

# CURATORS WITH AND WITHOUT COLLECTIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHANGES IN THE CURATOR'S WORK AT NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN FINLAND AND IN THE BALTIC STATES

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the curator's work has been in close connection with the main functions of the museum – preservation, research, and communication. The changes that have occurred at museums over the past few decades have also influenced the profession of curator. Specialisation has taken place inside the museum, and so the curator's functions have also changed. This article focuses on the curator's field of work at national museums in Finland and in the Baltic states. The analysis is mainly based on interviews conducted with curators and other museum professionals at the Estonian National Museum, the Estonian History Museum, the National History Museum of Latvia, the National Museum of Lithuania, and the National Museum of Finland. Emanating from the PRC model provided by the Reinwardt Academy as well as the global changes induced by the new museology, the focus is on the curator's connection with museum collections. The analysis shows that the curator's role is not similar in all the museums under discussion; there are regional differences in structure, curatorial duties, and priorities. While at some museums the curator is regarded as a collection keeper who can also do some research, at others they are rather researchers and have only infrequent contact with collections.

KEYWORDS: museum • collection keeper • researcher • new museology • curator

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history the classical role of museums has been the preservation and supplementation of collections as well as research into them and their popularisation. Initially, these functions were all fulfilled by the curator – it was the first profession at the

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museum which evolved in the 19th century. Historically, the curator's training was related, above all, to the thematic discipline of collections, such as art history, natural science, ethnology (*Key Concepts* 2010: 68). As the museum's attention focused on collections, the curator's profession occupied the central position among all museum professions. Beginning in the 1980s, both at the museums of Western Europe and North America, the position and functions of the classical curator started to be influenced by a new ideology called new museology. The theory, according to which the traditional museum was supposed to become socially more sensitive and more interdisciplinary in the selection and treatment of topics, was formulated in France in the 1970s (*ibid.*: 55). In recent years, museologists have been interested in putting the ideas of the new museology into practice. The research has revealed, among other things, that, as the new museology stood in contrast with the classical collection-centred museum, the study of collections remained in the background, so the job description of classical curators changed and their position weakened (see McCall and Gray 2014; Viau-Courville 2017). In recent years, the curator's competence and functions as well as usage of collections have again deserved more attention both in theory and practical museum work (see Greene 2015: 3–4).

Against a background of these trends, this article sets out to explore the content of the curator's work and their position in terms of museum collections at Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Finnish national museums. The principles of the new museology concerned with the inclusive and interactive museum have become generally recognised components of a contemporary museum and have spread internationally, including in Finland and the Baltic states. However, there is still a significant lack of research on the affects of the new museology on collections and curators' tasks at museums. With regard to developments in the countries under analysis, the research has been dominated by studies of museum communication, cultural participation and museum audience relationships (see Runnel and Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2014; Aljas 2015; 2017; Lotina 2016). While recent studies in Finland have focused on museum workers' assessments of museum work and their connection with the shaping of identity (Hakamies 2017), the study of the relationships between museum work and the new museology in the Baltic countries has been, until very recently, a neglected field (Stoškutė 2017: 77).

This analysis focuses on the content of the curator's profession at the Estonian National Museum (ENM), the Estonian History Museum (EHM), the National History Museum of Latvia (NHML), the National Museum of Lithuania (NML), and the National Museum of Finland (NMF). As an exception, Estonia is represented by two museums, as these two combined correspond to the content comparable with the others. While elsewhere museums feature a combination of political and cultural history, in Estonia the EHM represents the political history of the state and the ENM the everyday culture (and in the previous conception, the traditional peasant culture). In 2017–2018 all the four countries celebrated the 100th anniversary of their independent statehood, which enables the national museums to be focused on more as sites through which the state presents its history.

Finland and the Baltic countries are seldom regarded together in museum studies. Yet historically, before the Second World War, the national museums of Finland and the three Baltic countries operated in step with Western European museums. For example, in the case of Lithuania, an orientation towards Scandinavian countries and Germany

has been highlighted (Keršytė 2016: 429). The ENM had closer cooperation with Finnish and Scandinavian museums and researchers, with whom they managed to maintain contact during the Soviet occupation (see Leete et al. 2008). After the Second World War, when the Baltic countries had been incorporated into the Soviet Union, their museum activities were subjected to the ideological control of the communist party (see Leete et al. 2008; Kęncis and Kuutma 2011; Rindzevičiūtė 2011). Museums were able to evade producing direct Soviet propaganda by constructing themselves “as organizations that were first and foremost dedicated to the collection and storage of objects” (Rindzevičiūtė 2011: 532). However, they often lacked the space for proper preservation of collections and the means for high-level or novel exhibitions (*ibid.*); and the ENM even lacked a permanent exhibition until 1994.

In the 1990s museums in the Baltic countries once again oriented themselves towards Western European examples, at the same time maintaining the working contacts between Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian museums established during the Soviet period. Similar to Western European museums, yet somewhat later, in the late 1990s through to the 2000s, the museums of the Baltic countries started to concentrate on visitor- and community-centred, inclusive and interactive activities; museum education and cooperation with the tourism industry became important (Kuutma and Kroon 2012: 80; Keršytė 2016: 429; Lotina 2016: 45). In a similar way, the developments in Finnish museums, which started in the 1980s, are characterised as movement “from object-centred to phenomenon-centred and further to society-centred work, which has greatly increased the participatory role of the audience” (Vilkuna 2018: 102).

Although the three main functions of museums – preservation, research, and communication – are closely intertwined, this article focuses on one of them, namely the preservation of collections. Presumably, this sphere has undergone changes influenced, among other things, by the ideas of the new museology.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this analysis is to establish what the collections-related functions are that curators in this region fulfil today, what changes or tendencies can be noticed, what specialisations the position of curator has acquired, if any, and what are the proportions of collections-related work as compared to other components of the curator’s work (research and communication). What do curators think about the importance of collections in their work and do they, in the contemporary museum, have any contact at all with collections? How does museum structure influence the work done in the preservation of collections?

#### AFFECT OF THE NEW MUSEOLOGY ON ADDRESSING MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Museums took their beginning in collecting and collections. Initial activity at many museums focused on scientific research into collections (Maroević 1998: 248). The majority of the museums established at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries were designed as places offering profound encyclopaedic knowledge and as repositories for artefacts (Conn 2010: 58). At that time, natural scientific, anthropological, and ethnological research was closely connected with museum collections. Emphases started to change in the second half of the 20th century, when researchers’ attention gradually diverted from museum collections. There were two significant factors

that caused these changes. Firstly, academic anthropology and ethnology withdrew from museums in the middle of the 20th century, when these disciplines gradually turned from the study of tangible culture to intangible, expanding the research field by including contemporary society (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005: 5–6; Conn 2010: 56–78; Greene 2015: 1). The other influential factor was the ideology of the new museology, which, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, diverted museums from the collections-centred model (McCall and Gray 2014: 20).

