
Libraries and the Library System of Slovenia

MELITA AMBROŽIČ AND MAJA ŽUMER

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief introduction to the Republic of Slovenia and presents a history of its library system. Although the first “public” library opened in 1569 and the first “public” research library in 1701, the current library system originated in the twentieth century, after World War I. The library system of Slovenia today is an organized network consisting of publicly funded libraries of all types, which have been in continuous development since the end of World War II. Several academic and research libraries started using information-retrieval systems in the early 1970s, while other Slovenian libraries started using automated services during the late 1980s. Slovenian libraries have recently reached a relatively high level of development and are now focused on providing digital resources and other new services to their users. While digital libraries are active these days and several acquisition consortia are currently providing user access to numerous resources after a long period of stable and significant growth, the recent global financial crisis provoked austerity measures that are threatening the continued development of the country’s library system.

SLOVENIA — PAST AND PRESENT

Slovenia is a country in south-central Europe bordered by Italy to the west, the Adriatic Sea to the southwest, Croatia to the south and east, Hungary to the northeast, and Austria to the north. It takes its name from the Slovenes, a group of South Slavs who originally settled in the area at the end of the sixth century CE and established the principality of Carantania in the seventh, which became part of the Frankish Empire in the eighth century. Around 1000, Slovenia became part of the Holy Roman Empire. From the

fourteenth century, the Slovenian regions of Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, and Istria fell under the control of the Habsburg Empire becoming part of the Austrian Empire and subsequent Austro-Hungarian Empire (fig. 1).

In 1918, after World War I, most of the area that comprises present-day Slovenia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, which was renamed *Kraljevina Jugoslavija* (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) in 1929. On November 29, 1945, the Republic of Slovenia was established as part of Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, which in 1963 was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was disbanded in 1991. On June 25, 1991, Slovenia became independent; its democratic constitution was adopted on December 23rd of the same year. Slovenia was recognized by the European Union (EU) on January 15, 1992, and became a member of the United Nations (UN) in May. In 2004, Slovenia became a member of both NATO and the EU.

Today, Slovenia is a parliamentary republic with a multiparty system and a president who serves as head of state. Its central executive and administrative authority is retained by the government of the Republic of Slovenia (*Vlada Republike Slovenije*), which is led by the prime minister and a cabinet, whose ministers are elected by the National Assembly (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije*). The country of Slovenia covers just over 20,000 square kilometers of land, which comprises 212 municipalities with local, self-governing bodies. The city of Ljubljana is the capital. As of July 2013, the country had just over 2 million inhabitants. Of those age 15 years and older, over 50 percent had achieved a high school education, over 16 percent a university education, and less than 1 percent held a doctorate degree. During the 2012–2013 academic year, there were nearly 100,000 students enrolled in higher education programs, which employed nearly 9,000 full-time academic and research staff. The overall budget for formal education in Slovenia is over US\$2.5 billion, which constitutes almost 6 percent of Slovenia's gross domestic product (GDP). There are thirty-five independent colleges in the country, in addition to three public universities (University of Ljubljana, University of Maribor, and University of Primorska) and one private (University of Nova Gorica). In 2012, the budget for university-based research amounted to nearly 3 percent of the country's GDP, supporting nearly 13,000 full-time researchers. Almost 6,000 books and pamphlets and almost 2,000 newspapers, journals, and other periodicals were published in 2012, which constituted a decrease of over 2 percent from the previous year. In Slovenia, approximately 70 percent of the population uses the internet, and 74 percent of households have internet access (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, n.d.).

DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES IN SLOVENIA

The oldest libraries in Slovenia are located in churches, monasteries, and private collections. Historically, these libraries were accessible only to a

library was instituted to serve teachers, Protestant preachers, and the general public (Bahor, 2001, p. 204). The first research library with a full-time librarian was established in 1693—the Academia Operosorum Labacensium (Academy of the Industrious Residents of Ljubljana)—and remained open to the public until the Lyceum Library in Ljubljana succeeded it in 1774.

The Lyceum Library, which is considered the predecessor of the current National and University Library (NUL), opened with a collection of only 637 books, all rescued from a fire that had destroyed the disbanded Jesuit College. After two decades of serving only teachers, it opened to the general public in 1794. Accordingly, the library's name and mission changed over time. Beginning in 1807, it began receiving legal deposit copies of published material, although at first only from the province of Carniola. After 1919, when it formally became the primary research library in Slovenia, it started receiving copies from provinces throughout the country, and later from throughout Yugoslavia. With the establishment of the University of Ljubljana in 1919, the library took on a new role, that of a university library; the library was then renamed the University Library in 1938. After the liberation in 1945, the University Library was legally recognized as the Slovenian national library, whereupon its name changed to Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica v Ljubljani (National and University Library in Ljubljana) (fig. 2).

