LIBRARY PRACTICE IN
THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN PEOPLES REPUBLIC

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Gives an account of the development of public libraries in Czechoslovakia and the demarcation between scientific and national libraries. Describes the organisation and functions of the University Library, the National Library, the Slavonic Library, the Central Technical Library of CSR, Czechoslovakian Academy of Science, Central Library of the City of Prague, etc. Mentions the establishment of a central Department under the Ministry of Education and Culture responsible for uniform library practice.

1 STRUCTURE

Due to historical development, the library practice in Czechoslovakia up to 1945, like the German practice, draws a characteristically sharp line of demarcation between scientific and national libraries. As early as 1919, a library statute ensured not only the maintenance of viable public libraries, when their organization was imposed on the community in accordance with the size of the individual regions, but also promoted the establishment of libraries in places where none existed so far. At the same time, compulsory copyright law, central cataloguing, and training facilities were established at the central station of the University Library at Prague. As in Germany, the development of library practice in CSR after 1945 is characterized by a vigorous attempt towards a uniform library structure.

Excerpt for technical libraries, which were under individual technical departments, the libraries in CSR up to 1956 were essentially combined into two large systems: scientific libraries, which were directly attached to the Education Department, and the public libraries, which were directly attached to the Ministry of Culture.

11 Central Council

The attempts to arrive at a uniform library practice, first found expression in the formation of a "Central Council for Library Practice in CSR" in 1955. This study group, under the initiative of the Ministry for Culture, brought together librarians and representatives of all departments interested directly in library work. This central council, created as advisory organ of the Ministry for Culture, had the object of producing close co-operation between scientific libraries and public libraries. Besides, the Ministry for Education, to which the scientific libraries were attached, had an advisory committee for the library service unit in this Ministry.

12 Library Department

This promising transition period came to an end in September 1956, when the Ministry for
Education was combined with the Ministry for Culture. A library department was formed in the new Ministry for Education and Culture, which took up its work in February 1957. In it, a reviewer is responsible for the system of scientific libraries, and another for that of public libraries.

13 Science Libraries

Among the scientific libraries are:

1. Scientific general libraries
   a) University libraries in Prague, Brno, Bratislava and Olomouc.
   b) State scientific libraries in Plzen, Budejovice, Hradec Kralove, Kosice, Liberac, Ostrava and Zvolen.

2. Scientific technical libraries in the fields of industry, education, medicine and agriculture, at the top being the Central Technical Library of the CSR, are
   State Technical Libraries in Brno and Bratislava;
   State Medical Libraries in Prague and Bratislava;
   State Education Libraries in Prague, Brno and Bratislava; and
   State Agricultural Library in Nitra.

In the universities and higher schools, there are now 52 central libraries, 14 central stations of the faculties and 1063 libraries of individual institutes; besides, there are the libraries of the schools for arts and crafts and museum including the remarkable library of the National Museum in Prague containing nearly 1,300,000 volumes of which 800,000 is Bohemica (Czechoslovakian literature) and the other 500,000 is other scientific literature.

14 Public Libraries

The public or cultural libraries cover not only the appropriate public libraries, at the top of which is such a significant library organization like the Central Library of the City of Prague, but also all the libraries up to the smallest village libraries. Likewise the stationing of the Academy Library (main library of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences) in Prague is important. Like the entire Academy it is directly under the Government.

2 LARGE LIBRARIES IN PRAGUE

We are indebted to F. Horak, Director of the main library of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences in Prague, for a review of "Scientific libraries in Czechoslovakia", (ZfB 1952, 66, 9-27). The Centre for National Scientific Libraries in Prague, the Clementium, houses four important libraries, which function independently of one another: 1) the University Library, the oldest and largest in this group; 2) the National Library, which was separated in 1949 from the National and University Library; 3) the Slavonic library which was separated in 1949, as independent institute from the National and University Library; and 4) the Central Technical Library of CSR, the oldest European technical library, which is now the most modern scientific library of CSR.

