

THE ROLE OF THE RIGA LATVIAN SOCIETY IN THE LIFE OF STUDENTS AND GRADUATES OF THE RIGA POLYTECHNICUM / RIGA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (1862–1919)

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Summary. The Riga Latvian Society (RLS) is the oldest Latvian organization in the world, where students, graduates and academic staff from oldest universities in the territory of Latvia – the Riga Polytechnicum (RP), from 1896 – the Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI), had worked. The activities of the Society and its members have been diverse and varied, and their results are different, too. The heritage preserved for the future is books compiled and translated by Latvians that are well-known folk historical and cultural values, and new educated, patriotic generations of Latvians. Poor students were supported as much as possible, enabling them to achieve their chosen goals and contribute to Latvia's economic and national development, culture and education. The 150th anniversary of the RLS, the collaboration of the Society with the RP / RPI students, graduates and academic staff until 1919, has been studied.

Keywords: scholarships for students, RLS Knowledge Commission, «polytechnicans» and Riga Latvian Society.

Introduction

In 2018, the 150th anniversary of the RLS is celebrated. It is the oldest Latvian organization in the world and was founded six years after the establishment of the oldest technical university in the Baltic provinces, the oldest multidisciplinary technical university in the then

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Tsarist Russia – the Riga Polytechnicum. The university started its work in 1862. In the first years there were no Latvian teachers and students. The first students of Latvian nationality began to study in Riga a little later, and the first Latvian student corporation «*Selonija*», founded by the students of the RP, was established only in 1880. It is not known exactly how many Latvian students studied at the first university of Latvia because in the documents the religion was registered rather than nationality. By the year 1875, first year students of the RP, it was estimated that about 5 % of the total number of students were Latvians. The number of Latvian students increased at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century – it was around 17 % between years 1901 and 1910 [1]. RP / RPI students and graduates took part in the work of the RLS, but more studies have not been done so far in this regard.

Upon awaiting the RLS anniversary, members of the society were asked to remember its history, to participate in the study of documents. Responding to the initiative, documents and articles about RP after the reorganisation in 1896 were identified, which provide information about the participation of RPI students, graduates and academic staff in the Society's work as well as collaboration between the university and the Society. The study identified the contribution of those engineers to the development of the RLS who had studied or worked at the RP / RPI until 1919. The article reflects the most significant events and the most famous personalities, not covering all academic staff, students, and graduates of the technical higher education institution and their activities in the society and not mentioning all the engineers and staff of the university who have been active in the society.

Riga Latvian Society Student Scholarship

The Riga Polytechnicum was a private educational institution with the German language of instruction. After reorganization in 1896 into the Riga Polytechnic Institute it was a state university with the Russian language of instructions. Students had to pay, so at first, most students were the children of prosperous parents. In later years, peasants' offsprings also studied at the university, but when there was a shortage of money, they were forced to stop their studies. Students used to earn both by giving private lessons and taking various other jobs. The first scholarships were established in 1866, but they were received by a very small number of students. State scholarships began to be awarded from 1 January 1900. A larger number of students began to receive scholarships at the beginning of the 20th century and in the years of the First World War [2].

Students from different institutions of higher education were supported by the RLS Knowledge Commission, which was founded one year after the foundation of the RLS – in 1869. It was the first Latvian scientific organization that laid the foundations for the Latvian Academy of Sciences. During the first years of operation of the RLS and its Knowledge Commission, technical intelligence did not have a significant role. Latvian engineers received diplomas only in the later years and gradually became involved in the work of the Society. In 1876, the Knowledge Commission established Students' Aid Society, which administered the scholarship. Helping the poor was one of the main goals set in the Society's Statutes. In case the activity of the Students' Aid Society for some time subsided, scholarship issues were handled by the Knowledge Commission. It took care that poor students from different universities, including RP / RPI, would receive a one-off or continuous grant that had to be repaid after six years. The deadline for repayment could be extended. In some cases, when assessing particular circumstances and applications, it was decided that the money should not have to be repaid [3]. At first, it paid an average of 250 rubles a year, but in 1914 it was 1480 rubles [4]. The grants were interest-free loans that solved the problems of poor students for a short time; therefore, from 1902, scholarships began to be awarded. Students were provided with a scholarship for a longer period of time and, upon requesting it again, every six months, could complete their studies. For example, in 1903, the student of the Department of Mechanical Engineering *Ādolfs Vitckopfs* (1878–1967), who after graduating from the RPI (1907) did pedagogical work at the RPI, later at the University of Latvia and at the Riga State Technical University [5], repeatedly applied for the scholarship. The scholarship guaranteed the opportunity to study in the coming months and years, which made it possible to feel stable [6].

RLS did not have funds to grant non-refundable scholarships. The idea was to support Latvian students during their studies and to gradually recover money from graduate engineers who started earning and to use it to support future students. However, it turned out that the students were quick scholarship recipients, but lazy money repayers. This is evidenced by documents of RLS Knowledge Commission and press. In order to have the money repaid to the RLS Knowledge Commission Student Scholarship, the manager of the finance department of the Commission, former student of the Department of Commerce (1889–1898) of RPI *Zāmuels Gustavs* (1868–1904), with the help of the newspaper «*Apskats*» («Review»), asked the students who had received scholarships from 1877 until 1896 to repay the money. The society did not have information about the addresses and jobs of the students who were once supported, so one could hope only for honesty of each individual. Only a part of the allocated amount

was recovered. It is known that after repeated written reminders and calls to repay the money that had been granted in 1903, 2645 rubles were repaid. In the beginning of June 1904, there were still 12 000 rubles outstanding. This situation prevented awarding of scholarships to more students, because if they were repaid well and without hesitation, it would be possible to allocate around 6000 rubles each year [7].