In 1849, a government decree mandated that all secondary schools had to include libraries. In 1919, all primary schools were also required to have libraries. During the first half of the twentieth century, several public libraries opened in cities, but they were not well-organized and their funding was not guaranteed. In Slovenia, it was assumed that the role of public libraries would also be performed by school libraries: "In addition to holding books for students, materials for teaches, and textbooks for poor students . . . [school libraries] also had to provide resources for the adult members of the local community" (Kodrič-Dačić, 2000, p. 10). According to official statistics recorded in 1939, there were 2,791 libraries at the time, which housed over 2 million books, of which 1.5 million were in circulation. With the expansion of the University of Ljubljana, there was a subsequent increase in demand for library services. Unfortunately, the decision was made not to develop a central university library; instead, when new faculties, departments, or institutes opened, they organized their own libraries, resulting in forty-one separate facilities by 1932.

Many libraries and library collections were destroyed during World War II; it was, therefore, urgent during the years that followed to reestablish library services. In 1950, there were already 2,359 new and refurbished libraries: 845 public libraries, 673 research libraries, 463 school libraries, and 378 trade union libraries, with combined holdings of some 2.5 million items (Berčič, 1976, p. 2). Many of these libraries were small and had very limited collections. Due to the problems that would inherently beset



Figure 2. National and University Library, built between 1936–1941 and designed by Slovene architect Jože Plečnik. The front facade was designed as a combination of brick and stone embeddings, some of them archeological remains from the same place. (Photo by Branko Cvetkovič, reproduced with permission of the National and University Library, Ljubljana.)

a loose system of small, limited, and dispersed libraries, it became obvious that legislation was needed to ensure the future development of a centralized library system in Slovenia. The first Slovenian library legislation was passed in 1961, stipulating that every municipality should have a so-called central public library, which, in addition to its local responsibilities, would also coordinate activities and guide the development of libraries within its jurisdiction. Moreover, this legislation defined the network of all publicly funded libraries for the first time. This network was further strengthened by another legislative act in 1982, which designated the hierarchical, pyramidal structure of the Slovenian library system. Municipal libraries were defined as the system's foundation, while the national library at the top served as the operational figurehead responsible for coordinating the entire system's activities and development.

The trade union libraries were workplace libraries with small collections used by union members and their families for their general educational and cultural needs. These libraries were not serviced by trained librarians but by those union members themselves with an affinity for books. The number of trade union libraries increased after World War II as a result of the country's industrial development. The first library law of 1961 had not stipulated any regulations regarding these libraries, consequently their collections were slowly integrated into either the public library system or special subject libraries affiliated with hosting institutions.

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

The current Libraries Act of 2001 set forth the general framework for the organization and operation of all types of libraries throughout Slovenia, as well as for the national computer library service (now done by the Institute of Information Science in Maribor [IZUM]). The act also defined librarianship as a *public service*, which means that access to information sources and library services must be available to all Slovenes equally. Funding for library operations is provided by both state and municipal governments. Two separate regulations in the Libraries Act detail the duties that libraries need to fulfill and the services to provide, as well as the requirement of their being formally registered.

Legal deposit legislation covers both printed and electronic materials, and the NUL is designated as the both the legal deposit library and the deposit program's coordinator. Four copies of every new work are required to be deposited by publishers, and two of these are then forwarded to the University of Maribor Library. In the case of subsidized publications, sixteen copies are collected, and twelve of these are then distributed to regional central public libraries as well as to two libraries abroad: one in Trieste, Italy, the other in Klagenfurt, Austria, both of which serve their local Slovenian communities. Digital resources are either provided by the originators or collected directly by the NUL.

ORGANIZATION OF THE LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Unity of the Library System

Since 1982, all publicly funded libraries have acted as a coordinated network that has been organized as a single system that follows common professional standards, guidelines, and recommendations. The mission of Slovenian libraries is to provide access to library services equally among all Slovenes. The 2001 legislation further strengthened the existing library system and designated the types of libraries involved in providing services to the public, including public, school, academic, and special libraries and the NUL; it also defined the functions of the national computer library service responsible for the development and maintenance of the union (national) catalog and automated library services. The role of the NUL as coordinator of the nationwide system was reconfirmed by the 2001 legislation, and the National Council on Librarianship was also introduced as an expert body charged with the responsibility for providing advice to all relevant ministries.

