
Montenegrin Libraries, 1989–2014

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a historical overview of the processes and changes experienced by libraries of all types in Montenegro during the past twenty-five years, as well as their current state. Major aspects of library work are covered: the general situation, legislation, buildings and equipment, collections, services, personnel, and automation. The period from 1989 to 2014 is characterized by a stream of social and economic turbulences as well as by rapid changes due to developments in information and communications technology. Libraries in Montenegro are keeping pace with developments in the library field generally, the National Library of Montenegro (NLM) being the primary moving force in this regard.

INTRODUCTION

Montenegro, a small country in southeastern Europe situated on the shores of the Adriatic Sea has 660,000 inhabitants, 300 libraries of all types, and close to 500 librarians. The total number of library items in Montenegrin libraries is 2.5 million, which equates to approximately four items per capita. Most of them, nearly 2 million, belong to the National Library of Montenegro “Đurđe Crnojević” (NLM). Primary and secondary school libraries are the most numerous in the country, amounting to 250. There are twenty municipalities with their public libraries, and few of them have branches. The University of Montenegro, with its University Library, is the oldest and biggest Montenegrin university. Libraries in Montenegro have a long and rich tradition; their beginnings can be found in the monastic libraries of the Middle Ages and to the first printing establishment, situated in the Cetinje monastery in 1492, thanks to Đurđe Crnojević, the then ruler of Montenegro.

The NLM, with the deepest roots among national libraries in this part of Europe, is a true treasure of the Montenegrin written heritage—the intellectual memory of the nation. It is one of the leading cultural symbols of the country. The NLM preserves items that evidence the rich culture of Montenegro and also the origin and identity of the peoples who have lived for centuries in this part of the Balkans. In accordance with its mission, the NLM preserves written publications and other media issued within the country, and it publishes the *Montenegrin National Bibliography*. By organizing scientific conferences, exhibitions, concerts, and films, the NLM serves knowledge and education and fosters research, learning, and creativity.

As the central library, positioned at the apex of the republic's library pyramid, it is also the national agency for the allocation of ISBN, ISSN, ISMN, and other international bibliographic numbers as well as for providing Cataloging in Publication (CIP) data for publishers in Montenegro. Projects undertaken by the NLM, such as Montenegro's union e-catalog COBIB.CG and the Digital Library of Montenegro, allow users to use bibliographic information and documents in electronic form at the global level. The library has rich cooperative relationships with other national libraries worldwide, both in exchanges of publications and participating in various international projects.

MONTENEGRIN LIBRARIES

The NLM is designated by law to monitor and assist the work of all libraries nationwide. Its department for library network development prepares analyses, studies, and reports on individual libraries and library systems. These analyses also serve as the basis for determining library development policies, which means that they have not only professional but also social significance.

The impression is that a general assessment of the current state of Montenegrin libraries cannot be given. The situation varies from library to library (and from municipality to municipality), and it mainly depends on the relationship of the municipal funding agencies with these institutions. Problems are numerous: legal status, buildings and space, finances, professional qualifications of employees, and so on.

Out of twenty public libraries, only four are independent legal entities, the other sixteen being units within cultural centers—a fact that initially presents a limiting factor in their performance because we know that the funding agencies of cultural centers at the municipal level usually do not have sufficient financial resources. Minimal resources are being allocated to the needs of libraries, which often are given low priority in budgets. This is far from meeting the current needs of those libraries. As such, public libraries effectively lack the power to make decisions regarding their own work, whether this be acquisitions, working with users, or hiring the

necessary professional personnel. Libraries in Cetinje, Podgorica, Pljevlja, and Herceg Novi have fewer problems of this kind because they are able to make independent decisions about their program budgeting and its implementation. However, even among independent libraries, there are differences in terms of the budgets they receive from their funding entities.

Due attention should be urgently given to this problem, and a modality for its resolution must be found. The optimal way to address this situation would be to detach libraries from cultural centers and organize them as independent cultural institutions. This is a basic precondition for the creation of a favorable environment for public libraries and the improvement of librarianship in Montenegro in general (Radusinović, 2010). However, it should be noted that no library has been closed during the last twenty-five years. Libraries are still very much part of society, fulfilling their modest roles despite all the difficulties of neighboring wars and economic sanctions during the 1990s, transitional problems during the 2000s, and the global financial crisis during the 2010s.