Ļeņ. Rīgas Latviešu Biedrības
Zinību Komisijai.

Lūdzot pēc Zinību Komisijā ar lūgumu
atstāt man jau agrāk piešķirto stipen-
diju 50 rubl. arī šim puigadam, jo ma-
ni materiālos apstākļos nav labājusies,
bet gan strādā, un savas studijas
esmu sērīgi turpinājis.

Rīgā, 1925-03.

Ādolfs Vitckopfs
Latvijas biedrība
Stud. ver. mekl.

Figure 1. Letter of request from student Ādolfs Vitckopfs to the RLS Knowledge Commission for a repeated scholarship on 3 January 1903 [5].

The money was obtained thanks to public support – donations. The best source of money for students' scholarships turned out to be redeeming students from New Year's visits. This practice was drawn from other countries and helped students who needed immediate money. Capital accumulation and interest on scholarships would have taken a long time to get more money, and only a few students would benefit from it. It was decided to spend money on scholarships immediately. With the help of the Latvian newspapers, people were invited to donate money by repurchasing the New Year's visits and supporting the poor students, because «not all poor students succeed, without sacrificing their health and strength, to achieve the coveted goal, that is, to pass the final exam, but it also happens that while fighting with shortage and debt and working tirelessly, health is damaged and the hard-working young man has to be buried in the chilly grave. Therefore, it is a duty of every honourable person to help young people. By taking care of the younger

generation, we will take care of our future, and the one who has taken care of the future, has secured himself a secure capital. We can just reduce and not eliminate the general poverty of Latvian students, only if the whole nation helps in this work of love. .. A special obligation to help poor students is to be imposed on all those who at the time of study themselves had received the grant to help in need [8].» One of the biggest patrons of the 20th century, a member of RLS *Kristaps Morbergs* (1844–1928), who had privately studied with the Riga Polytechnicum teaching staff, was redeemed from the New Year's visits [9]. He was a generous patron, and in his Will he left all his fortune to students' scholarships, which, thanks to him, are still granted.

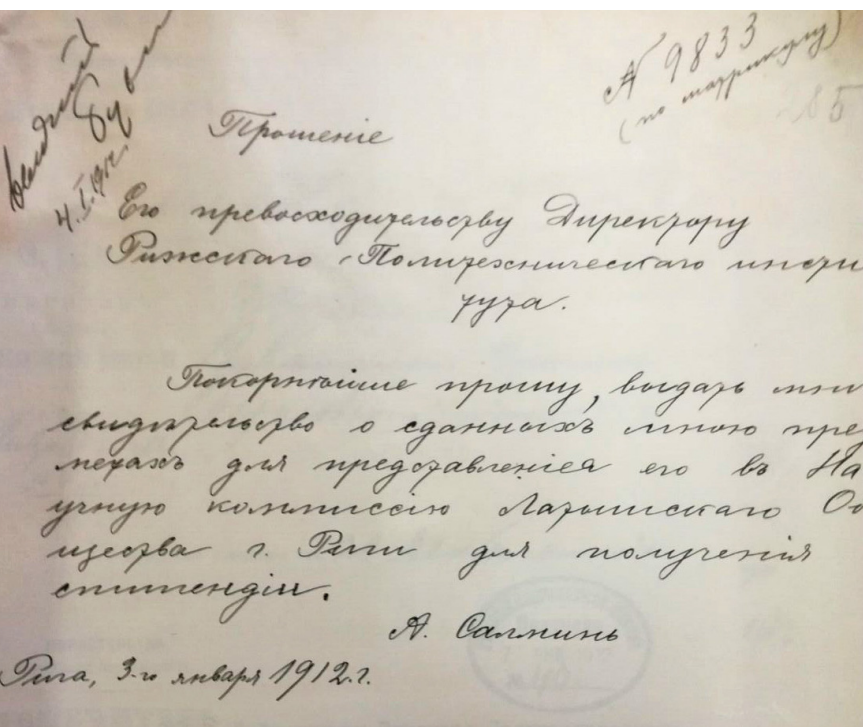


Figure 2. Letter of request from the Student of the Department of Commerce *Alfrēds Salmiņš* to the director of the RPI to certify that he is studying for submission to the RLS Knowledge Commission. 3 January 1912 [10].

When awarding scholarships, the RLS Knowledge Commission took into consideration the success of the students, and each study had to be documented. In addition, a large advantage in awarding of scholarships was the publications of students on the Latvian life, culture, history, as well as participation the work in the newspaper «*Baltijas Vēstnesis*» («Baltic Messenger»). By supporting student activity of writing, the Knowledge Commission hoped that it would be an incentive

to collaboration with each other. For example, in 1891, the Commission decided to pay 30 rubles to two students of the Department of Engineering of the Riga Polytechnicum – *Mārtiņš Bīmanis* (1864–1946) for collecting Latvian sayings and proverbs, and *Kārlis Graudiņš* (1863–1915) for the collection of Latvian beliefs [3].

There were also scholarships funded by such persons as *Fridrihs Lazdiņš*, *Jānis Meņģelis* un *Jānis Subra*. They did not have to be repaid as they earned interest from the capital of these persons. Such scholarships were also received by engineering students. For example, in 1901 the *Subra* Scholarship was awarded to a student of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. This can be read both in the documents of the Society and in the press. In Latvian newspapers, information was provided on the number of RLS scholarships and students seeking benefits, as well as the decisions to whom they were given. At the beginning of 1901, 106 students from different universities applied for financial support; the total amount was about 5000 rubles. The Commission of Student Aid's Society of the Knowledge Commission decided to allocate 575 rubles to RPI students who applied for grants during the first half of the year [11]. Sometimes scholarships and grants were awarded to Latvians who had already graduated. In 1910, the *Meņģeļa* Scholarship for agricultural studies abroad, was given to the agronomist, graduate of the Department of Agriculture (1908) of RPI, *Jānis Vārsbergs* (1879–1961) [12].

