



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Vigdís International Centre
under the auspices of UNESCO

Annual Report 2020

The Vigdís International Centre



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FOREWORD

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages began its operations under its new name in October 2001, making 2020 its nineteenth year of activities.

The Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding was formally inaugurated on 20 April 2017, on the opening day of Veröld – House of Vigdís, where the Centre is located, and it operates within the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute and under the auspices of UNESCO.

The Vigdís International Centre's programme was unusually limited in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and many conferences and events were cancelled from the middle of March onwards. Nonetheless, the board and members of the centre made a considerable effort to strengthen and promote its programme, not least concerning the centre's role in helping organise the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032), which UNESCO had announced at the end of 2020; indeed the chairperson of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages' governing board is a member of IDIL's steering committee. Much hard work on other projects also continued; the exhibition on Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's life and career was completed in the Vigdís Room, and in collaboration with Gagarín, the design and interactive multimedia company, preparation continued for the Living Language Lab exhibition which will be held in Veröld's exhibition room. Finally, mention should be made of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute's publication of the twelfth edition of its journal *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, its Icelandic translations of European literary works, and a book in honour of Professor emerita Auður Hauksdóttir, who retired in April.

Events and projects in which the Vigdís International Centre was involved were completed with the collaboration of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and other international organisations.

We would like to thank the board members, staff of the institute and centre, participants, collaborative partners and all well-wishers for their invaluable support throughout the year.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Chairperson and Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages.

Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, Chairperson of the board of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding.

THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

The Vigdís International Centre is the umbrella title of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, which is a research institute within the University of Iceland's School of Humanities, and the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Cultural Understanding, which operates within the VFIFL under the auspices of UNESCO.

The Vigdís International Centre places great emphasis on a multicultural knowledge and approach to other nations and languages and that multilingualism can facilitate personal, cultural and economic achievements. Globalisation calls for increasingly versatile skills in cross-cultural exchanges and various forms of interaction in all aspects of human life. The new challenges now facing communities, institutes, companies and private individuals on the international scene can only be handled with a comprehensive ability to communicate between differing linguistic and cultural worlds.

The United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development for the world is the guiding light in the forming of the Vigdís International Centre's policies and research. The centre works towards declaration number 16, concerning peace and justice, and also number 4, regarding education for all, by supporting and encouraging multilingualism, translation studies, multicultural exchanges and imbuing respect between differing cultural groups through championing research in foreign languages by providing more knowledge to the general public, providing further education for teachers, and welcoming visits of schoolchildren to the centre. Equal rights and environmental concerns are also seen as a guiding light for the work of the Vigdís International Centre.

THE VIGDÍS FINNBOGADÓTTIR INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages is one of the main members of the Research Centre of the Humanities which carries out teaching and research in the languages currently taught in the Faculty of Language and Cultures in the School of Humanities at the University of Iceland: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, English, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. The institute's research is based on various aspects of language and cultures and the main topics include:

- Linguistics, including comparative linguistics, interaction between languages, language acquisition, second language learning, and lexicology.
- Literature, including that of individual nations and language areas and also the literature of immigrants.
- The languages and cultures of specific geographical and linguistic regions, linguistic relations and comparisons of languages and cultures, both contemporary and historical.
- Communications in foreign languages and their value in education, culture and international trade and industry.
- Development of language teaching techniques and materials and the application of new technology in language courses and instruction.
- Translations for practical as well as literary purposes.

The aim of the Vigdís Institute is to support and strengthen research and teaching in languages and culture. The main guiding light in this research is to increase the understanding of multilingualism and the value of a knowledge on foreign languages and cultures in all their various aspects. The Institute disseminates its knowledge of the nature of language courses and innovations in language teaching at all the levels of education.

