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AABS Board members visit the Balzekas Museum exhibit, "No Home to Go to," an exhibit of the Baltic diaspora leaving Europe, organized with the cooperation of all three communities. From left: Giedrius Subačius, Karilė Vaitkutė, Olavi Arens, Janis Chakars, Mara Lazda, Ain Haas, Ivars Ijabs, Irena Chambers, Daiva Markelis, Kara D. Brown, Irena Blekys and Rita Janz.

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AABS congratulates 2013-2014 Award Recipients:

Aina Birnitis Dissertation Completion Fellowship in the Humanities for Latvia:

- Gita Siliņa (University of Latvia), "The Literacy of Popular Literature of Forming National Identity: Case of Vidzeme."
- Una Bergmane (Sciences Po, Paris), "French & American Reactions toward the Disintegration of the Soviet Union: The Case of the Baltic States 1989-1991" (partial award).

AABS Dissertation Grant:

- Lehti Keelman (University of Michigan), "Bachelors bridging the Baltic: The Artistic Ambitions of the Tallinn Brotherhood of the Blackheads, c.1400-1550."
- Maarja Merivoo-Parro (Tallinn University), "Exploring Ethnicity: An Oral History of Second Generation American Estonians."

Jānis Grundmanis Postgraduate Fellowship for Study in the United States:

- Iveta Kešāne (University of Kansas), "Latvian Emigrant Identity & Ideas that Shape the Latvian State."

Mudīte I. Saltups Post-graduate and Post-doctoral fellowship:

- Una Bergmane (Sciences Po, Paris), "French & American Reactions toward the Disintegration of the Soviet Union: The Case of the Baltic States 1989-1991."

Emerging Scholar Research Grant:

- Josep Soler-Carbonell (University of Tartu), "Multilingualism & the Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Baltic States. A Linguistic Landscape Approach."
- Joseph M. Ellis (Wingate University), "The Choir as Social Capital: A Case Study of the Estonian Laulupidu."

President's report: New AABS board meets in Chicago

By Māra Lazda

President

On Saturday, November 15, 2014, the newly elected board met in Chicago, hosted by President-Elect Giedrius Subačius at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The warm reception by UIC's Department of Slavic and Baltic Languages and Literatures and thoughtful discussions by board members helped offset the windy wintery weather.

The weekend provided several opportunities to consider Baltic Studies present, past, and future. On Friday, Subačius (Endowed Chair in Lithuanian Studies at UIC), Olavi Arens (Academic Executive Director), Irena Blekys (Administrative Executive Director), Ain Haas (Director-at-Large), and I met with Prof. Colleen McQuillen, Associate Director of the School of Literatures, Cultural Studies, and Linguistics to discuss the Lithuanian language program. UIC has a long history of offering courses in Lithuanian language and culture; however, in 2007 this program was cut by the university. Thanks to the efforts of Subačius, the program was restored by a partnership between Vilnius University, AABS, and UIC in 2012. Vilnius University agreed to fund the first two years of Lithuanian language study, then extended the support for one additional year, and AABS agreed to fund the teaching of one more year.

The aim of our meeting was to follow

up on our agreement, as well as to brainstorm how to foster Lithuanian and Baltic Studies at UIC more broadly. McQuillen and Subačius reported that the Lithuanian Culture classes were almost always fully enrolled, and popular among students with a range of backgrounds. Lithuanian language courses had more difficulty attracting students; however, this challenge reflects a broader trend across the nation in declining enrollments in all languages. Several concrete proposals emerged out of this discussion. The first is to reach out to graduate students, in European history in particular, who might be interested in using Lithuanian in their work. The second idea is to create internships with area businesses or government institutions that may use Lithuanian language in their work. The third proposal concerns community outreach and increasing the visibility of Lithuanian and Baltic Studies through cultural events such as Baltic music and film series, perhaps together with scholars of Polish and Russian at UIC. Such efforts would also underscore the integral and vibrant contribution of Lithuanian to the UIC campus.

Friday evening, AABS board members were invited to view the exhibit "No Home to Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons, 1944-1952," located at the impressive Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture. The founder of the museum Stanley Balzekas, Jr. first provided a fascinating insight into the history of the museum, which in-

cludes several permanent exhibits as well as a children's museum. Then the exhibit's curator, Irena Chambers, provided a tour of the remarkable exhibit that was realized through the cooperation of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian community members in the Chicago area. Artifacts that DPs ingeniously created and meticulously saved—including school books from DP elementary schools and traditional folk costumes—were accompanied by recorded personal recollections. This visit, while not an official component of the board meeting, was an appropriate beginning to the weekend, as it emphasized both the significance of cooperation among Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians, as well as the foundation of AABS by scholars with roots in the Baltic exile community. We are grateful to Balzekas, Chambers, the museum staff, and Dace Kezbers for making this visit possible.

