



Public Libraries

There are over 6,000 public libraries operated by local authorities. They form the basic infrastructure for providing accessible library and information services to all the inhabitants of the Czech Republic. In the last few years, the number of readers and library visitors has been gradually increasing, and there has been a remarkable rise in the number of loans. Libraries are also being gradually equipped with computer technology and connected to the Internet. The automation of library processes and cataloguing is also progressing quickly. In addition to the libraries' traditional cultural and educational roles, there is also emphasis on information services. Many libraries are creating new types of services to be more accommodating to clients, including those of the business community. New forms of mutual co-operation are arising.

Most libraries have managed to take advantage of possibilities presented through information and communication technologies for developing library services, thereby gaining new clients. The trend of the last few years has been to combine the tasks of traditional libraries with other functions such as public access Internet, municipal information and tourism centres and local community services. Libraries can also serve as a neutral venue for the meetings of various informal groups and community initiatives. It is clear that the only way forward is to systematically and actively support readership and to merge library activities with processes of school and life-long extracurricular education.

Very important for the development of public libraries are the regional libraries, which provide and organise auxiliary services for small libraries. These services involve 109 public libraries in larger towns that create co-operative systems at the level of the smaller regions. An important tool for evaluating the accessibility and quality of library services is the quality standard set forth by the Ministry of Culture in 2005. The standard sets the parameters of quantitative and qualitative indicators for the following areas of public library activity:

- library opening hours,
- development of library holdings and information sources,
- number of public access Internet stations,
- study carrels and spaces for library users,
- general principles of accessibility to the Public Library and Information Services (PLIS)

The indicator values are set for eight size categories of local authorities. The objective of the standard is to improve the accessibility and quality of library and information services for library users. The standard makes it possible for libraries, their operators, the local authorities, regions and central bodies of state administration to compare and check the accessibility and quality of library services and systematically provide support for library development. The PLIS standard is a motivational tool and its indicators are employed in the provision and use of financial resources from the state budget for supporting the development of PLIS.

Special Libraries

An important part of the library system are the special libraries, offering to libraries co-ordination, specialisation, information, and educational, analytical, research, methodological and consultation activities within their specialisation (e.g. Library of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, State Technical Library, National Medical Library, Central Agriculture and Forestry Library, National Museum Library).

The Library of the Academy of Sciences libraries of the Institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

<http://www.lib.cas.cz>

This is comprised of centres of scientific information and libraries, including the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (LAS). The centres of scientific information and libraries operate in 60 institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (ASCR) as specific departments whose task is to collect, process and disseminate scientific information. The total number of items in the holdings of the ASCR libraries exceeds 3 million. At present, over 7,000 serials are subscribed to, a great many electronic databases are accessible, as well as other electronic information resources.

The LAS was founded in 1992 pursuant to Act 283/1992 Sb. The library was made part of the scientific institutes of the ASCR. In 1993, the LAS was proclaimed an


autonomous scientific institute; on 1 January 2000, LAS became a joint institute providing an information infrastructure to the ASCR's institutes.

The LAS co-ordinates the activities of the scientific information centres and ASCR libraries. According to its charter, its task is to operate library, information and reprography services for the institutes of the ASCR, universities and other library users in the area of science and research, providing and building an information infrastructure for research. It also processes rare historical holdings.

Today, the LAS provides services that are comparable to those of research libraries in the Czech Republic and abroad. It provides access to primary and secondary databases of the ASCR. As the largest library at the ASCR, the LAS is best placed to monitor trends and the latest standards in library and information science, and to provide the technical methodology for libraries of the ASCR's institutes.



*Reading Room
of The Library of
the Academy of
Sciences*



In addition to the network of ASCR libraries, there are a number of research institute libraries. They often contain documents that are highly specialised and unique in the Czech Republic. They have the advantage of having precisely defined community of users, with direct contacts with it and its holdings.

The State Technical Library

<http://www.stk.cz>

The State Technical Library (STL) is a public access research and technology library that is building up and administering a state subsidised holding of domestic and foreign literature and of other information sources in the area of technology and applied natural and social sciences. The STL holding contains over 1.2 million volumes – including books, journals, newspapers, science dissertations, information about companies, electronic documents and other publications and texts in the field of technology and applied natural and social sciences related to technology. At present, the construction of a new STL building is under way, which will also serve the needs of the Czech Technical University and other technical schools and will be located on their campus.

The STL is also the seat of the Czech National Centre of the International Standard Serial Numbering CNC ISSN, which allocates ISSN numbers and processes records for serial publications published in the

Czech Republic. The ISSN system is an international register of serial publications (newspapers, journals, editions of technical and scientific books, etc.), collecting information necessary for their identification and for bibliographical checks, making its files available and also providing other services.

University Libraries

There are 25 universities and colleges in the Czech Republic, operating a total of 95 libraries and 1096 branches. University libraries also offer their services to the professional public. In spite of the complicated financial situation universities find themselves in, university library holdings are being renewed and replenished, especially with foreign literature. In 2001, library holding showed a growth of 50% from 1990, and annual increases continue this trend. In addition to printed information sources, still the basic component of securing information for the educational and scientific research activities of any school, access to electronic information resources is increasingly important. Obtaining these resources was significantly expanded in 2000–2004 through a project which was a part of the Ministry of Education programme entitled Information Resources for Science and Research.

The development of the technical and technological infrastructure of university libraries has been supported through University Development Fund grant

projects, under which libraries have been given their own area of competence. New types of library and information services have been installed, employing the latest technology, such as accessing electronic information resources within local networks through using even remote access, or sending documents electronically.

Directory of university libraries
<http://platan.vc.cvut.cz>

Medical Libraries

Medical libraries within the health sector are established in various types of facilities – teaching hospitals and medical faculties, integrated workplaces, faculty libraries, specialised health institutes, science-research workplaces, public health authority offices, health spas, medical secondary schools and others. At present there are 149 medical libraries and information centres. Medical libraries co-operate in providing literature and information services (national and international) for professionals and the general public and in the acquisition of information resources – traditional and electronic. Through the compilation of specialised union catalogues and a national medical bibliography, using the Czech version of the Medical Subject Headings thesaurus, they are organising educational activities and supporting the development of communication and in-

formation technologies (89% of libraries are connected to the Internet). The libraries are undergoing gradual automation, implementing library and other necessary standards.

Medical libraries are working on several projects of integrated research and development and collaborating with foreign institutes such as the European Association of Medical Libraries.

The National Medical Library

<http://www.nlk.cz>

Established by the Ministry of Health, this public access library creates, maintains, protects and provides access to a holding of information on medicine and related sciences, enjoying the status of a national legal deposit library.

Special functions of the library:

Digitizing rare prints

Co-operative creation and use of national authorities:

- Providing access to Czech national authorities in medicine and healthcare through the Internet and CD-ROM.
- Co-operative creation and use of name authority files in medicine and healthcare.
- Co-operative creation and use of name and corporate authorities in medicine and healthcare.



Digitizing of rare books of the National Medical Library

Museum Libraries

The holdings of museum libraries contain a great wealth of literature and an enormous information potential. An important component of their holdings is regional literature, often not represented in any other libraries in the region. In addition to books, these libraries collect manuscripts, historical collections and

other materials and documents – photographs, posters, master copies, exhibition and auction catalogues, etc. Libraries in the network of galleries and archives are of a similar nature.

In many respects, museum libraries find themselves in a worse position compared with other public libraries. They are not as yet equipped with information technology, and therefore cannot fulfill their potential. Abundant and often unique holdings are, as a result, not always adequately processed.

The National Museum Library

<http://www.nm.cz/knm>

The National Museum Library is seated in the main building of the National Museum. The history of this library began in 1818, as did that of the museum itself. This reference research library provides access to its holdings through its reading room. Its main department collects, maintains and preserves library holdings, numbering over 1.6 million volumes. Since the beginning, the programme of the library has been to build a collection of Bohemian works, from manuscripts to contemporary printed materials, and to collect literature from all the domains represented at the National Museum.

A rare component of the holdings is the vast collection of 19th century Slavonic literature. The department of manuscripts and old prints is responsible for

the library's rarest collections which include over 6,000 volumes of manuscripts and a collection of incunabula and early books plus two palace libraries, the Nostický and the Kinský. There is also a preservation laboratory. The library administers a collection of Bohemian serials, i.e. newspapers, journals and other serials that are published at least twice a year anywhere in Bohemia, Moravia or Silesia; this also includes newspapers and journals in Latin, German, Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian and other languages published in the Czech Republic.

The library also includes a special department for library holdings of stately homes in the Czech Republic.

There are 341 stately home libraries comprising a total of 1,672,000 volumes, of which there are 7,895 manuscripts, over 1000 incunabula and about 15,000 early books from the 16th century. The oldest manuscript dates back to the 9th century. The languages of the literature in this collection are mostly Latin, French, German, Czech, English and Italian; to a lesser degree, there are also books in Hungarian, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Polish, Russian and others.

The National Museum Library also operates the Museum of Books at the chateau in Žďár nad Sázavou. It is a unique exhibition offering a look at the history of written communication – from ancient cultures, mediaeval manuscripts and early printed books, up to the present day.

