

## INTRODUCTION

In the loosely organized domain of occupational folklore, scholars look at expressions of the working world and at the men and women for whom these expressions have meaning. At a time when folklorists are investigating complex situations, occupational folklore emerges along with urban folklore and multicultural folklore as a broad area study which invites research.

Several directions for this research seem obvious. Occupational identity, the nature of work, and of the heroic master of his or her trade may all be expressed in narration. In addition to narrative forms, other ways of responding to working situations may be of interest to the folklorist who recognizes the prominence of work in the everyday life of many people.

Looking not only at items and groups but also at the "scene" of the lore (the workplace), the authors of the articles presented in this special issue of the Folklore Forum have been influenced by the concept of folklore as performance and the idea that folklore may be used to maintain a positive sense of one's occupational identity.

As an area of research grows, it becomes necessary to make analytic distinctions. One separation we hope to explore with this issue is the subtle one between occupational folklore and the folklore of working.

To consider what is shared on the occupational level, folklorists must find material that can be linked to a topic and will tend to scrutinize content to do so. The topic is occupational identity, which may be shared across geographical and ethnic boundaries. The papers by Leary, McCarl, and Santino explore ways in which folk expression is occupationally-grounded.

On the other hand, the patterned interaction of work may provide the folklorist with a situational context which can generate and illuminate folklore, and may itself be an expression of shared identity. This perspective is illustrated by the papers of Berkman, March, Nusbaum, and Swanson.

We do not believe that occupational folklore and the folklore of working are mutually exclusive fields of research. The purpose of a distinction between the two is to provide ways to interpret and reinterpret data. We suggest such a division with the understanding that complex situations yield no less than complexes of interpretation.

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