



DIGITIZING DIASPORA COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHICAGO LITHUANIAN COMMUNITY

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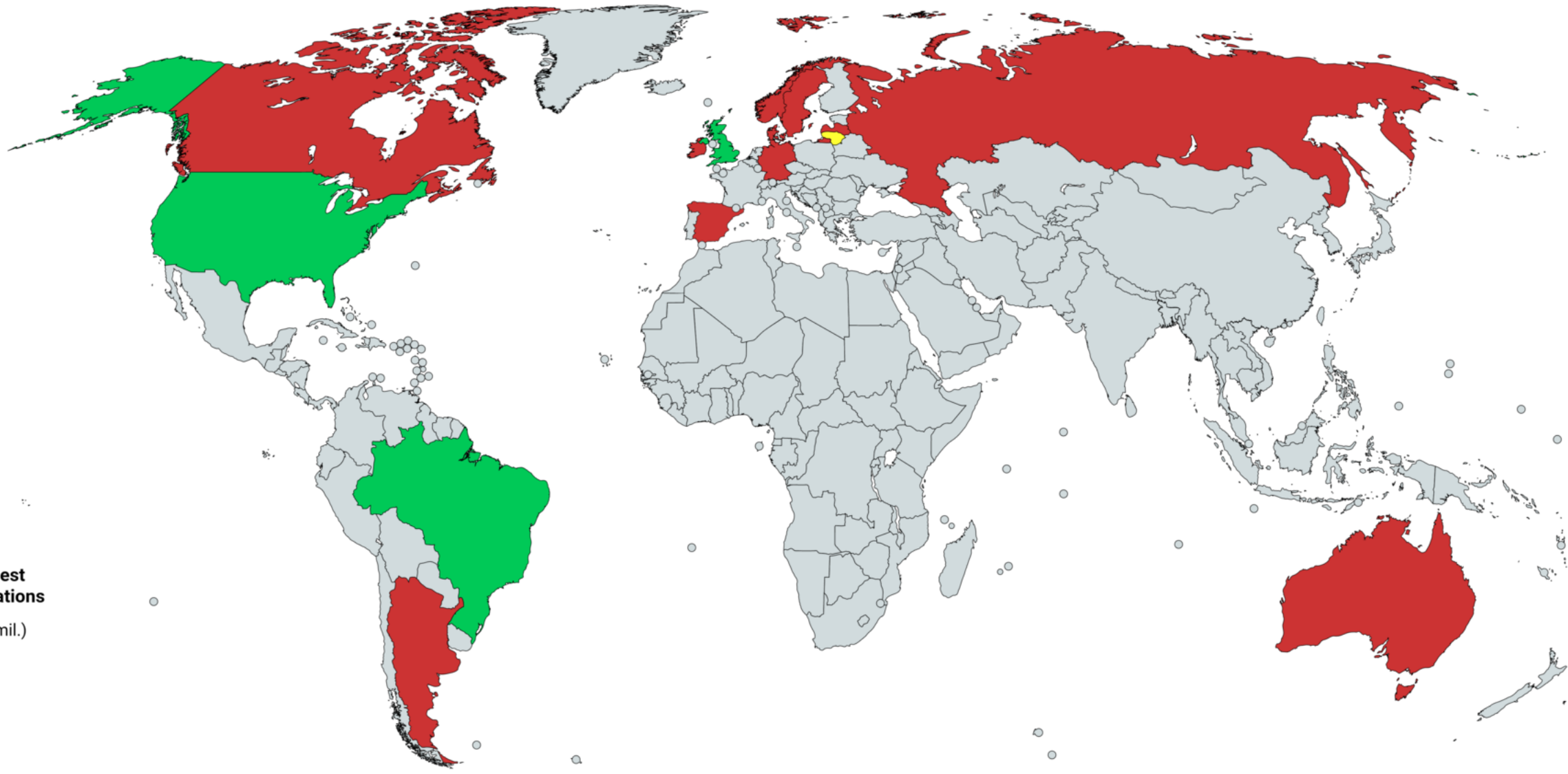
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INTRODUCTION

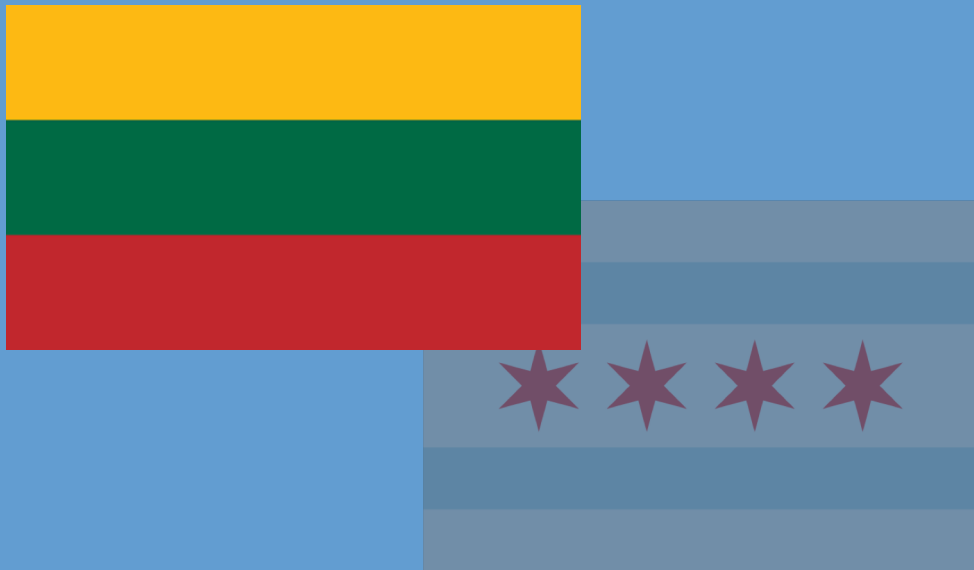
- Diaspora communities = people of shared culture and language living outside of their historic “homeland”
- Collecting the cultural heritage of diasporic communities represents a challenge for libraries, archives, and museums in both the adopted and native nations of these communities.
- Can the creation of digital collections using Web 2.0 technologies make these materials available to a worldwide audience?
- What does that look like in practice?
- Using the example of the Lithuanian community in Chicago, I explored these issues through both relevant literature and assessment of current digital collections

