
The Libraries of Belarus

ROMAN STEPANOVIČ MOTULSKIJ

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the history of libraries in Belarus, including the library network development and its current structure. The paper uses data analyses of official state statistics, normative and unpublished legal documents, and scientific research conducted by the National Library of Belarus.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

The libraries of Belarus are custodians of both the national and European cultural heritage and have a rich history. Over the centuries, the Belarusian lands were joined to different state formations: the Duchy of Polack and Duchy of Turov (ninth through the first half of thirteenth centuries); the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (second half of the thirteenth century to 1569); the USSR (1917–1991); and presently the Republic of Belarus (since 1991). Each of these periods has its own peculiarities, which influenced the collections of the libraries and their further development.

The first known library in the territory of Belarus was the Library of the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Polack, which is believed to have been founded in 1066, the year of the cathedral's building. Manuscripts written on the Belarusian lands, including the *Scriptorium of Euphrosyne of Polack*, were kept in the library, along with the most valuable books of European origin. Between the tenth to sixteenth centuries, the library housed the complete collection of manuscript books written at that time in the territory of Belarus. Consequently, the library is considered to be the first predecessor of the National Library of Belarus. Unfortunately, the library was destroyed by Polish soldiers in 1579, and the preserved books were taken abroad (Tsybulya, 2005, pp. 327–328).

The first Belarusian printer, Francysk Skaryna (ca.1490–ca.1551) from Polack, is a national hero. In 1517, he published the first book of Holy Scripture, “The Psalter,” in Old Ruthenian using the Cyrillic alphabet. In all, Skaryna published twenty books of the Old Testament with prefaces and postscripts (Nemirouski, 1988, p. 359). He later continued his publishing activity in Vilnia, which at that time was a cultural center of Belarus. In 1522, Skaryna opened a publishing house in Vilnia, which was the first in the East Slavic lands. There, he published twenty-two books, including *The Small Travel Book*, which was the first Belarusian book printed in Cyrillic characters in ethnic Belarusian lands. The publishing activities of Skaryna became the basis for the development of book publishing and libraries in Belarus and the neighboring states.

During the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, several libraries were built within Belarusian territories. The largest were the libraries of Radziwiłł Family Fee Tail and the ecclesiastical academies in Vilnia and Polack and the public library in Vilnia. The library of Radziwiłł Family Fee Tail (second half of the sixteenth century through 1812) is the largest private book collection within the territory of Belarus, started by Nikolaj Radziwiłł Čiornyj (1515–1565) (Roshchyrna, 2005). Over the centuries, the collection of the library was enriched with manuscripts and editions from throughout Europe and included books from the publishing houses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). Among the Radziwiłł library’s collection were prohibited works by such authors as Voltaire, Jean Bodin, and Erasmus and ancient writings with commentaries by banned authors, including state and church editions. The library also preserved maps, fine art, manuscripts, and printed editions from scriptoria and the publishing houses of the Radziwiłłs (Stefanovič, 2002, p. 189).

After the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, the Radziwiłł collection was seized from the castle in which it was housed as a military trophy by the order of Catherine the Great. Consequently, about 15,000 books were delivered to the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. In October 1812, those materials still remaining in the library were confiscated by Russian authorities as a punishment for the Radziwiłłs’ support of Napoleon. Thus one of the largest private libraries in Europe ceased to exist.

The library of the Jesuit Collegium in Vilnia, which was later known as the University of Vilnia (1570–1832), was one of the largest and most influential public libraries in the GDL. It included the collections donated by Sigizmund Avgust (king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), Kazimir Łev Sapego (vice chancellor of the GDL), and magnate Nikolaj Krištof Radziwiłł (Lazutka, 1979, p. 95). By 1832, the library’s collection consisted of about 60,000 items. However, the University of Vilnia was the center not only of education and culture in Belarus but also of freethinking and the development of democratic ideas. Teacher and student participation

in the uprising during 1830–1831 led to the university's closure in 1832 and its library's collection being portioned off to other educational institutions. Thus the country's largest library, which played a key role in the development of the Belarusians, closed.

