

SOFIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI" – THE BIGGEST UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN BULGARIA Past, Present, Future

Abstract: The Sofia University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" is the biggest university library in Bulgaria. The article traces its establishment and development. There is discussed the acquisition and formation of library collections, the organization of its catalogues. Special attention is paid to the automation of library processes, which marks a new era in the library's development. The advantages of the retrospective conversion and its impact on user services are discussed. Digitisation of library collections is part of the modern library activities. The publication presents the digitisation process and the digital collections developed by the University Library, with attention to the special collection for disabled users.

Keywords: library services, acquisition, cataloguing, automation, digitization.

The University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" was established on 29. 10. 1888. together with the School of Higher Education, which later grew into Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The good start of the library and its development in the first years were due to "the fact that most of the first lecturers were familiar with the basics of library studies and bibliography" (Petkova, Lilyana & Shopova, 2011, p. 24). One of the founders of the University, Ljubmir Miletić, was elected the first librarian of the Library. In 1897 the prominent Bulgarian librarian Stoyan Argirov was appointed as a librarian and later as its first director. He is the first associated professor in library studies in Bulgaria. Argirov led the library until 1936. Thanks to their efforts, the library developed successfully and became an important part of Sofia University.

The first library collection consisted of the library of the School Association "Poznaisebesi" at the Petropavlovsk Seminary in Lyaskovets, duplicates from the National Library in Sofia, as well as purchased books worth BGN 10 000, which were allocated by the Ministry of Education. It contained 2577 titles in 4243 volumes (Petkova et al., 2011, p. 27). From the very beginning the library was given the task to acquire publications in all scientific fields. It was bought "foreign scientific literature (theoretical and fundamental research)" (Angelova, Anna, 2010, p. 159). There were purchased a few valuable private libraries. Since then, as well as today, the University Library's acquisitions have been coordinated with faculty members who are specialists in the corresponding scientific fields. This ensures the quality of the incoming

¹ byavrukova@libsu.uni-sofia.bg

Аутор је ванредни професор на Универзитету у Софији и директор Универзитетске библиотеке „Св. Климент Охридски“. Бави се каталогизацијом, информационим ресурсима, стандардима и историјом библиотека. – Напомена ур.



Photo 1. Stoyan Argirov – the first Sofia University Library director.

literature. The Library is included in the scope of the Legal Deposit since 1925, and it keeps the national book heritage in its collections. Today it receives a copy of all books, published in more than 100 copies. The first volume of the Annual of Sofia University was published in 1905, and it founded the exchange programme. Today the library has more than 300 partners and receives about 1000 journal titles and about 1500 volumes books each year. The University Library's collections grew, providing scientific information for the research and education at Sofia University. Although the library has not purpose fully collected rare and valuable editions, its holdings today include "foreign old-printed books, innovative and seminal scientific works, books presenting the Bulgarian lands, Bulgaria and the Bulgarians (before 1878), publications of national and world literature classics during their author's lifetime, books with hand-written notes, exlibris, bibliophile editions and private collections" (Angelova, 2008, p. 7), many of them have been donated. The University Library owns fundamental scientific publications in History, Thracology, Classical Philology, Philosophy, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Law, Arts, etc.



Photo 2. Rare and valuable editions.

In 1985, the Rare Books Collection Department of the Library was established "in order to discover literary monuments and keep them in separate collections" (Angelova, 2008, p. 8). They are formed on the basis of three collection criteria – territory-linguistic, chronology and subject (Angelova, 2008, p. 8). There are organized the following collections:

- Manuscripts;
- Bulgarian old-printed editions (1806–1878);
- Foreign old-printed, special and rare editions (XVI–XX century);
- Foreign journals and books containing information about Bulgarian lands and the Bulgarians before 1878;

- Archive of Prof. Stoyan Romanski (a unique collection of 396 hand-written theses on ethnography);
- Collection “Slavica” 1822–1922 (contains rare and valuable publications in the field of Slavic Studies);
- Cartographic editions (published before 1900);
- Private collections of Bulgarian scholars.



