

RESEARCHING DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE AT THE MARTYNAS MAŽVYDAS NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA

Viktorija VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ

Abstract

The Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, founded in 1919, is one of the three largest libraries in the country. It collects, preserves and makes relevant the national documentary cultural heritage and ensures its dissemination and integration into the European digital field. The National Library of Lithuania is the only institution in the country entrusted with the task of collecting and preserving the national archive of published documents, an archive of Lithuanian and other language documents on Lithuanian history and culture published in Lithuania and abroad. The paper discusses the work with the documentary heritage carried out at the National Library of Lithuania. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit actively participates in dissemination and presentation of documentary heritage by restoring and digitizing the documents, developing online catalogue, preparing exhibitions based on library collections, publishing catalogues of book collections, participating in research and dissemination projects, pre-

paring conference papers and publishing articles on research in book history and book culture. All these activities helps to reveal Lithuania's unique and distinctive character as an independent state with deep European roots.

Keywords: documentary heritage, researching, national library, Lithuania

Abstrakt

Litovská národná knižnica Martynasa Mažvydasa, založená v roku 1919, je jednou z troch najväčších knižníc v krajine. Zhromažďuje, uchováva a propaguje národné dokumentárne kultúrne dedičstvo a zabezpečuje jeho šírenie a integráciu do európskeho digitálneho priestoru. Litovská národná knižnica je jedinou inštitúciou v krajine, ktorá je poverená úlohou zhromažďovať a uchovávať národný archív publikovaných dokumentov, archív litovských a iných jazykových dokumentov o litovskej histórii a kultúre publikovaných v Litve a v zahraničí. Článok pojednáva o práci s dokumentárnym dedičstvom vykonávanej v Národnej knižnici Litvy. Oddelenie vzácných kníh

a rukopisov sa aktívne podieľa na šírení a prezentácii dokumentárneho dedičstva reštaurovaním a digitalizáciou dokumentov, tvorbou online katalógu, prípravou výstav na základe knižničných fondov, vydávaním katalógov knižných fondov, participáciou na výskumných a prezentačných projektoch, prípravou konferenčných príspevkov a publikovaním článkov o výskume knižnej histórie a knižnej kultúry. Všetky tieto aktivity pomáhajú odhaliť jedinečný a osobitý charakter Litvy ako nezávislého štátu s hlbokými európskymi koreňmi.

Kľúčové slová: dokumentárne dedičstvo, výskum, národná knižnica, Litva

The Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (hereinafter, the National Library of Lithuania), founded in 1919 in Kaunas, is one of the three largest libraries in Lithuania. In 1951, it was granted the status of the main library of the Republic of Lithuania. Due to the intensive growth of book stocks and the increasing number of readers and staff, the National Library of Lithuania faced the problem of space shortage; therefore, a decision was made to transfer it to Vilnius. In 1963, within four months, the National Library of Lithuania was moved to Vilnius to the new building, which was designed and built exclusively for the library. The National Rebirth of the 1980s and the restoration of Lithuania's independence on 11 March 1990 greatly influenced the library's activities. In 1988, the National Library of Lithuania was named after Martynas Mažvydas, the author of the first Lithuanian book, and in 1989, it was granted the status of a national library. Since 30 May of that year, the official name of the library has been the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.¹ Currently, the library houses a total of 6.4 million physical items (1.8 million titles).²

The National Library of Lithuania is the only institution in the country entrusted with the task of collecting and preserving the national archive of published documents, an archive of Lithuanian and other language documents on Lithuanian history and culture published in Lithuania and outside of Lithuania. The main aim of the National Library of Lithuania is to collect, preserve and make relevant the national documentary cultural heritage and to ensure its dissemination and integration into the European digital field. The aim of this article is to discuss the work with the print documentary heritage at the National Library of Lithuania, focusing on the old and rare books. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit is part of the National Library of Lithuania's Documentary Heritage Research Department, which mostly focuses on the research and dissemination of documentary heritage. It consists of four units: the Lithuanian Studies Unit, the Judaica Research Centre, the Statehood Centre and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit (hereinafter, the Unit). Today, the Unit holds about 85,000 books from the 15th–19th centuries (books, periodicals, official letters, cartographic and other publications): Lithuanian-language books published from the 16th century to 1904; books on Lithuania published in Lithuania in foreign languages and books published in the Western Europe from the 16th century to 1830; old and rare European printing of the 15th – 19th centuries; also about 50,000 books from the private collections of the 20th – 21st centuries and about 100,000 manuscripts from the 14th century to this day, related to the Lithuanian history, culture, science and social life phenomena or events. The Unit also houses the doctoral dissertations and habilitation theses defended in Lithuanian education institutions from 1994.

