

Diamond' facets

Whether or not books made of paper will exist side by side with electronic technologies, is a rhetorical question. Having recovered from the early symptoms of Perestroika, and the crises, and instability of the 1990s, the former Soviet republics got down to erecting new libraries.

Countries like Belarus, Russia, Latvia and Kazakhstan are competing with each other in building the most advanced and largest library, though in the opinion of the renowned architect Jean Nouvel (designer of the modern library complex in Paris) he was invited to St Petersburg for the construction of a new stage in the

Mariinsky Theatre, this is one of the features of our time.

Presently the buildings under construction are nearly as large as a city. It is a clearly accelerating trend that will be picking up in the course of time. This is not only the opinion of the given French architect. As for the dimensions of the Belarusian library, they are not considered today to be something out of the ordinary, but it is still a unique building indeed by many other respects. It was called 'diamond', but few people knew that when developing the project, the architects pursued a utilitarian rather than an aesthetic goal. The library was designed by the 'tree' principle with

'branches' and a 'crown' of its own. Special lifts will move along the 'trunk' (central shaft inside the building) bringing books through the so-called 'branches' (special communication system) to the readers ('leaves') from the book depository. The designers managed to achieve unprecedented short terms of fulfillment of the future readers' orders. The readers at the technically advanced French National Library have to wait for the books they

ordered for one hour and 15 minutes on average, in the National Library of Belarus it will take them only twenty minutes, says Victor Kramarenko, one of the designers. There is no library of this kind in any country of the world thus far.

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