The same thing happened to the library of the Jesuit Collegium in Polack, which evolved into the University of Polack (1580–1820). This library's collection, which competed with Vilnia's, by 1813 consisted of 40,000 items. The Jesuits' proscription by Russia in the early nineteenth century led to the closure of the university in 1820. The historian Yuri Labyntsev (2006, p. 180) states that "257 pounds of books" were taken from the library. Consequently, the first Jesuit library of present-day Belarus ceased to exist.

The creation of the Vilnia public library (1867–1915) was conditioned by the tragic events regarding the suppression of the uprising that flared up during 1863–1864 in the northwestern territories, which had been recently annexed by the Russian Empire. Its collection was comprised of the confiscated books and manuscripts of the institutions and individuals participating in the uprising, including Catholic and Orthodox monasteries, secondary and regional schools, directorates, private and public libraries, museums, and private collections. By the late 1860s, the Vilnia library had been created to house these treasures from the northwestern region, which was mainly ethnic Belarusian. Its collection was further enriched by books published in the region. By September 1915, the library held 310,000 volumes, which, according to the politicians and librarians of the time, made it the largest library in the Russian Empire's territories, equal to the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg and the Rumyantsev Museum (now the Russian State Library) in Moscow (Butkevičienė, 2005, p. 8). During the repartition of the borders and creation of new states in 1920, Vilnia and its book collection remained beyond the borders of the newly created Belarusian state—the Belarusian Soviet Socialistic Republic (BSSR).

THE SOVIET ERA

Due to the many conflicts of the early twentieth century—World War I (1914–1918), the February and October Russian revolutions (1917), and the Polish–Soviet War (1919–1921)—by 1920, most libraries and book collections within the territory of Belarus had been destroyed. As a fledgling state, the BSSR had to create a new library system (see Motulskij, 2011).

During the 1920s and 1930s, the basis of the new Soviet library system was introduced in the BSSR. The 1934 Soviet census showed that there were about 10,000 libraries in the BSSR, including 4,300 public libraries; 4,900 libraries of preschool institutions, orphanages, nurseries, and comprehensive schools; about 340 libraries of academic and secondary schools; and 430 scientific and specialized libraries. During the interwar period, a number of large libraries were opened in the BSSR: the V. I. Lenin State Library of the BSSR (now the National Library of Belarus); the

library of the National Academy of Sciences of the BSSR (now the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus); the Belarusian State and University Library (now the Fundamental Library of Belarusian State University); the Government Library (now the Presidential Library of the Republic of Belarus); and the Republican Scientific Medical Library. These libraries served as the foundation for the development of librarianship in the republic.

After the unification of the eastern and western parts of Belarus in 1939, both the territory of the BSSR and its population increased, which led to a rise in the number of libraries and their individual collections. Before the Great Patriotic War (World War II, 1941–1945), 16,000 libraries existed in the BSSR, including about 5,500 public libraries, 1,400 village reading rooms (normally part of a larger, club-like institution comprising a variety of community facilities and functions), 8,800 school libraries, 153 secondary school libraries, 36 academic libraries, and about 50 libraries of scientific organizations.

The Great Patriotic War claimed the lives of millions and destroyed virtually all of the BSSR's industrial and agricultural enterprises. Libraries suffered as the prewar library network was again completely destroyed, book collections were mostly eliminated, and the most precious collections from the largest libraries of the republic were looted by the Nazis.

After the war, the Belarusians began restoring industry, agriculture, and the social institutions of the republic, including libraries. The mid-1950s was a turning point in the development of the BSSR's library network. In the first half of the decade, the number of public libraries increased—both state libraries and libraries that were opened by different government and public institutions. Thus, in 1955, the peak of library network growth, there were 8,331 public libraries (comprising 5,117 state public libraries of the Ministry of Culture, 2,412 collective-farm libraries, 460 trade-union libraries, and 342 libraries of other departments and organizations) (Golubykh, 1965, p. 238). The number of items in the collections of public libraries totaled 18.2 million. By 1960, many small libraries had been eliminated, often by combining to form larger institutions; this resulted in a reduction of the number of public libraries to 7,300, alongside 1,544 specialized libraries (917 research, 255 educational [excluding school libraries], and 372 other libraries).

From 1960 to 1980, the development of a modern library network was enacted. This movement sought a rational distribution of libraries, an increase of collection volumes, and greater efficiency. During the 1970s, the network was centralized by the Ministry of Culture, which united the resources of independent, isolated village libraries as they became city and regional centralized library systems (CLS). The socioeconomic stagnation of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, referred to as “*zastoj*” (depression), led to the decrease in the pace of the development of library services in the BSSR.

Thus, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning 1990s (that is, during the last years of the BSSR's existence), there were about 12,000 libraries, with a collection of more than 220 million items. This number of libraries was composed of 5,700 public libraries, with about 85 million books; about 5,000 school libraries, with 90 million books; about 400 secondary school and academic libraries, with 38 million books; and about 800 scientific and research libraries (Motulskij, R., 1995, p. 144).

THE POSTCOMMUNIST ERA

In 1991, the Republic of Belarus embarked on its new community development course. During the past twenty years, there has been considerable upheaval in the political, socioeconomic, and cultural life of the republic. The continuing development of libraries required the passing of legislation to update and regulate the system in order to meet the changing demands of society. Consequently, in 1995, the Librarianship Law in the Republic of Belarus was adopted for the first time. The law was altered several times. The main activity areas of Belarusian libraries were reflected in subordinate acts, instructions, regulations, and standard documents prepared by the initiatives of the librarianship community. According to the Regulations of Joint Library Network in the Republic of Belarus, the libraries were defined as specialized "coordinative" centers linked together by cooperative interaction.

The Belarusian Library Association (BLA) was another creation of this era, pushed by the initiative of the most progressive activists. On June 16, 1992, 262 delegates from all regions of the country attended the inaugural conference, and the association's charter was adopted. The chair and vice chair were also elected (at the time of writing, the chair of the BLA is Elena Eremeevna Dolhopolova, who is the first vice president for users' service of the National Library of Belarus). Also, the committees for legislative initiatives, social and legal protections, collections and catalogs, bibliographic activity, international relations, and audits were created.

Today, there are about 9,000 libraries in Belarus, which are governed by 30 ministries, other state organizations, and various public bodies, with a total collection of about 200 million items. The most numerous network of public libraries is that of the Ministry of Culture, with 3,400 libraries. The second largest is the Ministry of Education's network, with 3,300 libraries. In addition, there are 320 research libraries, 200 medical libraries, 170 libraries of religious denominations, 130 trade union libraries, and more than 1,500 libraries of other institutions and organizations.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

The leading library of the country is the National Library of Belarus (NLB) (<http://www.nlb.by>), which was founded in 1922 as the Belarusian State and University Library. In 1932, a new building was constructed for the

NLB, which is now an architectural landmark. At the end of the 1990s, the NLB's collections amounted to some 8 million volumes; however, the library faced many difficulties at the time. Understanding the increasing importance of access to information in the functioning of modern society, on March 7, 2002, the republic's president announced the construction of a new national library building, which was opened on June 16, 2006. It became an important event in the cultural and public life of the republic. The library marked a new stage in the development of the largest library of Belarus and for the country's librarianship in general.

Today, the architecturally distinct NLB is a unique complex (fig. 1). Its mission is to satisfy the information and sociocultural needs of the community while also ensuring the preservation of its collection. Being a significant scientific, coordinating, and methodological center of the republic, the NLB takes part in the development and realization of library policy. It houses the most complete and relevant collection of historically significant documents in the country—9.4 million documents, written in Belarus and more than other 80 other languages. The library pays special attention to the development of national collection of documents—manuscripts, printed editions, and other media.

THE LIBRARY SYSTEM IN BELARUS

Today, there are six regions in the republic and, accordingly, six regional libraries:

- Brest Regional Library, named after M. Horkij (850,000 volumes)
- Gomel Regional Multipurpose Library, named after V. I. Lenin (1 million volumes)
- Grodno Regional Scientific Library, named after J. F. Karskogo (650,000 volumes)
- Minsk Regional Library, named after A. S. Puškin (770,000 volumes)
- Mogilev Regional Library, named after V. I. Lenin (800,000 volumes)
- Vitebsk Regional Library, named after V. I. Lenin (700,000 volumes)

The regional libraries acquire and stock volumes according to the natural/geographic, social/economic, cultural, demographic, and other characteristics of the region. The literatures on local lore and history are also compiled. The regional libraries are methodical and coordinative research centers in librarianship and bibliography for the libraries of different institutions that have been designed for the inhabitants of the specific regions.

There are two centralized library systems in Minsk, the capital of the republic. One is the Centralized System of Public Libraries, which connects the city's twenty-four libraries. The system is headed by the Central City Library, named after Yanka Kupala, which houses 185,000 items. The other system is the Centralized System of Children's Libraries, which con-



Figure 1. The National Library of Belarus, Minsk. (Photo: V. Phibytko, courtesy of the National Library of Belarus.)

nects twenty-three children's libraries, including branches. It is headed by the Central Children Library, which has a collection of 120,000 items.

For a long time, the specialized libraries were under the control of different ministries and institutions, which is why the specialized libraries are united into library networks, since their activities are coordinated by the country's scientific libraries. The work of scientific academic libraries is coordinated by the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB), which was founded in 1925 at the Institute of Belarusian Culture. The collection of the NASB's library is one of the richest in Belarus, where one can find scientific (both technical and popular) editions in almost all languages, not only in hardcopy, but also in digital versions and on microfiche and microfilm. The library possesses the country's most complete collection of foreign literature (books and periodicals) on the natural sciences, in addition to rich holdings of fiction. It contains more than 4 million items. The NASB, aiming to enrich its collection of foreign technical and natural scientific literature, participates in book exchanges with 776 libraries and scientific institutions from 56 countries.

The Fundamental Library of Belarusian State University (FLBSU), founded in 1922 as the Belarusian State and University Library, is a

methodical and coordinative center of institutions of higher education (IHE). Its collection houses more than 2 million items. Annually, the FLBSU acquires some 50,000 new books and obtains more than a thousand native and foreign periodicals through exchanges with 136 scientific and educational institutions from 24 countries. The IHE network connects fifty-four libraries: thirty-two university, eleven institute, seven academy, and four higher college, their shared collections totaling 29 million items. The network's libraries define their own activities in accordance with the priorities of the IHE. These libraries are designed for information support in qualitative educational services, conducting scientific research, and fostering users' intellectual and spiritual development (Lapo, 2012, p. 15).

Much attention is paid to digital library creation and accessibility. A digital library increases the status of the university as a whole. In the 2014 international system of digital ranking, Webometrics, there were eight repositories in Belarus. In July 2013, the digital library of Belarusian State University was ranked ninety-seventh. The IHE libraries participate in a number of domestic and international cooperative projects:

- MARS (Interregional analytical database of articles)
- ARBICON (Association of Regional Library Consortiums)
- Scientists of Belarus (joint project of the NLB and IHE libraries on cooperative database creation)
- LibCARD and BelAR (Belarusian projects on analytical cataloging)

In 2009, international quality-management standards (ISO9001:2009) were introduced into the IHE system.

On the whole, the Ministry of Education network consists of 3,300 libraries, which includes school libraries and libraries of other educational institutions. As of 2013, there were 319 research libraries in the republic (Shulga, 2013, p. 12). Republican Library for Science and Technology (RLST) is the head of this network. It was opened in 1977 as the Research Library of the Belarusian Research Institute of Scientific and Technical Information and Economic Research. To improve information access for users, regional research and technical libraries were created as branch libraries of the RRL in Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, and Mogilev in 1994.

The RRL's collection of both native and foreign research and technical documents comprises more than 51 million items, including books and periodicals; patents; and information about production and trading in Belarus, Russia, and more than forty other countries. Additionally, the collection maintains technical regulations and codes of established practices; branch, state, interstate, and international standards; construction codes and regulations of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus; technical specifications and production lists; and alterations and supplements to the documents concerning standardization and production catalogs.

