



SUMMARY

International Forum of National Libraries
of the Baltic States *LiLaEst 2026*

Cultural mapping: identity shifts and transformations

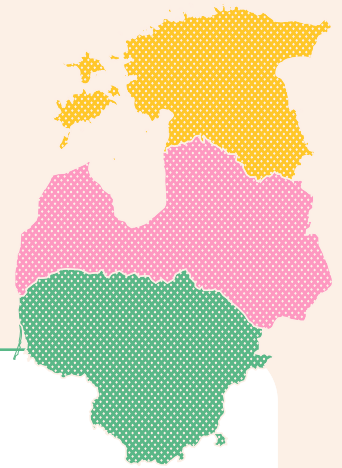
Baltic National Libraries Meet in Lithuania

On 10-12 June 2026, the national libraries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia gathered in Kretinga for the Baltic seminar *LiLaEst 2026*. This year's meeting focused on cultural memory, identity, and resilience in today's geopolitical context. Discussions highlighted the essential role national libraries play in preserving authentic heritage, strengthening democratic resilience, and helping societies navigate complex information environments. The seminar reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation and the people who carry this mission forward.

Full English report



Voices from the Baltic National Libraries



Lithuania (Host Country)

Aušrinė Žilinskienė

Director General, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

"Hosting *LiLaEst 2026* in Lithuania this year was especially meaningful – at a time when cultural memory and historical understanding are not only professional matters but also questions of national resilience. Each participant contributed to strengthening how our societies connect with their heritage and interpret it today. I'm grateful to our colleagues from Latvia and Estonia for their insights, openness, and the shared responsibility we all carry home"



Latvia

Dagnija Baltiņa

Director General, National Library of Latvia

"*LiLaEst* has become a strong ritual among the national libraries of the Baltics. By the continued cooperation, coming together, sharing, discussing, singing, enjoying the momentum, we bring forward our sisterhood and strengthen the role of national libraries in the Baltics. I thank our Lithuanian colleagues for hosting the *LiLaEst 2026* this year! And I am looking forward to meeting us all again in *LiLaEst 2028* in Estonia!"



Estonia

Martin Öövel

Director General, National Library of Estonia

"The National Library of Estonia cherishes the continuation of the *LiLaEst* tradition. Since 1968, this format of bringing Baltic national libraries together has succeeded in building personal networks and trust between our institutions. The results are best demonstrated by real cooperation projects and ongoing discussions on how to best preserve and protect our mutual Baltic and European cultural heritage".





Key Themes and Insights from LiLaEst 2026



Understanding the Role of Cultural Memory

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aurimas Švedas highlighted how presentism and the fast pace of modern life weaken our connection to the past and future. He emphasized that history and memory are increasingly used as tools for political and media narratives, making it essential to strengthen society's ability to interpret the past critically. **This underscores the role of national libraries as trusted institutions that preserve authentic sources and help the public navigate complex historical interpretations.**



Heritage Research and Public Engagement

Dr. Jolanta Budriūnienė stressed that artifacts and archival materials do not speak for themselves – they must be presented in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences. She underlined the importance of making academic heritage research accessible and relevant, especially in times of geopolitical uncertainty. **National libraries therefore function as mediators between heritage and society, ensuring that historical knowledge remains meaningful and understandable.**



Interpreting Cultural Data

Anda Baklāne from the National Library of Latvia spoke about the need to help the public understand cultural data. She pointed to curated exhibitions and thematic displays as the most effective tools for creating meaningful cultural narratives. **This highlights national libraries' responsibility to interpret data, contextualize collections, and support informed public understanding.**



Literature as Identity

Greete Veessalu, curator of digital cultural heritage at the National Library of Estonia, noted that literature can become a powerful tool for shaping identity. She illustrated this point by presenting the story of the literary hero from the short story "The Avenger" (Tasuja, 1880) by the Estonian writer Eduard Bornhöhe. The hero has been used for both cultural and marketing purposes under various political regimes and eventually became established as a symbol of national identity. **National libraries play a key role in sustaining these narratives and ensuring they remain part of the living identity of their nations.**



Cultural Resilience in Wartime

Oksana Brui, Deputy Director General of the Yaroslav Mudryi National Library of Ukraine and President of the Ukrainian Librarians' Association, emphasized that the work of public libraries in wartime is not only about preserving documentary heritage. They are often the only space in communities that serve as a hub for information exchange, social interaction, and emotional relief: from bibliotherapy to animal-assisted activities. **Ukraine's example reminds us that cultural heritage and the information space are an integral part of national security.**





Looking Ahead



The *LiLaEst* tradition, now spanning 58 years, continues to strengthen regional cooperation and shared cultural understanding. This year's discussions reaffirmed that national libraries play a vital role in preserving authentic heritage, supporting democratic resilience, and helping societies navigate complex information environments. The next, jubilee *LiLaEst* meeting will take place in Estonia in 2028.

