

# Historical interpretation of glorious life of region

## Rare book department at Grodno Regional Library (named after Karsky) keeps around 500 editions

By Yelena Stasova

A hall of rare editions opened at the Local History Department a year ago, holding 500 unique books from the 19th-early 20th century: in Russian, Polish, English, German and French.

It boasts the most complete collection of *Reviews of Grodno Province* (1878-1913), which details the life and activity of the province in general and its districts in particular. The edition presents information on the region — gathered over each year: demographic,

administrative-legal and economic. It even assesses improvements to medical services. For instance, the books tell us that, in 1878, there were only 63 doctors in the Grodno Province, compared to 205 in 1913.

Materials from the first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897 relating to the Grodno Province (St. Petersburg, 1904) are another precious acquisition. According to the edition, the residents of the province named Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Gypsy

and, even, Finnish as their native language.

Another book is by famous Grodno historian, *Grodnenskie Gubernskie Vedomosti* (Grodno Provincial News) journalist Vladimir Manasein: *Peasant Issues in the Grodno Province in the 19th Century* (1902). This analyses the legislation regarding serfdom and the attitude of landowners and peasants. Another edition regards education in the Grodno Region in the late 19th century: *A Short Report on the Condition of*

*Grodno Men's Gymnasium from 1881-1892, Compiled by Teacher G. Kharlampovich* (1893).

The Grodno Regional Scientific Library (named after Karsky) is Belarus' oldest library, having opened in 1830. At first, its books were largely donated by the city's nobility — serv-

ing state officials, the nobility and landowners. In the 1950s, the library opened to the wider public and now boasts over 640,000 editions (books, magazines, newspapers, printed music and electronic documents in 37 languages). Annually, around 50,000 readers use the library service.

