Photographic Archive for the Estonian Literary Museum

The art of photography spread in Estonia on the second half of 19th century and became more and more available at the beginning of 20th century. In Estonia several archives hold and beware the photographic collections, but majority of photographs are in private ownership. The private collections are unique and valuable for the sake of local community history and in the framework of national cultural history as well. There are two major problems with the photographs in the private collections: 1) the valuable photographs are not publicly accessible; 2) the content information of the older photographs is vanishing with every day. There are only few people in local rural communities alive who can tell us what or who is on the one or on another picture. The information is sometimes preserved within the families.

The aim of this project is to bring the photographs into the public use, to collect the digital copies of the private collections, but moreover to collect the content information of photographs. The project aims to do it by crowdsourcing. In the course of the project the web interface will be developed which can be used for uploading and discussing the photographs in the framework of a community. Private owners have been scanning their photographic collections actively, and these could be easily uploaded. Should the photographs be scanned previously with the poor quality, re-scans can be organized. The digital copies of photographs together with the necessary metadata and content information will be archived in the digital repository of Estonian Literary Museum, which beholds major Estonian cultural historical collections - manuscripts, photographs, sound and video recordings. The information and contacts of the owner of the original photographs will be preserved as well. ELM has a good proficiency in digitizing projects, and has already special equipment. The local historians are probably eager to find the elder persons with the knowledge of the pre-war persons and space.

As a result of the project the local communities will have a web interface to share (and gain access to) their common photographic heritage, together with content information; the major private collections will be openly accessed and preserved.