

FRANCIS SKARYNA BELARUSIAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

2025 was another successful, fruitful and fulfilling year for the Library.

The New Museum

The reconstruction and expansion of our museum space is now at its final stages. Beautifully customised display cabinets have now been installed in the newly constructed room, which will present our artefacts and tell history of Belarus in an organised and interactive manner. They will be accompanied by a display of ethnographical materials in side niches, which has been arranged with



help of our adviser Dr Katarzyna Waszczyńska of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Warsaw.

The original museum room, now fully renovated, houses old maps, Batlejka puppets and Belarusian art including works by famous artists from Belarus and the diaspora. We hope to announce a major new addition to our art collection soon.



the
the

Research and Networking

As in the previous years, numerous researchers worked with our library and archival collections, gave papers and presentations at meetings and conferences. In August, Dr. Taćciana Astroŭskaja from the Herder Institute of Historical Research of Central and Eastern Europe (Marburg) worked with the archive of Sakrat Janovič. The Krakow-based cartography expert Ilja Andrejeŭ came in September to study our fascinating collection of old maps dating back to the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Over the time of his stay he ordered and substantively described the cartographical collection, and published the results of his research in the independent Belarusian media [[Part 1](#); [Part 2](#)].



In November, the historian Prof Piotr Cichoracki (University of Wrocław) and the ethnologist Dr Katarzyna Washczyńska (University of Warsaw) worked with the archive of Lavon Rydleŭski and the materials on the political parties in the interwar Western Belarus. Dr

Śviatlana Lasovič of the Belarusian Language Institute studied our linguistic collection and provided valuable help with its systematisation – the work that will continue in 2026.

As part of our professional networking efforts, the Library hosted visits by participants of the ICCEES, including Dr Jacob Reuster of the Bavarian State Library (Munich) and Dr Juergen Warmbrunn of the Herder Institute (Marburg). During 2025 the Library also welcomed journalists from *Deutsche Welle* and the BBC, as well as a number of politicians and diplomats.

Conferences, Collaboration, and Cultural Outreach

The Library continued collaboration with other research institutions. Together with the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies and the Ostrogorski Centre, we organised the 10th annual conference on Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century in



London. The jubilee conference, which was also dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the *Journal of Belarusian Studies*, the oldest English-language journal dedicated to Belarus, was a real success and attracted a large number of scholars from different

fields of Belarusian studies from all over the world. Publishing and presenting research in English is essential for ensuring that our history and culture is known to the world!



Following last year's cooperation agreement with the Institute for Intercultural



Studies of Central and Eastern Europe at the University of Warsaw, the Skaryna Library has now signed a similar agreement with the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius. Prof Alaksandar Kałbaska from the EHU visited our library and shared a number of helpful ideas about our collections and collaboration with his university.

In April, our representatives Fr Serge Stasievich and Paval Shevtsov attended a conference organised by the Department of Belarusian Studies at the University of Warsaw. Presenters at the conference noted the contribution of the Belarusian organisations in Britain in preserving and disseminating Belarusian culture. In May, the Library was represented by Fr Ihar Łabacevič at the international conference “The Polish-Belarusian-Russian literary, linguistic and cultural connections” at the University of Bialystok, Poland. In July, a paper on the Library's Watenstedt collection was presented by Dr Karalina Matskevich at the International Congress of

Central and Eastern European Studies in London, aiming to promote the collection and generate interest in the understudied topic of Belarusian DP camps.

Collection maintenance

As in previous years, the crucial work of organising and systematising our archives continued throughout 2025. Processing of the Bishop Sipovič's Collection was spearheaded by our archivist, Fr Ihar Łabacevič. This extensive collection comprises over 25 linear feet of correspondence, manuscript drafts, personal documents, and photographic materials, documenting the Bishop's ecclesiastical and community activities from the early 1940s through the 1980s. The primary goal of this project was to enhance researcher accessibility while ensuring the long-term physical integrity of the materials. To establish full intellectual and physical control over the collection, the following archival standards were implemented:

The collection was surveyed for relevancy; approximately 1.5 linear feet of duplicate records and non-archival items (such as blank stationery and peripheral financial documents) were removed to streamline the files.

Materials were organized into four distinct series to facilitate ease of navigation:

Series I: Correspondence

Series II: Family and Biographical Materials

Series III: Manuscript

Series IV: Photographs

A comprehensive finding aid is currently nearing completion. This guide includes a detailed biographical note and a folder-level container list, which is scheduled to be made available to researchers in 2026.

Our collection of Orthodox Church documents from the Pinsk and Mazyr districts going back to 1793 was systematised by the historian Jury Snapkouski with a detailed [description](#) published on our website.

Preliminary steps have been taken on the preservation of the valuable materials from



the archive of the translator of Belarusian poetry Vera Rich, donated by the Chair of the Anglo-Belarusian Society, Dr Alan Flowers. The collection has now been rehoused into archival acid free boxes. These materials, among others, will be used in organising events in 2026 to mark the 90th anniversary of Vera Rich's birth.

Significant progress was also made in cataloguing of the Library's extensive book collection. Thanks to the professional expertise of Mrs. Xenia Łabacevič 1,334 records within the poetry, drama, prose and history collections have now been fully processed.