Libraries and Specialized Information Centers

At the present time, Slovenian public libraries have been in the process of developing their network for almost seven decades. A unified system now affords broad access to resources and services. Each local community or municipality provides library services to its inhabitants either by establishing and funding a public library on its own or by cooperating with neighboring municipalities. The current law stipulates that the Slovenian government may intervene when adequate services are not provided by a local community. Slovenian public libraries have recently prepared a strategic plan for the seven-year period, 2013–2020. In 2012, almost 25 percent of the population (about half-a-million people) were registered as users of public libraries; of these, over 150,000 are younger than age 15.

The Slovenian network of public libraries consists of both main and branch libraries. According to standards set by legislation, central libraries (currently fifty-eight) that are responsible for one or more municipalities must organize their branches in places with more than 1,500 inhabitants that are more than two-and-a-half miles apart. In 2012, there were 265 branch libraries. The Slovenian public library system also uses twelve bookmobiles that make 675 unique stops. Ten central regional libraries perform additional duties for the regions they serve: for example, more resources and services that fulfill advanced user needs; general professional support for library employees; the coordination of the accession of items relevant to local history; and the updating of stagnant collections. Central regional libraries represent, in this way, ten separate regional library networks that ensure the coordinated development of library services throughout the country. The responsibilities and activities of the central regional libraries are defined by specific regulations.

At the end of 2012, 86 academic libraries with 116 branches (including the NUL) were supporting higher education and research. Slovenian academic libraries have been organized into either a coordinated network (such as the ones that serve the universities of Ljubljana and Maribor) or university libraries (such as the ones that serve the universities of Primorska and Nova Gorica). The library system of the University of Ljubljana, on the other hand, is decentralized, connecting thirty-nine libraries with 63 branches that have been organized according to the needs of individual faculties and institutes. The NUL and the Central Technological Library (CTL), which are administratively independent, are adjuncts of the university library system. The Libraries Act of 2001 formally positioned the NUL as the primary university library for the University of Ljubljana, but, in reality, no proper mechanisms for assuming this position have been put in place. The University of Maribor has a similar organizational model that includes eleven libraries with twelve branches, in addition to the university's own library. In 2011, the University of Primorska established a centralized organizational model for its university library; unfortunately, however, this library currently has no suitable space in which to operate and is now housed in six separate locations. The University of Nova Gorica is the smallest institution (with only 549 students enrolled during the 2012–2013 academic year) supported by a university library. The independent colleges are served by the twenty-six federated libraries' 30 branches.

The 1982 legislation included school libraries as part of the library system of Slovenia. School libraries include those that serve elementary schools, high schools, community colleges, and music schools. As a rule, all pupils are members of their school's library. Such libraries perform a public service that is also governed by educational legislation. These school librarians are required to be certified teachers with training in library education. Statistical data about school libraries are collected every three years by the Slovenian Statistical Office. At the end of 2012, there were 966 school libraries, 77 percent of which were located in elementary schools, and 14 percent in high schools.

In 2012, there were 115 special libraries with 155 service units: 34 in cultural institutions, 21 in research organizations, 20 in governmental institutions, 16 in industry and commerce, 11 in health organizations, and 13 in other categories of institutions. Twenty-seven existing monastery and church libraries are not included in these figures. After the independence of Slovenia in 1991, the transition that ensued caused economic problems and consequently several special libraries closed. According to data collected by the NUL, the numbers dropped from 148 in 1997 to 137 in 2003, and further to 115 in 2012. In addition to libraries, there are six central, specialized information centers for science, technology, biotechnology, medicine, social sciences, and the humanities. The main mission of these

centers is to maintain control over bibliographic records that provide access to descriptions of the output of all Slovenian researchers. This service is coordinated by the IZUM.

The National Library

The NUL collects and preserves Slovenian cultural and scientific written heritage in both traditional and digital formats (fig. 3). It retains bibliographic control over the national collection and is part of international bibliographic-control administration with its ISBN, ISMN, and ISSN centers. In its role as central library, the NUL is responsible for the development of the library system at the national level and the continuing education and licensing of librarians; it both prepares professional guidelines and recommendations and assists with the preparation of library legislation. The NUL cooperates with the IZUM in the development of library automation and the union catalog. The NUL is also responsible for the design and development of the Digital Library of Slovenia (dLib.si) and is a founding member of both the European Library and Europeana. Since 2009 it has served as the national aggregator of cultural e-content for Europeana; additionally, the NUL coordinates the acquisition consortia for electronic publications. Since 1997, the library has contributed records from the Slovenian national bibliography to OCLC's WorldCat.

