

**BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF ESTONIAN FOLKLORE
RESEARCH AND FOLKLORE:
ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF FOLKLORE**

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Abstract. Folklore is a small area of research in the arts and humanities and it is fairly unique in every country or region. Because of these virtues it is hard to measure the impact of folklore research. This paper presents a detailed overview of the publications published by Estonian folklore researchers from 2005–2014 and verifies that Estonia is a highly active country with an impact as immense as its neighbors and the world in this area of science. One of the main reasons for this seems to be the indexing of Estonian folklore journal Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore in the Thomson Reuters Web of Science Core Collections Arts & Humanities Citation Index. Since 2008 when the indexing started the journal has developed into a regionally important folklore journal which is publishing papers not only from Estonia but also from other countries far and near, and these papers have a visible impact not only on the area itself, but to other areas as well, meaning Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore is catching up with other big folklore journals. Estonia is on the huge map of world science not only with biology, genetics or physics, but also with folklore.

Keywords: bibliometric, citation analysis, folklore, Electronic Journal of Folklore, Estonia

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1. Background

The research areas in Estonia that are most often considered to have a strong impact on the world based on their citations per publication are molecular biology and genetics (18th in the world on the Essential Science Indicator), environment/ecology (15th on the ESI), and plant and animal science (12th on the ESI). Overall the level on Estonian research is a small miracle considering Estonia's size and history (Allik 2015). But what is not known is that there is an area of research

where Estonia is at world level – and it is an area not visible in either ESI or Journal Citation Reports because it is an area in arts and humanities.

The humanitarian researchers in Estonia are skeptical about bibliometrics and how or if it can display their impact on a local or on a larger scale, and for the most part this is true (Allik 2012). It is no secret that the humanities with their publishing and citation practices are largely different from most of the other research areas in science and for this they are not ideal for bibliometrical comparisons or analysis. The citation tradition in the humanities is not as strong as it is in science. An art historian may not formally cite such works as *Guernica* or *Mona Lisa*. A literary critic would not cite Shakespeare every time he mentions Hamlet (Garfield 1980a). The citations to articles are slow to grow and in many subfields of the humanities articles do not even have any great impact (because of the book-oriented nature of the fields) (Stern 1983). Also most of the research done in the humanities are with localized conceptions, meaning that linguistic studies on Estonian or Finnish will be published in Estonian or Finnish for Estonian or Finnish readers and researchers.

But there is still a remarkable amount of documents on arts and humanities in the Web of Science Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) and this data is bibliometrically analyzable and actually quite interesting (Ho et al. 2015, Konur 2012).

The following paper tries to answer these questions: How does an Estonian folklore researcher compare with its neighbors and with the whole world? What kind of impact has the Estonian folklore journal *The Electronic Journal of Folklore* (EJoF) had and how has it changed the area in Estonia?

2. Methodology

To measure, compare and visualize the area of folklore in Estonia, 100 documents published from 2005–2014 and 73 documents published from 2010–2014 indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) were analyzed. For comparison with Estonia, Finland was naturally chosen because of its neighboring location and its similar culture to Estonia. Also Latvia, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales in total) and the United States of America were chosen because of their location to Estonia and their history and their role in the area of folklore. The analysis on the journal *The Estonian Electronic Journal of Folklore* (EJoF) was made by using data from Thomson Reuters Web of Science Core Collection (WoS) Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), Journal Citation Report (JCP), Scopus, and SCImago. To compare the impact of EJoF to a Finnish journal *FF Communications* was chosen since it has published the most cited and important work in folklore (Aarne, Stith 1928). *Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies* from the United Kingdom, *Folklore*, the journal for the Folklore Society of England, which is one of the earliest English-language journals in the area of folkloristics,

first published in 1879 and the Journal of Folklore Research from the Indiana University in the United States of America were chosen. The analysis was done in InCites (InCites is a customized, web-based research evaluation tool that allows users to analyze institutional productivity and benchmark research output against peers worldwide) during the last week (23–29) of November 2015.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. The research area of folklore in Estonia

When looking at the research that was done in Estonia from 2010–2014 in WoS research evaluation tool InCites nothing unusual can be seen at first. Most active were environmental researchers with 503 documents (folklore was 84th with 73 documents). Most cited were the areas of genetics & heredity (10 448) and physics (10 318) with folklore being 210th with 16 citations. And with Citation Impact (Average (mean) number of citations per paper) the areas in the top were similar (physics – 59.33; genetics & heredity – 31.65) and folklore was at the 232th place with 0.22. Such low Citation Impact of publications in folklore probably indicates an independent research topic and a wide disparity in research focuses (Ho et al. 2015).

