

---

# Libraries and Librarianship in the Republic of Macedonia

VIKTORIJA KOSTOSKA, ZHAKLINA GJALEVSKA,  
ELENA NIKODINOVSKA, MAGDICA SHAMBEVSKA, AND  
ZORICA JAKOVLESKA-SPIROVSKA

*Translated by Milan Damjanoski*

---

## ABSTRACT

Libraries and librarianship in the Republic of Macedonia have a tradition spanning centuries, one that is linked to the work of Saint Clement of Ohrid and the first Slavic university in the monasteries on the banks of Lake Ohrid. Libraries and librarianship are the fountain springs of Macedonian culture but also the foundation of its ongoing mission. Libraries in Macedonia are following new trends and tendencies in their efforts to build a national library-information system, with shared cataloging as part of the regional library network (COBISS.net). Building on the continuous application of the traditional types of preservation of library materials along with contemporary methods and technologies, current practice has expanded to include digitalization. This has ensured easy online access to Macedonia's rich library holdings, offered opportunities for its written cultural heritage to be presented in both digital and traditional formats, and opened up new paths for greater international cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

Libraries and librarianship in Macedonia have roots that reach all the way back to medieval times. The founder of librarianship in Macedonia is considered to be Saint Clement of Ohrid, who is the patron of the National and University Library Saint Clement of Ohrid (NUL) in Skopje and is also the person whose enlightened work is indelibly connected with the first Slavic university in the monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Ohrid.

Modern libraries can be said to have started to appear in Macedonia after World War II, when it was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Within the framework of this federation, a joint library

system was established that developed into the System of Scientific and Technological Information of Yugoslavia (SNTIJ) and the Library Information System (BIS), which were based on international library standards. The independent development and modernization of services and library processes are associated with the declaration of Macedonia as an independent state with the September 9, 1991, referendum.

The early 1990s were marked by the opening of the so-called banned collections that had been subject to special restrictions in Macedonian libraries. Materials that had been tightly regulated were integrated into general library holdings and can now be accessed within the bounds of general library regulations. In accordance with documents that outline the Republic of Macedonia's cultural policies, library work is considered to be an activity that contributes to the public interest. Libraries are open to the public, and through the availability of library materials, they expand access to education and satisfy a variety of public needs.

The library system in Macedonia is comprised of a wide variety of institutions, from the national library and public libraries, to the general scientific library (the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, MANU), academic libraries, and school and other specialized libraries. Macedonian independence was accompanied by social and political changes that enabled the opening of new state and private universities that, in turn, resulted in an increase in the number of academic libraries. Unfortunately, there was a slight decline in the number of specialized libraries, particularly those that had existed within major industries, which failed to restructure during the transition and were ultimately closed. The legal provision that allowed for the establishment of private libraries for the first time, the 2004 Law on Libraries, is important to note (Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 2004a). The first private library was founded soon after this law came into effect in a village in the southwestern region of the country.

The financing of libraries is the obligation of each library's founder. The Macedonian Ministry of Culture is, therefore, responsible for the funding of the NUL as well as five other public libraries that are part of the library network of national institutions. Likewise, local governments are responsible for local public libraries, and universities are responsible for their libraries.

With the exception of the library in Shtip, whose building was constructed in the 1980s, most Macedonian public libraries are situated in newly converted buildings. The children's library Drugarche functions as part of the Brothers Miladinovci city library, which was also built in the 1980s. The public library in the village of Preljubishte, in the region of Tetovo, was built in 2008 with funding from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the local government. Several other public libraries—Radovich, Strumica, and Kavadarci—renovated their premises

in 2006 and began offering new services through their participation in the Friendly Libraries for All Citizens project, which was initiated with support from the UNDP. Whereas the NUL is housed in a specially designed space built in the 1970s, in May 2009, new facilities were opened to house the Center for Digitization, part or several of the NUL's special collections, and the national COBISS (Cooperative Online Bibliographic System and Services) center. The public library in Tetovo is also expected to receive new quarters due to the unsuitability of its current premises. The Law on Libraries, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, established the National Library Council, an advisory body consisting of a president and eight other members appointed from the ranks of individuals who have distinguished themselves in various domains of library and information science and research science, as well as individuals who have made notable cultural, educational, or civic contributions.

