

***Knygotyra* – a scholarly journal of Vilnius University**

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Abstract

This short paper introduces the scholarly journal *Knygotyra* published by Vilnius University. Its main purpose is to present an overview of the research published in the latest volumes of this journal. The review of the articles is of an informative and descriptive nature. It is not intended to critically evaluate the quality of research, because of its great diversity, but, rather, to exemplify the variety of research projects pursued in the Baltic region and neighbouring countries.

Keywords: Lithuania, Vilnius University, *Knygotyra*, LIS scholarly journal, book science

In 1961, Vilnius University (VU) started publishing a collection of papers “The issues of library science and bibliography” (*Bibliotekininkystes ir bibliografijos klausimai*), which changed its name to *Knygotyra* (Book Science/Bokvetenskap) in 1970, also starting a new numbering of issues from 1(8). Since then, *Knygotyra* has become one of the most influential scholarly journals in the LIS area in the Baltic region and also in Eastern Europe. It is constantly expanding the circle of its authors and readers and the geographical region from which they come. However, the subject and focus remain rather constant, though the subject itself has changed rather drastically over the last decades.

It comprises book science in the widest sense (theoretical issues of book and document typology, structure, production, distribution and use within different historical contexts and socio-cultural systems), including the mediation of documents through libraries, bibliographic and information institutions, archives and museums, mass media, or market structures. The history of books and other documents is given significant attention in this journal, although it is the modern existence of books and other documents on the market and in digital spaces that represents the newest developments in research. Institutional approaches prevail, but information processing and retrieval aspects are also a part of the contents. Lately, issues concerning reading and information users have figured less in *Knygotyra*, but one can also find articles on these topics.

The focus and the point of reference that makes the journal unique is a concern for the relation of any research topic to the Lithuanian context of any kind (linguistic, geographical, historical, social, economic, etc.). On the other hand, the journal also includes articles of a theoretical or methodological nature, or related to the general interests of researchers in the field.

The authors publishing in the journal come from different institutions and countries which gives the journal not only an international but also an interdisciplinary profile. The editorial board of the journal is also international and includes researchers from eight countries in the region. One of the main sources for the articles is an annual conference in Book Science as its participants usually take the possibility of developing their presentations into scholarly articles. Another source of articles is doctoral research, because according to the regulations, it is impossible to defend a doctoral dissertation without having published in high ranking journals and *Knygotyra* is one of a few that counts as such in Lithuania. All the articles are refereed.

Besides the research articles and occasional conference papers, *Knygotyra* includes:

- scholarly publications of archival documents and texts with commentaries;
- overviews, for example, of materials prepared for encyclopaedias, institutional activities, programmes, conferences, or periodicals (in vol. 46, 2006, *Svensk Biblioteksforskning /Swedish Library Research* was presented to Lithuanian readers by Maceviciute),
- book reviews, and
- a chronicle of events at the departments related to LIS and book science at Vilnius University.

The articles are published in several languages. A majority are in Lithuanian, but there are articles in English, Russian, and sometimes German. Some articles are translated into Lithuanian from other languages. Each article has an English summary. The full bibliographic account of articles published in the last 45 years (from 1961 to 2005) was produced by Janonis in 2005.

The journal is published in two volumes a year in paper format and also has an electronic version (see <http://www.leidykla.eu/en/journals/book-science/about-knygotyra/>). The two volumes published in 2006 (46 and 47) provide a good example of the range of the topics, authors, languages, and research issues published in *Knygotyra*. Of 27 research articles 22 were published in Lithuanian, three in English, and two in Russian. They were written by 19 Lithuanians, four Estonians, three Russians, two Germans, one Latvian, and one Italian author.

Several articles dwell on *theoretical conceptual* issues; thus **Elnikov** (Moscow State University of Culture and Arts) examines a book as a theoretical and cognitive phenomenon, trying to define its main qualitative elements. He sees a book as a system and seeks to distinguish its main elements as well as to understand its methodological significance for book research. **Sveriene** (VU) investigates the concepts of a textbook in the works of European researchers in education and the book in order to establish the essential functions and attributes of a textbook. Finally, **Iljina** (Russian National Library in St. Petersburg) focuses on the concepts and terms attributed to a collection of books, namely, those related to the personal library phenomenon (private, family, individual library). She also draws the implications for the research of these conceptual differences expressed in terminology.

There are also several other articles of a reflexive nature concerned with the *development and changes of research* in book science and related disciplines: **Navickiene** (VU) provides an exhaustive overview of the development of book science in Lithuania since the beginning of 19th century, when the first bibliographic courses were introduced at Vilnius University, to the

end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. She identifies three major periods of development: the bibliographic period (from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century); the development of an autonomous book science (middle of the 20th century); and renaissance and expansion (since the end of the 20th century). She also traces major influences and discusses characteristics of the discipline and research within these periods.