Back on the UIC campus Saturday, board members reviewed the work of AABS during the past year. Detailed information may be found in the individual reports in these pages. Some highlights to mention briefly here include the discussions concerning the *Journal of Baltic Studies* contract with Routledge. Thanks to negotiations led by then-president Ain Haas, the journal's contract was renewed for a five-year term. We were also happy to learn that the *Journal of Baltic Studies* will soon be included in the online academic journal database JStor, possibly in summer 2015, which will considerably increase access to the journal. As you may read in the treasurer's report by Merike Henneman, the financial situation of AABS is stable. At the end of this year, AABS received a gift from the estate of Dr. Aina Galējs, which will be invested to support future Baltic Programs.

As its founding mission, AABS seeks to support Baltic scholarship. The Yale Conference on Baltic and Scandinavian Studies in March 2014 brought together more than 450 participants from North America, the Baltic States, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Turkey, Israel, Japan, and Australia, to name a few. It was particularly exciting to see the growing group of graduate students in Baltic Studies; their networking luncheon was



Board members meet with Associate Director of the School of Literatures, Cultural Studies & Linguistics at UIC. From the right: Giedrius Subačius, Mara Lazda, Colleen McQuillen, Ain Haas, Irena Blekys, Olavi Arens.

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News from American Council of Learned Societies

By Olavi Arens

Academic Executive Director

The ACLS held its annual fall meeting of member societies' administrative officers Oct. 30-Nov. 2, 2014 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Olavi Arens, the Academic Executive Director attended.

The major theme of the meeting was "How Can Learned Societies Impact the Landscape in which their Members Work?" Specific sessions were conducted to discuss different aspects of the general theme. The first involved a discussion of definitions of scholarship. It was recognized that definitions needed to evolve beyond the publication of traditional scholarly articles and books to include activity in the realm of public history like: public advocacy, documentaries, digital mapping, etc. Learned societies, after all, legitimize the definition and assessment of scholarship. They need to participate in the ongoing debate on the issue taking place at colleges and universities.

A second topic discussed was the role of societies in assessing teaching and learning. Societies need to be involved with universities in helping define assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning and how this assessment relates to questions of tenure. Societies also need to help prepare future faculty to current expectations in the field of teaching



The ACLS held its annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. | Wikipedia Commons

and the assessment methods that are carried out at universities.

The third topic of discussion under the general theme centered on learned societies and public controversies. A number of larger societies are currently involved in debates on resolutions that some members wish the association should adopt on current international or domestic political issues. The AABS was founded as a scholarly organization and, from the beginning, has avoided the introduction of political issues at its membership meetings. Representatives of a number of other small societies indicated to me that they too had similar policies and understandings in place and avoided political issues at membership meetings.

Other issues covered at the meeting

included the on-going topic of census data collected in 2013. An analysis of the data by an outside consultant has been completed but has not yet been circulated among members. The collection of census data from member societies will apparently become an annual activity.

Finally, a discussion was conducted on employment prospects. It was recognized that no longer will receipt of a Ph.D. necessarily lead to an academic career of university teaching. Graduate students in the future need to be mentored to consider non-academic jobs as well as academic ones. As this is happening, societies need to welcome into membership persons in non-academic employment as well as those in academic positions.

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President's report *continued*

attended by more than 40 students. The AABS featured speaker was Prof. Mordechai Zalkin (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), who enriched the conference with his presentation, "Jews in Interwar Lithuanian Society: Between Identity, Culture, and Image." AABS also awarded several grants to support the work of graduate students and junior scholars.

Achievements like these—the cooperation with UIC, the partnership with an international press, the growth and globalization of AABS membership—necessitated a discussion about the future of our organization. In the afternoon, the board turned its attention to considering the mission of AABS in the shifting geopolitical and academic environments. What does it mean to advance Baltic Studies? How do we meet the needs of all mem-

bers, who are diverse in location, interest and background? Some of our most dedicated members are not affiliated with an academic institution, but come from the Baltic communities and remain important supporters of Baltic Studies. How do we respond to cuts in funding for research in the Baltic Studies?