The new museology is a discourse about the social and political roles of museums, according to which museums are supposed to turn their focus from collections-centredness to society-centredness. The concept of the new museology was initiated in France in the 1970s, and beginning in 1984 started to spread internationally (*Key Concepts* 2010: 55). The new ideology contrasted the traditional museum as an institution focusing too much on artefacts and curators studying them, with the new, social museum, which assumes greater social responsibility and actively socialises with the community. From the point of view of the new museology, the traditional museum has been rebuked for authoritarianism and elitism, a colonialist viewpoint, and representation of the interests of a narrow social group, above all, the elite and intellectuals (see Ross 2004; McCall and Gray 2014; Viau-Courville 2017). One of the expressions of the new museology is the so-called inclusive museum, where visitors can discuss the exhibition, share their stories, and feel involved due to the possibility to cooperate in a purpose-built environment (Simon 2010: 350). In terms of museum collections it is essential, in the discourse of the new museology, to give preference to the display of socially important ideas and topics in which artefacts are important only as illustrations of ideas (see Viau-Courville 2017: 16).

Along with changes in the expressive methods of museums, museum structure also underwent some changes. Dutch museologist Peter van Mensch (2003) has described this process as changing the concept of curating. Initially, the structure of larger museums was divided into subunits according to thematic fields, and the curator was responsible for a number of substantial activities from research to educational work. The new structure separated these activities and function-based specialists started to perform them. As van Mensch (2003: 4) has put it, “As is clear, in this new model the curator is no longer the centre of the universe”.

Today, instead of discipline-based, the museum structure rather tends to be function-based, and a number of additional specialists are involved in museum work. Despite the changes, the curator’s profession has survived, although the job description and job title may differ to a certain extent by country. According to Patrick J. Boylan (2004: 148), there are countries where two groups of employees can be differentiated. Firstly, specialists with a higher education in the field – compatible with the field researched by the museum – who are engaged in research or artefact collections, these staff are usually called scholar curators or researcher curators; secondly, there are support staff engaged in administrative issues, museum education, advertising, marketing, exhibition management, and other support activities. The second group is composed of countries with very narrow specialisation in different spheres of museum work.

We can find both positive and problematic examples of the influence of the new museology on curators’ work. Max Ross (2004), who conducted research among

museum professionals in Great Britain in the mid-1990s, emphasises the interpretative role the curators have adopted as a positive result of the concurrence of the new museology and the ideology of the free market. According to Ross, this is expressed in relinquishing fixed ideas, dismantling cultural barriers, and a heightened awareness of diverse audiences. Researchers have also studied how museum professionals have understood and applied the ideals and expectations of the new museology. So, another piece of Great Britain centred research (McCall and Gray 2014) revealed that structural changes have generated tension between different parties at museums. The so-called new school is represented by professions related to communication, education, and other services, whereas the 'old school' is represented mainly by collections-related curators. The latter saw as a problem the fact that the management attached too little importance to collections and the curators related to them, and they cannot participate in decision making. (Ibid.: 24, 26) This situation corresponds to the model initiated in the 1970s, described by van Mensch, in which museums hired more and more specialists in the field of collection keeping (conservation, documentation) and mediating (exhibitions, design, education), who had been educated in the respective supportive discipline and who van Mensch (2003: 5) calls "new professionals". Within this model, the classical curator becomes a researcher in a narrower sense, who is engaged only in the content of the field and is less related to daily collections management. So, using specialisation, the profession of classical curator can be divided in another way.

When analysing the relations between museums and anthropology in North America and Great Britain, Candace Greene (2015) finds that recently anthropologists have started to re-discover museum collections as sources for research. On the other hand, universities have to face gaps in knowledge of material culture. According to Greene (2015: 7–8), "curatorial positions are being reduced in number and influence". Anthropologists' access to collections is complicated by the shortage of human resources at museums, which has recently directed attention to increasing digital rather than physical access (ibid.). In order to point to the danger of marginalising and ignoring the curator's profession and to expand the concept of contemporary curator, the Campaign for Good Curatorship was launched in Great Britain in 2015, emphasising curators' deep knowledge of their collections (Ewin and Ewin 2016: 325). Canadian researchers are also gradually finding their way to the traditional model of the researcher-curator-centred exhibition. A compromise is seen in reuniting scientific research and museum practice, especially as concerns museum collections (Viau-Courville 2017: 27).

Museologists have also sought to alleviate the problems of extending collections and their alleged underuse. These studies were especially intensive in Great Britain in the early 21st century (see Glaister and Wilkinson 2005; Cross and Wilkinson 2007; Keene 2008). The collection and usage policies of museum objects have been revised by museums in Great Britain and by many other museums all over the world (see Keene 2005). The supplementation and usage of collections is being observed more strictly also in Finnish and Baltic museums. Museums cooperate to a greater extent concerning their acquisitions, and try to avoid duplication of collections. In addition to this, favourable conditions for using collections are established, object loans from collections are favoured, as well as their study and popularisation. So the necessity of existing collections has been ascertained to a certain extent.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to study the content of the curator's profession and changes in it in the national museums of Finland and the Baltic states, I conducted interviews with museum professionals during the 2016–2018 period. The interviews were carried out in two stages. The first stage involved a two-week observation practice at the ENM, where I interviewed both the museum staff and representatives of the museum's cooperation partner institutions immediately after the opening of the new building and two new permanent exhibitions, in the late autumn of 2016; some of the interviews were also conducted in spring 2017. This resulted in a master's thesis titled *About Museum Education on the Example of the Cultural Heritage Study Centre of the Estonian National Museum* (Reidla 2017). These 15 interviews, which focused on the counselling and communication activities at the research department of the ENM carried out by curators, clearly highlighted the topic of the study and knowledge of artefact collections at the ENM. Therefore, I have also used these data in the current article.

The 18 interviews of the second stage were conducted from the autumn of 2017 to the spring of 2018 at the abovementioned five museums, in order to carry out a regional comparison. The questions concerned the diversity and proportions of curators' tasks. The selection of museum workers for the interviews involved those whose work content necessitated research capability in the discipline related to museum collections. Collection keepers and conservators were not interviewed, although their job title, if translated from the native language into English, could also be curator. The interviews focused on the study of museum collections and material culture as well as mediation of research results by means of exhibitions and museum education. The interviews of the second stage, in the case of Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania, also provided initial information about the organisation, buildings, and exhibitions of these museums as well as some of the employees. To distinguish between the interviewees, the abbreviation of the museum's name is added; the list of interviews is given at the end of the article.

Interviews in Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland were conducted, according to the interviewees' preferences, either in Russian or in English. Presumably, the selection of interviewees may have been restricted by the language barrier.<sup>2</sup> Although the people who agreed to give an interview were willing to speak about their work, it has to be admitted that the interviews conducted in Estonia are deeper in terms of describing feelings and problems. Both in the Estonian and foreign-language interviews, special attention had to be paid to understanding the use of the term 'curator' at respective museums. The notion 'curator' was most often used in parallel to the job title 'researcher', and, apart from this, to emphasise exhibition curating in Estonia, Latvia,<sup>3</sup> and Finland. In Lithuania, on the other hand, the term 'curator' rather indicates the function of working with collections; the chief treasurer is also called chief curator there. Apart from the advantage of expressing things in one's mother tongue, the results are influenced by my more extensive prior knowledge of Estonian museums, and my acquaintance with the interviewees as my former colleagues. My personal working experience at the ENM (1992–2004) has greatly contributed to the perception of the context as well. In addition, I have used museum websites and my first-hand experience during museum visits to complement the data. Although my trips to Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland were not

long (2–3 days), I was able, in addition to visiting exhibitions, to observe the working environment, intercommunication between colleagues, goods sold in museum shops, and, above all, museum publications. Although all the studied museums have, as well as a native-language website, a foreign-language one, including English, the native-language websites present more information.<sup>4</sup> The website of the EHM gives the most comprehensive information about its staff, for example apart from their contact information it also presents their photographs.

In the analysis of the interviews I draw on the changes called the second museum revolution by van Mensch (2003: 4–5) which saw museum structures change from the collections-based to the functions-based. I contemplate whether such a transition has taken place at the museums under study. Secondly, I proceed in my analysis from the museums' PRC model provided by the Reinwardt Academy, originating from the 1980s (Maroević 1998: 224). The model defines museums as having three main activities – *preservation, research, and communication*. The PRC model helps me analyse to what extent the work of researchers/curators at the observed museums corresponds to the concept of the classical curator and whether, and how, the structural changes are related to changes in the curator's tasks.

According to the PRC model, "the museum is seen as a system of connected sub-systems" whereat "the output of one subsystem serves as the input of another, or in theory all others" (Meijer-van Mensch 2017: 64). Due to the intertwining of the three functions described in the PRC model, curators' tasks are also closely connected with each other, which makes it difficult to approach one function separately without mentioning others. Although this article focuses on only one of the three functions – work with museum collections or preservation – the other two are also briefly touched upon, as they are interrelated with the function of preservation.<sup>5</sup>

In the narrower meaning, preservation involves all the activities undertaken to inhibit the ageing of objects, prevent their decay, and prolong their usage time (Konsa 2007: 283). Museologically, preservation involves all the activities in the process of an artefact reaching the museum, such as collection, accession, inventory (scientific description), labelling, repositing, and lending, but also activities related to conservation and restoration (see Key Concepts 2010: 65–67). In practice, the preservation function entails different collection management activities, with the aim of guaranteeing the long-term physical welfare and safety of the objects as well as their findability and usage in accomplishing the museum's mission (see also Ladkin 2004: 17). Today, for example, collections management also involves digitisation and entering data into the information system, which in the PRC model I treat as fulfilling the function of collections preservation, as a solid database guarantees the usability of collections.

Below I will analyse, against the backdrop of the general content of the interviewed curators' work, the activities that correspond to the fulfilment of the preservation function in the PRC model. According to the curators' participation in collections management, I divided the museums under study into two groups: one section focuses on the museums where curators are 'with collections', and the other on those where they are 'without collections'.

## CURATORS WITH COLLECTIONS

### *Estonian History Museum*

The EHM has three function-based departments – research, communication, and administration. Structural changes in 2013 established a communication department, the aim of which was to develop a modern museum environment that considers the audience in every possible way (e-mail EHM F1). In addition to this, the research and collections departments were merged in the same year and the chief treasurer was transferred to come under the research director's remit. This is a significant change in Estonian museum tradition, as usually the chief treasurer responsible for collections was structurally at the same level as the head of research. After structural changes the research and collections department involves mainly researcher curators (*teadur-kuraator*) and collection keepers (*koguhoidja*).<sup>6</sup> The researcher curator's job title in this case means that an employee with the potential for research (MA or PhD degree is required) performs the tasks of collection keeper and arranges exhibitions according to the working schedule. Collection management involves both documenting and physical maintenance of objects in the repository. Scientific research is related, above all, to the supplementation of collections and scientific description. The interviews showed that in the case of the researcher curator job title, the addition of 'curator' mainly means curating exhibitions rather than collection management, although most of these staff members also have to take care of collections.<sup>7</sup> This contradiction, in comparison to the concept of curator in English, most probably emanates from the fact that in Estonian the meaning of the concept of curator is related to curating exhibitions rather than managing collections. In Estonian, the specialist responsible for the management of collections is usually called a collection keeper.<sup>8</sup> The notion of the curator of art exhibitions was taken into use in Estonia in the 1990s, and over the course of time has extended to signify people staging other exhibitions.

Among museum functions, work with collections is what researcher curators at the EHM perceive as a priority set by the management, as in the evaluation of their work results the number of musealia registered in the information system is considered essential. The second (also important) factor is different mediating activities: organising exhibitions, appearing in the media, consultations. The sphere of academic research, on the other hand, is perceived as undervalued by researcher curators. The EHM, like the majority of museums in Estonia, is under the administration of the Ministry of Culture; therefore, the priority is work with the visitors and the musealia information system, rather than research, which belongs in the domain of the Ministry of Education and Research.