In the same category, **Maceviciute** (VU) (vol. 47) reflects upon how the events of recent history have shaped book science research and the publication of its results. **Janonis** (VU) presents a statistical study of the research publications in bibliography that appeared between 1941 and 1990. This analysis reveals the dynamics of research, the productivity of different authors, and other interesting features within one of the oldest academic research areas within LIS in the previous Soviet Union.

An article by **Poviliunas** (VU) combines theoretical analysis with empirical research and discusses the role of the academic book in the process of academic socialization. Critical and constructive evaluations of the publishing programme “Books for an Open Society” by Master’s and Doctoral students show that the programme’s books are an important factor in education influencing critical thinking, and academic and professional socialization. The number of books that are supported by the programme for one academic discipline could be considered as an indicator of the academic power of the discipline.

Another group of articles examines, in depth, wide areas of the *book and library landscape* of various periods and in different societal contexts. Thus, the Estonian authors **Jantson** and **Reimo** (Tallinn University) survey the general developments and changes in the book trade in Estonia during the second half of the 19th century. Their aim is to describe the growth of bookshops selling Estonian books and to analyse the activities of Estonian booksellers. By the end of the examined period these bookshops guaranteed the dissemination of Estonian language books to all strata of the society.

Another Estonian author, **Möldre** (Tallinn University), continues into modern Estonian book history by looking at the consequences of change in political and economic conditions for publishing and establishing the system of the state publishing houses in Estonia during the second Soviet occupation of 1944 to 1991. These years have been divided into three periods in accordance with political developments: the Stalinist era from 1944 to 1956; the thaw and stagnation era from 1956 to 1986, and the political break-through leading to the restoration of independence from 1987 to 1991. Special attention is paid to the leading role of the Communist Party of the USSR and the Communist Party of the ESSR in publishing activities. The adjustment of the economic principles of publishing to a market economy started during the last period.

The Soviet period is also explored by the Latvian author **Strale** (National Library of Latvia) in an article on the decline of censorship in Latvia between 1985 and 1990. She explores the changes in book publishing and dissemination policies under the conditions of ‘glasnost’.

A very interesting aspect of the pre-Soviet period constitutes the subject of an article by **Misiunas** (VU). Using material from the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) archives he investigates the connection between LCP and Lithuanian communists in the USA and the forms of their co-operation in the publishing and provision of press materials between 1920 and 1940.

To some extent the article by **Umlauf** (Berlin Humboldt University) about library planning in the German Federal Republic between 1965 and 1975, which is supposed to be the golden age for library strategy, belongs here. He examines national, regional, and local library planning documents and the results of their implementation in relation to a new strategic initiative *Bibliothek 2007*.

In addition to this rather recent historical context, several articles focus on current *general issues*. For example, **Petraviciute** (VU) looks at the long-term preservation policies for electronic documents in the state archives of the EU countries. She states that the legal situation across Europe with regard to the archiving of public records generated by government agencies, and public access to such records, remains diverse. Differences exist not only in terms of the legal requirements, but also in the extent to which these are interpreted and enacted. Most of the activities for preserving electronic records and providing access to them are concentrated in the north-western States of the EU. It is only within this region that specialised facilities for the preservation of electronic records within state archives have been established.

Mozuraite and Rudzioniene (VU) point out that because of the application of new ICT, it is no longer easy to draw clear boundaries between archives, libraries and museums in terms of digital content provision. Memory institutions such as libraries, museums and archives are adjusting themselves to the digital age. The politicians also have to support new trends and need guidelines on how to deploy digital services designed to meet real user needs. The CALIMERA (Cultural Applications: Local Institutions Mediating Electronics Resource Access) co-ordination action, funded under the Information Society Technologies Sixth Framework Programme, has set out to help with this task so that ordinary citizens join e-Europe through the digital services provided by their local cultural institutions.

Estonian principles and policies for the digital preservation of the Estonian book heritage by libraries, archives and museums are discussed in a paper by **Reimo** (Tallinn University). She analyses the main policy documents, organisational aspects and the premises under which the main digital preservation projects in Estonia are conducted. The problem is far from trivial, because a considerable part of the documentary heritage is located outside Europe. The author sees collaboration among organisations of various levels and between the projects as a determining factor for the ultimate success of preserving the Estonian book heritage and enabling unrestricted access to it at the same time.

Only two articles in these issues target *user-related topics*: in relation to the new resources and changing environments **Glosiene** (VU) explores success factors for information literacy in the academic community. Her aim is to present a holistic approach towards information competency development in a modern academic institution. According to her, information competency development is problem-specific, domain-specific, and discipline-specific. It is interrelated with critical thinking and analytical skills as well as with creativity and computer literacy skills. Critical success factors for information competency development are open and problem-based learning and cooperative, inclusive strategies for the whole university. Academic libraries continue to play a major role but connections with faculty and administration in the process are of major importance.

On the other hand, an article by **Krakyte** (VU) presents an historical retrospective of reading in universities. The article provides a general overview of research into the reading process of the academic community of Vilnius University from 1579 to 1832, derived from significant

research in librarianship and book science. It presents sources and strategies to reveal the multifaceted relations existing between literature, the reader, priorities, the environment, results, etc. This article also analyses works in the humanities and social sciences with significantly reliable data related to particular aspects of the issue. Analysis of selected quality research on the reading process can prompt new directions for research and increase knowledge of the development, tendencies and culture of reading in all of Lithuania from the 16th to the 19th century.

