The Development of Czech Libraries, 1990–2013

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Abstract

In the last twenty years, libraries in the Czech Republic have undergone extensive changes, which were evoked by a transition to a democratic society and market economy. At the beginning of the millennium, the development of libraries was gradually stabilized; this process culminated in the adoption of the new library act in 2001. The role of the Ministry of Culture is characterized in relation to libraries and grant programs in support of libraries. This paper studies the changes and trends in the individual areas of library activities, such as library collections and information resources, the construction of libraries, the automation of library processes, the retrospective conversion of Czech library catalogs and portals, the digitization of library collections, the training of library staff, and the activities of library societies and associations. An emphasis is placed on the transformations connected with the development of information technologies. The paper is complemented by selected statistical data on the development of libraries.

Introduction

The development of libraries always somehow reflects the state of the society in which they operate. Libraries in the Czech Republic have a rich history. Their origins can be documented from the twelfth century, when the first monastic and royal libraries were established. The foundation of Charles University in Prague in 1348 gave rise to a university library that was opened to the public in 1777. At the end of the eighteenth century, large specialized libraries were gradually established, including the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the present-day National Technical Library. From the beginning of the nineteenth

century, public libraries slowly began to appear. In 1919, their development was supported by the first library act. The development of Czech libraries, of course, reflected the various vicissitudes of historical development, such as the Hussite Wars in the early fifteenth century; the Thirty Years' War in the first half of the seventeenth century; the creation of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918; the German occupation in 1939; the communist coup d'état in 1948, but also the events of the "Prague Spring" in 1968 and the subsequent Soviet occupation, which essentially did not end until 1991 (Cejpek, 2002). This paper briefly attempts to capture the basic development trends in Czech libraries since 1990.

Libraries in a Time of Social Change

The most recent history of Czech libraries is connected to the process of political and economic changes initiated by the "Velvet Revolution" on November 17, 1989 (Matějů & Večerník, 1998). These changes led to fundamental changes in library management, organization, and funding, as libraries were gradually transferred from the state sphere to municipalities, regions, companies, and higher-education and other institutions.

The impact of the social changes on individual types of libraries varied (see table 1). University libraries were positively impacted. In efforts to increase the number of university students, the government supported the establishment of new, mainly regional higher-education institutions. The conditions of university libraries in the past were influenced by the concept of university education of the previous regime and its publishing policy and isolation from modern democratic states. University development since 1989 has made possible new developments in their libraries. The most important of these was the introduction of new information technologies to provide services and support for university education and research. In this regard, Czech university libraries today are comparable with university libraries abroad. Universities now offer regular financial support to sustain the ongoing development of the technological infrastructures that their libraries need. With government subsidies, academic libraries now provide their communities with access to the most important worldwide information resources, including, but not limited to, scientific journals, digital libraries, and databases. The space situation of the libraries has improved dramatically. Based on the capabilities of individual universities, most library facilities have been expanded and remodeled. University libraries are now involved in the creation of institutional repositories that provide widely based current and archival access to theses, dissertations, and other publications reporting the research produced at their respective universities (Prochásková & Ramajzlová, 2004).

The situation in nonuniversity research libraries has been more complicated. Initially, approximately twenty institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and numerous other research institutions

Table 1. Selected statistical indicators of some types of libraries

	1989	1993	1998	2003	2008	2012
Public libraries						
Libraries	5,751	6,227	6,131	6,046	5,438	5,401
Users (in thousands)	2,062	1,422	1,479	1,524	1,448	1,450
Loans (in thousands)	62,102	46,551	56,559	71,663	66,744	66,258
Staff	5,618	5,124	4,788	5,023	5,137	5,387
Academic libraries						
Libraries		58	64	99	128	107
Users (in thousands)		193	225	308	446	426
Loans (in thousands)		1,632	2,034	2,277	3,367	3,896
Staff		562	608	828	961	922
Libraries in museums and galleries						
Libraries			263	269	247	235
Users (in thousands)			35	29	23	28
Loans (in thousands)			271	222	217	272
Staff			251	282	290	293
Scientific libraries						
Libraries		64	70	65	61	61
Users (in thousands)		57	37	30	31	17
Loans (in thousands)		160	349	184	139	103
Staff			280	298	289	241
Medical libraries						
Libraries		239	191	149	110	94
Users (in thousands)		80	85	95	80	62
Loans (in thousands)		1,127	1,165	1,090	898	675
Staff		333	325	360	295	41

were closed, and their libraries with them. With new funding the situation stabilized, especially for the network of the libraries of the Academy of Sciences (Burgetová, 2010). This situation was similar for medical libraries. Hospitals and other institutions in the health sector had been slowly privatized, and, in consequence, the activities of their libraries had been restricted. In 1995, however, the National Medical Library introduced and supervised the development of a public information service in the healthcare system (Bouzková, 2004).