The Center for Library Development was established as part of the NUL in order to monitor the activities and development of all publicly funded libraries. The center maintains a registry of all libraries in Slovenia and also supports and evaluates the development of libraries of all types. It also collects statistical and other types of data about Slovenian libraries and is involved in the coordination of the activities of the regional central libraries.

The Union Catalog and the Computer Library Service

The Slovenian library catalog system, COBISS.SI (Cooperative Online Bibliographic System and Services), includes the automated library system, the union library catalog, and overall authority control. The system was established in 1987 when all Yugoslav national libraries adopted the cooperative approach supported by a contract that had been awarded to the IZUM. When Yugoslavia dissolved in 1991, there were fifty-five participating libraries outside of the newly independent Slovenia. Many libraries in the region that was cut off are now building their own systems using the same platform as the COBISS.Net network.

The role of the national computer library service continues to be performed by the IZUM, which develops and maintains both the COBISS system and the Slovenian Current Research Information System (SICRIS). The IZUM is also coordinating access to OCLC First Search, Web of Science, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost. At the end of 2013, there were 433 member libraries that had contributed 4.3 million bibliographic records to the



Figure 3. The National and University Library's main reading room, which is decorated with large chandeliers. (Photo by Branko Cvetkovič, reproduced with permission of the National and University Library, Ljubljana.)

COBIB union catalog. The "Ask a Librarian" reference service operating via e-mail and online chat is supported by information specialists in nine Slovenian libraries. COMARC, which is a version of UNIMARC, is the common bibliographic format; Eva Verona's cataloging rules (known by the acronym PPIAK) are used. The name authority control is fully implemented. The Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) is mandatory and is also used for shelf arrangement. The Slovenian subject-heading list is being developed, but there is no subject authority control at this time.

The Slovenian Research-Output Database

The SICRIS offers an overview of Slovenian research organizations, research groups, and all registered researchers supported by the national science agency. The information system provides bibliographic data for

all scholarly publications. The SICRIS is used for the evaluation of both researchers and research groups applying for project funding. These bibliographic data are part of the COBIB union catalog.

The National Council for Librarianship

The National Council for Librarianship, established in 2002, was inspired by the 2001 Libraries Act. This council is a consultative body that discusses and expresses opinions regarding any aspect of libraries and librarianship. Among its other roles, the council is responsible for the development and verification of professional standards and recommendations. It is comprised of thirteen members serving five-year terms and nominated by relevant ministries, the NUL and IZUM, public libraries, library schools, and professional associations. The major roles of the National Council for Librarianship include approving professional recommendations; discussing library legislation; monitoring library system development, library automation, and the union catalog; reviewing the annual reports and plans of the NUL and IZUM; and communicating regularly with the Slovenian ministries responsible for libraries.

SLOVENIAN LIBRARIES: RESOURCES AND SERVICES

At the end of 2012, there were 1,225 libraries, with 1,516 service points (table 1). Sixty were independent organizational units, with the remainder comprised of either subunits or parts of other organizations. Although there are nearly 1 million active members, it is important to note that this number may be inflated due to the fact that any single user may be a member of several libraries. Of the acquisition budget of almost €20 million, a significant part was used for e-resources. The NUL spent 61 percent of its library acquisition budget on e-resources; 48 percent of academic libraries' budget was spent on the same. Statistical data regarding Slovenian libraries used here are from the BibSiSt Online portal maintained at the NUL (Library System Development Center, n.d.), as well as from other printed and online resources published by the center. The data for school libraries are from the statistical office of Slovenia's SI-STAT portal.

The acquisition of foreign library materials and licensed electronic resources is coordinated by several consortia. There is a long tradition of this kind of coordinated acquisition of foreign research literature dating back to the compilation in the 1960s of the first "central" catalogs of foreign periodicals. These card catalogs provided an overview of existing resources, thus optimizing acquisition. The Central Technological Library at the University of Ljubljana led the way and started collecting foreign periodicals on engineering in 1968. The acquisition of research literature has been supported by the Slovenian government since 2005 through annual calls for proposals. In 2012, €3 million were earmarked for the acquisition of foreign scholarly books and periodicals and, in particular, electronic databases.