The institute also supports an informed discussion in society about multilingualism, literature and culture, language courses and teaching, and cultural literacy. The institutes carries out this role by holding lectures, symposia and conferences in connection with the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, the publication of scholarly works, and the development of course materials and other useful resources in order to simplify communication in a multilingual world. Much emphasis is placed on language technology for the benefit of language courses and research, including the development of internet-related courses, language materials and online dictionaries. The institute maintains a strong scholarly discussion through a programme of lectures and the

publication of an online journal: *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*. Scholars within the institute participate in many development and research projects within their various fields of interest and in collaboration with Icelandic and foreign scholars and university institutions.

THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MULTILINGUALISM AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding was formally inaugurated on 20 April 2017, the very same day as the official opening of the building Veröld – House of Vigdís. The centre supports conferences, seminars, lectures, research, film screenings, courses, meetings, and exhibitions to provide information and knowledge about foreign languages in as wide a spectrum as possible, in order to fulfill its obligations according to the agreement between the government of Iceland and UNESCO signed in June 2013. The main objectives of the centre are:

- To promote multilingualism in order to further understanding, exchange and respect between cultures and nations;
- To raise awareness of the importance of language as a core element of the cultural heritage of mankind;
- To promote translation and translation studies and the observation, analysis and statistics of translation flow;
- To work at the preservation of languages and to create awareness of language policies and control of languages, with multilingualism as a guiding light;
- To promote research and education in foreign languages and cultures;
- To support and promote research into mother tongues, regarding them as a basic element of human rights.

The main emphases of the Vigdís International Centre during its first decade of operations are to be as follows:

- Ecology of Languages in the West Nordic Region, i.e. the interconnection of languages and cultures on the western coast of Norway and in the Faroe Isles, Iceland and Greenland.
- Indigenous languages and languages in limited geographic areas with small numbers of native speakers, in connection with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032 (IDIL 2022-2032) in collaboration with UNESCO.
- The literature, language and culture of the Romani/Gypsy peoples around the world in connection with the research network Roma in the Centre.
- The organizing and setting up of The Living Language Lab exhibition, to be opened in 2021, where visitors will have the opportunity to become acquainted with, and be informed about, the history and development of various languages from all over the world.



Members and staff of the Vigdis International Centre.

GOVERNING BOARDS, SCHOLARS AND STAFF

The governing board of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages in 2020 consisted of Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor in Second Language Learning and also the board's chairperson, Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Professor of French, Geir Þórarinn Þórarinsson, Adjunct in Greek and Latin, Oddný G. Sverrisdóttir, Professor of German, and Guðmundur S. Brynjólfsson, the doctoral students' representative.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, and Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir made up the institute's editorial board, while Geir Þórarinn Þórarinsson and Þórhildur Oddsdóttir were the editors of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute's internet journal, Milli Mála.

The governing board of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding consisted of Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, the board's chairperson and Professor of French, Ann-Sofie Nielsen Grimaud, Lecturer in Danish, Geir Sigurðsson, Professor of Chinese Studies, Guðrún Kvaran, Professor emerita of Icelandic, and the government's representative appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Irmgarda Kasinskaite a programme specialist and the representative of the executive office of UNESCO, and Sæunn Stefánsdóttir, representative of the Icelandic UNESCO committee. According to the agreement made with UNESCO, the executive committee is to oversee the projects and policies of the Centre, and this executive committee is composed of all the board members except the UNESCO and Icelandic UNESCO representatives. The governing board of the Centre held its annual meeting on 9 September 2020, and the executive committee also held a meeting once during the year.

In 2020 there were thirty-five scholars who were members of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages. The staff of the Vigdís Institute consisted of Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir, publicity and project manager and Valgerður Jónsdóttir, publishing and events manager.



Governing Board of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages



Governing Board of the International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding

COLLABORATION

The Vigdís International Centre collaborates with a large number of institutes, organisations, associations and companies, both in Iceland and internationally. Examples include: Linguapax, European Language Resources Association (ELRA), Common Language Resource and Technology Infrastructure (CLARIN), the Icelandic Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, the City of Reykjavík, the Reykjavik City Library, the Centre for Icelandic Literature, the Reykjavík International Literary Festival, various publishers, STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland, Women Political Leaders (WPL), the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL), InfoTerm, Modelling the Consequences of Digital Language Contact (MoLiCoDiLaCo), the Nordic House, the Language Centre of the University of Iceland, the Northern Lights Confucius Institute in Iceland, the Icelandic Mother Tongue Association, the Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters, the Gypsy Lore Society, Andrúm architects, Gagarín, the embassies of the United States of America, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia and Sweden, many universities throughout the world, and the cultural associations Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute.



