



INTERVIEW WITH ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GENOVAITĖ RAGUOTIENĖ, FIRST EDITOR-IN- CHIEF AND A LONG-STANDING MEMBER OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF *KNYGOTYRA*

The serial publication *Knygotyra* has been published since 1961. Its initial title until 1969 was *Bibliotekininkystės ir bibliografijos klausimai*. In the period of 1981–1991, being a part of the *Lietuvos TSR Aukštųjų mokyklų mokslo darbų* series, it was published in two parts: the first part focused on the book history, topics of book publishing and distribution, while the second part focused on librarianship, bibliography and information sciences. As of 1990, it became the publication of Vilnius University and the second part has acquired an independent status and is published under the title of *Informacijos mokslai*. Since 2003, the publication interval of *Knygotyra* has been established and the publication has become a scientific journal published twice a year. As an open-access peer-reviewed scientific journal, it has been indexed in Lithuanian and international database for decades, and since 2018 in the Elsevier Scopus database. You are a member of the editorial board of the publication with decades-long experience, and, in the period from 1970 to 1974, you were its executive editor.

When and how did you learn about the library science?

Let me begin by saying that when I enrolled in librarianship I hardly knew what this discipline actually was about. Since a young age, my greatest interest was books and periodic press (for children and adults). I started visiting

libraries while attending the primary school in Švedišķiai and Lukšiai, and gymnasiums in Šakiai and Kaunas. Thus, my love (it is not too strong a word) for books and reading was definitely one of the reasons why I chose this discipline. I expected that, thanks to these studies, I would be able to combine studies and work. When I enrolled, I already had been hired by Vilnius children's home. I had to work to earn bread. My background was hardly enviable and even dangerous in the Soviet period. I had no one who could have paid for my studies. While studying, especially in my last years, I gained a better understanding about individual fields of librarianship. The different aspects of children's reading, and especially the topic of lectology, appealed to me the most.

Unfortunately, I learned more about librarianship as a science in 1955, when I was appointed to the Department of Librarianship. I had to teach the subjects of the discipline that I had never been taught during my studies. Among these subjects was the course General Librarianship. While preparing to teach this discipline I had to rely on different sources in languages that were available at that time.

However, I grasped the true idea of librarianship while preparing and writing the candidate's dissertation; I had to raise and solve different issues of historical and theoretical nature in the field of pedagogy, psychology, libraries, children's literature and their reading, etc. I found the Lithuanian literature on those fields of that time very useful as well as works by Russian and, to some extent, German authors. My scientific activity while writing the dissertation was heavily influenced by the goodwill or methodical advice of Vincas Auryla, the supervisor of my dissertation. The research and analytical experience gained while writing the dissertation was enriched by my work on the book *Spaudą atgavus* (After recovering of the press) (1996), which was on books and readers in Lithuania in 1904–1918 and which immediately followed my dissertation. This book has received positive reviews in the press and among the specialists.

When did you prepare your first scientific published work?

When was your last book released?

I tend to consider my first scholarly published work a rather humble article "J. Geniušas about children's literary education", published by me in *Bibliotekų darbas* No. 8 in 1963. Among my first more important published works, I would like to distinguish my work "About children's reading interests and psychology" published in the *Bibliotekų darbas* journal in 1964. This was one of my selected research fields. I would also like to mention an abundance of material of the study on the reading of teenagers (forms 7 and 8) at Panevėžys

secondary schools conducted in 1966. I remember that strenuous daily work organising such comprehensive study of teenagers, the first one of such scope in Lithuania. A questionnaire containing 40 different questions was prepared and 830 answers were processed. Together with my colleague E. Vaivadienė, we published the results of that major study and discussed them with teachers. What if such study was conducted once again?