Table 1. Slovenian libraries in 2012

	National library	Academic libraries	Public libraries	Special libraries	School libraries	TOTAL
Administrative units	1	85	58	115	966	1,225
Service points	1	115	278	156	966	1,516
Library collection (units)	2,658,304	4,981,004	11,062,765	2,743,042	9,063,032	30,508,147
Yearly increment (units)	29,420	119,309	488,820	50,860	607,612	1,296,021
E-books	154,570	508,634	241	9,471	101,476	744,392
Members	10,401	127,702	495,995	48,199	310,244	992,541
Visitors	188,167	1,682,162	10,178,178	91,143	8,524,793	20,664,443
Circulation (units)	178,515	1,975,414	26,244,452	620,820	5,161,344	34,180,545
Reading-room seats	314	3,502	6,689	800	12,419	23,724
Professional librarians (FTE)	10,350	32,395	92,167	16,025	87,800	238,737
Total employees (FTE)	14,300	37,675	118,555	19,455	98,800	288,785
Acquisition budget (€)	689,384	5,190,004	7,590,894	3,009,585	2,299,099	18,778,966

Source: Library System Development Center, BibSiSt Online.

The Consortium of Slovenian Electronic Collections (COSEC) was established in 2003 to continue the work of eIFL Direct, the international consortium that provides access to EBSCOhost. Its focus is on information resources for the social sciences and humanities. COSEC is managed by the NUL. It continues to be one of the sixty members of eIFL, the world's largest international library consortium. In 2012, there were 136 members of the consortium, which cooperated in the acquisition of 33 databases, providing access to well over 9,000 e-journals and 100,000 e-books. Most of these are intended for use by students and researchers, but there is also a subset of resources available to public library users that have been included in the library collection for general interest. Remote access to digital content is available to nearly 100,000 students, researchers, and staff members at Slovenian universities, in addition to the employees of Slovenia's twelve public research institutes. Collections and services of a more general nature are also available through COSEC to an additional 500,000 users of public libraries and various special libraries.

Among the consortia coordinated by the Central Technological Library were IOS Press, JSTOR, IEEE, ACS, Wiley Online Library, SpringerLink, and Science Direct. As of 2012, the consortia had 56 institutional members, which were able to provide access to over 6,000 e-journals and 26,000 e-books mostly in science and technology to their patrons—mainly students and researchers. Over a million documents were downloaded in that year; the average price per download was less than €3 (“Letno poročilo Centralne tehniške knjižnice,” 2013). Access to additional information re-

sources (namely, ProQuest, Scopus, and Web of Science) is provided by the IZUM.

The Digital Library of Slovenia (dLib.si) is a national portal developed by the NUL that provides access to the Slovenian printed heritage and current scholarly publications. The documents are either digitized from materials housed at the NUL or partner libraries or, in the case of original digital publications, are provided by authors and publishers. Since 2006, all Slovenian scholarly journals that have been systematically included in dLib.si have been openly accessible whenever feasible. In 2012, the portal provided access to over 650,000 documents, of which 20 percent were provided by partners (publishers of scholarly journals, other libraries, associations, and authors).

KAMRA is a regional online portal that provides access to digitized documents from local historical collections in public libraries, archives, and museums. In 2012, there were nearly 11,000 digital objects distributed among 162 collections that had been contributed by 138 partners. The KAMRA portal is maintained by the Celje Central Library, in cooperation with other regional libraries and the Association of Public Libraries.

The Central Technological Library manages the Digital Library of the University of Ljubljana (DiKUL), which is a metasearch tool that provides access to more than 60,000 e-journals, e-books, and databases, including Web of Science, OCLC FirstSearch, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Blackwell-Wiley, ACS, IEEE/IEL, IOS Press, JSTOR, ProQuest, Oxford University Press, Emerald, Sage, EBSCOhost, CINAHL, APA, open-access resources, and local digital collections.

Similarly, the Digital Library of the University of Maribor (DKUM) provides access to all electronic resources acquired or licensed by the university, including theses and dissertations that have been defended at the university. In 2013, these resources totaled approximately 33,000. The library also acts as a repository for all scientific output of the university.

In 2013, with partial funding from the European regional-development fund and support from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport, all Slovenian universities established the infrastructure for the Slovenian Portal of Open Science, an open repository for all research output in Slovenia, including theses and dissertations.

FORMAL AND CONTINUING LIBRARY EDUCATION

There was no formal library education in Slovenia until 1957, when a one-year program for library and archives was initiated. It was replaced by a one-year program for librarians and publishers in 1964, which was the first formal library education at the tertiary level, although no degree was granted. Beginning in 1965, a two-year minor degree in librarianship was possible at the Faculty of Education, which ran for twenty-two years, until the full four-year program started at the Faculty of Arts in 1987. The

only formal library education in Slovenia currently available is through the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies at the University of Ljubljana. Founded in 1987, the department first offered only an undergraduate minor, then in 1997 commenced offering an undergraduate major. It was at this point that both master's and doctoral programs in library science were also offered for the first time. Since then, the so-called Bologna reforms (commencing in 1999, these reforms aimed at ensuring comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications across Europe) have been implemented and now the structure of degrees is

- a three-year bachelor's degree (first cycle) in librarianship and informatics;
- a choice of four two-year master's degrees (second cycle) in library science, information science, publishing, or school librarianship; and
- a three-year doctoral program (third cycle) in information science.

