

# Baltic Fund News

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## Summer 2002

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### Celebrating the Baltic Endowment

On Sunday evening, October 6, 2002, University of Washington's President Richard McCormick will host a reception thanking all donors to the Baltic Studies Program. Invitations will be sent in early autumn. Please save the date, and join faculty, administrators, students and our off-campus community at this festive event!

Five years ago, the Committee for the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington set out on an ambitious quest: To raise \$775,000 in donations to the UW Baltic Studies Program's endowment. Today, the UW is proud to announce that this milestone has been reached, ensuring that the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian languages will be taught in perpetuity at the UW.

The Department of Scandinavian Studies and the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Center in the Jackson School of International Studies thank our generous supporters and friends.

### Eighth Year of Baltic Studies at the UW

As summer warms up in Seattle, we look back to a year of exciting achievements and events. Two Baltic dissertations were defended in Spring of 2002:



Kristin Kuutma, the Program's Estonian language Teaching Assistant in 1998-2001, successfully defended her dissertation, which compares two works of literature: The first non-religious book published in the Sami language, and an epic poem recorded in the Seto language in Southeastern Estonia. This fall, she will join the Estonian Folklore Archives in Tartu as a researcher.



Robert Smurr wrote a groundbreaking dissertation about the history of the Estonian environmental movement. The work digs deeply in historical documents written in Estonian, German and Russian over the past two centuries. Smurr first studied Estonian at the UW in 1995, and lived in Estonia for two years while doing archival research and recording oral history. He is now teaching history at Evergreen State College.

Two Master's degrees were awarded in 2002. Glenn Kranking completed his MA thesis about Swedish foreign policy toward the Baltic countries during and after World War II. Anastasija Bitiukova, the program's Lithuanian language Teaching Assistant (1999-2001), wrote her MA thesis about "The Integration of the Baltic States into the European Political Economy."

Three students completed Bachelor's degrees majoring in Scandinavian Area Studies with a Baltic Specialization. Their senior essays covered a variety of topics: **Imants Holmquist** wrote about Latvia's relations to the European Union; **Marisa Hougardy** studied Latvian death and burial traditions in Latvia and the USA; **Aaron Eglitis** explored the life and work of Latvia's President Vaira Vīķe Freiberga.

As in previous years, students travelled to the Baltic countries on exchanges: **Elizabeth Celms** and **Rachel Erland** studied at the University of Latvia in Riga. **Katarina Vatne** traveled to Kaunas, Lithuania, to study at Vytautas Magnus University. **Glenn Kranking** spent the past year at Tartu University. In addition to taking courses in Estonian language and history, Kranking sang in the University Men's Choir which toured Estonia with a series of concerts.

Research trips to the Baltic will continue in the next academic year. **Rachelle Harrison** (BA, 2001) received a Fulbright Fellowship to expand her undergraduate thesis research about Deaf sign language in Latvia. **Glenn Kranking** (MA, 2002) entered the Tartu University History Department's graduate program, where he will study Swedish-language periodicals published in Estonia under Soviet rule.

Photographs and essays about student exchanges and research trips appear on the website, "Baltic Encounters," created as a class project by **Marita Graube**. Visit <http://depts.washington.edu/baltic/encounters.html> for a colorful view of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania through the eyes of UW students!

An exciting new chapter in academic exchanges will open next year, when the UW School of Engineering's Valle Exchange Program will expand from Scandinavia into Estonia. Beginning with a visit to Seattle in fall of 2002 by Estonian professor **Ülo Mander**, the UW will annually exchange students and

faculty with Tartu University.

## Teaching about the Baltic at the UW

As many readers of the *Baltic Fund News* know, the University of Washington is the only university in North America to offer language instruction in all three national languages of the Baltic States: Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. Language courses, currently taught by Ulla Vanhatalo (Estonian), Guntis Šmidchens (Latvian), and Rimas Žilinskas (Lithuanian), are the core of the Baltic Studies Program.

Since 1994, language courses have been supplemented by other courses taught in English: SCAND 344, "The Baltic States and Scandinavia," is a broad survey of Baltic history since the Viking Age. SCAND 345, "Baltic Cultures," presents masterpieces of Baltic literature, art and music. SCAND 454, "Baltic History," examines 20<sup>th</sup> century history in depth, while SCAND 455, "Baltic States since 1991," introduces Baltic politics, society and culture since the three countries regained independence a decade ago.

