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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN LITHUANIA: NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Lithuanian library and information services (LIS) development during the various periods of the post-communist era were presented in three previous papers by the author¹. Looking back at the evaluations made eight, five and even three years ago, it becomes absolutely evident that the main features of Lithuanian LIS of the past decade are *changes* and *dynamism*. The main purpose of this presentation is to articulate the most recent changes and challenges the professional field was and is facing during the recent years.

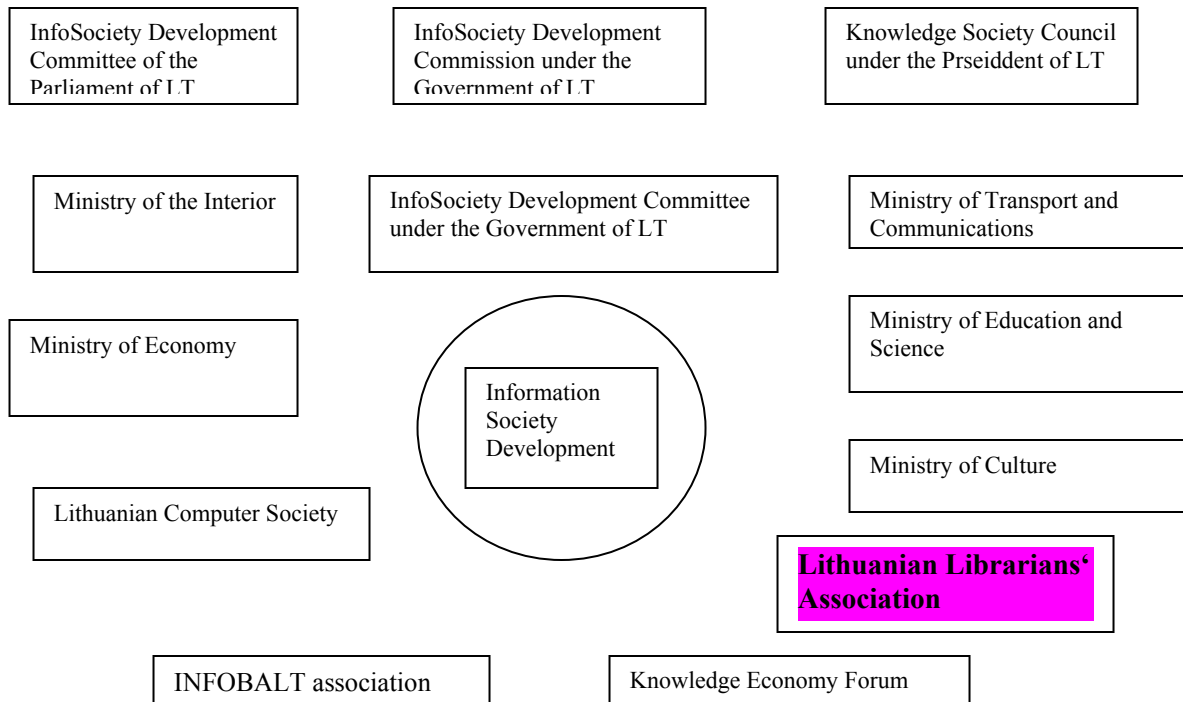
1. New social and political context

Traditionally, libraries were and are seen (almost solely) as *cultural* players in the society with the influence on *educational* activities but their social role is much wider. Today more and more libraries claim and are perceived as viable players in the *information- and knowledge-based* society. This can be seen as the main shift in library policy. The most recent developments of library policy in Lithuania are connected to the *National Information Society Development* of Lithuania². Lithuanian Librarians' Association is actively lobbying for libraries, participating in the regulatory framework of the Information Society Development (picture 1). European Union *eEurope 2002* and *eEurope+* strategies³ place high priority on establishing Public Internet Access Points (PIAP) as public centres, which primary mission is to provide access to computers and internet for those who don't have it, to help users to assimilate information technologies, secure access to public administration and other public services provided through internet.

Another significant factors affecting libraries' activities today are life-long learning and elearning as means to achieve major European political goals for the most competitive knowledge based socially inclusive society. This is a possibility and a challenge for libraries not only in Lithuania as it requires to reconsider the potential of libraries to contribute essentially to the new skills, employment possibilities and social cohesion.