The negative impact of earlier developments were fully demonstrated in the period during which the Czech Republic undertook economic reform and began the transition to a market economy. During the privatization of state enterprises, the network of libraries for scientific, technical, and economic information slowly disappeared. As a result of these and other changes, unique library collections and information resources were lost. The number of libraries in this sector dropped by 77 percent, from 653 in 1991 to 158 in 1997. Only a few dozen have been preserved since then ("Knihovny," 1997).

A similarly complex situation occurred in the area of the libraries established by municipalities and regions. In the period after 1998, it be-

came evident that public libraries in the Czech Republic were in a deep crisis. This was manifested in a sharp decline in the population's interest in library services; all performance indicators of library activity dramatically decreased, such as the number of registered users, visitors, and loans. This decline was caused by a variety of factors. The new democratic society offered a whole range of new activities for people: many started their own businesses; unprecedented travel opportunities became available; and television was now able to expand its offerings. During this period of rapid social and economic change, suddenly people had less time for reading books and visiting libraries.

Changes in the administrative structures of the state, such as removing and restoring regions, among others, also had a negative impact on libraries. The transfer of libraries from the administration of district authorities to individual towns and villages brought a collapse of numerous regional library-cooperation systems. Often, libraries in small villages lost their contact with and support from regional libraries. There was a significant decline in library funding, which was further enhanced by the negative impact of a sharp rise in inflation and the price of energy. Rents and the prices of books, periodicals, and other information resources increased. The shortage of funds for purchasing library materials was accompanied by the gradual disintegration of the previous distribution system for books and periodicals and the collapse of the book market. Until 1990, all distribution had been by *Knižní velkoobchod* (book wholesaling). After this system was privatized and subsequently closed, bookshops began to disappear very quickly. The publication of books and magazines had been concentrated in a few state-funded and state-controlled companies; after these ceased to exist, thousands of publishing houses emerged. Under these new circumstances, libraries found collection development difficult and confusing ("Knihovny," 1997).

From the middle of the 1990s, however, the situation slowly changed. Most libraries managed to seize the opportunity offered by information and communication technologies to develop their services and attract new users. Since then, the number of library loans and library visitors has been growing slightly though steadily, but the actual number of libraries has continued to decrease slightly. The number of *registered* users of public libraries is now above 15 percent of the total population, although the *actual* number is probably higher because many library services are provided without the requirement of registration. Public libraries have tried to extend their functions and transform themselves into information, education, and cultural centers. They also provide neutral spaces for the meetings of various informal groups and others working in their municipalities. In sum, by using the existing infrastructure, libraries have been able to remain accessible to a wide network of users.

LIBRARY LEGISLATION: THE SHAPING OF A NEW LIBRARY ORGANIZATION

A new public library system in the Czech Republic gradually emerged at the end of the 1990s. This was closely linked to developments over the course of nearly a century based on three library acts, in 1919, 1959, and 2001 (Burgetová, 1996).

The 1919 Act on Municipal Public Libraries

Act no. 430/1919 Coll. of July 22, 1919, on Municipal Public Libraries was the first of these acts. It was enormously progressive for its time both by European and world standards. The act was passed by the Czechoslovak Parliament following the creation of the independent Czechoslovak Republic on October 28, 1918. It imposed an obligation on each municipality to establish a public library within one to two years. The library was to be equipped with lending facilities, a reading room, and reference materials. In localities where there were national minorities, the local authorities were further obliged to establish either an independent minority library or, at least, a special minority library department. The act also set a minimum per capita fee for maintaining and extending library service, and it created and gave significant authority to library boards. In municipalities of over 10,000 inhabitants, libraries were required to be managed by professional librarians. Because of this first library act, a dense network of one public library per every 813 inhabitants was created within the first decade of the existence of the republic. By 1929, virtually every locality had its own public library.

The 1959 Act on the Unified System of Libraries

Act no. 53/1959 Coll. of July 9, 1959, on the Unified System of Libraries was approved by Parliament during the communist regime. It focused primarily on strengthening centralized control over libraries through the formation of a unified system of library networks based on the type of library: public, school, scientific, university, medical, and so on. Each network was headed by a main library, which provided methodological assistance to its branches. The State Library of the Czechoslovak Republic, presently the National Library, occupied a special position within the system, as did the Central Library Board. This goal of a unified system of libraries was never fully realized; nevertheless, this overtly ideological act significantly strengthened the practical cooperation of libraries of different types. It remained valid for more than ten years after the political and social changes of November 1989.

The Library Act of 2001

On June 29, 2001, Act no. 257/2001 Coll. on Libraries and Terms of Operating Public Library and Information Services (Library Act) was passed by the Czech Parliament (Law no. 257, 2001). This act, the third in the

history of Czech librarianship, deals with the issue of information services, but mainly in terms of public libraries. It does not, however, exclude other libraries from joining the system, provided that they offer information services to the public. The 1959 act, it should be noted, applied to all the libraries operating in what was then Czechoslovakia.

