



BALTIC HERITAGE NETWORK

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This year, those working with the history of the Baltic diaspora and its heritage will gather in Vilnius at the end of June for the 8th Baltic Heritage Network conference. The first conference of this kind took place in 2006 at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu – our organization grew out of that meeting. These have been exciting years full of teaching and learning, collection and organization, research and sharing.

At the conference, we will not only be looking into the past but also forward to the future. One main theme will run throughout the presentations and discussions: the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape of 1944. We are very grateful to our hosts, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, and all the supporters. See you in Vilnius!

Piret Noorhani, Editor-in-Chief

High Recognition for Merike Kiipus



Congratulations to the founding member of the Baltic Heritage Network Merike Kiipus, who was awarded the Order of the White Star Fifth Class by the President of the Republic of Estonia Alar Karis on Estonian Independence Day! Merike has worked at the Estonian Literary Museum's archival library for nearly half a century. From 1999 onwards, she has been the head of the library and has also acted as the director of the Literary Museum.

From the entire BaltHerNet family, congratulations Merike!



*June 27-July 1, 2006
Estonian Literary Museum
Tartu, Estonia*

**International Conference on
the Baltic Archives Abroad**



June 27-July 1, 2006

Estonian Literary Museum

Tartu, Estonia

International Conference on the Baltic Archives Abroad

The Baltic Heritage Newsletter is distributed quarterly, on-line.

The next deadline for submissions is **15 May, 2024.**

Please send all related enquiries and submissions to Piret Noorhani: piretnoorhani@gmail.com

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To mark the 80th anniversary of the massive WWII refugee flight west, the Baltic Heritage Network is organizing an international conference **Eighty Years after 1944: Then and Now. A three-day conference will take place on June 26–28, 2024, at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius.**

The Second World War left over 400,000 people from Eastern and Central Europe (including over 200,000 Baltic people) homeless, creating entire communities of displaced persons (DPs) in West Germany, Austria, Italy, Great Britain, Norway and Sweden after the war, the majority of whom later emigrated to North and South America and Australia.

WWII formed a new generation, which some historians call “a diaspora of the highest maturity” and which gave the Baltic States such personalities as the President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus (1998–2003 and 2004–2009), the President of the Republic of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga (1999–2007) and the President of the Republic of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves (2006–2016).

The DPs, a phenomenon of the 20th century, symbolize the loss of home, the separation of families, and the fragmentation of nations as well as the

irreversible change in the social fabric of their countries. At the same time, they were instrumental for the three Baltic States in their struggle for freedom and independence, which all three of them regained in the 1990s.

The organizers of the conference invite you to (re)examine the historical context of WWII and its aftermath, delve into the experiences and testimonies of the DPs, explore the Baltic diaspora narrative in literature and arts, and discuss its cultural and historical heritage and legacy, including various memory institutions in the diaspora and home countries and their rich collections. Finally, we invite you to look into the current situation of the Baltic diaspora: its relationship with the state, the new possibilities, challenges and its future.

The conference is open to heritage preservationists, historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, art historians, political scientists, sociologists and other specialists and researchers.

Please, also note that the Baltic Heritage Network’s annual general meeting will take place during the conference in Vilnius.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Proposals on the following topics are invited:

- Historical context
- People
- Experiences and testimonies
- Baltic diaspora narrative in literature and arts
- Preservation, access and research of the cultural-historical heritage of the Baltic diaspora in three Baltic States and abroad
- Historical memory and memorialization
- Baltic diaspora in the world: political, organizational, economic, cultural and educational activities
- The Baltics and other diaspora communities
- Baltic diaspora after 1990: New possibilities and challenges
- The state and diaspora
- The length of presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

Please send your abstracts in English (up to 400 words) along with short bios by March 22, 2024, to info@balther.net

Applicants will be notified by April 5, 2024.