The problem of shortages of space in public/city libraries is a major one. As for the collections in such libraries, the situation differs from one to the other both quantitatively and qualitatively. According to the standards stipulated by law, the size of a collection depends on the number of inhabitants in the municipality in which the library is located. Libraries follow the requirement laid down in standards that books are kept on open access and arranged according to the UDC system. It must be emphasized that only a small number of libraries have a closed storage space.

In terms of the professional processing and handling of library materials, as in other areas of library work, each situation varies. Automatic data processing (ADP) is used only in a small number of libraries—for many reasons, including the lack of trained personnel and equipment and the reluctance of libraries to assume the obligations imposed by the modern information environment. Until 2001, two programs for ADP were used: BIBLIO, the local version of WIN ISIS (Herceg Novi, Bar, Budva, Pljevlja); and an old version of COBISS, which has been used in the NLM and the University Library.

In many libraries, including those that used BIBLIO, the equipment consisted mainly of only one personal computer. Obviously, this was far too inadequate to become involved in the contemporary trends of library automation. But thanks to the efforts of IZUM (Institute of Information Science) in Maribor, the NLM, the Ministry of Culture, and a number of funding agencies, this situation is changing for the better.

At the present time in Montenegro, there are twenty-six libraries that use the COBISS.CG system, which represents a major step forward in the modernization process. The quality of the COBISS program can be recognized, among other things, by the fact that, in addition to Montenegro, libraries in Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia,

Albania, and Bulgaria are using the same system. By connecting to this bibliographic information system, librarians and users of library services can search online databases of all participating libraries and access the desired information at any time. Moreover, usage of the system eliminates the need for traditional card catalogs and manual book inventories, which significantly facilitates the work of libraries and provides more quality services to customers.

School libraries represent the largest, but also the most underdeveloped, library sector in Montenegro. They are visibly lagging behind the innovation and modernization evident in the national educational system as a whole. Old and outdated books, the absence of modern and attractive formats, few professional librarians, short opening hours, and a generally low status in school communities are the main characteristics of school libraries, without at present any signs of change for the better. It is an area that is still waiting to be reconsidered (Damjanovic, 2001).

The University in Podgorica was founded in 1976, its main library in 1979. The university's library also consists of seventeen faculty and institute libraries. Historically, academic librarianship in Montenegro has not developed as a system; rather, it has evolved to consist of a series of independent faculty and special libraries within their parent institutions and their central university libraries, all loosely connected. The availability of equipment and funding varies in libraries. In recent years, new private universities and faculties have been established, but except for two of these, they do not have libraries as mandated by academic standards. Consequently, their students are directed to the NLM and the University Library to study (Cicmil, 2006).

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Libraries in Montenegro house over 2.5 million items of library materials, the NLM itself holding more than four-fifths of them. The collections of the NLM are constituted, developed, and planned in accordance with modern principles of collection development. The general collection consists of books and serials from all scientific fields and in different languages. Special collections include manuscripts and archives, old and rare books, cartographic materials, music and audio-visual items, and graphic and artistic works. In addition, the Montenegrina (Черногорика) collection consists of Montenegrin periodicals and books and other materials of historical importance. Public libraries, in addition to their general collections, including collections for children, hold items pertaining to local history.

The collection of old and rare books contains about 10,000 items, including incunabula, post-incunabula, old books (books printed in Cyrillic before 1868, and in Latin before 1800), rare editions, and miniature books. The collection holds nine extremely significant manuscript books

(mostly *ljebaruše*, which are folk medicinal-recipe collections). The single most valuable Cyrillic book is the *Оточник*, which dates back to the late fourteenth century. As for printed books, the oldest in the collection are *Noctes Atticae*, printed by Andrija Paltašić (from Kotor) in Venice in 1477, and *Epistolae sancti Hieronymi*, also printed in Venice, in 1496, by Jovan Varcelens. These are showcase copies, with prominent typographic features.

The Montenegrina National Collection is the most important set of materials documenting Montenegrin cultural heritage. It is housed in the NLM and was established according to three criteria: *territorial* (works published and printed in Montenegro); *personal* (publications whose authors are Montenegrins or who were born in Montenegro); and *subject* (publications, as well as some unpublished materials, that are thematically related to Montenegro, regardless of their language and places of publication) (Đurović, 2009). The acquisition of materials for the Montenegrina is largely provided by legal deposit, gifts, and exchanges. Due to insufficient funding for the purpose, few materials are directly purchased.

According to internal statistical data collected by the National library's department for development of the library network, the acquisition of library materials increased significantly between 2000 and 2012, compared to the poor record of acquisitions between 1990 and 2000.

LIBRARY SERVICES

The city library in Bijelo Polje (a municipality in the north of the country) maintains a bookmobile—Infobus. Started in 2003 as a project funded by the Open Society Institute, Infobus is the first mobile library in Montenegro. The service is aimed at users in rural parts of the municipality. Besides the usual lending services, this mobile library has undertaken several successful projects targeting local inhabitants and special user groups, such as prisoners and people with special needs (Đurović, 2011).

Libraries provide services to distant individual users and other libraries both within the country and abroad. The NLM operates an interlibrary loan system. In 2011, there were nearly 12,000 registered users in the public library system, borrowing nearly 145,000 items (12.12 items per user). During that same year, there were about 17,500 registered users in the academic library system, including the NLM, who borrowed over 38,000 items (2.18 items per user) (Cicmil, 2010). This lower number of borrowed items within the academic sector is due to the fact that its collections are noncirculating, hence research has to be done onsite. In 2013, Montenegro's union e-catalog, COBIB.CG, was browsed 102,234 times, the NLM's OPAC was accessed 30,554 times, and data on libraries from the COLIB.CG database were browsed 2,211 times. In addition to their traditional services, Montenegrin libraries have diversified their offerings; the adoption of new information technologies has led to an increasing number of remote users.

Publishers are required to register their publications with the CIP program. This is done in the COBISS Montenegro database, and the publication data are available on the internet even before the item is released. An average of a thousand CIP numbers for books and periodicals are issued annually by the NLM.

The national ISBN (International Standard Book Number) center, located in the NLM, was established in 2005, and since then has annually assigned an average of a thousand numbers to books and pamphlets printed in Montenegro. The national ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) center, also located in the NLM, was established in 2004 and assigns numbers to magazines, newspapers, and periodicals published in the country. The center allocates about sixty ISSNs annually. Regarding legal deposit, immediately after the printing or publication of a title, all publishers, according to the nation's Law on Publishing, are bound to deliver a certain number of copies of each publication, regardless of medium, to the NLM.

LIBRARY PUBLISHING

The NLM has its own publishing imprint, with distinctive editions and titles resulting from the research work of its experts and external contributors in the field of library and information science, bibliography, and cultural history. There are six series: colotype editions, special editions, bibliographies, bio-bibliographies, serials, and catalogs. According to the number of published titles, special-editions series is the largest collection and also the most thematically diverse, containing works on library science, printing and publishing, and history (including library history), as well as memorials, proceedings, linguistic studies, studies of culture and art, and facsimiles of manuscripts from the NLM's special collections.

Other Montenegrin libraries engage in publishing activity also: the Ivo Vučković Public Library and Reading Room in Bar; the Njegoš City Library and Reading Room in Cetinje; the Library of Budva in Herceg Novi; the City Library in Kotor; the Stevan Samardžić Public Library in Pljevlja; and the Radosav Ljumović Public Library in Podgorica. Generally, these publish works by local authors or books on local history and people. The research materials for these titles are very often provided by local library collections.

In 1961, the NLM, together with the Association of Librarians of Montenegro, launched the journal *Bibliographic Herald*, which was published three times a year. Only one break in the publication sequence has occurred, between 1966 and 1976. Since 1999, it has usually been published annually. Mainly focused on bibliographic, bio-bibliographic, and cultural-history research, the journal is an indispensable source of information for further research in these areas.

Several public libraries have launched their own journals. The Radosav Ljumović Public Library started *Glasnik* in 1993; in 1999, the Herceg Novi

City Library and Reading Room started publishing *Boka*; and the Njegoš City Library and Reading Room launched its journal, *Luča*, in 2008. Unfortunately, all three have ceased publication because of lack of funding. In 2003, the Association of Librarians also launched its own journal, but it was short-lived.

LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2004, the NLM was included in the project of restoration and renovation of the former Italian embassy in Cetinje (funded by the government of Norway), a building dating from the early twentieth century. The library is now housed in the refurbished structure, which provides optimal conditions for the storage of library materials. The installation of air conditioning and alarm systems has secured and protected the collections. A computer network has been installed throughout. The NLM's old and rare books and other special collections are situated in another building, the former French embassy, also a historic building that is scheduled for remodeling as well (fig. 1).

The story of the Radosav Ljumović Public Library in the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica, is an instructive one. Because of its extremely favorable location, the building has been a very attractive place to conduct library work. For decades, library authorities waged an unequal struggle with town planners who, in their general urban designs and projects, planned for the building to be demolished and for the library to be located elsewhere. Due to social changes that have taken place during the past twenty years and the new technical and other standards required, the need for modernization of the working and user conditions became an imperative. Thus the library's renovation commenced in 2006, and the building was reopened in 2012. The main floor now provides an upgraded area of 900 square meters containing reading and conference rooms, a small ceremonial hall for business meetings, carrels for individual work and scientific activities, areas for professional and administrative staff members, and a variety of public spaces for book and art exhibitions, concerts, and roundtable discussions.

The library's ground floor level is nearly 3,000 square meters and provides spaces for reading rooms, study rooms, space for special collections, local history collections, books on open-access shelving, periodicals, newspapers, and other collections. Funded by the city authority, the new library represents a wise investment in both local and national culture (Milić, 2011).

LIBRARY AUTOMATION AND DIGITALIZATION

The knowledge-based society requires library information systems that support education and research and encourage cultural, technological, and economic development. Libraries cannot function successfully if they



Figure 1. National Library of Montenegro, Cetinje. The building was formerly occupied by the French embassy. (Photo: Courtesy of the National Library of Montenegro.)

remain as isolated islands. Knowledge and culture must be linked, thus providing conditions for dialogue and cooperation as the basis for national and international development.

In 2004, the NLM, together with the IZUM, developed the Montenegrin union e-catalog. This project, which is a model of an automated library and information services system based on the platform developed in 1987, was accepted by the Montenegrin Ministry of Culture. Because of this project, the COBISS Center of Montenegro was established in 2007 and currently consists of twenty-six member libraries. The result of their cooperation is an electronic union catalog (union e-catalog), available to online users worldwide, of Montenegrin library materials based on shared cataloging practice. Currently, COBISS3—the third generation of this software, with user interfaces in multiple languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, English, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovene), is gradually being implemented.

The shared bibliographic database of Montenegrin libraries, our union e-catalog COBIB.CG, includes 327,000 bibliographic items: more than 2,000 links to electronic publications, 255,000 monographs, 65,000 articles, 2,300 magazines, 500 CDs/DVDs, and about 2,000 other units. In 2008, the Center for Microfilming and Digitization was established at the NLM in order to protect valuable Montenegrin heritage documents and ensure its availability in digital form to the widest range of users.

The Petar II Petrović Njegoš digital project collection was part of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of the great Montenegrin poet and ruler. The collection contains approximately 10,000 scanned pages and includes first editions of all of Njegoš's works (*The Mountain Wreath*, *The Ray of the Microcosm*, *The False Tsar Šćepan Mali*, *Svobodijada*); manuscripts of *The Mountain Wreath* and *Njegoš's Notebook*; translations of his works; literature about him; correspondence; biography; and posters for performances of his theatrical works. Producing the collection included the scanning and processing of materials, programming, and design of the portal, which became operational in early 2014.

With technology that was largely acquired through donations and a constant lack of professional staff, the NLM has succeeded in achieving viable results in establishing a digital library. Obviously, a large number of publications are being produced exclusively in digital format and thus requires their inclusion in a web archive, as the NLM also has an obligation to collect and keep e-published materials acquired through legal deposit. In order to prepare for the launch of the Digital Library of Montenegro, about 400 periodicals, old and rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and posters have been scanned, amounting to more than 70,000 digital objects.

The National Library Digitization Program was adopted by the government of Montenegro in December 2008. The program is aimed at launch-

ing a comprehensive, long-term process of the development of special digitization programs for all segments of the cultural heritage of the country. The government has planned to provide adequate staff, space, and technological infrastructure to assist its implementation.

