

**Bohdana Stoklasová and Pavel Krbec,  
CASLIN Union Information Gateway**

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Union Catalogs at the Crossroad

Edited by

Andrew Lass and Richard E. Quandt

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## **Chapter 9**

# **CASLIN Uniform Information Gateway**

Bohdana Stoklasová and Pavel Krbec

At present, the majority of Czech libraries are hybrid libraries that provide information from both traditional and electronic resources and, in addition to their own information resources, rely to an ever-increasing extent on external domestic as well as foreign resources. The heterogeneous and international nature of information resources offers new possibilities that would have been difficult to imagine just a few years ago, but it also poses a number of problems that libraries must resolve in order to provide the maximum possible efficiency for their clients. Libraries should offer their clients integration of their services in a single user-friendly environment without the need to repeatedly log in and out, the ability to present queries in a uniform manner, to receive outputs, i.e. both information on documents and the primary documents themselves (most importantly full texts, but also graphics, sound, etc.) in a uniform format, and, on the basis of information thus obtained, to facilitate access to offers of further relevant information, and the possibility to work in the clients' own predefined environment with predefined preferred resources. In other words, most of what is so annoying to users today should take place 'in the background'. The CASLIN Uniform Information Gateway described in this paper provides the above functionalities. Since the CASLIN Uniform Gateway serves also as a virtual union catalog, these functionalities are described in the paper together with a possible model of cooperation of both real and virtual union catalogs under the umbrella of CASLIN.

## 1 The Beginning of the Project: Motivations

Information sources are not the only thing that has changed. The clients of libraries are also changing in their perceptions and in the demands they place upon libraries. Having access only to an online library catalog with a user-unfriendly interface will not placate them. They want much more. Being users of the Internet, they have grown accustomed to having immediate access, and they quite naturally also expect libraries to provide easy access to information. If libraries and librarians are to successfully compete on the information market, they have to offer qualitatively new services. At present, clients of heterogeneous libraries must be able to deal with different user interfaces (more or less friendly) of different services, learn a number of different query formats, repeatedly log in and log out, handle outputs of vastly different character, and resolve problems of different output formats and of different coding of diacritics.

In order to achieve integration of services in a single user-friendly environment, libraries need good-quality software providing the functionalities noted earlier, good-quality tools to manage information about both internal and external sources, tools for the management of information about users, and a sufficiently large staff of skilled librarians to effectively utilize all those tools.

An obstacle to full accessibility to the traditional holdings of Czech libraries and to easy navigation by users seeking information on a specific subject in libraries with particularly good resources in relevant areas is the poor quality of descriptions of the content of most Czech libraries' collections, and the absence of data for their overall viewing. What is missing is a comprehensive and easy-to-understand map of Czech libraries based on a common methodology. Coordination in the development and utilization of collections is not one of the strong points of the Czech library sector. Consequently, scarce financial resources for the purchase of documents are not used optimally. At the same time, Czech libraries have presented no convincing arguments that would enhance their chances for more money for collection development.

## 2 Project Objectives

The project Uniform Information Gateway for Hybrid Libraries<sup>1</sup> aims at improving the situation in all the above areas.

The objective of the project was to set up a uniform information gateway (UIG) that would allow users uniform and easy access to both traditional library holdings and local and remote electronic resources. The result of the project would be a gateway for the National Library as well as for Charles University, whose students and faculty it traditionally serves.

The project follows two main trajectories:

1. Implementation of foreign technical tools and standards for the UIG in the Czech Republic. Based on an analysis of the most appropriate tools for the attainment of the project objective, two products distributed by the Ex Libris company<sup>2</sup> were selected, namely MetaLib<sup>3</sup> and SFX.<sup>4</sup> The most important international standards used include OpenURL, Z39.50, UNICODE and MARC21; and
2. Determination of the prerequisites for optimum operation of the UIG, uniform subject cataloging, and a uniform description and analysis of Czech library collections based on the conspectus method and cooperation in their development and utilization.<sup>5</sup>

The UIG has been developing rapidly, and a number of changes have been implemented since the end of 2001. The present situation is described below.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://jib-info.cuni.cz/dokumenty/branaprojekt.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.exlibris.co.il/intro1.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.exlibris.co.il/metalib/overview.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.sfxit.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> For results of the project in 2001, see <http://jib-info.cuni.cz/dokumenty/zprava2001/JIBTEXT.htm>.