Conference fee:

1 day for BaltHerNet members—30€

1 day for non-BaltHerNet members—35€

3-day package for BaltHerNet members—75€

3-day package for non-BaltHerNet members—90€

<https://www.balther.net/cooperation-2/conferences/2024-eighty-years-after-1944-then-and-now/>

Partners: Adolfas Damušis Democracy Studies Center of the National Library of Lithuania, Lithuanian Research Center in Chicago, Estonian Museum Canada VEMU, Estonian National Archives, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonian National Museum, Latvian National Archives

Organizing Committee:

Valda Budreckaitė (Lithuania), Jolanta Budriūnienė (Lithuania), Dalia Cidzikaitė (Lithuania), Ilona Strumickienė (Lithuania), Birgit Kibal (Estonia), Karin Kiisk (Estonia), Piret Noorhanni (Canada, Estonia), Maarja Merivoo-Parro (Estonia), Kristina Lapienytė (USA), Inese Kalnina (Latvia)



VEMU Instagram

As of 2023, VEMU is sharing its photo archives through Instagram posts, which follow historically important events and days, as well as current topics.

Follow us at: <https://www.instagram.com/vemu.emc/>

1944. AASTA SUUR PÕGENEMINE 80

“Our Relics”: A Collection Campaign Dedicated to the 80th Anniversary of the Great Escape

Connected to the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape of 1944, VEMU is **organizing a collection campaign “Our Relics,” over the course of which we’re awaiting artefacts, photos, and archival material which were taken along in the escape from Estonia, as well as stories that accompany those belongings.**

The decision to leave the homeland was made during a very short period of time for most. The items which made their way into the suitcases and bags of refugees tell us the emotional stories of people who were forced to leave their homes behind and of the values which they held. These could have been sentimental items or documents that were important to families, everyday necessities, artworks or other belongings that hold symbolic meaning.

We also welcome items that were hidden away in homes before escaping and brought along on a later visit to the homeland or which were sent by relatives in Estonia at a later time.

We prefer original artefacts, but are also interested in photos if items are unable to be submitted to us.

The stories associated with

these items can be sent to us in written format, or as audio or video recordings. VEMU is also prepared to record audio and video interviews with people who have these belongings. The stories could include:

- Who escaped?
- Why the decision to escape was made?
- When and where the escape took place?
- What was taken along on the journey of escape and why?
- Was something hidden in homes and if so, what items were they and why?
- Describe the escape journey itself.
- What was the first destination?
- What was the new route to the final destination country?
- What was/is the importance and meaning of the item(s) that were taken along on the escape journey?
- What was/is the importance and meaning of item(s) that were hidden in homes?

Items and submissions from all diaspora Estonian communities are greatly appreciated – through these artefacts, we will begin to

depict the history of Estonians abroad in the permanent exhibit in VEMU’s new building.

We will accept items and their stories until **December 31st, 2024** at the following address:

Estonian Museum Canada/VEMU

310 Bloor St. W.

Toronto, ON M5S 1W4

Canada

info@vemu.ca

Munich Displaced. After 1945 and Without a Homeland

“Munich Displaced” is a pioneering exhibition focusing on displaced persons (DPs) that casts a spotlight on their different experiences during the immediate post-war period in Munich. This heterogeneous group of people had either fled to the German Reich or had been deported during WWII and had ended up in Munich in 1945.

Two exhibitions, which ran concurrently at the Jewish Museum Munich and the Münchner Stadtmuseum, framed the experiences and accounts of a range of DPs from very different cultural and religious backgrounds within a local historical context.



They explored the lives and fates of these people in Munich during the immediate post-war period and provided an important landmark in the history of immigration in Munich.

The Münchner Stadtmuseum's latest exhibition, "Munich Displaced. After 1945 and without a Homeland" (July 5, 2023–January 1, 2024), traced the long-forgotten fates and accounts of around one hundred thousand DPs who ended up in Munich in 1945. For the very first time, the public was able to explore the post-war history of former forced laborers, prisoners of war, political concentration camp prisoners and refugees in Munich and its vicinities through this research-led exhibition. Some of these displaced persons spent months or even years in DP camps, and this gave them an opportunity to obtain the schooling they would need for their future lives.