The new act stipulated the terms by which particular libraries could become part of the system of libraries within the spirit of the act. Its two general points are that a library must ensure equal access for all patrons to library and information services and all other services offered and that a library must be listed in the register of libraries kept by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. The ministry manages the register of libraries as a public-access information system; at present, more than 6,000 libraries are registered. Many libraries that do not provide public services, such as most school libraries, are not a part of the system of libraries to which the Library Act applies.

Basic library services are free of charge. These include the lending of books and periodicals, verbal information, internet access, and the provision of information from public sources. Libraries can, however, charge fees for other services. Libraries covered by the act can also obtain state funding in the form of special-purpose subsidies, and they are granted an exclusive status regarding related laws and legislative standards, such as the Copyright and Accounting acts. The Library Act is linked to other regulations and recommendations concerning certain library activities, such as interlibrary loan services, the rules for providing financial subsidies, and the standards for providing public library services.

Special regulations also relate to legal deposit. The nationwide legal-deposit system requires that two copies of all publications be sent to the National Library, the Moravian Library in Brno, and the Research Library in Olomouc. Regional libraries receive nonperiodical publications through legal deposit from those publishers located in their region. However, through the legal-deposit system, certain periodicals, regardless of place of publication, are distributed to these libraries and also to some specialized libraries, which are required to archive them.

The Role of the Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture's Section of Literature and Libraries is the central body for the state administration of librarianship. By its mandate, it

- maintains the National Library of the Czech Republic, the Moravian Library in Brno, and the K. E. Macan Library and Printing House for the Blind;
- contributes to the creation and amendment of the legislative framework for libraries and library science;
- coauthors guidelines and other materials in the area of librarianship;

- cooperates with other state administrative bodies and local governments in ensuring the optimum and functional development of libraries;
- oversees the activities of the Central Library Council as a creative, advisory, and coordinating body for the ministry concerning fundamental questions regarding library science;
- supports contacts among the professional associations of librarians, writers and translators, and book publishers and distributors;
- organizes the Library of the Year Award;
- participates in activities that provide support for library research and development;
- prepares applications and secures financial support for library-based projects;
- participates in the preparation of co-organized events in the areas of literature, book culture, and library science; and
- supports the tasks of the ministry concerning the Czech Republic's membership in the EU, UNESCO, and other international organizations (Marvanová, 2009, p. 12).

Funding for Library Development and Cooperation

The development of the library system is provided for by subsidy programs that were gradually established in the second half of the 1990s by the Ministry of Culture; the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports; the Ministry of the Interior; and the Ministry of Health and by regional administrations (Marvanová, 2009, p. 14). One of the principles governing subsidy appropriations is the obligation to abide by established standards and to make the results obtained in the implementation of projects available to other libraries.

In 2000, the Czech government adopted policies, detailed in its *State Information Policies*, to guide a number of programs supporting the use of information and communication technologies in all segments of society. The Library Public Information Services (LPIS) program was designed for libraries registered according to the Library Act and for associations whose primary work involves the support of library and information activities. The LPIS program is funded by the Ministry of Culture and divided into nine subprograms concerning different areas where information technologies are used in libraries. These nine subprograms are

- LPIS1: LPIS Program Coordination Center;
- LPIS2: Training in Information Technologies for Library Staff;
- LPIS3: Establishment of Public Library Information Centers;
- LPIS4: Digital Library and Archive for Library Information Services;
- LPIS5: Retrospective Conversion of the Catalogs of the National Library of the Czech Republic;
- LPIS6: Digitization of Rare Documents—*Memoriae Mundi* Series Bohemica;

- LPIS7: Microfilming and Digitization of Documents in Danger of Acid Paper Degradation—Kramerius;
- LPIS8: Digital Information Resources, the Uniform Information Gateway and Access to Information Resources in the Form of Multi-Licenses; and
- LPIS9: The Union Catalog of the Czech Republic, the System of National Authority Files.

This program was complemented by the Internet for Libraries project launched by the Ministry of Informatics in 2005 to provide a high-speed internet connection for all public libraries. Approximately 2,500 public libraries were given internet connection subsidies from the state budget, but this program was terminated in March 2013.

Another important program for the development of libraries was the Applied Research and Development of National and Cultural Identity Program. This is funded by the Ministry of Culture, which has developed two related programs exclusively for public libraries: the Library of the 21st Century and the Czech Library programs. The former is a program designed to support work with national minorities, the cultural integration of foreigners, and to make library services accessible to handicapped individuals. The program also supports cultural and public education activities, the protection of library collections from unfavorable influences of the environment, and encourages reading. The Czech Library program, on the other hand, is intended to promote the acquisition of original Czech literary works by public libraries. The Ministry of Culture and the National Library have developed a Public Lending Right program that reimburses authors for the circulation of their books and the use of audio recordings of their works in libraries.

With its primary focus on the purchasing of licenses for electronic information resources, the Information Resources for Research and Development program of the Ministry of Education is essential for the development of modern services in Czech libraries. This program has given rise to a completely new type of interlibrary cooperation, which involves the establishment and operation of a number of library consortia whose objective is the joint purchasing and sharing of licenses for electronic information resources. Medical libraries that are part of the Ministry of Health's program Public Information Services in Health Care is a case in point.

Regional administrations fund the Auxiliary Services Program for Small Public Libraries. A new impetus for the development of public libraries has come from the programs and funds of the European Union (EU), which may become even more important in the future. During the initial period, libraries have used the funds mainly to improve their operations and provide internet access to the public.

Library Collections and Information Resources

During the twentieth century, there were several periods in which Czech libraries faced harsh political restrictions aimed at destroying the democratic character and pluralism of opinion represented in their collections. During World War II, Czech public libraries in the Sudetenland were closed. This was followed by extensive purges of library collections in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Immediately after the war, German literature was removed from library collections and disposed of. Another purge of politically "harmful" literature came immediately after the communist coup d'état in 1948. The last purge occurred after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 following the Prague Spring, and by 1972, approximately a million volumes had been removed from libraries.

During the period 1948–1989, libraries were part of a communist ideologically and centrally controlled state system. Beginning in 1948, a harsh censorship regime was applied to all publishing materials (Šámal, 2009). The development of Czech libraries was also deeply affected by restrictions on purchasing foreign books and periodicals, poor funding generally, and political intervention. Since scientific and other research required the latest information even in a communist state, a system of scientific, technical, and economic information (STEI) was established with generous support, but it served only a limited group of experts.

After 1989, a paradoxical library acquisition situation ensued. Libraries no longer were restricted in their acquisitions by censorship and could even commence filling in the gaps from the past, but their financial resources were so limited that they could not always take advantage of this opportunity (Stoklasová, 2007). The libraries could now purchase domestic literature, although even in this area there were numerous restrictions because of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, Czech libraries—public and academic, as well as specialized—remain most disadvantaged by their financial situation in relation to the purchasing of foreign literature. The funding for new acquisitions has, at best, been kept at the same nominal level for a number of years, but fixed library budgets mean fewer acquisitions because of price inflation. This negative trend has recently been intensified by a massive increase of the value-added tax, from 5 to 21 percent for the purchase of books.

The situation for purchasing electronic information research resources is significantly better than that in other areas (Richter & Nová, 2009). The trend in the Czech Republic of establishing consortia for collaborative access to selected electronic information resources began in the mid-1990s. The first consortium brought together four university libraries and provided access to the Current Contents Connect database. In 1999, a major change in how electronic information resources was to be accessed occurred with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports' four-year initiative Information Resources for Research and Development. This program

provided the impetus for the creation of further consortia as well as for the possibility of purchasing licenses that would be effective nationwide. The Information Resources initiative has gradually been followed by other programs that provide access to important resources, including EBSCO, Pro-Quest 5000, Elsevier, Kluwer, Springerlink, Blackwell Synergy, Wiley, Web of Science, Science Citation Index, and Ebrary. A total of CZK130–150 million (US$6.5–7.5 million) from the national budget supports the purchasing of electronic resources annually. Currently, the establishment of a national center for purchasing electronic information resources, which would negotiate licenses for specified library groups, is under review.

A large issue for Czech libraries in the future is the acquisition and lending of domestically produced ebooks. Czech publishers discriminate against libraries because they are afraid of their competition. During joint discussions, suitable economic models have been sought. A planned amendment to the Copyright Act will create the possibility of concluding collective licensing agreements for access to digital documents administered by collective copyright officials. These agreements could make it possible to provide access to Czech digitization projects through libraries.

The Automation of Library Processes

Libraries began to use information and communication technologies in the mid-1960s. In Czechoslovakia, during the period of socialism, libraries lacked the funds and intellectual capacity necessary for automation to become a regular part of their activities. As a result, computers, and subsequently access to the internet, were not introduced into Czech libraries until the early 1990s. Prior to this, the use of computer technology was rare and involved only a select group of larger libraries, such as the National Library of the Czech Republic, the National Technical Library, and a few others. Based on data from a 1998 survey, only seven libraries were using an automated library system in 1989 (Richter & Nová, 2009). This twenty- to thirty-year automation delay adversely affected the situation in Czech libraries and the standard of their services. But on the other hand, this delay might be regarded as having allowed Czech libraries to take advantage of international experience and adopt well-tested solutions and standards, thus avoiding the pitfalls that often attend the immediate implementation of new technologies.

The project that was of decisive importance for the initiation of automation in Czech libraries was the creation of the Czech and Slovak Library Network (CASLIN) (CASLIN, 1993). On December 14, 1992, the Andrew Mellon Foundation approved a three-year grant of US$1.1 million for the implementation of the CASLIN project. Its aim was to build solid foundations for a nationwide library network that would provide both domestic and foreign users with easy, quick, and barrier-free access to information available in Czech libraries and information institutions. Libraries in the Czech Republic currently use different automated library

systems of both domestic and foreign provenance, which has led to the creation of a diverse and heterogeneous environment that is very demanding in terms of mutual communication. The systems with the widest use are LANius, in 3,144 libraries, followed by KPsys, in 630 libraries. Others include the DAWINCI system, with thirty-five installations; the Advanced Rapid Library system, with eighty installations; and the Aleph 500 system by Exlibris, which has a total of 133 installations. Regional automated-public-library systems have become increasingly common, facilitating the automation of libraries in the country's smaller towns and villages.

THE RETROSPECTIVE CONVERSION OF CZECH LIBRARY CATALOGS

When the automation of library processes began, Czech libraries had many millions of book and periodical volumes and other documents in their holdings. The only access provider to this information and the cultural treasure it represented was the traditional card catalog. Retrospective catalog conversion commenced on a large scale only in the mid-1990s (Stoklasová & Bareš, 1997). The introduction of integrated library systems produced increasing pressure for the conversion of catalogs into electronic form. The National Library developed a special technology, RETROKON, which is based on OCR/ICR technology, for this purpose. Catalog conversion is supported by the National Program of Retrospective Conversion, which provides for the coordination among libraries and ensures the maximum use of already-existing records.

Once these catalog records are converted into machine-readable form, they are incorporated into the union catalog and made available to all libraries. Since 1995, 10 million catalog cards have been scanned, of which 1.75 million have been converted into a standardized format. An important step was the retrospective conversion of the Czech national bibliography for the twentieth century, which contains the bibliographic records for everything published in the country during the century. At present, retrospective conversion focuses on the nineteenth century and the libraries that have rich collections of foreign literature.

CATALOGING, CATALOGS, AND PORTALS

The use of information technologies has been driven by the implementation of international standards for the cataloging of library collections and the exchange of bibliographic data. An initiative of the National Library during the 1990s was to encourage the use in Czech libraries of such standards as the International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD), the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2), and the bibliographic-exchange format UNIMARC, now the MARC 21 format (Stoklasová, 2007). At the end of the 1990s, these standards were joined by the Z.39.50 protocol for open-system interconnections. The use of these standards

has provided the basis for the integration of library systems nationally and has opened the door to international cooperation for Czech libraries. In 1994, the National Library was the first library in the former communist countries to make available its bibliographic data in the OCLC union catalog.

Access to the library collections of the Czech Republic is provided by several nationwide systems: Union Catalog (UC) of the Czech Republic, the Czech National Bibliography (CNB), and the Uniform Information Gateway (UIG).

Union Catalog of the Czech Republic
The Union Catalog (UC) of the Czech Republic was created by the National Library in 1961. In 1966, all libraries in the republic were required to list their acquisitions of foreign literature in this catalog. From then on, the UC was jointly developed by the National Library in Prague and the University Library in Bratislava. Since Czechoslovakia was divided, in 1993, into the separate states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the catalog has been divided into Czech and Slovak parts.

As mentioned above, Project CASLIN was essential for the automation of the UC because of its centrally coordinated, shared cataloging. The electronic version of the UC was introduced in 1995 (Svobodová & Hájková, 2007). After unsuccessful experiments with the development of a homemade proprietary system to manage the UC, in 2005, the ALEPH system, now ALEPH 500, was adopted. At present, the catalog has over 5.2 million records of printed monographs, special types of documents, and foreign and domestically produced serials. The cataloging of monographs and special documents is shared by 300 libraries. The National Library, the Moravian Library, and the Research Library in Olomouc are legal-deposit libraries that catalog materials in one central database using the ALEPH cluster. Other libraries do not enter their records directly into the central database but participate in a batch procedure that can lead to duplicate work. The UC serials cataloging involves 400 libraries. All catalog data are encoded in the MARC21 format; cataloging follows AACR2. The standards for subject processing are the UDC and the Conspectus methodology. The UC is also connected to the National Authority database. The UC offers librarians

- interlibrary loans;
- records for downloading via Z39.50;
- the capability to download in one batch file all records for the documents maintained by particular libraries;
- online updating of holdings information;
- online updating of contact information for libraries listed in the Directory of Libraries and Information Institutions in the Czech Republic; and
- connection to the full texts of digitized documents.

In addition to the central Union Catalog of the Czech Republic, other union catalogs have been created, facilitating access to library collections of particular groups of libraries (Matějovič, 2011).

Czech National Bibliography
The Czech National Bibliography (CNB) is a universal bibliography that records everything printed in the Czech Republic, as well as foreign Bohemica. In the second half of the 1990s, the records for what had been published in the country during the twentieth century were retrospectively incorporated into the CNB (Stoklasová, 2007). The National Library, in cooperation with the regional libraries and the largest specialized libraries, prepares the CNB on the basis of the provisions of the legal-deposit law. The database now contains more than 2 million entries for books, periodicals, special documents, dissertations, foreign Bohemica, and articles in Czech periodicals. The CNB is now the primary source of information for what has been published in the country, and also for the shared cataloging by libraries.