Three resolutions emerged out of this discussion. First, to help build the visibility of Baltic scholarship, AABS will co-sponsor panels at conferences of similar regional organizations such as the German Studies Association, Association for Jewish Studies, Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, and the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies. Second, to recognize both funding shortages as well as the variety of forms that contributions to the advancement of Baltic Studies may take, the current board hopes

to establish a grant that would support scholars, artists, and community members at all levels of their careers. Further, this grant would recognize that contributions to Baltic Studies may come in many forms—books, articles, performances, or film to name a few. Third, to continue to strengthen our ties to Baltic communities, we hope to increase our communication about recent developments in the organization through traditional printed means such as the newsletter and the Journal, as well as the expanding website found at www.aabs-balticstudies.org/.

This conversation is an ongoing one, and we welcome suggestions from members on these and other topics concerning the future of Baltic Studies. Please send your suggestions to Mara Lazda Mara.Lazda@bcc.cuny.edu; or the Executive Office iblekys.aabs@gmail.com.

Back to the Ivy League for 2016 AABS Conference

By Jānis Chakars

Vice President for Conferences

Following a successful joint conference with the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies at Yale University in 2014, AABS will be going Ivy again at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia from May 26-28, 2016.

The brainchild of Benjamin Franklin, UPenn claims status as the oldest university in the United States, but its pedigree includes Baltic studies as well. Among its many accomplished faculty was Alfred Senn, who served as chair of the Department of Balto-Slavic Studies from 1947-1965 and is renowned for his work on Lithuania. The UPenn library contains a strong Baltic collection, especially regarding Lithuania and including items belonging to one of the country's founding fathers, Jurgis Šaulys. Notable alumni include recent AABS president Vejas Liulevicius, European MP from Latvia Krišjānis Kariņš, and the current president of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves. Indeed, following our invitation, President Ilves has expressed strong interest in serving as the keynote speaker of the conference and we look forward to his participation with great enthusiasm, should his schedule permit it.

Conferences are important to members for providing experiences that can-

not be gained by other means. This, of course, includes exchange of the freshest ideas and information through papers presented, but it must include more.

A key benefit of any scholarly meeting comes from the networking and relationships that are formed on site. To promote the development of a community of Baltic scholars, we hope to boost the intensity and value of these connections by organizing forums that stimulate research collaboration, new publications, and scholar-to-scholar learning.

While we are still in the early stages of planning events that are both edifying and fun, we can already report some exciting plans that are emerging for the conference. We are planning to assemble a rich cultural program of music, poetry, and the arts. We hope to bring a museum exhibit or two as well. All ideas are still on the table and the conference chair welcomes the suggestions of members.

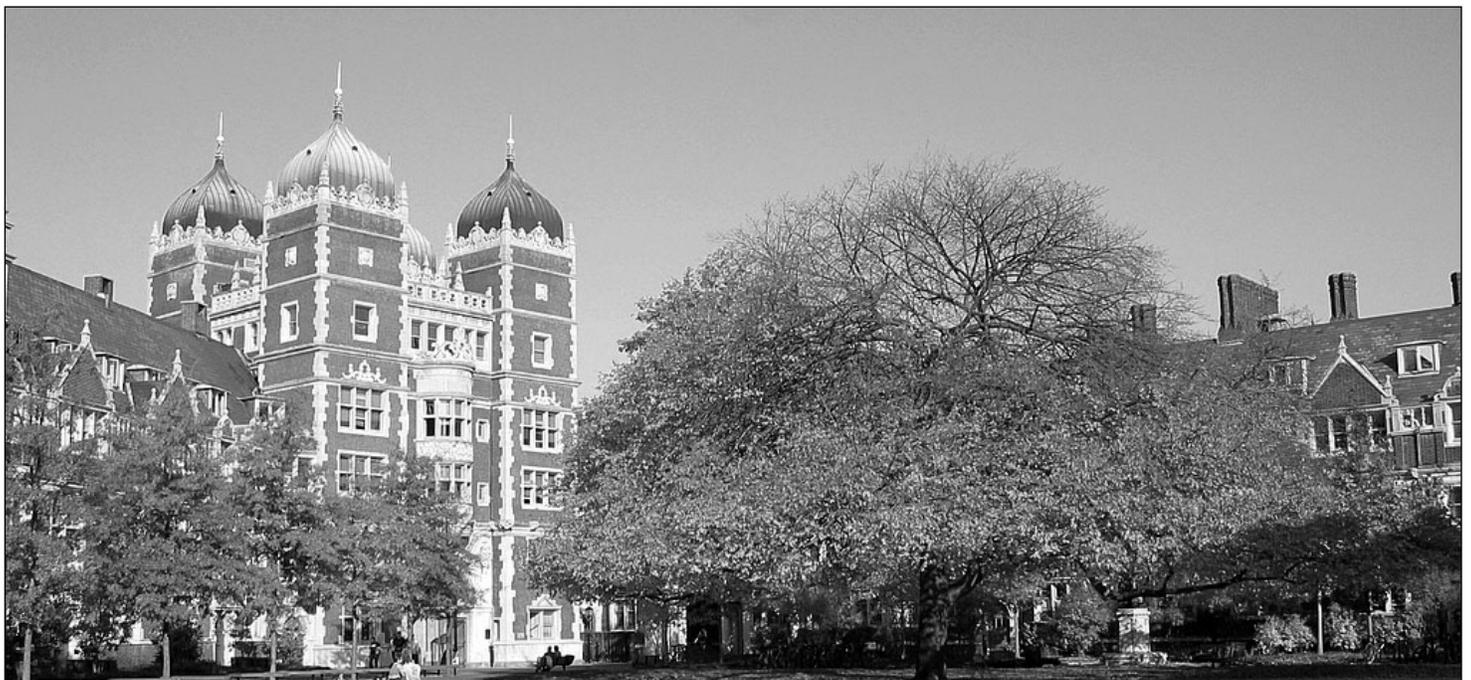
Lastly, a conference should also be affordable. Our attendees travel great distances and we know that AABS is not the only conference in which they may wish to participate. We are happy that those registering for the AABS 2016 conference will have the option of staying in comfortable dormitories (private bedroom, bathroom shared in a small suite) for a fraction of typical conference accommodation costs. Hotel rooms will be also

