



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 Ģelzis** (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 m<sup>2</sup>;
- Built up area: 8,590 m<sup>2</sup>;
- Height: 68 m;
- Cubic area: 263,000 m<sup>3</sup>;
- 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.



































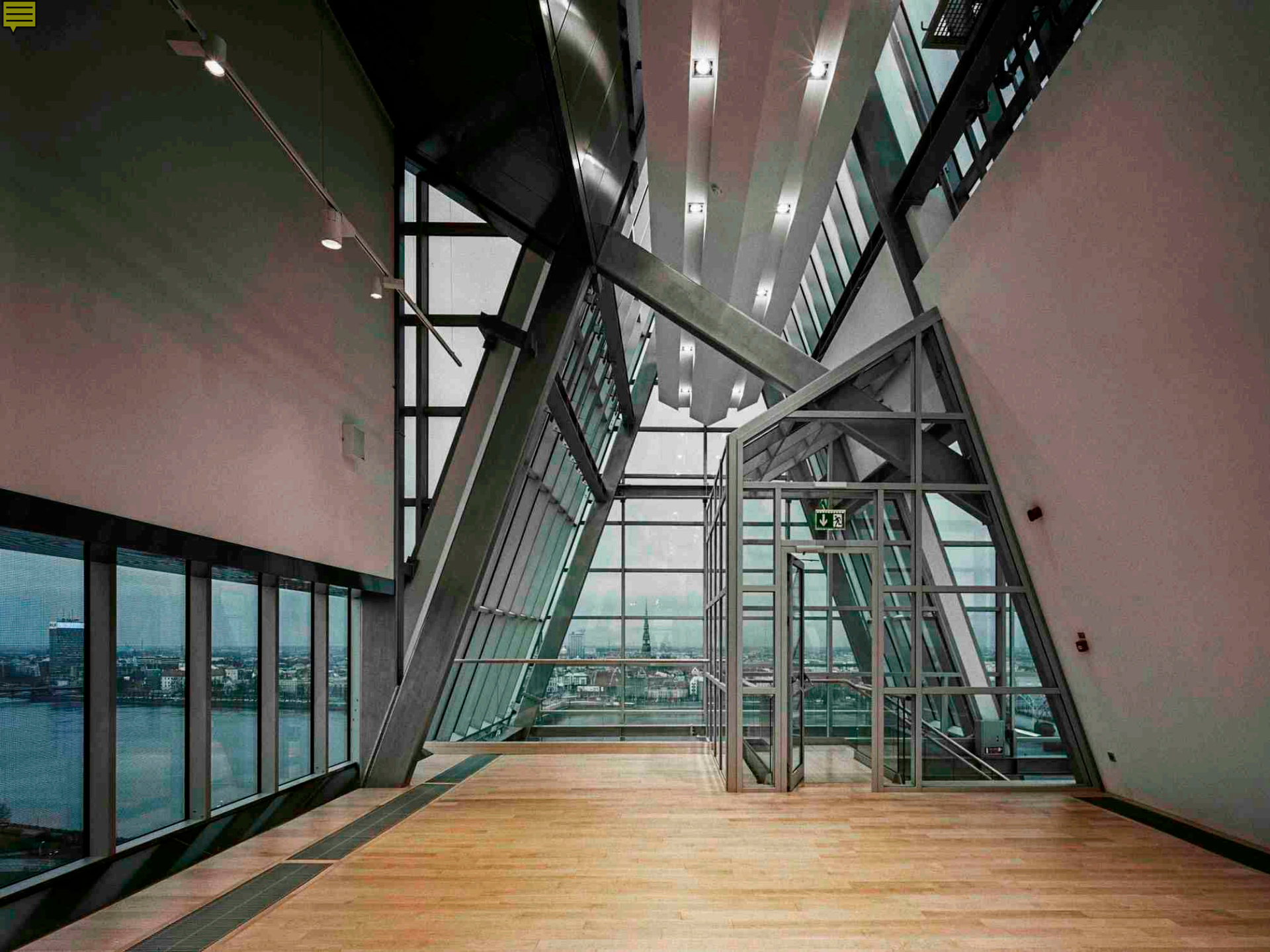