The Library Association of Macedonia is a nongovernmental organization that protects the interests of library professionals and libraries in the country, representing and defending their positions. According to article 17 of the Law on Libraries and article 151 of the 2004 Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 2004b), the NUL operates as the central authority for libraries. Article 18 of the library law specifies its functions as

- ensuring the development of the national library network;
- providing professional help and coordinating work in libraries;
- developing both current and other types of specialized bibliographies;
- conducting library staff training and continuing education;
- assessing the fulfillment of conditions for commencing or discontinuing library operations; and
- proposing technical and protective measures for the preservation and maintenance of library materials.

Through the National Agency for ISBN, the National Center for ISSN, and the creation of the CIP-records, the NUL has gained perspective on the production of Macedonian publications, and on the newest trends in publishing in general. National publishing production has been conspicuously on the rise in the last few years. Through its annual programs of financing, the Ministry of Culture has helped publish a great number of original titles by Macedonian authors, a development that has been accompanied by a noticeable rise in the number of translated works of fiction and scholarly literature. The rapid development of Macedonian publishing has been the result of policies initiated by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science. Some of the most important capital projects of the Ministry of Culture in the area of publishing have been a collection titled "Translations of Literary Works by Nobel Prize-Winning Authors"; a set of works titled "Stars of World Literature" (which includes

around 180 published titles to date); and 135 volumes of Macedonian literature that have been translated into English (more translations—into Russian, German, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, and French—are planned, albeit on a smaller scale).

The NUL is responsible for implementing all of these projects, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Education and Science's project Translations of University Textbooks Used in the Most Prestigious Universities in the World has resulted thus far in about a thousand publications. All of these titles have been distributed to public and university libraries throughout Macedonia, but they have also reached a great number of libraries throughout the world. With regard to periodical publications in the country, the years following 1991 saw an upward trend, which has become particularly pronounced in recent years. The growth of publication of scientific and scholarly journals directly correlates to the establishment of new state and private universities. There has also been a rise in the publication of new newspapers and magazines, and while some of these have only appeared for a few issues, some have been in circulation throughout all the years since Macedonia gained its independence. A unique facet of the current law is that an individual can register as a publisher, unlike in the past, when this possibility was open only to corporate entities.

### AUTOMATION OF LIBRARY PROCESSES

The first efforts at automating library processes in Macedonia began as early as 1977, when the NUL and the Faculty of Natural Sciences (FNS) in Skopje developed a program for the cataloging of serial publications. In 1988, the referral center at the NUL started to use the MAREBA (Macedonian REferral BAses) software for recording research institutions and the work of its researchers. This solution proved highly successful until the end of 1990s, at which time its lack of online deployment became the cause of its obsolescence as a merely localized system. In 1989, the NUL, the University Library of Bitola (UL), FNS, and Cinematheque of Macedonia started the systematic automation of library work as part of the SNTIJ/BIS project. This included the application of software for co-operative cataloging—which later became the COBISS system—that was developed by the Institute of Information Sciences (IZUM) in Maribor, Slovenia. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, COBISS ceased operating, although NUL and UL continued to use this software for its everyday operations.

Immediately after Macedonia proclaimed its independence, the Ministry of Education and Science initiated the establishment of the SNTIJ/BIS project. The NUL and FNS led the project due to their experiences with building and administering such a system. Due to the fact that implementation of the project was delayed, however, individual libraries started

to search independently for ways to modernize and automate their daily operations. In 1996, the NUL, UL, and FNS decided to renew their agreement with IZUM and update their version of COBISS software. COBISS was subsequently selected from among several available domestic and foreign software packages because it best met the stipulated criteria: the application of international standards; the use of mixed scripts for showing data; and the maintenance, development, and support of Macedonian Cyrillic, which was of distinct importance for libraries in Macedonia. Initially, libraries used this software locally, but when it was also chosen by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, they accepted IZUM's proposal for the creation of the united bibliographic database COBIB. MK and the establishment of the library information system COBISS.MK. These systems enabled both full functionality of the COBISS software and mutual cooperation through the exchange of bibliographic records among participating libraries.