What is the relationship between collection management and research at the EHM? Ideally, for the research director the research priority at the museum is collections-based research, which she called highlighting the potential of the collections (EHM B). As estimated by the research director, the situation in this sphere is not ideal at the moment, as, firstly, in recent years development- and exhibition-related activities<sup>9</sup> have received extensive attention and, secondly, researchers' competence fails to cover the whole thematic variety of museum collections. So the research director argues that

postponing collection-based research as a priority direction is a personnel problem. Among researcher curators, two viewpoints can be differentiated: some of the interviewees stated that recently the focus of attention has changed from studying museum collections (EHM D, E), whereas others were satisfied that they had been able to study the collections for decades without interference from any of the directors (EHM A, C). It is noteworthy here that the researcher curators who are satisfied with their work and position have a scientific degree, have specialised in a narrower research field based on museum collections, and are recognised specialists in their field. If they are dissatisfied with something, it is related to the task of entering musealia into the Information System of Estonian Museums (ISEM).

The issue of the museums' information system was highlighted due to the researcher curators' critical attitude towards it. In Estonia, the ISEM has a long history. The current all-Estonian system was preceded by the intra-museum Information System of Cultural Heritage (ISCH), which evolved in the 1992–2003 period. The development was rather ragged due to different technical errors, incomplete dictionaries, and the generally poor IT level at the museums (Jeeser 2009: 80). Since 2004, the ISEM system has been developed, which, unlike the previous system, enables someone to search for musealia in all the museums that have joined this information system (*ibid.*: 60). To describe the system, the interviewees used the words "unreliable", "cumbersome", and "hare-brained" (EHM A, C, E). One of the reasons for resentment seems to be the excessively long development process of the system in its first stage between 1992 and 2003, which has caused exhaustion from the endless motion and prejudice about the efficient operation of the system. At the current stage, when the system is already relatively stable, but retrospective data entry is on-going, the curators are mainly dissatisfied because entering data is routine and time-consuming. So, a long-term researcher curator, who, according to her own words likes to study collections, consult visitors, and write articles, is dissatisfied with the task of entering the initial data into the ISEM, as this routine work wastes her valuable time as a specialist with a scientific degree (EHM A). Here the interviewee distinguishes between entering the initial data and writing scientific descriptions of artefacts; the latter definitely belongs to the competence of the researcher curator, and cannot be trusted to anyone else (EHM A, C). Correct data in the information system must not be underestimated, as museum objects can "get lost" in the collections if they have been described incompetently, the keywords are inept, or mistakes have been made when rewriting the data. These dangers were acknowledged by the interviewees (EHM A, D).

In conclusion it can be said that the content of the researcher curators' work at the EHM corresponds to the profession of classical curator, covering all the three activities in the PRC model. The researcher curators themselves feel that, to live up to the expectations held by the administration, the emphasis in their everyday work should be on the management and description of the collections, and from time to time, also arranging exhibitions. To compensate for this, they would like to get more recognition for academic research. For the research director greater attention to the study of artefact collections is essential, and a planned measure to achieve this is to advance collections studies through personnel selection. As after structural changes in 2013 the collections were subordinated to the research director, she has been given administrative means for that. The establishment of the communication department indicates that

the museum is willing to bring communication with the general public to the centre of attention, which is a sign of following the ideology of the new museology. Here we can see that as the proportion of function-based specialists (communication) increases there is a shift in the positions of the curator and the collections away from the central position, as described by van Mensch (2003).

### *The National Museum of Lithuania*

There are seven collection-based departments at the NML: archaeology, the Middle Ages and urban archaeology, history, ethnography, iconography, contemporary history, and numismatics. The collections represent different disciplines and their subdivisions. The rest are support units, such as the exhibition department and the education department.<sup>10</sup> So the museum structure has partly been divided according to the discipline-based principle and the support departments represent the function-based division. The work of all collections is organised by the chief curator, who is also the deputy director. By order of the Minister of Culture, from 2013 the job title of all the specialists corresponding to the meaning of 'curator' in Lithuania is 'museum worker' (*muziejininkas*), and there are three stages: chief specialist, senior specialist, and junior specialist (NML C). In the following, *muziejininkas* is referred to by the job title 'curator'.

Curators educated as historians, archaeologists, or ethnologists mainly fulfil the tasks of collection keepers. Each of them manages a certain collection, for which they are responsible – not only for supplementing, documenting, and overall knowledge of the collection, but also for physical order and tidiness in the repository (NML C). In addition, the more laborious tasks involve staging exhibitions and counselling visitors. For curators, organising exhibitions or lending artefacts initiates research into the collection material: "Then you have to come back to the exhibit. But without this need, they are just lying there [in the repository]" (NML A). The reason for such a practice is quoted as lack of time rather than lack of interest.

Although some of the curators have doctoral degrees, it is not obligatory to write scientific articles. The interviews show that this is done by those who have corresponding interests, and researchers are ready to invest their free time. As one of the curators said: "On a primitive level, I could only do inventorying. This would suffice to get my salary." (NML B) On the other hand, the management initiates and directs who could publish books or articles, and on what topic or collection.<sup>11</sup> In addition, they enable the curators to dedicate themselves to publications at the cost of other everyday tasks. (NML A) The albums, yearbooks, and catalogues published by the museum are often related to the collections, and the content predominantly comes from the museum staff, for example, as a result of curating an exhibition (NML C). The museum shop at the NML confirmed that the study and publication of museum collections is in the foreground, the leading fields being archaeology, numismatics, and ethnology.

To document a new artefact in the collection, an accession form is filled in on the computer. Today, the NML has its own intra-museum information system of collections; yet, in addition to this, scientific description of artefacts is still made in hand-written inventory books and catalogue cards completed by hand, both of which are done by the curators. Usage of the paper form was justified by its safety (NML A). Lithu-

anian museums also have a joint information system called LIMIS (Lithuanian Integral Museum Information System).<sup>12</sup> This was launched by the Lithuanian Art Museum in 2013, with support from the state and the European Union and is meant to be used by the state-run as well as other Lithuanian museums. Today, the NML does not enter information about its collections into the LIMIS. The interviews left an impression that the museum would rather wait and see if the system justifies itself so as not to make premature efforts.

However, there is a department at the NML in which researchers without the function of collection keeper work. This is a branch of the NML, *Signatarų namai* ('House of the Signatories'), dedicated to the history of restoring the independence of Lithuania. The researchers working there write scientific articles on history, and in addition guide excursions and are engaged in museum education just like everybody else; yet, they are not supposed to fulfil the tasks of collection keeper (NML C). Curating exhibitions also constitutes part of their work, and the current permanent exhibition was organised by researchers from this branch.

