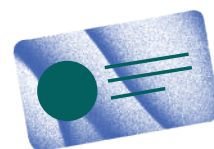


Nr.1 [ENG]

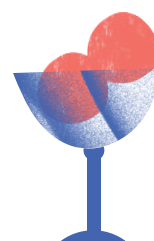
The National Library of Latvia = The Castle of Light

Is waiting for you to visit!



What can you do here?

- Admire the world's only People's Bookshelf
- See Riga from a bird's-eye view
- Get your free reader's card in just 5 minutes
- Browse the oldest and newest Latvian books in the world
- Study
- Meditate
- Visit the famous Cabinet of Folksongs (Dainu skapis)
- Take stunning photos inside or outside the building
- Celebrate your visit in the library café!



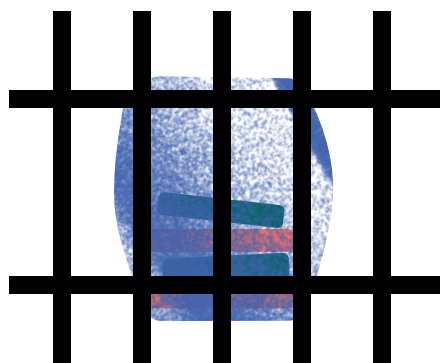
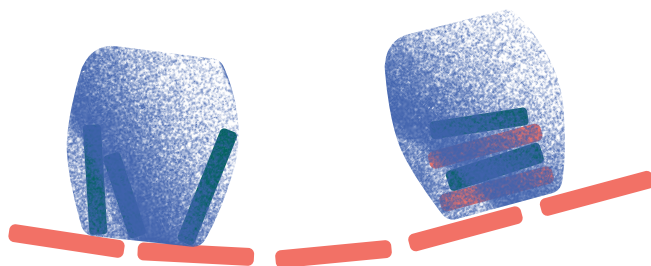
P.S. Did you know? The Castle of Light was designed by Latvian-American architect Gunārs Birkerts, who lived in exile in the USA and designed 19 libraries around the world!

Nr.2 [ENG]

The Birth of Latvian Books

It all happened 500 years ago – a story worthy of an adventure novel!

In 1525, the first printed works in Latvian and Estonian were sent in barrels from Germany to Riga – in those days, barrels were often used instead of bags!



But the shipment never reached Riga. It was stopped in Lübeck: the books were arrested for containing controversial Lutheran reformist ideas that challenged the Catholic Church.

According to historical records from the city's leader at the time, the event occurred on November 8. 500 years — that's almost five times longer than the Republic of Latvia has existed today! 500 years, that's 20 generations of Latvians.



Look through your family photos – how many generations back can you trace?

Nr.3 [ENG]

The Latvian Language – Ancient Roots and a Rich Heritage

Latvian is the official state language of Latvia.

We are proud that it's one of the oldest Indo-European languages in Europe, along with Lithuanian and the now-extinct Prussian.



There are around 6,700 languages spoken globally, but many are disappearing. The Latvian language changes with the times; it evolves through digital devices and is nurtured not only by writers, poets, scientists, and teachers.

We invite you to carry it forward too – so in 500 years, future generations will say: We are proud!



What's your favorite Latvian word today?

Nr.4 [ENG]

The "First" Krišjānis Valdemārs and the First Latvian Library

The first Latvian-founded library emerged during the 19th century, a time when the idea of modern nations was taking shape across Europe.

Latvians, especially those studying at universities such as the University of Tartu (called Dorpat at that time, located in current Estonia), began founding various societies, publishing newspapers, and rallying fellow countrymen around ideas that would become the foundation of a future nation.



One of the most prominent figures among the Latvian intelligentsia was Krišjānis Valdemārs—this year he would have celebrated his 200th birthday, if only he had lived that long.

The title “the first” suits him well—K. Valdemārs was the first Latvian to found a library in 1848. This library was opened in Ēdole, Kurzeme, and was built from donations by the readers themselves. K. Valdemārs is also known as the student who, at the University of Tartu, wrote his nationality – “Latvian” – next to his surname on his dormitory door. He founded the first maritime school, the first Latvian secular choir, was a well-known economist, and was the first to encourage the collection of Latvian folklore.

latvietis

Nr.5 [ENG]

The First Latvian Library Abroad

The first Latvian library outside of Latvia was established in Saint Petersburg, Russia, where on 16 August, 1862, six Latvians founded the Saint Petersburg Latvian Reading Society.



Soon after, across the ocean in the United States, seven other Latvian male emigrants founded the Boston Latvian Society during Christmas of 1889 and created their own library. Within a few years, they acquired a cabinet to store books and newspapers. Fellow Latvians could freely read newspapers such as *Latviešu Avīzes*, *Mājas Viesis*, *Balss*, *Tēvija*, and the monthly magazine *Austrums*.

A part of this library's collection—100 publications—can still be found in Boston today. It only takes a few active individuals to start something meaningful!



Nr.6 [ENG]

The First Latvian Newspaper – Social Media

The first newspaper began publication two centuries ago, and gradually, with the launch of more newspapers, reading the news became very popular — 100 years later, many people even complained they couldn't stop reading newspapers. Doesn't that seem similar to today's social media trends?



In 1822, *Latviešu Avīzes* (Latvian Newspapers) began publication in Jelgava, in the region of Zemgale, under the leadership of Carl Friedrich Watson — this was the first Latvian-language newspaper. The Bible, hymn books, primers, and calendars were no longer the only reading material in Latvian homes.