The potential of the COBISS software was immediately recognized by public libraries, which were interested in its immediate implementation. As a result, over the past decade, almost all Macedonian public libraries began to use COBISS for their everyday activities. Starting in 2004, the Ministry of Culture supported projects for the automation of public libraries throughout Macedonia through the application of COBISS and the establishment of the national library-information system based on its platform. This support was a key factor in the decision by IZUM and the NUL to consummate their agreement to implement COBISS in 2004. Connection of the COBISS.MK with the COBISS systems of Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to form a regional network, COBISS.Net, was of vast significance for libraries in Macedonia. COBISS.Net ensured the free exchange of bibliographic records among the databases of the then more than 300 libraries throughout the region with library holdings similar in content to those of Macedonian libraries, which meant significant savings of time and effort in the cataloging process. Today, with Bulgaria and Albania having joined COBISS.Net and the number of libraries in the network having risen to more than 700, the importance of membership in the consortium is even greater.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Science supported the inclusion of fifteen additional academic and special libraries into the COBISS.MK system, and also the implementation of a national Current Research Information System in Macedonia, E-CRIS.MK ([http://e-cris.mk.cobiss.net/default.aspx?lang=eng\\_mk](http://e-cris.mk.cobiss.net/default.aspx?lang=eng_mk)). Additionally, the ministry and IZUM jointly funded the postgraduate studies of seventeen librarians from Macedonia at the University of Zadar in Croatia and the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia.

The experiences of libraries using the COBISS system have been positive, in that libraries have seen an improvement in the quality of their

work through standardization of their cataloging processes and a consequent reduction in the processing time required and cost. An example of the time that participating libraries are saving is the fact that up to 10 percent of national LIS records are ones that Macedonian libraries have download from other library systems within the COBISS network. Because users have free access to search online library catalogs through COBISS/OPAC and also, if enabled by the library, to renew the loan period of borrowed materials, reserve items, make interlibrary loan requests, and view their accounts (to give just a few examples), there has been a rediscovery and resurgence of libraries in Macedonia. Gradually, this has resulted in an increase in the number of users, transforming Macedonian libraries into information hubs that meet the diverse needs of citizens.

Despite all the possibilities it offers, only about 10 percent of Macedonian libraries, mostly public libraries, are members of the COBISS system. Besides COBISS, there are other software solutions that meet international standards for library automation. South East European (SEE) University in Tetovo, for example, uses Aleph software. Other libraries employ software solutions that are specially tailored for their operations, but these are most often only accessible to onsite users or associates of these institutions.

### PRESERVATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Library holdings of the libraries in Macedonia are comprised of library materials and "goods." Library goods are, in essence, part of the country's "movable" (material) cultural heritage, therefore their preservation is regulated by the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. In accordance with this law, the library institution appointed to administer the preservation of this kind of cultural heritage is the NUL. It is responsible for the official registration of protected library goods, for the implementation and supervision of professional activities related to the immediate protection of protected library goods, and for ensuring such improvements as developing the professional capacities of library staff. To achieve these aims, most activities related to the protection of library materials in Macedonia are done by the Department for Protection, consisting of the Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration and the bindery at the NUL, and also by smaller units in a number of other libraries that specialize in the repair of damaged library materials within their own holdings.

Recognizing the importance of this area of library work, the NUL set preservation as one of its priorities and took steps in 2009 to transform the Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration into the Center for Preservation of Library Materials (Jakovleska-Spirovska, 2008). In the process of transitioning to new and larger premises, the NUL also procured modern equipment and tools in accordance with its commitment to protect not only the materials in its own collection but also those of other

libraries, museums, and galleries, and even collections in private hands. Contemporary procedures and methodologies utilized for the preservation of materials housed in all these places take into account the fact that in Macedonia, this kind of cultural heritage is at risk of being lost. For this reason, strict conditions have been set for the storage of materials. In accordance with the International Federation of Library Associations' (IFLA) *Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material* (n.d.), the NUL has intensified its efforts to implement a system consisting of legal measures and procedures for preventing, delaying, or mitigating damage to library materials. Such measures include the provision of environmentally appropriate storage conditions and the standardization of procedures for the handling, maintenance, presentation, reproduction, packaging, transport, and use of materials. These measures also included the development of a system to cope with damage to materials caused by natural disasters or other unfortunate circumstances that might adversely affect library materials. The NUL has been housed in a specially constructed space at a safe distance from facilities where high-risk processes are conducted. Library holdings are stored on/in metal shelves/cabinets or in vaults that have been dedicated for securing valuable materials. All of these storage areas have unhindered air circulation and are equipped with devices for monitoring environmental conditions, for ensuring the readiness of fire-alarm systems, and for continuous video surveillance.