Although at the NML curators focus on the physical maintenance and documentation of collections, their work with exhibitions, research, and publications is not modest either. Perhaps success in managing the three functions of the curator's profession could be explained by the great number of departments (seven in all) which support the researchers' thematic delving into the topic, in addition to which the number of staff members is not small.<sup>13</sup> Although formally the tasks are similar, there is a silent agreement on specialisation: some staff members are inclined to write scientific articles while others supplement and describe collections. No structural changes, which would have brought about a change in the curating conception mentioned by van Mensch (2003), have occurred at the NML; rather, the curator occupies a central position in the system.

### *The National Museum of Finland*

The function-based structure of the NMF is comprised of three extensive domains: marketing and communication, collections, and museum services. The collections department has three subdivisions: 1) the collections centre (storage), 2) conservation, and 3) collections and research. I conducted my interviews in the latter, where curators (*amanuenssi*) and collection keepers (*intendentti*) specialising in different collections (history, Finnish ethnology, the Finno-Ugric collection, ethnography of other nations, the maritime museum, the independence era, the coin chamber) work.<sup>14</sup> The head of collections and the research department is practically both the research director and the chief treasurer (NMF B).

At the NMF a significant institutional reorganisation took place in 1972, when an umbrella organisation for national heritage – the *Museovirasto* (the Finnish Heritage Agency, which in English was called the National Board of Antiquities until 2018 [Vilkuna 2018: 96]) – was established, and the NMF became a department within it. The last more extensive administrative reorganisation was announced in 2011, after a new director had been appointed to the *Museovirasto* in 2010 (Pettersson 2011: 275). As Susanna Pettersson (*ibid.*: 276) states, referring to a then press release by the *Museovirasto*, in essence work remained the same, only the inner work organisation was changed. The

new structure indicates that, firstly, the relative importance of the communication function was increased and, secondly, in the field of collections and research the collection-based division of departments was abandoned and replaced by function-based subunits. The interviews proved that the function-based merger of collections also improved the intercommunication between curators as well as collaboration in the collections and research department, as formerly there had been discipline-based separation (NMF B). The title was changed from researcher (*tutkija*) to curator (*amanuenssi*), but the work did not change, because researchers had already worked mainly with the collections (e-mail NMF B2). Before the administrative reforms of 2011 the researcher could not concentrate on research only, as was the case in the 1990s and earlier (NMF B). The interviews show that curators (former researchers) are mainly professional historians, art historians, archaeologists, or ethnologists. They are distinguished from the collection keepers by their capability of research. Their work with collections consists, above all, in creating information about collections, their maintenance and mediation to visitors, as well as participation in exhibition teams as representatives of collections – as information managers. In a similar way to the EHM, the interviews at the NMF also showed that the notion of curator is connected, first and foremost, with the task of curating exhibitions.

Museum curators also offer services to researchers from outside the museum who wish to explore the collections (NMF B). It has to be mentioned here that the central repository<sup>15</sup> is outside Helsinki and therefore curators do not visit the collections on a daily basis. Unlike curators at the NML and the EHM, their peers at the NMF are not responsible for the physical maintenance of the collections. At repositories collections are under the care of conservators, with whom they consult on the physical suitability of artefacts for exhibition. Curators take care of new acquisitions, lending, data collecting and information system entry. Part of the information system is open to the public in the joint database of Finnish museums, archives, and libraries, called Finna<sup>16</sup> and part is in the intra-museum information base.

On the initiative of the national museum a new policy of collecting and collection use started to be shaped in 2004, and from this year the Finnish Museums Association and *Museovirasto* organised discussions and seminars on this topic (Hakomäki 2008; Järvinen 2010: 6). A working group for designing strategies for collections was established at the national museum in 2009 (Pettersson 2011: 275) and in 2013 guidelines for the management of the collections of Finnish museums were completed (Ekosaari et al. 2014).<sup>17</sup> One of the most remarkable results of the new policy is the reduction of duplicated materials in repositories and joint usage of collections (NMF C). On the other hand, the joint usage of collections adds to the administrative workload of the curator, who coordinates inter-museum artefact loans. Other curators also have some extra tasks related to administration: coordination of the web-based counselling section “Ask the museum”,<sup>18</sup> organisation of new acquisitions for the museum, etc. The main problem here is that scientific research in collections can be carried out only when “there is time left or when it is needed for the exhibition” (NMF B). According to the interviewees, this has been the trend of the last decades, which has gradually been introduced into everyday practice (NMF B, C).

The topics for publications about the collections are usually suggested by the curators in connection with exhibition or education projects. In this way the topic in focus is used for publication, as the artefacts are selected from the collections so that new qual-

ity photographs can be taken. One of the interviewees explained that they go through all the existing material about the artefacts and also try to find something new (NMF B). This process adds new information, and in these cases they usually propose to the museum that a book could be published on that subject. The museum does not publish its own yearbook. According to my observations from the interviews and the museum shop, the publications are either collection-based overviews or catalogues, but their variety is not wide.<sup>19</sup>

The responsibilities of the curators at the NMF are closely connected with the collections, which is proven by the statement that was voiced in the interviews several times: the curators represent collections in the exhibition teams as they know what artefacts the collections include. On the other hand, it seems they are not expected to provide a more general analysis. For the new permanent exhibition, completed in 2017, the exhibition team also included curators, yet the manuscript and catalogue texts for the permanent exhibition were ordered from university researches (NMF A). The plan was that the concept of the permanent exhibition would not be based on the collections; the curators selected exhibits according to the needs to illustrate the manuscript and wrote texts for the artefacts. So we can say that the notion of curator at the NMF involves research in the meaning of studying collections.

In conclusion it can be said that practically, the curators of the NMF are representatives of the classical profession of curator, as their activity focuses on collections. In the analysis of the interviews conducted at Finnish museums between 2007 and 2011, Inkeri Hakamies (2017) shows that, according to the estimates of the museum staff, the so-called real museum work is based on practical contact with museum objects. The museum professionals who do “real museum work with artefact collections” were considered so-called museum people. These were, above all curators and conservators. This refers to the initial structure, in which curators and collections constituted the core of the museum, before “changing the concept of curating”, as it was stated by van Mensch (2003: 4).