21 The University Library

The University Library has the largest collection (1,500,000) among all the Czechoslovakian libraries. Its annual accession is nearly 42,000. It is the central scientific library for the entire region of CSR. 160 workers look after the entire library work, which has increased by 100% as compared with 1938. Its main divisions are:

a) Acquisition, for which two central national organizations are attached: Service station for old stock and Central exchange station;

b) Catalogue;

c) Department for manuscripts, rare works, old works, microfilm, library archives;

d) Users' department, including information and photography department;

e) Preservation workshop and book bindery; and
f) Administration

The University Library has made rapid progress in all fields. It has accommodation for 800 readers. It is open from 8 to 22 hours (Sundays from 8 to 12 hours). As compared with 53,000 users in 1945, nearly 236,000 readers have used it in the year 1954. The comprehensive bibliographical activity of the University Library, in relation to the bibliographic work in the CSR as a whole, deserves mention.

22 The National Library

The National Library was established in 1935 as part of the University Library and with the Archives Department of Czech literature as the nucleus. Thus the University Library came to be renamed as "National and University Library". A comprehensive compulsory copyright law in CSR (Control order of 28 May 1935) assisted the collection of Czechoslovakian literature. The National and University Library has since received two compulsory copies from the entire state territory. Since the separation of the National Library from the University Library (1949), both the compulsory copies have been accessioned by the National Library. It delivers one of the copies with a single reproduced photograph of the title to the University Library. For earlier years, the National Library supplements the Czechoslovakian production up to 1918. The collecting area covers the entire Czechoslovakian literature, production of books in foreign languages in CSR, all works on CSR appearing in other countries, as well as translations of Czechoslovakian works in foreign countries.

The National Library has earned a name for dissemination of Czechoslovakian journal literature. Since 1953, it publishes the periodical index "Bibliograficky katalog CSR. Ceske casopisy (1955 onwards: 'Clanky v ceskyh casopisach)"; it displays prominently the periodicals of CSR.

23 The Central Technical Library of CSR

This Central Technical Library is the centre for technical literature and technical documentation and, for all libraries is the embodiment of closest coordination between scientific library work and documentation. With its bibliographic information department, this library is also the documentation centre for the entire field of industry in CSR. This special function is brought out by J. Koblitiz in his paper "Bibliographical information department of the Central Technical Library in Prague" (Dokumentation 1955, 2, 81-87).

The primary display of technical literature (books, brochures, periodical articles) is done in the card index for technical and economic literature. Each title is indexed with a short summary on slips in the format given in DIN A 6. The fields included are: building industry, mining, metallurgy, machine design, chemistry and chemical technology, energetics and electro-technology. Within these five main groups, 84 special subjects are handled, which may also be referred to individually. The entire primary material is then grouped every month in the five issues of "Review of technical and economic literature" (Prehled technicke a hospodarske literatury). There are bibliographic technical journals for the five fields mentioned above.

Besides this comprehensive work, literature searches are performed according to the requirements of technical science and practice in the country, and literature indexes and suitable bibliographies of widely different types are collected.

The central function of this library is also effectively confirmed by its work on the comprehensive two-volume "Index of foreign technical periodicals in the CSR" (Soupis cizozemsckych periodik). 800 libraries have collaborated in the preparation of this extremely important central catalogue of periodicals, for a preparatory period of only 5 years.

24 Slavonic Library

The fourth active library in the Clementium is the Slavonic Library. It has been created from the Slavonic Department of University Library, and was made independent only in 1949. It was established in 1924 by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It has more than 290,000 volumes of books, periodicals and
newspapers from the past and the present, of all the Slavonic peoples. The Russian department, containing nearly 160,000 volumes, forms the greatest collection within the Slavonic Library. It can be rightly proud of its periodical collection, in which numerous titles are included, which are extremely scarce in European libraries in such completeness. Today the modern literature of Slavonic people, especially the Russians has been given the greatest attention. Since 1952 it has been publishing the title index "Nove Sovetske knihy" which appears every 14 days. The titles, annotated according to subject, are indicated in transcription only. An author index and a subject index are provided for the 26 comprehensive issues appearing in the year.