Uniform Information Gateway
The Uniform Information Gateway (UIG) is a national portal established in 2002 (Stoklasová & Krbec, 2002). The gateway makes it possible to search multiple Czech and foreign resources simultaneously, including library and union catalogs, full-text databases, and so on, through one user interface. Currently, it provides access to 155 resources. Anyone can use the resources that are freely accessible through the UIG. Licensed resources are available only to registered users in libraries that have access to or own these resources. In addition to resource searching, the UIG offers additional functions, such as providing information about the complete texts of specific documents, accepting orders for delivery of electronic documents, checking the availability of desired items in the Czech Republic, and obtaining information on particular libraries or authors. The gateway has become a popular tool for downloading bibliographic records, which for some libraries is preferable to using the UC.

Portals
In addition to printed documents, Czech libraries now offer their users access to numerous databases, digital libraries, and other electronic information resources. These services, however, are fragmented and are not user-friendly. There are significant differences between the responsiveness of traditional library services and the new services provided in the digital environment.

In reaction to this situation, the *Concept of the Development of Libraries in the Czech Republic for 2011–2015* document was released. One of its main objectives of the project it establishes is to create a central portal of Czech libraries providing quick, high-quality services, allowing clients to receive information or obtain requested documents in either print or digital format.

The creation of this uniform interface for Czech libraries is a complex task, comprising a number of component projects and activities:

- Creating a strong portal as requisite for access to the entire library system
- Creating a system for user-identity sharing (using federated authentication)
- Utilizing the available online payment systems for the library services provided
- Ensuring coordinated access for libraries and their users to the information resources offered by the system
- Optimizing the system of interlibrary loans and document delivery, with an emphasis on speed, readiness, reliability, and the effective use of information resources
- Creating the conditions for every library to become an interface to the entire library system, and for every librarian to be able to provide complex services
- Ensuring interoperability with the European digital library, Europeana (*Koncepce rozvoje knihoven*, 2012)

The project's goal is to launch the portal in 2015 (Stoklasová, 2013).

The Digitization of Library Collections

The initial impetus for the digitization of the library collections in the Czech Republic was provided by UNESCO's Memory of the World program, which focuses on the preservation and protection of the world's cultural heritage (Knoll, 2010). In 1992, the National Library, in cooperation with the Albertina Icome Praha company, commenced digitalizing the most valuable items in its historical collections. This was followed in 1996 by a routine digitization of manuscripts and early printed books, and in 1999 by the digitization of periodicals. Great attention has been paid to the application by all libraries of international standards for digitization and access. Digitization in other libraries was stimulated by a grant program of the Ministry of Culture, Library Public Information Services, which included two subprograms focused on the digitization of manuscripts and periodicals in other Czech institutions.

The National Program for Access to Rare Documents through Digitization of the *Memoriae Mundi* Series, Bohemica is a program for the digitization and preservation of the country's cultural heritage contained in the documents of Czech libraries and other institutions. The results of the program have been concentrated since 2003 in the Manuscriptorium digital library. Among other things, this has provided access to medieval and early modern manuscripts, *incunabula* (books printed before 1500), early printed books, historical maps, and graphic posters issued before 1800. As a result of the European project ENRICH, collections of other European libraries have been included in the Manuscriptorium. It currently is

comprised of 109 partners, involving libraries, archives, museums, galleries, and so on from twenty-three countries, the majority being European. It is one of the largest digital libraries of this type in the world, offering approximately 22,700 digitized documents, predominantly manuscripts (75–80 percent), of which 24 percent come from the Czech Republic. The Manuscriptorium provides data for global projects and is accessible through European portals, such as Europeana (a search platform for a collection of European digital libraries); The European Library (TEL, an online portal for access to the collections of forty-eight national and research libraries in Europe); the World Digital Library (WDL); and CERL (a portal providing access to a database of mainly manuscripts, but also printed materials). In 2005, the National Library was awarded the UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize for its work in digitization and its international impact through recommendations and training courses. In addition to the digitization of rare manuscripts and early printed books, the Manuscriptorium is involved in a recently launched project for the long-term archiving of online publications.

At the beginning of 2011, a joint project of the National Library and Google focused on the digitization of historical documents. The outcome of the project will be the digitization of approximately 140,000 early printed books from between the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, which are no longer subject to copyright restrictions. It is expected that, in the future, access to these documents will be provided through the Manuscriptorium digital library.

