



National Library of Latvia, Riga
(Castle of Light)
Andris Vilks, Director

The National Library of Latvia

- **The National Library of Latvia (NLL)** – a universal scientific research library; the national cultural institution of importance under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia;
- **Mission** – to promote a free and inventive usage of the national cultural and scientific heritage so as to foster education, research, the development of knowledge and the quality of life;
- **The NLL cooperates with many libraries, organizations and institutions** (IFLA, CENL, CDNL, CERL, EBLIDA, LIBER, Bibliotheca Baltica, UNESCO, etc.;) in Latvia and in the world with the aim of sharing professional experience and knowledge;
- **Collection** – 4,5 million units.

The main roles of the NLL

- **Providing access** to all analogue and digital publications in Latvia, Latvian and about Latvia;
- **Collecting and promoting** national documentary heritage;
- **Ensuring data organization** and **quality control** on a national level;
- **Making a marketing policy** for better access and usability of information resources;
- **Ensuring preservation** of analogue and digital resources;
- **Cooperating with different memory institutions** on a national and international level.

History and context

- **The NLL was founded in 29 August, 1919;**
- Since 1919, the NLL has been located in about 30 buildings. **Currently the library is located in 6 buildings including 1 repository;**
- **The first discussions on a new NLL building began back in 1926-1928.** They continued before and after the Second World War, and came close to realization in the 1960s-70s when the present site was selected and the first sketches materialised;
- The library of Schola Carolina/Lyceum Rigensis, 1675 – one of the cornerstones of the State or National Library.

Schola Carolina/Lyceum Rigensis

- Moulding or relief on the facade in Riga, Mazā Smilšu Street.



The Imperial Lyceum Rigensis

Vidzeme Provincial Gymnasium



The Latvian State or National Library

in Riga, 2 Pils laukums (1919 – 1959)





On a way to the new library

- In 1977 architect **Modris Gelzis** (1929-2009) was chosen for the development of the State Library building project;
- In 1988 the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR adopted **a decision on constructing a new State Library building;**
- In 1989 Latvian born American architect **Gunnar Birkerts** (1925) was chosen to be the main architect for the development of the new State Library building design;
- In 1991 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia **adopts a decision on constructing a new State Library building;**
- **1998 the Support Foundation of the NLL** established (at present – the Society);
- In 1999 the 30th General Assembly of the UNESCO passed a resolution which asked the UNESCO members and the global community to support the Latvian National Library project. **An international group of experts advises and oversees the project on behalf of the UNESCO** since then;
- In 2002 the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia passed the “Law regarding the Implementation of the Latvian National Library Project”. Contracting authority
Ministry of Culture

Technical process

- The audit of the project's program and size reduction in 1995;
- Construction directorate “The New Three Brothers”;
- Program of requirements (Por) and “COWI”.

Modris Ģelzis and Gunnar Birkerts



Gunnar Birkerts

- Gunnar Birkerts (1925) is the all-time most productive and most notable Latvian born architect;
- Dozens of public buildings in U.S. And Europe were built by his designs: universities, libraries, museums, etc.;
- Birkerts highlights northern interest for organic, environmental shape, light and fine attention to architectural creation process.



The new National Library of Latvia project

**The new building
of the NLL**
(Castle of Light)

**Repository in
Silakrogs**

Project

**State Unified Library
Information Network**
(Lightnet)

Digital Library
(Lighthouse)

The new NLL building

- Most complex object to be constructed in independent Latvia;
- A modern and innovative, world-class information and cultural centre;
- Architects – Gunnar Birkerts, Modris Ģelzis and partners;
- Construction works: 2008 – 2013;
- The construction was carried out by “The National Association of Construction Companies”;
- Design and construction management supervisor: “Hill International”;
- The new NLL will open its doors on the 29th of August, 2014.

Conception

- The main storage is the core of the building;
- The arrangement of reading rooms – beginning with the general collections (from Mezzanine) and following with special collections (for example, Maps, 6th floor);
- Services for children – Children’s Literature Centre, providing a platform for discussing digital materials, animations, illustrator workshops, alphabet games, a “Storytellers chair”, a picture book theatre, interactive exhibitions, and more;

- Competence centre, Institute of Library Development;
- Public space – auditorium, exhibition halls, concert hall/conference centre, book museum;
- The readers' zone is faced to Old Town of Riga, providing marvellous view and lots of natural daylight;
- Infrastructure will be able to generate financial income – public occasions halls, restaurant, library store and parking space (in the future).

