

Li thuan i a

Rasa Balčikonytė
Head of the Information Society
Development Department
Ministry of Culture

Up to now, Lithuania's distinctive feature was instability in the coordination of the development of information society on the state level: in a relatively short period of time, institutions responsible for this area have been changed several times, and ultimately, even a few of them emerged. To conclude the lengthy process of transformations and transitions, 2001 the Information Society Development Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania launched its activities targeted at contributing to the shaping of state policies pertaining to the development of information society in Lithuania and at the co-ordination of the implementation. During the last years a certain amount of projects on long term preservation of cultural heritage and improving access to them was executed with financial support of the Lithuanian Government, national and international foundations and organisations. In the field of long term preservation of cultural heritage of Lithuania the most extensive works are done in the following directions.

Policies and programmes for digitisation

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, responsible for preservation of published cultural heritage, are working on the policy of digitisation of Lithuanian cultural heritage with the following main trends:

- preparation of the strategy for digitisation of cultural heritage, including the formulation of selection criteria to be applied on digitisation objects, making a list of memory institutions (such as libraries, archives and museums) and digital collections, application of the good practices and technologies, creation of the the management mechanism of digitisation process in Lithuania;

- preparation of a long-term investment programme in the field of Lithuanian cultural heritage in order to receive financing from the national budget;
- preparation of projects in the field of Lithuanian cultural heritage digitisation for the European Structural Funds. Recently PHARE financing was received for the preparation of the project "Creation of Integrated e-Library Infrastructure". The project provides for digitisation of 11 Mio pages of Lithuanian cultural heritage and 1000 shellac records. 60 public libraries, 11 research and academic libraries will take part in this project.

Co-operation activities and digitisation programmes

In the field of digitisation of cultural heritage of Lithuania there are a number of individual plans, support frameworks and projects, mainly executed by the following institutions:

Libraries

One of the first project in the field of the digitisation of cultural heritage was executed by the Library of Vilnius University. Vilnius university, founded in 1570, owns one of the richest collections of old and rare manuscripts and publications. Library's main concern is to preserve printed and written heritage by developing restoration and digitisation process. They should be presented to the world through the means of CD-ROM containing bibliographic descriptions, characteristics and representative images of the documents. The first compact disc – Historical Vilnius Collections of the Vilnius University Library – presenting the most significant publications, manuscripts, graphic works and other collections was published in 1998 within



An extract from the privilege of Sigismund Augustus of June 6, 1563



the frame of the Unesco project "Memory of the World". In 2000, Library digitised the full text of the first Lithuanian book Catechizmus of Martynas Mažvydas (published in 1547) and started the biggest project – digitisation of the manuscript court books of the 16th-18th centuries. Digitised material (6500 pages already digitised) is transferred to compact discs that are offered to readers thus preserving the originals from decay.
<http://vu.lt>

The other biggest libraries are working in the similar directions: manuscript collection (privileges and bules of the 15th-18th centuries of Grand Duchy of Lithuania), held in National Library, is digitised in 2001. It was the first step of the digitisation of the most valuable documents of the National Library and ensuring an access to them for the users.
<http://lnb.lt>

In 2002 Library of the Academy of Science started digitising the collection of manuscripts (library holds more than 250 000 copies of manuscripts of the 11th-21th centuries). This library preserves large holdings of the periodicals of the Republic of Lithuania of 1917-1940 crucially important for the modern history of Lithuania and started being digitised in 2001.
<http://mab.lt>
<http://mab/parchments.lt>

Research institutions

Since 1996, the Institute of the Lithuanian language has been creating the database of written Lithuanian language of the period of 16th-18th centuries. Available examples of first Lithuanian written texts are connected with the Reformation movement

in Europe (mid 16th century). They mostly comprise Lutheran, evangelic-reformat and catholic religious books, such as catechisms, books of songs, translations of the Bible. The database of old written Lithuanian language consists of three parts: full texts, concordances and indexes. Digitisation of manuscripts of 16th-17th is almost completed.
<http://iki.lt>

Institute of Lithuanian language has the biggest collection of the audio cassettes of Lithuanian dialects. The database of the dialects archive, established in 2001, holds information (in the Lithuanian language only) on sound records that are copied out from magnetic tapes and cassettes into compact discs for computer use and preserved in the Institute of the Lithuanian language. The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in cooperation with its partners (the Institute of Lithuanian Language, the Lithuanian Institute of History, and the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics) has since September 2003 launched the scholarly program RaSa: "Expressions of Lithuanian Mental Culture: The Ethnological, Linguistic, and Historical Database". In 2003, the preliminary conception of describing cultural sources has been worked out, stating the principal criteria of digitalizing the data included into the computer database. The pattern for the scientific classification of data has also been worked out, supplemented by illustrative samples. In 2003, the perspectives of creating the systematic compendium of keywords have also been explored.
<http://aruodai.lt>

Institute of Mathematics and Informatics is national research institute known for its achievements in science and applied areas. The Institute participated in several

European projects supported by Unesco, currently it is involved in: EU the 5FP project CHIMER, where children learning in heritage and ICT investigated; and EURECA program – ECH:TOPICC – Endangered Cultural Heritage: tools for preservation, investigation and copyright clearance. IMI is the co-ordinator of this project. Among the project partners are Czech Republic, Spain, Germany, Greece and Latvia. Lithuanian partners – the Library of the Academy of Science and Visoriai IT Park (<http://mi.lt>). In the frame of this project musical manuscript collection, held in the Library of the Academy of Science, is digitised; and one of the manuscripts is the oldest inscription of Lithuanian national melody of the 17th century. <http://www.mil.lt>, <http://musicalia.lt>

Department of History of the Vilnius university is worth mentioning. The Department has been executing CD projects related to the Heritage of Lithuania and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – The memory of Lithuania in the old maps (Unesco project “Memoria mundi”) and Lithuania on the way of Europe, dedicated to European dimension of the Lithuanian cultural heritage.