The program's preparatory phase (2009–2010) entailed the establishment of the legal framework, standards, norms, guidelines, and the Council for Digitization and the formation of the digitization center at the NUL. The implementation phase included the development of digital collections and the Digital Library of Montenegro portal; equipment acquisition for the digitization center; selection of materials for digitization; the setting up of centers for digitization in the University Library in Podgorica and city libraries in Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, and Herceg Novi; digitization projects; the establishment of digital collections based on selected materials; and the formation of a digital archive. An integral part of the program is its action plan for digitization.

So far, most of the program's planned activities have been implemented or are in the realization phase, except for the formation of the Council for Digitization and working groups for certain tasks, and the creation of the centers for digitization at the University Library and city libraries. Also, although the digitization of a library collection is an extremely demanding process and requires the acquisition of expensive equipment, the NLM has succeeded in purchasing two large-format scanners, as well as a local web server, from its own budget funds.

LIBRARY SCIENCE EDUCATION

In the current educational system in Montenegro, there is still no possibility of acquiring a formal education in library and information science at any level. In the former state of Yugoslavia, the closest university centers where students from Montenegro could study librarianship were in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. This lack of trained personnel in the field of library and information science is a serious hindrance for the profession. In addition, there are problems related to insufficient funding for purchasing equipment to endow libraries with new information technology, as well as inadequate budgets for collection development, marketing, and other educational programs and activities.

Due to this obvious lack of librarians with formal education, particularly during the last decade, as well as due to the training needs of employees in Montenegrin libraries, the NLM has organized various types of nonformal education for librarians. In this context, three initiatives are

- the Center for Continuing Education of Librarians: the Biblioteka IN project;
- the State Professional Exam; and
- licenses to work in the COBISS library and information system.

In 2000, thanks to the initiative of OSI-NLP (the network library program) for the establishment of training centers in libraries, the NLM made an application for funding Biblioteka IN, the project of the Center for Continuing Education of Librarians. The activities of the center were focused on the presentation of courses that, based on previous findings, were considered a priority: acquiring knowledge in computer literacy; the use of new information technologies in libraries; and the introduction of modern standards of work and management issues. In Montenegro, there are about 500 employees in about 300 libraries of all types, of which the largest number are school libraries. The courses were presented in 2001 and were mostly attended by librarians from the NLM, the University Library, the libraries of some faculties, and several public libraries. During Biblioteka IN, the need for training the instructors themselves became obvious in order not to have to engage lecturers from other countries for specific courses. This problem could be solved by providing scholarships for advanced training for Montenegrin staff members, who would then be able to present lectures and organize seminars and workshops. Also, there was a need for providing scholarships to librarians for specialized studies in the field of library and information science (Đurović, 2010). In 2009 and 2011, the goal of organizing postgraduate studies for librarians was realized in collaboration with the University of Zadar in Croatia and the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Eleven librarians attended graduate courses for the master's degree in library science.

In accordance with the Montenegrin Law on Library Practice, for decades, the NLM has organized the State Professional Exam twice a year, after the completion of internships. Since 2011, this exam has been given by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the NLM. It is organized according to the guidelines and curriculum that cover all major areas of library theory and practice: library legislation, international standards for cataloging, organization of information, bibliography, and principles of preservation of library materials. Immediately prior to the exam, the NLM offers a seven-day training program for candidates taking it, given by professional instructors from the library. The scope and content of the exam are different for candidates with a university degree and for candidates who have only completed a secondary education. Between 1989 and 2013, some 465 candidates have passed the exam.

Since its founding, the COBISS Center has provided continuous training of library staff for work in a shared cataloging system based on the COBISS2 platform, as well as in some individual segments of the COBISS3 platform. Thus far, three lecturers have been licensed to teach basic COBISS courses. For other courses, if necessary, licensed trainers from Slovenia are brought in. During the period from 2007 to 2012, twelve courses were given (on cataloging monographs and serials, copy cataloging, and creating researcher's bibliographies), with 149 participants. To

date, ninety-two librarians, senior library technicians, and library technicians have been certified.