My very last, eighth book, *Mylėję knygą* (Those who loved the book) was released at the very end of 2015 and came about in a rather strange way. The book itself is a rather “strange” composed of two different but interrelated parts. The first of them “For Lithuania to read” consists of scholarly studies about book and library events, phenomena and people of the Lithuanian state in the period of 1918–1940. It focuses on less analysed and discussed topics. It discusses the attitudes of Pranas Mašiotas and Vaclovas Biržiška towards children’s literature and reading, male librarians – Kazys Sendzikas, Vincas Jonuška, Leonas Žurauskas, Vytautas Tumėnas, Vytautas Steponaitis, Viktoras Cimkauskas and others.

The other part of the book “One Zanavykija tribe” is autobiographical, more intimate and written in a colloquial style. It covers the history of several generations of my Parents’ kin, complex and dramatic destinies of relatives. The publishing of this book, which is so dear to me, was a gift by Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. Its leaders and publishers have showed me their goodwill and generous spirit.

Who determined the field of your scientific research? You have previously written that you consider Vac. Biržiška the biggest authority in terms of science and discipline. What was his impact?

As I already mentioned, my main research and work focused on different issues of children’s books, periodicals, reading, their history, theory and practice. This started with my dissertation and, I should say, continues until now – a very old age. It probably corresponded with my temperament, maternal nature, and the plans of the management of the department.

I should probably mention one of the biggest concerns in my scientific activity and our research field. Our Lithuanian librarianship has always lacked a theoretical basis. Thus, the department has decided to prepare a theoretical collection titled *Teoriniai bibliotekininkystės pagrindai* (Theoretical foundations of librarianship). It was released in two volumes – the first (1990) and the second revised and extended published in 1995 in 1000 copies. Articles and studies

aimed to theoretically discuss the following issues: “General theory of librarianship” (Arūnas Augustinaitis), “Acquisition of library collections” (Stanislovas Dubauskas), “Information retrieval systems” (Ala Miežinienė), “Reading science” (Alvydas Samėnas), “Library management” (Renaldas Gudauskas), “Features of Lithuanian history of library thought” (Genovaitė Raguotienė). The weakness of this collection were evident back then and are evident now. Of course, this is not a textbook but the first publication of such profile in the historiography of Lithuanian librarianship.

Vac. Biržiška has played a major role in the history of Lithuanian libraries. He is so far the greatest figure in Lithuanian librarianship, bibliography and the history of books. His works remain exemplary (e.g. *Aleksandrynas*) even under the new conditions of our modern state and science. I had an opportunity to get acquainted with Vac. Biržiška works at the time of my studies and feel the multidimensional impact of his personality, especially of his scientific works. I have written multiple articles on more recent topics (a little bit about his private life, him as one of the first critics of children’s literature, and, back in 1921, the first lector on children’s literature and reading). Together with my husband Bronius Raguotis, we have prepared a collection of works by Vac. Biržiška – *Knygotyros darbai* (1998) (Book research). Vladas Žukas has released a monograph about Vac. Biržiška.

I personally appreciate the initiative of the Department of Librarianship to establish a scientific seminar of Vac. Biržiška, the so-called Readings, and the lecture-room named in memory of him. Over 100 papers on different topics were presented during Vac. Biržiška Readings in the period of 1991–2004. The Readings were held in Vilnius and other cities: Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys. The Vac. Biržiška seminar allowed the younger generation scientists to appear publicly: Aušra Navickienė, the then post-graduate student, Audronė Glosienė, Arvydas Pacevičius, Alma Braziūnienė, librarians Elena Stasiukaitienė, Silvija Vėlavičienė, Audronė Matijošienė. To conclude, I would like to mention that my colleague Osvaldas Janonis and I are the winners of the Vac. Biržiška Prize.

*You probably were the only one to study female librarians.
What made them the object of your interest?*

From the biographical point of view, I wrote a lot about female and male librarians in the period of 1918–1940. Women already had a significant role in libraries at that time. Such librarians as Marija Čilvinaitė, Birutė Vileišytė-Tursienė, Stanislova Petraitienė, Antanina and Felicija Šalkauskaitės,

Elena Eimaitytė and others from the so-called constellation of Vac. Biržiška were spiritual, cultured and devoted personalities.

I hope male librarians will not be offended by my description of one episode told by Ignas Končius, the previous manager of Vilnius Stephen Bathory University who served in this position since the end of 1939. Vac. Biržiška, the director of Vilnius University library, rarely showed up in the library and assigned the duty of library's administration to a certain male librarian. The male librarian could not deal with the difficult and stressful situation. Then, according to I. Končius, the duties were assigned to a young woman who had an iron fist and the relationship between the administration and the Polish library staff "got back on the right track". This happened thanks to "the soft but consistent and tough hand of a tiny Lithuanian lady". Most likely, the persons referred to in his story were Izidorius Kisinas and Elena Eimaitytė. This is how it was.

What was the state of research of Lithuanian libraries, bibliography and books on the eve of establishing Knygotyra? Please compare it with achievements of Latvian and Estonian scholars.

On the eve of the launch of *Knygotyra* – which was in 1970 – the research of Lithuanian librarianship and related fields was well under way. The majority of lecturers of the department had successfully defended their candidate dissertations. After all, since 1961, the collection of scientific works *Bibliotekininkystės ir bibliografijos klausimai* had started to be published systematically and consistently. Its traditions were developed by a serial publication with a different title of *Knygotyra*. Other departments that originated from the Department of Librarianship and this allowed to further differentiate the subjects taught and focus on the scientific activity, which had an impact on the development and improvement of scientific work.

The above, in my opinion, serves as an evidence that librarianship, bibliography (in particular), book research sciences, regardless of the unfavourable conditions, restrictions and censorship of the Soviet period, had in their essence enriched the Lithuanian historiography of those sciences. These fields have nourished their scientists even in the Soviet period. It should be noted that the famous specialists (Vac. Biržiška, Mykolas Biržiška, Aleksandras Ružancovas and others) of the Lithuanian librarianship and bibliography of the period of 1918–1940 had left Lithuania during the war, while the remaining ones (not all of them) engaged in practical rather than scientific activity only after a while.

Vytautas Steponaitis was one of the famous ones who continued the traditions of librarianship and especially of bibliography and bibliophiles. He

educated his students (Stasys Tomonis, Algis Lukošius and others) who were successful in the fields of bibliography and book science. I wrote a book about V. Steponaitis titled *Vytautas Steponaitis – iškilusis knygos žmogus* (2003) (Vytautas Steponaitis – a famous book person. This was the first book in the planned series about the society of XXVII Book Lovers. Unfortunately, other books did not follow...

It is hard for me to compare our scientific achievements with the works of Latvian and Estonian scholars. I am more familiar with Estonian librarianship since our departments had closely cooperated for many years. After restoring the statehood, Estonian librarians are more advanced. We attended scientific conferences of one another. We communicated on political matters as well. It was probably 1987 that we received publications (in Russian) from our Estonian colleagues that had already criticized the Soviet government and raised revival ideas boldly and openly.

I am more familiar with Slovak children's books and the situation in their reading science. It is probably because I attended scientific conferences and other events at that country multiple times. For example, I was impressed by a meeting discussing the literature and reading of girls (women). I have received a lot of information and publications on the topics of children's reading through my long years of cooperation with Eugen Mešša, the lecturer at Comenius University in Bratislava.

Then we had a strong relationship with librarianship of the Democratic Republic of Germany. In 1968, I was a trainee at scientific institutions and libraries in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and Weimar; I got acquainted with their scientific figures.

*How did you get an idea to reorganize the publication
Bibliotekininkystės ir bibliografijos klausimai to Knygotyra?
What led to such restructuring?*

Most likely, it is still known that the publication *Bibliotekininkystės ir bibliografijos klausimai* was published by the State Committee for Higher and Specialized Secondary Education of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, and later the publishing was taken over by the ministry of the same title. In May 1967, the publisher decided (it seems after a discussion) to restructure the publication of scientific works. The publication had to represent scientific works not only from Vilnius University but also other important library institutions, concentrate their scientific activity and publish their works. The Ministry

formed the editorial board of the representatives recommended by these institutions (Juozas Galvydis, Viktoras Lyrovas, Genovaitė Raguotienė, Klemensas Sinkevičius, Stasys Tomonis, Jurgis Tornau, Antanas Ulpis, Valerija Vilkienė). I was appointed executive editor. These days such “order” seems strange, but in the Soviet period, it was a common thing... I had no experience working as an editor of a scientific publication, but I knew that the duties would be complex and difficult. However, thanks to the support of the new editorial board, I started making some changes in the publication as I understood them.

Who coined the title for the new publication which at the same time was neologism “knygotyra” in Lithuanian? How did the contents of the publication titled Knygotyra change; how was the layout and the cover created?

The title of the previous publication had seemed clumsy since long ago. Moreover, the title did not reflect such field of librarianship as book science. I browsed other Lithuanian and foreign publications of such profile and nature and got an idea to give the publication the title of *Knygotyra*. The editorial board approved my suggestion.

A new numbering was applied: from the first volume of *Knygotyra*, a continuous number was also indicated in the brackets 1(8). Now, such numbering is rightly no longer used. We have not managed to do something different or better. The format and the exterior of the publications were changed. The cover was created by artist Romualda Verygaitė. There were changes in the contents too. The chapter “Chronicles” was significantly expanded (up to four–six pages). It consisted of news from different libraries assigned to the publication. An article of the foreign author Friedhilde Krause was published in edition 2(9) in 1972, and the circle of the published authors has expanded in general. It grew beyond the scholars and specialists of Vilnius University Department of Librarianship. The summaries of articles and contents of the publication were provided not only in Russian but also in English, attempting this way to promote it at least through annotations. Before printing an article, it had to be recommended by the reviewer.

Once the new editorial board was confirmed, its members started ordering and collecting material for the publication. It is a known fact that sometimes it is very complicated and hard to receive scientific publications from authors. Thus, some articles for the first *Knygotyra* were received in 1968, and some in 1969. The first humble volume of *Knygotyra* was signed in June 1970.

*Which stages of the publication's existence would you distinguish?
How did Knygotyra changed in the times of L. Vladimirov and
how did it change when D. Kaunas managed the editorial board
in the years after 1990 when the faculty was established
in Vilnius University?*

I can hardly answer this question. I am afraid to tell a nonsense or make a mistake. I have not been able to consistently follow this journal due to my age and health. I can imagine it well how difficult it was for L. Vladimirov and D. Kaunas, editors-in-chief of *Knygotyra*, to coordinate teaching and scientific activities, and, in addition, social activity. They devoted their rest hours to *Knygotyra* as well. Both editors-in-chief brought some innovation. D. Kaunas stood out thanks to his new projects, ideas, their practical implementation; he was a very hard working academic scholar, the only representative of librarianship at the Lithuanian Academy of Science.

*We have your latest books: Greta įžymiojo Vaclovo Biržiškos (2000)
(By the side of famous Vaclovas Biržiška), Lietuvių vaikų lektūra,
1918–1940 (2001) (Readings of Lithuanian children, 1918–1940),
... atversta knyga (2008) (... open book) and Mylėję knygą (2015)
(Those who loved the book) in front of us.
Are there signs of your works in Knygotyra in them?*

My books, maybe even other scientific activity in *Knygotyra* have not left a more prominent sign. Several more solid works were published in several parts from the monograph *Readings of Lithuanian children, 1918–1940*. The journal published the article “The features of the US children’s press in 1919” (1979, vol. 9) from the study-like work “Lithuanian children’s periodical press: start and development till 1940” (1995). My other works “Teaching of book science courses and the role of Vaclovas Biržiška” (2001, vol. 37), “Features of life and activity of Lev Vladimirov” (1988, vol. 15) and others suited *Knygotyra*. Actually, the majority of my works was published in the *Tarp knygų* (Among Books) journal. It contains the majority of the articles from the books mentioned here.