The National Library of Lithuania lent some of its documentary material for the exhibition.

Exhibition on Emigration Receives an Award

The Panevėžys Regional History Museum's exposition "To Stay, to Emigrate, or to Return?" was recognized the best in the country by the Lithuanian Museum Association. The exhibition analyzes one of the most pressing problems in Lithuania—emigration. It looks at the stories of the writer and philanthropist Vladas Rasčiauskas, the linguist Petras Būtėnas, and the promoter of Lithuanian identity and organizer of charity events Aleksandra Kalvėnaitė-Kazickienė, as well as the stories of today's emigrants, their motives for leaving and their life in the diaspora. Video stories of people who have lived in Panevėžys and are currently

The exhibition showed an extremely diverse community of displaced persons from Eastern Europe.

Photos by The Münchner Stadtmuseum.

building a new life abroad or have returned after emigration have been prepared especially for the exhibition. A sales manager, a businessperson and director of the Lithuanian Robotics Association, a student, an engineer and a member of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, a producer, a photographer, and an interior designer share their experiences.

Suitcases, which are among the exhibits, show the difference between the past and present emigrants. In an old suitcase, you can see relics that are important to a person who emigrated from Lithuania in the 19th or 20th century. It contains a passport, books and important photos. In the suitcase of a recent emigrant, one can see modern things, which attest to different life conditions and changing times.

The exhibition also includes suitcases and objects donated by emigrants. Not only the museum staff, but also the community contributed to the creation of the exposition. Two colors, black and white, were chosen to convey the present and the past.



Visitors are invited to vote and choose between staying, emigrating, or returning.
Photo by J. Židonis / Sekunde.lt





Reading Promotion Program for the Lithuanian Diaspora at its Midpoint

On November 14, 2023, representatives of the Reading Promotion Program for the Lithuanian Diaspora, run by the National Library of Lithuania in cooperation with the Lithuanian Institute of Literature and Folklore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, the World Lithuanian Community and the Lithuanian Publishers Association, visited Peterborough Central Library, United Kingdom.

During the event, over thirty Lithuanian books were gifted to the Library, a lecture “Lithuanian Literary Fugue” was presented, and excerpts from Lithuanian authors were read in Lithuanian and English. Julie Spence, His Majesty’s Lord Lieutenant of the County of Cambridgeshire, Nick Sandford, Mayor of Peterborough, Virginija Umbrasienė, Minister at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in London, Kitran Eastman, CEO of Peterborough Ltd., and Dr. Jolanta Budriūnienė, Director of the Documentary Heritage Research Department of the National Library of Lithuania, attended the event. The guests praised Lithuania’s gift to the local Lithuanian community. His Majesty’s Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire particularly welcomed the fact that some of the books coming to Peterborough

are translations into English, noting that these books will give a better insight into Lithuanian culture, history and people, as well as the large and active Lithuanian community living in Peterborough.

On November 28, 2023, the Reading Promotion Program event took place in Paris, at the Institut National des Langues et Cultures Orientales (INALCO). The participants were welcomed by Prof. Hélène de Penanros, Head of INALCO Lithuanian Language Section, Austė Zdančiūtė, Cultural Attaché at the Embassy of Lithuania in France, and Dr. Jolanta Budriūnienė, Director of the Documentary Heritage Research Department of the National Library of Lithuania. Dr. Dainius Vaitiekūnas, Head of the Lithuanian Studies Unit of the National Library of Lithuania, gave a talk on Lithuanian literature to the large gathering of Lithuanian language students and members of the Lithuanian community in Paris. The audience also had the opportunity to get acquainted with the latest Lithuanian fiction books. The lecture also focused on translations of Lithuanian literature into French.

Many esteemed guests attended the event.
Photo by Tony Nero.