Ansis Grīnbergs (1880–1930), a graduate of the Department of Engineering (1910) of RPI, Director of the Riga State Technical University (1920–1930), could not receive family support during his studies – his father was dead, and the young man took care of himself. In his autobiography he wrote that he received a scholarship from the RLS Knowledge Commission for almost all of his studies, but in summer he had earned money for both pedagogical work and practical work on railway [13].

The number of applications for scholarships and grants was usually higher than the ability of RLS to grant them. For example, on October 1900, scholarships were awarded to 102 students with a total of 1800 rubles. The Society received applications from 105 students, who in total wanted to receive 5079 rubles [14]. At the beginning of 1903, 18 RPI students asked for grants. Latvians also attended higher education institutions in Zurich, Moscow, Tartu, and St. Petersburg; therefore, the total number of applications for grants was 91 [6]. The applications were reviewed twice a year – in the first quarter and in autumn. Students confirmed in writing that they had received the money and will repay it [15].

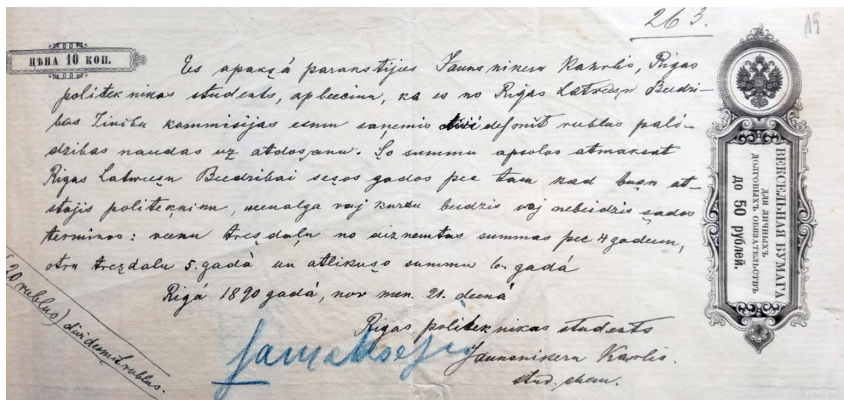


Figure 3. Student Kārlis Jaunsnīķeris' statement about the receipt of 20 rubles and a pledge to repay them. 21 November 1890 [15].

The management of the Riga Polytechnic Institute had to confirm that the particular person was really studying. For example, on September and October 1911 such certificates were received by Jānis Levans, brothers Artūrs and Oskars Ozols, Kārlis Skalbe, Ernests Snīķeris, and Jānis Vilks [16].

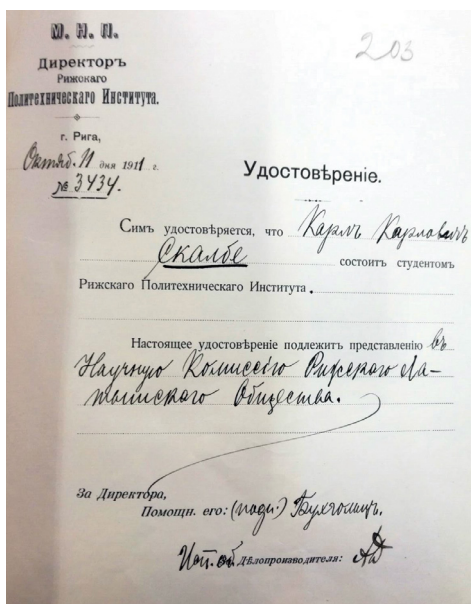


Figure 4. Certificate issued by the RLS Knowledge Commission to the student of the Department of Agriculture of RPI Kārlis Skalbe. Copy, 11 October 1911 [16].

In the context of the revolution of 1905, the RPI was temporarily closed, and the RLS at the beginning of 1905 awarded fewer scholarships to Rigans. Only those who were awarded a permanent scholarship received it. Some scholarship applicants were against this, as they did

not receive award because of the closure of the university. They wrote a letter addressed to RLS Knowledge Commission and sent it to the newspaper «*Dienas Lapa*» («Day Page») for publication. The letter says that «it is not a scholarship in the full sense of its word, but only a loan, which, like every debt, has to be returned, and nobody will intentionally get into debt [17].» Although the studies had to be stopped, students did not cut their expenses – they had to pay rent for the apartment and buy food and clothing. Part of the wealthiest student went to study to other universities, uncertain of when the studies will be resumed at RPI. Uncertainty, obviously, also dominated at the RLS Knowledge Commission.

Only part of the students who received scholarships and grants worked at RLS, therefore some members of the Society raised objections regarding supporting students who had not joined the Society. Although in the second half of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century people were active participants in various societies, students had to pay membership fees when they joined the RLS, and not everyone could afford it. Forcing to work at RLS was not ethical either. One of the graduates of the RPI, chemist *Spricis Paegle* (1876–1962), considered that scholarship money was public money and he could serve the people even if he was not a member of the RLS [18]. As a result, there was no requirement for students to join the Society, but despite that many students joined the society during or after studies, and as graduate engineers, participated in the work of the RLS.