**Regions with largest
Lithuanian populations**

- Lithuania (~2.5mil.)
- >100,000
- >10,000



LITHUANIANS IN CHICAGO



- In 1908, Chicago was home to the largest Lithuanian population of any city in the world with over 50,000 Lithuanian residents (Lietuva 1908).
- Chicago is also home to the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center which holds the largest collection documenting the worldwide Lithuanian diaspora.
- Lithuanians have had a significant impact on the city of Chicago
 - Newspapers, schools, cultural organizations



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AMERICAN HISTORY BASED
ON THE EXPERIENCES OF
LITHUANIAN FAMILIES IN
CHICAGO



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CULTURAL HERITAGE OF DIASPORA COMMUNITIES



- Lithuania
 - Mainstream institutions are highly interested in diasporic materials and often coordinate with the United States Lithuanian community in collecting efforts
 - These efforts were highly limited during the period of the Soviet Union
- United States
 - Mainstream institutions have shifting interest in diasporic communities
 - The late '70's was a period of high interest in "ethnic" archives
- Community-driven libraries, museums, and archives were created to collect and preserve materials that were not of interest to these other institutions but often lack resources.

DRAUGAS DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Digitized by libraries in both Lithuania and the United States.

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THE FRIEND

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Striding Forward To the Freedom Of Speech

The "Lithuanian Free Speech Center" (LFSC) in Lithuania is an umbrella organization for leading Lithuanian media associations, logistically supported by the U.S. - Baltic Foundation. The LFSC is also funded by the "National Endowment for Democracy," "Martin Gress Foundation" and "USCF donors." From its inception in October 1995, the LFSC has been involved in the creation of new, more democratic mass media in Lithuania. The center's efforts have been rewarded: on July 2, 1996, the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) passed the Law on Public Information, Lithuania's most comprehensive media legislation yet, and on July 10th, the Seimas passed another bill that guaranteed the proper implementation of this new media law. Members of the Seimas described the law as "the basic step to democracy". These bills still await the final approval of

by the US - Baltic Foundation and the Friedrich-Nauman Fund, and in conjunction with the Lithuanian Radio and Television Association, the LFSC held another conference entitled "Legal and Economic Conditions for Development of Mass Media in the Baltic States." At this conference, the first drafts of the new media law were the primary topic of discussion by participants, who included representatives of the mass media and politicians.

One of the leaders of this conference was American professor Steven Pasternack, who is the head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at New Mexico State University. Dr. Pasternack was present to offer his expertise in media and governments is involved as evolutionary. "Freedom of expression has to be a joint effort between a responsible press and a government that is trust-



A meeting in Vilnius with Lithuania Christian Democratic Party leaders and Parliamentary Election committee. Some of the participants are from abroad visiting Lithuania and helping with the election to the Parliament process.

No Secure Lithuania Without Secure Poland

and France, are to be invited. Brauskas and Kwasiński agreed to finish the prolonged negotiations with the

MAKING THE CASE FOR DIASPORIC DIGITAL COLLECTIONS



- The digitization of diaspora materials and their dissemination through Web 2.0 technologies provides a potential solution for both collections with contested ownership and user bases
- Provides the opportunity to serve a geographically disparate and diverse user base
- *“the ability to assemble and arrange cultural heritage from various geographic origins offers ethnic communities new ways to shape, expand and rekindle ethnic identities”* (Daniels, p. 11, 2015).

REPRESENTATION IN DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

- Digital representation is largely related to mainstream institutions' interest
 - The two largest collections were created by the Library of Congress and Martynas Mažvydas National Library
- Quality of metadata was highly variable and largely in the native language of the creating institution
- Interest in specific publications resulted in duplicated efforts



Digital Collection	Approximate Number of Items	Date Range
ePaveldas	848	1886-1995
Chronicling America (Library of Congress)	3006	1913 - 1951
Chicago Ethnic Arts Project Collection (Library of Congress)	141	1977
Draugas Digital Archive	25,100	1909-2017
Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey (The Newberry)	2599	1892-1938

FINDINGS

- Although digital collections provide solutions to many of the issues related to diaspora collections, digital collections more often than not reflect the same gaps caused by shifting interests and collection policies of mainstream institutions.
- Physical barriers to access caused by the fractured institutional holdings of these collections is often recreated by single language or inaccurate metadata.
- Community-driven efforts like the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center are largely absent from the digital space.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- By pursuing inclusive models of collaboration by which digital collections are built, diaspora collections can be more accurately represented digitally than they are through traditional models of collecting by institutions.
- However, formulating a collaborative framework to assess these collections across regions and countries is the first step in visualizing the full potential of transnational diasporic heritage collections.

NOTABLE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

- <http://www.epaveldas.lt/home>
- <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/collections/migration>
- <http://www.draugas.org/archyvas-pdf-2019/>

THANK YOU!

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