Photo 3. Reading room “Studii” (Central Library).

The University Library consists today of Central Library and 28 branch libraries of faculties, specialties and departments. Its collections are over 2 660 000 library items and it is the largest university library in the country. The Library preserves literature in all scientific fields. Every year, the University Library receives about 20 000 library items. Annually it serves over 18 000 faculty members and students. The Library is open to all who wish to use its valuable resources and annually serves over 2 000 external users.

The Central Library is housed in the first building built especially for a library in Bulgaria. It was designed by the prominent Bulgarian architects Ivan Vasilyov and Dimitar Tsolov. Their project has the emblematic name “Bible”. The official opening of the building was at the end of 1934. There are five reading rooms, one of them is specialized for disabled users.

Branch libraries are located on the campuses of faculties and departments. The Philological Library is the biggest one. It has nearly 200 000 volumes books and journals. The most visited libraries are the Law Library and the Libraries of History and Philosophy.



Photo 4. Central Library.

In recent years, the University Library has been one of the most preferred libraries for interlibrary loan requests from other academic and research libraries as well as Bulgarian public libraries. The library sends more than 600 books and articles annually. It is the only one Bulgarian library included in the OCLC SHARES list for libraries outside USA.

In its long history, the library has developed an excellent card catalogue system. Each branch library has an alphabetical catalogue which reveals the library's collections and contains full bibliographic descriptions. The branches also have topographic catalogues in which some of the catalogue cards are handwritten and contain a brief bibliographic description. Most libraries also have systematic catalogues. The collection of each branch library is also represented in the University Library's official alphabetical union catalogue, which is maintained in the Central Library building, i.e. there is information for all library collections in one place.

In 1992, the process of automation of cataloguing was started with the Bulgarian software product AB. Two years later the integrated library and information system ALEPH 300 was implemented. The University Library became the first fully automated library in the country – from acquisition to circulation services. The bibliographic records created in the first system were successfully migrated, but were substantially edited to be fully compatible with the new machine-readable cataloguing format. Catalogue cards were printed until the end of 1999, after that the card catalogues of foreign books maintenance ceased. The catalogue of Bulgarian books was maintained until 1995–1996. It was frozen after the National Library stopped the programme for centralised cataloguing in Bulgaria. The centralised printing of catalogue cards for new acquisitions for the branch libraries ceased too. Bibliographic data for all publications received by the library after 2000 can be found only in the electronic catalogue, which is available online.



Photo 6. Cataloguing hall (Central Library).

In 2009, the University Library introduced the integrated library and information system ALEPH 500. It is a flexible product that can be adapted to the specific requirements of the library, where it is used. It covers all library processes and allows networking, which is particularly important for libraries with a branch structure such as the University Library. The interface of the product is user-friendly for both librarians and library users. The system uses Unicode, which is very important for the University Library, because of the collections of the Library of Eastern Languages and Cultures. It acquires library documents in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean etc. Some branch libraries also collect publications in Greek, which need to be adequately represented in the catalogue too. One of the main advantages of ALEPH 500 in cataloguing is also related to the possibility of maintaining a number of authority files and indexes directly linked to the bibliographic database. This allows quick and easy search for author names, titles, places of publication, publishers, series, subject headings, etc.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the University Library faces the challenge of converting bibliographic information for nearly 2 million library items. The implementation of the retrospective conversion project was possible thanks to the NALIS project², funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation³. The library has to do a complete retrospective conversion of the alphabetical union catalogues. The project did not provide funds for external services, which led to the decision for in-house conversion, performed by librarians. Since there is a limited time to complete the process, students were involved in the project. Today, the University Library is the only big Bulgarian library that has converted all its catalogues into

² NALIS [online]. [accessed 02.05.2022]. Available from: <http://www.nalis.bg>.