The network of medical libraries consists of more than 200, including regional libraries, libraries of medical research institutes, medical institutes, and medical colleges. The head of this library network is the Republican Scientific Medical Library (RSML), which was founded in 1940 and whose goal is information resources generation and preservation and to provide assistance in conducting scientific research. The RSML's collection is national property and consists of more than 990,000 documents, both native and foreign. The library acquires more than 17,000 items regarding medicine and health annually. It also has a unique collection of rare books on medicine, such as early printed editions of Hippocrates and Avicenna and nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature. The RSML is also the regional center of the World Health Organization (WHO) and an active member of the International Consortium of Medical Libraries.

Founded in 1933, the Presidential Library of the Republic of Belarus is one of the largest scientific libraries in the country. It maintains a collection of both native and foreign documents numbering more than 1.5 million, as well as the collection of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Currently, the library is the main sectoral library and information center for the republic's regulations and legislation, laws, economics, and social sciences. It is also the center of national interlibrary loans on the subjects of public administration, parliamentary system, legislation, economics, and social sciences; the holder of regulatory and technical legal acts database; and the depository of rare and valuable early printed editions. Information services are provided in two branch libraries of the Presidential Library: the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus; and the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States. This joint library network consists of other types of libraries, including church libraries, trade-union libraries, the libraries of military units, and other types.

THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

The libraries' goal is for complete information fulfillment. The acquisition of the Network Electronic Information Resources (NEIR), which has a significant body of constantly upgraded information and convenient interface, is an important step in electronic assets provision. In 2013, access to 230 internationally recognized databases were purchased by Belarusian libraries, including EBSCO, East View, ProQuest, Oxford, and Cambridge.

The NLB, as a national information center, strives to build up the electronic information resources (EIRs) database in such a way as to eliminate information gaps on a national scale. Since the library moved to a new, well-equipped building, it has increased the allocation of funds for access to the best databases available. The NLB provides access to more than 130 databases, which accounts for half of all the databases subscribed to by the

country, the majority of them being of foreign origin. Unfortunately, this market segment has not developed much in Belarus.

These EIRs, which reflect the world's scientific achievements, provide the opportunity for the NLB to fulfill users' information needs more efficiently. The acquisition of these resources depends on the financial resources of libraries. The NLB plays the roles of organizer, coordinator, and leader of shared EIR use, having identified these as the main strategy of the library. The first result of this strategy was the creation, in 2008, of a virtual reading hall (VRH), which provides equal opportunities for readers throughout Belarus to access the EIRs. The first users of the VRH were the regional libraries, coordinated by the Ministry of Culture. In 2013, forty-one organizations of different institutional affiliations were partners with the NLB in the VRH.

Since the middle of 1990s, the largest libraries commenced generating EIR catalogs and bibliographic databases. By the middle of the 2000s, the number of these EIRs increased with state and branch program implementation. Today, native libraries generate about 200 databases, with a volume of more than 19 million records. A considerable part of these EIRs can be found on the internet, which provides access not only to Belarusians but also to users in other countries. The regional databases of local lore, generated by public libraries, possess unique content; these databases are, by far, the republic's richest.

The NLB is the leader in EIR creation and usage. The first digital production of the library was its electronic catalog, which is now a basic information resource. It allows for multifaceted inquiries and processes orders for requested documents. In 2009, the number of documents in the NLB's database increased as a result of digitizing its card catalogs. The NLB's electronic catalog has been enriched by 100,000 items, and now contains about 4.5 million in total. Since 2009, the catalog has been available to all internet users.

A file of authoritative records was created for more precise presentation of information-retrieval languages and the organization of search fields in the electronic catalog. Based on this, the national database of authoritative records is being created. Presently, it contains 300,000 records, and it grows by some 3,500–4,000 new records annually.

The NLB also generates specialized databases for past, present, and future information. There are fifteen such specialized databases, including: "Belarus: From the Past to the Present"; "Belarus, with Its Events and People"; "The Libraries of Belarus and Foreign Countries"; "The Scientists of Belarus"; "The National Library of Belarus in Print Media"; "The Electronic Archives of the National Periodicals"; and "The Electronic Library of Theses and Author's Abstracts of the National Library of Belarus." As of the beginning of 2014, the total volume of the NLB's EIRs was more than 9 million items.