available for those who wish more conventional comforts. We are also grateful for the assistance and cooperation of the University's Slavics Department and in particular, Professor Kevin Platt.

In order to stage the best possible conferences, AABS provides more in programming and organization than it can cover by registration fees alone. This conference will be no different. Therefore, we urge not only your participation, but welcome your ideas as well as your donations. Philadelphia is a fascinating, attractive, and historic city. It is a convenient travel destination. We will be at one of America's most prestigious universities. We promise an exciting program for the Memorial Day weekend conference, but we will need your help. Please consider lending your assistance upon receiving this year's Christmas appeal letter from the AABS executive office or making a donation at any time to AABS's operating expenses marked for the 2016 conference.

Questions about the conference can be directed to Janis Chakars at aabs2016@gmail.com. You can also follow us on Twitter ([@balticstudies](https://twitter.com/balticstudies)) and on Facebook for updates about the conference, along with other information about Baltic studies. We look forward to seeing you in the City of Brotherly Love.

chakarsj@gmail.com



The 2016 AABS Conference will be held at University of Pennsylvania May 26-28. | Wikipedia Commons

Treasurer's report on Fiscal Year 2014

By Merike Henneman

MBA, CPA

Review of 2014

The Association's financial position improved significantly in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014. Our invested assets produced a net return (income and capital gains) of \$272,489.67, almost tripling our budgeted investment return of \$94,451 and enabling us to fund our program initiatives, as well as grow our net assets by \$288,702, from \$2,367,673 to \$2,656,375.

Other sources of revenue were membership dues, donations, and the Journal of Baltic Studies (JBS). Total membership dues and donations of \$18,045 fell short of budget target of \$37,000 by \$18,955, or 51 percent. JBS revenue of \$22,200 exceeded budget by \$1,700, or 8.3 percent.

Total expenses and allocations of \$109,070 were considerably below the budgeted total of \$158,257. The association's program, management, and fundraising expenses and allocations

were all lower than forecasted. Management expense reduction was related primarily to the lower cost of executive office administration. Savings in program allocations came about because certain grants and donations budgeted for the 2014 fiscal year will be made in 2015 fiscal year.

2015 budget

Total non-investment revenue and support for the fiscal year ending 30 June 2015 is budgeted to total \$53,900. The slight increase relative to last year's actual total non-investment revenue and support of \$52,197 is attributable to increased donations and membership dues.

Investment returns (dividends and capital gains) are budgeted to be \$105,351. This figure represents an assumed 4 percent annual return on our beginning-of-year investment assets, below actual investment returns of 11.5 percent last year and 6.1 percent in the prior year, but consistent with current market expectations. The association has adopted a target

investment allocation mix of 50 percent bonds and 50 percent stocks. As of June 30, 2014, 48.49 percent of our portfolio was invested in bonds, and 51.51 percent was invested in stocks.

