Finnish folk music collector
Erkki Ala-Könni

Digital collection catalogues as a research material

Photo FMI, Leo Torppa
Basic information

- Erkki Ala-Könni (1911-1996)
- Collected from 1940’s to 1980’s
- “The Collector’s gaze” (Anttonen 2005)

Photo TFA (Tampere/4196)
Research material

- Content lists of the sound recordings
- Tampere Folklife Archives: 5347 recordings
- First handwritten manuscripts, available also in a digital database
  = Collection catalogues

Photo TFA (Tampere/4196)
Photo: Tampere Folklife Archives (Veteli/0631a)
Classification

- "Traditional Music"

P Common and miscellaneous
P1 Signal
P2 Improvisation
P3 Ceremonial Music
P4 March Music
P5 Folk Dances
P6 Pastime Music
P7 Spiritual Music
P8 Other Folk Music
P9 Art-Performances

P10 Common and miscellaneous (concerning instruments)

P11 Shepherds instruments
P12 Kantele (Finnish national instrument)
P13 Violin
P14 Clarinet
P15 Accordion
P16 Other instrument
P17 Folk ensemble
P18 Learning, teaching, competitions, composing…
# Collection catalogues in paper

A-K 1 [Tape-number] / 1941 [Year]  9,5 Parlograph

H a l s u a [Recording place in Finland]
Karvonen Viljo, born 1906  [Name and year of birth]
Busdriver, plays kantele  [Profession and instrument]

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## Classification as a standard set of numbers

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As an Inspiration

- **Erkki Ala-Könni:**
  - "There are a lack of good recordings [...] with those we could "feed" the computers and after that get good results – results that we can’t predict" (1981 / Kper Y08720)

- **Alan Lomax:**
  - "It still remains for us to learn how we can put our magnificent mass communications technology at the service of each and every branch of the human family". (1960 / Association for Cultural Equity)
Digital humanities

- Keywords: Computing, digital technologies, humanities
- Also for textual metadata in archival database?
- Data-mining, visualisations, mapping…
Women in Finnish folk music

- Collectings 1940 – 1956
  (recordings 1-109)

<table>
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<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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Photo: Tampere Folklife archives (Alavus/1143a)
Age groups

The number of recorded tracks
Place of Birth - 1940’s

Instrument recordings from men

Instrument recordings from women
Place of Birth - 1950’s

Instrument recordings from men

Instrument recordings from women
“Self-educated, no sheet music…”

- “Oral tradition”
- "Master-folk-musicians shouldn’t depend on sheet music"
- “Those who can read sheet music, go to the Art music -division”
- Recordings marked with -b booklore – if being played from sheet music
  - Over 1000 performances, no-one was marked with -b booklore...
Collector’s gaze

- Gatekeeper: What was worth being recorded?
- ”Folk Music Canon” : Did the ideals become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

TFA (Kaustinen/0584)
Classification – a stepping-stone?

- Classes (and subclasses) illustrate the collection more specifically than many of the computer programs.
- Collector himself created the classes of "tradition".
- Classifications don't tell us about folk music itself – they define what the collector considered to be folk music.
Conclusions

- "Collector’s gaze" - what he was interested in?
- Graphical User Interface of the Archival database is usually not good enough for the Digital Humanities
- Analysis enables us to deal with more than 155,000 performances in an archive!
Requirements

- Certain technical resources
  - Open database
  - Computer-readable format
  - Placenames etc. In certain style

Classification track-by-track (as opposed to whole recordings) makes statistical analysis easier - Collector was here ahead of his time!
Thank you!

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outi.valo@kaustinen.fi

PhD Student, Music research (University of Tampere)
Archivist-in-chief (Folk Music Institute of Finland)

Photographs:
- FMI: Folk Music Institute (Kaustinen, Finland)
- TFA: Tampere Folklife archive (University of Tampere, Finland)