LIBRARY PERSONNEL

The staffing of libraries has special significance in library administration and management. The needs of modern libraries for highly qualified personnel are clear, especially nowadays when all the achievements of modern technology are used on a daily basis. The features and capabilities of COBISS have been highlighted above. Beyond these, the system requires the application of professional knowledge and skills that modern librarians must possess in order to interact with the digital technology that is ubiquitous today. The inclusion of libraries in the COBISS system caused the deficiencies in the skills of library staff to come into sharp relief. It appears that the managers of some libraries do not adequately account for the training needs of their staff members, which necessarily impacts negatively on the quality of services provided to library users. In terms of having a *professional* library staff, what the standards call for is clear: namely, a librarian, a senior library technician, and two library technicians (all having passed the State Professional Exam, of course) are essential for even the smallest library. Here again, the situation differs from library to library; some libraries have a sufficient number of staff members, both quantitatively and qualitatively, while others do not have the minimum personnel needed to perform the functions outlined in the Law on Library Practice and the Standards for Public Libraries.

In order to overcome these problems, the NLM, within its capabilities and legal obligations, provides continuing education for library staff members by organizing biannual training sessions, courses, workshops, and professional examinations. It also provides literature and presents a course on preparing for the practical part of the exam in which candidates are trained on how to process library materials. As a result, during the past decade, the staffing situation in Montenegrin libraries has improved. Statistics show that in many libraries, there has been a trend toward using better-qualified librarians—those who have successfully passed the professional exam and are licensed to work in the COBISS system (Milić, 2011).

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

In 2009, the Montenegrin government drafted new laws on museum, library, and archival practices that regulate the reorganization of institutions in these areas. The existing laws, some of them more than twenty years old, were obsolete due to the recent social, political, and economic changes in the country and consequently unfit to oversee their respective goals, objectives, principles, and standards. In order to reorganize the existing systems and improve services, it was necessary to establish a new legal framework. The drafts of the new laws provided quality regulations

to align the country's museum, library, and archival activities with the principles and standards of the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the United Nations, and other relevant international organizations (Đurović, 2009).

After numerous public debates and discussions, the government adopted the following set of laws and regulations regarding the library and information profession: Labor Law (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011), Law on Culture (2008, 2012), Law for the Protection of Cultural Property (2010), and Law on Library Practice (2010), in addition to numerous regulations that oversee different areas of librarianship.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

For nearly three decades, the NLM and its staff have nurtured and developed professional and scientific connections with similar institutions and individuals from other countries. The relations they have established with their professional and institutional counterparts elsewhere have been lasting, comprehensive, and fruitful. The integrity of the NLM is based on, among other things, the application of high standards and norms prescribed by respected international organizations and associations. By actively cooperating with international institutions, the NLM has become the national agent for ISBN, ISSN and ISMN standards and participates in IFLA's Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL).

Following recommendations, framework programs, guidelines, and manifestos outlined in European Union (EU) documents, and in accordance with national policies and in cooperation with other cultural institutions, the libraries in Montenegro need to plan and develop projects of digitizing collections that aim to preserve and provide accessibility to materials that represent the nation's cultural heritage. Citizens' knowing their own past will allow current and future generations to embrace democratic ideals and build their future on them. In a global and multicultural information society and a growing knowledge economy, libraries are recognized as the place for achieving basic human rights because they allow equal access for all to knowledge and information (Špadijer, 1994).

After almost fifteen years of difficulties that began in the early 1990s, since 2004, the NLM has become more intensively involved in international cooperation efforts. In addition to the usual exchange of publications with foreign libraries, institutions, and organizations (while also coping with the problems caused by high postal rates for library materials), the library has significantly developed its international activities.

Since 2004, representatives of the NLM have regularly attended annual and general conferences of the following international organizations: IFLA, ISBN, ISSN, COBISS, CDNL, CENL, SEEDI, OCLC, and TEL (Đurović, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The quarter of a century from 1989 to 2014 witnessed a long process of transitional political, societal, and economic events, from the dramatic dissolution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, through wars in neighboring republics and accompanying economic sanctions, to the beginnings of negotiations for joining the EU. It has been a difficult path to follow. Nevertheless, Montenegrin libraries have survived, fulfilling—more or less—their traditional mission. And no library was closed during this period, which is remarkable.

Since the country's proclamation of independence in 2006, visible improvement and development have been underway in most libraries and in almost all sectors of library work. Through the implementation of information and communications technology and the creation of digital resources and their integration into regional, national, and international networks, libraries in Montenegro have been enabled to join the ranks of more developed library environments.

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