³ America for Bulgaria Foundation [online]. [accessed 02.05.2022]. Available from: <https://us4bg.org/>.

machine-readable records and has bibliographic data for its library collections in the online catalogue. The University Library is the first library in the country whose online catalogue contains nearly 1 200 000 bibliographic records.

The retrospective conversion of library catalogues leads to more convenient and high-quality services for users. As a result of the retrospective conversion, the University Library has seen increasing requests for library documents that were previously only found in the card catalogues. This is convincing evidence that library users in Bulgaria, and in particular the faculty members and students at Sofia University prefer to use e-catalogues. It is important to note that the catalogue is accessible online, as well as the service for online requests, which facilitates the users. A curious result has also been observed in the use of the collections of branch libraries by students. They are no longer confined to the library of the faculty in which they are studying, but also use other libraries. For example, students of History or Pedagogy use publications available in the Biology library collection. Most of these publications are necessary for the educational process, but there are few copies in the faculty branch library. Sometimes these titles are available in other branch libraries. The retrospective conversion allows to be found information about the titles and copies in each branch library with only one search in the online catalogue.



Photo 8. Students' reading room (Central Library).

The University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" initiated the process of digitization of its collections in late 2011, in the midst of the retrospective conversion and the library already had the software necessary for development of digital collections. Each library needs to be provided hardware and software to start the digitization process. The University Library obtained a book scanner in 2000, which was mainly used for the needs of the electronic document delivery service and less frequently for the digitization process of rare and valuable books. It was

situated in the Mediateka reading room. At this time, digitisation was not popular in Bulgarian library practice and the University Library does not have the necessary software to establish and develop digital collections. The first steps towards the establishment of a digital collection were made in 2002-2003 with the implementation of the project “Library for Bulgarian Slavic Studies. Bibliotheca Slavica”, which aimed to present the work of medieval scribes and their works and to digitize hardly accessible old-printed editions, books and documents from the collections of the Sofia University Library “St. Kliment Ohridski”. A modern SupraScanbook scanner was obtained in 2012. It allows high-quality digitization. This was the beginning of the digitization process at the University Library. The Digitization Department was established in 2013. There is carried out the digitization process – from scanning to creating metadata and organizing digital objects into collections. The department employs four full-time specialists – three librarians and one technical specialist who are responsible for the entire cycle. This ensures the systematic work of fulfilment the goals set by the library – digitization of rare and valuable library documents and textbooks, and their organization into digital collections.

The selection of documents to be digitised is related to the research interests of users, which may be encyclopaedic or, most often, subject-oriented. Various printed materials are digitised – books, periodicals, maps, etc.

One of the main tasks of the library is to provide literature for the educational process at Sofia University. It is available for faculty members to request for digitizing library resources needed for it⁴. Thus, users actively participate in the digitization process.

The University Library provides a service for digitizing resources to help disabled students. The Copyright Law in Bulgaria allows “the reproduction of already published works by means of Braille or any other similar method, if this is not done for profit” (Zakon za avtorskoto parvo i srodnite mu prava, article 24, paragraph 9). The Library has offered this service since 2002. Once a library document has been digitised, it is necessary for the file to undergo an optical character recognition procedure, which then allows blind users to listen the text with appropriate software or to read it with a Braille display. This procedure is followed by correcting any errors in the text recognition process. The University Library has created an archive of these resources. The files are stored in .tiff format on a file server. Blind users receive on request the required title in a format that is convenient for them, usually .html. All titles are organized in a collection which contains over 530 book titles and articles. Access is by user name and password. The library also has a specially equipped reading room for disabled students. Computers with special software, as well as a Braille printer and a Braille display, are available.

Today, the library maintains 15 collections with over 10 000 titles available to users⁵:

- Main literature for readers with special educational needs;
- Annual of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”;
- Dissertation abstracts, defended in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”;
- Scientific publications of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” researchers;

⁴ Request a digital copy of books and article with copyright [online]. [accessed 02.05.2022]. Available from: http://libsu.uni-sofia.bg:81/UB/?page_id=3245&lang=en.

