Managing heritage: collections security in Vilnius University Library

Tartu, 2019 09 05
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General overview
Physical environment (buildings, storages)
Services (reading rooms, terms and conditions)
Regulations (guidelines, plans etc.)

Final remarks
Vilnius University Library

Jesuit college library

Founded in 1570

Library of state importance

1+1=1 philosophy

Situated in the city Center (Central Library) and

In the student campus (SCI Center)
Scholarly Communication and Information Center

Modern building opened in March 2013
24/7
Modern systems (e.g. fire extinguishing system by fog, RFID etc.)
Modern collections for students' needs
Self service (even in some part of stacks)
Space for learning and creating
Central Library

Home for Heritage Collections
Situated in various parts of historical ensemble of Vilnius University (protected by UNESCO)
Storages (since 1970s) – 13 floors (apx 350 m3 each) in two buildings
4 floors dedicated to Heritage Collections
3 special reading rooms for Heritage Collections
Heritage collections

• Manuscripts (archives)
• Rare books
• Graphical prints and drawings
• The 19th century collection
Origins - donations of:

- kings and dukes (e.g. Sigismundus Augustus),
- bishops (Georgius Albinius, Valerianus Protasewicz etc.)
- Noble families (Sapieha, Radziwill, Pac etc.)
- Professors and students of the university
- And many others

- Manuscripts – more than 325 000 documents and still growing
- Rare books – more than 160 000 items
- Graphics – over 92 000 artworks

The 19th century collection (circa 150 000 items)
1900-1945 books (over 450 000 items)
Manuscripts

1. Vilnius University
2. Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas
3. Societies and organizations
4. Church institutions
5. Courts
6. Sets formed by the VUL
7. Personal archives
Rare books

1. Incunabula
2. The 16th-18th century prints
3. Old Lithuanian books
4. Cartography
5. Public libraries
6. Personal libraries
7. Bibliophilic editions
Graphics

1. Old graphics (the 16th-19th centuries)
2. Contemporary Lithuanian graphics
3. Works of foreign authors
4. Exlibris collection
Some treasures

The first Lithuanian book (M. Mažvydas. *Catechismusa prasty szadei...* Königsberg, 1547)


337 incunabula (Valturio, Roberto. *De re militari*. [Verona], 1472)

The oldest manuscript from the beginning of the 13th century

600 court books

Collection of cartography and atlases

Portraits of Radvila family, Vilnius Album

13 positions in UNESCO Memory of the world programme national and regional registers
Heritage for research and studies

- Heritage Collections and Research Department (Manuscripts, Rare Books, Documental Heritage Preservation)
- Research and dissemination projects
- Publishing
Digitization of GDL Courtbooks in VUL (DigiCOURT)
Virtual reconstruction of the oldest academic library in Lithuania (VIRTUS)

COST „Republic of letters“
Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI) database (CERL)

Lithuania in Vilnius University Library (Lietuva VUB)
Fundraising project to preserve 4 unique globes
Library in 1990s
Reconstruction

Title - Reconstruction of Old Vilnius University Library (investment project)

Period – 2006-2020

Budget – 10 500 000 € (State budget funds)

Aim – to reconstruct Old Vilnius University Library security and microclimate support systems, Library premises and historical furniture, to purchase necessary conservation, restoration and digitisation equipment.
Beginning (2006)

Technical reconstruction of document storage (14 floors, apr 5300 m2, special collections – 1600 m2)
Renovation of fire extinguishing system (gas)
Implementation of new microclimate support system and dust cleaning system
Main challenges

Library remained open
Impossible to move the collections
Reconstruction in stages
A lot of unfamiliar people
Lack of knowledge and competences in managing such situation
Results

1. New environment for special collections
2. Loss of some storage space
3. Unhappy readers / nervous staff vs better conditions for heritage
4. New service providing procedures
Storage of cultural heritage

1. Special premisses
2. Microclimate system, fire extinguishing system
3. Special conditions for document storage (boxes, drawers, folders etc.)
4. Restricted access, special order of service
Reading rooms

- Enhanced security zone
- Separate guidelines for users
- Physical security of documents
Manuscript reading room – 10 places
Rare books reading room – 10 places
Special equipment
Department of prints and drawings – 2 places
User services: regulations and guidelines

Documents can be used only in special reading rooms
No food/drinks, bags, coats
ID check, recommendation letter, request for using special collections
Limited quantity of documents
Orders – 2 times per day
Document check before and after using
Staff always present in the reading room
New order of making copies
Legal basis

Document preservation guidelines of Vilnius University Library (2016)
  • General and special requirements for document storages
  • Requirements for exhibitions and packing
  • Preservation of documents
  • Microbiological control
  • General principles of document use

VUL collection policy (2014)
Guidelines for using special collections
Policy of making photo copies with personal devices (2018)
  • Clear definitions for documents
  • Clear restrictions for devices
Partnership

Document lending for exhibitions (6-8 every year, special procedures and requirements for exhibitions area)
Projects (digitization – unexperienced staff)
NB: documents are always evaluated by preservation staff
Preservation of cultural heritage

1. Restoration and conservation
2. Restoration of bindings
3. Digitisation
The way of the document

The storage – reading room (user) – description – back to the storage

The storage – description - preservation unit - exhibition/digitization - preservation unit – back to the storage

Digitized objects vs originals
Heritage in virtual space

National level (epaveldas http://www.epaveldas.lt/home; VUL digital collections; VUL virtual exhibitions http://www.eparodos.mb.vu.lt etc.)

Final remarks

Historical building is a challenge itself
Not all expectations and wishes of users can be fulfilled
User friendly environment vs security?
More information in digital form – less visitors in reading rooms
Contacts

Nijolė Klingaitė-Dasevičienė
Director of Heritage Collections and Research Department

nijole.klingaite@mb.vu.lt