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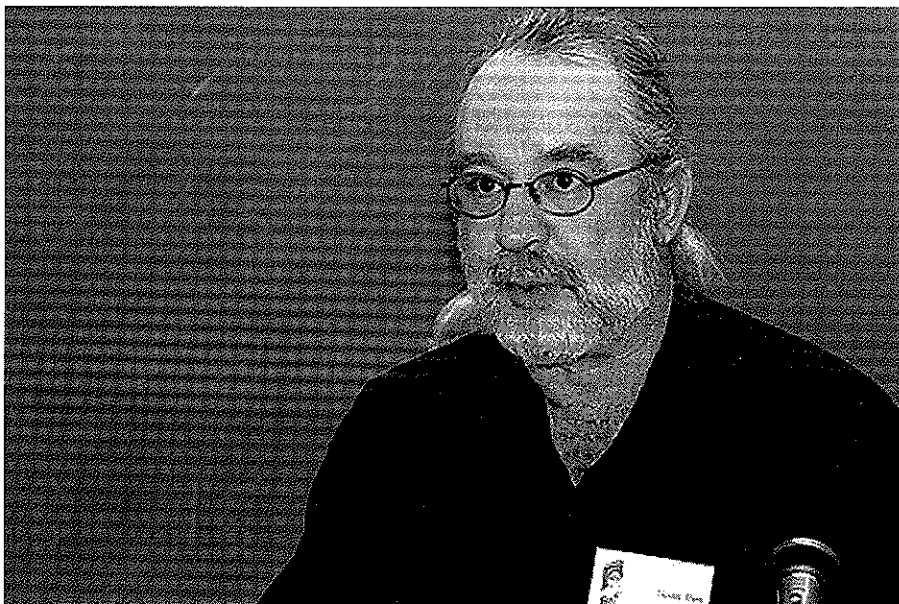
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ISFNR Committee "Folktales and the Internet"

by Theo Meder, Meertens Institute, Netherlands



Theo Meder in Tartu talking about tales of wonder in the New Age era.

Photo by Alar Madisson.

At the ISFNR conference in Tartu, Estonia, one of the workshops was called "Computer Mediated Communication – How Stuff Works?" chaired by Maria Yelenevskaya. During the discussion it was established that computer-mediated communication is already an important source for folk-narrative research, and that its importance will only increase in the future. Folktales can be found on websites and in online databases, tales are told in discussion fora, jokes (either as text or as PhotoShopped images) are sent by e-mail, SMS or MMS. On the one hand the Internet makes it easy for us to find the stories we are looking for, but on the other hand we all have experienced the situation where stories that we could find yesterday seem to have vanished today – just like in the oral tradition. So, for contemporary research it is necessary ourselves to collect these stories also.

At the General Assembly of the ISFNR the birth of a committee on folktales and computer-based communication was announced by Maria Yelenevskaya and several members had already

volunteered to participate. At Maria's request, I later agreed to coordinate the first steps of what I would like to call the Committee for "Folktales and the Internet".

As far as I can see, the Committee might deal with the following matters:

1. Make the ISFNR acquainted with our existing online folktale databases. In Iceland, for instance, Terry Gunnell works on his *Sagnagrunnur*¹, in Flanders Katrien van Effelterre runs her *Vlaamse Volksverhalenbank*², and in The Netherlands I am managing my own *Nederlandse Volksverhalenbank*³.
2. Make a list of other useful folktale collections or databases on the Internet - be it in English, French, German, Russian, or Japanese etc.
3. Make a list of useful websites about folktale genres (such as fairy tales, legends, myths, jokes, riddles and urban legends).

Most of the ISFNR members probably have their own private list of sites, and putting them together could be a benefit to us all.

As soon as the new Estonian ISFNR website is active, I am planning on adding the overviews as mentioned in #1-3 of our "Folktales and the Internet" pages. These pages will include the names and addresses of the Committee participants as well.

4. Start a Yahoo e-mail forum for further contact, discussion, questions, support, and the exchange of information, news and ideas.

5. Create an ISFNR database with international folktale material, for instance contemporary joke-lore (texts, pictures, powerpoint presentations, movies). The recently published book *www.worldwidewitz.com. Humor im Cyberspace* by Rolf W. Brednich could be a point of reference here. Creating such an ISFNR database will – technically and financially speaking – be the hardest part of the project, as well as encouraging participants to actively put material into this database. Obviously, the features of such a database need to be thoroughly discussed in advance.

The Committee will, of course, be open to all ISFNR volunteers, and I hereby would like to invite members to join – just by sending me an e-mail.

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¹ See <http://www.hi.is/~terry/database/sagnagrunnur.htm>.

² See <http://www.volksverhalenbank.be>.

³ See <http://www.verhalenbank.nl>.