Many articles explore the features of certain *types of documents, texts, or collections*. Thus, **Michelini** (Università degli studi di Parma) analyses the history of the texts of spiritual and Christian songs written in the tradition of Zengstock (the producer of the third song book in Lithuanian in 1612). These texts were popular in Prussia and the song book was reproduced several times with certain omissions and changes. The author closely examines the origin and the changes made in the texts of different editions of the song book and seeks contextual explanations for certain changes.

Burba and Pacevicius (Vytautas the Great University and VU) discuss fourteen drawings that portray human beings and were drawn by readers in the margins of manuscripts and printed books actively used in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 17th to 19th centuries. These drawings were not a planned work but more like quips, scribbles and doodles, therefore the authors use the terms *portrait graffiti* and *portrait marginalia* to describe them. Several types of analysis (palaeographical, structural, content and semiotic) were carried out and the authors came to the conclusion that these marginal portraits bear similarities to the graffiti (in Italian *scarabocchi*) left in the documents by the workers in the Naples bank archive. According to an archivist, Giuseppe Zevola, who examined these documental graffiti, they were born out of opposition to grey everyday routine.

Kaunas (VU) believes that the registration of old books from personal libraries in national bibliographies is an important task in accounting for Lithuanian cultural heritage. His article is a result of an investigation into the author's own collection for this purpose and provides a) additions to the retrospective bibliography of books, b) copies of books that were registered and described in the bibliography not *de visu* but from sources, c) additional data for some bibliographic descriptions, d) unknown copies of rare books, and e) valuable copies of books.

The article by **Bajoraite** (VU) examines the nature of the poster as a tool for information and propaganda. In particular, the author looks at the formation of the Soviet poster in Lithuania during the post-war period. She identifies the institutions related to the creation, production and censorship of the posters and analyses the role of the government in the policy of creating and disseminating posters.

Misiuniene (Martynas Mazvydas National Library) examines a collection of Elzevier (Elzevier) publications from 1583 to 1712 held in the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania. The collection consists of 231 books (180 titles). The author investigates the nature and provenances of the books, their characteristic features and physical state.

In another library related article **Petrauskiene** (VU) provides a typology of digital resources for the humanities. She also looks into the reasons for the lower usage of digital resources by the representatives of the humanities in comparison to natural scientists. According to her, the simplistic explanation of technophobia is not accurate as many existing digital sources do not meet the specific needs of the humanities. She also provides descriptions of the digital sources

available in general on the Web or provided by Vilnius University Library in relation to the special needs of humanities researchers.

The life and work of influential people also deserves the attention of Lithuanian researchers. Book researchers explore mainly the input and influence of other researchers in the field. There are two articles devoted to such personalities. In one of them, **Kvietkauskas** (VU) analyses the early publications in press by Mykolas Birziska – one of the most prominent figures in pre-war Lithuanian bibliography as well as book and library research. The development of Lev Vladimirov's personal and research interests related to book history research and library work is analyzed by **Akstinaite**(VU) Vladimirov was the leading figure in LIS and the book research field during the post-war period. The third personality-related article is of another kind: **Kucinskis** (Kaunas University of Technology) discusses the major problems of finding and establishing the authoritativeness of the musical texts composed by Ciurlionis, one of the most interesting composers and painters in Lithuania. The role of the historical and textual analysis of surviving manuscripts is critical in this respect.

Last but not least, there are two articles dealing with the *activities of important institutions*. **Patrusheva** (Russian National Library in St.Petersburg) conducts a deep archival analysis in the Russian State Historical Archive to describe the activities of the Temporary Press Committee (a tsarist censorship institution) in Vilnius during 1914 and **Hermann** (Ruprecht-Karl-Universität Heidelberg) describes the structure and work of the contemporary Library of the Lithuanian Cultural Institute in Germany (Lampertheim-Huttenfeld).

Of course, the two volumes of *Knygotyra* published in 2006 do not provide a full view of LIS research going on in Lithuania or the Baltic region in general. The editors of this particular journal have a specific perspective and support certain types of articles and research papers. One also has to have in mind that in 1994 *Knygotyra* branched into two distinctive journals, because of the increase and diversification of research in Library and information science; another currently influential journal *Informacijos mokslai* was established as a result (see ...). Actually this increase and diversification has led to the establishment of the research area of Communication and Information in Humanities within Lithuanian research classification. Book Science, Library Science, Bibliography, Information Science, Media Research, Journalism, and other areas are research branches within this area. *Informacijos mokslai* also publishes a wide range of LIS research within information retrieval, information systems, information needs and use, digital resources, etc. Both journals serve the different requirements of the research communities and have no problem with the acquisition of original articles of the required quality and both maintain the status of high ranking journals.

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