Participation of engineers in the work of the Knowledge Commission of the Riga Latvian Society

The work of the RLS Knowledge Commission was mainly related to the collection and promotion of Latvian folklore and ethnographic materials, the study of the Latvian language and literature, the creation of Latvian terminology and orthography. In most cases these were areas, which involved professionals with a humanitarian background. But there is always someone who, besides his bread job, is interested in some kind of his non-professional work. Among them were the graduate engineers and graduate students from Latvia. Some of the former students of RP / RPI were involved in the study of the history of Latvia, and their contribution is significant – they have made a significant contribution to the work of the RLS Knowledge Commission.

They are engineers, economists, and agronomists who obtained RP / RPI diplomas at the end of the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of them are also well-known public employees,

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whose names are still mentioned in various studies. One of them is the social worker and publicist *Vilis Olavs* (till 1890s – *Vilis Plute*; 1867–1917), who joined the Society after graduating from Tartu University in 1892. He actively participated in the RLS Knowledge Commission, and was its Director (1894–1895; 1897–1899; 1912–1914), together with journalist *Fricis Kārkluvāls* (1867–1903) wrote the book «*Rīgas Latviešu Biedrība savā 25. gadu darbā un gaitā*» («The Riga Latvian Society in its 25 years of work») (1893) [19]. He was not a «polytechnician» at that time, because *V. Olavs* began his studies at the Department of Commerce of the RPI in 1899 and obtained his second degree in 1904. In RLS, he worked with colleagues who also studied or had studied at RPI. One of them was ethnographer and folklorist *Mikus Skruzītis* (also *Skruzīšu Mikus*; 1861–1905), who studied architecture in RP. *Konstantīns Pēkšēns* (1859–1928) also studied architecture and in 1885 received a RP diploma. *Aleksandrs Vanags* (1873–1919), who studied engineering and architecture, worked in the Society and, although he did not obtain an RPI diploma, became an acknowledged architect with his office in Riga. The aforementioned *K. Pēkšēns*, *V. Olavs*, *M. Skruzītis*, *A. Vanags* and a student of the Department of Architecture *Nikolajs Puriņš* (also *Puriņu Klāvs*; 1858–1935) together with other inhabitants of Riga in 1896 organized the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition at the X Archaeological Congress of Russia. The exhibition was organized by RLS, and it was the most ambitious Latvian event in the 19th century showing its culture, history and achievements. *Vilis Olavs* was called the «spirit of exhibition». He made an exhibition catalogue, which was issued by RLS in 1896. After evaluating the activities of the public worker, publisher, pastor and entrepreneur *V. Olavs* in RLS, academician, physicist, historian of science and Honorary Member of the RTU *Jānis Stradiņš* concluded that the organization of the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition was the apogee of *V. Olavs'* activity and in «Riga Latvian Society and Lateonistics in general [20].»

Materials for the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition were collected by the RLS Knowledge Commission from various regions of Latvia. Altogether 11 expeditions took place, the participants of which were to collect household appliances and tool sets, to observe people's lives and customs, taking pictures of them all. Old dwellings and residents in old clothes were drawn. It is known that on one of such expeditions in the summer of 1894 went student of the Department of Agriculture of RPI *Krišjānis Zīverts* (1870–1944) [21]. He went on expedition along the eastern coast of the Gulf of Riga to the present border of Estonia. It should be noted that *K. Zīverts* graduated from RPI in 1901, obtaining a diploma of agronomist.

The Chairman of the RLS Knowledge Commission was also Head of the Department of Technical Chemistry (1895) of RP *Mikelis Bružis*

(1868–1941), who took this post in 1915 and held it until 1918 [22]. *M. Bružis* also actively participated in the Latvian Art Promotion Society and was its Chairman, promoted art of to the Latvian people and together with his contemporaries organized art exhibitions. He was one of the participants in the Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918 and – like other Latvians and members of the RLS – he was a patriot of the Latvian state and the Latvian people until the end of his life.

A graduate of the Department Engineering (1894) of RP, *Jānis Rīteris* (1867–1945), whose interests included not only building of houses, but also cultural issues, also had worked in the Knowledge Committee. Many engineers had such interests, but *J. Rīteris'* merit is his work on developing closer relationships between the neighbouring nations of Latvia and Lithuania [23]. Thanks to him, on July 1924, the first Latvian-Lithuanian Convergence Congress took place in Riga, and the Society of Latvian-Lithuanian Union Society was active. Its Chairman (1921–1940) was *Jānis Rīteris* – a man who paid tribute to the Latvian folk traditions and whose collection of folk songs was included in «*Latvju dainas*», but riddles were issued in a special collection.

Several «polytechnicians» actively participated in the RLS Knowledge Commission. For example, former RP / RPI students who did not receive a university diploma: the librarian of the commission was the aforementioned journalist *Kārlis Graudiņš*, while the secretary (1906–1912) was *Jūlijs Benšons* (1873–1949).

RP / RPI students and graduates, both as listeners and as rapporteurs, participated in the meetings of the Knowledge Commission during the evening and summer meetings. For example, at the summer meeting of the RLS Knowledge Commission on 13 June 1901, the report «*Pārskats par tehnisku literatūru no 1889. līdz 1901. gadam*» («The Review of Technical Literature 1889–1901») was presented by a graduate of the Department of Mechanical Engineering (1895) of RP *Didrihs Vidbergs-Piķieris* (1864–?). The report was also published in the newspaper «*Baltijas Vēstnesis*» («Baltic Messenger») [24].

