

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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The destruction of Vijećnica - the Historical Building of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina - in the Summer of 1992 represents one of the most tragic consequences of war in the period 1992-1995. Its value as an architectural monument and the content of its priceless collections had been recognized for many years. To bring back to life the beautiful building - symbol of the city of Sarajevo - and to reconstitute its precious manuscripts and other documentary records represents not only an architectural, professional and financial challenge but also will make a valuable contribution to the fruitful dialogue between various civilisations which have left their traces in this country.

Vijećnica, the home for the Library since 1951, was completed in 1896, and is the most visible monument of the urban development of Sarajevo in the first decades of Austro-Hungarian rule. As early as 1881 Mustajbeg Fadilpašić, the mayor of the city, had proposed to the City Council the construction of the new city hall - its original function.

Several years passed until the idea of the new building was taken up again. In the beginning of the 1890s the government made the necessary decisions and money was appropriated for the construction. Its location was decided to be to the East from the main Baščaršija market at the place known as Mustajpaša Mejdan. The design of the city hall was initially made by architect Carl Pach (1857-1942). The construction work was carried out by two engineers: Aleksandar Wittek in the period 1892-1893, and Ćiril Iveković from 1893-1896. The completion of the building was warmly welcomed in the journal appropriately called "Nada" or "Hope", on 1st December 1897, reminding the readers that most of the building material for Vijećnica came from Bosnia, while some was imported from Tirolia and Hungary. In its history the building had various tenants. At one time it was city hall, courthouse, and from 1910 until 1914 it was the seat of Bosnian Parliament. After the Second World War it was the home of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally in 1951, it became a library, remaining so until its fatal destruction in 1992.

Reconstruction of the old library building started after the war, which was ended by signing the Dayton Peace Agreement in November of 1995. The initial stage of the reconstruction was supported by the Austrian government, later on this task was undertaken by the European Union. As one can see, progress is slow and immediate steps should be taken to accelerate the peace of the works, for which additional and considerable financial means are needed.

Having in mind the important role which the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina plays in the cultural, educational and scientific life of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not to mention the urgent need to reconstitute the nation's lost memory, the continuation of the reconstruction of the library is urgently required. It should be revived as a modern library, balancing traditional and digital resources.

The ultimate aim would be to create a full text electronic archive, making available on a worldwide basis the literature of/and on Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country of centuries long tradition of tolerance and cultural pluralism. The urgency to revive the Library was most eloquently expressed in the Resolution 4.8 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 27th session on 13 November 1993. This document invites, "Member States, intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations and public and private institutions to make voluntary contributions in cash, equipment or services to reconstruct and equip the Sarajevo National and University Library, constitute and preserve its collections and train the requisite personnel."

Reconstruction of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina should serve as a model for the revival of other libraries and information centres in the country, particularly if one knows that hardly a single library building was built in this country for the last 50 years. Wherever possible, cooperation with friendly, particularly neighbouring, countries should be sought to establish and maintain the groundwork for useful international cooperation.

SERVICES

Its services to the users include: several reading rooms, various kinds of bibliographic tools, including the library website (<http://www.nub.ba/index.html>) and an on-line catalogue (<http://www.cobiss.ba/>).

The Library carries out the functions of the national agency for ISSN, ISBN and Cataloguing in Publication (CIP). It is a depositary library for the publications of several UN organizations in addition to the World Bank and UNESCO. The library is creating conditions to become a focal point for links to the other libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina and providing access to Internet resources. Due to the present political arrangements with two entities in the country (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska), the library system is quite decentralized, and it will take some time before the appropriate cooperative arrangements are made for the library and information system to be functional.

Presently the library functions on the basis of the Law of Librarianship (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 37, October 1995) which is expected either to be re-affirmed or new law enacted. According to the present law, the National and University Library is a legal deposit library and the central institution of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Provisions are made for its central role in establishing and maintaining library and information services throughout the country. It is a member of IFLA, CENL, CDNL and provides home for ISSN and ISBN centres. International cooperation is carried out through staff exchanges, interlibrary loan and book exchanges. In addition the National and University Library is trying to enhance the joint work with other libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly as regards the development and reconstruction of library services and collections. The purpose of the support given to the development of libraries and librarianship as a profession by the National and University Library is to collect and preserve the documentary heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the present constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this country consists of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic Srpska. This arrangement influences to a great extent the legal, financial and administrative status of libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION

Today there are 69 employees among whom are 25 trained librarians. Strong efforts are made to initiate additional training programs for library staff and users. The activity of the Library is carried out through the following departments: [Acquisition](#); [Processing](#); [Serials](#); Reference Centre; [Special Collections](#); [Bibliography](#); [Centre for Continuing Education of Librarians](#); [Centre for Restoration and Preservation](#); [ISSN Centre](#); [ISBN Centre](#); [Reader Services](#).

