto. Tiiu Kravtsev and Kaia Ivask from the National Archives organised VEMU's document archives, including the Estonian Central Council in Canada's extensive archive. Riina Reinvelt from the Estonian National Museum continued the systemisation of Tommy Tomson's sizeable collection of photos, which she began last year. Krislin Kämärä, the coordinator of the team of curators that works on VEMU's future permanent exhibit, arrived at the end of August to start in on research at VEMU archives. Work meetings about



*Ene-Liis Martens with sweaters knitted by her mother.*

the permanent exhibition took place, in which Krislin, Tiiu and Riina joined. We're thankful to our guests for their dedication and the Global Estonian program for their financial support.

Aimar Altosaar and Marge Tiidus, both former directors of the State Archives and on the road to the Kotkajärve Forest University, could also stop by VEMU for a visit. Eli Pilve from the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory got acquainted with VEMU's activities and collections after Forest University.

Hille Viires from Montréal brought archival material. Piret Noorhani and Kerly Ilves spent two days in Collingwood choosing items for VEMU's archives from Ene-Liis Martens' collection.

## THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA OPENED AN EXHIBITION IN CHICAGO

On July 15, 2023, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the flight of the legendary pilots Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas, an interactive exhibition by the National Library of Lithuania was opened at the Čiurlionis Gallery in



*The Director General of the National Library of Lithuania opened the exhibition. Photo: National Library of Lithuania*





*The exposition features manuscripts, documents, photographs and interactive technology.*

*Photo: National Library of Lithuania*

Chicago (USA).

The exposition consists of manuscripts, documents, photographs and interactive technology. It includes letters from Darius and Girėnas, in which the pilots thank the Lithuanian-American community for their donations and support, historical documents, photographs, and event descriptions. The exhibition is equipped with software with AR technology. It includes archival documents from the National Library of Lithuania, digitised documents from the Vytautas Magnus War Museum and the

Lithuanian Aviation Museum.

At the opening of the exhibition, the Director General of the National Library of Lithuania, Prof. Dr. Renaldas Gudauskas, thanked the partners of the collection, the Čiurlionis Gallery in Chicago, the Lithuanian-American Community and the Lithuanian Foundation in the USA. He noted that in Lithuania alone, at least 115 streets have been named after Darius and Girėnas, and squares and other public spaces have been renamed after them. These two courageous Lithuanians have been commemorated in monuments, works of art, exhibitions, films, poems, postage stamps, coins, and medals.

The partners of the exposition are the Čiurlionis Gallery in Chicago, the Lithuanian-American Community, the Lithuanian Foundation, the Vilnius Academy of Arts, the Vytautas Magnus Military Museum, the company Tikras vaizdas HoPro, the Lithuanian Aviation Museum, and the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania advised on

the project.

## A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

On July 13-18, 2023, Prof. Dr. Renaldas Gudauskas, Director General of the National Library of Lithuania, visited the United States of America. The main purpose of the visit was to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the flight of two Lithuanian American pilots, Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas, across the Atlantic.

During his visit, Gudauskas opened an exhibition at the Čiurlionis Gallery in Chicago, took part in the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union flag and ceremonial march to the monument dedicated to Darius and Girėnas in one of Chicago's neighbourhoods, Marquette Park. He also visited the editorial office of one of the oldest Lithuanian newspapers in the diaspora, "Draugas," and the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, where he discussed the possibilities of cooperation in cultural heritage.

The Director General also met with the Board of the Lithuanian Studies Center Chairman, Dr. Robertas Vitas. During the meeting, a renewed bilateral cooperation agreement was signed. The document will ensure further cooperation between the two institutions, including the digitisation projects of the documentary archive, further research on the Lithuanian diaspora, and the dissemination of the content of Lithuanian cultural heritage in the USA.

The National Library of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Studies Center have cooperated since 1990. At that time, the Library was particularly interested in supplementing its holdings with periodicals and books published in the Lithuanian diaspora. On more than one occasion, the library staff travelled to the Center to help catalogue the books. In 2002, the cooperation was consolidated by an agreement signed by the then Director of the Library, Dr. Vladas Bulavas, and the Director of the Lithuanian Studies Center, Dr. Jonas Račkauskas.

*The Head of the National Library of Lithuania visited the editorial office of the Lithuanian newspaper "Draugas." Photo: National Library of Lithuania*







### COOPERATION WITH TEACHERS OF LITHUANIAN SCHOOLS ABROAD CONTINUES

This summer, the National Library of Lithuania once again invited the participants of the Lithuanian Studies Summer Courses organised by Vytautas Magnus University. The Library has been inviting the participants of these courses for several years now to discuss topics of interest to teachers, to share their experiences and concerns, and to listen to lectures presented by the library experts.

Prof. Dr. Jolanta Zabarskaitė gave an informative and practical lecture on the Lithuanian-reading classroom, in which she discussed different methodologies

*The participants of the courses with Prof. Dr. Jolanta Zabarskaitė.*

*Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis*

for children of different ages that can help to develop close reading, comprehension of text and vocabulary. She shared several case studies of how these methodologies have been applied in practice.



*Prof. Dr. Gudauskas paid tribute to Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas. Photo: National Library of Lithuania.*

Dr. Dalia Cidzikaitė gave a lecture on oral history and its application in the classroom and outside of the classroom. She introduced to the genre of oral history and challenges and possible solutions when working on oral history projects. She highlighted and discussed in detail the eight steps of the oral history project that can help achieve successful results and shared advice on preparing for the interview and integrating these practices into the school curriculum.

Dr. Dainius Vaitiekūnas shared his insights on the sense of humour in advertising and language teaching. The researcher pointed out that linguistic curiosities found in the ads can be exploited in language learning. He discussed the model of how an advertisement can become an anti-advertisement, the emotional connection created by ads and the different types of humour seen in them.

The Library also hosted a discussion on the Integrated Program of Lithuanian Language Education. The discussion focused on the integration issues of the program in Lithuanian schools abroad, the challenges faced in different schools, and the program's advantages. Insights were shared on how to succeed in Lithuanian language education, what kind of support teachers need and how Lithuanian will be taught in the future.