# Lithuania

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*A letter of Casimir IV the Jagiellonian, King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania* (1465 m. F101-7), Martynas Mazvydas National library

## Digitisation policy

During last few years a number of policy initiatives related to digitisation of cultural heritage were launched in Lithuania. Ministry of culture of the Republic of Lithuania initiated a national program for Modernization and Renovation of Libraries which was launched in 2002. Among other issues the program also aims at furnishing the public libraries of Lithuania with modern IT equipment necessary for access to national and international electronic databases.

The Information Society development Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has launched a number of important instruments targeted at efficient development of the IT infrastructure in Lithuania among which the most important are the Strategy for the development of information society and the Detailed plan for the development of Information society. In 2005, a revised Strategy for the development of information society has been prepared. The most important recent political initiative in the field is the preparation of the Concept of the digitisation of cultural heritage. At the end of the year 2004 minister of culture established a working group in which relevant Governmental institutions together with Martynas Mažvydas National Library and other memory institutions (museums, archives etc.) are represented. The working group has prepared the project of the Concept of digitisation of cultural heritage which covered the following issues:

• setting the main goal, tasks and principles of the processes of digitisation of cultural heritage, access and promotion of the digitised cultural heritage in Lithuania

• formulation of the notion and range of the cultural heritage objects to be digitised as well as the main general selection criteria,
• creation of political and legal prerequisites for common attitude and responsibility for the relevant Governmental institutions to be engaged in consistent, coordinated, and long-time activities of digitisation of cultural heritage.
• creation of the legal basis for initiation of national digitisation strategy, programs and projects
• setting up of the mechanism of coordination among the memory institutions (libraries, etc.) engaged in digitising activities.

The preparation of the document has revealed the importance of coordination of the initiatives. The Concept of digitisation of cultural heritage will be adopted by Lithuanian Government in the second part of 2005.

## Co-operation and main digitisation initiatives

There is a growing number of individual as well as joined initiatives in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage in Lithuania. Examples of the projects initiated by Martynas Mažvydas National library and Vilnius University Library show the range and dimension of successfully accomplished and presently implemented digitisation initiatives.

*Martynas Mažvydas National Library*
Within the framework of project "Card catalogue of images and card files" implemented by Martynas Mažvydas National library during 1998-1999, the cart catalogue and bibliographical publications were

digitised and imported into Library catalogue system.
Graphical images of the alphabetic catalogue were
presented in GIF format including: books printed in
Russian and other foreign language, National
bibliography publications, Sheet music in Lithuanian,
Russian and other languages, Records in Lithuanian,
Russian and other foreign language. Presently, the
Internet users can access 3 millions catalogue carts,
1 million card file indexes and almost 18 thousand
bibliographical pages.
`http://vaizdai.lnb.lt/`

In 1997, Martynas Mažvydas National library initiated
a project "16th Century Lithuanian Books".
The title pages of the first 16 Lithuanian books were
scanned and presented in the JPG format together
with their annotations.
`www.lnb.lt/publications/atv/izngl.htm`

Starting with 2000, National library implements
a heritage digitisation project "Digital archive
of historical and cultural documents". The goal of the
project is the publication of a CD series of collections
of digitised documents which also are going to be
published on the Internet.
This project is implemented in cooperation with
Lithuanian Institute of Mathematics and Informatics,
Lithuanian Institute of History, Multimedia Centre,
Vilnius University Faculty of Philology, and Faculty
of History of University of Florence. The first CD
"Collection of Parchments" has been already published
and its abridged version is presented on the Internet.
`http://pergamentai.mch.mii.lt/pergamentai.en.htm`

In 2003, National library started to implement a project
designed to digitise old Lithuanian shellac plates. Until

the end of 2004 there were 1087 plates digitised.
The project is supported by Japan foundation.
This year Martynas Mažvydas National Library is about
to start implementation of the largest cultural heritage
digitisation project in Lithuania „Creation of integrated
virtual information library system". The project is
supported by European Union's Structural Funds. The
goal of the project is digitisation of more than 3 million
300 thousand documents including books, periodicals,
microfilms, microfiches, official documents of the
Republic of Lithuania, and also written documents.