«Polytechnicians» and the Section of Valuable Books of the Riga Latvian Society

RP / RPI students and graduates, also called «polytechnicians», are closely linked with the Section of Valuable Books of the Riga Latvian Society, which was established in 1886. At the beginning, it operated under the auspices of the Knowledge Commission, from 1903 as an independent unit. Head of the Section (1897–1899) was *Vilis Olavs*, the later

graduate of the RPI (1904). The duties of an accountant (1904–1909) were executed by the graduate of the Department of Commerce (1905) *Jānis Žagata* (1867–1910), assistant treasurer (1907) was the then student of the Department of Commerce of RPI *Arturs Lūle* (1882–1941), later a well-known social worker [25].

The most prominent achievement of the Section of Valuable Books is its published books, including those written by «polytechnicians». Along with the works of Latvian and foreign writers, the Section published books in agriculture, natural sciences, construction, pedagogy and other fields. Some of them were compiled by RP / RPI students and graduate engineers, economists and agronomists.

Books written by «polytechnicians» and published (1889–1911) by the Section of Valuable Books: *Mikus Skruzītis* (1861–1905), studied at the Departments of Architecture, Technical Chemistry and Agriculture (1884–1890) – «*Sēļi, Kurzemes augšgala senči*» («Selonians, ancestors of Kurland») (1889); *Jānis Mazvērsītis* (1866–1943), graduate of the Department of Agriculture (1890) – «*Par lauku iedalīšanu*» («About the division of fields») (1892; 1902), «*Mācība par mēsliem un mēslošanu*» («Studies about manure and fertilization») (1894; 1902), «*Lopkopība*» («Cattle breeding») (1901–1903 3. sēj./3. vol.), «*Liellopi, viņu sugas, audzēšana, audzināšana un ēdināšana*» («Cattle, their breed, growing, breeding and feeding») (1908); *Kārlis Graudiņš* (1863–1915), student of the Department of Engineering (1884–1890) – «*Būves mācība*» («Construction studies») (1895); *Nikolajs Pāķis* (1860–?), graduate of the Department of Chemistry (1896) – «*Vārāma sāls: viņas svars fizioloģijā, tās ķīmiskās sastāvs un iegūšana; vietas, kur tā dabā atrodama, līdz ar paskaidrojumu par sāls slāņu izcelšanos*» («Common salt: its weight in physiology, chemical composition and extraction; places where it can be found in nature, and an explanation of the origin of the salt layers») (1987), «*Apgaismošana un apgaismojamie līdzekļi: īss pārskats, kā dažādi apgaismojamie līdzekļi un veidi cēlušies un attīstījušies*» («Lit and lighting equipment: A brief review of how different lighting tools and types originated and evolved») (1898); *Pauls Ašmanis* (1881–1952), graduate of the Department of Commerce (1911) – «*Japāna*» («Japan») (1904). *Vilis Olavs* (1867–1917), graduate of the Department of Commerce (1904) – «*Galvenie virzieni ētikā*» («Main directions in ethics») (1910; 1918 (2 sēj./3. vol.); *Kārlis Bušs* (1873– 1920), Graduate of the Department of Chemistry (1903) – «*Elektrība*» («Electricity») (1911).

Part of the issues of the Section of Valuable Books were translations. For example, in 1903, a popular work by the German chemist Lassar Cohn (1858–1922) «*Ķīmija ikdienišķā dzīvē*» («Chemistry in everyday life») was published in the Latvian language thanks to a writer and the student of the Department of Chemistry *Jānis Asaris* (1877–1908). The

graduate of the Department of Commerce (1904) *Jānis Stiprajs* (1870–1946) translated the biography by author Andrei Kamensky (*Андрей Васильевич Каменский*; 1843–1913) of an American scientist, entrepreneur and author of many technical inventions Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931), which was published in Latvian in 1892. Probably some RP / RPI students have also used some of the original papers and translations. For example, the book entitled «*Mežos un ārēs: vadonis dabas novērošanā*» («In Forests and Expanses: Guidebook on Nature Observation») (1911–1912) by Bernhard Landsberg (1856–1911) was translated from German by the student of the Department of Agriculture and later agronomist *Pēteris Murītis* (1891–1924) [26].

The Section of Valuable Books issued a series of «*Vispārīgie raksti*» («General Articles») and «*Jaunības raksti*» («Youth Articles») as well as a magazine «*Druva*» («Cornfield») (1912–1914), where the student of the Department of Chemistry *Augusts Kešāns* (1881–1954), later Professor of the University of Latvia and the State University of Latvia, one of the developers of chemistry terminology in the Latvian language in the first-half of the 20th century, was regularly published. *A. Kešāns'* article «*Uzskatu maiņa ķīmijā 20. gadu simteņa sākumā*» («Change of views in chemistry in the beginning of the 20th century») in magazine «*Druva*» No. 2 and No. 3 in 1913 is called «the first popular scientific article in the Latvian language devoted to radioactivity and imperturbability of substance and Law of conservation of energy [27].» In No. 2 and No. 3 of the magazine of 1913 a report by the graduate of the Department of Technical Chemistry (1889) of the Riga Polytechnicum, then well-known world scientist, chemist, academician Paul Walden (1863–1957), is published, which was entitled «*Par vielas pastāvības likumu*» («On Law of Persistence of Substance») and was presented at the Mendeleev's Congress on 27 December 1911. The report with the academician's permission was translated from Russian by *Augusts Kešāns*.