### 3 The Present Situation

The objective of the original project was to establish the UIG for the National Library and Charles University, with the understanding that other libraries would be invited to participate in the project after it has been implemented and tested in those two institutions in the pilot stage. A number of libraries participating in a similarly focused project for the Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) division had already joined the project in the first year of its implementation (2001).<sup>6</sup> That made our joint effort a de facto national information gateway project from the very beginning. Such a project requires better hardware and software, and also more human resources, than a pilot project. This was the main reason for submitting the Library Public Information Services Program project.<sup>7</sup> In the year 2002, the project transcended national boundaries when Slovak libraries expressed an interest in participating in it.

### 4 Why the CASLIN Uniform Information Gateway?

The smooth start of the UIG project was made possible by the results achieved in previous years within CASLIN project activities<sup>8</sup> (especially in standardization and in setting up a uniform basis for a library network), the UIG being one of its logical outcomes, which is also the message on the UIG opening screen.

At present, the following Czech catalogs and databases are available to all MetaLib users through the UIG as freely accessible resources (sites that may be searched):

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://jib-info.cuni.cz/o\\_nas/stm/jib-stm.html](http://jib-info.cuni.cz/o_nas/stm/jib-stm.html).

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.nkp.cz/o\\_knihovnach/English/LPISindex.htm](http://www.nkp.cz/o_knihovnach/English/LPISindex.htm),  
<http://jib-info.cuni.cz/dokumenty/visk8projekt/visk8projekt.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.caslin.cz:7777/caslin/historie/document.html>.

**Table 1. Available Catalogs and Databases in MetaLib**

ANAL-články VK Olomouc (VKOL)	ANAL-článková bibl. (NK ČR)
AUT-báze autorit (NK ČR)	CASLIN-soub.katalog ČR
KKL-knihovnická lit. (NK ČR)	Katalog (MSVK Ostrava)
Katalog dokumentů (SVK Plzeň)	Katalog knih STK (STK)
Katalog-knihy (KVK Liberec)	MZK-katalog MZK Brno (MZK)
NFA-katalog dokumentů	NKC-katalog NK (NK ČR)
OPAC (Uk Upa)	SLK-katalog Slov.knih. (NK ČR)
SVK01-katalog VK Olomouc (VKOL)	Souborný kat.Univ.Karlovy (UK)

UIG users can also use a number of catalogs and databases of libraries abroad. The most frequently used US libraries are the Library of Congress Online Catalog, WorldCat (OCLC) and the University of California Digital Library. Records may be viewed separately after the appropriate source (e.g. WorldCat) has been selected. The Czech records come to WorldCat from the National Library of the Czech Republic, which, based on an agreement with OCLC, has been sending Czech National Bibliography records to the WorldCat catalog for a number of years, where they can be used by foreign libraries and their users. The application of AARC2R and LCSH in the Czech Republic makes mutual cooperation easier. At present, conversion from UNIMARC to MARC21 is necessary; in the future, Czech libraries plan to implement MARC21, which will make the situation even easier.