The objectives of Kramerius, the national program for digitization of documents in danger of acid-paper degradation, are to preserve and provide access to Bohemica that are printed on acid paper, mainly newspapers and periodicals. In addition to support for the actual work of digitization, an open-source software system, called Kramerius, has been developed to provide access to the digitized documents (Lhoták & Jansová, 2011). Numerous Czech libraries utilize the system to provide access to their books and periodicals, maps, sheet music, and early printed books. The system is also suitable for providing access to digital-born documents. The metadata used in the system, version 4 of which was implemented in 2009 and also involves digitalized workflow management on the basis of the National Library's Digitization Registry, are continuously adjusted in order to meet international standards. The system makes possible the coordination of the digitization activities of Czech libraries and helps avoid duplicate work. Through the Kramerius system, about 12.3 million pages were made accessible in 2012.

WebArchiv, the archive of Czech web resources (http://webarchiv.cz) has been established under the research and development project Registration and Preservation of and Access to Czech Resources Available on the Internet (Gruber, Síbek, & Coufal, 2009). This project, with financial

support from the Ministry of Culture, has been conducted since 2000 by the National Library, in cooperation with the Information Technology Center and the Faculty of Informatics of Masaryk University in Brno. It has two principal objectives: first, to catalog online publications developed in the Czech Republic, and to integrate these into the Czech National Bibliography database; and second, to store these publications in a system that will ensure long-term access. The tools used for web archiving have been developed by the Internet Archive organization of the International Internet Preservation Consortium (IIPC). The Czech WebArchiv has been a member of IIPC since 2007; it is also a part of the National Digital Library (NDL) project of the National Library and the Moravian Library (Hutař & Melichar, 2009). The main goals of the NDL project, which is financed by the EU and the Czech national budget, are

- the digitization of a significant part of the printed Bohemica from the nineteenth century up to the present, such as books and serials either issued in the Czech Republic, are written in Czech, or concern Czech lands (It is anticipated that by the end of 2019, more than 50 million pages—approximately 300,000 volumes—will have been digitized.);
- the long-term preservation of these documents in a reliable digital repository that provides not only for the safekeeping of already-digitized documents, but also digital documents created by or acquired as a result of other projects; and
- making these digital documents accessible if permitted by copyright laws.

Apart from these nationwide programs, there are digital activities in a number of specialized libraries, such as the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (ASL) and regional libraries. The ASL works on the Czech Digital Library project, whose main goal is to ensure the digital-content aggregation from various digital libraries in the Czech Republic.

The Construction of New Library Buildings

The former socialist Czechoslovakia could be described as a country in which libraries were not built (Blechová & Richter, 1989). In the entire forty years of its existence, only four library buildings were constructed. Most libraries were housed in poorly equipped, limited spaces. Under these circumstances, the physical condition of library collections deteriorated badly. By 1989, for example, the situation had become extremely critical in the National Library, where hundreds of thousands of volumes of old books and magazines were stored in piles; many of them were mildewed and in danger of being destroyed.

In 1990, things began to change in this respect. Most central libraries, as well as university libraries, are now housed in new premises. New facilities have been built with optimal climatic conditions to ensure the

long-term preservation of collections. Hundreds of public libraries now operate in new or reconstructed facilities with modern equipment. Many of these new library buildings have won awards in architectural competitions. Funding from the EU made these changes possible. Nevertheless, the neglect of the past is still present, and continued efforts are still required to transform libraries into inviting places that will be sought after for meetings, study, and leisure (Kurka, 2011).

The Profession, Education, and Training of Librarians

The future development of the library profession will depend on education and staff qualifications. Many kinds of professional education in librarianship are available in the Czech Republic at secondary and postsecondary technical schools and in undergraduate and graduate programs. The tradition of education in what is now the Czech Republic began in 1927 with librarianship courses in the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. The graduates from this program constituted the first academically educated generation of librarians. After 1989, substantial changes led to increased possibilities for staff training. Tertiary education in the field of librarianship was greatly expanded, and the number of university students and graduates increased (table 2). In addition to Charles University in Prague, university education in the field of librarianship and information science is now provided by Masaryk University in Brno and Silesian University in Opava.

A major problem for personnel development in Czech libraries are salaries, which are significantly below the national average. As a consequence, many graduates in library studies seek jobs outside of libraries. Therefore libraries have to employ a large number of staff members from other fields, which necessitates ongoing retraining and additional education. Retraining is provided chiefly by libraries: the National Library,

Table 2. The number of university graduates in the field of librarianship and information science

Year	Charles University		Silesian University		Masaryk University		Bachelor total	Master's total	TOTAL
	Bachelor	Master's	Bachelor	Master's	Bachelor	Master's			
2005		53	52	0	0	0	52	53	105
2006	30	62	33	0	0	0	63	62	125
2007	47	75	55	13	0	0	102	88	190
2008	46	250	72	32	52	32	170	314	484
2009	53	42	47	15	47	27	147	84	231
2010	50	48	58	27	50	20	158	95	253
2011	35	65	125	32	62	37	222	134	356
TOTAL	261	595	442	119	211	116	914	830	1,744

the National Technical Library, and some regional libraries. Also, the Association of Library and Information Professionals is a major participant in educational activities. The 2012 survey of library staff members in the Czech Republic indicated some important trends (Houšková, 2012):