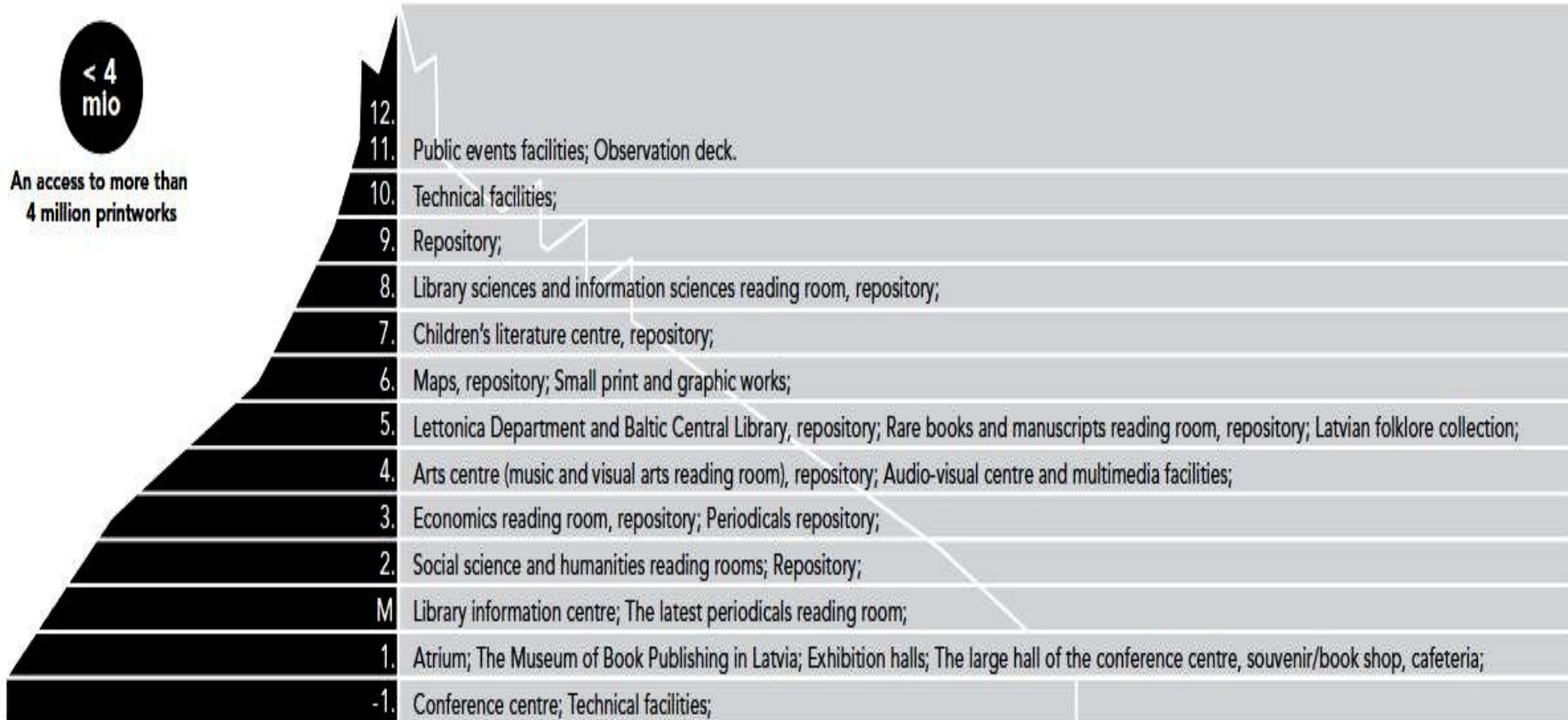








# Information on the different levels





**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

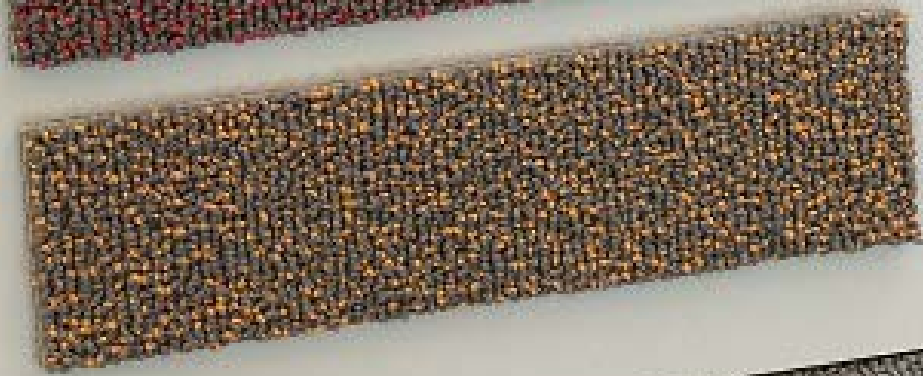
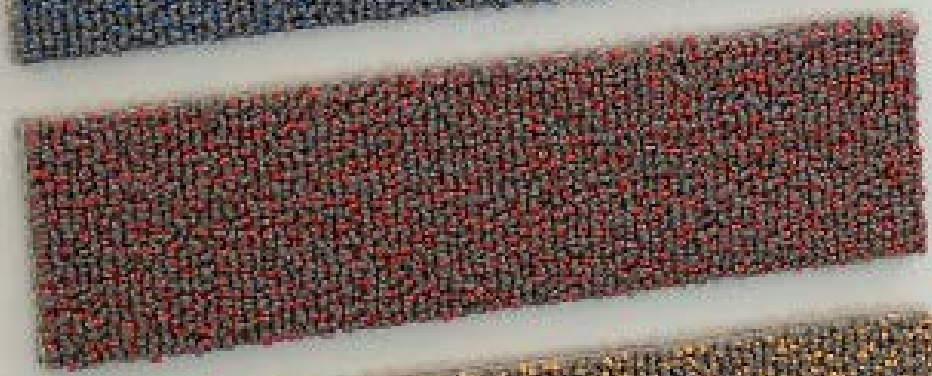
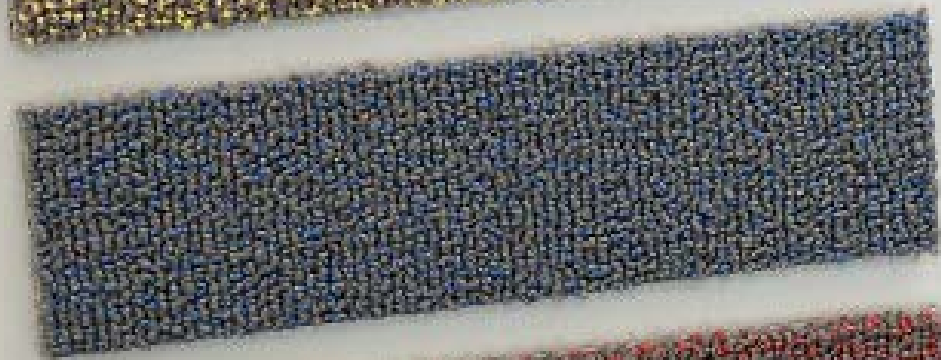
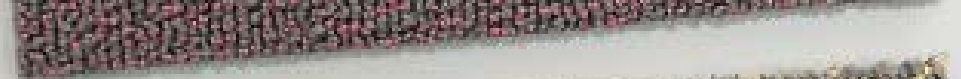
**4'th floor** Arts and music centre

**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 Centrs  
 Rēto grāmatu un rokkrakstu  
 lasītava, krātuve  
 Latviesu folkloras krātuve,  
 "Dainu skaņis"

**6. STĀVS**  
 Kartogrāfisko izdevumu la  
 Sīkiespiāddarbu un  
 attēlizdevumu lasītava,  
 krātuve

**7. STĀVS**  
 Bēnu literatūras centrs,  
 krātuve

**8. STĀVS**  
 Bibliotēkzinātnes un  
 informācijas zinātnes  
 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.

