



INDIANA UNIVERSITY FOLKLORE INSTITUTE TRADITIONS

Alumni Newsletter of the Department of Folklore

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JFR: 'The most emergent journal in the field'

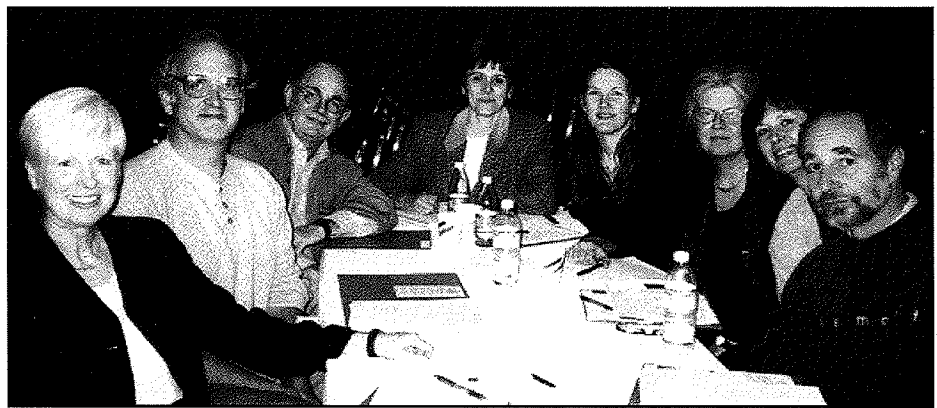
When the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* was begun in 1964, it was not really a beginning but a transformation of *Midwest Folklore*, a regional journal, into an international journal showcasing the study of folklore in an international context. Again in 1983, the journal changed its name: *JFI* became *JFR*, the *Journal of Folklore Research*, to de-emphasize the connection with the Folklore Institute itself and to put research in the foreground.

Journals evolve to continue. And so, in 1998, *JFR* began another, much more collaborative round of evolutionary, potentially transformative discussions by inviting a new cohort of advisory editors — all chosen from among IU alumni. We convened an editorial board meeting the day before the American Folklore Society began its annual gathering in Portland, Ore. Many items were on the agenda — most particularly, charting the next transformations.

Should we change the name again? And if so, to what? We revisited many of the comments — oral and written — that have surfaced in the wake of the 150th anniversary of the coining of the term "folklore" and the disciplinary anxiety about the utility or inutility of the word. But we came to no definitive decision. We grappled with the potentials and drawbacks of electronic publishing.

Those of us based in Bloomington returned with pages full of ideas, some of which we have or are in the process of turning into reality — some to do with content, some with form, some with expanding our Web presence, some with the nuts and bolts of journal survival.

We share these decisions with you because this is, collectively, *our* journal, *our* way of presenting the discipline we have studied and embraced (or not) as graduates and undergraduates, to ourselves as



Meeting of the board: IU alumni gather at AFS to advise JFR staff. From left are editor Mary Ellen Brown, Greg Schrempp, Neil Rosenberg, Betty Belanus, Regina Bendix, Barbro Klein, Inta Carpenter, and Elliott Oring.

well as to others. We invite your continued participation — as contributor, as subscriber, as book note writer.

Look for us on the Web at <http://www.indiana.edu/~jofr>. There you will see our newly re-tooled pages and will have a chance to peruse the book notes, which are now beginning to be posted, rather than printed, in the journal. Beginning in 2000, you will see the table of contents of various issues, as well as abstracts of articles.

In fact, we think you may be missing something if you are *not* a subscriber. At the advisory board meeting, one of our alumni half-facetiously quipped that we should subtitle *JFR* "The journal of what you *will* be thinking." Recent issues have dealt with the name "folklore" itself, an interrogation of basic tools of the trade, applied folklore, genre, revisiting the history of the study of vernacular materials, international perspectives that challenge our views, and analyses of the broad and developing array of uses and re-contextualizations of the object of our study. This collective and cumulative discourse is actively involved in the produc-

tion of the knowledge that further advances our ability to understand, critique, interrogate our ways of knowing. We invite you to read what our authors say, to respond — by sending us comments, submissions, book notes (for the Web), and, of course, suggestions for future issues.

Especially, we welcome your submissions of many sorts: cutting-edge approaches to the materials we call our own; encounters with folklore, historical or contemporary; translations of works that merit our attention or expand our knowledge of the study of folklore throughout the world; reviews of essays on related books that we should all know about; solid academic papers that add to our knowledge of the data, theories, methods we use; forums and special issues. We sometimes invent a new category to make room for something new, different, challenging. Do you have a suggestion? **Let us know.**

We invite your help and participation in this ongoing and always emergent process.

— Mary Ellen Brown, Editor

Past journal assistants reminisce about *JFR*

Editorial assistants have always been key players in the production of the journal. Their duties range from acknowledging receipt of submissions to participating in the initial review of manuscripts to careful copyediting for consistency and clarity. Editors have benefited enormously from their participation.

