

Report on Participation in the 114th BiblioCon 2026 in Berlin

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Introduction

This report was prepared following the generous financial support of BI-International, which enabled my participation in the 114th BiblioCon 2026 in Berlin, the largest library and information science conference in Germany. I would like to explicitly express my sincere gratitude for this support, which made it possible for me to present my research, engage in professional exchange, and strengthen international cooperation.

The conference brought together librarians, information professionals, researchers, and policy makers from across Europe and beyond. It provided a platform for discussing current developments in digital transformation, open access, research infrastructure, and the evolving role of libraries in society.

Conference Overview and Main Themes

BiblioCon 2026 offered a comprehensive program covering a wide range of topics. Key themes included:

- Digital transformation of libraries
- Open science and research data management
- Artificial intelligence in information services
- Preservation of cultural heritage in digital formats
- Community engagement and regional development
- Sustainability and accessibility in libraries

A strong emphasis was placed on the role of libraries as active agents in social and regional development, particularly in the context of digital inclusion and knowledge accessibility. The conference highlighted how libraries are evolving from traditional repositories into dynamic hubs of knowledge exchange and innovation.

My Presentation

I contributed to the conference with a presentation titled: **“The Digital Library of Latvia and its Role in Regional Development: Lessons from Latvian Regional Libraries”**
(Session: <https://bibliocon2026.abstractserver.com/program/#/details/sessions/305>)



E.Radova presenting, moderator: Josef Jeschke, photo by Viktorija Piščikova, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

The presentation focused on the development and impact of the Digital Library of Latvia, particularly in relation to regional libraries. The presentation explores how the Digital Library of Latvia (digitalabiblioteka.lv) supports regional development while ensuring data sovereignty by enabling local libraries to manage, preserve, and share their digitised cultural heritage within a secure national infrastructure. Drawing on a three-year study of regional library practices, the research examines how regional libraries participate in digitisation, improve metadata quality, and integrate their content into a centralised platform, maintaining local control over unique materials while benefiting from national-level support.

Findings show that Latvian regional libraries have increased digitisation activities, invested in professional equipment, and strengthened staff competencies. The clear trend toward centralising digital content in the Digital Library enhances quality, accessibility, and long-term preservation, while respecting regional ownership of

materials. Smaller libraries still face challenges in initiating digitisation, but overall, regional libraries are emerging as hubs of digital competence centres.

By centralising content within a national infrastructure while preserving local control, the Digital Library of Latvia exemplifies a practical model of national data sovereignty in cultural heritage management. The platform reduces regional information gaps, enhances equitable access to cultural resources, and fosters community engagement. Latvia's experience provides valuable insights for international colleagues on integrating regional libraries into national digital frameworks, balancing centralisation with local ownership, and prioritising unique local content to support sustainable knowledge development.

My presentation highlighted:

- Cooperation between the National Library of Latvia and regional libraries
- Case studies demonstrating how digital access enhances local cultural engagement
- The role of digital heritage in strengthening regional identity
- Challenges such as digital literacy, infrastructure, and long-term sustainability

The presentation was well received, and the discussion afterwards showed interest in the Latvian experience as a model for other countries. Participants particularly appreciated the practical examples of collaboration with regional libraries and the emphasis on inclusive access.

This opportunity allowed me to position Latvia as an active contributor to international library innovation and to exchange insights with colleagues facing similar challenges.

Library and Information Infrastructure in Germany

The conference provided valuable insights into the German library system, which is characterized by a highly decentralized yet well-coordinated structure. Academic libraries, public libraries, and specialized institutions operate within a federal framework, supported by strong professional networks.

Key observations include:

- A strong integration of research infrastructures and libraries
- Advanced implementation of open access policies
- Significant investment in digital services and research data management
- Active collaboration between institutions at regional and national levels

Compared to Latvia, Germany benefits from larger-scale funding and infrastructure, but many of the strategic priorities—such as digitization, accessibility, and user-centered services—are shared.

Personal Impressions and Professional Impact

Participation in BiblioCon 2026 was a highly valuable professional experience. It allowed me to:

- Present Latvian achievements in an international context
- Gain new perspectives on digital library development
- Establish professional contacts for future collaboration
- Reflect on the strategic direction of the Digital Library of Latvia

The exchange with colleagues confirmed that many challenges—such as digital inclusion, sustainability, and user engagement—are shared across countries. At the same time, it became clear that Latvia's experience, particularly in integrating regional libraries into a national digital framework, is of significant international interest.

Conclusions and Future Outlook

The participation in BiblioCon 2026 has strengthened my professional knowledge and expanded my international network. The insights gained will directly contribute to the further development of the Digital Library of Latvia, especially in the areas of:

- Enhancing cooperation with regional libraries
- Improving user-oriented digital services
- Strengthening international partnerships

I am committed to sharing the knowledge gained with colleagues in Latvia and integrating best practices into future projects.

Acknowledgement

I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to **BI-International** for their financial support. Without this grant, my participation in BiblioCon 2026 would not have been possible. The experience has had a lasting positive impact on my professional development and on the international visibility of Latvian library initiatives.

References

- BiblioCon 2026 Program:
<https://bibliocon2026.abstractserver.com/program/#/program/1/horizontal>
- Session details:
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Social Media posts:

- Facebook Digitālā bibliotēka (Digital Library of Latvia) :
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0EJoFStoagh6113xCwypt8zHQQGvCLqW2QvGfVLM3YE66EY3hmRUVa1HenuwB5korl&id=61552313681187
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