- In the first half of the 1990s, the number of employees in almost all types of libraries decreased. This trend slowed or stopped at the end of the decade.
- Librarianship continues to be a highly feminized field; nevertheless, it is possible to notice a slight increase in the number of male librarians, mainly in some types of libraries. Overall, the increase was from 7 percent in 1998, to 9 percent in 2004, to 12 percent in 2011.
- Libraries chiefly employ middle-aged or older women whose secondary education is usually in fields other than librarianship, but the number of university-educated workers is steadily growing (table 3).
- Library employees have grown older and show considerable employment stability in the long term. Fifty percent have worked in one library for more than ten years. The ages of 56 percent of the library workforce were between 41 and 60. Employees above age 60 comprised only 10 percent; 12 percent of library workers were below age 30.
- Basic computer literacy skills of librarians have considerably improved. Librarians' competency levels are directly proportional to the size of their library. Nevertheless, the levels are unsatisfactory in numerous demanding areas. Language skills have also improved.
- There is inadequate support of employee education by funding bodies. The time requirements for educational activities are perceived as the major barrier to the better education of library employees.

Associations, Corporations, and Partnerships of Libraries

Unlike in countries where there has been a long tradition of library associations forming an important part of the library system, the situation in the Czech Republic is much more complex. The Association of Czechoslovak Librarians and Their Friends was founded in 1919, bringing together librarians from all types of libraries. Originally, this association was active only in Bohemia, but later included Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia. In 1948, the association was discontinued for political reasons. Throughout the period of the communist regime, library workers and libraries were not allowed to form associations. Following the events of 1989, three library associations were established: the Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic (SKIP); the Czech Republic Library Association (SDRUK); and the Association of Libraries of Czech Universities (Marvanová, 2009, p. 69).

Table 3. The educational level of library staff members (2012)

	Employees	Percent
Elementary education	112	2
Secondary education	3,306	61
Higher vocational education	183	3
University education	1,818	34
TOTAL	5,419	100

Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic
The Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic (SKIP in Czech) is a voluntary professional organization of librarians and information professionals founded in the spring of 1990. It followed a professional association of the same name that had been formed at the time of the Prague Spring of 1968, but this was abolished by the Ministry of the Interior in the summer of 1970.

SKIP is the Czech Republic's largest professional association. Its membership is on the order of 1,000 individuals, 600 institutions, and eleven regional organizations. It is organized into sections, clubs, and committees; for example, the public library section, educational section, employers' section, children's library club, school library club, club of academic librarians, francophone club, editorial committees, and the committee for foreign relations. SKIP shapes the identity of the profession, is active in supporting the necessary library legislation, and represents libraries in dealing with collective-management organizations concerning copyrights.

One of SKIP's major functions is to develop contacts with professional associations and organizations of the same or similar purpose both at home and abroad, particularly those of neighboring countries with embassies and cultural centers in the Czech Republic. It manages and takes part in local, national, and European projects, such as PIK, a national project to establish internet connectivity in public libraries; LPIS, a national project to develop public library services, improve the training of librarians, develop information literacy in the general public, and participate in a national program of reformatting library collections, and so on; and CERTIDoc, a European system for the certification of library and information professionals. Since 1990, SKIP has been a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Recently, it became a member of the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA).

Czech Republic Library Association
The Czech Republic Library Association (SDRUK in Czech) was founded in 1992 with the task of systematically organizing professional events aimed

at, in particular, research and special libraries. Its members comprise forty-four public and research libraries. It regularly organizes seminars on the development of book collections, automation of library processes, and questions related to the establishment of library standards. It publishes a series of information resources that involve library directories, terminological dictionaries, and other methodological aids. Professional activities take place within sections dedicated to bibliography, historical collections, information technologies, and regional services.

Association of Libraries of Czech Universities
The Association of Libraries of Czech Universities was founded in 2002 and currently has twenty-three members—all libraries of universities and other higher-education institutions. Its mission and goals are to promote, develop, and support university libraries in the Czech Republic; to facilitate their negotiations with information providers in order to improve their opportunities for the cost-efficient purchasing and licensing of electronic information resources; and to support collaboration and partnership on both the national and international levels. Its activities are carried out in working groups for information education and literacy; electronic information resources; and electronic theses and dissertations.

Conclusion
During the past twenty years, libraries in the Czech Republic have undergone extensive development in response to national political and economic changes and the rapid development of information and communication technologies. After an initial phase of uncertainty in the 1990s, a period of gradual stabilization and development in line with global trends began with the new millennium. The adoption of a national library act created a new role for libraries: namely, providing public library and information services; the act also defined the fundamental elements of the new national library system. We are now beyond the middle of the period outlined by *Concept of the Development of Libraries in the Czech Republic for 2011–2015* (discussed above). This strategic document, with its twenty-one priorities for development, provides an important blueprint for Czech libraries in the next few years (*Koncepce rozvoje knihoven*, 2012).

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