Valuable materials are stored primarily in protective folders or boxes in accordance with guidelines that stipulate precise procedures for handling materials both by librarians and users (British Standards Institution, 2012). These guidelines also require compliance with specific procedures for the packaging, transport, presentation, and reproduction of library materials. The required measures and procedures aimed at repairing damage to the materials and restoring them as close as possible to their initial or original appearances are implemented by the Department for Protection at NUL. With respect to the choice of treatment that is most compatible with each individual document and the type of damage it has sustained, the laboratory has started the process of introducing a standard method (TAPPI T401) for conservation testing of the integral components of documents. The testing involves the application of modern techniques used to determine the composition of materials; for example, the type of cellulose fiber, fillers and glues, physical and chemical composition of ink pigments, and cause of the damage, among others. In order to conduct tests that require more sophisticated equipment, the Department for Preservation of Library Materials has established a partnership with the institutes of chemistry and biology at FNS.

The restoration treatment begins with documenting and preparing materials according to the degree of damage involved. Formerly, restoration by hand had been the primary means of protecting invaluable

manuscripts and other fragile materials. Due to the expert skills and experience of the many generations of conservators who have been treating damaged materials, the center has preserved the most valuable artifacts of Macedonia's cultural heritage. Among these are the "Fragment of a Lenten Triodion" from the second half of the thirteenth century; "The Tetraevangelion (The Four Gospels) from Vrutok" from the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century (fig. 1); and "The Tetraevangelion (The Four Gospels) of Benche with Miniatures" from the early sixteenth century. (All of these are in the possession of the Archeographic Collection at the NUL.) "The Tetraevangelion (The Four Gospels) of Kichevo" from the last quarter of the sixteenth century (owned by the Historical Archive of Ohrid) and "The Liturgical Collection" from the second quarter of the seventeenth century and containing a sixteenth-century inserted segment (owned by the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Museum of the City of Bitola) have also been preserved, along with many other treasures.

A treatment involving lamination with synthetic foils at high temperature and pressure was discontinued because of the great risk it presented in maintaining the physical integrity of fragile materials. This procedure, which had long been used for the preservation of rare books and periodical publications, was successfully replaced due to efforts to constantly modernize and improve the process of preservation. As an example of such efforts, in 2011, new equipment was procured for the application of the leaf-casting method of restoring and strengthening individual pages and bound books. The introduction of this modern procedure increased the center's capacity to achieve higher quality restorations; it also highlighted the issue of staff qualifications by emphasizing the need for continuing education and increasing the number of specialists involved in preservation.

In line with these initiatives, there have been numerous scientific and professional papers published on the topic, as well as participation in several international projects and partnerships involving

- obtaining handmade cellulose paper for the conservation and restoration of book material and graphic techniques needs (UNESCO and the Ministry of Science of the Republic of Macedonia, 2001–2002);
- partnering with the Tempus III program of the European Union in a project involving handmade paper (cellulose) (2000–2003);
- conducting a study of the chemical interaction between cultural objects and environmental impacts (COST Action D42, 2006–2010);
- partnering with the Turkish Yunus Emre Institute in a project concerning reconstruction of the cultural heritage of the Balkans (2013).

In this context, it is important to mention the Young St. Clement University project implemented by the Laboratory for Conservation and Res-





Figure 1. The Tetraevangelion (The Four Gospels) from Vrutok (thirteenth or fourteenth century), 157 folios, parchment, in the Saint Clement of Ohrid National and University Library, Skopje, Macedonia. (Bequest of D. Popovski, reproduced with permission.)

toration of Library Materials in 2009, which encompassed planning and organizing workshops—such as one for making and applying handmade ecological paper, one for learning the basics of the Glagolitic alphabet, and one for studying woodcarving techniques—that were aimed at promoting traditional crafts in primary and secondary schools as well as among adults.

## DIGITALIZATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

The first steps in the area of digitization of library materials were taken by the NUL in the years between 1999 and 2002. With financial support from the Ministry of Culture and in cooperation with the Faculty of

Electrical Engineering and Information Technology at Skopje, the NUL digitized more than a third of the 230 Old Slavic manuscripts in the Archeographic Collection. Three compact disks were created out of 1,500 digitized pages, which were then made publicly accessible on the Medieval Old Slavic Manuscripts website (<http://staroslovenski.nubsk.edu.mk>). In order to adequately carry out its function as the National Center for the Protection of Library Heritage in accordance with the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, the NUL spent several years studying international standards and regulations for digitization, the description of digital objects, and the equipment required for such work to proceed. Cooperation with other libraries involved in preserving and digitizing cultural-heritage library collections, such as the British Library, Bavarian State Library, National and University Library in Ljubljana, and University Library in Graz, as well as various international projects for such preservation, including MINERVA, CALIMERA, TEL-ME-MOR, ASO, and The European Library (TEL), was extremely important in helping to acquire knowledge and experience.