2. Lithuanian library network and performance

On macro level, the main changes are connected to the decreasing number of libraries and their stocks and increasing usage. In 1991 there were 4 120 libraries of different types, in 1994 this number decreased by 192, in 2000 we had 3 785 libraries,



Picture 1: Information society development in Lithuania

and in 2003 – 3 406 (Chart 1), i.e. the number of libraries in Lithuania became smaller by 17% during the period of independency. The networks of public, technical, medical, agricultural libraries were diminished; nearly all libraries of trade unions were closed. Today we still are under the threat of the *scissors effect*, articulated in Tallinn three years ago and indicating the tendency of increasing **demand** for LIS while the **offer** is decreasing. The total number of stocks remained almost on the same level, but lending has increased by over 8 million items annually and the number of visitors has increased almost 6 times! (Chart 2).

Chart 1: Lithuanian library network 1991-2003

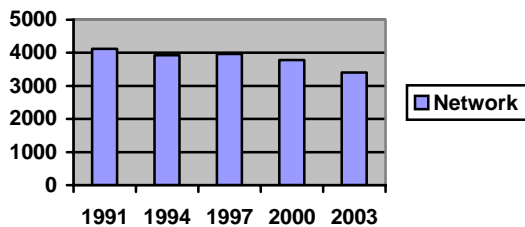
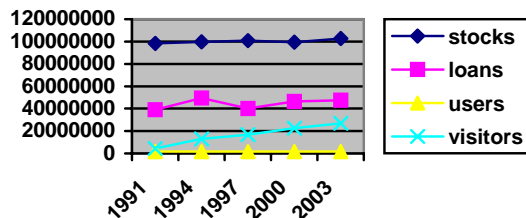


Chart 2: Lithuanian Libraries' indicators 1991 - 2003



Source: Centre for Librarianship, M. Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania, 1999-2003

Today, library system in Lithuania consists of different types of libraries belonging to the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Science as well as to other bodies (Table 1). In the end of 2003 there were **3 406 libraries** in Lithuania, among them:

1 418 libraries belonging to the Ministry of Culture, among them:

- Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania
- 5 Regional Public Libraries
- 60 Municipal Public Libraries with 1333 branches

1 914 libraries belonging to the Ministry of Education and Science, among them:

- 19 university libraries
- 19 college libraries
- 1 628 school libraries

5 libraries of the state importance:

- Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library
- Vilnius University Library
- Library for the Blind
- Lithuanian Technical Library
- Lithuanian Medical Library

Special libraries, among them:

- 21 technical libraries
- 38 medical libraries
- 8 agricultural libraries.

Today, libraries in Lithuania are popular and busy. The collections of all libraries comprise over 102, 6 million documents; in 2003 there were 26,8 million visits and over 1,65 million registered users of all types of libraries (in 1998 there were 19,4 million visitors and 1,59 million registered readers). *In 2002 47,6% of the country population are library users (in 1998 - 43,2%). Each inhabitant of the country has borrowed 13,6 items from libraries in 2002.* The total number of staff in 2003 was 6 494 (in 1991 – 6 356).

Public Libraries

There are 5 regional public libraries in the biggest cities of Lithuania: Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Panevezys and Siauliai. The total collection in 2003 was 5 mln. items, and they served 95 thousand readers. Regional public libraries have ca. 1 million visitors per year and the total lending figure is 3,8 million items.

In 2003 there were 60 municipal public libraries with 155 branches in urban and 1163 branches in rural areas (213 of which are merged with school libraries), plus 15 children libraries. They visited almost 9 million times annually. Although during the first years of independence the number of public libraries was diminishing rather drastically (over 200 libraries closed) but the network of public libraries covering all the country was secured and their usage grows since 1993 (Table 1).