Main facts

- Space for more than 1,000 readers;
- Serving over 3,000 visitors a day;
- Free access to 350,000 publications;
- Concert hall with seats for 462 people;
- Conference centre – 400 seats;
- Mezzanine level open 24/7 (in the nearest future);
- Space for 6 million books, journals and other materials;
- 10 group study rooms (for 6-16 people);
- Individual study cabins.

- Museum of Latvian Book History;
- Exhibitions of rare books and manuscripts;
- Music room, Story room, language courses;
- Exhibition halls;
- Opportunity to watch 35 mm motion picture films;
- 360° panorama observation deck;
- Staff: 400;

- 13 Levels (including the basement);
- Construction: monolithic reinforced concrete building, covered with glass panels and stainless steel sheets;
- All wooden furniture are made in Latvia;
- Floors are made from Canadian maple tree;
- Overall area: 40,455 m²;
- Built up area: 8,590 m²;
- Height: 68 m;
- Cubic area: 263,000 m³;
- Air change rate: twice an hour;
- Library accessibility: all services available for people with limited mobility, with specially equipped work stations for the visually impaired.

















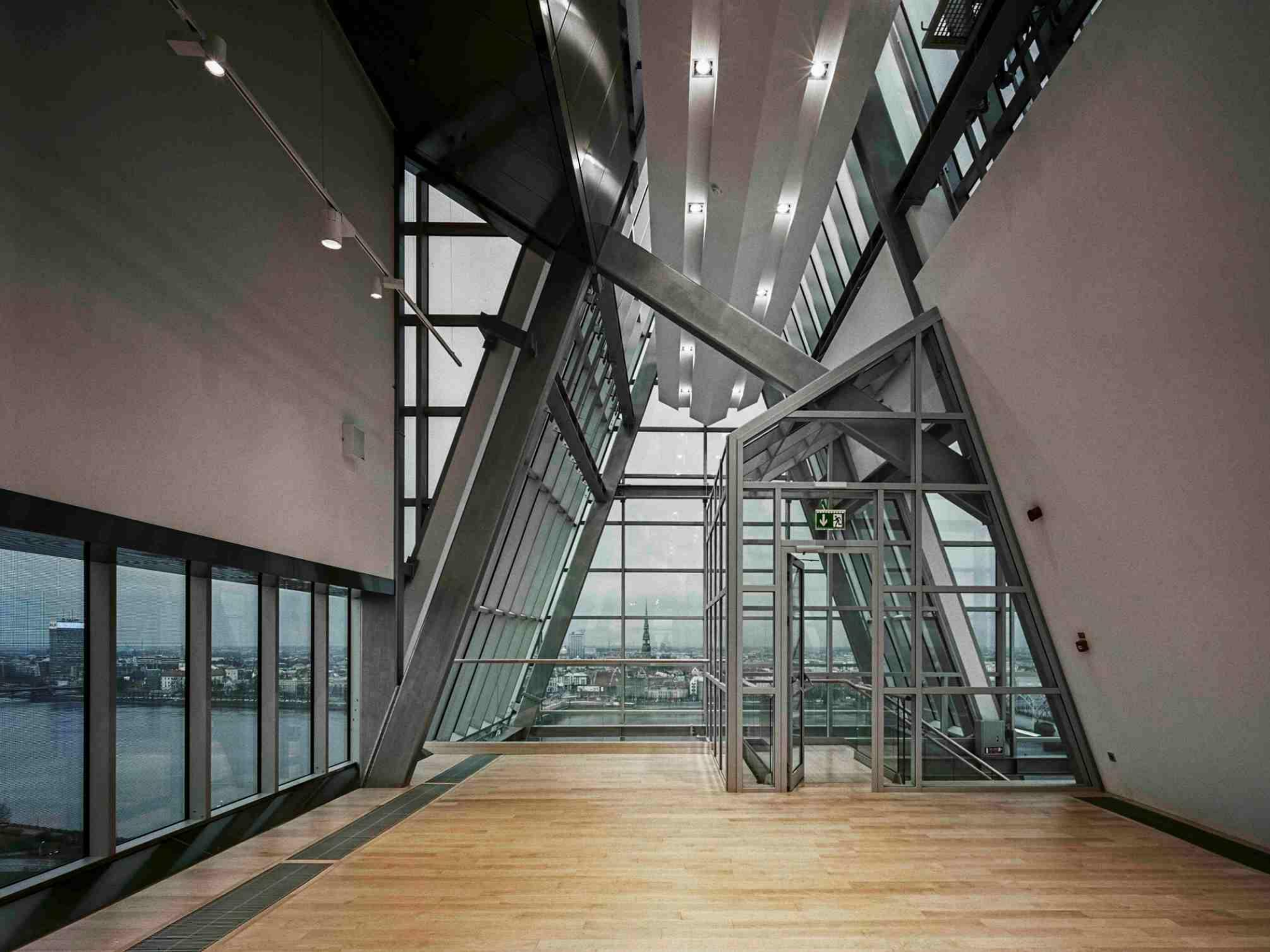




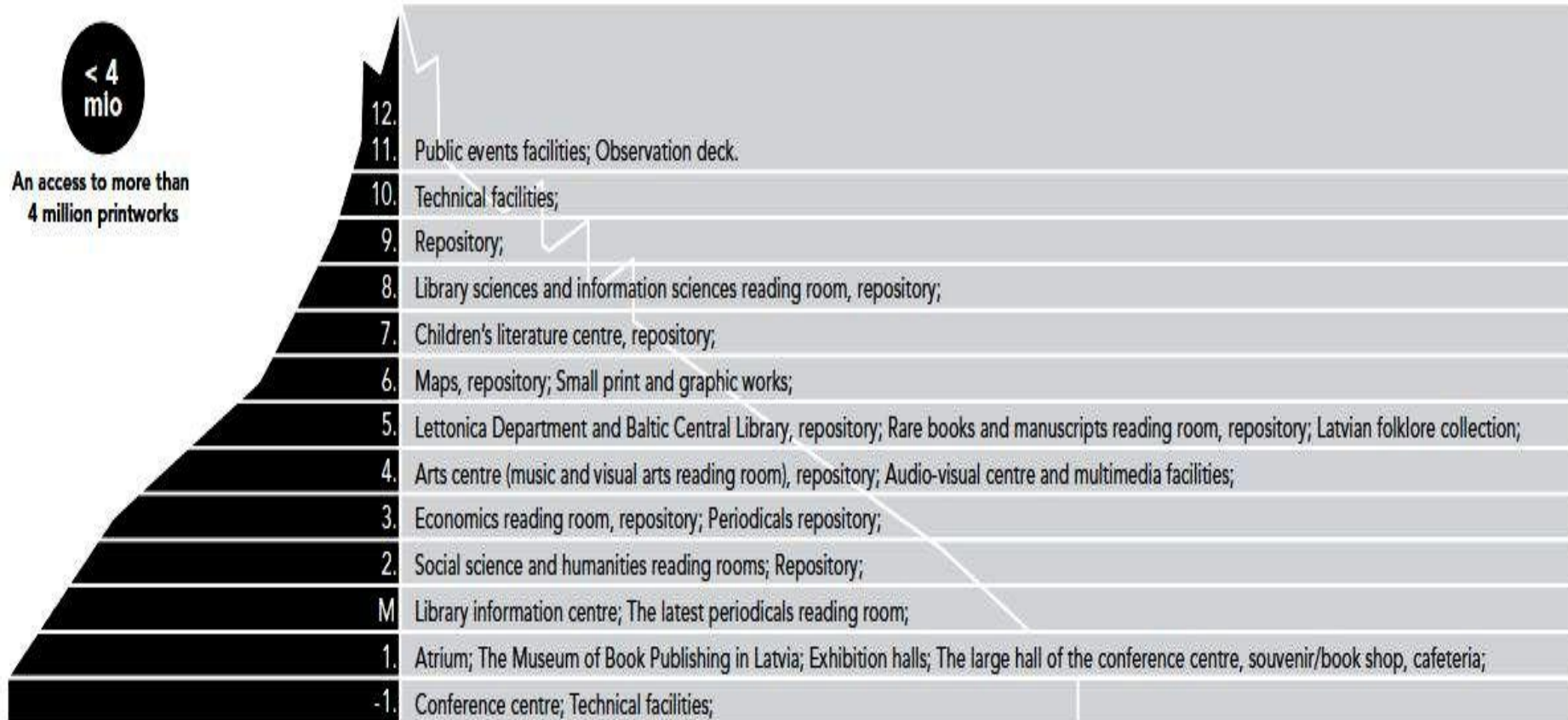








Information on the different levels





8'th floor Library sciences and informations sciences reading room

7'th floor Children's literature centre

6'th floor Small print and graphic works
Maps

5'th floor Lettonica Department and Baltic Central Library
Rare books and manuscripts reading room

4'th floor Arts and music centre

3'rd floor Economics reading room

2'nd floor Social science and humanities reading room

Mezzanine The latest periodicals reading room
Library information centre



5. STĀVS

Letonikas un Baltijas Centrālo grāmatu un rokrakstu lasītava, krātuve
Latviešu folkloras krātuve,
"Dainu skaņis"

6. STĀVS

Kartogrāfisko izdevumu lasītava
Sīkiespieddarbu un attēlizdevumu lasītava,
krātuve

7. STĀVS