In my article, I talk about the Unit's work related to the research of documentary heritage. The Unit actively participates in dissemination and presentation of documentary heritage by restoring and digitising the documents, developing online catalogue, preparing exhibitions based on library collections, organising conferences, publishing

¹ More about the history of the National Library of Lithuania see: History [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/en/about-library/main-information/history>

² MARKEVIČIŪTĖ, Vaiva and Jarda PAUKŠTIENĖ. *Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka 100*. J. BIČKAUSKIENĖ and V. MARKEVIČIŪTĖ, eds. Vilnius: Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, 2019, p. 32.

catalogues of book collections, participating in research and dissemination projects, preparing conference papers and publishing articles on research in book history and book culture.

Restoration and Digitisation

The restoration and digitisation are very important in the field of old heritage. The Library's Document Conservation and Restoration Unit disinfects, conserves and restores documents from the library's holdings (manuscripts, engravings, lithographs, various plans, prints, maps, albums, leather and parchment covers of old books and their fittings), and also runs a document protection programme. Currently, all the 15th – 18th-century books have been going through the process of cleaning and putting into cardboard boxes.

The digitisation of documentary heritage is one of the most important activities in many Lithuanian memory institutions. A number of libraries, as well as various museums and the Office of the Chief Archivist of Lithuania take part in the documentary heritage projects. The Unit has also been involved in such projects. *ePaveldas*, which digitalisation comprises digitised prints and manuscripts from the 15th – 21st centuries, is one of the largest digitisation projects in Lithuania. *ePaveldas* is the largest digital cultural heritage portal in Lithuania, which has been in operation for more than fifteen years. At the moment, it contains over 500,000 items. Twenty-four Lithuanian institutions, including libraries, museums and archives, contribute to its content and new additions.³ This constantly augmented portal has greatly increased the possibilities of use and dissemination of unique Lithuanian cultural heritage objects. The usage of digital copies helps to preserve the originals for posterity. All the objects in the portal are labelled *Creative Commons*. This type of licence informs the user about the rights of use of a digitised object in question. At the moment, the collection of incunabula of the National Library of Lithuania is being digitised for *ePaveldas*.⁴ The digital collection of parchments is going through the same process.⁵ Also, the Unit has started scanning the Plantin-Moretus Printing House books, the most famous printing house in Europe in the 16th–19th centuries. All these documents are in public domain; therefore, they can be used without any restrictions.

This year, the National Library of Lithuania started a new digitisation project. In cooperation with nineteen other Lithuanian cultural institutions, it has set in motion an *eCulture* platform, a unified portal for digitised and digital cultural and audio-visual content, e-services and dissemination in Lithuania. The public launch of the portal, which is meant to bring together cultural resources on the Internet, is scheduled for April 2026. The platform will offer the public convenient access to quality digital and digitised content, new e-services, as well as relevant and engaging curated content products—carefully selected content items in different shapes and formats, grouped

³ More about this portal see: *ePaveldas*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/about>

⁴ See: *ePaveldas*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/collections/23>

⁵ See: *ePaveldas*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/collections/8>

together according to a common feature and designed to meet the needs and interests of different user groups.⁶

Projects

From the beginning of 2017, four Lithuanian libraries have been taking part in the creation of a database *Material Evidence in Incunabula* (MEI),⁷ which is specifically designed to record and search the material evidence of the 15th-century printed books: ownership, decoration, binding, manuscript annotations, stamps, prices, etc. MEI is linked to the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (ISTC),⁸ provided by the British Library, from which it derives the bibliographical records and allows the user at last to combine searches of bibliographical records (extracted from ISTC) with copy-specific records. MEI is a great tool for exploring the book history, because it significantly extends the look to the first printed books and provides a possibility to examine the incunabula housed in Lithuania in a new light. The participation in the project has been very important for Lithuania, because it is a great opportunity to make the heritage of Lithuania more visible in the world. The National Library of Lithuania holds ninety-one incunabula. Almost all of them are recorded on MEI (only a few incunabula have been missing from the database). The participation in this project has enabled us to explore the collections of incunabula found in the Lithuanian memory institutions in more detail and to publish a few new publications about them.⁹