One of the main goals of all the libraries in the country is the ongoing maintenance of the union electronic catalog (UEC), which was created in 2010 to merge the bibliographic information in the three largest libraries: the NLB, the Republican Library for Science and Technology, and the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the NASB. As of January 2014, the total number of UEC items was almost 3.4 million. It is annually increased by approximately 130,000 items, 70 percent of which due to the NLB. In the near future, the number of participants in shared cataloging is set to increase, which will bring an influx of documents from many regional and academic libraries.

THE NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY

All of the above-mentioned EIRs form the foundation for the future National Digital Library (NDL). Digital libraries represent a new qualitative level in the production, preservation, organization, and distribution of information. As such, special attention must be paid to their creation. The NLB started creating the NDL in 2002, beginning with the process of digitizing the nation's music that was on vinyl discs. Having moved to its new home, the library now has a dynamic technical facility for digital library creation, with document-digitization equipment; servers for electronic copy preservation; software for electronic document processing and copy-making; and workplaces with access to electronic resources within the library.

The NLB's equipment allows the digitization of all types of documents: theses, abstracts, posters, microfiches, newspapers, leaflets, books (including rare manuscripts and old books, which require special handling and protocols), vinyl discs (gramophone records), and audio-video cassettes. The library today creates its own digital library, which is the foundation of the future NDL. From 2006 to 2013, various projects were implemented with the goal of creating thematic electronic collections on the history of Belarus. The most important of these projects are supported by UNESCO. Some of these included the virtual reconstructions of the Radziwiłł, Sapego, and Chreptovič libraries, which were implemented both internationally and interdepartmentally. In 2010, the international exhibit "Francysk Skaryna: The First (Early Sixteenth Century) Belarusian and East Slavic Printer" was initiated because the year 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of his first printed book.

The NLB also participates in international projects to create digital libraries. As a result, the Belarusians can access well-known digital libraries such as the World Digital Library, the Golden Collection of Eurasia, and the European digital library of written cultural heritage, Manuscriptorium. The popularization of rare Belarusian books and of the country and culture as a whole is another important result of this cooperation.

The principal national strategies for digitization are the creation and maintenance of a common information environment and the accumulation

of information resources. The public centers for legal information (CLI) are being created at the premises of the Ministry of Culture's libraries. The NLB functions as the Republican Scientific and Methodical Center for the Monitoring and Promotion of CLI. The regional libraries now create CLI networks.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The result of modernization during the past twenty years is the integration of the Republic of Belarus into the global information environment as an equal partner and participant. The country's libraries are developed in close cooperation with the global library community. The library code of the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States was approved with the global community's assistance. The libraries of Belarus participate in international scientific conferences, symposia, and library forums.

New forms of international cooperation have been enacted. In 2010, the project Belarus Today commenced. It was initiated by the NLB and supported by the Culture, Information, and Foreign Affairs ministries. Through it, the largest libraries throughout the world acquire about a hundred special-edition books from Belarusian publishing houses annually. These editions reflect the social, economic, and political life of the country, as well as its history and culture. The books sent abroad include the prize winners of the international contest The Book Art and other prestigious awards. The first library to receive Belarusian books was the US Library of Congress in the United States of America. The libraries of Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Germany, France, China, and Venezuela have also received books; in 2014, the NLB also sent books to Poland, Latvia, and Turkmenistan.

The effectiveness of libraries depends on the professionalization of its staff members. The Mogilev State Library College and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts prepare librarians for information and documental communications. More than 40 percent of the 8,500 librarians in public libraries have advanced levels of education. Belarusian librarians exchange their professional experiences and publish their research in various domestic and foreign library periodicals. *The Library World*, *The Library Offers*, *The Library Messenger*, and the ongoing *The Heritage: Documents in Belarus* are the national periodicals in the field.