The Institute of Agriculture and Food Information Prague

Libraries of Agriculture and Food Information

<http://www.uzpi.cz>

The Institute of Agriculture and Food Information (IAFI) is a specialized state-operated national organization set up by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic. Its task is to make available comprehensive technical information on agriculture, food, nutrition, consumer protection, forestry and the environment. The Institute also has the third largest library of this kind in the world (after Beltsville, USA, and Moscow) with a total of about 1.2 million volumes. The library is a member of AGLINET, the international network of agriculture libraries, acting as a conservation library of national agriculture and food literature and a FAO deposit library. It subscribes to about 750 domestic and foreign journals and the basis of its holdings is comprised of books, serials, special literature (materials from conferences, technical norms, research reports, dissertations) and corporate literature (catalogues of companies, products, trade fairs and exhibitions, directories, promotional material, instruction and service manuals, etc.). The library holdings contain not only complete sets of current national agricultural literature and the

most important literature published abroad, but also valuable rare historical books and collections inherited from liquidated or defunct agricultural institutions and important personalities of agricultural science.

IAFI activities can be divided into two main groups: the first involves information collections, the second communication services. The information section collects, processes and provides access to Czech and foreign scientific literature and other forms of documents and data. The second group co-ordinates the services of the Institute's information systems and its communication related activities. One of the tools for communicating with specialists and the general public is the INFOPULT – a free 24-hour information service. IAFI also publishes 10 scientific journals in print form.

Agriculture and food industry libraries work together to provide library and information services, and



they create consortia for the joint use of information resources. The Institute of Agriculture and Food Information shares in the creation of the AGRIS international information system under the auspices of The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

School Libraries

There are a total of 4,653 (statistics from 2002) libraries at primary and secondary schools and colleges today, serving students and teachers. They are run and financed from the school budget. Their main task is to provide information and documentation for the teaching process. A school library can have two separate parts – one for teachers and another for students. As a rule, services are for school use only and not for the public.

The Comenius National Library of Education

<http://www.npkh.cz>

The Komensky National Education Library (KNEL) is a public access library which collects books and journals on education and related fields in the social sciences. The services of KNEL are intended mainly for education, training and teaching. The library is used not only by teachers and students specialising

in education at secondary school and university, but also by those studying the social sciences. The library provides various services:

- lending of books (reading room, external loans, inter-library loans),
- reprographic services of materials in the library,
- reference services – information about catalogues, databases and library holdings, bibliographical information, fact-finding,
- research services within the KNEl's print sources and database, and external databases.

The K.E. Macan Library and Printing House for the Blind

<http://www.ktn.cz/>

This library, established by the Ministry of Culture, provides information to the visually impaired and various special services:

- issuing audio publications and print materials in Braille and enlarged fonts,
- publishing and disseminating periodicals and non-periodical publications relating to the purpose of the library and its activities,
- digitizing texts for the visually impaired,
- providing cultural services to visually impaired students, musicians and other interested groups,
- producing printed materials in Braille and in relief embossed graphics,
- making and disseminating audio recordings,
- providing, selling and distributing products and aids to the visually impaired.



Selected Library Statistics

Libraries established by regional authorities and the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic

	2002	2003	2004
Number of libraries	6 057	6 046	5885
Number of branches	1 005	959	941
Collections	60 669 380	61 044 000	61 236 000
Number of registered readers	1 533 135	1 525 000	1 507 000
Number of visitors	19 657 619	20 102 579	20 614 779
Number of loans	70 825 448	71 663 000	72 825 000
Number of staff	4 971	4 844	5 059
Resources for stock acquisition ¹	8 651 093 €	9 047 621 €	8 626 379 €
Number of study carrels	18 529	21 847	24 520
Number of computers for users	4 237	5 111	5 888
of these with Internet access	3 081	3 798	4 544

University Libraries

	2002	2003	2004
Number of libraries	95	99	106
Number of branches	1096	920	1022
Collections	11 008 000	11 801 000	11 745 000
Number of registered readers	288 000	308 000	333 000
Number of loans	3 783 000	2 277 000	2 769 000
Number of library staff	782	828	826
Stock acquisition expenditure	5 926 955 €		

¹ It follows from the KULT V12-01 statistics that the costs (expenditures) of libraries in small localities (i.e. volunteer libraries) are not included

Libraries of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

	2002	2003	2004
Number of libraries	64	65	65
Collections	3 147 000	3 011 000	3 087 000
Number of registered readers	30 000	30 000	31 000
Number of loans	201 000	184 000	183 000

Medical Libraries

	2002	2003	2004
Number of libraries	173	149	143
Collections	3 164 000	2 850 000	2 832 000
Number of registered readers	97 000	95 000	93 000
Number of loans	1 028 000	1 090 000	1 087 000
Number of staff	377	360	340
Resources for stock acquisition	2 492 184 €	2 760 171 €	2 698 396 €

Museum and Gallery Libraries

	2002	2003	2004
Number of libraries	192	269	270
Collections	8 674 000	8 989 000	8 981 000
Number of registered readers	23 000	29 000	30 000
Number of loans	503 000	222 000	236 000
Resources for stock acquisition	303 754 €	350 648 €	362 426 €
Number of staff	260	282	282