

• *Editor's Introduction* •

***Novus Initium:***  
**A Reintroduction to New Directions in Folklore**

TREVOR J. BLANK  
*Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg*

---

Dear Colleagues,

Numerous respected folklore publications have come and gone over the years. For a time, it appeared as though *New Directions in Folklore (NDiF)* would meet the same fate. Indeed, this volume marks the first issue of this journal to be published in over seven years. Despite the vandalism of time and the ongoing evolution of the folklore discipline, the purview of *New Directions in Folklore* remains as timely as ever, dedicated to the areas of folkloristic inquiry that remain unheralded despite their relevancy to the study of contemporary society.

*New Directions in Folklore* has—and always will—serve as an outlet for scholarship that is traditionally underrepresented in the folkloristic discourse. In the past this has largely consisted of materials that intersect with new media or vernacular expression in online contexts; in many ways this remains the journal's "bread and butter." However, this publication does not restrict itself to one dimension of folkloristic inquiry. As the late Alan Dundes once noted, the lack of mainstream appeal does not present "an intellectually valid reason to [forgo] publish[ing] a well-researched paper or monograph" (2005, 404).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, we

---

<sup>1</sup> Dundes, Alan. 2005. "Folkloristics in the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of American Folklore* 118(470): 385-408.

seek to engage a wide variety of issues and perspectives, and welcome contributions that tap into controversial, unorthodox, or simply unheralded areas of scholarship. In doing so, we aim to stimulate discussion and push the boundaries of folkloristic scholarship in an effort to expand the scope of the discipline's foci. Just as the volumes that will follow, this issue seeks to do exactly that.

In the opening essay, B. Grantham Aldred examines the ways that Internet users conceptualize "the self" in online contexts. Through an interdisciplinary analysis of the popular blogging service, *LiveJournal*, Aldred interprets the ways that site patrons foster a sense of identity through symbolic artistic expression in the incorporeal terrain of cyberspace. The "Notes" section of this issue contextualizes the chronology and thematic drives of *New Directions in Folklore*. NewFolk co-founder Tyrone Yarbrough shares a personal reflection on the historical development of the journal and it explains that it has always been inextricably tied to **NewFolk**—an online community of over one hundred scholars, professionals, students, and laypersons who are interested in the study of emergent folklore in contemporary society. Julia Kelso comments on the nature of folklore as a malleable social phenomenon and speaks to the value of challenging the status quo of folkloristics.

The road to bringing this journal back into circulation has been a long one, but the gracious enthusiasm of *NDiF's* last editor, Camille Bacon-Smith, and the dedication of the journal's editorial board has made this endeavor possible. In

addition to being the first issue of *NDiF* since 2003, it is also the first to be published in partnership with [IU ScholarWorks](#), which, under the excellent guidance of Jennifer Laherty, generously hosts the online framework in which this journal operates. We stand committed to the open-access ethos propagated by IU ScholarWorks and its constituent journals; further, we seek to uphold the tradition and spirit of the original incarnation of *New Directions in Folklore*, which also championed the free exchange of ideas and respectful, challenging discussions on pressing matters that face the folklore discipline. As a peer-reviewed journal, we also think of ourselves as *peer-mediated*.

While this issue is indexed as “Volume 8, no. 1/2,” I like to think of it as our inaugural issue. We are once again testing the footing below us and attempting to reestablish ourselves within the intellectual discourse while engaging and responding to the pressing needs of the folklore discipline. As such, we welcome feedback (for better or worse), and we encourage readers to contact the journal via [email](#); by commenting on our [Facebook page](#); or by posting to the [listserv](#). We also maintain a hub for links to all NewFolk-oriented activities at [NewFolk.net](#).

On behalf of the editorial board and the NewFolk community, thank you for your continued interest in *New Directions in Folklore*. It is my pleasure to reintroduce this publication to the scholarly community. We hope that you enjoy it!

**[Trevor J. Blank](#)**  
Editor, *New Directions in Folklore*