## CURATORS WITHOUT COLLECTIONS

### *The National History Museum of Latvia*

At the NHML departments are both function- and discipline-based.<sup>20</sup> The departments of museum pedagogy and exhibitions, restauration, and some others are function-based, while the collections are discipline-based (numismatics, archaeology, and ethnography departments and the department of history with its subdivisions). The departments of collections are curated both by the director for scientific work and the director for collections. This is because both collection keepers (*krājuma glabātājs*) and researchers (*pētnieks*) work at the departments of collections. There has been no official structural change, yet in practice some of the researchers specialise in research and curating exhibitions, and are freed from the task of collections management. The trend of the *de facto* division into collection keepers and researchers was initiated around 2012, in the course of practical work, and this is considered when drawing up working schedules (NHML D). The

interviews suggested that the transition period continues and separation is different in different departments. Because some of the current researchers had previously worked as collection keepers, each of them still has knowledge of a certain part of the collections, and they are ready to consult their colleagues and visitors (NHML C). Researchers are still involved in the supplementation of collections and consult collections keepers on documenting artefacts (NHML D). The collection keepers enter the data into the Joint Catalogue of the National Holdings of Museums of Latvia.<sup>21</sup>

At the NHML, the reason for the researcher not to manage collections is to keep their work better balanced. Because the museum emphasises the importance of research and exhibitions, researchers are allowed to focus on this. Collections management can simply not be part of the researcher's work anymore, as a contemporary scholar has to publish, make presentations at conferences, be prominent in his or her domain; in addition, they also have to communicate with the public and represent their museum (NHML D).

Despite the tendencies revealed in the interviews to emphasise the importance of research, some of the researchers admitted that, according to the practical responsibilities, scientific research is a collateral activity for the museum, "according to its mission, the museum is, above all, a preservation institution" (NHML C). When looked at by practical responsibility the interviewees meant that the labour input in describing, managing, and documenting, as well as the norms established by the management for the workload necessary to manage collections (NHML C). So it was obvious that separating the tasks of researchers and collection keepers has not resulted in a marked change in practice; the researchers are still engaged in work with collections. This work, however, also depends also on the subject field; the work of archaeologists, for instance, is more related to collections.

A new tendency at the NHML, related to museum collections, is that researchers' topics of study do not necessarily have to be related to the collections. As one of the interviewees said, some years before it had been obligatory for the research topic to be related to the collections, yet recently this tendency has changed in practical terms (NHML D). The study of collections is increasingly trusted to collection keepers, who, at the NHML, are also employees educated in the corresponding academic discipline. In addition, it cannot be said that museum publications are no longer dedicated to the collections. On the contrary, the museum shop, publications in staff offices, and the interviews testify to the fact that recently quite a number of articles on archaeology, numismatics, and ethnology have been published, written on the basis of the collections.

The NHML is moving towards the specialisation that the new museology brings about: preservation (collection management) has been excluded from the traditional tasks of the curator and, as a result, the researcher can specialise in research and communication. Attention turned to the museum's communication with the community – a response to the needs of the general public – has become an increasing priority for the museums, and at the NHML this role is performed by the researchers. These processes demonstrate a tendency in the new museology to withdraw from collections as the highest priority, in order for the museum to be flexible in the choice of topics, as well as versatile and socially active. On the other hand, this tendency also proves that collections are considered important – managing them is so labour-intensive that separate specialists are needed for this work, which coincides with van Mensch's (2003) statement about function-based specialisation.

At the ENM departments are function-based. The collections department is separate from the research department. Researchers (*teadur*) and collection keepers (*koguhoidja*) work in different departments, each headed by a deputy director. In addition, the ENM has a conservation department which fulfils collection-related tasks. It is a long-established tradition at the ENM that researchers are not involved in depositing and preserving artefacts. Those studying collections are also served by the collections department. Collections are supplemented with new acquisitions in cooperation between the research and collections departments. Researchers enter initial information about the collected artefacts into the electronic database and also draw up their scientific description. Researchers are not involved in entering initial information about artefacts retrospectively, yet they add to the existing data if necessary, usually in the process of staging new exhibitions. Most of the researchers are historians and ethnologists by education.

Collection keepers are not supposed to do research or consult people, i.e., be experts on a topic in the classical meaning of curator; they rather have to take care of the safe preservation of artefacts, enter data, and cater for visitors to the collections (ENM C, G). Collection keepers are not supposed to be historians or ethnologists by education. However, the interviews elicit the fact that some collection keepers have, due to interest and long careers, become experts on their collections and deserve their colleagues' respect (ENM H). Since 2012, consultations to those interested and education for them on topics related to artefact collections has been the task of a subunit of the research department – the Cultural Heritage Study Centre (CHSC). The researchers at this subunit were renamed curators. There are three kinds of job title at the research department: researcher (*teadur*), researcher curator (*teadur-kuraator*), and curator (*kuraator*). This division refers to differentiation between the tasks: science articles constitute the majority of the researcher's work. The curator's tasks are, first and foremost, curating exhibitions and counselling and educating those interested in them. On the other hand, the interviews showed that in practice exhibitions are also curated by researchers<sup>22</sup> and curators feel some pressure to write scientific articles (ENM A, B, E, F).

In practice, knowledge of artefact collections is not differentiated by job titles (researcher, researcher curator, curator) but rather by work experience and interest. For example, there was a researcher among the interviewees who has excellent knowledge of a specific segment of the ENM collections, and she can be called a curator in the classical sense of the word. The interviews crystallised the fact that today knowledge of and research into collections is not as important for ENM researchers as it used to be in the 1980s and earlier (ENM A, B, C, D, E, F, G). The change has taken place gradually. Those with longer work experience had observed the lack of knowledge or interest in the collections mainly in the case of new researchers who come to the museum with a personal research topic that is not related to the collections, and the museum accepts it (ENM E, G). Researchers with longer work experience have a better knowledge of the collections because they were working with them when the tradition of studying collections was still viable and also because during their long careers they have staged plenty of exhibitions and drawn up many catalogues. This is generational specialisation, the representatives of which have started to retire recently causing a fear of losing collection knowledge and leading the museum to think that in the future it will be hard

to find competent people to work at the CHSC (Reidla 2017: 71–72). As was mentioned above, popularisation work based on collections is the task of the curators at the CHSC, yet they feel that the research department does not consider it on a par with publishing articles in scientific journals (ENM A, B, D).