Total expenses and allocations are budgeted at \$158,920, representing an increase of 45.7 percent compared to last year's actual expenses and allocations of \$109,070. The increase is attributable primarily to budgeted grants, prizes, and donations, which increased to \$78,000 in fiscal 2015 from \$32,775 in fiscal 2014.

Fiscal year 2015 is expected to be a breakeven year, with a marginal budgeted net increase in assets of \$331.

Other matters

An independent auditor conducted a full audit of the association's financial statements for the 2014 fiscal year, and the result was favorable. The auditor's opinion was unqualified; our financial statements "present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Association."

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF BALTIC STUDIES	FYE June 2014		FYE June 2015	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Total revenue and support	158,951	327,783	159,251	0
Expenses				
Program				
<i>Baltic Studies Newsletter</i>	4,200	3,509	4,200	
<i>Conference</i>	13,000	9,491		
<i>Journal of Baltic Studies</i>	19,200	13,000	19,500	
<i>Grants, prizes, and donations</i>	65,000	32,775	78,000	
<i>Other program expenses</i>	3,990	3,586	3,990	
Total program expenses	105,390	62,361	105,690	
ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF BALTIC STUDIES				
Management				
Total management expenses	49,367	44,166	50,230	
Fundraising				
Total fundraising expenses	3,500	2,542	3,000	
Total expenses	158,257	109,070	158,920	0
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	694	218,714	331	0

You Are Here: A personal essay

By Daiva Markelis

Vice President for Publications

I love being on the AABS board as vice-president of publications. I get to read a lot of interesting books on Baltic history, politics, and culture for the biennial award. Along with other board members, I help plan the conferences.

I read the following piece for the literature evening at Yale last March. It's a personal essay written in the weirdly intimate, yet somewhat distancing, second person, and deals with my first trip to Estonia for the 2013 Baltic Studies in Europe Conference.

You Are Here

You've always loved travelling solo, reveling in the possibility of discovering what can't be discerned in the company of a good friend, a lover, a husband. Alone, you stop to look at the façade of a building that reveals nothing much at first, then see how its wrought iron balcony morphs into a series of musical symbols—graceful treble clefs, bold and manly double bar-lines. You glimpse a heavy wooden door with artful graffiti and a line from your favorite Rilke poem: *Du bist nicht näher an Gott als wir; wir sind ihm alle weit.*

Because you've carried this image of yourself as the brave and solitary traveler, you're surprised to find yourself anxious and, worse, conspicuous, maneuvering the winding cobble-stoned streets of this medieval city as gracelessly as a drunk. The moose dumplings you had for dinner last night were a mistake. And you're wearing the wrong shoes. Black patent leather sandals. Finnish Comfort, made in Germany. Worst of all, you're the only person sans companion in this crowded Old Town platz of middle-aged couples, roving clean-cut teenagers, and orderly Japanese tourists. You detect pity in the eyes of the young men in medieval-style outfits and comely women dressed as milkmaids handing out flyers for authentic Estonian restaurants.

Worst of all is the fact that you're lost. You entered the Old Town on Viru Street. You remember the toothless woman who tried to sell you mittens. You remember the pink and white McDonalds. You avoided the golden arches, fearing that prolonged



'Medieval McDonalds' in Tallinn. Steve Jurvetson | Flickr

viewing would contaminate your appreciation of the authentic. You followed the signs to Raekoja Plats, admired the Town Hall with its famous spire, destroyed in a Soviet air raid in the 1940s and later rebuilt to its Renaissance splendor. You stubbed your toe. When you tried to retrace your steps back to the hotel for your ugly but comfortable Birkenstock clogs, the tributary street leading into Viru had disappeared.

And now you are here—again—by the faded white umbrella advertising Saku beer. You sit down at an empty picnic table. You would like a beer but don't drink anymore. Coffee will irritate your sensitive stomach. You ask a waiter who's dressed as the town crier for a ginger ale but there is no ginger ale. You ask for a 7-Up, but there is no 7-Up.

"We do have Sprite," he says.

You feel tempted to ask why he's speaking in perfect English and not medieval Low German but that would be rude, so you sip your tepid beverage and retrieve the crumpled map you kept hidden at the bottom of your over-sized purse.

You were never the kind of woman who carried a map.

