

# A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG FOLKLORISTS

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The International Conference of Young Folklorists is an annual gathering that brings together emerging scholars and researchers in the field of folklore studies from around the world. This conference provides a platform for young academics to present their research, share their ideas, and engage in discussions with their peers and established experts in the field. Each year, the International Conference of Young Folklorists selects a specific theme or focus area within the broader field of folklore studies. This theme serves as the backbone for the conference, guiding the selection of papers, panels, and discussions. Themes can vary widely and may include topics like oral traditions, folk narratives, material culture, rituals and festivals, cultural heritage preservation, and much more. Here is an overview of what the conference covered this year.

This year's theme was "Beyond the Field: Fieldwork in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," presented by a wide range of speakers. At the conference, which took place in Riga, Latvia between the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> of September, young researchers presented different approaches to what fieldwork, or aspects of it mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was fascinating to see how classical fieldwork could be presented in an increasingly digital world, but also, how the digital world could be the site of fieldwork.

During these three days, we heard a wide range of presentations, both in space and time, where we could learn about the exciting issues and problems of current research. This series of conferences shows that there is indeed a future in folklore research, and the current theme, concerning possible approaches to fieldwork in innovative ways, proved very fruitful.

It was refreshing to see the colourful and diverse range of topics in which fieldwork, or the notion of fieldwork, was presented, and how young researchers were working through the issues that arise, both from a practical and a theoretical perspective. This conference proved that fieldwork is still of paramount importance among folklorists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as it has been throughout the history of folklore studies.

Among the presentations, you could find ethical problems of fieldwork, the disadvantages or even advantages of COVID, the question of perceptions, and even

volunteer research. Ethical issues such as the blurring of distance in today's modern world, but also the advantages of technology and especially of internet contact, were raised. While in some cases the pandemic was a disadvantage, in other situations it offered opportunities that everyday life probably did not.

One of the key benefits of attending the International Conference of Young Folklorists is the opportunity for participants to network with their peers and established scholars. These interactions can lead to collaborations, mentorship opportunities, and the exchange of ideas that enrich the participants' academic journey.

The International Conference of Young Folklorists plays a crucial role in fostering the next generation of folklorists. It provides a platform for emerging scholars to gain exposure, receive feedback on their work, and connect with mentors and peers. Moreover, the conference contributes to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage by advancing research in folklore studies.

In conclusion, this year's International Conference of Young Folklorists served as a vital forum for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences among young scholars and researchers in the field of folklore studies. It promoted the study and appreciation of diverse cultural traditions and ensured that the rich tapestry of human folklore continues to be explored and celebrated.