All cataloguing was performed in adherence to international bibliographic standards, ensuring these titles are discoverable for future scholarly use. While the drama and anthology sections are now complete, work continues systematically on the remainder of the poetry and prose series. This ongoing effort ensures that our literary holdings are preserved and accessible to the public and academic community alike.

In the first months of the year, Dr Natalla Harkovič conducted the ordering and the first stage of cataloguing of our history collection.

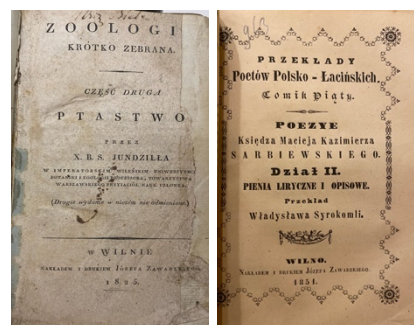
In preparation to the centenary of Fr Alexander Nadson, a substantial work on digitising his correspondence was carried out by Alaksiej K. These documents will be used as source material for a volume being prepared by Dr Uładzistaŭ Harbacki (EHU) to mark the centenary.

Crucial assistance was provided by a professional museologist who started an inventory of the numismatic collection with detailed descriptions of GDL coins going back to the 15th century. This work shall be continued in 2026.

Further progress has been made on the inventory of the art collection thanks to the help from Nata Janchur.

Acquisition highlights:

In 2025 the Library continued to develop its collections, acquiring a number of important academic publications as well as unique and rare materials, among them *Ptastwo* by Banifacy Jundził (1825), *Poezye* by Maciej Kazimir Sarbieŭski, translated by U. Syrakomla (1851), *Listy z podróży* by Anton Adyniec (1884), and *Narrative of events during the invasion of Russia by Napoleon Bonaparte and the retreat of the French army 1812* by General Sir Robert Wilson (1860).

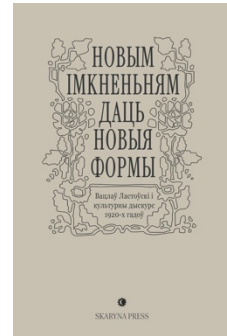


Another valuable addition to our archives was a handmade album containing photos by the well-known Belarusian photographer Viačastaŭ Dubinka. The 1980s photos picture some well-known artistic and literary figures including Uładzimir Karatkievič, Larysa Hienijuš, Jaŭhien Kulik, Alaksiej Maračkin and others. The album was kindly donated to the Library by the Belarusian Charitable Trust.

The museum's ethnographical collection has received donations including a Niehlubka-style towel from Evielina Ščadryna and a unique hand-woven belt, made in the traditional style by the master-weaver Andrej Strocaŭ with a line from Janka Kupała's poem in the Bierahinia script.

Publishing

Based on the proceedings of the conference organized by the Library in 2023, a collection of articles, *Novym imknieńiam dać novyja formy: Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski i kulturny dyskurs 1920-ch hadoŭ*, was published in collaboration with Skaryna Press. The volume was presented at the International Congress of Belarusian Studies in Berlin in September and at the literary festival *Pradmova* in Prague in October.



Cultural activities

In 2025 we were proud to continue hosting the Vir folk group, which is going from strength to strength led by Evelina Ščadryna, as well as a variety of other cultural and educational events. These included:

- traditional *Hukaŭnie viasny* [folk festival](#), with participation of the Vir group and the pupils of the Saturday school;



- poetry and music recital in celebration of the centenary of Jakub Kolas' poem *Symon-muzyka* during our traditional, colourful and well attended mid-summer Kupalle [celebration](#);

- a fascinating and informative [presentation](#) by Prof Francis Young (Oxford) on Latin-language literature in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania;

- a presentation of the work of the Belarusian Language Institute by the linguist Šviatlana Lasovič;
- a book display dedicated to the centenary of the birth of the prominent Belarusian writer, diaspora leader and friend of our Library, Kastuś Akuła;



- a gathering of young Belarusian leaders organised by the Library in partnership with John Smith Trust (12.12.25)

- Christmas book fair, organised by Skaryna Press (20.12.25)

Social media and website

Thanks to a dedicated team of volunteers, the Library continues to promote its collections and share news and announcements on social media. Our audience is steadily growing: at the end of 2025 we have 1,050 followers on Instagram, 1,221 on Facebook, and 284 on Telegram. The website is regularly updated with articles related to the collection, reports on key projects, and announcements, ensuring wide access to information about the Library's activities and ongoing work.

Book club

The Skaryna Library readers' group continued to meet throughout the year via Zoom, discussing works by Belarusian writers from the 19th century to the present day.

Throughout the year we received help from volunteers in various areas of library work as well as financial, practical and moral support from numerous friends and well-wishers, for which we are very grateful. Since its inception, the Library has always been a community effort aided by Belarusians and friends of Belarus from all other the world.

Apart from itself turning 55 years old in its current form next year, the Library will be organising a series of events marking the centenary of the birth of Father Alexander Nadson, a priest, translator, researcher and cultural and spiritual leader of the Belarusian community, who was one of the founders and the long-standing director of the Skaryna Library. We hope our friends in Britain and more distant lands will join the commemorations and continue supporting our work!