



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
OF ICELAND



ORIGINAL CULTURE IN ICELAND, IDENTITY AND ARCHIVES

Njordur Sigurdsson
Director of Acquisition & Access
Chair of ICA Expert Group on Shared Archival Heritage

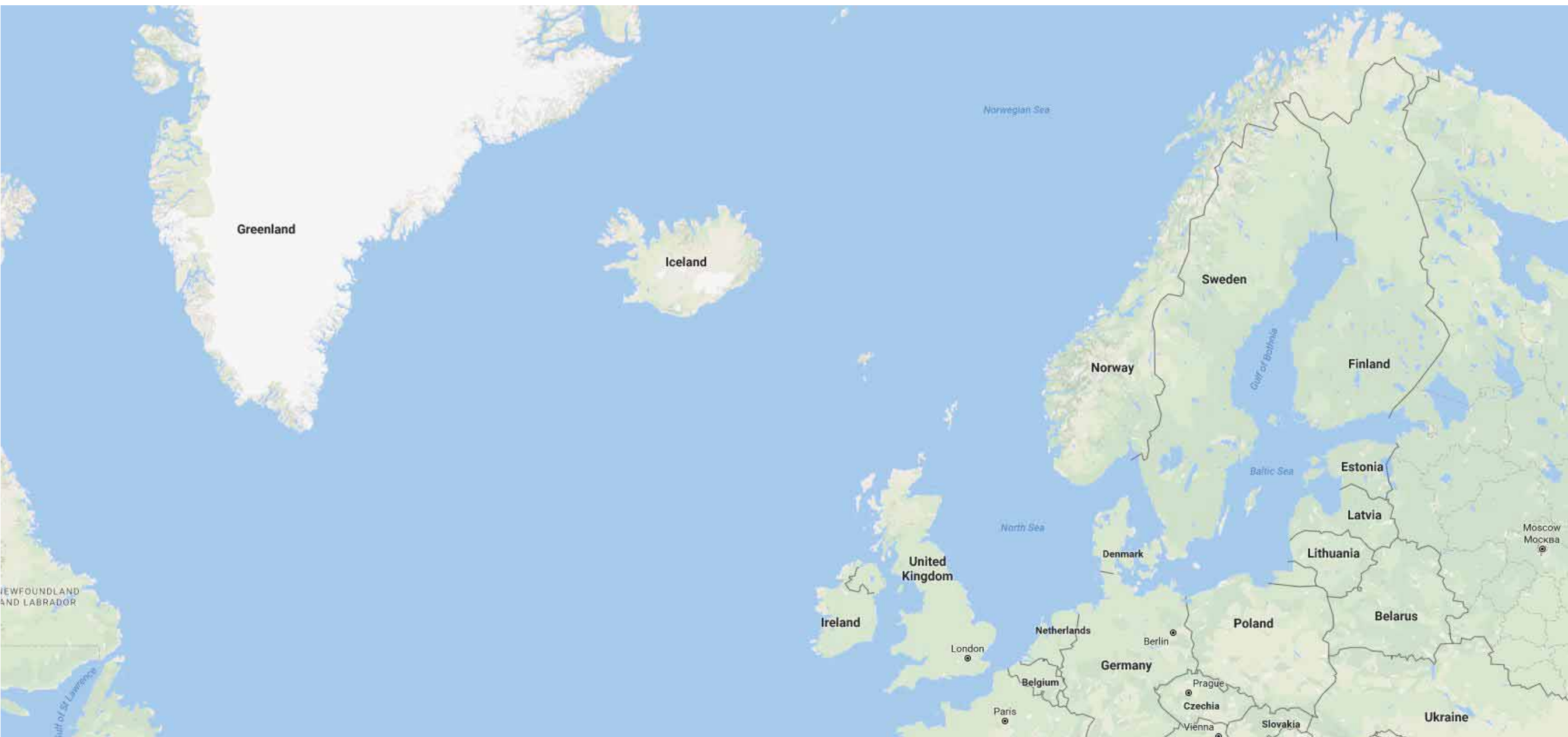


Photo: Google Maps, www.maps.google.com.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
OF ICELAND

ORIGINAL CULTURE

- Iceland was settled by Nordic people from Scandinavia and the British Isles in the 9th and 10th century
- The language Old Norse evolved to different languages
- Icelandic has changed the least and Icelanders today can easily read medieval texts

