

LITHUANIAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF SCIENCE ANNUAL MEETING

What a great opportunity - to meet other Lithuanians with higher degrees and hear about their work, their problems solved, their goals accomplished, their plans for the future! „What a fun opportunity to meet with fellow Lithuanians and talk about all these academic topics!“ commented a participant at the recent Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science (LCAS) meeting.

The meeting took place on September 15 at the Immaculate Conception Convent in Putnam, CT, in the cozy „Raudondvaris“ („Red Manor“). It started with lunch and coffee, with participants catching up or getting to know each other. This year’s meeting featured four speakers from four different disciplines, each generating questions and discussions in the audience.

Dr. Mindaugas Šapoka, the first speaker, received his Ph.D. in History 4 years ago at Aberdeen University in Scotland, where his thesis director was world-reknown Eastern European historian Dr. Robert Frost. Dr. Šapoka has published a book based on his thesis titled Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion. The book depicts the difficulties faced by Lithuania during the Great Northern War of 1700-1721 between Russia and Sweden, after the electorate had invited Augustus II of Saxony to be the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.



Dr. Mindaugas Šapoka.
(photo by Dr. Nomeda Girniūtė)

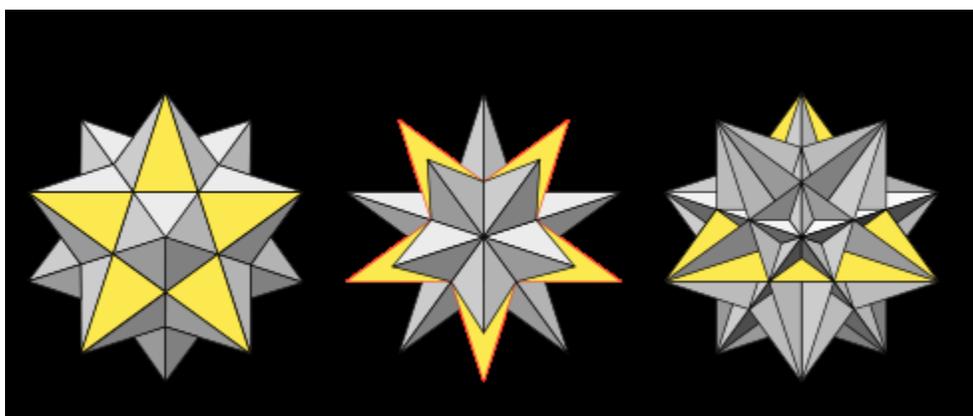
In a casual style with snippets of humor, Dr. Šapoka depicted the background and private goals of Augustus, shedding light on the inevitability of the eventual rebellion against him. The audience was especially interested in his research work - the archives he had to visit

and peruse in Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and Poland. Currently he has a postdoc at Yale University, where he is planning his next book - a sorely needed deep-dive into the Great Northern War. For this book, says Dr. Šapoka, he will have to research additional archives in Sweden.

The second speaker was Dr. Gabriel Cunningham, who received his Ph.D. in Mathematics six years ago at Northeastern University in Boston. Dr. Cunningham is currently collaborating with a fellow mathematician in Mexico researching polyhedra without planar (flat) faces. He started off by warning the audience that his work has no immediate practical application. It is simply beautiful and interesting. „Would you ask an artist about the usefulness of his work?“ asked Dr. Cunningham with a grin.



Dr. Gabriel Cunningham. (photo by Dr. Nomed Girniūtė)



Polyhedra are beautiful. But how many are there?

Dr. Cunningham teaches Math at University of Massachusetts Boston. Although he speaks Lithuanian, he did not dare attempt talking about polyhedra using the Lithuanian language. This admission evoked a chuckle from the audience.

Dr. Žara Girniūtė was the third speaker. She received her Ph.D. in Math at UCLA in 1995 and works at market research firm Nielsen, where she is Director of Data Quality. „I was able to follow Gabe’s presentation because my thesis was in a related field, but the work I do now has more to do with real-life problems than abstractions,“ she explained.



Dr. Žara Girniūtė.
(photo by Dr.
Nomeda Girniūtė)

As Director of Data Quality, she is the go-to person when market research comes in with

unexpected results, for example, a research result that a particular product will be purchased 65% of the time in Brazil, but only 5% of the time in Japan. Sometimes wide discrepancies are due to cultural differences. For example, don’t try to market pork rinds in Saudi Arabia. Or canned seaweed - it may be popular in Japan, but probably not in Brazil. However, wide discrepancies may be due to the data being used. Dr. Girniūtė has to understand the difference and figure out the source of the problem (if there is one). And she has to address the problem for future studies.

Dr. Milda Richardson, the fourth speaker, received her Ph.D. in Art History from Boston University in 2003. She teaches at Northeastern University where she spearheads a program called “Dialogue of Civilizations”. Under the auspices of this program she takes students to Lithuania, introduces them to various aspects of Lithuanian history and culture, and shows them



related historical/cultural sites. She introduces them to Lithuanian artists and provides them with an opportunity for hands-on work with pottery, paper-cutting, egg decorating and other Lithuanian folk art forms.

Dr. Milda Richardson.
(photo by Dr. Nomed Girniūtė)



ALKA.

In addition to organizing annual meetings with guest speakers, LCAS distributes scholarships and maintains the American Lithuanian Cultural Archives (ALKA) located in Putnam, CT. ALKA comprises a museum, library and archive.



A tiny portion of the archives.

The archive is invaluable to researchers, who visit ALKA to access first-hand information about historical people and events.

The museum is interesting to visitors who do not know about Lithuania. They get a deep-dive into Lithuanian history and culture and leave with a better understanding of this nation of 3 million people.



Part of the ALKA museum.

The library is not a lending library, but more of an archive, as it conserves books as a record of Lithuanian culture. For, example, the collection of books printed during the early XX century is especially interesting, as it reflects the culture of Lithuanians in the U.S. during that period.



Volunteers helping out at the ALKA library.

Two new members were accepted into LCAS – Valdas Buožys, who received his Master's degree in History at Vilnius University in 1991, and Dr. Gabriel Cunningham, who received his Ph.D. in Mathematics at Northeastern University in 2012.

Any Lithuanian with a Master's or Ph.D. can be a member of LCAS. If you are interested, please contact Onutė Traitor, LCAS Board member and professor at SUNY Oneonta. Her e-mail address is ann.traitor@oneonta.edu. If you are interested in volunteering at the library, please contact Mirga Giriuvienė at mgirius@hotmail.com Please visit us at www.lkma.org

*Dr. Mirga Girniuvienė
LCAS President*

Photo Gallery of LCAS Meeting:





