

# Books available online

21st century world gives access to editions from comfort of home, in just a few clicks of the keyboard

By Lyudmila Semenova

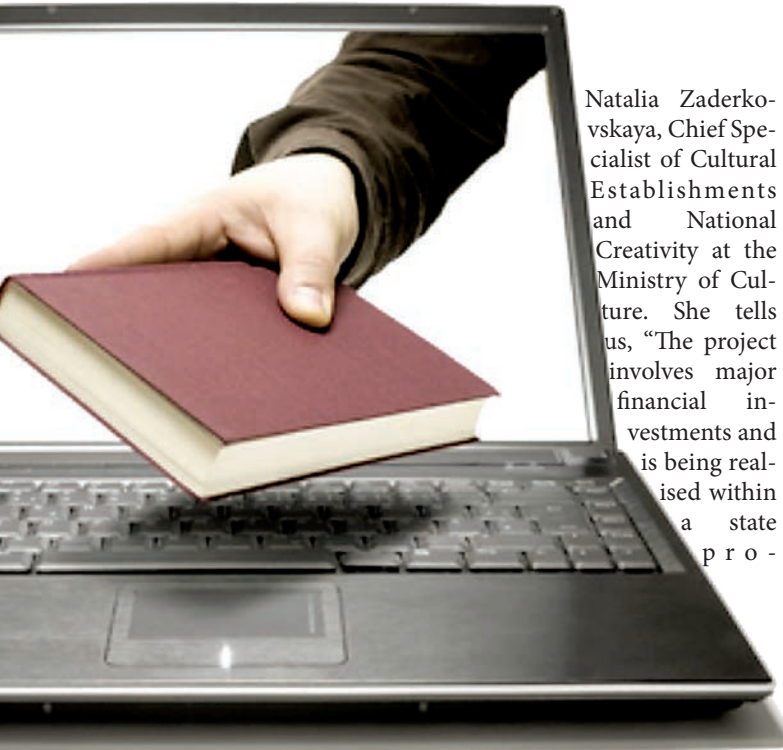
Belarusians can already access a wide range of literature from home, saving time spent at libraries locating specific editions. The latest databases allow books to be catalogued easily and stored electronically, making them available online to all. Meanwhile, traditional libraries are undergoing change.

According to the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, more than 90 percent of young people consider reading vital. Modern readers are using electronic editions more often with each passing year, paying fewer visits to libraries, having realised the advantages of online access: convenience in locating books, compact storage and time saving. Fewer readers are dropping into libraries, despite there being more than 3,500 public libraries operational; of these, about 58 percent are computerised, and more than 45 percent have access to the Internet. Of course, there is some way to go but our libraries are looking to the future, using digital technolo-

gies to their advantage — rather than seeing them as a 'toll of doom'.

Natalia Berezkina, the Director of the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library, tells us, "We offer a system of electronic delivery of documents, and a virtual referral service, as well as virtual exhibitions and an electronic archive of NAS editions." Few people realise the potential that digital services open up.

Virtual referrals, like electronic catalogues, are being offered by many modern libraries, allowing requests to be placed remotely; librarians can also make suggestions of interest and give a bibliographic description of documents. Meanwhile, a virtual reading room allows you to read library texts re-



Natalia Zaderkovskaya, Chief Specialist of Cultural Establishments and National Creativity at the Ministry of Culture. She tells us, "The project involves major financial investments and is being realised within a state programme to accelerate ICT services for 2011-2015. Not only libraries but also publishing houses are participating, with progress already evident. We are now analysing existing volumes of digitised information." Providing full public access to this information is the real challenge of course.

motely: perhaps from the comfort of your own home, sipping tea. The National Library of Belarus provides access to approximately 150 global databases, including those used by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The national electronic library is a project for the future, explains

programme to accelerate ICT services for 2011-2015. Not only libraries but also publishing houses are participating, with progress already evident. We are now analysing existing volumes of digitised information." Providing full public access to this information is the real challenge of course.

## Alternative beauty

By Andrey Konoplev

**Grodno State Agrarian University student Nadezhda Dubrovskaya named 'most charming' in Miss Summer International 2013 international contest**

Nadezhda amazed the jury at the international competition, hosted by Bulgarian Burgas in early September, being noted for her unusual and tender beauty, gentleness and extraordinary appeal. "Nadezhda won people's hearts. The Belarusian 'Spring Queen' charmed the 'Bulgarian Summer' with her irresistible and incomprehensible beauty," explains Natalia Trofimova, Belarus' national representative at international beauty pageants.