**TIL HAMINGJU
VIGDÍS!**

ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN HONOUR OF VIGDÍS FINNBOGADÓTTIR

On 15 April 2020, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir celebrated her ninetieth birthday, and June of the same year marked the fortieth anniversary of her historic election as President of Iceland. This gave occasion for the University of Iceland, the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, the Icelandic government and the City of Reykjavík, in collaboration with RÚV (the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service), and the Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre, along with numerous other associations and companies, to present a celebratory programme in her honour. It was also the occasion for the first presentation of the Vigdís International Prize.

On Vigdís's actual birthday itself, there was a plan to hold a splendid celebration at the University Cinema, but as this became impossible due to social restrictions concerning the Covid-19 outbreak, a birthday programme entitled "Congratulations, Vigdís!" was televised by RÚV on the same evening. Many entertainers, artistes, and prominent members of government and society expressed their gratitude and best wishes to Vigdís on this very special day.

THE AUÐUR AUDITORIUM NAMED DURING THE AUÐUR FESTIVAL

There was a large gathering of people for the Auður Festival on 12 June 2020 in Veröld – House of Vigdís. Members of the University of Iceland choir sang a repertoire of songs while gifts and congratulatory messages poured in from many different places. The Rector of the University of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson, gave a speech in which he announced that the main auditorium was to be named in Auður's honour. Other speakers included Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, the current Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, Gísli Magnússon, Professor of Danish, who presented Auður with a book of essays dedicated to her, Þórhildur Oddsdóttir, Adjunct in Danish, Valgerður Jónasdóttir, the institute's events manager, who presented Auður with a chronicle of her work for both the institute and the University of Iceland, and the pastor Davíð Þór Jónsson, who spoke on behalf of all of Auður's former students.

Auður Hauksdóttir has had a superb career at the University of Iceland and in recent decades used all her powers and skills in the service of foreign languages and participating in a large number of confidential and important executive and advisory committees, both within and outside the University. The two greatest achievements of Auður's career are without doubt the building of Veröld – House of Vigdís, a project she worked on for many years, and the establishment of the International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding.



Jón Atli Benediktsson and Auður Hauksdóttir

RESEARCH SUBJECTS, RESEARCH NETWORKS AND DEVELOPING PROJECTS

RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH NETWORKS

Jón Ólafsson, Professor of Cultural Studies and Russian was given an excellence award for his project **Democratic Constitutional Design: Negotiating Civic Engagement, Institutional Control and the Common Good** which examines what lessons about democratic constitutional design can be drawn from the ongoing attempts to revise the Icelandic constitution that began in 2010.

Pórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, is the project leader of research entitled **Insular Scandinavian Morphology and Morphosyntax** ongoing from 2019–2021.

Three research networks of multinational teams of scholars concentrating on the West Nordic area are now within the International Centre's auspices:

Auður Hauksdóttir, Professor emerita of Danish, is leading the research network **Language and Cultural Interaction in the West Nordic Region**, which is investigating the linguistic and cultural interconnections between Greenland, Iceland, the western coast of Norway, and the Faroe Isles. The SVF members of the network include Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Birna Bjarnadóttir, Gísl Magnússon, Guðrún Kvaran, Kristján Árnason, Pernille Folkmann, Pórhallur Eypórsson, and Þórhildur Oddsdóttir; in addition there are representatives from universities and institutes in Greenland, Norway, Denmark and the Faroe Isles.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir and Auður Hauksdóttir are in charge of **The Language Barometer**, a synchronic contact study of the Faroese, Greenlandic and Icelandic languages with English and Danish.

