

Books in modern format

Everyone loves to receive a book as a gift but what role do book shops play in our age of electronic reading?

By Lyudmila Minakova

On the eve of the New Year, Minsk received a pleasant 'present': a new book shop on Nezavisimosti Avenue. It offers a wide choice of editions in Belarusian and foreign languages (imported directly from Europe). As the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Alexander Radkov, noted at the opening of Knigi & Knizhechki (Large and Small Books), the shop is truly 'European'. With modern fittings and shelves laid out attractively, labelled in Belarusian and English, it's very inviting. Air conditioning and the playing of

traditional folk music add to visitors' comfort.

Works by Belarusian authors occupy a central place, including novels by modern writers, each with eye-catching covers. There are even reproductions of the Slutsk Gospel and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Statute. Prices are cheaper than those of the Russian publishing house and there's a large department of foreign literature — supplied directly from abroad.

Readers are sure to be impressed by stylishly illustrated mini-anthologies of poetry by famous foreign writers and those from Belarus. The Kolas and Kupala



Unique ethnographic album about Belarusians goes on sale

editions cost just Br93,600. There's also a good range of biographies — of such legends as Alexander Makedonsky, Theodore Roosevelt and Coco Chanel. It's immediately apparent that there's something for everyone: those who love to cook; those studying serious subjects (such as economics and law); those seeking a light-hearted read;

and, of course, tourists seeking a souvenir edition lushly illustrated. A corner is soon to be set aside for writers to meet their readers and give autographs.

"This is a true present for book lovers and those working in publishing," stresses the Information Minister, Oleg Proleskovsky, adding, "As e-books are gain-

ing increasing popularity, not all countries can afford to open new book shops." Belarusian publishing houses have begun producing e-books but, according to the official, Belarusians still prefer reading printed editions; 3.5-4 books are published per capita annually — a high figure among European states.



Domains numbers growing steadily

More than 70,000 domains are now registered under the national .by Internet zone, explains Reliable Software's Sergey Povalishev, who heads the Hosting and Domain Registration Department

By Andrey Anufriev

He notes that just over half are registered by legal entities and individual entrepreneurs, with individuals owning 44 percent. The 100,000th domain should be registered by spring.

Most of the domains are registered by Belarusian entities, with approximately 11 percent belonging to foreign residents — mostly from Germany, the USA and Russia. About 43 percent of domains were registered in 2012 and around 19 percent have existed since 2011 plus 14 percent since 2010. "Last year saw more activity in the registration of domain names, which may be linked to the simplification of registration procedures," Mr. Povalishev stresses. "You can now register for a .by domain in the same way as in any other zone."

All two-letter domain names with .by have already been taken, with two character domains (combining letter and number) remaining greatly sought after. Single-letter domains are not yet permitted notes Mr. Povalishev. "If it's decided to allow them, they should be put up for auction or have specific requirements for their registration." If a domain name's period of registration expires, it can be put up for charity auction, once the owner has been given 30 days for the opportunity to renew. "Previously, the most interesting domain names were intercepted illegally — albeit for a matter of seconds. To prevent this from happening, auctions are held," he tells us. Four stages of charity auctions have been held already, with profits donated to children's homes.

Award enlarges circle of laureates

People's Artist of the BSSR and USSR Rostislav Yankovsky joins People's Artists of Belarus Leonid Shchemelev and Georgy Poplavsky, and sculptor Sergey Gumilevsky in revealing artistic plans and explaining the importance of the Union State Award

By Vladimir Yakovlev

This year, the award celebrates its tenth jubilee and has so far recognised 22 poets, artists, composers and painters, whose talents reflect the unity of Belarusians and Russians. "It's clear why we've gathered here," noted Mr. Yankovsky at the awards ceremony. "Nations exist when they have a defined culture; no nationhood is possible without this. The Union State Award highlights the proximity of Belarus and Russia. I've been awarded jointly with wonderful Russian actor Alexander Kalyagin, which I'll remember for a long time."

Of course, those awarded have many artistic ideas still to explore, as Leonid Shchemelev, 90, asserts; his personal show opens soon and promises to be fascinating.

There has been discussion as to whether criteria for proposing laureates may be changed, with a separate nomination for young authors perhaps introduced. Ivan Yanovich, who heads Social Policy Department of the Social Policy and Information Support Directorate of the Union State Standing Committee, tells us,



Film director A. Yefremov (right) and R. Yankovsky, with his wife

"We are preparing an amendment to the Union State Award, aiming to enhance the quality of applications and open its doors to a wider variety of projects: all devoted to the establishment and modern development of our Union. We'll probably decide that only proposals dating from after Belarus-Russia Union establishment can be submitted. The draft awards project has already been studied by our Belarusian and Russian culture ministries and is now being considered by our finance ministries, for on-

ward viewing by Union State supreme bodies.

Candidates for the 2013-2014 Union State Award can now be proposed, with applications studied by the council of the Russian and Belarusian culture ministries. This features the most authoritative figures of art and representatives of artistic unions and state agencies, including People's Artist of Belarus Alexander Yefremov. He promises that all works are judged honestly, objectively and without bias.