In 1992, the Ministry of Culture and the public association "Belarusian Cultural Fund" sponsored a national contest titled "The Library Is a Heart of the National Culture." The results testify to the unlimited potential of libraries in fostering the revival and dissemination of the country's culture and heritage. The libraries of Belarus are the basic element in local communities' access to information. The library system is designed in accordance with the needs of a democratic, informed society, and individual libraries are developed to be consistent with the country's strategic

priorities; namely, the automation of library processes, information-resource formation, integration of libraries' infrastructure, and social-partnership opportunities based on corporate sponsorship. The libraries serve the needs of all user groups and provide free access to information and knowledge pursuant to citizens' constitutional rights. The libraries foster the conditions for the intellectual and spiritual development of all Belarusians in accordance with humane values and culture, and the integration of Belarusian culture into the global cultural environment.

REFERENCES

- Butkevičienė, B. (2005). *Vilnius University Library*. Vilnius: Vilnius University Press.
- Golubykh, A. (1965). *The cultural formation of the BSSR: Statistical reference book*. Minsk: Council of Ministers Belarus.
- Labyntsev, Y. (2006). *The library of Lauryšava Monastery: Bk. 1*. Minsk: Belarusian University of Culture and Arts Press.
- Lapo, P. (2012). *The libraries of institutions of higher education in the Republic of Belarus: A survey*. Minsk: Library World.
- Lazutka, S. (1979). *The history of Vilnius University (1579–1979)*. Vilnius: Mokslas.
- Motulskij, R. (1995). *The library guide in the Republic of Belarus: A reference book*. Minsk: Center for Science.
- Motulskij, R. S. (2011). *Из прошлого в будущее. Библиотеки Беларуси* [From the past to the future: The libraries of Belarus]. Minsk: The Belarusian Encyclopedia.
- Nemirouski, Y. (1988). The catalog of Francysk Skaryna's editions. In *Francysk Skaryna and his time: Encyclopedia* (pp. 359–360). Minsk: N.p.
- Roshchyna, T. (2005). The library of Radziwiłłs. In G. A. Pashkoi (Ed.), *The grand duchy of Lithuania encyclopedia: Vol. 1* (pp. 329–330). Minsk: N.p.
- Shulga, O. (2013). *The network of scientific and technical libraries in the Republic of Belarus: The conditions and perspectives of development*. Minsk: Library World.
- Stefanovič, A. V. (2002). Белорусика XVI–XVIII вв. в книжной коллекции Несвижской ординации Радзивиллов 1939 г. : по фондам ЦНБ НАН Беларуси [Belarusika 16th–18th centuries in the book collections of Radziwiłł family fee tail 1939, using sources of the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus]. In T. E. Roschina, L. G. Kiruchina, et al. (Eds.), *Матэрыялы другіх кніжнаўчыных чытаньняў «Кніжная культура Рэчы Паспалітай», Мінск, 15–16 верасня 2000 г. / Нац. б-ка Беларусі* (C. 188–198) [Proceedings of the “Book culture of the Polish–Lithuanian commonwealth” conference, Minsk, 15–16 September 2000, National Library of Belarus (pp. 188–198)]. Minsk: N.p.
- Tsybulya, V. (2005). The library of the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom. In G. A. Pashkoi (Ed.), *The grand duchy of Lithuania encyclopedia: Vol. 1* (pp. 327–328). Minsk: N.p.

Roman Stepanovič Motulskij graduated from the Minsk Institute of Culture in 1983 and started working in the State Library of BSSR. He was at the Minsk Institute of Culture from 1986 to 1998, becoming dean of the Faculty of Library and Information Systems. Since 2003, he has been the director of the National Library of Belarus. He earned his doctorate in pedagogic sciences in 2003, and is a professor, an “honored activist of culture of the Republic of Belarus,” an academician of the UN International Informatization Academy and of the Cyrill and Methodius International Academy of Slavic Education, and vice president of the Library Assembly of Eurasia. He has authored more than 360 scientific and scientific-methodical publications, including monographs and methodological and reference books. His areas of expertise include the theory and history of librarianship and library and information systems, library and information management and marketing, library and information education, and the history and present state of book culture in Belarus.