

**Twenty-ninth session  
Bangkok, 25 – 29 April 2016**

---

**Item 16 of the provisional agenda**

**Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

## **Digitalisation of the Names Archive**

Submitted by Finland \*

---

\* Prepared by Ulla Onkamo (The Institute for the Languages of Finland)

## Digitalisation of the Names Archive

### Summary

*The Names Archive (Nimiarkisto) of the Institute for the Languages of Finland contains a corpus of material on Finnish and Saami place names, as well as copies of a Swedish place name collection, which together serve as a tool for research and name planning.*

*The digitalisation of the Names Archive began in 2014. The project aims to convert all of the archive's place name cards, data capture maps and the attributes and metadata related to them into digital format. This will facilitate the use of data from the Names Archive together with geographical and other data provided by other organisations. The electronic environment also enables citizens to produce supplementary information for the archive.*

### Introduction

The Names Archive (*Nimiarkisto*) of the Institute for the Languages of Finland contains a corpus of material on Finnish and Saami names, as well as copies of a Swedish place name collection, which together serve as a tool for research and name planning. The archive includes more than 2.7 million original or comparable place name card files covering Finland and neighbouring territories. The place names are organised according to locality (by parish) and also in a nationwide index.

### The contents of the Names Archive

The Names Archive dates back to 1915, when *Tieteellisten seurain paikannimitoimikunta* ('the scientific societies' commission on geographical names') was founded to oversee the systematic collection of Finnish and Saami geographical names in Finland and neighbouring regions, and to promote research into geographical names.

The bulk of the Names Archive consists of a collection of place names, personal names, names appearing in official documents, and a cartographic collection. Most of the toponymic collection is based on information from oral sources collected in the field by trained linguists and students. The archive's 2.7 million place name card files (See Figure 1) form the basis of a comprehensive nationwide toponym collection and index. It is estimated that 95 per cent of Finland's traditional place names in Finnish and Saami are included in the collection, making the archive exceptionally comprehensive by international standards.

The Names Archive of the Institute for the Languages of Finland and the national standardisation procedure based on the collections of the archive in many respects fulfill recommendation B (*Collection of geographical names*) of the UNCSGN resolution I/4 (*National standardisation*), as well as recommendations in the UNCSGN resolutions V/22 and VII/5.

More information on the Names Archive is available on the webpages of the Institute for the Languages of Finland (in English): [http://www.kotus.fi/en/on\\_language/names/names\\_archive](http://www.kotus.fi/en/on_language/names/names_archive).

## **The digitalisation process**

The digitalisation of the Names Archive began in 2014. The project aims to convert all of the archive's place name cards, data capture maps and the attributes and metadata related to them into digital format. This will facilitate the use of data from the Names Archive together with geographical and other data provided by other organisations. It will also improve the usability of the existing data, and provide an electronic environment for enriching and supplementing the data.

The archive's name cards were scanned during 2015, and the process of transforming their essential content into database format has been started. The database will include the spelling of the place names, the coordinates of the named places, the parish, the year of collection, the name of the collector, and categorisation of the type of place. The locations of the named places will be given as point coordinates. For place names that are also listed in the Place Name Register of the National Land Survey, the place name identification codes used in the Place Name Register will also be entered into the Name Archive to link the databases.

A tailored web user interface will be developed to enable different kinds of searches based on text content and geographical information. The data will also be usable through a map application. A Web Feature Service (WFS) interface allowing queries will be offered, as well as data downloads. The goal is to complete the digital archive in 2017.

The Digital Names Archive will also enable the information it contains to be enriched in new ways. Citizens will be able to produce new information for the archive, for example by noting whether the names recorded in the archive are still in use or have been replaced by new names, or whether the named places no longer exist. In this way the new digital archive will also put into practice the UNCSGN resolution VIII/10. The primary information of the Names Archive collected by linguists and the supplementary information contributed by citizens will be explicitly separated from each other, enabling users of the digital archive to be aware of the distinction between specialist information and additional information.

During spring 2016 the Finnish National Museum has been preparing an action plan for the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which Finland ratified in May 2013. The Institute for the Languages of Finland has noted that preserving and maintaining both the manual and the digital versions of the Names Archive should be among the objectives of this action plan.

1	<u>Hakkarikivi</u>	Saarijärvi 17ma Ojitervo 1973
2	hakarkiv(i)	
3	Saarijärvi, Pyhäjärvi (9 27/74; kart.)	
4	Suuri siirtolohkare keskellä suo- ta, vanha rajamerkki. Kiveen on hakattu paljon merkintöjä. Tätä nykyä kivi on kolmen pitäjän, Saarijärven, Kannonkosken ja Konginkankaan, rajapyykinä. Eetu Hyvämäki (s. 1909) arveli, et- tä kivi on ollut jopa vanhojen heimorajojen merkki. Eräluetteloissa mainitaan Kouvolan Pyhäjärven erämaan yhtenä raja- kohtana "Hakkarinkivi". (VSH s. 83.)	

- 1 The name in standard Finnish; *hakkari* 'an unusual deverbial nominal from *hakata* 'to chop, hew', *kivi* 'stone'
- 2 Local dialect form
- 3 Location (municipality, village, and reference to the map)
- 4 A large erratic boulder in the middle of a marsh, an old boundary mark. There are many signs cut into the stone.  
Nowadays, the boulder is the boundary mark of three parishes, Saarijärvi, Kannonkoski and Konginkangas.  
Eetu Hyvämäki (b. 1909) thought that the boulder was perhaps a mark of old tribal borders. "Hakkarikivi" is mentioned as a boundary mark in the Pyhäjärvi wilderness in Kouvola in the wilderness catalogue.

Figure 1. Example of an archived place name card. From Närhi, Eeva-Maria 1990: *The onomastic central archives: the foundation of Finnish onomastics*; in the journal *Finnish onomastics* (Studia Fennica 34).