The average impact (citations per item) of all papers published by some country is certainly a more meaningful indicator of scientific quality than a mere number of published papers (Allik 2013).

But there are indicators that show folklore in the top part of the table and this indicator is Average Percentile. The percentile of a publication is determined by creating a citation frequency distribution for all the publications in the same year, subject category and of the same document type (arranging the papers in descending order of citation count), and determining the percentage of papers at each level of citation, i.e., the percentage of papers cited more often than the paper of interest. A percentile indicates how a paper has performed relative to others in its field, year and document type and is therefore a normalized indicator. The Average Percentile can apply to any set of papers, such as an author's body of work, all the publications in a journal or the accumulated publications of an institution, country or region (InCites Indicators Handbook 2014). The average percentile of folklore in Estonia is 86.42 and it is 14th in Estonia. And this is because Incites sorts the data in a descending order and with Average Percentile the smaller number is better.

By other indicators folklore is not visible in the top part of the table. As it becomes clear, folklore in Estonia is not practically visible amongst other areas of research but both its impact and activity is actually as high as its neighbors' or even higher (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Estonia, Finland, England and USA in the areas of folklore (2010-2014)

Country	Web of Science Documents	Category Normalized Citation Impact	Times Cited	Citation Impact	Average Percentile	% Documents in Top 10%	Impact Relative to World
ESTONIA	73	1.08	16	0.22	86.42	5.48%	0.045
UK	242	0.94	25	0.10	92.26	4.12%	0.022
FINLAND	35	0.43	2	0.06	94.90	2.86%	0.012
SWEDEN	19	3.13	4	0.21	80.69	15.79%	0.045
LATVIA	5*	0.00	1	0.20	100.00	0.00%	0.000
LITHUANIA	4**	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.000
USA	853	1.81	157	0.18	89.83	7.03%	0.039
WORLD	4543	0.85	498	0.11	94.51	3.17%	0.023

* All published in the Estonian journal Electronic Journal of Folklore

** 50 % published in the Estonian journal Electronic Journal of Folklore

These numbers above show the similarities and dissimilarities of folklore between these countries. As it can be seen, the United States of America is way ahead of everybody because of its mass. Like with all research, out of the three Baltic states only Estonia managed to do both, increase substantially the number of publications along with their average impact (Allik 2013). But to bring this data into a bigger context the data from all over the world should be looked at. Table 2 shows the indicators by which Estonia is in the top 10 in the world of folklore from 2010–2014.

As it can be seen, Estonia is not the first in any of the indicators but it should be noted that Estonia is the only country who has both a high productivity and also a high number of citations. Countries like Argentina, Greece, and South Africa have a higher impact because they have a small number of documents but their low number of citations is somewhat higher relative to the document number, so considering that Estonia has both a high number of documents and a high number of cites the impact of Estonia is remarkably high. Even if there is doubt over the individual indicators and how they can show the level of Estonian folklore research, the overall fact that we are in most (important) of the top 10 tables should show a high level of research in the area of folklore.

The different types of documents published by Estonian researchers from 2010–2014 can be seen in Table 3. Article is the most common form of document type.