*Vilnius University Library*
Digitisation activities in Vilnius University Library are
pursued in two main directions – preservation of
cultural heritage by means of creation of digital library
and promotion of collections of cultural heritage held
in the Library.
A number of projects have been prepared by Vilnius
University Library that received funding from different
foundations, programs and organizations.
Unesco program *World Memory* allocated funds
for two projects. In 1998 a CD Historical *Collections
of Vilnius University Library* was issued and an Internet
version created For the first time in Lithuania most
valuable documents have been digitised and presented
to scientists and researchers of the world via internet.
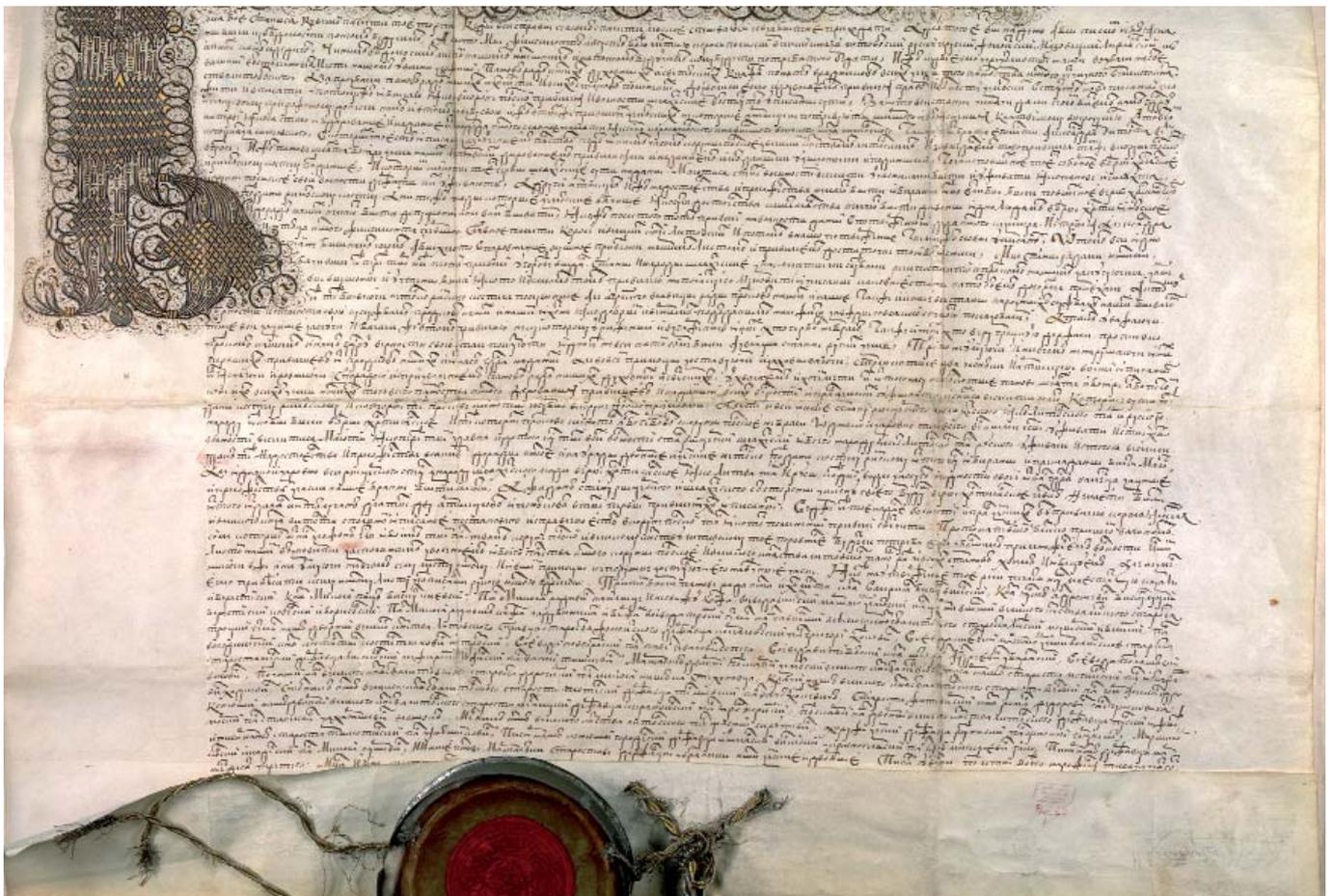`www.mb.vu.lt/unesco/index.htm`
`www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm/visite/vilnius/`
`index.htm`