⁵ Digital collections of Sofia University Library “St. Kliment Ohridski” [online]. [accessed 02.05.2022]. Available from: <http://unilib-dspace.nasledstvo.bg/xmlui/handle/nls/94>.

- Course readings;
- Archive of Acad. Stoyan Argirov;
- Archive of prof. Stoyan Romanski - title pages, illustrations, glossary, photos;
- Library of prof. Boyan Penev – title pages;
- Manuscripts;
- Bulgarian old printed editions (1806–1878);
- Collection "Slavica" (1822–1922);
- Old-printed, rare and valuable books in foreign languages (XVI–XX c.);
- Dissertation abstracts, defended in other universities and scientific organizations;
- Photographs;
- Serials.

The Digital Collections section of the University Library website presents each collection with brief information about its nature and importance to the library. This meets the good practices and recommendations for digital collections.

In addition to its own library and information products, the library also provides its users with access to scientific and full-text databases. Their usability has been increasing over the years. In 2021, more than 247 000 loans of digital documents were registered. More than 90 000 of the loans are registered for the library's own digital collections.

The University Library is an important unit of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The far-sighted policy of the library's managers has turned it into a modern library and information centre, which invariably fulfils its most important mission – information support for research and educational process in the University.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Petkova, Lilyana, & Shopova, Slavka (2011). *Istoriya na Universitetskata biblioteka "Sv. Kliment Ohridski" 1888–1944*. Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press.
2. Angelova, Anna (2010, June). Knizhovnite pametnitsi v interkulturnia dialog i nauchnata komunikatsia. In *Savremennata biblioteka – tsentar za informatsiaiznanie: Dokladiot XX natsionalna konferentsia na BBIA Sofia: Dopalnenie*. Sofia: BBIA.
3. Angelova, Anna (Comp.). (2008). *Knizhovni pametnitsi v Universitetskata biblioteka „Sv. Kliment Ohridski“ XVI–XX v.* Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press.
4. Zakon za avtorskoto parvo i srodnite mu prava, *Darzhavenvestnik*, N 56 (1993).

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКА БИБЛИОТЕКА „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ” У СОФИЈИ – НАЈВЕЋА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКА БИБЛИОТЕКА У БУГАРСКОЈ Прошлост, садашњост, будућност

Резиме: Универзитетска библиотека „Св. Климент Охридски” у Софији највећа је универзитетска библиотека у Бугарској. Овај чланак прати њено оснивање и развој. Бавимо се набавком и формирањем библиотечких фондова, као и организацијом њених каталога. Посебна пажња посвећена је аутоматизацији библиотечких процеса, што означава нову еру у развоју библиотеке. Разматрају се предности ретроспективне конверзије и њен утицај на корисничке услуге. Дигитализација библиотечких фондова део је савремене библиотечке делатности. У раду је представљен процес дигитализације, заједно са дигиталним колекцијама које је развила Универзитетска библиотека, а посебна пажња посвећена је специјалној колекцији за кориснике са инвалидитетом. Одељак Дигиталне збирке на веб-страници Универзитетске библиотеке представља сваку колекцију са кратким информацијама о њеној природи и значају за библиотеку. Поред сопствених библиотечко-информационих производа, библиотека својим корисницима омогућава приступ научним базама и базама података пуног текста. Њихова употребљивост повећава се током година. У 2021. регистровано је више од 247.000 позајмица дигиталних докумената, а више од 90.000 позајмица регистровано је за сопствене дигиталне колекције библиотеке. Универзитетска библиотека важна је јединица софијског универзитета „Св. Климент Охридски”. Далековидна политика руководиоца библиотеке претворила ју је у модеран библиотечко-информациони центар, који неизоставно испуњава своју најважнију мисију – информатичку подршку истраживачком и образовном процесу на Универзитету.

Преузето: 24. маја
Прихваћено: 11. септембра