One of the most significant editions of the Section was the first biggest encyclopaedia in the Latvian language «Conversion Dictionary», published in 99 volumes (1904–1921)¹. This extensive work had already been published in 1891–1898 but it had not been completed and stopped at the entry: *Kristjans*. The author of the incomplete dictionary, teacher, translator, and lexicographer *Jēkabs Dravnieks* (1858–1927) gathered around himself famous scientists and writers of that time, including some «polytechnicans» – *Vilis Olavs*, *Nikolajs Puriņš*, *Mikus Skruzītis* and *Jānis Mazvērsītis*. *J. Dravnieks'* publishing house went bankrupt and «Conversion Dictionary» remained unfinished. RLS decided not to continue the dictionary that was once started, but to create a new one inviting *J. Dravnieks* to participate. From December 1902, meetings of Conversion Dictionary Steering Committee of the RLS Knowledge Commission

¹ From 1927 to 1940, 21 Volume of «Latvian Conversation Dictionary» was issued. It was published by *A. Gulbis'* publishing.

took place in which representatives of various professions took part. It was planned to complete the dictionary in six years, but it was too short for such a large volume [25]. The first book came out in 1904², the last one – in 1921. During the preparation of the dictionary, the Knowledge Commission also had a crisis that did not promote successful work. The publication of the last volume was delayed until the First World War.

Many of well-known personalities at that time were involved in the publication of the «Conversion Dictionary». Of the 99 editors and authors of the articles of «Conversion Dictionary» – 25 are former RP / RPI students, 20 of them had graduated from RP / RPI [25]. *Jānis Asaris, Pauls Ašmanis, Kārlis Graudiņš, Augusts Ķešāns, Jānis Mazvērsītis, Vilis Olavs* and *Janis Žagata* worked on the preparation of the «Conversion Dictionary». Among those who participated in preparation of «Conversion Dictionary» should also be mentioned the former graduate of the Department of Mechanical Engineering *Jūlijs Benšons* (1873–?) and the students of the Department of Engineering *Jānis Beitāns* (1882–1966) and *Jānis Pauļevskis* (1872–1922), as well as graduates of the Department of Commerce *Ernests Birkhāns* (graduated in 1896; 1872–1941), *Gothards* (also *Gotards*) *Krūmiņš* (1907; 1880–?) and *Vilis Vītols* (1908; 1879–1973); graduates of the Department of Technical Chemistry *Arvīds Kalniņš* (graduated in 1916; 1894–1981), *Kārlis Neimanis* (1909; 1884–1945), *Mārtiņš Prīmanis* (1908; 1878–1950) and *Kārlis Vidiņš* (1893; 1865–1909); graduates of the Department of Engineering *Jūlijs Kornets* (graduated in 1908; 1871–1968) and *Mārtiņš Robs* (1898; 1874–1947); graduates of the Department of Architecture *Eižens Laube* (graduated in 1906; 1880–1967), *Augusts Malvess* (1906; 1878–1951) and *Mārtiņš Nukša* (1908; 1878–1942); graduates of the Department of Agriculture *Paulis Lejiņš* (graduated in 1907; 1883–1959) and *Pēteris Sauleskalns* (1908; 1876–1975), graduate of the Department of Mechanical Engineering *Didrihs Vidbergs-Piķieris* (graduated in 1895; 1864–?). *A. Ķešāns, E. Birkhāns, A. Kalniņš, E. Laube, P. Lejiņš, A. Malvess, M. Prīmanis, M. Robs* and *V. Vītols* worked as lecturers at the University of Latvia.

Two of them – *Arvīds Kalniņš* and *Paulis Lejiņš* – became academicians after the Second World War. The agronomist, animal husbandry specialist, politician and professor of the University of Latvia *P. Lejiņš* was the first President of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia (1946–1951). His oldest brother and godfather, *Kārlis Morics Lejiņš* (1858–1920), was a doctor, the first Chairman of the Latvian Medical Association (1902–1903), and worked at RLS [28]. He worked as a radiologist and physical therapist in Riga. The office of *K. M. Lejiņš* was next to the RLS building. In 1902, on their own initiative, Latvian doctors established the Medical Department at the RLS Knowledge Commission. Both brothers *Lejiņš* were RLS members.

² Literature also refers to December 1903 [see reference No. 25, 174 p.].

In the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, the RLS Section of Valuable Books was the centre of national publishing [27]. The aim of the Section was to disseminate knowledge necessary in life to public. It paid great attention to science by publishing books in various fields [25]. The «polytechnicians» were important contributors in this blessed work by educating in cattle farming and engineering sciences such as architecture, electrical engineering, chemistry, and mechanics.

Department of Industry of Riga Latvian Society and engineers with the diploma acquired in Riga

Several commissions operated at RLS: Knowledge, Linguistics, History, Philately, Numismatics, and others. In 1901, the Department of Industry of RLS was established, whose mission was to «provide and disseminate knowledge relevant for Latvian craftsmen and industry through articles, performances, etc. [24].» The Latvian technical intelligence participated in its formation. The details of its activities are fragmentary, but at the beginning of the 20th century the Department did great work, which later, apparently, subsided or reflected in the activities of other Departments.

Head of the Department of Industry was the architect, graduate of RPI (1885) *Konstantīns Pēkšēns*, the duties of Secretary and Archivist were carried out by architect, former RPI student *Aleksandrs Vanags*, and later by the graduate of the Department of Technical Chemistry (1901) of RPI *Spricis Paegle*, the duties of the editor of the articles were assigned to the former student of the Department of Architecture *Nikolajs Puriņš*. In the Board of the Department there were the following «polytechnicians» – the graduate of the Department of Commerce (1895) and active member of the RLS *Jānis Meilands* (1869–1928) was a Cashier; lectures were presented by the graduate of the Department of Commerce of RPI (1898) *Zāmuels Gustavs* (1868–1904), who worked as an accountant at *Berga* Bazaar with Latvian contractor and landlord *Kristaps Bergs* (1843–1907). By the way, *K. Bergs*, one of the founders and speakers of the RLS, was Deputy Head of the Department.