As you heave your tired body from the bench and wend your way to St. Nicholas Church, you remind yourself you travel solo all the time: to visit friends, to present papers at academic conferences. You're fond of conferences. You like how time is neatly parceled out: panel on collective identity, panel on Baltic representations, panel on history and memory, short break

Continued on pg. 7

for lunch, panel on deportation narratives, panel on trauma and displacement, panel on Baltic exile, dinner with colleagues. The next day, more history, more memory, more displacement, more deportations, more exile, more trauma.

You enter St. Nicholas, a Gothic beauty partially destroyed by the Soviets during the Second World War. It's now an art museum specializing in religious works of art: splendid altarpieces, medieval burial slabs, silver chalices. The museum's most famous work is a large fragment of the 15th century painting *Danse Macabre*. The dancing skeletons do not put a damper on your day; they look more sprightly than the stiff, well-fed kings and cardinals they're leading to the grave. You are partial to the skeleton on the right, the one wearing a turban and clutching an oboe.

As a young woman, you felt self-conscious in museums. Because you feared being bourgeois, you dismissed entire periods and schools of art. The Renaissance was boring; rococo, frivolous. Your greatest scorn was reserved for the Realists, so fake in their futile attempts at the accurate. You loved the prehistoric. You loved African carvings. You loved Picasso and Jackson Pollock and even Ivan Albright: *That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do*.

You were an exhibit yourself back then with your bright pink peasant blouse and too tight jeans and silver high-heeled sandals.

There are fewer pages, town criers, and milkmaids the further you get from the center of town, fewer signs for genuine Baltic amber, fewer stores selling Viking dolls and Tallinn refrigerator magnets and the fluffy white and black sheep figurines made of wood and wool that have inexplicably become a symbol of the city.

You toddle uphill towards Toompea, the limestone hill that houses parliament and a couple of famous churches. A blister's forming on the side of your foot. You wonder how you'll continue when you notice for the first time the slightly older versions of yourself marching, albeit slowly, to their own middle-aged rhythms, to the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, or maybe to the church of St. Mary the Virgin, whose bell tower provides a panoramic view of the city and its red medieval roof-

tops, or maybe even to Kiek in de Kok, the old artillery tower with its series of linked underground tunnels.

You have to see the Nevsky. Every guidebook tells you this.

You are prepared to dislike this ostentatious house of God, built in 1900 to remind the unruly Estonian Lutherans of their Russian Orthodox rulers, but the old woman wearing a babushka asking for money reminds you of the old women at the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius climbing the stairs on their knees to touch the miraculous golden Madonna. Vilnius—a city close to your heart, different from Tallinn, greener, with its beckoning courtyards filled with potted plants. Sadder, too, with its lone remaining synagogue, its dilapidated buildings, its shady bars.

You drop the equivalent of a dollar into the woman's sad little bowl. Her look of awe suggests you are Jesus himself, coming to inspect the rental properties.

Inside, cedar and frankincense permeate the air, rising to the ceiling. A melody unmoored from the tyranny of instruments lures you to its source at the eastern end of the church—an unseen stereo.

A bearded priest in a long black robe faces the altar. Behind him, several rows of women wearing headscarves make the sign of the cross and bow towards the sanctuary. The younger women touch the ground with their fingers. Up and down, up and down, like participants in a particularly uncoordinated aerobics class. You stare at the sea of cheap polyester skirts. You feel superior in your linen Eileen Fischer dress, your leather Coach hobo bag.

You wish you had that kind of faith.

You mutter a brief prayer for your small unruly soul and head for the gift shop. You walk up to the babushkaed cashier to plunk down your shiny euros for the Byzantine CD, but she ignores you. She is facing the direction of the altar, bowing. Up and down. Up and down.

It's still light outside; nine o'clock according to your watch. You're near the Land of the Midnight Sun. You wonder about the prevalence of hypomania in the Baltics, whether it's part of your genetic inheritance. You can't sleep in anything

less than total darkness. Sometimes you can't sleep at all.

As you tramp towards St. Mary's, a young woman in tight jeans and low-cut blouse appears like a vision at your side, then slowly passes you up. Her long blonde hair drapes her pale white shoulders like a ragged silk veil. But the blouse—the blouse is too much.

You were fifteen when your mother warned you about the dangers of décolletage. You questioned her taste in clothes, movies, boyfriends, cars.

"You think I was never young," she said in English. "You think I'm over the top."

"You don't even know the idiom," you answered. "It's over the *hill*."