An interesting fact is that the high place amongst other countries is not because of highly cited papers, since only one of the most cited papers in folklore by Estonian researchers is from 2010–2014:

Valk, U. *Ghostly possession and real estate: The dead in contemporary Estonian folklore*. Journal of Folklore Research. 2006. Vol. 43 No. 1 P. 31- + (cited 5 times)

Leete, A, Vallikivi, L. *Imitating Enemies or Friends Comparative Notes on Christianity in the Indigenous Russian Arctic during the Early Soviet Period*. Asian Ethnology. 2011. Vol. 70 No. 1 P. 81–104 (cited 4 times)

Johanson, K. *The changing meaning of "thunderbolts"* Folklore-Electronic Journal of Folklore. 2009. No. 1 P. 129–174 (cited 3 times)

Table 2. The top 10 in the world from 2010–2014

	Web of Science Documents		Times Cited		Impact Relative to World ^{*2}		Category Normalized Citation Impact		Citation Impact ^{*1}
USA	853	USA	157	SOUTH AFRICA	0.107	NORWAY	4.09	SOUTH AFRICA	0.5
TURKEY	372	GERMANY (FED REP GER)	26	ARGENTINA	0.107	SWEDEN	3.13	ARGENTINA	0.5
GERMANY (FED REP GER)	196	ENGLAND	19	GREECE	0.071	SOUTH AFRICA	2.57	GREECE	0.33
ENGLAND	158	TURKEY	18	NEW ZEALAND	0.071	ARGENTINA	2.43	NEW ZEALAND	0.33
SPAIN	133	ESTONIA	16	RUSSIA	0.059	USA	1.81	RUSSIA	0.28
AUSTRIA	119	AUSTRIA	11	ICELAND	0.058	ICELAND	1.61	ICELAND	0.27
ESTONIA	73	SPAIN	11	FRANCE	0.053	RUSSIA	1.59	FRANCE	0.25
SWITZERLAND	64	NETHERLANDS	7	NORWAY	0.049	FRANCE	1.52	NORWAY	0.23
BELGIUM	57	CANADA	7	ESTONIA	0.047	GREECE	1.39	ESTONIA	0.22
SCOTLAND	48	FRANCE	6	SWEDEN	0.045	ESTONIA	1.08	SWEDEN	0.21

*1 Citation impact (citations per paper) normalized for subject, year and document type (InCites Indicators Handbook. 2014).

*2 Impact Relative to World indicator is the ratio of the Citation Impact of a set of documents divided by the world Citation Impact for a given period of time (InCites Indicators Handbook. 2014).

Table 3. Document types and average citation per document of folklore documents in WoS by Estonian researchers from 2010–2014

	Article	Book review	Editorial material	News idem	Proceedings paper	Book chapter
Number of documents	49	17	4	3	2	1
% of 73	67.123%	23.288%	5.479%	4.110%	2.740%	1.370%
CPP	0.37	0	0.25	0	0	0

This implicates that the Estonian research in folklore had citations before the last five years. So what can be seen if the data from the last ten years would be analyzed?

Similar to the papers published in Estonia from 2010–2014 the same thing is with 2005–2014. Folklore is not a top research area in Estonia by any indicator but the following tables (Tables 4, 5) show the indicators by which Estonia is in the top 10 in the world of folklore from 2005–2014.

Table 4. Number of Web of Science documents 2005–2014

	Web of Science Documents
1. USA	1687
2. TURKEY	532
3. GERMANY (FED REP GER)	308
4. ENGLAND	298
5. SPAIN	250
6. AUSTRIA	243
7. SWITZERLAND	101
8. ESTONIA	100
9. BELGIUM	94
10. CANADA	88

Table 5. Number of times cited 2005–2014

	Times Cited
1. USA	740
2. ENGLAND	82
3. GERMANY (FED REP GER)	73
4. TURKEY	40
5. NETHERLANDS	37
6. SPAIN	37
7. CANADA	35
8. ESTONIA	31
9. FRANCE	19
10. SWITZERLAND	19

Interestingly, Estonia has had a high level of citations and document numbers from 2005–2014. But these two tables also show that the impact the Estonian researchers had from 2005–2014 is lower and not even in the world top 10 (Citation Impact – 0.31 and 20th in the world; Impact Relative to World – 0.038 and 20th in the world) from the impact from 2010–2014. This strongly implicates that something has happened that has pushed the impact to new heights for the last five years.