A New Archivist for EAA as Maie Barrow Steps Down After 29 Years



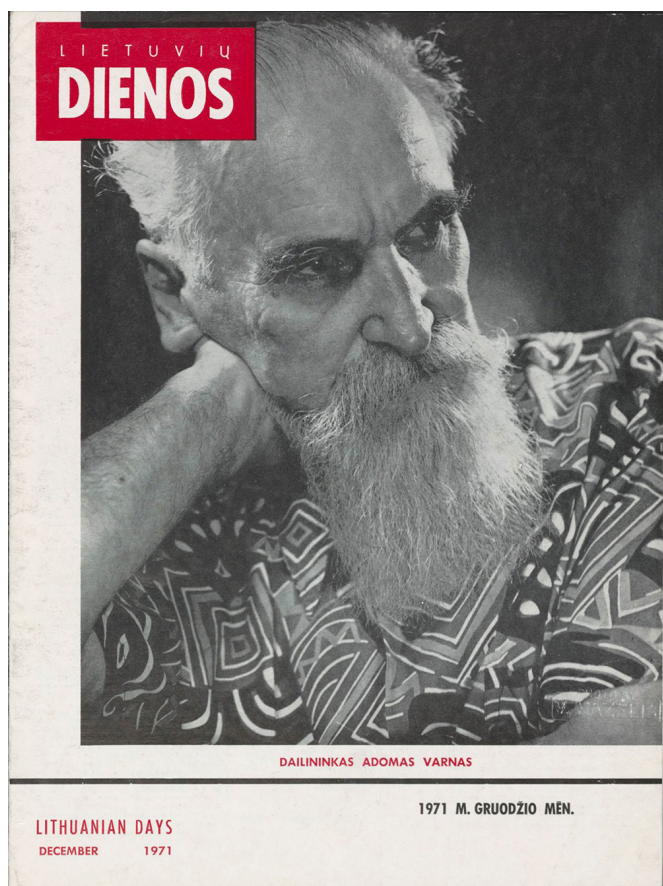
From the 15th of February 2024, the Archive will change opening hours to 10am – 3pm Thursday or by appointment.

After 29 years as an honorary archivist for the Estonian Archives in Australia, Maie Barrow has decided to retire. Maie remains on the Council of EAA and will continue to work in the Archive as a volunteer.

“We would like to thank Maie on behalf of the AESL, all Estonian Societies and organisations across Australia for all that she has achieved in the 29 years that she has been with the EAA. Over the years, Maie has grown and transformed all the material into an organised and ordered Archive for the Estonian diaspora in Australia. The material is now situated in a new purpose-built facility that opened last year in November 2023. Maie has provided support for all the people who came to her. The work has led to international plaudits for both Maie and the EAA. A Truly Incredible work!”, said Dr Juho M. Looveer, President of Council of Estonian Societies in Australia, Inc.

The new honorary archivist is Dr Terry Kass. Terry is a professional historian and author of 11 books, all based on research in original sources. Two books have won awards from the Australian Society of Archivists, whilst others have been similarly recognised. He has conducted research in state and national archives and libraries over a career of over 40 years. He has sat on advisory panels for archives in Australia. Taking up this new role gives him an opportunity to apply that experience to Estonian archives.

The Digitisation of the Lithuanian Diaspora Press Continues



Before the launch of the project Spauda.org, which aims to digitise the press of Lithuanian diaspora, the newspaper *Draugas*, published from 1909 to the present day, was digitized first. After the success of this work, the idea came about to start bringing online more newspapers published by Lithuanians in the USA. Thus, the Spauda.org project was born, with the initial goal of digitizing Lithuanian newspapers published in the USA so that they could be preserved and made available to readers online worldwide. However, the scope of the work had expanded as more and more of the Lithuanian diaspora press was gradually covered. Today, the project has gone beyond the geographical boundaries of the USA.

The project was started and managed by Dr. Jonas Daugirdas. It is carried out and supported by the Lithuanian Research Center in Chicago. The project is coordinated by Kristina Lapienytė, managing director of the LRC.