In 2009, the Unit created the website *The Provenances. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania*.¹⁰ The project was funded by the Culture Support Fund. The aim of this website was to make the provenances available to the public through visual, graphic and textual means, and also to provide more information on the processes related with the provenances.¹¹ The website classifies the provenances into three groups: the provenances of the National Library of Lithuania, personal provenances and the provenances of institutions and organisations. It includes images of provenances and a brief history of the person, institution or organisation, also a bibliographical list of the books and articles about the former book owner. Despite the fact that the website requires tech-

⁶ More about this project see: *eCulture platform (a unified portal for digitised and digital cultural and audio-visual content, e-services and dissemination)*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/en/projects/programs-and-projects/electronic-services/eculture-platform-a-unified-portal-for-digitised-and-digital-cultural-and-audio-visual-content-e-services-and-dissemination?highlight=WyjIY3VsdHVyZSJd>

⁷ See: *Material Evidence in Incunabula*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: http://data.cerl.org/mei/_search

⁸ See: *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC)*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: http://data.cerl.org/istc/_search

⁹ VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, Viktorija and ZEMKAJUTĖ, Agnė. How provenance marks from Lithuanian incunabula are contributing to historical narrative. In: *Printing R-Evolution and Society 1450 – 1500. Fifty Years that Changed Europe*. C. DONDI, ed. Venezia: Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2020, p. 431-462; VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, Viktorija. Inkunabulų sklaidos ir funkcionavimo ypatumai: Lietuvos atminties institucijų rinkinių atvejai. In: *Knygotyra*. 2020, Vol. 74, p. 7-34.

¹⁰ See: *Proveniencijos*. [online]. [cit. 2024-30-04]. Available from: <https://proveniencijos.lnb.lt/>

¹¹ More about the website see: *Apie svetainę*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://proveniencijos.lnb.lt/apie-svetaine/>

nical updating, supplementing and editing, the information it contains is still relevant and worthwhile. In the future, we plan to edit and update the website.

Expanding Library's Holdings

The National Library of Lithuania has the opportunity to enrich its book collections. Purchases and donations are the main sources of document acquisition in the National Library of Lithuania. Every year, the Lithuanian Council for Culture supports the projects to buy valuable documents (prints, manuscripts and photos). Since 2018, the library have purchased eight rare books of importance to Lithuanian culture and history.¹² Two books from Plantin-Moretus Printing House,¹³ also the German translation of the first European work in Latin on artillery *Artis magnae artilleriae* (Amsterdam, 1650) by the military engineer, artillery theoretician, Lithuanian nobleman Kazimierz Siemowicz (ca. 1660 – ca. 1651),¹⁴ are the most significant. The latter was also translated and published in other languages, such as French, English, Dutch, Danish and Polish. In recent years, the National Library of Lithuania has welcomed a number of private libraries of prominent 20th-century Lithuanian cultural figures. The research of those private libraries will provide important information on the culture and history of the book in modern era.

Cataloguing

The Unit also maintains an online catalogue. When cataloguing the old books, their records are made as detailed as possible. The greatest attention is given to the provenances, such as inscriptions, stamps, ex libris and supralibros, and marginalia, because the bibliophilic value of an old book depends greatly on this information. The identification of different marks of provenances is one of the most reliable ways to restore old libraries; however, this work requires a lot of knowledge, effort and time.

¹² More about the old books purchased by the National Library of Lithuania see: *The National Library Obtained Valuable Items Significant for the History of Culture of Lithuania*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/en/news/6120-nacionaline-biblioteka-isigijo-lietuvos-kulturos-istorijai-svarbiu-vertybiu-2>; *Nacionalinė biblioteka įsigijo dvi lituanistines senąsias knygas*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/naujienos/7862-nacionaline-biblioteka-isigijo-dvi-lituanistines-senasias-knygas?highlight=WyjwdWZlBmRvcMzVlI0=>; *Nacionalinė biblioteka įsigijo dvi lituanistines senąsias knygas*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/naujienos/9132-nacionaline-biblioteka-isigijo-dvi-senasias-lituanistines-knygas?highlight=WyjcdTAXMmZzaWdpam8iLCJcdTAXMmZzaWdpam90ZSJd>; *Nacionalinė biblioteka įsigijo Lietuvai svarbių dokumentų*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://www.lnb.lt/naujienos/10443-nacionaline-biblioteka-isigijo-lietuvai-svarbiu-dokumentu?highlight=WyjcdTAXMmZzaWdpam8iLCJcdTAXMmZzaWdpam90ZSJd>