Pórhildur Oddsdóttir, Adjunct in Danish, leads the research project **The Representation of Language and Culture in Learning Materials for Foreign and Second Language Learning** in which representatives from four universities in Scandinavia take part. The main aim of this project, financially supported by Nordplus Sprog, is to examine the course materials and books used in the teaching of Danish in Iceland, the Faroe Isles, Greenland, and Denmark, as well as the teaching of Swedish in Finland.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Professor of French, is leading two research projects, one on **Representations of Sin**, dealing with the origins of the concept and its representations in literature, and the other on **The Translation and Reception of French Narrative Literature in Iceland**, from medieval times until the present day.

Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir, Associate Professor of English, represents the research project **Scotland in the North: Arctic Encounters in Scottish Literature**, with the goal to provide new insights and knowledge as to how the longstanding ties between Scotland and the Arctic have informed Scottish literary culture from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor of Second Language Learning, is one of the leaders of **WILA – Workshop on Heritage Languages in the Americas**, which holds a conference every year, alternatively in Europe and the Americas, and publishes an annual journal. Birna is also one of the leaders of **PRISEAL**, a research network concerned with the use of English in the writing of academic articles.

Sofiya Zahova, a research specialist, leads an international research network **Roma in the Centre**, a multidisciplinary project involving the study of the literature, language, culture and social issues of the Romani/Gypsy peoples around the whole world. Creating a detailed databank on the publication of Roma literature is also part of the project as well as the publication this year in Icelandic of the book *Sunday Meal and Other Roma Stories*.

Pórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, is a participant in the research network **Emotive Performativity in Northern Europe**, in progress 2019–2021 and in the research network **The Oxford History of North Germanic Morphology** for the period 2018–23.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

Auður Hauksdóttir is leading the development of two projects related to the teaching of Danish in the Faroe Isles, Greenland and Iceland. On the one hand is the pedagogic material **Taleboblen** to help teach spoken Danish, especially pronunciation, and on the other the interactive computer game **Talerum** for the teaching of Danish. Auður is also leading the project **Frasar**, which is an online collection of Danish-Icelandic idioms designed especially to help Icelanders express themselves in Danish, and which can also be used to help Danes express themselves in Icelandic.

The Icelandic-French online bilingual dictionary **LEXIA** is a collaborative project of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. Other collaborative partners include the Sorbonne University in France and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The project began in 2015 and it is hoped to be completed by 2021. The project leader of the French part is Rósa Elín Davíðsdóttir, and both she and Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir are the representatives of VFIFL on the committee of experts.

Icelandic Online is a collaborative project of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. The project director is Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir. Seven Icelandic Online web courses began during the period 2004–2013 which were intended for self-education on computers, tablets and smartphones; they were all free with open access. Around 200,000 people all around the world have registered for these courses, of which 70,000 users are active participants. Since 2019, work has progressed on producing a new Icelandic Online course especially for children between the ages of five and seven. The project's editorial board consists of Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Halldóra Þorlákssdóttir, Þorgerður Anna Björnsdóttir, Úlfar Bragason and Branislav Bedi. In 2020 both the methodology and technology of Icelandic Online was utilised to develop two internet courses intended for students preparing for university studies; the editor of the German course is Vanessa Iseemann and Rósa Elín Davíðsdóttir is the editor of the French one.