The department also offers one-year courses for certified teachers who want to become school librarians. In 2012, there were 157 undergraduate students and 81 (second-cycle) graduate students, 4 of which were part-time. In 2000, 645 students graduated from the "old" bachelor program, 65 from the "old" master's program, and 18 from the doctoral program. After the Bologna reforms, 171 students have graduated from the bachelor's degree program, 29 from the master's, and 2 from the doctoral.

Continuing education in librarianship also has a long tradition in Slovenia. Courses on a variety of topics were first offered in 1947 and have continued to the present day under the auspices of the NUL and IZUM. Several large libraries and professional associations also host occasional lectures and workshops to the interested public. According to Slovenian library legislation, all librarians must pass a licensing examination after an internship period in a library. These exams are administered by the NUL, which is home to the licensing exam committee. Catalogers who wish to contribute to the shared cataloging system must obtain the appropriate permissions from the NUL and IZUM.

ASSOCIATIONS OF LIBRARIANS AND LIBRARIES

Slovenian librarians did not have their own association until 1947. Before that, many would have been members of the Austrian Library Society, and, after 1931, of the Society of Yugoslav Librarians. The latter had three sections, with seats in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. The Slovenian section in Ljubljana had only six members prior to the beginning of the World War II, after which time the number rose to ten.

The first meeting of the Slovenian Library Society occurred in Ljubljana in December 1947. Later, in 1968, several additional regional societies were also established that served as branches. In 1983, eight of these regional societies joined to form the Slovenian Library Association. It is

now organized into sections that support a variety of professional library activities and institutions. Currently, there are ten sections, as well as a terminology committee. The association adopted its Code of Ethics in 1995 and its Library Development Manifesto in 2000. Today, there are approximately 1,300 members. Since 1957, the association has published its own journal, *Knjižnica* (The Library), which is the only Slovenian scholarly journal in the library field.

The Slovenian Library Association focuses particularly on the development and promotion of professional guidelines, standards, and recommendations. It also organizes conferences, serves as an advisory body to the Slovenian government, and cooperates with the IFLA and other international bodies. Three awards are presented by the association every two years: the Čop Award, for general contributions to librarianship; the Kalan Award, for significant publications related to librarianship; and the Stepišnik Award, for contributions to mobile librarianship.

In 2009, Slovenian public libraries established the Association of Public Libraries. All fifty-eight independent public libraries are now members and are represented by the directors of each individual library. This association aims to foster coordinated efforts to further develop public libraries in Slovenia and has recently implemented its strategic plan, "The Slovenian Public Libraries Development Strategy 2013–2020."

SLOVENIAN LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS

Public Libraries

After the independence of Slovenia in 1991, public libraries in the country developed quickly, and there was a general increase in activity to include new and renovated library buildings, new computer equipment, more staff, and larger collections. By the end of 1990, public libraries had over 45,000 square meters of floor space, including buildings that housed branches and service points—a figure that more than doubled by 2012, at which time library space covered over 105,000 square meters. Similarly, the number of library staff members grew from 653 (of which 538 were qualified librarians) in 1990 to 1,185 (of which 930 were qualified librarians) in 2012. During these years, library collections more than doubled while the number of users increased by 50 percent, and the circulation of materials and number of library-related events more than tripled. The workload of librarians has increased as well: the circulation per librarian has nearly doubled since the early 1990s. Funding grew from about €2.5 per Slovenian citizen in 1992 to over €23 as well. Further, while library membership in 1990 consisted of a mere 16 percent of the total population, by 2012 it had grown to 24 percent. Public libraries in Slovenia have modernized over the last couple of decades, successfully building digital collections (although mainly as members of consortia) and by digitizing their own materials.