¹³ SARBIEWSKI, Maciej Kazimierz. *Lycorum libri IV*. Antwerpen: ex Officina Plantiniana, Balthasaris Moreti, 1632 (sign. R.XVII:C.537; <https://www.epaveldas.lt/preview?id=LIBIS000000234058>); MAGNUS, Olaus. *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*. Antwerpen: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1558 (R.XVI:B.911; <https://www.epaveldas.lt/preview?id=LIBIS000000497496>).

¹⁴ SIEMENOWICZ, Kazimierz. *Vollkommene Geschütz und Büchsenmeisterey Kunst...*, Frankfurt am Main: in Verlegung Johann David Zunners, 1676 (sign. R.XVII:E.340; <https://www.epaveldas.lt/preview?id=LIBIS000000493640>).

If possible, every bibliographic record is given a fingerprint, a book recognition code of 22 symbols facilitating the identification of a damaged book or its variant.¹⁵ The fingerprints are especially helpful in cases where, due to numerous defects of the copy, there is no other possibility to correctly identify the year of publishing, edition, title and/or other data. For several decades, the fingerprint was favoured by many Western European libraries.

Scientific Research and Publications

The cataloguing of old books is accompanied by consistent research. As I mentioned earlier, only recently, the Unit researched the collection of incunabula housed in the National Library of Lithuania. The richly illustrated catalogue *The Incunabula of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania*, published in 2014,¹⁶ introduces the features of the first printed book and its former owners. Over the past decade, the library's collection of incunabula has enlarged as new books have been identified.

In 2018, to celebrate the centenary of the restoration of the Lithuanian state and the centenary of the National Library of Lithuania, a book *Mstislavas Dobužinskis's Heraldry: Not Only a Science; It Is an Art* presenting heraldry, one of the most significant parts of Mstislavas Dobužinskis's (1875 – 1957) artistic legacy, was prepared.¹⁷ The Unit holds a large archive of Dobužinskis's, stage designer, painter and graphic artist, documentary heritage. This richly illustrated book introduces to the artist's contribution to the history of heraldry in Lithuania. Only a few know that in the early 20th century, Dobužinskis almost became the author of the official coat of arms and the flag of the Republic of Lithuania.

The collection of post-incunabula (books published between 1501 and 1550) has also been researched and several articles concerning it have been published.¹⁸ The books printed in Elzevirs' Printing House, which was active between 1583 and 1712, were identified and analysed (a total of 231 copies of 180 titles were found).¹⁹ The books published in Lithuania in the 16th – 17th centuries were also examined.²⁰

¹⁵ RAČIUS, Vidas and RANKELIENĖ, Sondra. Kam reikalingas fingerprintas? In: *Tarp knygy*. 2008, No. 7/8, p. 9-10.

¹⁶ *Lietuvos nacionalinės Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekos inkunabulai: katalogas*. V. VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, ed. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2014.

¹⁷ *Mstislavo Dobužinskio heraldika: ne tik mokslas, bet ir menas*. M. KVIZIKEVIČIŪTĖ, D. NORKŪNIENĖ and J. K. PAČKAUSKIENĖ, eds. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2018.

¹⁸ VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, Viktorija. Lietuvos nacionalinės Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekos Retų knygų ir rankraščių skyriaus paleotipų rinkinys. In: *Knygotyra*. 2011, Vol. 56, p. 135-148; VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, Viktorija. Paleotypy w zbiorach Litewskiej Biblioteki Narodowej im. Martynasa Mažvydasa. In: *Bibliotheca Nostra: śląski kwartalnik naukowy*. 2014, No. 4, p. 53-69.

¹⁹ MISIŪNIENĖ, Jadvyga. Elzevirų leidiniai Lietuvos nacionalinėje Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekoje. In: *Knygotyra*. 2006, Vol. 46, p. 101-117.