25 Main Library of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences

This important scientific library was formed in the following manner. In 1769, the "Gelehrte Bohmische Privatgesellschaft" was established, from which, after various stages, the present Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences has developed (1952). It is directly under the Government. Like all academy libraries, it conducts extensive literature exchange. At present it has direct exchange relations with 540 institutions. It publishes the retrospective "Knihopis ceskych a slovenskych tišku". This bibliography of Czech and Slovakian publications from the earliest times to the end of the 18th century, started by Z. Tololka in 1925, is not yet complete. It is edited by F. Horak and has been appearing recently as a publication of the Academy. A bibliography of foreign-language 'Bohemica' will follow as supplement to this retrospective bibliography. The Academy Library has now a collection of more than 400,000 volumes. It has a staff of 50. F. Horak describes this Library in his paper "Main Library of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences"(Bibliothek, Bibliothekar, Bibliothekwissenschaft. Joris Vorstius Souvenir, Leipzig 1954, Pp 192-202).

26 Central Stations of the Faculties

The organisation of central stations, which play the role of faculty libraries, was done in 1950. For improving the work of the institute libraries, the stock of the individual institute libraries were checked and reduced. For each professorship, (katheder), special reference libraries of 2000-3000 volumes were alloted, consisting of books primarily for the assistants of the professorship (professors, lecturers and teachers). These privileged users may have at their disposal such a reference library by agreement with the college. All the remaining book stock in the region of the faculty was combined into a central faculty station. The main idea of this was to arrange as effectively as possible the material available in the university, and to avoid duplicate purchases. All faculty libraries are lending libraries, and the loan period as a rule is 4 weeks.

Besides, some other advantages have been obtained: 1) loss of books was reduced, 2) Greater use of the stock was made by personal loans to students for taking home, 3) Technical library services are available in each faculty, so that perfect cataloguing work is possible.

The management of the central station is not done by the university library but by a special committee of the Ministry of Education. Besides, the faculty library is assisted in its work by a standing commission, consisting of the prodekar (Assistant Dean), a librarian and a student representative. The stock is greatly staggered up to 40 copies so that certain important text books may be given to individual students for longer periods, sometimes for a whole semester, for use at home. Obviously these 'effective' copies ensure that a particular textbook is never 'exhausted' but may always be studied in one of the reading rooms of the faculty - one for students and one for members of the teaching body. Also, concession is shown to professors by allowing them longer loan periods and sometimes even permanent loans. Every month, a list of new acquisitions sent by the central station is available to each professor of the faculty. The college council decides the distribution of the stock within the faculty.

27 Central Library of the City of Prague

The Central Library of the City of Prague is much more than a library. It is a cultural
centre of Prague. Every week, either in the evening or late in the afternoon, literary sessions are held. The best artists of the theatre recite, poets read out their unpublished works, and discuss with their listeners their outline and plans. A large open-shelf library invites the reading of old books. The simple lending work is done at the desk in the same room. A whole series of special reading rooms offer extensive handy libraries with popular and scientific works. The children's reading room, in which lessons in reading aloud, Punch-and-Judy shows, and other entertainments for young readers are performed, is probably one of the biggest and best equipped in the whole of Europe. A bustling activity prevails in the corridors from early morning till late at night, but absolute quiet is ensured in the working rooms.

A stock of 1,000,000 volumes, distributed over 80 branches in all parts of the city and suburbs, is augmented, managed and circulated by 150 assistants. One thousand users are attracted every day by this extensive stock and by the central location of the main library. Nearly 100,000 users are registered every year, and the annual turnover of books lent out runs over 2,275,000.

3 SOME SPECIAL FEATURES

31 Collections

The acquisition work of a large central library like the University Library is in conformity with international practice. Scientific literature exchange is greatly developed, both with the countries of the Peoples' Republic and the western countries, in West Germany, particularly with Munich and Marburg. There is no plan for separate collecting area for the scientific libraries of the CSR. A central exchange station, which has the character of an international exchange office, is attached to the University Library.

The old stocks have a vast range. More than three-fourths of a million is arranged in University Library alone. In all, the number of old stocks to be arranged in the coming year is estimated at 2 millions. All duplicates are transmitted to other libraries, as required, without charge and without accounting procedure. In this connection, it may be mentioned that the most important closed access libraries of the past in the entire CSR have been preserved completely. 127 closed access libraries which contain besides extensive book stock, nearly 2200 incunabula and 3300 manuscripts, are made accessible to the public as book archives. The library of the National Museum has been authorized to compile a central catalogue of the stocks of the closed access libraries.