After starting with the digitization of the Lithuanian American diaspora press, it was decided to include the South American Lithuanian newspapers as well. All of them are printed in Lithuanian. The only exception is the *Lithuanian Bulletin*, which was published in English. Some of the publications had sections in English or Spanish or Portuguese.

Thus, the focus is now on South America. The Brazilian Lithuanian newspaper *Mūsų Lietuva* has already been digitized. The digitization of other newspapers published in Brazil between 1927 and 1940 has already begun. In 2024, a new initiative has started to scan the Brazilian Lithuanian newspaper *Garsas*, and the Argentinean newspapers, *Argentinos laikas* and *Argentinos lietuvų balsas*. Information is currently being sought as to whether there are archives in South America housing these newspapers.

The digitization of newsletters, magazines and newspapers published by Lithuanians in the DP camps in Germany at the end of WWII is one of the most important objectives of the project. American Lithuanian Cultural Archives, the LRC and the portal Epaveldas.lt contain about 270 such publications. The project Spauda.org has already digitized about 106 of them. Although the National Library of Lithuania has scanned some of the publications, there are about 160 publications, which originals are stored at the LRC or ALCA and which still need to be digitised.

Ramunė Kubiliūtė



VEMU Events: Winter 2024

In addition to other events, VEMU is focusing on three main themes in 2024: the 80th anniversary of the Mass Exodus, Tartu as the 2024 European Cultural Capital, and the year of cultural diversity.

As mentioned, cultural diversity will be celebrated in Estonia upon initiative from the Estonian Ministry of Culture – the unique qualities of communities and cultures which contribute to the cultural diversity of Estonia. Everyone will work together in order to showcase and help bring cultural diversity to the forefront. There will be discovery and sharing, valuing and creation, preservation and enrichment of the cultural idiosyncrasies of communities and cultures through everything that unites people: starting from experiences and myths to creations and the future in day to day life and special occasions, in research projects and events. In keeping with the theme of the year of cultural diversity, VEMU has a whole slew of events, lectures, concerts, EstoCast interviews, and more planned during the course of the year. Our latest collection campaign “My Many Lives. Being an Estonian in Multicultural Canada,” which kicked off in the end of 2023, continued into the new year. An exhibit featuring what was collected will be opened in March at Tartu College.

January tends to be a grey, dull, rather chilly month and so, to lift up spirits and brighten these days, we kicked off the new year with a film screening of the classic “The Master of Kõrboja” directed by Leida Laius. The film is based on Anton Hansen Tammsaare’s renowned novel of the same name and portrays the tragic love story of Villu, son of Katku farm, and Anna, daughter of Kõrboja farm. Villu is played by the famed Estonian actor Lembit Peterson, who we had the pleasure of speaking with and discussing the film via Zoom call post-screening.

Our language cafés or *keelekohvikud* continue to be popular and we are continuing with them bi-weekly as of the beginning of January. We have a truly great group of all ages and different ethnic backgrounds that enjoy learning about Estonian culture and language, and practicing their language skills.

Keelekohvik. Photo by: Piret Noorhani



Photo by: Kerly Ilves

Along with the language cafés, we continued with our fresh writing club from the beginning of January. Once a month, our group of enthusiastic writers meets and we discuss how to create inspiration for writing, how to go about writing autobiographies and memoirs, improve skills and more, under the guidance of seasoned writer Anne Remmel. Now that participants have tapped into their creative sides over the past few workshops, they’re focusing in on their long term writing goals and beginning to work towards them. Exciting times are ahead!