²⁰ MISIŪNIENĖ, Jadvyga. XVI – XVII a. LDK teritorijoje išspausdinti leidiniai Lietuvos nacionalinėje Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekoje. In: *Tarp knygy*. 2008, No. 5, p. 11-26; MISIŪNIENĖ, Jadvyga. Druki impresorów protestanskich wydane na terytorium Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w latach 1553 – 1656 (ze zbiorów Litewskiej Biblioteki Narodowej im. Martynasa Mažvydasa). In: *Bibliografia Polska Estreicherów. Rama wydawnicza, studia i źródła*. Vol. 2: Libri Nostri Omnes Studia i źródła. W. WALECKI, T. NASTULCZYK and S. SIESS-KRZYSZKOWSKI, eds. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2022, p. 269-293.

For several years, the research has been carried out on the cultural heritage of Lithuanian manors. Actually, the books from the manor libraries formed the basis of the old and rare collections of the National Library of Lithuania. The research is based on the surviving catalogues of personal libraries from the mid-19th and the early 20th centuries and the book collections, which have remained. A number of books that belonged to noble families have been identified in the library: the Kossakowski, Oginski, Tyszkiewicz, Hutten-Czapski, Koncza, Plater, Radziwill, Tyzenhauz and Rönne.²¹ Also, the Unit holds many collections from various monasteries shut down in the late 19th century. The identification of those books makes it possible to reconstruct the peculiarities of monastic reading. Currently, we have been intensively researching the books of several monastery collections. Our research is usually presented at the conferences and published in scientific journals.

It is important to note that in 2022 we finished a long-running project. Over the last few years, the books of *Officina Plantiniana* housed in the National Library of Lithuania have been identified and catalogued. This printing house (operated in 1555 – 1876) was the most successful and popular printing house in early modern Europe, known throughout the world for its high quality books. Upon receiving the funding from the Research Council of Lithuania, we published the catalogue of those books.²² The National Library of Lithuania holds 283 titles (386 copies) of *Officina Plantiniana* printed between 1564 and 1755. It is the second largest collection in Lithuanian memory institutions. The catalogue groups the records according to the representatives of Plantin-Moretus dynasty, who headed the printing house during the period. A brief biographical and historical information is also provided. The introductory article that accompanies the catalogue focuses on the surviving different signs of ownership. The catalogue is in English, whereas an introductory article and short annotations on publishers are in Lithuanian and English. The catalogue is an open-access publication and is freely available to the public.²³

Exhibitions

We also organise exhibitions and collaborate with other memory institutions (libraries and museums) in Lithuania and abroad, preparing the joint exhibitions of relevant old documentary heritage. We hold small-scale exhibitions in the Rare Books and Ma-

²¹ Some publications are published: MACKEVIČ, Teresa. Šaltinių liudijimai apie grafų Kosakovskių bibliotekas ir archyvus (Iš Lietuvos nacionalinės Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekos fondo). In: *Bibliografija 2010 – 2011*. 2013, p. 84-91; MILTENYTĖ, Asta. Baronų Rönne bibliotekos. In: *Renavas*. Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademija, 2001, p. 133-142 (*Žemaičių praeitis*, Vol. 9); MISIŪNIENĖ, Jadvyga. Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis ir jo palikimas Lietuvos nacionalinėje bibliotekoje. In: *Tarp knygų*. 2016, No. 1, p. 20-25; MISIŪNIENĖ, Jadvyga. Mykolo Kleopo Oginskio ir jo palikuonių asmeniniai knygų rinkiniai: Zalesė, Rietavas, Plungė. In: *Žemaičių saulutė*. 2015, October 30, p. 2-4.

²² *Officina Plantiniana knygos Nacionalinėje bibliotekoje: katalogas = The Officina Plantiniana Collection at the National Library of Lithuania: A Catalogue*. M. KVIZIKEVIČIŪTĖ, E. PRAŠKEVIČ and V. VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, eds. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2022.