This year, representatives of 18 countries took part, with the crown going to a contestant from Montenegro. Preparations for the contest lasted a whole week, including rehearsals, excursions, meetings with the city mayor and sunbathing on the beach. During the contest, ladies took part in the Best National Costume contest and presented evening gowns, as well as appearing on a local TV channel and taking part in photo sessions. They were also offered a vast cultural programme.

Miss Summer International was held for the tenth time, aiming to promote the host country as a tourist destination and to choose the most beautiful girl of the summer. In previous years, the contest has been hosted by Bulgaria, Venezuela, Russia, Italy and Margarita Island.

## Old walls built anew

Well-loved Novogrudok Castle undergoes restoration



Reconstruction of Novogrudok Castle at full speed

By Yekaterina Charovskaya

Guides in the Grodno Region have many sights to show tourists, including numerous historical places. Sadly, time has been cruel, with some formerly impressive buildings now completely in ruins. However, restorers promise to bring them back to life in the shortest possible time.

Ancient Novogrudok is worth visiting, regardless of where you are travelling from; its castle ruins send shivers down your spine, harking back to a bygone age. Despite having been destroyed in the war years, resulting in fences and signs declaring 'no access', tourists are eager to photograph the site. However, restoration works are in full swing for its three towers and fortress walls (hidden under many metres of soil). In addition, the picturesque remains of Kostelnaya

(Roman Catholic) Tower are being restored. Metal underpinnings are needed to stop subsidence onto homes below its steep overhang. Meanwhile, a temporary rope system is pulling the wall in the opposite direction.

Of course, there's little point in restoring any building unless the foundations are secure. The tower has had its façade removed to allow fundamental work to be undertaken, explains Alla Zabayevskaya, a specialist in historical-cultural heritage. Her work for the Novogrudok District Executive Committee's Cultural Department has led to her overseeing the restoration of the Castle. She tells us that large cracks have appeared recently, saying, "Constructors disagree with us but we think that more damage has been caused as a result of fortifying Kostelnaya Tower's basement, due to

the heavy machinery operated. Trucks loaded with soil and concrete passed over, and numerous holes were drilled and cemented — up to 6m deep. Unsurprisingly, the vibrations led to new cracks."

Time will show whether the restoration is a success and, of course, climatic conditions play their part: damp, mist and temperature fluctuations. The building, which actually once served as a jail, is also to have its façade revamped. The central — Shchitovaya (Shield) — Tower has several walls in semi-ruin but should soon regain its former appearance, thanks to suitable materials: antique-styled high density bricks. The ancient architecture of the building is being preserved and, with care, under the supervision of historians and true professionals, it should remain standing for many centuries to come.

## India promoted to the public

By Alexey Ivanov

**Indian information and co-ordination centre for sci-tech co-operation opens at National Scientific and Technical Library**

The culture, history, traditions, science and technologies of this South Asian state will soon become more accessible to the public, thanks to the launch of the new centre, explains Igor Voitov, Chairman of the State Science and Technology Committee of Belarus. He notes that sci-tech collaboration between our states gains momentum each year, with the most promising avenues including microelectronics, design and production of measuring devices, alternative energy sources, and biotechnologies. Work is also underway to set up a Belarus-India centre for laser and optic technologies in New Delhi.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Manoj Kumar Bharti, congratulated all those in attendance at the opening of the centre. "It's now possible to learn about India's sci-tech achievements, with the help of bilateral exchange. The establishment of such a centre is of great importance," noted the Ambassador.

The National Scientific and Technical Library also launched a permanent information booth on the same day, featuring about 50 books and albums about India. Moreover, a database, entitled India. Information Resources of the Republican Scientific and Technical Library is now available and accessible online, via the Library's website. In addition, the Belarus, Our Common Home: India and Belarus photo exhibition was unveiled.

## Who is interested in new services?

By Yekaterina Sergeeva

**Minsk offers car wash without water and botox-therapy for hair**

Since the beginning of the year, more than 50 new types of consumer services have appeared in the capital. Anastasia Makarskaya, who heads service sphere organisation and development at the Minsk City Executive Committee's Consumer and Hotel Services Department, tells us, "Nightly hire of bicycles is one of the most unusual new services on offer. You can now cycle around the city for the evening, starting at any one of six rental outlets, returning the bike the next morning. A dry car wash has also appeared, using a polish to lift dirt, wiping it away with a cloth for a mirror like finish. You can also pay for an all-season waterless nano-coating on glass, headlights and mirrors."

Meanwhile, beauty maintenance now offers more treatments than ever: botox-therapy, Japanese blow-dries and three-dimensional hair reconstruction are all available at Minsk salons.