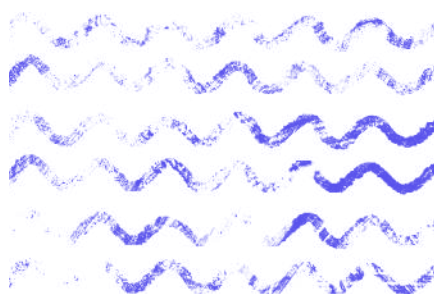
Before *Latviešu Avīzes*, people shared information mostly by word of mouth, but now newspapers circulated from house to house, offering updates on local events, foreign news, and useful advice.



Where do you usually get your news about Latvia and the world?

The First Encyclopedia

In 1903, the Riga Latvian Society began publishing the first comprehensive "encyclopedia of general knowledge" in the Latvian language – *Konversācijas vārdnīca* (Conversation Dictionary).



It included all major branches of science known at the time. This continued the work started in 1891 by Jēkabs Dravnieks, who published the first Latvian-language encyclopedia.

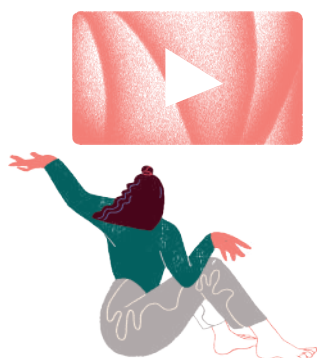
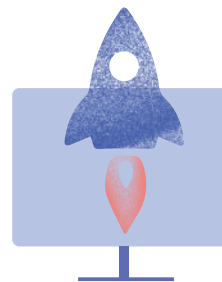
For many Latvian families, owning this publication was considered a matter of pride. Today, we would simply call such works *encyclopedias*. In 1927, Ansis Gulbis' publishing house continued publishing *Konversācijas vārdnīca*.



The encyclopedia eventually expanded to 21 volumes and contained 43,008 entries. What do you think – how long might it have taken to compile such an extensive encyclopedia?

Latvia in the Digital World

In Latvia, modern technologies are used to establish companies, access various services, sign documents with the so-called “e-signature,” create new products, and even become a “unicorn” in the fields of information technology and creative industries! The famous animation Straume (Flow) was also created using technology that anyone can download for free!



Even from abroad, you can access various kinds of knowledge accumulated in Latvia. For example, to check verified information about Latvia, visit the National Encyclopedia at www.enciklopedija.lv. The Digital Library also holds many exciting videos, audio recordings, photos, and stories — just open www.digitalbiblioteka.lv!

If you're interested in exploring Latvian newspapers published at different times in Latvia or abroad, head over to <https://periodika.lv>. You'll find stories here about what life has been like for Latvians who moved abroad. You can also read books in the virtual library. Get comfortable and browse the digital bookshelf here: <https://gramatas.lnb.lv/>.



Nr.9 [ENG]

Your voice in the 'Children's, Youth, and Parents' Jury' – vote for the newest Latvian books!

Each year, readers young and old are warmly invited to help choose the best new books by reading and voting for their favourites. In various age groups, the 'Children's, Youth and Parents' Jury' evaluates books chosen by literary experts.



Take part in this exciting reading and voting experience — your voice matters! By joining other readers, you can contribute to shaping a wise and informed Latvia that aims for great accomplishments on the global stage!



Have you come across an exciting sentence or quote in a book you just read — something you really liked or that made you think, smile, or reflect? Is there a book character you'd love to draw, someone who could inspire your friends?

The Chain of Book Lovers' & the People's Bookshelf

Over the course of six hours, in freezing cold weather on 18 January, 2014, a global campaign called **"Chain of Book Lovers – the Path of Light"** took place in Riga. During the campaign, participants formed a human chain stretching two kilometres, passing more than 2,000 books hand-to-hand from the former building of the National Library of Latvia at 14 Krišjāņa Barona iela to its new home — the **Castle of Light** at Mūkusalas iela 3.



This symbolic event marked the opening of **Riga** as the **European Capital of Culture** for 2014. The "Chain of Book Lovers" attracted widespread international media attention, with more than 15,000 participants from both Latvia and abroad signing up to take part!

The books that were passed along in this manner were placed on the **People's Bookshelf**, which greets visitors in all its glory as they enter the library. The People's Bookshelf is the only bookshelf in the world with its own website: tautasgramatuplaukts.lv. There, you can explore the special inscriptions in each donated book, along with photographs of donation visits by state officials and other notable figures. Anyone can still contribute a book to the People's Bookshelf. You too can donate a beloved book with your own personal message written inside for future readers.



Nr.11 [ENG]

Latvia's Cultural Canon

If you want to discover Latvia's greatest cultural treasures, the easiest way is to visit the Latvia's Cultural Canon website – www.kulturaskanons.lv. The site is also available in English and German.

Latvia's Cultural Canon includes Latvia's most cherished cultural values – the ones we are proud of and can help you feel closer to Latvia, no matter where in the world you are right now.



kulturaskanons.lv



Art, literature, film, natural landscapes, architecture, music, folk traditions – explore and find what resonates most with you! If you're curious about the legendary **Song and Dance Celebration**, you can also participate virtually: <https://dziesmusvetki.lnb.lv>



Open the "Literature" section and explore which Latvian authors are considered classics. Do you think others should be included in the list?

Nr.12 [ENG]

**Draw Your Favourite
Book! Write a quote
from a book that
touched or inspired you.**