Our book historians, as it has already been mentioned, created the publication *Knygotyra* of international significance. They have published significant works, the preparation of which required careful studies. The collective work *Lietuviškoji knyga: istorijos metmenys...* (1996) (Lithuanian book: historical dimensions) and authors A. Glosienė, D. Kaunas, A. Navickienė, V. Stonienė

should be mentioned. Among outstanding works, I would like to mention *Knygos istorija* (1979) (Book history) by L. Vladimirov, its Russian version (1988), his collection *Apie knygas ir bibliotekas* (On books and libraries); also the majority of works by D. Kaunas, among them – *Klaipėdos krašto lietuvių knyga iki 1919 m.* (1988) (Book of Lithuanians in Klaipėda region till 1919), *Mažosios Lietuvos knyga: lietuviškos knygos raida 1547–1940* (1996) (Book of Lithuania Minor: the development of Lithuanian book in 1547–1940), and others. Books by Vladas Žukas should be mentioned in the field of bibliography and research on publishing houses. Alma Braziūnienė, Remigijus Misiūnas, Arvydas Pacevičius and others have proved themselves in separate publications and articles in *Knygotyra*. I am sure that the current Department of Book, Media and Publishing Studies is capable to achieve new scientific goals.

What determines the significance and recognition of a humanitarian scientific journal in today's world?

Today a great variety of technologies and technical devices can be found everywhere and inside everything. Without them, librarian and other humanitarian institutions, which benefit from them but also acquire new work duties due to them, could not operate. Technical sciences also intercept the spiritual life of humans and society. I will not quote loud, popular and righteous slogans and wisdom as of what will save the world. At least for me, the idea that the human and the book (whatever form it may take) have grown together so much that, according to Vaižgantas, they are stuck together through ages and no one can tear them apart, will remain uncontested. Librarianship, its sciences (in a wider sense) and journals devoted to them develop and improve the soul of humans and society. Thus, a growing attention is paid to humanities, its works and publications. Technology and the book must be compatible. Especially, in the global world.

What would you wish for the book science and the scientific journal Knygotyra of Vilnius University representing it?

In 1974, I delegated my functions as the executive editor to L. Vladimirov, who has returned from the UN organisation, without following any procedures but remained a member of the editorial board for a number of years.

Since the time of our humble attempts, *Knygotyra* has reached an international level when L. Vladimirov, and especially D. Kaunas, were its editors, and now it is known worldwide among the publications of such type. I am sincerely happy

about it and take pride in my humble contribution. At the same time, I am sad that the discipline of librarianship is no longer taught at Vilnius University. Some time ago, every five years I used to ask students who selected the specialization of children and school libraries to respond to the following question in writing: Why have I chosen this discipline? Responses were very different: “I have loved books since a young age”, “my mum was a librarian, I grew up in a library”, etc. Where did the youth who had such wishes disappear?

Luckily, in 1999, a solid work summarizing 50 years of history of Librarianship and its departments, titled *Bibliotekininkystės studijos Vilniaus universitete* (Librarianship studies at Vilnius University) was prepared and published. S. Dubauskas, the compiler and one of the authors, spent days carefully collecting the material at the University archives or interviewing graduates. Authors (A. Glosienė, R. Gudauskas, Julija Čepytė, Danutė Kastanauskaitė, Elena Macevičiūtė, A. Miežinienė, G. Raguotienė) and members of the editorial board, Klemensas Sinkevičius and L. Vladimirov among them, helped him with articles and advice.

I will support my good wishes for *Knygotyra*, its editor-in-chief Aušra Navickienė, the editorial board, and authors by quoting Virginia Woolf who said that “when the Day of Judgment dawns, the Almighty will gaze upon the mere bookworms and say to Peter, “Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them. They have loved reading.” I wish you to maintain your strength doing hard and difficult scientific work.

*Congratulations on your 90th anniversary
and thank you for the interview.*

Interviewers Domas Kaunas
and Aušra Navickienė