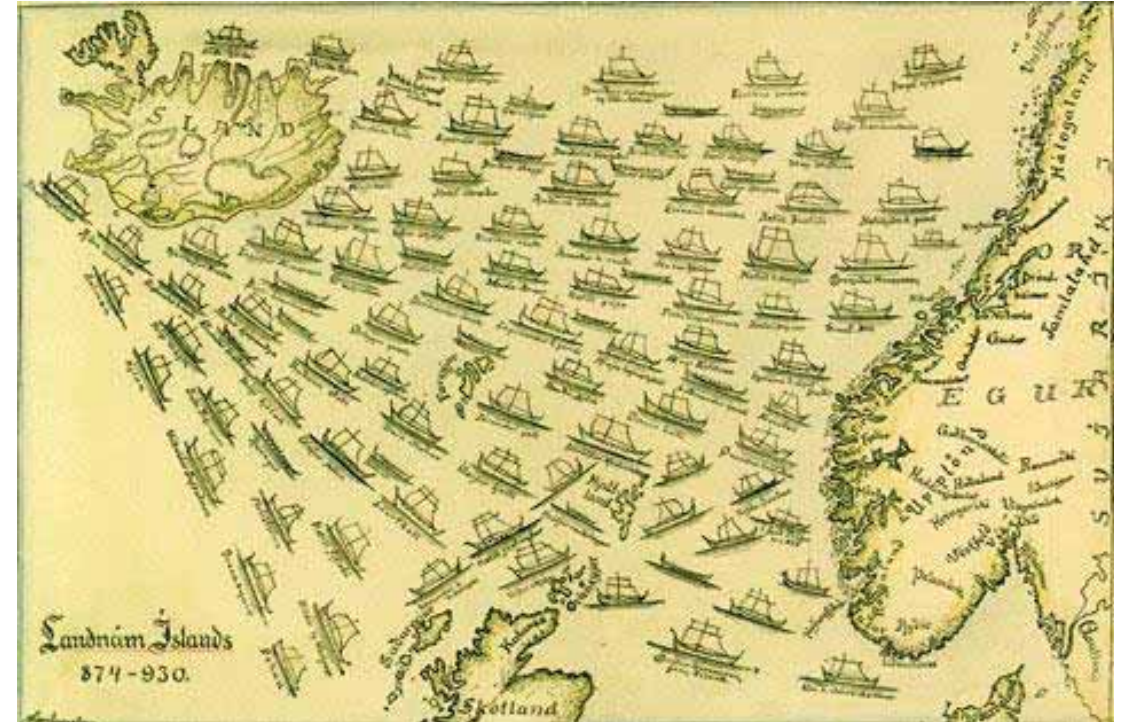


Photo: Saga Íslands. Drawn by Samúel Eggertsson.



PRESERVATION OF THE ICELANDIC LANGUAGE

- Isolation of Iceland
- Manuscripts written in Icelandic that were read in homes through centuries
- Writers wrote in Icelandic
- Influence of Latin on Icelandic much less than other languages
- The Bible and other religious writings were in Icelandic from 16th century and onwards



Photo: The Árni Magnússon Institute in Icelandic Studies, www.arnastofnun.is.





Photo: Reykjavík vikublað newspaper, www.rvkv.wordpress.com.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
OF ICELAND

MILESTONES – ICELANDIC ARCHIVAL CLAIMS

- 1907 – First archival claims against Denmark
- 1928 – Archives concerning Icelandic matters are delivered from Denmark to Iceland
- 1946 – Claims for the return of Icelandic manuscripts from Denmark
- 1961 – Danish parliament approves the return of Icelandic manuscripts to Iceland
- 1971 – The first Icelandic manuscripts are returned to Iceland
- 1997 – The last Icelandic manuscripts are returned to Iceland
- 2003 – The first Icelandic constitution of 1874 returned to Iceland
- 2004 – The archives of the Danish Office of Icelandic affairs returned from Denmark to Iceland





Photo: Alþýðublaðið (newspaper) June 11th 1961, www.timarit.is.

The headline reads “The manuscripts – they are coming home”



Photo: Tíminn (newspaper) June 11th 1961, www.timarit.is.

The headline reads “The manuscripts are coming home”





Photo: Þjóðviljinn (newspaper) May 1st 1955, www.timarit.is.

Workers march in Reykjavík, Iceland, May 1st 1955.
One sign reads “Handritin heim”, transl. “Manuscripts home”.





Photos: The Árni Magnússon Institute in Icelandic Studies, www.arnastofnun.is.

In April 1971 the Danish patrol vessel, *Vædderen*, sailed from Denmark to Iceland with the first shipment of the Icelandic manuscripts. Thousands of Icelanders greeted the Danish ship.





Photo: University of Iceland, www.hi.is.

“The joy of Icelanders of having recovered the manuscripts is as deep and heartfelt as it is because we feel that it strengthens us in our efforts to be Icelanders, to preserve everything that is Icelandic.”

Gylfi Þ. Gíslason, Minister of Education 1956-1971



TO CONCLUDE

- The history of archival claims in Iceland show how important it was for Icelanders to reclaim manuscripts and archives from Denmark, sources that portrayed their original culture and their own identity



Photo: The Árni Magnússon Institute in Icelandic Studies, www.arnastofnun.is.