32 Catalogue

Special attention is paid to cataloguing. The requirement of all progressive librarians for special select catalogues - alphabetical as well as subject - is fully met. Everywhere, such catalogues are available or in preparation, so that the old, complete and also most complicated catalogues in their outline are continued as service catalogues and may be available only to a small circle of investigators.

The second feature which we are establishing in the field of cataloguing is - in its new part - uniform alphabetical cataloguing. Since 1950, the cataloguing rules based on mechanical principles of arrangement (Prozalimri pravidla jmenncho seznamu) are followed.

The position in the field of subject cataloguing has naturally not been so fortunate. Here we come across old and new systematic catalogues besides keyword catalogues. But here also, attempts towards rational uniformity have been apparent in the last few years. Decimal classification on one side, and the key word catalogue based on a prescribed set of rules (Prozatimni pravidla predinetoveho seznamu, 1951) are the main subject catalogues in the scientific libraries.

In the external form of the catalogues, the success of the card catalogue over the dictionary catalogue and loose-leaf catalogue has been clearly achieved. The flat card index for periodical catalogues according to the cardex system, produced by a Czechoslovakian firm (Karto-system) has been successful in the public scientific libraries. Mechanical multiplication of titles by printing or rota-printing processes is common. However in smaller libraries cards are typed. Edge-punched cards have not been used anywhere.
The progress in the field of central cataloguing has been remarkable. The entire Czechoslovakian literature has been centrally collected by the National Library. For the important field of periodicals, different indexes have been formed in the central catalogue:

1. Index of foreign technical periodicals in CSR, already mentioned, is prepared by the Central Technical Library of CSR,
2. Corresponding index for non-technical periodicals is prepared by the University Library.

The organisation and performance of central analysis of the contents of periodicals is done by the National Library. There is no circulation of central catalogue in the university libraries, like the one we have been mentioning for the past few years; but there is coordination between the various functions of university libraries on the one hand and the existence of faculty libraries on the other.

3. Use

The conditions for library use in CSR are very liberal:
1. The use of all the scientific libraries is free. In the public libraries, the reader pays a very small administrative fee.
2. Every citizen can use the literature displayed in the reading rooms without any administrative process throughout the extensive open hours (as a rule, 8 to 20, 21 or 22 hours continuously). He need only prove his personal identity.
3. Every citizen can borrow books from the scientific libraries - with the single exception of the National Library. On proving his personal identity, he is registered as a user. There are no special users' cards.
4. The lending of books within CSR is also free. Only in international borrowing, the user has to pay the incidental postage. In order to avoid overburdening the lending organization, the libraries restrict the number of orders which a user can place to three at a time.
5. All the scientific libraries are lending libraries. The National Library is exception.

It is a reference library having most rigid rules. Only in strongly exceptional cases does it give out its stock on loan. For all the other libraries, the usual restrictions for use hold good: works published before 1880, works having special importance, dictionaries, etc. And in the University Library, there is also a special restriction on journals, which can be lent, as a rule for a fortnight, only to research institutes, e.g. the Academy, but not to individuals. Belles-lettres are lent out like all other literature, only the University Library emphasizes firmly its archive-like nature: belles-lettres are given out only for verification of scientific work. This restriction can be understood when one considers that the Central Library of Prague city has extensive stock of learned works, and which are lent out without formal restrictions.

Most of the libraries have changed over to "numerus-currens" arrangements. The University Library shows some traditional specialities; it has an arrangement according to 73 heterogeneous groups, e.g. beside the appropriate subject fields, there is a linguistic group of all Czechoslovakian literature, as well as source groups, which cover the closed-access learned libraries. For the last two years, this library has also changed over to mechanical arrangement. However, the use of the 12 format groups (for saving space) retained in the University Library, is still not sufficient.

An important establishment which has so proved its worth is the special reading room of the University Library for research workers and scientific workers, which has an extensive reference library covering all subject fields.

How intensively the Czechoslovakian science, particularly philologic-historical disciplines, is devoted to cultural heritage, is shown by the richly equipped division of manuscripts and incunabula, for which a large special reading room is provided with extensive reference apparatus.

The special distinguishing feature of the work of Czechoslovakian librarians is their untiring struggle to explain the social service, which every library has to fulfil.