Another financed project is *Preservation of old Judaica
collections of the National Jewish Museum of Lithuania
and the Vilnius University Library.*
Open Society Institute supported the project *Transfer
of texts of old manuscript court-books to CDs.* Owing

to this support the digitisation equipment was obtained and digital database of old books of acts was started. The full text manuscript database was not accessible to users via internet; therefore, a project *Digital database* was prepared in 2004. Upon the implementation of this project the users will be able to access information of court-books of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania database from any computerized workplace.

The Centre of Jewish Culture and History of Eastern Europe funded a project *Monuments of Old Hebrew*



*An extract from the books of the Highest Tribune* (1590, F101-41), Martynas Mažvydas National Library

*writing.* The aim of the project was to preserve a unique manuscript book of XIVth. c. – The Old Testament, written on parchment in the old Hebrew language, i.e. to create its digitised copy.

The first newspaper in the Lithuanian language *Vilniaus žinios* (1904–1909) is safeguarded in Vilnius University Library. This newspaper played an immense role in the Lithuanian cultural history. Because of great scientific and practical value of this publication Vilnius University Library started the digitisation of 1904–1909 sets. The project has been supported by the Commission of the Actualization of Lithuanian Traditions and Heritage under the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Documentary heritage of different kinds is safeguarded in the Library: manuscript books, parchments, photographs, negatives, microfilms, films, etc.

To preserve the originals of photonegatives, to make them accessible and handy to users, to make their further research work easier, a project *Digitisation of Vilnius University professor, a signatory of the Act of the Independence of Lithuania, Č Kudaba's personal archival collection of photonegatives* was implemented. The project was funded by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania upon the decision of the Jubilee Commission to mark the 70th birth anniversary of Prof. Č. Kudaba.

Vilnius University Library had prepared two virtual exhibitions: *Vilnius in Old Photographs* (www.vu.lt/mb/Vilnius/index.htm) and Vilnius *University Architectural Ensemble* (www.mb.vu.lt/kiemeliai/vu/izangaen.html). These projects are part of the *Virtual Exhibition of the Millennium of the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage.*

The unique photographs in *Vilnius in Old Photographs* exhibition show the distinctive and unparalleled old city of Vilnius. More than ninety photographs from the Vilnius University Library are presented in this exhibition. They include unique works by internationally acclaimed photographers Józef Czechowicz and Stanisław Filibert Fleury, as well as by Nikolay Ostankovich, Isaac Tzinovek (Aizik Cinovec), and Miron and Leon Boutkowsky. These old photographs – eloquent witnesses to the past of Vilnius and to the history of Lithuanian photography – are one more distinctive documentary source of the history of this city.

The old Vilnius University campus occupies the Old Town quarter between Universiteto, Šv. Jono, Pilies and Skapo streets. Since it's founding in 1579, the campus has expanded and there have been changes in the building style and appointment. On the occasion of the 425th anniversary of the Vilnius University, the Vilnius University Library has designed a virtual exhibition *Vilnius University Architectural Ensemble* where the Vilnius University courtyards, Church of Sts. John and the historical University campus halls could be observed.

These examples of the heritage digitisation projects give a glimpse into manifold and growing activities of Lithuanian institutions in their attempts to preserve and promote cultural heritage by means of modern information technologies. Digitisation initiatives by libraries, museums, archives and other memory institutions deserve consistent and coordinated state policy approach. Therefore, implementation of prepared Concept of digitisation will certainly make positive influence on digitisation processes in Lithuania. It goes without saying that access to information about experience and examples of good practice in other countries facilitated by Lithuania's participation in the MINERVA project is especially beneficial in all stages of developing and implementing national digitisation policy, its programs and projects.