Á fjarlægum ströndum

TENGL SPÁNAR OG ÍSLANDS Í TÍMANS RÁS



SUNNUDAGSMATUR

og fleiri sögur Rómafólks

Sunzi

Hernaðarlist Meistara Sun

við kvikuna

örsögur frá Rómönsku-Ameríku

Raddir frá Spáni

Sögur eftir spænskar konur

LANGUAGES OPEN UP WORLDS

| Words for Vigdís

TUNGUMÁL LJÚKA UPP HEIMUM

| Orð handa Vigdís

SPROG ÅBNER VERDENER

| Ord tilegnet Vigdís Finnbogadóttir

Pablo Neruda

Hafið starfar í þögn minni

Jorge Luis Borges

Yfir saltan mar

T.S. Eliot

Morð í dómkirkju

Rangan og réttan - Brúðkaup - Sumar

Albert Camus

Franz Kafka

UMSKIPTIN

PUBLICATIONS

The Vígdís International Centre pays special attention to the publication of scholarly research and translations of foreign literary works into Icelandic and publishes an annual journal *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*. The centre's series of dual-language books now has more than a dozen titles available. This work is beneficial for students in the fields of languages, literature and the humanities in general and is also intended for lovers of literature who have the opportunity to compare the translation with the classic's original text. The centre's single-language translations aim at introducing foreign authors and works that are not so well known here in Iceland while also filling a gap in the history of Icelandic translations. All attempts are made to translate these works from their original languages, and most of them have detailed introductions.

MILLI MÁLA – JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

The twelfth volume of *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures* was published in 2020 with open access on the website millimala.is. The editors of this edition are Geir Þórarinn Þórarinnsson and Þórhildur Oddsdóttir. The journal publishes peer-reviewed articles in the fields of foreign languages, translations, linguistics and education. A tradition has also evolved of publishing literary translations, especially of short stories and texts. There are seven peer-reviewed articles in the twelfth volume of *Milli Mála* featuring topics of literature, linguistics, the teaching of foreign languages, translations and composition. It also contains the works of eight authors which have been translated from six languages.

THE ART OF WAR BY SUN TZU

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is one of the most famous and widely read ancient works in the Chinese language. Its direct influence on the military tactics of China and other surrounding nations through the course of history can hardly be overestimated. Geir Sigurðsson's work is the first ever Icelandic translation of an ancient Chinese book and has the original text on each opposite page of the Icelandic version. The book is edited by Rebekka Práinsdóttir and

published by the Vigdís Institute for Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press with the aid of a grant from the Icelandic Literature Centre.

VIÐ KVIKUNA – FLASH FICTION FROM LATIN AMERICA

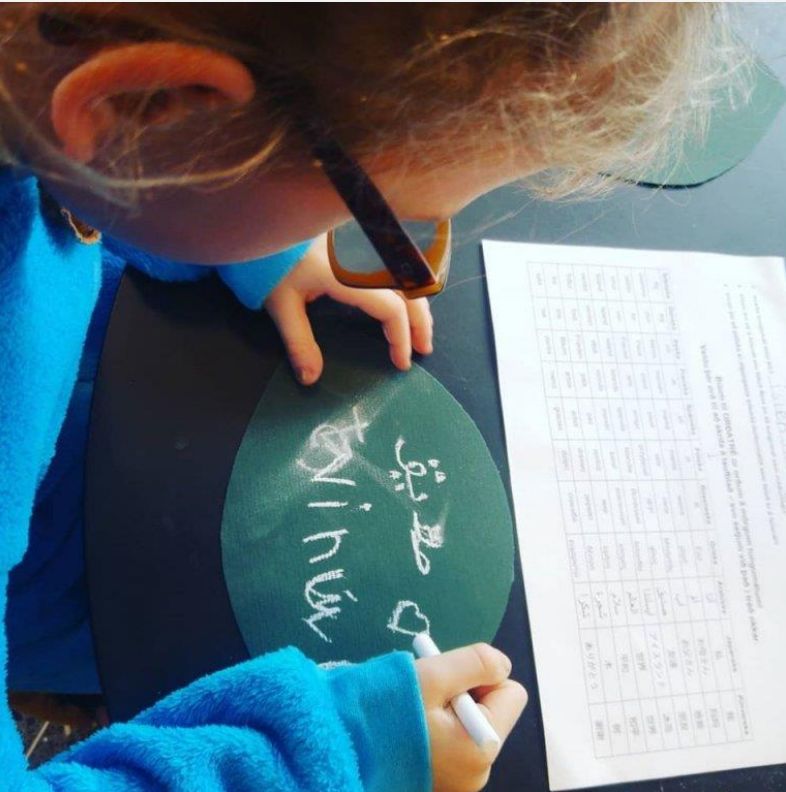
Flash and sudden fiction have a long tradition on the South-American continent and the book reveals the popularity and variety that this form has gained within the ranks of its authors. The book contains 156 stories by forty-nine Latin-American authors over the period 1893–2014. Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir chose and translated the stories and wrote the introduction. The book is edited by Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, published by the Vigdís Institute for Foreign Languages, and distributed by the University of Iceland Press.

FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF AUÐUR HAUKSDÓTTIR

A Festschrift in honour of Auður Hauksdóttir, the former Professor of Danish and Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, was published to celebrate her seventieth birthday in the spring of 2020. It contains articles by Anne Holmen, Birgit Henriksen, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Oddný G. Sverrisdóttir, Þórhildur Oddsdóttir, Peter Juel Henriksen, Erla Erlendsdóttir, Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud, Sofiya Zahova, Birna Bjarnadóttir, and Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir. The book was edited by Gísli Magnússon and published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages.

SUNDAY MEAL AND OTHER ROMA STORIES

This collection of short stories was edited by Sofiya Zahova, Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir and Asta R. Magnúsdóttir and is comprised of short fiction by six authors written in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: Georgi Tsvetkov, Ilona Ferková, Jess Smith, Jorge Emilio Nedich, Jovan Nikolić and Matéo Maximoff. Their stories have a wide variety of topics and are written in very different languages, though all of them seek inspiration in their common culture. The book is published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press with the help of grants from the Icelandic Literature Centre and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute Fund.



EVENTS

LECTURE SERIES

Twenty-five lectures and seminars had been organised for the Vigdís International Centre's Tuesday Lecture Series in which scholars discuss the world's languages from various linguistic, literary and translation viewpoints. Unfortunately it was only possible to hold six of the programme's events as during the latter part of the spring semester and the whole of the autumn semester strict rules limiting the number of participants in meetings were in force due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All of the first six events held at the beginning of the year were very well attended, however, and it is evident the series of Tuesday Lectures has become a regular and recognised programme for the general public.

CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

Two international conferences were planned for the Vigdís International Centre during the summer of 2020, but both had to be postponed because of Covid-19 restrictions. Two symposia were held early in the spring semester before group meetings became prohibited:

Language and Cultural Interaction in the West Nordic Region

On 30 and 31 January there was a consultation meeting and conference of the research network Language and Cultural Interaction in the West Nordic Region in Veröld – House of Vigdís, where particular attention was given to the linguistic and cultural connections between the Faroe Isles, Greenland, Iceland and the west coast of Norway. Auður Hauksdóttir, Professor of Danish organised the event and the participants were from universities and other institutes in the Faroe Isles, Denmark, Greenland and the University of Iceland.

Mimesis in Danish Literature and Art

Gísli Magnússon, Professor of Danish at the University of Iceland, organised a symposia on the Greek concept of "mimesis" (imitation) and its application in literary and artistic presentations of reality. All the other participants were scholars from Danish universities.

Art, Architecture, Education and Communications: on the Road to Reconciliation, Seeking the Indigenous Ways

A symposium on the art, architecture, education and dissemination in the Arctic areas was held in connection with the exhibition *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy to Iceland and EVOQ architects in Toronto.

TRANSLATORS' SYMPOSIA

In 2019 the Vigdís International Centre embarked upon a series of symposia for translators which were held both within the institute itself and abroad. The aim was to encourage and increase translations of Icelandic literary publications and to support and encourage those involved in such work. One symposium was held in 2020: *Between Signs and Letters: A Symposium on Translation between the Chinese and Icelandic Languages* in collaboration with the Northern Lights Confucius Institute and the Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters.

DIALOGUE WITH THE THEATRE

Dialogue with the Theatre is a series of symposia and lectures wherein professionals from the world of the theatre and scholars in foreign languages meet to discuss the production of theatrical performances. The purpose of this series is to honour Vigdís Finnbogadóttir with events that connect two of her main interests, theatre and languages, and to create a platform for scholarly discussion of the translation and production of plays which appeal to the general public. It is also intended to increase culturally informed discussions of theatre productions in Iceland and draw attention to those foreign plays translated and performed here. One such event was held in 2020 in collaboration with the Reykjavík City Theatre in which the production of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* was discussed and analysed.