Table 1: The main performance indicators of municipal public libraries in 1975- 2003

No.	Year	Network	Stocks	Readers	Lending
1.	1975	2 453	19 657 000	1 203 563	23 303 300
2.	1980	1 900	19 559 600	1 323 700	29 545 600
4.	1990	1 706	23 285 300	811 900	15 383 200
6.	1994	1 514	19 629 600	619 774	13 141 925
8.	1998	1 458	18 913 003	684 284	18 368 169
10.	2003	1 393	17 828 922	706 934	21 315 916

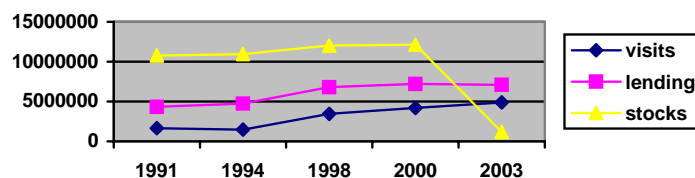
Source: Centre for Librarianship, National Library of Lithuania

National Martynas Mazvydas Library of Lithuania (NLL) is a principal Lithuanian research library open to the public, simultaneously functioning as a parliamentary library. The library staff numbers 510 employees. NLL consists of 6 centres, 14 departments, it houses 18 reading rooms. NLL holdings comprise 7 million items. Library embraces special collections including medieval manuscripts and archival documents, old and rare books, *Lituanica* publications, music records and fine-art publications, children's books. In 2002 NLL had 29 256 registered readers, 365 501 visits, lending reached 1.3 mln items.

Academic libraries

There are 19 university libraries and 19 college libraries academic libraries in Lithuania. Here the same tendency of sharp increase of the library usage is observed too (Chart 3). It is extremely challenging as the number of staff in academic libraries was reduced from 613 in 1995 to 588 in 2003. If in 1998 Lithuanian academic libraries had 90,5 thousand registered readers who borrowed 6,8 million items and visited libraries 3,5 million times, in 2003 there were already over 138 thousand readers who visited university libraries over 7 million times and borrowed ca. 5 million items.

Chart 3: Dynamics of usage and stocks, University libraries, 1991 - 2003



3. Just providing ICT and Internet access is no longer enough

Information resources and technology are two pillars of the library infrastructure. Today most of Lithuanian libraries are equipped with computers, many have access to the Internet, use world-wide electronic resources, create their own digital resources and databases as well as deliver networked services for the users.

Library automation

In 1993, Consortium of Scientific Libraries under the initiative of 8 Lithuanian scientific libraries was founded to co-ordinate library acquisition and to create an integral automation system. This was a start of Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System LIBIS program that was confirmed by Lithuanian Government in 1996. Today, there are 1205705 entries in the union catalogue⁴ compiled and shared by 5 county libraries, 46 (out of 60) municipal public libraries, 7 biggest libraries: NLL, Library of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Library of the Ministry of Defence, Lithuanian Library for the Blind, Lithuanian Medical Library, Lithuanian Technical Library and Lithuanian Agricultural Library. For educational purposes it is used at the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University

Academic libraries use Aleph library automation system. Lithuanian Academic Library Network (LABT⁵) was established to create Lithuanian's academic virtual library through the automation of libraries, unification of search and access to information sources and virtual services. LABT currently links together 16 universities, 9 colleges, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, 29 research institutions of sciences and as such represents Lithuanian academic library consortia.

Access to the Internet

Access to the Internet is provided in Lithuanian libraries since 1995. However, the early beginners “had to wait” for the followers for quite a long time. Since the end of 2001, all **60 municipal and 5 county public libraries can offer access to Internet to their communities**. Access to the Internet is provided by all research, special and academic libraries; many school libraries, branch libraries are being connected to the web as well.

The overall number of Internet users in Lithuania has dynamically increased in past few years and now is reaching 24 % of all citizens. The number of Internet users in 2002 in Lithuania almost doubled in one year since autumn 2001⁶ and the growth of Internet users among the Baltic states in 2003 was the fastest and biggest in Lithuania where internet penetration grew from 20% to 25%. Still, the leader between the neighbour states is Estonia where 47% of population of 15-74 years age are internet users⁷.

Development of ICT and Internet-based services give wide opportunities but also increase digital divide. Solving digital divide is one of the main targets of the European Union information policy. In the *eEurope* strategies, development of a network of Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) is suggested like one of the most important elements of leap into the information age. Important initiative to widen citizens' access to the Internet was undertaken by the business alliance *The Window into the Future*⁸. Hence, two main forms of public Internet access now exist in our country:

- in libraries;
- in other institutions.