The number of citations and the number of publications has had a steady rise since 2008 and the lower numbers from 2005–2007 pull the 10-year impact down (Fig. 1). The citation numbers for 2013 and 2014 are low because citations in

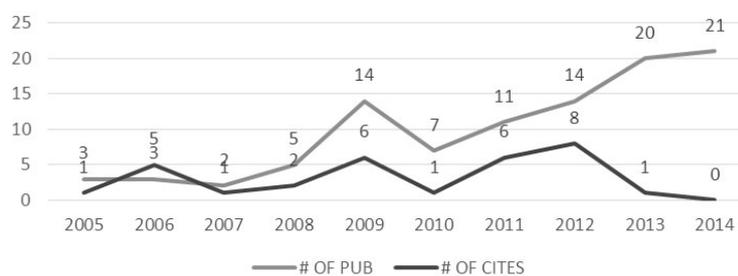


Figure 1. Estonian folklore research from 2005–2014.

folklore as in all areas in the arts and humanities take time to aggregate. So what happened in 2008? This is the year when WoS A&HCI started indexing the Estonian folklore journal the Electronic Journal of Folklore.

3.2. *The Electronic Journal of Folklore*

A journal impact analysis is one way for a journal to gauge its contribution to an area using quantitative measures. Although it is not possible to definitively capture all variables associated with a journal's impact, using a variety of tools we can create a reasonable approximation of its role and standing in the scholarly community (Behles 2014).

Most (65.3% out of 104 documents from 1998–2014) of the papers by Estonian folklore researchers is published in the Electronic Journal of Folklore (EJoF). EJoF is indexed both in WoS (Arts & Humanities Citation Index) (from 2008) and in Scopus (from 2012). The journals in Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) do not have an Impact Factor (IF) provided by the Journal Citation Report (JCR). This makes comparison harder but not impossible. For journal-level metrics Scopus uses the portal SCImago which allows to compare journals quite easily.

JCR provides quantifiable statistical data about journal titles and enables users to sort data by various fields such as the journal impact factor and cited half-life (ISI 1994). However, it was realized that citation characteristics of the arts and humanities journal articles were quite different from those of sciences and social sciences and this is why JCRs for A&HCI has never materialized (Al, et al. 2006). But the IF for journals in A&HCI could still be calculated and for the comparison of journals in this paper this calculation was made.

To get the IF for the journals not in JCR a calculation should be made based on the data from WoS. For the comparison of journals in this review, IF for 2014 was calculated by dividing the number of citations in 2014 to articles published in 2012 and 2013 by the number of publications in 2012 and 2013. The same formula was used to calculate the IF for 2013 and 2012. Table 6 shows the IF of selected folklore journals in 2014, 2013 and 2012.

From Table 6 it is clear why IF for journals in the A&HCI is not calculated. The numbers are very low or they just are not there. From these numbers it is also clear that the EJoF has an IF that is not very high considering some of the other journals. On the other hand, most of these journals have a long history in both

Table 6. Impact Factor of folklore journals from 2012–2014

Journal	IF in 2012	IF in 2013	IF in 2014
FF Communications	0	0	0
Folklore, The Journal for the Folklore Society of England	0.077	0.064	0.068
The Journal of Folklore Research	0.172	0.153	0.346
Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies from United Kingdom	0	0	0
Electronic Journal of Folklore	0.035	0.049	0.035

Table 7. Folklore journals and their history in WoS until 2014

Journal	First publication in WoS	Number of publications	Number of citations	CPP	h-index	Journal Normalized Citation Impact* ¹	Category Normalized Citation Impact* ²	% Docs Cited
FF Communications	1980	199	5	0.02	1	0.06	0.08	2%
Folklore, The Journal for the Folklore Society of England	1980	1788	1232	0.68	11	0.49	1.20	23%
The Journal of Folklore Research	1983	640	1136	1.77	13	0.76	2.26	45%
Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies from United Kingdom	2005	103	5	0.04	1	0.29	0.72	5%
Electronic Journal of Folklore	2008	305	39	0.12	2	0.57	0.59	10%

*1 The Journal Normalized Citation Impact (JNCI) indicator is a similar indicator to the Normalized Citation Impact, but instead of normalizing per subject area or field, it normalizes the citation rate for the journal in which the document is publishing.