In recent years, records sent by the National Library to the WorldCat database have been equipped with subject headings (LCSH) in English, which is highly appreciated by foreign libraries:

Mi haj lo Rostohar (1878-1966) v tradi ci cel ostní a experi mentál ní  
psychol ogi e =

Mi haj lo Rostohar (1878-1966) frui tful tradi ti on of i ntegrate and  
experi mental psychol ogy / [uspořádal Josef Švancara] . -- Vyd.  
1. -- Brno : Masarykova uni verzi ta, 1999. -- 115 s. : il.,  
portréty ; 24 cm. -- -- (Sborník prací Filozofi cké fakul ty  
brněnské uni verzi ty ; P 3 (1999)

UDC: \* 159.9-051 \* 159.9.07 \* 159.9.019.2 \* 378.4 \* (066)

SH - Czech

Rostohar Mi haj lo, 1878-1966  
psychol ogové -- Sl ovi nsko  
psychol ogové -- Česko -- stol. 20.  
experi mentál ní psychol ogi e  
tvarová psychol ogi e  
uni verzi ty -- Česko

SH Engl i sh

Rostohar Mi haj lo, 1878-1966  
Psychol ogy sts -- Sl oveni a  
Psychol ogy sts -- Czech Republ ic  
Psychol ogy, Experi mental  
Gestalt psychol ogy  
Uni versi ties and col leges -- Czech Republ ic

Figure 1. Illustrative Headings

Thanks to the cooperation with OCLC and the credit received for Czech records, Czech libraries can afford to use WorldCat records, which replaces original cataloging of their foreign acquisitions. Our cooperation with the WorldCat international union catalog is well known worldwide. Our foreign colleagues are often surprised and confused by the fact that our shared cataloging at national level is much less successful.

The sources that have been selected for the UIG out of the several hundred ones available are those where a high level of use by Czech libraries is expected. Other sources will be added according to requests from the UIG clients.

After a registration and necessary verification, other (paid) sources, including full texts, are available to the users. Table 2 shows what is currently offered in the subject category Economic Sciences and Business.

**Table 2. Economic Sciences and Business**

ABI/Inform (ProQuest)	ANAL-články VK Olomouc(VKOL)
ANAL-článková bibl.(NK ČR)	AUJ-jmenné autority (NK ČR)
Academic Search Premier(Ebsco)	ArticleFirst (OCLC)
Academic Source Premier(Ebsco)	CASLIN-soub.katalog ČR
DANBIB	Ecollections (OCLC)
IDS Basel/Bern	IDS Luzern
IDS NEBIS	IDS St Gallen
IDS Zurich Universitet	Katalog (MSVK Ostrava)
Katalog-knihy (KVK Liberec)	Library of Congress Online Cat
MZK-katalog MZK Brno (MZK)	MasterFILE Premier (Ebsco)
MZK-katalog MZK Brno (MZK)	NetFirst (OCLC)

ANL FULL-plné texty (NK ČR)	Acad. Research Lib. (ProQuest)
Account. Tax (ProQuest)	Asian Business (ProQuest)
Banking Inf. Source (ProQuest)	Business Wire News (Ebsco)
Báze české literatury (STK)	EconLit (SP)
European Business (ProQuest)	GEK-generální katalog (VKOL)
General Sci Plus (ProQuest)	ISSN (STK)
Journal Citation Reports (ISI)	KZP-zahraniční period.(NK ČR)
Katalog germanik (KVK Liberec)	Katalog-seriály (KVK Liberec)
Katalog-články (KVK Liberec)	Know@urope (ProQuest)

The extended services feature (SFX) permits UIG users to navigate from the source to other related targets.

## 5 Conspectus

Another important aspect of the UIG project is the development of prerequisites for its optimum operation: uniform subject-cataloging, use of the conspectus for a uniform description of the collections of Czech libraries, and cooperation in their development and utilization. We shall discuss this aspect only briefly.

The prerequisite for uniform subject-processing is the establishment of a national standard, i.e. the subject authority file. The subject authority file is gradually being built and published at the NL. It is based on the Library of Congress Subject Headings international standard (LCSH). Authority records include a notation symbol for the systematic selection language (Universal Decimal Classification) connected with the authority heading. This creates a connection between the subject and the systematic selection language for greater user satisfaction in searches.

