

Mister National Archivist, Excellencies, honoured guests!

It's a pleasure and honour to be here today with you to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the National Archives. The National Archives as a carrier of cultural continuity and preserver of national memory of Estonia has today reached a new milestone, a number so remarkable and illustrious as 100 years of existence.

The past one hundred years has been filled with bustling activity, perseverance and preservation of archival records throughout the Soviet era and its policy of blanket classification and development into a leading-age modern archival institution. Today we can proudly acknowledge the favourable positioning of the National Archives for its next hundred years: usage of the archives is at an all-time high - over 20 million digital archival records are only a click away and online applications of the archives were visited more than 1.5 million times last year.

For ten years already archival services have been available to all for as much as twenty-four hours a day and archival collections contain something interesting to everyone, no matter their age or education. The archives are used across Estonia and beyond. I am pleased that information that used to be largely confined to professionals has now become accessible and attractive also to those who might not otherwise even think of accessing archival content. The involvement of volunteers in the description of archival sources has definitely played a role here - joint authorship has become an everyday part of archival work in the last ten years.

It is worth mentioning that besides individual contributors the Archives has been able to successfully involve companies. The campaign and acquisition project titled Estonian Companies 100+ launched on Estonia's big anniversary year has helped inform companies that the heritage they too create is worth preservation for future generations.

The efforts of the National Archives in the field of archival education have been invaluable and yielded results extending far into the future. The range of archival education programmes is incredibly wide: for example, do ladies and gentlemen in the audience know that Noora, the main building of the Archives, can also be explored through an escape room? In addition to typical archives classes, exhibitions and field trips there are cycling tours organised, interactive video games

played, historical garrison sites visited, archival films watched, they participate in the museum night programme and do many other things.

The National Archives' contribution to science is also remarkable. During the last 20 years the Archives has published over 200 scientific publications, of which a particular highlight is the two-volume monograph about State Elder Jaan Tõnisson that was published last year in collaboration with the Government Office.

For substantive work to be effective it is important that it is supported by infrastructure. Undoubtedly one of the ground-breaking moments in the history of National Archives was the opening of its main building three years ago, finally allowing our most important and oldest archival records to be placed in proper conditions with capacity to acquire and store long-awaited new collections.

It was equally important that the government last year decided to support the reconstruction of the National Library building in Tallinn. This will carry out the long-awaited plan whereby two of Estonia's most important memory institutions - the National Archives and National Library - will have the same physical location in Tallinn. The synergy from this will open up new opportunities for the institutions themselves and for visitors.

A lot has been completed but more still needs to be done. Today, on this festive day, I wish the dedicated staff of the archives could look back with satisfaction at their achievements and would be as determined in the future while preserving the heritage reflecting Estonian society. Congratulations!

Mailis Reps

Minister of Education and Research

Speech given by Mart Laidmets

Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Research