In 2008, the NUL adopted a strategy for the digitization of its special collections that established standards for long-term preservation of digital content: the equipment and staff required, the methods of selection and evaluation of library holdings, and the methods of archiving and providing access to digital objects. Regarding digitization standards, recommendations of TEL working groups were adopted, such as the Dublin Core format, XML format, Z39.50 protocol, OAI protocol, and OAIS system, among others. The working group at the NUL subsequently acquired the minimum amount of equipment required for the digitization and archiving of library holdings declared to be cultural-heritage items from the Archeographic, Oriental, and Cartographic collections. This equipment included the highly sophisticated Zeutschel OS14000 scanner, proprietary digitization software, a graphics-processing unit for digital objects, and a server for storage. The NUL working group also provided training for the digitization center's staff members.

The digitization process commenced in 2009, with a trial period during which the functioning of digitization equipment was tested, the digital library's database was designed and tested, and the overall functionality was checked. For the purposes of designing and developing the digital library, the open-source platform dSpace was selected because, in addition to offering multiple possibilities for presentation, it provides for the long-term storage and management of digital objects. In 2010, the digitization process began production and the digital library became available for users through the internet portal dLib.mk. This portal was initially registered on all major search engines and the index bases of websites, such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, Alexa, and Open Directory, to name but a few. Additionally, profiles on Facebook and Twitter were established to promote the portals.

One particular benefit of the NUL's special-collections preservation efforts came from participation in the Yunus Emre Institute's Reconstruction of the Cultural Heritage of the Balkans project, initiated and financially supported by the Central Bank of Turkey. In 2013, with the assistance of experts from Turkey, 3,619 manuscripts from the oriental collection (written in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian) were cataloged and digitized. After completion of this digitization process, the equipment used by the institute was donated to the NUL. Presently, digital objects are still being processed and will soon be made available to the public through the dLib.mk portal, TEL, and World Digital Library (WDL).

The digitization of contemporary publications in the library's holdings and the development of digital libraries has been, so far, incidental and consists mostly of placing electronic versions of printed publications on the web in the pdf format. One example worth mentioning is the e-library and repository of scientific and professional works in the possession of Goce Delchev University in Shtip, which offers full text access to them.

#### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Up until Macedonian independence in 1991, the NUL was part of the Union of Yugoslav National Libraries, a relationship that intensified international cooperation with other national universities, other types of libraries, and other partner institutions and associations both in Europe and elsewhere. Consequently, the NUL has established relationships with many international organizations and networks responsible for the advancement of library and information science, thereby transforming Macedonian libraries into information centers. These organizations include the IFLA, CDNL, UNESCO, Council of Europe, CENL, LIBER, EBLIDA, ISSN, ISBN, and IAML. An ISSN center and state agencies for ISBN and ISMN, as well as the INIS Center of the Republic of Macedonia, were established in close cooperation with international centers and agencies in Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna.

During wartime conflicts in the region, the NUL followed the emergent needs of at-risk libraries by staying in contact with their colleagues throughout southeastern Europe. Aware that the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina suffered extensive damages, the NUL donated a significant quantity of library materials to help fill gaps left in their holdings. Until 2004, the NUL played the role of coordinator for the procurement of books, magazines, and newspapers for faculty members, institute affiliates, and individuals, with the assistance of Blackwell and the Russian publisher Nauka. This coordinated acquisition was continued through the provision of direct, free online access to electronic resources for the users of EBSCO through EIFL and the Consortium of Macedonian Electronic Libraries (MEL). MEL was formed in 2003 in the NUL, the

funding for which was provided by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture.

Membership in these associations, especially in the IFLA and several of its committees, resulted in the NUL's participation in various conferences and seminars that generated useful contacts with experts from developed countries. The NUL's partnering in the Development of an Academic Library Network project, in association with the 1999–2000 TEMPUS program under the leadership of the Institute of Information Technology of the FNS, involved the Royal Danish School of Library and Information Science and the Faculty for Library and Information Science at the University of Loughborough in Great Britain. Experts from these two institutions presented lectures at the NUL for Macedonian librarians, while several librarians attended courses in Copenhagen. The NUL also took part in the PULMAN (2000–2002) and CALIMERA (2003–2004) projects, which were supported by the European Commission as part of the e-Europe initiative An Information Society for All. In line with its recommendations, efforts were directed toward the inclusion of public libraries in the digital network and toward intensifying cooperation with museums and archives, both of which ultimately achieved notable results. Because of these activities, librarians from the National Library, various public libraries, and the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia were all able to attend lectures in Greece, Croatia, and Slovenia, which greatly enhanced their knowledge. The digital guidelines of these projects were translated into Macedonian, thereby enabling wider access to practical advice, initiating new projects in the work of local cultural institutions through the introduction of new services for users, and encouraging lifelong learning through the exchange of knowledge about best practices.

Participation by the NUL in the 2006–2008 Strategy for the Development of Digitization of the Special Collections in the NUL international project was of great significance because it represented the first step toward library digitization. The project was coordinated with the ASO (Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices) and carried out in partnership with the National and University Library of Slovenia and University of Graz library in Austria. The documents produced by this project provided guidelines for the preservation of special collections through digitization, thus ensuring access to Macedonia's cultural heritage as a result, as well as a methodological framework for implementing the digitization processes in the NUL. In 2008–2009, through the FUMAGABA project, the NUL became a full member of TEL through membership in CENL, which was important for uniting national libraries that shared a common European cultural heritage. The Reading European Culture through the Book project helped present parts of digital documents from collections that included Old Slavic manuscripts and rare Macedonian books. Another important feature of the 2006–2008 international project was that

users of TEL's web portal could now search in both Macedonian and Cyrillic. The NUL's agreement with the WDL, on the other hand, enabled the presentation of materials from the library's cartographic collection.

For the purposes of sharing experiences, collaborating on digitization projects, and promoting new buildings specially designed for digitizing library materials, the NUL organized a regional meeting in 2010 titled "National Strategies and Policies for the Protection of Cultural Heritage" that included directors and experts from the national libraries of Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The NUL continues to be a regular participant in all regional conferences on this topic. As part of the Program for Public Libraries (PLIP) funded by the EIFL, two examples of successful projects carried out in 2010 by Macedonian libraries are the Municipal Public Library's Brothers Miladinovci in Radovich, which created new jobs, and the Goce Delchev University Library's A Library on Wheels (Infobus) in Shtip intended to help farmers access grants and subsidies. Encouraged by the results of these projects, a group of library professionals has recently formed a new association for library development and innovations: Innova Lib.

The NUL, with its landmark building (fig. 2) located on the left bank of the Vardar River, is home to the following institutions:

- The English Studies Resource, which later became the British Council Macedonia
- The German Reading Room of the Central Office of the Goethe Institute in Munich
- The American Corner, in partnership with the US embassy
- The Russian Reading Room, in cooperation with the Association of Russian Compatriots (Chayka)
- The Confucius Institute at the Saints Cyril and Methodius University
- The European Union Info Point, a project of the EU delegation
- The Chinese Corner, which is a project of the Hanban in Beijing

These associations allow the NUL to participate directly in joint projects involving other libraries. In addition to these above institutions, reading rooms with foreign-language literature have been opened in a number of libraries in Macedonia, such as those in Bitola, Shtip, Prilep, Strumica, Tetovo, and Veles.

In 2005, as a result of the long-term strategic partnership between the NUL and the British Council in Macedonia, a state-of-the-art conference and study center was formed in the library, which now also provides support for video-conferencing links. The center hosts a large number of seminars, conferences, workshops, lectures, promotions, and training programs, which are also available to the general public. Librarians throughout Macedonia have a chance to attend lectures given at the



Figure 2. Front and side views of the Saint Clement of Ohrid National and University Library building in Skopje, Macedonia. (Photo: Courtesy of Robert Jankuloski.)

center, such as those by experts from the British Library, Bavarian State Library, OCLC, TEL, WDL, and EBSCO, among many others. Other contributions to the continuing education of Macedonian librarians are the NUL Meetings, a forum in which the exchange of knowledge acquired abroad can be shared by librarians, other experts, and public users. These meetings were inaugurated in 1996 following successful visits to the academic library at the University of Illinois and the New York Public Library, and also following the success of specialized programs attended by several librarians at the French school of library and information science, ENSIB (École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques).

The longstanding cooperation between the NUL and IZUM has resulted in the inclusion of Macedonian libraries in the Slovenian government's project, Development Assistance Programs for Southeastern European Countries for Information Infrastructures of Science, Education, and Culture. This project has involved the receipt of donations of ICT equipment for multiple libraries, the training of librarians in the use of the COBISS system, the possibility of postgraduate study in library and information science, and the participation of many Macedonian library professionals in COBISS international conferences. A large number of activities have been carried out as part of the bilateral agreements for cooperation among various national and university libraries, including

those in Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Hungary, and China. Some of the more significant activities that have resulted include research visits to the national libraries in Sofia, Kiev, Belgrade, and Tirana for the purpose of filling gaps in the special collections of Macedonian libraries. Thus, in 2005–2006, through the research efforts of the National Library of Serbia, fragments of various Old Slavic manuscripts with Macedonian redactions from the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries were acquired, along with various periodical publications printed in Serbian regarding the ethnogeographical territory of the Republic of Macedonia up to 1944. Moreover, Macedonian library holdings have been examined by experts from Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Kosovo, and Turkey for the purpose of augmenting their own collections.

In cooperation with libraries abroad and diplomatic missions in Macedonia, numerous cultural events have been organized. Some of the more significant events have been the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the first flight into outer space by Yuri Gagarin; the 200th anniversary of the first edition of the Brothers Grimm fairytales; an exhibition titled *Comics, Manga & Co—Germany's New Comic Culture*; a traveling exhibition, *Creative Women—Inventions from Sweden*; several art exhibitions from the Ukraine; an exhibition and debate regarding Franco–German reconciliation; and a photo exhibition, *Co2 The Infinity of Brussels (Co2 Bruxelles à l'infini)*. To promote reading, UNESCO's World Book and Copyright Day is celebrated, a new tradition focused on celebrating books in libraries throughout Macedonia through inventive educational programs and the distribution of original messages by renowned Macedonian writers, in conjunction with the NUL. There are now regular events organized for observing World Poetry Day (another UNESCO-sponsored event) and the International Day of Francophony, among others.

For the purpose of promoting contemporary book publishing in Macedonia and its literary and cultural heritage, exhibitions and presentations in a variety of countries have been organized. As part of the 2004 Days of Macedonian Culture organized at the National Library (V. I. Vernadsky) in Kiev, academic and scientific publications were exhibited for the first time. This was followed by a 2012 presentation at the Széchenyi National Library in Budapest of contemporary Macedonian publishing. Macedonian books translated into Serbian were also presented at the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade in 2013. An exhibit of Slavic manuscripts from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries from Macedonia was presented at the Royal Museum Mariemont in Belgium in 2012, and as a result of cooperation with the NUL, the Mariemont, along with the Catholic University of Leuven, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, and Wallonia Brussels International, published a guide to the exhibit. Original artifacts from the cultural heritage of various Macedonian institutions were also presented abroad for the first time, which

attracted great interest. In 2010, fragments of fifteen Old Slavic manuscripts were presented at the Berio Public Library in Genoa.

In 2010 and 2011, the NUL played an important role as an organizer of the International Book Fair in Skopje, at which presentations on contemporary Macedonian publishing were made. Additionally, the NUL has published a catalog of publishers and of contemporary Macedonian writers and also anthologies, presenting Macedonian poetry (Stojčevski, 2011) and short stories (Cvetkovski, 2011) before other major international book fairs in Frankfurt and Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2011, and in Belgrade in 2013.

## CONCLUSION

The Republic of Macedonia is a small European country located on the crossroads of the civilizations that form the heart of the Balkans. It is working toward membership in the European Union. It is from this region that Slavic literacy first spread because it is where Saints Cyril and Methodius began their journey to bring civilization to the Slavic peoples. This is also the place where their students, Saints Clement and Naum of Ohrid, returned to continue the work of their teachers—an event that left an indelible mark on Slavic and Macedonian culture. Libraries in Macedonia safeguard a rich cultural heritage and play an important role in the promotion of cultural diversity both domestically and internationally. The primary future task of Macedonian libraries will be to continue its efforts to achieve greater cooperation among libraries throughout the region and to participate in important European and international projects for the benefit of all.