You take a deep breath. You've reached the top of the hill. St. Mary's cathedral stands small and plain and unobtrusive. Originally Roman Catholic, it's now the seat of local Lutheran power. You want to go inside, but the door is locked. Three teenaged boys drinking from a bottle of Koch Vol Vodka sit on the edge of the crumbling stone wall. You want to tell them to be careful, the fall is rocky and steep, though you're far from the ledge and can't see below.

A middle-aged woman in sneakers and sundress snaps photos of the city's red rooftops with her expensive camera.

But the girl—the girl has disappeared.

You wonder whether you're hallucinating. Somewhere, perhaps in your head, the fourth movement of Sibelius' Second Symphony is playing, the wild finale, the culmination of all that fragmentary tension in one heroic climax. You gaze out onto the city below you, the remnants of thick medieval gates, the hint of grey blue harbor, Finland on the other side. Stars appear in the sky, forming a map of places you want to visit.

The boys leave.

The woman leaves.

But you—you're still here.

You stand alone in the darkness, then slowly make your way down, retracing your steps—church, church, winding alley, Raekoja Platz, Viru, nameless street, hotel—trying not to stub your toe in the transfigured night.



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'Nation building' authors honored



Authors David E. McNabb and Gundars Ķeniņš-King celebrate their newest work. | Guntis Šmidchens

By Indra Ekmanis
Newsletter Editor

Professors emeritus Gundars Ķeniņš-King and David E. McNabb celebrated their recently published book, *Nation-building in the Baltic States: Transforming Governance, Social Welfare, and Security in Northern Europe* from CRC Press of Taylor & Francis, in Seattle September 2014.

The book maps out the transition from Soviet vassals to modern European states for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It capitalizes on the expertise of its authors, both of whom have spent considerable time in the Baltic region.

Ķeniņš-King was the founding president of AABS, and was also instrumental in bringing educational opportunities and business acumen to the newly independent Latvian state in the 1990s. Ķeniņš-King developed Latvia's first MBA program, working with Riga Technical University and University of New York at Buffalo to found Riga Business School. In 2006, he was awarded the Latvian Three Star Order by President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. According to the President's press release, "Gundars Ķeniņš-King has played an invaluable role in explaining the key principles of free market and capitalism and the related ethical considerations behind them to students, teaching staff and society."

Ķeniņš-King co-author, David McNabb, became interested in the

Baltic economic and political transition as a result of his close collaboration with Ķeniņš-King. While working elsewhere in Europe, McNabb accepted an invitation from Ķeniņš-King to visit Riga, Latvia. McNabb says he fell in love with the Baltic States, and consequently became a visiting professor at the Stockholm School of Economics-Riga.

McNabb has also filled a similar role at the American University in Bulgaria, University of Maryland University College-Europe, and the University of Washington-Tacoma. A current adjunct professor at Olympic College, McNabb has published eight books and nearly 100 articles and papers.

Ķeniņš-King and McNabb's collaboration in *Nation-building in the Baltic States* spans a 20-year research period. It is a forthright and critical analysis of both the successes and failures of the post-Soviet transition in the region.

The authors home in on economic, social and political indicators of change, unapologetic in their assessments, particularly in regard to policy errors and lingering challenges. Importantly, the work does not assess the distinct countries as a single unit, nor do they equate failings in a single area with the failing of the state. Instead, they present a nuanced analysis that sets a baseline, but leaves room for further study of the issues and the state of Baltic development.

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Anna Birnitis Fellow: The literacy of popular literature

By Gita Siliņa

PhD Candidate | University of Latvia

This thesis aims to examine the interaction between popular literature and the Latvian national identity. This will be done by identifying the most important nodes and the possible explanations of the influence regarding the interaction process between the formation of a Latvian national identity and popular literature, which has been one of the most popular genres among readers over the last decades, as well as an obvious phenomenon of the readers set out by consumers and the media market that was established in Latvia after independence (1991). Today, expressions of popular culture and its meanings are becoming increasingly more topical among Latvian researchers of communication, culture, and literature. Nevertheless, the role of this field within the processes of society functioning is still an issue that is barely touched upon. Only some research has viewed it in a broader theoretical and empirical context. The role of popular literature in the broader field of Latvian literature is a marginal topic, according to scholar of Latvian literature Raimonds Briedis. At the same time, popular literature is a significant part of everyday life for readers.

The conceptual framework of this study is derived from the approach that examines the influence of mass media and attempts to understand the changes in culture in Britain. This approach was founded in the 1950s and 1960s by Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson, and Raymond Williams. The theoretical ground of the research is based on the concepts of popular literature, literacy, national identity and social memory. It is an interdisciplinary work.

James Potter stresses, “media literacy is a perspective from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. We build our perspective from knowledge structures.” Mass media, including books, create social memory and national identity.

David Morley stresses that the stories created in the present about the past is one of the sources for the creation of identity. This idea of media as important creators of identity and memory corresponds to the explanation Benedict Anderson, a theoretician of nationalism, gives for the concept of imagined community, where he stresses three interdependent concepts: published language, common conscience of nation, and the nation-state. Thus the media can be seen to possess the role of creating or “imagining” a common conscience of a particular group.

Culture, history, and media researcher Vita Zelče points out that the reading of fiction as a leisure activity in Latvia was started a long time ago. In the 19th century “in the countryside, there was a deep-rooted tradition to read books together while doing handicraft or other evening crafts. That is, one was reading loudly for others and the others were listening and experiencing the lives of characters.”

The novels that respondents admitted to be their favorite have common features; they are the closest, the best understandable – they have been accepted as their “own”, and, crucially they “travel” from one generation to the next. They have taken a stable place in the opinions and experience of these people.

In the present case, popular literature has been analysed as the carrier of meaning. In the process of forming community members’ individual attitudes towards themselves and other members of the community, the concepts, myths, meanings, attitudes, opinions drawn in the literature – the product of popular culture – could be thought of as “glue” or, alternatively, “disconnecting material,” thus reviewing the interaction of national identity to the meanings obtained from the popular literature. What promotes the endurance of the popularity of certain novels in the readers’ community of Latvia? What is the social importance of these novels and what is their role in social memory? What is



Anna Birnitis fellow Gita Siliņa

the role of public and personal libraries in everyday life and life stories of the people in Vidzeme?

In my research I focus on reading-time when popular literature meets everyday life. To better understand this opinions, we need to understand readers. Literature and culture researcher Scott McCracken addresses issues of popular literature and questions the status of public and personal everyday situations and how popular texts are disseminated. A variety of media is involved in this process, including theater, television, film, and digital forms. What is really going on at the time of reading a popular novel – how is the reader's personal experiences related to this process and how do they link to forms of everyday life experiences?

Literature and communication researcher Andrew Piper shows that we have no idea what happens when people are reading books, but it is extremely important to have a reflective process. People read out loud, quiet, linear, careless, careful, distracted, focused, alone, and with someone, with or without a pencil, sitting, standing, walking, reclining, lying down, in candle light, sunlight or even moonlight. The researcher believes that reading books is the mental discipline and one of the more effective forms of mental escape. Piper argues that

Continued on pg.11

Anna Birnitis Fellow continued

reading is social process.

The internet has already had a major impact on how people find and access information, and now the rising popularity of e-books is helping transform peoples reading habits. In this changing landscape, many people (who read books) are trying to adjust their resources to these new realities. Many institutions are eager to expand personal and public libraries digital resources, but at the same time to keep print books as important resources.

Within my research, I combine various methods, including surveys, ethnographic research, in-depth interviews with experts in literature, mass media, socioantropology and culture fields in Latvia. In order to obtain data about the

reading habits of popular novels and literacy of literature, I carried out a survey of readers by distributing questionnaires in several libraries of the Vidzeme region – Madonas district, Cēsis district, and Valmieras district.

There is a need to work with very subtle data that requires a lot of careful research and immersion. With the help of Aina Birnitis fellowship, I will be able to finish the thesis. I have divided my plan into some basic tasks: summarize the analyses of the experts` interviews; summarize the statistical data from the libraries; analyze the data from the survey; realize the final version of the last section of contextual background; and offer the result, conclusion and novelty.

Member News

Amanda Swain is now Associate Director of the Humanities Commons at the University of California Irvine, where she manages research communities, collaborative projects and public engagement. She received her PhD in History from the University of Washington in 2013. Her most recent publication is "From the Big Screen to the Streets of Kaunas: Youth Cultural Practices and Communist Party Discourse in Soviet Lithuania" in *Cahiers du Monde Russe*.

Erick Reis Godliauskas Zen recently published a book based on his PhD research in which he investigates the forms of organization and the relation among the Lithuanian communities rooted in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Title: *Identidade em Conflito. A imigração lituana na Argentina, no Brasil e no Uruguai 1920 - 1950*. [Identity in Conflict. The Lithuanian immigration in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay 1920 - 1955]. EdUFSCar Press. 2014. <http://www.editora.ufscar.br/>

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