On 25 January 1902, the Department looked back at the accomplishments of the first year of operation. In 1901, 58 RLS members of the Department of Industry has had five monthly meetings, eight management meetings, and has presented five lectures prepared by the former students of the RP / RPI: *Nikolajs Puriņš* – on industry in Riga and the participation of Latvians in it and on the natural development of industry; *Didrihs Vidbergs-Piķieris* – on power machines in small industries;

Spricis Paegle – on the processing of potatoes in industry; *Aleksandrs Vanags* – on technical terms in Latvian language [29].

From the information in press about the meeting of the Department of Industry held on 7 February 1903, information can be obtained about the operation of the Department of Industry in 1902: six monthly meetings and 11 management meetings were held; in May, a tour of *M. Pagasts'* wood processing factory was organized. In each of the monthly meetings, reports were presented, altogether – six. Two reports on roof coverings were prepared by architect *Aleksandrs Vanags*, but the student of the Department of Engineering and later a graduate of RPI (1908) *Pēteris Bērziņš* (1875–1951), talked about buildings. In February 1903, *A. Vanags* presented a report on modern style, presumably – in architecture [30].

On 24 April 1903, architect *K. Pēkšēns* referred to the historic development of the issue of labourers and new foreign companies aiming to raise workers' well-being. In turn, the former student of the Department of Engineering (1892–1902) of the RP / RPI *Jānis Pauļevskis* (1872–1922) talked about reinforced concrete structures using drawings and lectures by Professor of RP / RPI *Otto Conrad* (1866–1919) [31].

The paper by engineer *P. Bērziņš* about the serpula lacrymans in buildings, as well as the chemist *Spricis Paegle's* report on the industrial processing and use of potatoes and the presentation by *Jānis Pauļevskis* about reinforced concrete constructions, were published in the collection of articles of the Department of Industry in 1905 [32]. When getting acquainted with the reports published in the collection of articles, it is concluded that the reports were well prepared. The engineering technologist *S. Paegle* described the industrial processing and use of potatoes on 32 pages. The publication contains information on starch, starch sugar, dextrin, syrup and alcohol and their production from potatoes.



Figure 5. Title page of the collection of articles of the Department of Industry of RLS (1905) [32].

Innovations, as well as various improvements, were demonstrated at the gathering of the Department of Industry. For example in 1905, an electric lamp was demonstrated in the Department, in the construction of which a sample of the bulb constructed by the German physical-chemist Walter Hermann Nernst (1864–1941) was taken. The Department wanted to establish a craft school where craftsmen could acquire theoretical knowledge. Due to various reasons, the idea could not be realized, therefore it was decided to establish and maintain craft courses. There was a lot of interest about the work of the Department, there were many requests for advice from many people who were not members of the RLS and the Department. Various advice and information on the latest findings and suggestions for industry could be obtained in the Library of Department of Industry, which hired a librarian. Readers had access to around 20 different press releases, including foreign ones, as well as books.

Funding for library maintenance and other activities of the Department came from membership fees and donations, and significant support was also provided by the *Vidzeme* reciprocal credit union [30]. The Department of Industry attempted at attracting the industry workers. For example, in 1907, Secretary of the Department *Spricis Paegle* asked the Convention of «*Selonija*» to find out the number and addresses of the industrialists in order to invite them to various joint events [33]. The list of the Department of Industry shows that manufacturers, tradsmen and businessmen not only attended different events, but were also members of the RLS Department of Industry. Famous businessmen *Kristaps Morbergs* (1844–1928) and *Kristaps Bergs* (1843–1907), as well as less-known entrepreneurs *Jānis Brigaders* (1956–1936) and *Jēkabs Rozevskis* (1861–1932) who had not studied at RP / RPI, the graduate of the Department of Agriculture (1891) of RPI *Ansis Frišmanis* (1867–1940s), former student *Fridrihs Zommers* (from 1940 – *Vasarietis*; 1981–1972), and others were in the list [34].

For various reasons, the activities of the Department of Industry subsided and did not go on during the First World War. It is known that the Department did not resume its work after the war and did not operate until 1940 when, due to the loss of independence of the Republic of Latvia, the RLS was temporarily closed.

Conclusions

Riga Technical University, in the very beginning – RP, then RPI, and RLS were founded in the 1860s with a difference of six years. Both institutions had common tasks, objectives, and together they had carried out various activities. The study provides insight into the contribution of students

and graduates of the University of the 19th century to the RLS, and their involvement in the implementation of the Society's tasks. Collaboration between the two institutions continues in the 21st century, and during the preparation for the 150th anniversary of the Society the list of its members revealed that also nowadays, graduate engineers and RTU employees are involved in the work of the RLS and in implementation of its goals.

The article mentions the names of many «polytechnicians» who worked in the RLS. Although the task of the article was not to identify all the members of the society who were «polytechnicians», some interesting facts were revealed during the study. In the list of members of the RLS were such personalities as: the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, graduate of the Department of Commerce (1911) of RPI *Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics* (1887–1925); Latvian Naval Commander, Admiral, graduate of the Department of Mechanical Engineering (1914) *Teodors Spāde* (1891–1970); Minister of Agriculture (1928; 1930–1931; 1931–1933), Minister of Education (1933–1934), Minister of the Interior (1934–1939), graduate of the Department of Agriculture (1914) of the RPI *Vilis Gulbis* (1890–1942); Latvian Prime Minister (1923), Minister of Transport (1921–1925), graduate of the Department of Engineering (1892) of RP *Jānis Pauļuks* (1865–1937); Colonel of the Latvian Army *Reinis Stučka* (1882–1938) [35], who had not yet finished commercial studies; and several other well-known engineers.