Museums

In 1989, the Lithuanian Art museum started implementing collection management system, up to now the database of over than 150,000 exhibits are entered. In the frame of EUREKA program the project Development of An Internet-Based Online Access to Information on Cultural Heritage Preserved in Baltic State Museums has been started in Lithuania executed the the Art museum. Lithuanian Art museum (<http://lmuzejus.mch.mil.lt>) represents the Lithuanian Art museum in Vilnius and all Branch museums and galleries spread in other Lithuanian

towns: their history, collections, educational activities, exhibits and the latest exhibitions.

All range of Lithuanian museums are represented in a Portal Site (<http://muziejai.lt/panorama.en.htm>). Over 250 Lithuanian museums including: national and republic museums, local government museums, department museums, public, and private are represented in this site. Museums in countryside and big towns, the collections and important information for visitor as well as the latest exhibitions of any museums described can be found there. The pictures of the most interesting items, some sound records are displayed.

A Virtual Exhibition of a Millenium of Lithuanian Cultural Heritage (<http://alka.mch.mil.lt/>) represents Lithuanian cultural heritage from ancient time until nowadays. The main themes are the following: Balts, Lithuanian State, society, ethnic minorities, folk and elite culture, landscape & architecture, religion, intellectual life, art, and Lithuania in the world are overviewed in depth by more than 25 specialized project teams working on separate themes and having this joint connection in a virtual exhibition site.

Lithuanian art publishers and publication of art books and albums since 1997 are represented in the Web site New Fine Art Editions <http://leidiniai.mch.mil.lt>

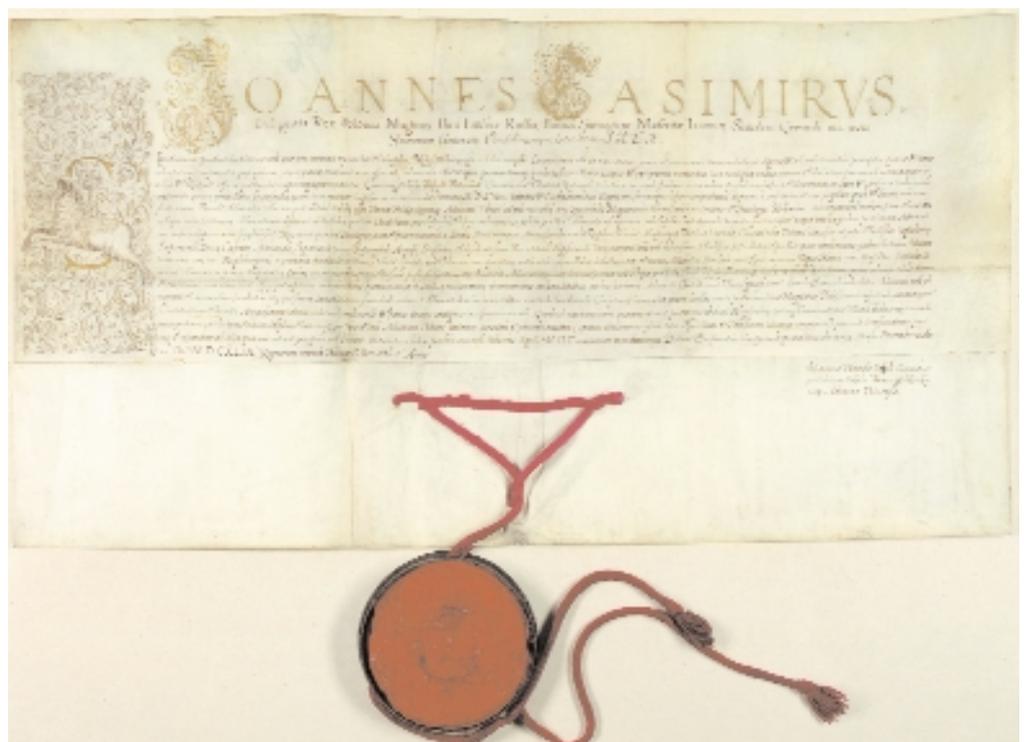
Immovable cultural values

Lithuanian cultural monuments are registered by the Center of Lithuanian Cultural Heritage in the list of Lithuanian cultural values and the data base. <http://kpc.lt>

Archives

Internet accessible Archival Database currently is on the creation stage. The trial version of this Database is planned to be launched in the beginning of 2004. Further plans – maintenance of database, creation and development of the search tools, digitalization of the unique and wide used documents.

Being a part of in the MINERVA Network, Lithuania expects to absorb the experience and expertise of other countries on active participating in the process of exchange of digitisation of cultural heritage.



An extract from the letter of John Casi, King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania