

# 2024 Annual Report

The past year was very active and fruitful for our institution. The Library expanded our circle of friends and started new significant projects.

## New museums



One of the main projects of the year was the reconstruction and expansion of our museum space. The old museum hall was thoroughly renovated and will now serve as a new art museum for permanent and temporary exhibitions. The Library preserves an interesting collection of Belarusian art – by prominent artists from Belarus and the diaspora – which is awaiting its cataloguing and description.

An additional space was created in the former attic of the building, which will house a new historical **museum of the Belarusian Revival**. This exhibition will explore the vibrant and complex national identity of Belarus tracing its historical and cultural roots back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the national revival and nation-building in the early 20th century. By showcasing the fluidity of borders, languages, and writing systems, the exhibition will highlight the enduring shared identity of people who have lived on these

lands, shaped by their diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and by their resistance to the cultural and political dominance of neighbouring powers.

The physical museum spaces will be supplemented by a new virtual museum, which has made substantial progress this year. It will enhance the experience of visitors to the physical museum and will also enable “virtual guests” to learn about the history and culture of Belarus through the library’s artefacts.

## Archival work and collection development



Concordia Choir  
Мастацкі кіраўнік  
Галіна Казіміроўская

Салісты:  
Ганна  
Міхаіл  
Юлія

Гучыць  
Скарынаўка  
SOUNDS OF SKARYNAUKA

духоўныя творы  
Міколы Куліковіча  
SACRED MUSIC BY  
MIKOLA KULIKOVICH

**Дызайн:** Наста Хвастоўская

**Права:** Галіна Казіміроўская ©

Усе права абароненыя. Для прыватнага  
праслухоўвання.

Капіяванне, пракат, публічнае аднаўленне і перадача  
ў этар без дазволу праваўладальніка забароненыя.

**Кантакты:** g.kazimirovskaya@gmail.com

**Design:** Nasta Khvastouskaya

**Copyright:** Galina Kazimirovskaya ©

All rights reserved. For private listening.

Copying, rental, public reproduction  
and broadcasting without the permission  
of the copyright holder is prohibited.

**Contacts:** g.kazimirovskaya@gmail.com



With the help of a professional archivist, Yury Snapkouski, thorough work was carried out to organise and systematise our archives, including the extensive archive of the library's founder, Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich, whose 110th birth anniversary was in December. Apart from being a distinguished church leader (the first Belarusian Greek-Catholic bishop since the early 19th century), Bishop Sipovich was actively involved in Belarusian temporal life and maintained close links with many prominent Belarusian and British figures associated with the Belarusian diaspora.

Most of our music and audio archive has now been digitised. Led by Halina Kazimirouskaja, a Belarusian conductor currently based in Poland, work has been completed on the rich archival heritage of the Belarusian composer Mikola Kulikovic, preserved in our collection for over 50 years. In addition to being a composer, he was a musicologist, researcher of Belarusian church and secular music and one of the organisers of the Opera and Ballet Theatre of pre-WW2 Belarus. A concert by the Concordia Choir, conducted by Halina, was held in the Belarusian Church of St Cyril of Turau, where Kulikovic's works were performed publicly for the first time.

Our work on cataloguing the library's extensive book collection, as well as its maps and postage stamps, continued with the help of professional librarians and experts, such as Natallia Harkovich. A significant part of our collection has now been professionally catalogued and a classification system in accordance with current international standards has been produced and adapted for the collection, but a lot of work still lies ahead!

The library and museum have been further enriched with fascinating new acquisitions — from rare books from the first half of the 20th century from the private collection of historian Jury Turonak (donated by his widow, Zinaida), to new puppets for the traditional Belarusian Batlejka puppet theatre kept in our museum!

## Links with other institutions



In 2024, the Institute for Intercultural Studies of Central and Eastern Europe was inaugurated at the University of Warsaw. The Skaryna Library signed a **cooperation agreement** with that institution to create a Research Centre for Belarusian Studies based at the library and facilitate visits of young scholars of Belarusian studies. Our first joint event was the **symposium** "The Legacy of the 25 March 1918 Act and Belarusian National Identity".



The Skaryna Library collaborated with other research institutions. Together with the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies and the Ostrogorski Centre, the library organised another annual conference on Belarusian studies. Preparations are already underway for the tenth anniversary conference, which will take place in May 2025 and will also be dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Journal of Belarusian Studies, the oldest English-language journal on Belarusian studies.

In August 2024, we participated in the summer school of the Herder Institute for Historical Studies of Eastern Europe in Marburg, where we talked about the history of the library and its growing role as a research centre and a cultural hub of the Belarusian diaspora. In October, the library was presented at the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian round table "History in the Service of Society," organised by the Mieraszewski Center in Augustów.



We continued our fruitful cooperation with the London publishing house Skaryna Press. The album **Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski's 1928 Expedition: A Preserved Heritage** has been published, based on the original preserved in the Skaryna Library. This publication opens to readers a unique collection of photographs gathered by Łastoŭski's ethnographic expedition in the Słucak and Mazyr regions of Belarus nearly a century ago. The preparation of a facsimile edition of the manuscript collection of poems by Larysa Hienijuš, donated by the poet's son, is almost complete.

## Visits and Events



Throughout the year, the library was visited by numerous researchers who worked with our book and archival collections, gave papers and presentations at meetings and conferences. Among them were historians Joanna Getka and Jerzy Grzybowski (Warsaw), Piotr Cichoracki (Wrocław), Tatsiana Astrouskaya (Marburg), Katarzyna Waszczyńska (Warsaw), and Andrzej Gajduk (Paris).

The library hosted a variety of literary and cultural events this year that included several recitals by Andrej Chadanovič (in collaboration with the Anglo-Belarusian Society), meetings with poet Valzyna Mort and poet and Belarusian PEN president Taciana Niadbaj (in partnership with Skaryna Press), as well as a talk by writer and researcher Hanna Jankuta. The library was visited by several diplomats and prominent Belarusian and Western public and political figures.

With the help of our partners at Bright Belarus, we launched our first short-term internships for young Belarusians. The interns not only assisted with

library projects but also deepened their understanding of the library and developed valuable skills.

The library continued to serve as a venue for numerous Belarusian cultural events and gatherings — from the celebration of the centenary of the famous Belarusian writer Vasil Bykaŭ (who visited the library back in May 1986!) to the Night of (Un)Executed Poets commemorating those who perished during Stalin’s purges to the Belarusian weekend school to various traditional folk festivals which enjoy great popularity among Belarusians and British friends alike.

In the spring, we celebrated the **70th anniversary of the Anglo-Belarusian Society**, with which the library continues a fruitful collaboration. The Society was founded in 1954 “with the object of the diffusion, interchange and publication of knowledge relating to the Belarusian people, their land, their history and their culture”.

## Looking ahead

The Trustees are confident that the coming year will see a further development in the activities of the library, and a growing interest in our work. As in previous years, our work would have been impossible without the help of volunteers and well-wishers from all over the world — we hope this support will continue in the new year 2025!