Other courses also include Baltic materials: Prof. Marianne Stecher Hansen's course, "War Stories: The Nordic Baltic Region and World War II" discusses works by Agate Nesaule, Birutė Baltrušaitytė and Dalia Grinkevičiūtė. Prof. Christine Ingebritsen's "Scandinavia in World Affairs" devotes a significant portion of the course to Scandinavian-Baltic relations.

Doctoral student Jūra Avižienis taught Lithuanian Language from 1996 to 1999. Since then, she has taught other courses in the Comparative Literature Department. In one of her courses, "Defining Narratives," students read short stories by numerous authors, among them Cita Čepaitė's "Malva's story," where the experiences of an elderly Lithuanian woman confined to a wheelchair are framed by the Lithuanian independence movement of the late 1980's. In another course, "Gender and Narrative at Century's End," the class read Emil Tōde's *Border State* to examine Baltic perceptions of heading west to rejoin the "real" Europe.

Undergraduate students taking these and other courses with Baltic content may receive either a Minor in Baltic Studies, or a Major in Scandinavian Area Studies, with a specialization in any one of the Nordic or Baltic countries. Undergraduate majors must also complete two years of language instruction and write a senior essay on a topic related to Baltic history, culture or politics.

## On the Eve of NATO Enlargement

It is essential that American policies and issues be presented and debated from a variety of perspectives, to ensure that decisions are based on a thorough knowledge of facts and interpretations. The Second Conference on NATO Enlargement in the Baltic Region, organized by the University of Washington on November 29-30, 2001, provided a forum for such discussion.

Presentations at times converged, and at times diverged dramatically from papers at the first UW conference on NATO enlargement and the Baltic, held in May of 1997. Unlike 1997, both supporters and opponents of NATO enlargement agreed that in November of 2002, NATO is likely to invite Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to become members. As in 1997, however, they disagreed on the consequences of enlargement, and on the role NATO should play after the Cold War.



Baltic Embassy representatives: Eerik Marme, Aivis Ronis, Vygaudas Ušackas.

Prof. Christopher Jones, organizer of the conference, brought together diverse speakers: Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian government representatives responded to opponents of NATO enlargement. Scholars of European politics pondered the place of the Baltic countries on the future map of Europe, and the place of current events in political science theories. Students, faculty and local community members in the audience added incisive questions and comments.



Keynote speaker Robert Hunter, Former US Representative to NATO, remarked about the Baltic ambassadors: "Listen to these three guys! What do they sound like? -- They sound like NATO allies. Stability has come to Europe because the West has taken steps to stabilize it. If we're serious about security, we've got to get this right..."

The conference organizers aim to publish the conference papers in the near future.

## 2001 Conference Participants:

Zoltan Barany, (University of Texas); Ted Galen Carpenter (Cato Institute); Herbert Ellison (University of Washington); Robert Hunter (Former US Representative to NATO; RAND Corporation); James Huntley (Council for a Community of Democracies); Christine Ingebritsen (University of Washington); Christopher Jones (University of Washington); Eerik Marme (Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Estonia to the USA); Jack Mendelsohn (Lawyers Alliance for World Security); Väino Reinart (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Aivis Ronis (Ambassador of Latvia to the USA); Ivan Safranchuk (Center for Defense Information, Moscow); Jānis Sārts (Latvian Ministry of Defense); Bengt Sundelius (Swedish National Defense College, Stockholm); Vygaudas Ušackas (Ambassador of Lithuania to the USA).



*Conference Organizing Committee members Jacob Kaltenbach and Grant Heard*

"I would like to note the growing importance of the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington. Established in 1994, it served since then as a gateway to the Baltics for hundreds of American students. A growing community of students, which is travelling to and doing research on Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, not only broadens their horizons, but also brings knowledge of the Baltics to their American peers."

— Vygaudas Ušackas, Ambassador of the Lithuania to the USA; introduction to speech at the University of Washington, November 29, 2001.

## Liv Folk Singer visits the Baltic Program

In November of 2001, about 180 students in Guntis Šmidchens' "Introduction to Folklore Studies" class were treated to two performances by the Liv singer, Julgī Stalte. Livs, (sometimes called Livonians) are an ethnic group who settled in Latvia more than five thousand years ago, and speak a language related to Estonian and Finnish. Today they number less than fifty. "There are many of us!" exclaimed Stalte when asked about the size of her nation, "When I sing, all of my ancestors are with me." Stalte's Liv songs have become popular in Estonia, along with her band called "Tulli Lum" ("Hot Snow"). Stalte also performed at the Universities of Wisconsin and Indiana, who teamed up with the UW to sponsor her trip to the USA.



Julgī Stalte introduces students in the Latvian language class to the vowels of the Liv language:  
There are eight different ways of pronouncing the letter "o"!

Where can you find the largest American university collection of new Baltic books? Visit the University of Washington Library's catalog online to see what you can find. Each year, the UW receives about 500 new books and 150 periodicals from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania:  
<http://www.lib.washington.edu/>

### Gift from the Estonian Government

In autumn of 2001, the Baltic Studies Program received a fifteen-pound box of teaching materials sent by the Estonian Ministry of Education. Along with several classic Estonian films, the Baltic program received recently published textbooks, videotapes, CDs and cassette tapes, books on teaching methodology, grammar reference and history. We are grateful to the Government of Estonia for this extraordinary gift!

### Meet the Baltic Teaching Assistants!

Estonian TA **Ulla Vanhatalo** is a Visiting Graduate Student from the University of Helsinki, where she is a doctoral candidate specializing in Finno-Ugric linguistics. She recently published a research paper, "Population tests in lexicography" in the Finnish linguistics journal, *Virittäjä*. Besides teaching Estonian at the University of Washington this year, Vanhatalo organized extracurricular activities for Estonian language students: Film viewings and a conversation table at the HUB cafeteria where they could regularly meet and practice speaking Estonian outside of class.



Lithuanian TA **Rimās Žilinskas** received the Masters Degree in Lithuanian Literature from Vilnius University. In 2001, he enrolled in the UW Comparative Literature Department's PhD program. He has edited several standard reference books in Lithuanian literature. Among his numerous publications are textual commentaries in the Complete Works of Balys Sruoga, and articles about the Lithuanian-American poet Algimantas Mackus. He is working on a Lithuanian language textbook for the Internet.

### Creating Internet Resources

Several years ago, students taking Baltic history classes noticed a critical blank spot in the enormous field of Internet resources: Although they could find hundreds of websites for tourists traveling to the Baltic countries, and thousands of websites arguing and discussing various topics in Baltic Studies, there was no easily available basic reference website on Baltic History. An ambitious project, the "Encyclopedia of Baltic History," was born at <http://depts.washington.edu/baltic/encyclopedia.html>

The undergraduate and graduate students who are writing the "Encyclopedia" aim, first and foremost, to guide their readers to periods and topics relevant to Baltic history, for example, "Grand Duchy of Lithuania" or "World War I." It is intended as a handbook for students at American high schools and universities who wish to read a compact outline of the given topic, followed by a bibliography of useful websites, books and journal articles for further research. The "Encyclopedia" is a work in progress, continually changing and expanding as students improve on the work of their peers in past years.

### Translating Peko, Epic of the Seto People

On April 29, 2002, students and faculty at the UW enjoyed a special treat: Kristin Kuutma, who had a few days earlier defended her doctoral dissertation, gave the world premiere reading of her English translation of "Peko", the epic of the Seto people. "Peko" is an epic poem composed in 1927 by folk singer Anne Vabarna, a member of the Seto ethnic group in southeastern Estonia. The epic was first published in 1995, and has now been translated into English as a portion of Kuutma's dissertation. Kuutma taught Estonian language at the UW from 1998 to 2001, and received the PhD degree in the UW Department of Scandinavian Studies in June 2002. We eagerly await the publication of this translation. In the meantime, we present a brief

excerpt about the birth of the Seto hero named Peko (lines 79 to 110):

The old woman washed the child well, soothed with gentle water  
Carefully started to swaddle him, stretch him steadily.  
She called others to observe, three or four old ones to watch.  
They observed, they watched, the three checked the baby  
They praised the Lord, they hailed Holy Mary  
For granting us a giant, a strong and healthy child:  
His ribs are long as yardsticks, his knuckles seem like fists,  
His skin looks finer than finest, bones stronger than those of the rest.  
It's not an easy job to swaddle, to bind them strongly.  
Then they lit a candle, set a wax candle to watch.  
Father set one for the Lord, put it close to the icon closet,  
He lit a candle as large as an arm, wax of several inches.  
He lit it, then said a prayer, held the wax, made a sign of the cross.  
Father bowed down to his shoes, the dear one bowed down to the floor  
He bowed and he wept, prayed eagerly to God:  
"Lord, grant health to my son, good luck to my chick!"