*2 Citation impact (citations per paper) normalized for category, year and document type.

being published and indexed in the A&HCI and EJoF is quite new (Table 7). This implicates that the impact of EJoF is evident. Relying on the impact factor alone, however, is not sufficient to situate any journal in this field.

For journal evaluation Scopus uses SCImago Journal Rank (SJR). SJR (score) is weighted by the prestige of a journal. Subject field, quality, and reputation of the journal have a direct effect on the value of a citation. Apart from JCR and IF SJR is calculated for all journals indexed in Scopus (Guerrero-Bote, et al. 2012)

In SJR *Folklore (Estonia)* (the name of EJoF in Scopus) is based in two categories: Anthropology and Cultural Studies. In 2014 Folklore (Estonia) was in the second quartile in the Culture Studies category and in third quartile in Anthropology. The Quartile in Category or the Quartile Score, on the other hand, shows the relative location of a journal along the range of an SJR distribution. In Anthropology the third quartile means 190th place out of 276 journals and in Culture Studies the second quartile means 330th place out of 689 journals. It should be noted that in 2013 Folklore (Estonia) was in the fourth quartile in both of these categories. So a visible rise has occurred.

Table 8 indicates that since it was first indexed in Scopus, EJoF has made a mark in all indicators in a very short time. As in WoS EJoF has a better SJR (IF in WoS) than the Finnish journal FF Communication and it is catching up with journals that have been indexed for much longer than EJoF.

Table 8. Folklore journals and their history in Scopus and SCImago to 2014

Journal	First publication in Scopus	Number of publications	Number of citations	CPP	h-index	SJR 2012	SJR 2013	SJR 2014
FF Communications	2002	66	11	0.166	2	0.106	0.126	0.101
Folklore (United Kingdom) (Folklore, The Journal for the Folklore Society of England)	1980	335	773	2.307	12	0.16	0.123	0.139
The Journal of Folklore Research	2002	189	397	2.100	9	0.177	0.168	0.15
Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies from United Kingdom	2002	109	49	0.449	3	0.133	0.101	0.159
Folklore (Estonia) (Electronic Journal of Folklore)	2012	112	14	0.125	2	0	0.101	0.125

These journal-level metrics display only what the documents or citations sum up to and how they relate to other journals. For core knowledge about a journal the documents and citations must be analyzed to see if the journal is used and cited locally or internationally. As mentioned at the start of the paper, the humanities and folklore as a part of them have a very localized use.

3.3. Articles and authors in the Electronic Journal of Folklore

Table 7 demonstrates that by the end of 2014 there were 305 publications from EJoF in WoS, which were cited 39 times. The average citation per publication was 0.12 and h-index was 2. Figure 2 shows that there is a clear rising trend in EJoF citations.

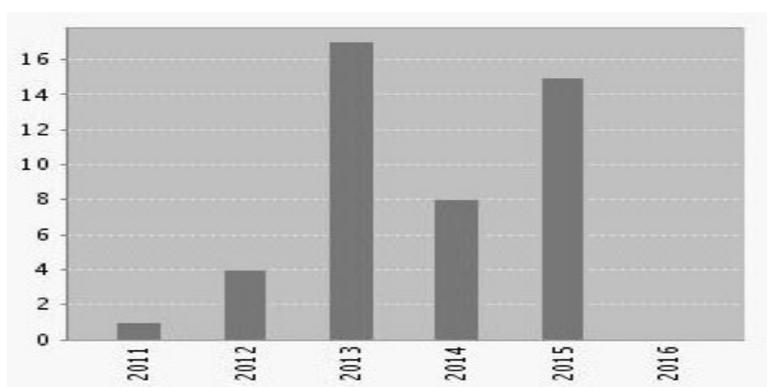


Figure 2. Citations of Electronic Journal of Folklore documents in WoS by year.