RP / RPI students also participated in other RLS commissions, such as the Theatre Commission. The student of the Department of Engineering *Kārlis Graudiņš* published in the newspaper «*Baltijas Vēstnesis*» («Baltic Messenger») a research on the development of RLS theatre and plays staged in the House of the Society [36]. A comic play in three acts «*Lielkungu pusdienas*» («Dinner of Great Lords») by the student of the Department of Architecture *Nicholajs Puriņš* was published by the RLS Theatre Commission in 1889. Plays for RLS theatre were translated and adapted by former student *Mikus Skruzītis*. The graduate of the Department of Agriculture (1889) of RP, an agronomist, Professor of the University of Latvia *Jānis Bergs* (1863–1927) is known as the author of books and articles on crop farming and cultivation. He also wrote stories, plays, and couplets, and translated literary works and various articles. *J. Bergs* also was an actor of the Riga Latvian Theatre and wrote theatre reviews [37] in the newspaper «*Baltijas Vēstnesis*».

The graduate of the Department of Architecture (1907) of RPI *Artūrs Krūmiņš* (1879–1969), being still a student, in 1903 participated in the RLS opera libretto competition, and received the award of RLS Department of Music [38]. In the history of music, *A. Krūmiņš* became known as the author of the libretto of the first Latvian opera «*Baņuta*», composed by *Alfrēds Kalniņš* (1879–1951).

Collaboration between the RLS and members of corporations was also apparent at the traditional Latvian cultural event that was important for Latvians – the Latvian Song Festival. Thus the fillisters of the «*Selonija*» and «*Talavija*» student corporations founded by the «poly-technicians» and the «*Lettonia*» founded in Tartu, and the fillisters of the «*Fraternitas Moscoviensis*» founded in Moscow in June 1910, ensured the order during the 5th Nationwide Latvian Song Festival. The fillister of «*Selonija*», RPI graduate (1908) architect *Ernests Pole* (1872–1910) was the author of the design of the Concert Hall of the Song Festival in Riga [39]. *E. Pole* together with the graduate of the RPI *Eižens Laube*, a fillister of «*Selonija*» too, designed the rebuilding of the RLS House in 1908.

On 14 December 1900, the RLS premises were the place where the foundation of the second Latvian student corporation «*Talavija*» in Riga was initiated [40]. One of the founders of the new student corporation was *Vilis Olavs*. He was a fillister of the Latvian student corporation «*Lettonia*» (founded in 1870), joining it while studying in Tartu.

At the end of 1918, during the freedom fights of Latvia, students decided to participate. On 20 December, the Student Division was established. Many former RPI students joined in. Military training for the Student Division (of men) took place in the Hall of the RLS [41].

The RLS helped RP / RPI students and graduates financially by awarding grants or scholarships, and by organising events strengthening their feelings of citizenship and patriotism, interest in national traditions and culture, thus providing the opportunity to try forces not only in the professional field. RLS was and is a place for people to meet after studies or work and to spend quality time. Collaboration of both institutions will continue.

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The role of the Riga Latvian Society in the life of students and graduates of the Riga Polytechnicum / Riga Polytechnic Institute (1862–1919)



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Rīgas Latviešu biedrības loma Rīgas Politehnikuma / Rīgas Politehniskā institūta studentu un absolventu (1862–1919) dzīvē

Rīgas Latviešu biedrība (RLB) ir vecākā latviešu organizācija pasaulē, kurā darbojušies vecākās augstskolas Latvijas teritorijā – Rīgas Politehnikuma (RP), no 1896. gada – Rīgas Politehniskā institūta (RPI) – studenti, absolventi, mācībspēki. Biedrības un tās biedru aktivitātes bijušas dažādas un daudzveidīgas, dažādi ir arī to rezultāti. Nākamībai saglabājušās latviešu sastādītās un tulkotās grāmatas, apzinātās tautas vēstures un kultūras vērtības, izaudzinātās patriotiskās un latviskās jaunās paaudzes. Iespēju robežās atbalstīti trūcīgie studenti, dodot iespēju sasniegt izvēlētos mērķus un dot ieguldījumu Latvijas ekonomiskajai un valstiskajai izaugsmei, kultūrai, izglītībai. Sagaidot RLB 150 gadu jubileju, apzināta biedrības un RP / RPI studentu, absolventu un mācībspēku sadarbība līdz 1919. gadam.

Atslēgas vārdi: stipendijas studentiem, RLB Zinību komisija, «politehniķi» un Rīgas Latviešu biedrība.

Алида Зигмунде, Майя Поземковска

Роль Рижского латышского общества в жизни студентов и выпускников Рижского политехникума / Рижского политехнического института (1862–1919)

Рижское латышское общество – старейшая организация латышей в мире. В деятельности общества участвовали студенты, выпускники, преподаватели старейшего вуза на территории Латвии – Рижского политехникума (РП), с 1896 года – Рижского политехнического института (РПИ). Деятельность общества и ее членов была разнообразной и их результаты различны. Для будущих поколений сохранились изданные и переведенные латышами книги, известные национальные исторические и культурные ценности, воспитаны новые поколения патриотических латышей. В пределах возможностей общество поддерживало бедных студентов, что позволяло им достичь своих избранных целей и способствовать экономическому и национальному развитию, культуре и образованию в Латвии. Накануне 150-летней годовщины Рижского латышского общества было проведено исследование о сотрудничестве общества и студентов, выпускников и преподавателей РП / РПИ до 1919 года.

Ключевые слова: стипендии для студентов, Комиссия знаний Рижского латышского общества, «политехники» и Рижское латышское общество.