It is important to notice that **the main quality Internet access providers to citizens in Lithuania are public libraries**. There are 490 computerized work places with

the access to the internet in Lithuania's municipal public libraries: 30 PIAPs were initiated by OSF–Lithuania Libraries program and Open Society Institute funds, 61 PIAPs were implemented by the initiative of Ministry of Culture “Equipping society with information”, 40 PIAPs were established by alliance *The Window into the Future*. There are 28 PIAPs also established by alliance *The Window into the Future*, working in other institutions⁹. Today, just providing Internet access is not enough. Libraries are not Internet cafés; their competitive advantage is in variety and diversity of electronic and traditional information sources, value-added information services and qualified staff to support, educate and serve the users of all ages.

Electronic resources and services

Many Lithuanian libraries offer their users various electronic resources. One of the major information resources is full text data bases. In 200-2001, 22 libraries subscribed to the *Ebsco Publishing* full text data base and the usage of this rich resource is increasing every year (table 3).

Table 3: Statistics of usage of EBSCO Publishing data base in Lithuanian libraries, 2000-2001

Year	No of searches		No of abstracts copied		No of articles sent by e-mail		No of articles copied		Viewed as PDF files	
	000	001	000	001	000	001	000	001	000	001
Total	9047	3769	2125	0108	80	3950	4041	5379	15	993

Source: Duomenų bazės EBSCO Publishing naudojimo Lietuvos bibliotekose analizė / Aušra Vaškevičienė // Informacijos mokslai: mokslo darbai, 2002, t.22, p. 88-96, ISSN 1392-0561

Lithuanian libraries also subscribe to electronic journals as well as the global and foreign data bases such as *Cambridge Journals online*, *Oxford journals online*, *ProQuest*, *Science Direct*, *Springer LINK*, *Web of Science*, *Global Books in Print*, *GLIN*, *INION*, etc., national data base LITLEX, those produced by the National Library of Lithuania (bibliographic data bases of articles of Lithuanian periodicals, TEISE, VIS, LITUANIKA, SUTARTYS, etc). Many libraries maintain their websites and/or portals and provide a virtual service *Ask a librarian*.

There are tremendous plans for the creation of a **virtual library**. For example, LABT sees the primary task for the near future is the extension of LABT databases up to full text data bases (e-resources). In that case our libraries will become real e-libraries where e-documents will be available for individuals (not only traditional library services and e-catalog). MetaLib and SFX is used as single central portal for search and information retrieval.

Digitization has become an integral part of the routine activities in many memory institutions – libraries, museums and archives – in Lithuania¹⁰. The first initiative was implemented by Vilnius University library (VUL). With the funding of UNESCO Memory of the world programme, VUL has produced a CD *Collections of the Vilnius University Library* in 1988¹¹. Since 2000, NLL together with other national and

international partners has been running an ambitious project *Digital Archive of Historical and Cultural documents*. The first CD *Collection of Parchments* has been already published¹². The parchments are being digitized at the Library of the Academy of Sciences as well¹³.

4. Drivers of change

ICT is probably the most influential driver of changes in libraries. But there also other forces stimulating dynamic developments in LIS and creating challenges for them. Participation in programs and projects are not only additional source of funding but also very essential drivers of change. Activities of professional associations, especially targeted at library promotion and lobbying as well as continuing professional development (CPD) contributed remarkably to the visible changes in Lithuanian LIS.

OSI and OSFL Library programs

It is not possible to overestimate the role of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and National Open Society Funds in support of modernisation of libraries in CEE and former Soviet Union¹⁴. OSFL Library Program that was operating in the country in 1993-2003, in the beginning gave a priority to academic and research libraries, especially the projects on their automation and computerisation. In recent years the focus has changed into public libraries. Participation in OSF and OSI-NLP programs opened opportunities for Lithuanian libraries to provide Internet access to the communities, to develop LIBIS, to enrich their collections, get access to data-bases, train and retrain staff, participate in international professional organizations and conferences.

One of the most exciting projects supported by OSI in 2000-2003 was the exchange of trainers. 12 trainers from Lithuania visited Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia and Uzbekistan delivering training seminars (total duration – over 80 days!) to the LIS specialists in these countries on new trends in library management, marketing and public relations, electronic resources and bibliographic control, public library as community centre, library consortium building, school libraries as information centres. There was also exchange of groups of librarians and representatives of local authorities from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Lithuania within the framework of OSFL program *East-East*.

European Union Projects

Lithuanian LIS institutions during the recent years were involved in a number of EU projects and programs: *Phare-Tempus*, *CECUP*, *5th and 6th Framework program (PubliCA, Pulman, Cultivate-CEE, Calimera)*, *CobRA+*, *Libecon 2000*, *DEDICATE* and others. The impact of the two recent EU projects that Lithuania took part in – *Cultivate-CEE* and *Pulman* is quite remarkable and worth mentioning separately. *Cultivate-CEE* was the EU-funded project under the 5th FP IST project (2001-2003) that aimed at fostering cross-sector cooperation between the library-museum-archives institutions. It made a very important contribution to the encouragement of collaboration between memory institutions both in Lithuania and in the whole Europe. *PULMAN* aimed to strengthen the performance and help achieve the potential of public libraries in new

economic, social and cultural roles, to spread strategic initiatives across Europe through knowledge sharing, exchange of experience and the extension of good practice involving both policy makers and practitioners, enhance cross-sectoral links between all cultural institutions, to establish the feasibility of a sustainable European agency or mechanism to promote the interests and development of public libraries. One of the major results of the project was *Pulman Guidelines on Digital Services*, translated into over 20 languages¹⁵ and *The Oeiras manifesto: The PULMAN Agenda for e-Europe* – a strategic document indicating the four main directions of libraries' development and impact for the information society:

- democracy and citizenship;
- life long learning;
- economic and social development;
- cultural diversity¹⁶.

Since the end of 2003 two Lithuanian institutions (Utena public library and Vilnius University) are partners in the 6 FP IST project *Calimera: Local Institutions Mediating Electronic Resource Access*¹⁷. CALIMERA builds upon the achievements the PULMAN and aims to assist local memory institutions to apply and develop innovative technologies and strategies for serving ordinary citizens in their everyday life.

One of the major targets for libraries in the years to come is the EU Structural funds that became available from May 2004 when our country joined the EU¹⁸.

Professional organizations

Lithuanian Librarians' Association (LLA) is the main, the biggest and most representative and influential LIS professional organization in the country with international reputation. LLA unites 1653 members in 64 branches. LLA stimulates changes in the professional community by organizing National Library week (April 23-30 each year since 2001), nomination and award of the Librarian of the Year, lobbying for wages of librarians and other activities.

Lithuanian Research Library Consortium (LMBA) was created in December 2001 to promote the creation of virtual libraries, prepare and implement the advanced technology and innovative projects in the libraries; subscribe to electronic databases for Consortium members and other libraries. LMBA participates in *EIFL.net* Project. LMBA has 29 members. One of the major changes introduced by this association is resource sharing and consortia building culture.

Association of Academic Libraries of Lithuania was formed in 1997. It joins all 15 academic libraries. The Association works close with the Rectors' Conference looking for solutions in library automation, coordination of acquisition, services to the academic community.

Lithuanian Municipal Public Library Directors' Association was established in 1996. It unites all directors of municipal libraries in Lithuania for solving actual problems of municipal libraries on the national level. The Association is active in lobbying for

libraries in Lithuanian parliament and government, preparation of library development projects. *County Public Libraries Association* was created in 1998. The aim of the Association is to join the intellectual and financial resources of its members to solve the important problems of county libraries, to represent and defend their interests nationally and internationally.

Lithuanian School Librarians' Association (LSLA) was established in 1994. In 1995 it joined the International Association of School Libraries IASL. LSLA strives to ensure the right of students to free access to information, self-expression and self-education promoting international standards for school libraries in Lithuania. The aims of Association are to unite school librarians for joint activities in preparation of standards for school libraries, participation in continuing education programs, to encourage school librarians to develop their libraries into school media centres.

Last but not least **continuing professional education (CPE)** should be mentioned as a driver of change. Integrated Training centre for LIS specialists at the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University (ITC¹⁹) started its activities with the help of the grant from OSI Network Library Program (1999-2002) and functions as a coalition of several players in the field (NLL, Klaipeda University Library, Vilnius County Library and others) to serve the training needs of the library and information workers of **all types**. The results of the four years' activities ITC are quite remarkable: 1664 librarians were trained, that is **every 4th librarian in the country raised his/her qualifications!** (Table 4). Even if the ITC, unlike the other players, is not funded by the public/state budget, it proves to be a viable and effective education provider.