What might *JFR* have meant to student assistants, we wondered, and so we asked them to write something about their stint at *JFR* — or *JFI*, as it was called in former days.

Frank DeCaro, now on the faculty of Louisiana State University, wrote that he got a “kick out of being addressed as ‘Dear Colleague!’ by German contributors” and was “amused by the occasional contributor who seemed to think that I was more powerful than Richard Dorson.” Editing the student journal *Folklore Forum*, he adds, “was a lot more fun, however.” In DeCaro’s estimation, *JFR*’s hallmark has been to “put out an intellectually solid product.”

Egle Zygas, now senior press officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, remembers *JFI* as a “formative experience,” one she didn’t fully appreciate at the time, but which yielded her three pieces of advice she still follows today: “Writing — even about the most arcane material — should be clear and compelling; footnotes should be even more interesting than the body of the text, to reward the dedicated reader; and editing is an art, not a science, and is best practiced with a light hand, a sensitive heart, a sharp pencil, and a good eraser.”



Lisa Gabbert, '97-'99 assistant

folklore, Alice is doing fieldwork for Historic Landmarks Foundation in Indianapolis.

Janet Gilmore and **Sandy Dolby** shared the first split editorial assistantship in 1972. They inherited “a prodigious backlog,” Janet recalls, and “a sluggish production schedule,” with the publisher in The Hague, Netherlands. While Dorson jokingly called them his “‘jiffy girls’ and ‘faithful servants,’” he never sent them “on fool’s errands as he sometimes did with his male assistants — he gave us tremendous responsibility,” and thus “far from substantiating the stereotype of the

Alice Morrison Mordoh remembers enjoying her time at *JFR*, even though Dorson “was fastidious, difficult, perfectionistic. He minded me of my father, another crotchety professor. I felt right at home!” After 15 years of absence from the field of

time that two women graduate students equaled one man, we proved instead ‘two for the price of one!’” Based in Mount Hore, Wis., Janet has worked as an independent folklore researcher for almost two decades.

Simon Bronner recalls that working for *JFI* during the late 1970s “meant understanding the zeal, philosophy, and intellect of its editor, Richard Dorson,” for the journal “was an extension of him.” Simon and **Stephen Stern** shocked student colleagues (“with our cheekiness”) when they submitted a dissenting response to Dorson’s special issue on “Folklore in America vs. American Folklore.” But, adds Simon, “the truth was that Dorson relished the chance to dialogue and built several issues around the controversy.” Simon is a distinguished professor of folklore and American studies at Penn State in Harrisburg.

As we pass the millennium mark, **Danielle Lindquist**, second-year graduate student in folklore, with a particular interest in folklore and education, will join the long list of *JFR* student assistants. She succeeds **Lisa Gabbert**, now a fourth-year graduate student in folklore, who is preparing to take prelims and begin dissertation fieldwork.

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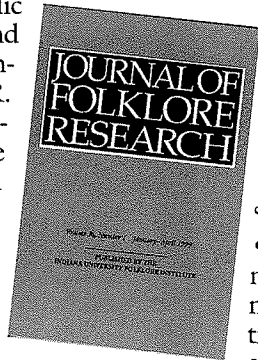
JFR notes

Social Research thanks JFR

For several years, *JFR* has participated in the East & Central Europe Journal Donation Project, sponsored by the journal *Social Research* at the New School for Social Research in New York City. In a recent letter thanking *JFR* for participating, staff from the project quote a library director in Lithuania: "In the name of all our readers, I thank you for the possibility to be acquainted with the newest achievements of science, art, culture, education, and democracy." Libraries in Albania, Ukraine, Lithuania, Macedonia, Latvia, Moldova, Republic of Georgia, Estonia, and Slovakia are receiving complimentary copies of *JFR*. Several others have recently begun to purchase subscriptions. Do you have recipients to suggest? **Let us know.**

Hottest course adoptions

In the last five years, Gary Alan Fine's "The Kentucky Fried Rat: Legends and Modern Society" (vol. 17, 1980) has far outpaced any other requests to copy *JFR* articles for course adoptions. Elliott Oring's "Dyadic Traditions" (vol. 21, 1984) and Nancy Baym's "Interpreting Soap Operas and Creating Community: Inside a Computer-Mediated Fan Club" (vol. 30, 1993) round out the top three.



contrast, Archie Green's suggestion that the term was suggested in 1988 at a meeting of state arts agencies. Article in Robert Baron and Nicolas R. Spitzer, *Public Folklore*.)