²³ See: *Officina Plantiniana knygos Nacionalinėje bibliotekoje: katalogas = The Officina Plantiniana Collection at the National Library of Lithuania: A Catalogue*. M. KVIZIKEVIČIŪTĖ, E. PRAŠKEVIČ and V. VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, eds. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2022. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://journals.lnb.lt/dokumentinio-paveldo-tyrimai/article/view/821/784>

nuscripts' Reading Room, usually five or six a year, also one-item exhibitions, where we showcase particularly valuable and interesting books. In this way, we draw visitors' attention to the most interesting and important documents kept in our library. Every two years we prepare a large-scale exhibition, generally linked to a specific event or theme. In 2023, the exhibition *Urbs: People and Books*, dedicated to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, which celebrated its 700th anniversary, invited to a journey through the history of Vilnius press. In the exhibition, Vilnius was presented as the most important centre of book printing and dissemination in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, shaping the city's cultural, religious and economic life. During the exhibition, we invited visitors to take part in public lectures and guided tours. Based on this exhibition, a virtual exhibition *Book Dissemination in Vilnius: Urbs et Libri* was published on the Google Arts & Culture platform in English,²⁴ making old documentary heritage more accessible to a wider audience. The interactive virtual details of the exhibition are more engaging and attract the visitors.

Conferences

In order to bring together the community of specialists and researchers interested in old books, it was decided to organise international conferences every other autumn. The first conference *Experiences of Documentary Heritage Research and Dissemination in European Libraries* took place on 9 October 2019. It was dedicated to the centenary of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The researchers and scientists from Great Britain, Poland, Latvia, Belarus and Lithuania shared their research and ongoing projects on documentary heritage collections housed in various European memory institutions. The second conference *Theatrum libri: The Press, Reading and Dissemination in Early Modern Europe* took place on 1–3 December 2021. It was dedicated to the centenary of the establishment of the first archive in the Republic of Lithuania. The conference brought together live and virtual researchers from Europe, Asia and the United States, who presented over thirty papers and shared their insights on the history of the book and application of digital humanities and computational history. Last year, on 5–6 October, we organised the conference *Printing Centers and Peripheries in the Early Modern Period*, dedicated to the 700th anniversary of Vilnius. The conference featured a plenary lecture and 33 presentations, both live and virtual, by the researchers from fourteen countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States. The plenary lecture *Centres and Peripheries, Large and Small, Public and Private, Religious and Secular: The Equalizing Role of MEI* was given by Oxford University researcher Cristina Dondi. In autumn 2025, we plan the fourth conference, also dedicated to the old book, but this time focusing on the Baroque epoch. In addition to organising conferences, we have set ourselves a goal of producing collections of articles. In 2022, we published an open-access collection of articles in English, *Theatrum libri: Book Printing, Reading and Dissemination in Early Modern Europe*.²⁵ The

²⁴ See: *Book Dissemination in Vilnius: Urbs et libri*. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/0wXhdpfHMGsCLA>

²⁵ *Theatrum Libri: Book Printing, Reading and Dissemination in Early Modern Europe*. M. KVIZIKEVIČIŪTĖ and V. VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, eds. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2022.

collection is based on the papers presented at the international conference mentioned earlier. The peer-reviewed collection includes fifteen articles by the researchers from the universities and libraries in Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Currently, we have been working on a new collection of articles, which will be available by the end of 2024. The book will also be an open-access publication and freely available to the public.²⁶

All these different National Library of Lithuania's activities on researching old documentary heritage discussed in this article help to reveal Lithuania's unique and distinctive character as an independent state with deep European roots, as well as the tendencies of certain cultural, political and social processes that are characteristic of the entire region.

²⁶ See: *Theatrum Libri: Book Printing, Reading and Dissemination in Early Modern Europe*. M. KVIZIKEVIČIŪTĖ and V. VAITKEVIČIŪTĖ, eds. Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, 2022. [online]. [cit. 2024-01-05]. Available from: <https://journals.lnb.lt/dokumentinio-paveldo-tyrimai/article/view/798/773>

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Viktorija Vaitkevičiūtė, Ph.D.

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Gedimino Ave. 51, LT-01109 Vilnius, Lithuania, viktorija.vaitkeviciute@lnb.lt, +370 5 239 8586

My research interests include the culture and history of the book of the 15th – 18th centuries, as well as the religious Baroque and Enlightenment literature of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. My most important publications are the monograph *Baroque Catholic Sermon in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Between Ars Vivendi and Ars Moriendi* (2008) and the catalogues, *The Incunabula of Martynas Mažvydas Lithuanian Library of Lithuania* (2014) and *The Officina Plantiniana Collection at the National Library of Lithuania* (2022, co-authored with Eva Praškevič and Milda Kvizikevičiūtė).