Bērnu literatūras centrs,
krātuve

8. STĀVS

Bibliotēkzinātnes un
informācijas zinātnes lasītava,
krātuve

Location of the Library in the context of the historical centre of Riga

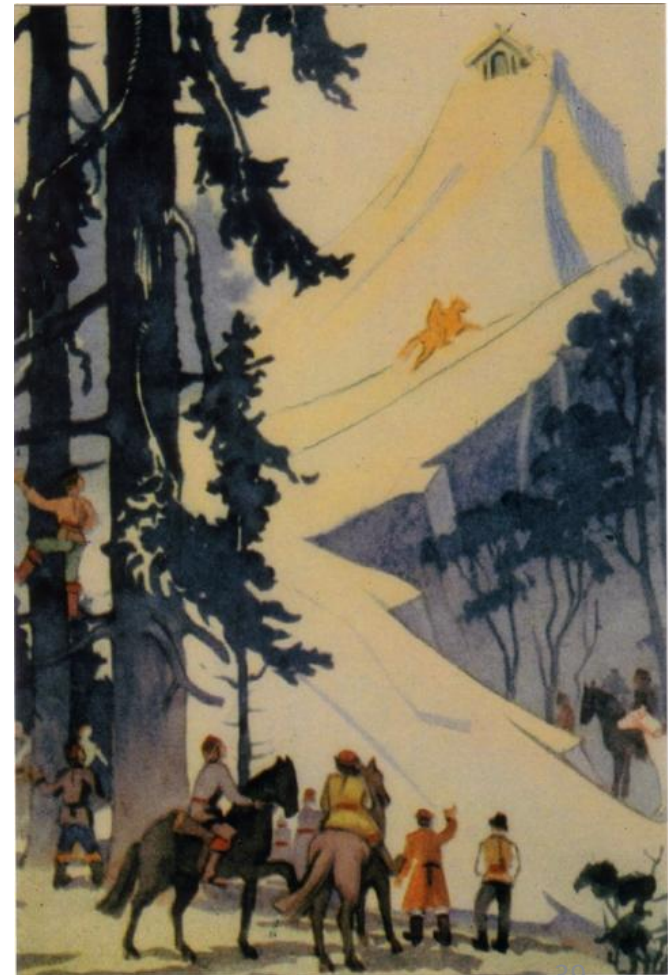


Problems

- Facade cleaning;
- Parking space;
- Bicycle parking options;
- Electricity consumption.

The Castle of Light

- Metaphors and references to Latvian folklore
 - the **glass mountain**, the symbolic **Castle of Light**:
 - Height of achievement – difficult to attain, yet full of rewards for those who make the commitment to reach its peak;
 - Wisdom that has been lost in darkness of war and invasion, but then regained by Latvian people;
- **Flexibility, light, place.**



Conclusion

- The new library building – attractive tourist destination.
- The opening of the Castle of Light in 2014 enhances the appeal of Riga and Latvia.
- The Castle of Light is a national symbol.
- The multi-functional structure that meets the needs of a modern knowledge based society.