Table 4: Inputs and outputs of the ITC, 2000-2003

Inputs/outputs	No of hours / weeks taught	No of staff trained
OSI support (2000-2002)	2 520 hrs 63 weeks	1 099 participants (17,5% of all librarians)
Leonardo support (2002)	42 weeks	36 participants
Phare (2002-2003)	66 weeks; 2 640 hrs	442 participants
Fee-based courses (2003)	2 weeks	87 participants

CONCLUSIONS

Development of LIS in the independent Lithuania is marked with essential changes in library philosophy, social role, services, resources, competencies of staff, expectations of users. The period of 14 years can be clearly divided into two: 1990-1994/95 and from these years till now. The first period is characterized by the decline of library network and performance compared to the earlier period and by the crisis of library "ideology". From 1994/95 the library usage began to grow, library automation and ICT applications became routine. New concept of a library in the information society

formed a solid background for libraries' operation. Now it may seem that this essential change from state-funded to locally supported public library, from ideologically indoctrinated institutions to the democratic provision of access to information for all, has occurred long ago. But it is only a decade that Lithuanian libraries have a new paradigm.

Changes are constant and rapid: just several years ago we talked about OPACs and library automation as about novelty; today we are concerned more with the provision of interactive electronic services, access to electronic resources, building digitised and digital collections. But the drivers of change in Lithuanian libraries are not only the ICTs; the professional field changes while taking part in projects, continuing professional education, activities of professional associations, building alliances and consortia. All this requires also inner cultural change. Today LIS sector is mostly dependent on the national policies for information and culture, education and research; it is most likely that the EU integration is one of the main future-shaping factors for LIS.

¹ Glosiene A. *Librarianship in Lithuania in 1990-1995*. In: *Independence and libraries: Papers of the 5th Congress of Baltic librarians. October 21-22, 1996 Tallinn, Estonia*. P. 13-20; Glosiene A. *Lithuanian librarianship of the past decade: a long way to freedom* In: *Library as Information Gateway to the new millenium: Proceedings of the 6th Congress of Baltic Librarians. October 5-6, 2000 Vilnius, Lithuania*. P. 23-27; Glosiene A. *All you wanted to know about Lithuanian librarianship*. In: *Libraries in Knowledge-Based Society: Proceedings of the 3rd Nordic-Baltic Meeting, October 25-26, 2001, Tallinn, Estonia*. Tallinn, 2001, p. 11-17.

² <http://www3.lrs.lt/c-bin/eng/preps2?Condition1=130056&Condition2=>

³ *eEurope 2002: action plan [interactive]*. Council of the European Commission, 2000
<http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/action_plan/index_en.htm>

⁴ <http://www.libis.lt/en/welcome.html>

⁵ www.labt.lt

⁶ *IT plitimas Lietuvoje leteja [IT penetration slows down in Lithuania]*.
<http://www.ebiz.lt/article.php3/1/5698/2>

⁷ *Internetu naudojasi kas ketvirtas lietuvis [Every fourth Lithuanian is using Internet]*
<http://www.ebiz.lt/article.php3/23/5987/2>

⁸ www.langasiateiti.lt

⁹ Rutkauskiene, Ugne & Glosiene, Audrone. *Just providing Internet access is not enough*. In: *Library and Information in Multicultural Societies: the 12th BOBCATSSS Symposium Abstracts*. Riga, 2004, p. 129-130.

¹⁰ *More information about digitization in Lithuania is in the article: Glosiene, Audrone & Manzikh, Zinaida. Lithuania: Cultural heritage digitization initiatives in Lithuanian memory institutions*. In: *eCulture*, vol. 4, issue 5, December 2003, p. 8-9. <http://www.cordis.lu.digicult>

¹¹ online version is available at <http://www.mb.vu.lt/unesco.turinys.htm>

¹² online version available at <http://pergamentai.mch.mii.lt/pergamentai.en.htm>

¹³ <http://mab.lt/pergamentai/main.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.osf.lt/eng/main.htm>

¹⁵ *Digital Guidelines Manuals / Pulman*. <http://www.pulmanweb.org/DGMs/DGMs.htm>

¹⁶ [http://www.pulmanweb.org/documents/Oeiras_v2.1_5mar%20\(1\).doc](http://www.pulmanweb.org/documents/Oeiras_v2.1_5mar%20(1).doc)

¹⁷ www.calimera.org

¹⁸ http://europa.eu.int/grants/info/introduction_en.htm

¹⁹ www.kf.vu.lt/~btmc