The Library has a very active centre for continuing education of librarians, which has benefited more than 400 colleagues from different parts of the country. Life long learning provision to the librarians is one of the most important commitments of this library in its strategic orientation towards development based on knowledge.

Recently, in order to create proper conditions for preservation and restoration of library material, a book bindery and laboratory for that purpose has been inaugurated. It is hoped that this laboratory will be able to perform its task on a much more professional level in the future.

DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

The written records in various languages and scripts, which were lost in the destruction of the Library, were witnesses to the multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious character of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The National and University Library housed about 3 million books, periodicals and other documents most of which were catalogued according to the up to-date international bibliographic standards. The automated library catalogue had been started a few years before the war. In accordance with the legal deposit regulations enshrined in the law, the National Library received most of the publications that were produced in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other parts of former Yugoslavia. It was given additional responsibility in 1957, when the National Library became also the University Library serving the academic community in the Country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina publishes the National Bibliography in three series: for monographs, periodicals and articles in serial publications. A few years ago the project on retrospective bibliography was initiated. Retrospective bibliography research is very important because it will help to fill gaps in the reconstruction of Bosniaca holdings of the library. Even though this institution went through difficult times, the "Bibliography of Bosnia and Herzegovina books from 1992 to 1996" was published. Recently, a publication entitled "Books and Publishers from Bosnia and Herzegovina" was issued. Reprint editions of old and rare books have also been inaugurated. These publications represent a valuable contribution for present and future generations of readers and are testimony of the richness of the cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

AUTOMATION OF CATALOGUING FUNCTION

The Internet was introduced into Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 through the UTIC University Tele-information Centre. A year later BIHNET was founded to become the biggest Bosnian Internet provider. There are three public telecommunication operators in the country (JPPTT BiH, based in Sarajevo, Telekom Srpske, based in Banja Luka, and HPT Mostar Ltd; based in Mostar) Recently (April 2002) the first licences for private operators have been issued. Still "the digital divide" runs deep in the country. There are approximately about 50.000 usernames in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of them belong to the companies and internet-cafes. There are about 30 internet service providers in the country. Among those most visible ones are BIHNET, LOGOSOFT, ERONET, TEOL, SMARTNET, UTIC, CITYNET, GENELEC and others.

At present, Bosnia and Herzegovina has about 1.100 registered domains ending in country code '.ba'. ISP licences are issued by Communication Regulatory Agency - CRA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was established in March 2001 to regulate the telecommunication sector. The internet is entering, even if slowly, into the world of libraries and librarianship. The National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina recently created its own website presenting its services to the users.

Thanks to the implementation of the cooperative cataloguing system (cobiss.ba) some records of the resources of the Library are accessible automatically. The other libraries which participate in the system are: Public and University Library in Banja Luka, Sarajevo City Library, Faculty of Philosophy Library in Sarajevo, Public and University Library "Dervis Susic" Tuzla, Public Library Zenica, Public and University Library Bihac, City Library Mostar, Faculty of Law Library Mostar, Mechanical Faculty Library Zenica, Library for the Blind Sarajevo, Library of Academy of Sciences and Arts of B&H Sarajevo, Medical Faculty Library in Foca.

The computerisation of the various functions of the National and University Library of B&H in Sarajevo is at the preliminary stage and it is too early to make any definite conclusions as to the speed at which it is likely to proceed in the future. A number of problems have to be overcome:

- A weak telecommunication infrastructure;
- A shortage of well trained 'systems librarians'. Even if they are there, low salaries will not attract them to work in the library;
- Additional problems are present due to the fact that a system is supported from outside of Bosnia, even if there is a local office;
- Shortage of funds for new equipment.

Nevertheless, NUBB&H is well placed to achieve its goal of computerising most of its functions even though the progress may seem slow.

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