The most common document type in WoS from 2010–2014 was Article (Table 9). Articles were also the type with the highest impact per publication. The same thing occurred with the documents that were published by Estonian researchers from 2010–2014 (Table 3). The impact of EJoF is much lower than other journals but one peculiar fact is that other journals have published much more book reviews in them (Folklore, Journal for the Folklore Society of England – 56.44% out of 1788; Journal of Folklore Research – 22% out of 640). This indicates that folklore is very similar to other fields in the arts and humanities in general where book reviews are a considerable means of scholarly communication (Lindhölm-Romantschuk, et al. 1996).

The author of this paper is not sure if this choice of publishing more articles was intentional or not, but it has certainly been an advantage since the articles seem to have a bigger impact.

Contributing authors to EJoF documents in WoS originate most often from Estonia (68), Finland (24), Russia (18), Norway (8), England (8), and USA (7). All together, EJoF has authors from 37 countries.

Figure 3 illustrates the impact that sometimes the research published from other countries seem to have a higher impact than the research published from Estonia. This implicates that EJoF is not just an Estonian journal for Estonian researchers. Besides this the citations to Latvian and British documents are not coming just from Estonian or Latvian or British journals – they are international citations from different areas, and not just folklore.

One way to decide if a journal is internationally orientated is to look at the percentile of international collaboration. Since InCites do not have the indicator for international collaboration for A&HCI journals, this must be calculated by the number of contributing countries. Of course the author of a document can be from Estonia just working or studying in another country.

The 45 citations to EJoF came from 37 articles. Out of 37 articles, 8 were from Estonia, 2 from USA, 2 from Russia, and 2 from Finland. The most often citing journals other than EJoF were the Journal of Baltic Studies (3) and FF Communications (2).

Table 9. Document types and average citation per document in WoS of EJoF

	Article	News item	Book review	Editorial material	Proceedings paper	Biographical item	Review	Letter
Number of documents	165	62	49	17	11	8	3	1
% of 867	54.09%	20.32%	16.06%	5.57%	3.60%	2.62%	0.98%	0.32%
CPP	0.24	0.06	0	0,06	0	0	0	0

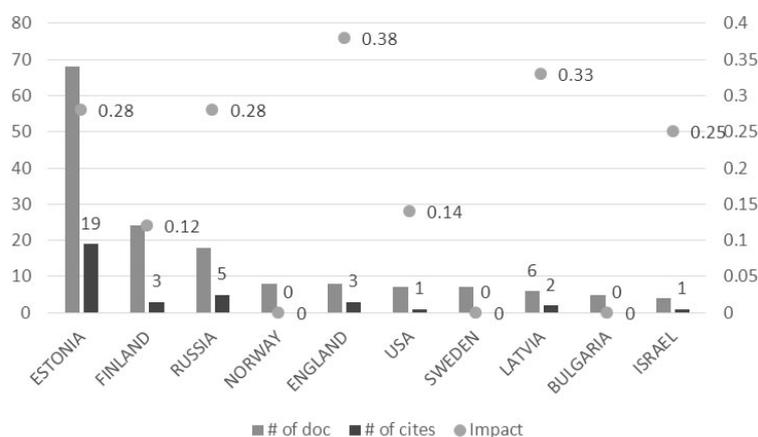


Figure 3. Number of documents, number of cites to the documents and the impact of the countries contributing to EJoF 2008–2014.

Table 10 shows that EJoF is one of the most international sources with the majority of citations not coming from Estonia. Indeed, the numbers that some of these percentiles are taken from are fairly small, but if not this then what implicates more clearly the international scope of a journal in an area that is not analyzable? And this can apply also to other areas in the arts and humanities.

The impact of EJoF has not only been evident in folklore. The 37 articles cited by EJoF are not only from the area of folklore. Actually only 35% (13) of them were from folklore. The other areas from citations came from: area studies (10% – 4), archaeology (8% – 3), biology (5% – 2), and zoology (5% – 2), altogether from 32 different areas of research in the arts and humanities and also in science. This means that EJoF has a growing impact outside of the immediate area of study.

The most contributing authors are Ventsel, A. (15), Voolaid, P. (9), Leete, A. (9) and Koiva, M. (9). The number of citations and the impact of the most contributing authors are visualized in Figure 4.