When asked whether a researcher can work at the ENM without having any contact with the collections, the interviewees answered in the affirmative, admitting, however, that it was still necessary when they had to curate an exhibition (ENM F). In addition to this, the interviewees admitted that researchers would like the management to highlight the priorities in their tasks as well as plan for the longer term. Incomprehensible priorities are most probably related to the diversity characteristic of the job (to study and mediate an extremely wide domain), which easily makes one feel that it is not possible to do everything (ENM E). The researchers are regularly confronted with the dilemma of whether to write articles or curate and popularise exhibitions. This situation was even called an identity crisis (ENM E). The dilemma emanates from the attempt to act according to the management's expectations, yet unfortunately these expectations are not clear enough. In addition, the researchers' administrative load has increased due to the project-based character of some tasks (fieldwork, arranging exhibitions, etc.) (ENM E, F).

From the three activities in the PRC model, ENM researchers are engaged in two – research and communication, so they are not classical curators. The ENM considers the curator mainly a communicator. Researchers perform the function of academic research, yet studies based on museum collections are not predominant and the tasks of researcher curators are somewhere in between these two. Despite certain specialisation, they perceive their work as fragmentary, and would like their tasks and objectives to be defined more clearly. Those with good knowledge of artefacts and of studying them constitute a minority among the researchers. It is still an open question at the ENM whether and who should conduct scientific research into museum collections in the future; nor has this function been handed over to collection keepers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the curator's work at the Finnish and Baltic museums was based on the traditional tasks of a museum curator, which correspond to the main functions of the museum according to the PRC model presented by the Reinhardt Academy (preservation, research, communication). As was shown in the background overview, the new museology, emerging in the 1980s, brought about changes in the paradigm of curator. Traditionally, focusing on collections had formed the basis of the curator's job, and they were responsible for all the spheres directly related to the artefacts in museum collections, such as collecting artefacts, their preservation, study, and sharing information about them. So the job of classical curator merges the tasks of the researcher and the collection keeper; the curator has knowledge of and explores the collections and therefore is able to arrange exhibitions based on them. Yet, with the development of museology, the collections that initially constituted the body for which the museum was established, gradually became second rate, a kind of inconvenient load, and at the beginning of the 21st century, museums started to seek applications and justifications

for them. This tendency has also influenced the curator's position and self-definition, which has, in a way, specialised, for instance, the role of curator has withdrawn from museum collections and moved nearer to academic scholarship.

When, beginning in the last decades of the 20th century, emphases started to be changed in the museum's functions due to the appearance of the new museology, the organisational structure also underwent changes, specialisation emerged, and other professionals besides curators started to be hired. However, the model of the classical curator has not entirely disappeared today. Basically, the classical curator with a higher education in a discipline suitable for the museum field is a researcher with museum-specific functions. He/she is a collection keeper doing research into museum collections, curating exhibitions, and communicating the museum in various other ways. Along with this, a newer trend exists, the specialisation of curators, which sees curators with different tasks act side by side. A contemporary curator can be a scholar who does not explore museum collections or is not a collection keeper, but they can also specialise in collections management, exhibitions, or mediation of the museum to visitors in some other ways.

The gathered empirical material indicated that the content of curators' work somewhat differs at the ENM, the EHM, the NHML, the NML, and the NMF. These differences emanate, above all, from whether the curator is supposed to manage a collection or not. The similarity between the ENM and the NHML is that in both of them the curator is 'freed' from collections; in the rest of the studied museums curators fulfil the classical role, managing collections and, alongside, exploring and mediating them.

At the EHM, the NML, and the NMF, where curators have to manage collections, their tasks involve supplementation of collections, lending of musealia, their scientific description, as well as servicing and counselling of visitors. At the NMF, the responsibility for the physical maintenance of the collections lies with the conservators, whereas the curators mainly take care of information management and documentation. Apart from documentation the curators' responsibilities at the EHM and the NML involve the physical maintenance of the collections, including tidiness of the rooms and the proper placement of musealia in the repository. At the latter two museums, the task of collections management is proportionally the greatest.

When looking into the position of collections at the museums under study, it can be said that they are not irrelevant. The physical safety of collections is considered significant. Every country attaches great importance to the elaboration of countrywide electronic information systems, which is instrumental in the usage of collections. The museums under study contribute to entering data into nationwide databases; only the NML currently prefers their own information system. In the NHML and the ENM, it is the collection keepers rather than curators who enter information into databases.

The more extensive the concrete collection, the bigger is the volume of work related to collections management. Museum collections are continuously increasing, and here it is important to note that both the volume and the range of topics expand due to the inclusion of the themes of recent history. This could be the reason why it is complicated to manage the increasingly voluminous museum collection by the model of the classical curator. It is feasible to perform the diverse functions of the classical curator if a curator can specialise in a specific thematic field. Otherwise (for instance, when the staff is too small) it is impossible to perform all the curator's functions and manage all the thematic

fields simultaneously. In terms of specialisation, the NHML has come up with a solution by withdrawing some of the curators from collections. The same has been done for a long time at the ENM.

What are the advantages or problems for the curators who have been 'freed' from collections? The organisation rather treats them as researchers. The advantage could be the fact that because they are 'free' from collections, they have fewer tasks to perform – only the two main functions of the museum, research and communication. The fact that the ENM and the LMNH have separated their researchers from collections probably demonstrates the museum management's attempt to emphasise the importance of research and promote it. In a paradoxical way, this does not diminish the feeling of excessive diversification and diffusion of tasks. The need to focus on social problems, to be socially open and thematically flexible, which emerged with the new museology, has drawn museums closer to the community, but, on the other hand, also created new responsibilities for curators and researchers. It is no longer possible to focus on one topic and contribute to it for a long time. This problem was faced both by the museums where curators are involved in work with collections and by those where they are not. The communication function in the curator's work needs a more detailed individual analysis.

The museum is a specific space for research, where attention has to be divided between different topics, as there are not enough people for each of them separately. The community assumes that the museum provides expertise in all the topics pertaining to its collections. In an attempt to increase the volume of academic research, the museum has to comply with the efficiency requirements of neoliberal research policy, which do not consider the specificity of museum work. This is reason for conflict, and as a solution it museum curators are supposed to specialise. Empirical material revealed that despite the curator being either 'with collections' or 'without collections', they specialise periodically according to the priority field in their work.

Practical life at the ENM shows that promoting intra-museum academic research detaches research from the study of the local museum collections. From where should museum staff acquire knowledge to creating a sensory exhibition or organise workshops? While following the ICOM manual (Ladkin 2004: 29–30) and the key concepts of museums (*Key Concepts* 2010: 74) the objective of museum research is applied, i.e. to provide material for staging exhibitions and for museum education – it is probably difficult to do so without studying collections. Studying museum collections might develop on the basis of applied higher education, and the function of mediating knowledge of collections will in future be performed by collection keepers specialising in this particular field.