Academic Libraries

Since 1990, the number of academic libraries (aside from the NUL) has grown from fifty administrative units to eighty-five, a consequence of new, mostly private universities and colleges that have sprung up only during the past decade. The last ten years in particular have seen an impressive growth in the number of these libraries, given that as of 2002 there were only fifty-four. There are various notable indicators in the expansion of Slovenian academic libraries. For example, collection sizes have increased by nearly 50 percent, and the number of periodicals to which libraries provide access increased exponentially, from fewer than 25,000 in 2007 to well over 600,000 in 2012. At the same time, collections were purged of outdated materials after 2005, an activity that was followed by a significant increase in e-resources as more digital libraries were established. The number of user visits to libraries peaked during 2006–2007, followed by a decline that can also be attributed to the availability of remotely accessing digital library resources. There was a similar trend in circulation of materials, which has seen a consistent decrease since 2008; the proportion of materials in circulation is now 6 percent lower than it was in 1995. While the number of library staff members has grown by a mere 17 percent, the number of potential users has seen a whopping 95 percent increase. The number of registered users has remained stable throughout all these changes, however. The decline after 2003 appears to have been a consequence of the introduction of a common membership card for all academic libraries in the university library system.

These statistics seem to indicate a generally positive trend for Slovenian academic libraries since 1991, but on further analysis a different picture emerges. While the number of periodicals experienced a dramatic increase (160 per 1,000 potential users in 2000 to over 2,000 in 2012), circulation fell from 48 per potential user in 1995 to a mere 19 in 2012. The number of visits per potential user also fell slightly, from 18 in 2000 to 16 in 2012, while at the same time, the number of reading-room seats remained stable. Acquisition funding rose from €36 per potential user in 2000 to €49 in 2012. On the other hand, one can see far less improvement in facilities when compared to public libraries; most academic libraries still lack appropriate spaces for the new generation of users and changes in modern teaching and research.

One important library context to consider is that of private college libraries, where the situation looks rather bleak. Most Slovenian private colleges had not established an appropriate library before the accreditation process, so they signed contracts with local public or academic libraries to provide services to their students and faculty. Often, these libraries in more recently established private colleges do not meet the basic professional requirements for staff, space, collection, and hours of operation. These libraries are quite isolated from the academic library system, and in

some professional activities, are not able to cooperate with other academic libraries.

General trends indicate that Slovenian academic libraries are moving toward acquiring electronic resources, providing remote access, forming consortia, federating digital libraries, and creating institutional repositories. On the negative side, however, the fragmentation of academic libraries and the lack of cooperation among them have resulted in inefficient operations, particularly in acquisitions and cataloging.

School Libraries

Since independence, there have been many school openings, particularly at the secondary level. The number of school libraries in Slovenia has thus steadily increased, a consequence of the rising student population. Between 1996 and 2012, the number of these libraries rose by 50 percent, while schools' library staff grew by only a little over 20 percent. The total budget for school libraries increased from €8.8 million in 1996 to €19.3 million in 2012. At the same time, the acquisitions budget first grew by almost 30 percent, but since 2009 has decreased and is currently 10 percent lower than it was in 1996. Meanwhile, the amount of space devoted to library facilities has improved dramatically, from less than 55,000 square meters in 1999 to over 123,000 in 2012. The number of school library reading-room seats has increased by 79 percent, and these libraries have seen similar trends in frequencies of visits by students—a number that has doubled over the past twenty years—yet overall circulation has been steadily decreasing since 2009 and is already 10 percent lower than it was in 1999.

Library automation began in 1990 with a newly developed software package, Šolska knjižnica (School library). At that time, the NUL had been distributing floppy disks with bibliographic data of newly published books. After 1995, however, school libraries started downloading the bibliographic data from the COBIB union catalog. School libraries are the only library type for which the use of COBISS is not mandatory; in fact, most Slovenian libraries are now using WinKnj, a system that was specially developed for them. At the present time, 159 larger libraries in Slovenia are members of COBISS. Despite all the positive trends in space and funding, however, problems persist, particularly following the economic downturn of 2009. A decrease in the acquisitions budget and declining investment in computer equipment may be the two factors that pose the most danger to the future development of school libraries in Slovenia.

The National Library

The NUL was assigned several new functions after the country gained independence, including, in 1992, responsibility for assigning ISBN and ISSN numbers, and, in 1999, for ISMN numbers. As the main library in Slovenia, the NUL includes a Library System Development Center that

collects and analyzes statistical data regarding the national library and public, academic, and special libraries. During the 1990s, the NUL was able to join the international library community and commenced contributing its bibliographic data to international databases and joining forces with other European national libraries in their activities. The NUL is currently involved with contributing its records of translations into Slovenian to the Index Translationum, which is maintained by UNESCO. In 1996, the NUL signed a contract with OCLC, and in 1997, it commenced uploading its bibliographic records into WorldCat. The NUL and its staff are now members of more than twenty international organizations and associations, including IFLA, CENL (Conference of European National Libraries), and the European Library. The NUL was one of the eight founding members of the European Library and is now also involved in building Europeana, the digital library of Europe.