TEACHERS' WORKSHOPS

The Vigdís International Centre began a series of workshops for teachers in 2019 in collaboration with STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland and the Language Centre of the University of Iceland. The workshops, which were well received right from the beginning, are half-day courses introducing the latest methodologies in

language teaching. They are especially intended for teachers of foreign languages, but are open to the public. In 2020, only one of such workshop was actually held.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY AND EUROPEAN LANGUAGES DAY

UNESCO's International Mother Language Day on 21 February and the European Day of Languages on 26 September are celebrated every year by the Vigdís International Centre in collaboration with STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland. A large group of students from Landakot School in Reykjavík and Álfhóll School in Kópavogur were invited to Veröld on 21 February, where a language tree had been set up with its leaves decorated with words from many different languages. Because of the prohibition on holding meetings later in the year, the European Day of Languages was celebrated in an untraditional way. The day was dedicated to the languages of the Roma people and teachers of 14 to 16-year old students in the primary school system were sent relevant teaching materials for use in class. These contained general introductions to the history and culture of the Roma folk along with pieces of their music and readings aloud of both original texts and translations of short stories to introduce to the students the special features of their languages.

CAFÉ LINGUA

Café Lingua—Living Languages is a collaborative enterprise of the Vigdís International Centre and the City of Reykjavík Library. One of its aims is to utilise those languages that have found their way to Iceland with people from all around the world and which have enriched its society and culture. Café Lingua provides a doorway into the world's many languages and cultures and a perfect place for those who wish to try out or gain a greater knowledge and ability in foreign languages. The Vigdís International Centre held four events for Café Lingua in 2020, one of which was dedicated to the Day of Icelandic Sign Language.

MOVIE DAYS IN VERÖLD

Movie Days are regular screenings organised by the teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures at the University of Iceland as part of their courses in foreign languages; these films are also open to the public. The films screened are not usually shown

in the cinemas or on television stations in Iceland, but are utilised to help train students in listening and understanding the spoken foreign languages taught within the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures and in connection with the multicultural policies of the Vigdís International Centre. In 2020 there were fourteen screenings of films from Chile, Italy, Germany, Poland, Spain and Mali, and were held in collaboration with the Goethe Institute, the university's Language Centre, and Alliance Française in Reykjavík.

THE JAPAN FESTIVAL

The Japan festival, in collaboration with the Japanese Embassy to Iceland and the teachers and students of Japanese studies of the University of Iceland, has been held annually in Veröld – House of Vigdís from its opening and always been extremely popular. A large number of guests of all ages gathered for the festival on this occasion where they were offered courses in sushi making, lectures on judo, and a chance to practice Japanese calligraphy or trying on Japanese national costumes. One of the climaxes of the festival was a magnificent drumming performance, with traditional Taiko drums, by the Munedaiko group, which had come from Italy especially for this festival. From the very beginning of Japanese studies, there has always been a good social life and camaraderie among the students and all of the work organising the festival was carried out by the teachers and students of the department.

VISITING LECTURERS

A large number of lectures are delivered by scholars from universities abroad every year in Veröld – House of Vigdís. In 2020, guest scholars from universities in Italy, the United States, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Colombia and Finland presented a total of nine lectures, while teachers from the Azerbaijan University of Languages in Baku offered a short, intense course in Azerbaijani in association with Middle-Eastern Studies at the University of Iceland.



Sketch of The Living Language Lab project in progress



Exhibition of the works of Porvaldur Skúlason

EXHIBITIONS

THE LIVING LANGUAGE LAB

Progress was made throughout 2020 in the planning of The Living Language Lab, a multimedia experience to be opened in the exhibition room of Veröld – House of Vigdís in 2021. This is intended to be a continuous project aiming at increasing knowledge and appreciation of the world’s languages in as many contexts as possible. The exhibition is being constructed in collaboration with the multimedia company Gagarín and Andrúm, a company of architects, while the Icelandic Youth Fund and Fund for Student Creativity helped support the project financially. The project is meant for young people between the ages of twelve and nineteen, providing invitations to visits for such groups, where the university students of foreign languages will be on hand to help educate and inform them.

EXHIBITION OF THE WORKS OF ÞORVALDUR SKÚLASON

A splendid exhibition of the abstract paintings of Þorvaldur Skúlason was opened in Veröld – House of Vigdís on 13 March and remained open until the end of the year. The display was part of the fortieth anniversary exhibition of The University of Iceland Art Collection. The works illustrate the whole range of the artist’s career, from 1923 to 1984. The exhibition curators were Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson, Director of the University of Iceland Art Collection, and Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir, Senior Lecturer at the University of Iceland.

INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT

The exhibition Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Art, Architecture and Traditional Knowledge is the result of a competition among Inuits of the Inuit Nunangat region of Canada for producing artistic adornments for the Canadian Centre for Arctic Research in Ikaluktiak. The exhibition has fifty works chosen from proposals sent in and are intended to shed light on the relationship between the traditional knowledge of the Inuits and the science and technology of the modern world. The exhibition was held in Veröld – House of Vigdís from 6 to 31 January in association with the Canadian Embassy to Iceland.



Jonhard Mikkelsen

THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

The Faroese linguistics scholar, teacher and publisher Jonhard Mikkelsen was awarded the first international cultural award named in honour of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir on 15 April 2020.

The Icelandic government, the University of Iceland and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages created this award in honour of the remarkable fortieth anniversary of her historical election as President of Iceland. The prize will be awarded annually to the individual whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the field of culture, especially languages.

Jonhard Mikkelsen was the first to be awarded this prize for his efforts to strengthen and develop the Faroese language. Mikkelsen was born in Vestmanna in 1953 and studied English at the University of Århus in Denmark, and Faroese at the University of the Faroe Islands. He has taught Faroese at secondary school and university levels, has taken part in course development in Faroese secondary education, has had a seat on the Faroese Language Council and taken part in the publication of newspapers. In 1993 Mikkelsen established the publishing company Sprotan and since 2016 has concentrated on the publication of pedagogical books, educational material, and novels translated into Faroese. Mikkelsen has also applied himself to the creation of Faroese-English-Danish dictionaries and supported the development and production of digital dual-language dictionaries, most recently a Faroese-Greenlandic one. This new application of modern technology to dictionaries has been remarkably successful. Twenty online dictionaries, now available free of charge on Sprotan's website, have revolutionised foreigners' access to Faroese and Faroese speakers' access to foreign languages.

Through his work, Jonhard Mikkelsen has thus made a major contribution to strengthen and establish Faroese as a living language in this modern age of globalisation.

The ambassador Benedikt Jónsson, Iceland's consul in the Faroe Isles, presented the first Vigdís International Prize to Jonhard Mikkelsen with gratitude for his special contribution to the field of foreign languages; his work greatly supports the diversity of languages and cultures, which is precisely the core policy which Vigdís propagated as the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages.



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We are also especially grateful to the governing board, teachers, staff and the Rector of the University of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson for their very willing and harmonious co-operation. The same is also due to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, and the faculty's staff, and to Guðmundur Ragnar Jónsson, overall manager of the university's governance.

Finally, both the governing boards and members of the Vigdís International Centre wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to all those who have collaborated with or, in many and various other ways, have supported the centre's work and projects.

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Brynjólfsgata 1, 107 Reykjavík

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Annual Report

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir

Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir

Translation

Júlían Meldon D´Arcy

Photographs

Front cover: Ari Magg

Other photographs: andrúm arkitektar, Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir, Kristinn Ingvarsson, Rán Flygenring, Valgerður Jónasdóttir og Þorgerður Anna Björnsdóttir



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