As mentioned earlier, the passing of 80 years since the Mass Exodus in 1944 from the homeland is a second major theme throughout the year. This tragic event in Estonian history left so many homeless, destroyed families, and shattered an entire nation that we are still trying to piece together. To commemorate this, we organized a mini-film festival on January 27th that resurrected the infamous EstDocs documentary festival name, and so our event was called PostEstDocs. The most recent board of EstDocs, led by Maimu Mölder (also the director of the first festival) passed the EstDocs brand on to VEMU in June of last year, along with their archives. VEMU has no plans to start organizing a full-fledged film festival since our program of events is already busy, but a small, thematically fitting mini-festival seemed appropriate in order to honour the leaders, volunteers and supporters of EstDocs who made this amazing festival happen for 15 years. We screened two doc films that told the stories of Estonians who had left their mark in Canada, the first being “Anna Kaljas: The Untold Story” (directed by Dwight Storrington, 2023) and the second “Maestro Roman Toi: Beautiful Songs I Dedicate to You” (directed by Kalli Paakspuu, 2023). Both films had a great reception and we had a fantastic turnout. We had esteemed guests such as the Honourable Speaker of the Estonian Parliament Lauri Hussar, Estonian Ambassador to Canada Margus Rava, Head of Foreign Relations and Protocol Department of Estonia Toomas Kukk attend the festival. Post-screening discussions with the film directors were led by Kristi Sau-Doughty, who was one of the influential directors of EstDocs. Ellen Valter, yet another important director of EstDocs,





Photo by: Kerly Ilves

announced that a new film festival titled “FILMIST” would be starting in March of this year.

On January 29th, VEMU partnered with Soundstreams to present a captivating discussion of Arvo Pärt’s music, titled “Arvo Pärt: Words and Music.” The event took place at Tartu College and featured Estonian-Canadian composer Omar Daniel leading a discussion along with famed author Anne Michaels and Soundstreams director Lawrence Cherney about the intersection of words and music in Pärt’s works. Live performances with counter tenor Dan Cabena and pianist Hyejin Kwon were peppered throughout the event. It was organized as a precursor to the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir concert that took place just a few days later on February 3rd, featuring esteemed conductor Tõnu Kaljuste and presented by Soundstreams. It was a great success with every single seat filled in the hall! The performance took place at the unique and very fitting St. Paul’s Basilica, which was the perfect venue for performing Pärt’s music. The repertoire featured the works of Palestrina and Omar Daniel as well. The audience was buzzing and the sold-out event was fabulous. A post-concert reception to thank the musicians, partners and sponsors was organized by VEMU and Estonian Music Week (EMW), in partnership with the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa.

To finish off the month and take us into February, we organized a virtual quiz contest in honour of the Estonian Literary Day, which lasted from January 30th to February 4th.

Since Tartu College is VEMU’s home in Toronto, we, of course, keep following that theme as well. On February

11th, we had another film screening, this time more family oriented, of “The Secret Society of Souptown”, directed by Margus Paju and inspired by Mika Keränen’s children’s books, which takes place in the Souptown neighbourhood of Tartu. The premise of the film is the attacking of a town by a mystical virus that turns all of the grown-ups into children and how four brave 10 year olds fight back to save their loved ones despite all the obstacles. The event was also livestreamed and several local Estonian School students along with families attended and tuned in. We also had an interesting post-screening discussion with author Mika Keränen himself, a Finn who has lived in Tartu for years. And so, the film screening was also a celebration of the year of cultural diversity.



Photo by: Peeter Põldre

Just a few days later on February 14th, Mihkel Tombak presented a captivating lecture about Estonian entrepreneurs, specifically what this entrepreneurship is rooted in and what the results have been. The lecture concluded the introduction of Estonia’s digital development; Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedoms exhibition on this theme could be viewed until the end of February.

To commemorate Estonia’s 106th anniversary of independence, VEMU along with Estonian Central Council in Canada, Tartu College, and Korp! Vironia presented an formal evening event on February 23rd. Entertainment was provided by young lõõtsamehed, concertina players Kert Krüspan and Mihkel Sildoja. Kert was named a Musician of the Year in 2022 in Estonia. Just as the month began with music, so it ended; Krüspan and Sildoja put on a fun concert for the local Estonian community on February 28th at Tartu College, presented by VEMU and Estonian Music Week.

And so, the cold winter weather is already coming to a close, the fresh spring is quickly approaching and along with it, an event-filled, busy season for VEMU is beginning. We look forward to seeing many of you at our events, lectures, concerts and more that we have coming up!

Photo by: Kai Kiillaspea