Statistical data show that the NUL expanded significantly during the period between 1990 and 2012. Its collections have increased by 40 percent, library staff by 20 percent, library visits by over 60 percent, and circulation by 30 percent. Circulation peaked in 2006 and then, unsurprisingly, started to decline because after that time the library began to focus on electronic publications and services. This change is reflected in the increase in its share of the acquisition budget, from under 30 percent in 2005 to just over 60 percent in 2012, and by the number of digital resources made available as part of dLib.si. As with the other types of Slovenian libraries, not all trends have been positive, however. While the NUL was experiencing a 2 percent annual gain in government funding prior to 2009, this funding has now been reduced. At the same time that there has been less funding available from European projects, austerity measures enacted domestically have resulted in staff reduction and minimal investment in computer equipment at the NUL. Space also continues to be a problem: the building of the new library, which was expected to be completed in 1999, has not yet begun and seems to have been postponed indefinitely.

CONCLUSION

Slovenia is *geographically* defined as a Mediterranean country, and *culturally* as a central European country. The historical influence of the Austrian library tradition is still evident in the old card catalogs, library buildings, and, to some extent, in current practices. As part of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia was considered as belonging, politically, to Eastern Europe. In the case of libraries, however, this assumption is only partly true: in contrast to other Eastern Bloc countries, Yugoslavia was far more open under communism. Foreign scholarly publications have always been available to most library patrons, and its first computers were installed during the 1970s, which was fairly early in the general move toward automation. Information-

retrieval systems were either developed locally or purchased, and from the early 1970s onward, tapes of databases (INSPEC, COMPENDEX, Chemical Abstracts, and so on) were regularly uploaded into them. Access to DIALOG was available despite nearly prohibitive connection costs. Slovenian researchers have always received ample support and services from their nation's academic and special libraries.

What makes the Slovenian library system special is its library automation. Since it was developed in Yugoslavia in 1988 and initially intended for its six national libraries, the COBISS system was designed as a uniform solution for both local library automation and the union catalog. All publicly funded libraries, with the exception of school libraries (for whom membership is optional), are members of the COBISS network. The local and union catalogs are closely connected; the latter catalog also includes data about research publications in support of the research database. Slovenian libraries were developed and have operated as an efficient, coordinated network since the end of World War II. As far as libraries are concerned, there has been no dramatic change after Slovenia gained independence in the early 1990s. The positive attributes of the country's libraries include relatively good computer equipment and networks, given that almost all Slovenian libraries support either EDUROAM or LIBROAM. Unfortunately, the recent global economic crisis and consequent austerity measures are threatening both the public sector in general and libraries in particular. Slovenian libraries have been facing budget cuts, lack of maintenance and investment, and staff reductions since 2011. If this continues, the development of libraries and their services may be compromised. In order for the nation's libraries to operate efficiently, their funding needs must be reconsidered by policymakers.

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Melita Ambrožič has served as the deputy director of the National and University Library (NUL) in Ljubljana since 2004. After completing her degree in political science in 1979, she worked in the library and documentation center of the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism in Ljubljana (now known as the Jože Goričar Central Social Sciences Library). Between 1985 and 1991 she served as the head of this library. Since 1991, she has worked for the NUL, first as a consultant in the research and development department, and then as the head of the education and training center. She completed her master's degree in 1993 and doctorate in 1999 in the field of information science at the University of Zagreb. From 1995 to 2012 she was a part-time lecturer in the Department for Library and Information Studies and Book Studies at University of Ljubljana. Her research interests include academic libraries, library performance evaluation, and user studies. For more than three decades, she has been actively involved in the professional activities of the Slovenian Library Association, and since 1991 has been a member of IFLA, currently serving on its Standing Committee of the National Libraries Section.

Maja Žumer is a professor of library and information science at the University of Ljubljana. After completing her degree in mathematics, she held several positions as a computer programmer and systems analyst, during which time she was also involved in the design, development, and implementation of information-retrieval systems. Her master's degree is from Kent State University in Ohio. In 1993, she became head of the research and development department at the NUL in Ljubljana after having first served as systems librarian. After completing her doctorate in information science in 1999 at the University of Zagreb, she joined the faculty of the Department for Library and Information Science and Book Studies at University of Ljubljana. Her research interests include usability, conceptual modeling, and the design and evaluation of information-retrieval systems and end-user interfaces. She has also been involved with various IFLA working groups and several EU projects. She is a member of the IFLA FRBR Review Group and has served as cochair of FRISAD.