Table 10. Percentile of publications from the countries of folklore and the origin of their citations until 2014

Journal	Country	% of documents from origin country	% of citing articles from origin country
FF Communications	Finland	5%	0%
Folklore, The Journal for the Folklore Society of England	England	21%	17%
The Journal of Folklore Research	USA	66%	50%
Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies from United Kingdom	United Kingdom	32%*	40%
Electronic Journal of Folklore	Estonia	22%	29%

* England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland combined

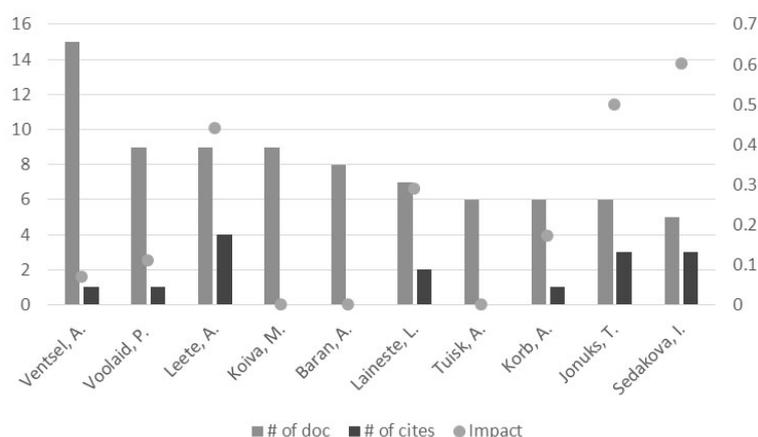


Figure 4. Number of documents, number of citations of the documents and the impact of the authors contributing to EJoF 2008–2014.

The most cited paper in EJoF with three cites is Johanson, K. *The changing meaning of “thunderbolts”* that was published in 2009. All the citations are self-citations from EJoF.

Self-citation can be an issue and it keeps coming up from time to time since sometimes journals use it to boost their impact factors. But self-citation is a natural thing that occurs in all journals disregarding the research area. Given the cumulative nature of the production of new knowledge, self-citations constitute a natural part of the communication process (Costas et al. 2010).

Among all journals listed in the 2010 JCR Science Edition, for example, 85% have self-citation rates of less than 15% (Testa 2012).

By the end of 2014 EJoF had been cited 45 times with 10 being self-citations (22.3%). This number of citations is not relevant compared to other journals review in this paper (Table 11).

Table 11. Self-citations to documents published until 2014

Journal	% of self-citation
FF Communications	0%
Folklore, The Journal for the Folklore Society of England	22.4%
The Journal of Folklore Research	9.9%
Folk Life – Journal of Ethnological Studies from United Kingdom	40%
Electronic Journal of Folklore	22.3%

4. Conclusion

It is easy to get lost in huge numbers and forget everything else. Large numbers of citations and WoS documents attract attention and admiration yet in many cases

they do not show the full potential and impact of a researcher, researcher's area, institution or a country. Sometimes looking into the subject inside its own area or peers may paint a totally different picture. Smaller areas of research deserve also notification since they are analyzable.

Folklore in Estonia and in the world is microscopic amongst the wide specter of research areas and invisible by most of the popular indicators. Yet researchers are working and publishing and their papers have an impact on the area. History (Yalcin 2010, Behles 2014) and present have proven that bibliometrics can be used to measure the area of folklore and other areas in the field of arts and humanities.

This paper has answered the questions raised at the beginning. Estonian folklore researchers are very active compared to their neighbors and they are remarkably visible amongst other big research countries from all over the world. The impact of the works published in Estonia is also comparable to other countries. Considering its size, Estonia and its folklore researchers have had global level numbers in all indicators in the last five years. The Electronic Journal of Folklore has had the main role in bringing Estonia to this level. It publishes works from authors all over the world and receives citations from all over the world. Its impact is still small considering other journals in this paper but the rise to the place at the moment has been quick and if it continues on a mission to be more than a local journal there is no question that its impact will rise even more.

These results confirm that EJoF is becoming a leading influential journal in the area; they also suggest that EJoF has disproportionate strength in the area given its smaller size and recent rise to the A&HCI in comparison to other journals (Behles 2014).

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