### Upcoming Events

**September 30, 2002:** Fall Quarter begins

**Sunday, October 6 2002, 5:00 pm, Kane Hall 210:** Reception in honor of the UW Baltic Program's supporters, hosted by President Richard McCormick

**June 23 to August 22, 2003:** Tenth Annual Baltic Studies Summer Institute, University of Washington, Seattle

The Baltic Studies Summer Institute ([BALSSI](#)) offers intensive language courses in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. The Institute is financed by a consortium of eight American universities, and moves to a new host every two years. In 2003, the Tenth Annual BALSSI will return to its birthplace, Seattle. Watch for future announcements about events and courses at [BALSSI 2003!](#)

### Stretching toward Our Next Goal

Irena Blekys, Advisory Board Member

UW Department of Scandinavian Studies

Today, the Baltic communities of Washington State have reached their first goal, raising \$775,000 to fund the Baltic Program at the University of Washington. This money will now earn interest in perpetuity to fund the instruction of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian languages at UW.

Five years ago, many wondered how these small Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian communities in the Pacific Northwest would be able to collect such a fantastic sum. The fundraising started with donations, some as small as a dollar, to show the commitment of our communities. Letters went out asking our friends and fellow Balts to support this program. Intense energy was poured into several "Follow the Amber Road" auctions, raffles, and an evening of entertainment called "Folklore Baltica." As we succeeded in raising



money in Seattle, confidence grew in the Program. Nine local families led the fundraising effort by their donations at the ten thousand dollar and upwards level.

Additional funds were received from corporations with matching gift programs. Donations, each one gratefully welcomed, arrived from across America and Canada and as far away as Tasmania. Gestures by our American friends inspired others to give. Paul Goble, from Radio Free Europe, the keynote speaker at the Seattle Lithuanian independence day celebration, donated his honorarium to the Program. Ken Coulter, a retired foreign-service worker who had just begun studying Lithuanian when he suddenly passed away, left a significant bequest to support the Program. Baltic foundations responded to our appeals.

Among gifts received at this time, the largest has been from the American Latvian Association (\$250,000) followed by the Raišys and Liffick families (\$100,000) and the Lithuanian Foundation (\$57,000). Equally important were the hundreds of individuals who regularly dug into their pockets for donations ranging anywhere from a few dollars to hundreds. These contributors told the University that this program has a broad base of support.

What has the Program accomplished? The results are truly impressive.

Over the last eight years at the University of Washington, about one hundred and fifty students have studied Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian language. Hundreds more have passed through the Baltic history and culture courses taught each year in the Department of Scandinavian Studies, the home of the Baltic Program. The Program has had a part in twenty-two graduate level theses and in ten undergraduate degrees by students choosing to specialize in Baltic topics. It is exciting to anticipate the effect the Baltic Program will have in the lives and future scholarship of these students. These students will also expand American knowledge of the Baltic area.

Other achievements of the Baltic Program include major academic conferences on NATO Enlargement and the Baltic region (1997 and 2001), concerts, and lectures by visiting diplomats and heads of the Baltic States.

Observing the present trend of decreasing state support for higher education, the Baltic members of the Advisory Board to the Scandinavian Studies Department discerned a new goal to preserve the present operating level of the program. This goal is to increase the endowment to three million dollars. The increased income earned by the Baltic Studies Endowed Fund will provide money to support parts of the program currently paid by government funds and susceptible to budget cuts:

- *Courses taught in English about Baltic history, culture and politics*
- *Conferences and visiting lecturers*
- *Scholarships for students studying the Baltic languages*
- *Scholarships for students traveling on exchanges to Baltic countries*

- *Library acquisition of books*

Six years ago our first goal for the Baltic Program seemed incredible. Our new goal may boggle the mind. We have seen the current program fill a need in Baltic studies. The future seems limitless for what this endowment could mean in the lives of our families and in the national and international discourse on Baltic issues. Let us renew our commitment to the Baltic Program and continue to give at the level that is comfortable and hopefully add a little stretch to our giving to be part of a new vision of the future.

Won't you consider renewing your support for the Program today?