## REFERENCES

- Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. (2004a). Law on libraries. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, 60(66), 14–27.
- Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. (2004b). Law on the protection of cultural heritage. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*, 60(20), 2–71.
- British Standards Institution (BSI). (2012). *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials* (PD 5454). London: BSI.
- COST Action D42: Chemical interaction between cultural objects and environmental impacts (Enviart). (2006–2010). [Project led by the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Institute for Chemistry, Skopje.] Retrieved December 15, 2013, from [http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/cmst/Actions/D42](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/cmst/Actions/D42)
- Cvetkovski, B. (2011). *Anthology of contemporary Macedonian short stories*. Skopje, Macedonia: National and University Library.
- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). (n.d.). *Principles for the care and handling of library material*. Retrieved December 15, 2013, from <http://www.ifla.org/VI/4/news/pchlm.pdf>
- Jakovleska-Spirovska, Z. (2008). Transformation of the laboratory for conservation in NUL St. Clement of Ohrid: Republic center for protection of library materials. *Library Review: Newsletter of the National and University Library St. Clement of Ohrid, Skopje*, 23–26.
- National and University Library (NUL). (2013). *Contemporary Macedonian writers*. Skopje, Macedonia: Author.
- Stojčevski, S. (2011). *Anthology of contemporary Macedonian poetry*. Skopje, Macedonia: National and University Library.



Viktorija Kostoska holds a degree in English language and literature from the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She is a senior librarian and started working at the National and University Library (NUL) of Macedonia in 1984. She has been the head of the department for international relations and projects for the past fourteen years and participated in international projects under the auspices of TEMPUS and the European Commission. She also participated in developing the digitization strategy for special collections at NUL. She previously worked in collection development in the foreign orders department and was involved in the processing of English-language monographs and the cataloging and publication of the Macedonian legal deposit.

Zhaklina Gjalevska holds a degree in engineering from the Information Technology Institute, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Skopje (1993), and an M.A. in information and library science from the University of Zadar, Croatia (2010). Since 1993 she has worked at the National and University Library (NUL) of Macedonia. In 1997, she took charge of the COBISS library software in the NUL and other Macedonian libraries, and in 2005 was appointed head of the national COBISS center. She is also head of the working group for developing guidelines and methodology for the digitalization process in the NUL. She is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Organizacija Znanja* (Organization of knowledge), as well as president of the COBISS alumni association. Since 2011, she has been a department head at the NUL.

Elena Nikodinovska obtained a degree in French language and literature from Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She is a senior librarian at the National and University Library (NUL) of Macedonia, working since 1983 in the development of international cooperation and projects. She has made a number of study visits to foreign libraries and participated in various international conferences. She was a member of the IFLA's Standing Committee on Education and Training (2001–2005) and coordinator of the Macedonian–French project for the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of Macedonia.

Magdica Shambevska is a Macedonian-language teacher and is currently writing her master's thesis in the field of information sciences at the University of Zadar in Croatia. She has been working at the National and University Library (NUL) of Macedonia since 2002, and has played an active role in the Library Association of Macedonia, most notably as a member of its executive board. She has also been a member of the editorial board of the journal *Bibliotekarstvo* (2002–2010). She has served as an organizer and lecturer for the foundations course in librarianship (2006–2010) and has organized trainings and seminars for public libraries in Macedonia.

Zorica Jakovleska-Spirovska holds a degree in biological engineering from the Faculty of Natural Science, Skopje Biology Institute. She received her M.A. in 2009. After graduation from the institute, she worked as a research associate in the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology at the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences until 1997, when she started working at the National and University Library (NUL) of Macedonia as a conservator in its Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration. Since 2005, she has been a department head and was promoted to senior conservator in 2012.

Milan Damjanoski is an assistant of literature in the Department of English Language and Literature in the Faculty of Philology Blazhe Koneski, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. He has an MA in English literature. Currently, he is working on his PhD thesis, titled "Voice and identity in the works of Robert Browning, Blazhe Koneski, James Joyce and Slavko Janevski." He runs seminars in English literature and conference interpreting. He has worked as a freelance interpreter and literary translator, and has translated into English works from prominent contemporary Macedonian writers, such as Vladimir Martinovski, Blazhe Minevski, and Svetlana Hristova Jocik.