Whatever the origin of the term, we are pleased to be a forum for exploration of public folklore's goals and contributions to our field. Do you want to add your voice to our pages? **Let us know.**

JFR past classics

- **Dan Ben-Amos**, "Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in Its Meaning in American Folklore Studies" (1984)
- **Alan Dundes**, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory" (1969)
- **Gary Alan Fine**, "The Kentucky Fried Rat: Legends and Modern Society" (1980)
- **Lauri Honko**, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs" (1964)
- **Suzi Jones**, "Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy" (1976)
- **Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, "Authoring Lives" (1989)
- **Robert B. Klymasz**, "From Immigrant to Ethnic Folklore: A Canadian View of Process and Transition" (1973)
- **Elliott Oring**, "Dyadic Traditions" (1984)
- **Kurt Ranke**, "Einfache Formen" (1967)
- **Sandra K.D. Stahl**, "The Personal Narrative As Folklore" (1977)
- **John Alexander Williams**, "Radicalism and Professionalism in Folklore Studies: A Comparative Perspective" (1974)
- **William A. Wilson**, "The *Kalevala* and Finnish Politics" (1975)

Alumni news

1960s

Joseph C. Hickerson, MA'61, after 35 years as head of the Archive of Folk Culture and head of acquisitions for the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, retired in July 1998. He has helped found several clubs, including the Indiana University Folk Sing Club in 1961. As a folksinger, he has been heard in live concerts, on radio recordings, on tapes, and on CDs, and as the author of the last two verses of the song "Where Have All the Flowers Gone."

Margaret Read MacDonald, BA'62, PhD'79, returned from two winters as a Fulbright Scholar in Mahasarakham, Thailand. Her recent books are *Scipio Storytelling: Talk in a Southern Indiana Community* (University Press of America, 1996) and *Traditional Storytelling Today* (Fitzroy Dearborn, fall 1998). She lives in Kirkland, Wash.

1970s

Francis A. deCaro, PhD'73, wrote and edited *Louisiana Sojourns: Travelers' Tales and Literary Journeys* (Louisiana State University Press, May 1998). He is a professor of English at LSU and the author/editor of four previous books. In June, he received a 1998 Preservation Award from the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, "for advancing the knowledge and preservation of Louisiana folklife and folklore through his scholarship, writing, and teaching." (See page 2.)

Joyce E. Ritchie, BA'74, BME'78, is the associate director of development at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. She and her husband, Thomas, live in Elkhart.

William A. Wilson, PhD'74, was awarded a 1998 Governor's Award in the Arts for his accomplishments and contributions to the arts in Utah. He founded the Brigham Young University Folklore Archive and the Fife Folklife Conference at Utah State University. He is professor emeritus at Brigham Young University and lives in Provo, Utah.

Claudia H. (Johnson) Loomis, MA'77, has a new book coming out from Focal Press in January 2000, titled *Five Easy Screenplays: Screenwriting at the Florida State University School of Motion Picture, Television, and Recording Arts*. She is a professor at Florida State University. Her husband, **Ormond H. Loomis**, PhD'80, is writing his dissertation for his second doctoral degree, in rhetoric and composition. Their daughter, Anne, graduated from Dartmouth in June, and their son, Ross, will be a senior in high school, applying to colleges this fall.

Ann G. Swartzell, BA'77, MLS'78, is the senior preservation program officer of the Harvard University Library Preservation Center. She and her husband, Stuart, live in Lexington, Mass.

1980s

Kofi Anyidoho, MA'83, is a literature professor at the University of Ghana, a poet, and the president of the African Literature Association. He lives in Legon, Ghana.

1990s

Lynne M. Hamer, MA'90, PhD'95, received an Outstanding Teacher Award from the University of Toledo in April. She joined the UT faculty in 1994. She teaches graduate courses in qualitative research methods, qualitative data analysis, folklore and multicultural education, and one undergraduate course, Diversity in Contemporary Society.

Alan R. Burdette, MA'93, PhD'97, wrote his doctoral degree thesis, titled "Celebrating Localities: Performance and Community in a German-American Singing Society." He is a visiting professor at the IU Folklore Institute. He and his wife, Deb, live in Bloomington.

Jolie L. Hess, BA'96, is a financial advisor and insurance broker. She lives in Philadelphia, Pa.

JFR stakes its claim to 'public folklore'

For some time, the editors have been interested in publishing work written by folklorists engaged in the public side of our profession. *JFR* is pleased to have achieved this goal, first in 1998 by collaborating with David Shuldiner and Jessica Payne, editors of *Folklore in Use*, on papers from applied folklore sessions that were originally presented at AFS in Pittsburgh. Now, this fall, we will publish papers from an international symposium held in Germany in summer 1998, titled "Cultural Brokerage: Forms of Intellectual Practice in Society."

JFR posthumously published a piece by Richard Dorson, in which he used the term "public folklore" to refer to the "newest term in the lexicon of folklorists," one that "shows all signs that it will be widely used in the 1980s." (See, in

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