In conclusion it could be said that no significant differences in the preservation of collections were observed, which would depend on whether the museum structure is, according to van Mensch (2003), of the older type, i.e., collections- (or discipline)-based, or of the newer type, i.e. function-based. It cannot be argued that at a museum with a collection-based structure the curator has a closer connection with the collections than at a museum with a function-based structure, as whether the curator is with or without collections does not depend on the structure but rather on work division, which at the museums studied can be function-based regardless of the structure.

To date the ideology of the new museology has found more conscious application in the sphere of communication due to the need to communicate with the public, to be

visible, and to introduce socially interesting topics. According to this, some of the museums under study have increased the proportion of communication in their structure (the EHM, the ENM, the NMF). The affect of such change on the collections has probably not been consciously acknowledged because the function of collections preservation is influenced by the new museology not directly and purposefully but rather as a by-product of communication activities. For instance, there are activities in the service of the communication function, the aim of which is to make collections publicly accessible through digitisation<sup>23</sup> and electronic catalogues. However, this is not directly the task of the communication department (the main performer of the communication function), but is passed on, proceeding from the needs of communication, to those fulfilling the function of collections preservation, i.e., to collection keepers and curators (researchers). As more resources are required for the activities directed outside, the inside activities (related to the study of collections) reduce. This means additional workload and stress for the curators working with collections and diminishes their opportunities for research and exhibition curating. The function-based separation of tasks (curators without collections) is one of the most conspicuous solutions adopted for this problem. The intertwining of museum functions (as presented in the PRC model) probably presents a challenge to the function-based structure, which needs to be analysed in the future.

## NOTES

1 Although the influence of the new museology on the role of the museum worker cannot be viewed in isolation from wider developments, including the countries' social-economic developments, the affect of the market economy and the neo-liberal science and culture policies, in this analysis these social, political and economic factors are alluded to when touched upon in the interviews, but they are not analysed in detail. Despite their general similarities, contexts differ in different Baltic states and their detailed analysis would not be possible in the framework of the current problem setting.

2 In Latvia and Lithuania interviews were conducted either in Russian or in English, and in Finland in English. The websites of the NML and the NHML do not present the names of their staff but only representatives of departments; therefore I was not able to make agreements on interviews but depended on my contact people and I do not know if any people refused interviews; most probably the fact that the interviewees could not speak in their mother tongue limited the choice of interviewees. In some cases I also perceived that this fact inhibited the interviewee's spontaneous self-expression.

3 At the NHML the content of the concept of curator (researcher) is well illustrated by the following excerpt: "Researcher – usually it means that he is the curator of the exhibition with the knowledge in a particular science field, with a background in history, archaeology or ethnology, but probably he doesn't know all about the collections of the museum" (NHML D).

4 For example, the native-language website presents the structure of the organisation.

5 As this article focuses on one function, it does not analyse how the function-based structure manages the intertwined functions inherent in the museum.

6 Job titles can be found on the EHM homepage; apart from the aforementioned, the research and collections department employs conservators (referred to as conservator/curator on the website), an archivist, a librarian, and a photographer.

7 Most of the researcher curators fulfil the tasks of a collection keeper, yet there are a few exceptions who do not have their 'own' collection.

8 Collection keepers are referred to as curators on the EHM website, and this a confusing inconsistency in the usage of the term. In essence, the collection keeper at the EHM is not a curator, as exhibition curating or research is not expected of them.

9 Development work in the 2015–2018 period has involved the renovation of the museum's Maarjamäe complex, the construction of the Film Museum with its exhibition, and arranging the exhibition dedicated to the history of Estonia over the last 100 years.

10 The structure of the NML can be found on the NML homepage.

11 The interviewed ENM researcher curators missed this kind of guidance; they found that the museum publishes too few collections-based publications or does so only at the initiative of researcher curators.

12 See LIMIS homepage.

13 According to the data of the business newspaper *Verslo Žinios*, the number of the employees at the NML in 2018 was 252 (*Verslo Žinios* 2018).

14 In addition, this unit employs a few project researchers (*projektitutkija*), a collections assistant (*kokoelma-assistentti*), and a museum assistant (*museoassistentti*). For structure and personnel data, see *Museovirasto* a.

15 The central repository was established in 1981, after which curators' access to collections became stricter. The curators felt then that this endangered their expertise on artefacts (Hakamies 2017: 148).

16 The portal Finna can be found at <https://museot.finna.fi/>; over 300 organisations have joined. Finna is managed by the National Library and was founded by the Ministry of Education and Culture as part of the national digital library project (2008–2017) (see Finna b). Along with the Finna, *Museovirasto* is developing a common information system for museums called *Musketti* (*Museovirasto* b).

17 The guidelines were published in Finnish in 2013 and in English in 2014; the author used the latter.

18 "Ask the museum" (see *Kysy museolta*).

19 On *Museovirasto* homepage publications by NMF are brought out separately (see *Museovirasto* c).

20 Find a diagram of the structure at the NHML homepage.

21 See JCNHM database.

22 When the respondents estimated the volume of exhibition activities as enormous, they may have been influenced by the project of two permanent exhibitions completed in 2016, which involved the majority of the research department.

23 Digitisation as technical work is usually the task of collection keepers or other technical specialists; the curators' or researchers' task is, above all, to enter scientific data into the electronic catalogues.

## SOURCES

Interviews with museum professionals were conducted during the 2016–2018 period. Interviews, transcriptions, and recordings are in the possession of the author:

ENM – Estonian National Museum:

ENM A	08.11.2016
ENM B	09.11.2016
ENM C	03.03.2017
ENM D	07.04.2017
ENM E	08.03.2018
ENM F	28.03.2018
ENM G	16.11.2016
ENM H	09.11.2016

EHM – Estonian History Museum:

EHM A	24.10.2018
EHM B	24.10.2018
EHM C	25.10.2018
EHM D	30.10.2018
EHM E	31.10.2018

NHML – National History Museum of Latvia:

NHML A	06.11.2017
NHML B	07.11.2017
NHML C	07.11.2017
NHML D	07.11.2017

NML – National Museum of Lithuania:

NML A	01.03.2018
NML B	01.03.2018
NML C	01.03.2018

NMF – National Museum of Finland:

NMF A	23.01.2018
NMF B	24.01.2018
NMF C	24.01.2018

E-mails with interviewees are in the possession of the author:

e-mail EHM F1	07.11.2018
e-mail NMF B2	12.11.2018

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