Comprehensive accessibility of collections of Czech libraries and easy navigation by users are hindered by the poor quality of collection descriptions on the websites of a majority of Czech libraries, and by the absence of suitable data on collections in our libraries. There is no comprehensive and easy-to-understand thematic map of Czech libraries based on a uniform methodology, and coordination in the development and utilization of collections is not among the strongest points of the Czech libraries either. The Czech libraries' use of the conspectus approach (developed in the USA) should contribute to improving the situation.<sup>10</sup> The conspectus approach has so far been applied in the Netherlands, and the results and the necessary documents are available on the National Library

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<sup>9</sup> See the OCLC/WLN Collection Assessment and Analysis Service, <http://www.oclc.org/western/products/aca/conspect.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.wln.org/products/aca/conspect.htm>.

website.<sup>11</sup> The conspectus subject categories were applied in the UIG project where they constitute ‘thematic crossroads.’

## 6 MetaLib and SFX, or the Basic Software for the Project

The most primitive search tools are simple information portals. They are basically lists of heterogeneous sources (sometimes thematically structured or thematically oriented), and the user merely selects the source to be used. Users will proceed differently with different sources because their formats for both queries and answers are typically different. A typical example is the ‘Information Gate’ at Charles University (which, in fact, is a portal and not a gateway, at least according to our definitions stated below). For a specific group of users (those who have an IP address from the Charles University block), the portal offers specific (and always identical) information resources. Unauthorized clients cannot use the portal. The real situation is somewhat more complicated, but this characterization will suffice for our purposes.

Parallel browsers are products of the gateway type that are more sophisticated in certain respects. They can send a query to several targets, and then use a uniform format to present the answers. The simplest parallel browsers will carry out searches in databases of the same type and, at the same time, provide the necessary interface. Parallel searches can be carried out in all databases equipped with the same browser/interface.

We may simplify this a little by saying that when parallel browsers are used, the communicating systems have the same interface, the sources are homogeneous, and the peer-to-peer communication model is used. Although services are offered to everybody, they need not be the same for everybody, and some of the services may be reserved for specific users only.

It would, of course, be convenient to have a tool that would have the characteristics of both a portal and a parallel browser. Such a tool would

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.nkp.cz/konspekt>.

- offer access to heterogeneous sources as a portal, but always (from the user's point of view) in the identical way (as in the case of a browser);
- present results always in an identical uniform and easy-to-read manner; and
- distinguish between individual users and offer them user-tailored options.

We are going to refer to such tools as information gateways. It is obvious from the requirements imposed on information gateways that each information gateway must have instruments for the management and description (i.e. cataloging) of information resources, and also instruments for the management and description of the users and their rights. It must also have means for communication with the sources. It might therefore be tempting to build information gateways using the same elements that are used for the construction of library systems, which is what Ex Libris did by using the principles and technologies applied in its ALEPH library system to build its MetaLib information gateway.

Every information gateway (including also MetaLib), at least by our definition of information gateways, is an intelligent parallel browser in heterogeneous information resources. Search is the only service specified so far. But users know that browsers (OPACs) of library systems offer more services than just search (some services related to circulation). It would therefore be appropriate and satisfying to have information gateways that would also offer some additional services. However, it appears that it is advantageous to operate the 'system for the provision of extended services' separately from the search system, to make sure that the two systems can cooperate with each other, and to make it possible for the 'extended services system' to operate independently of the search system, that is to say independently of the information gateway.

An autonomous system for the provision of extended services has been developed at Ghent University. It is called SFX, which stands for Special Effects. SFX was developed by Herbert Van de Sompel. Ex Libris bought the SFX system and has been developing it further since. In combination with MetaLib (but also independently), SFX is a tool that can significantly enhance the productivity of work with heterogeneous information resources in the Internet environment.

The way that MetaLib and SFX work is that MetaLib connects to the Universal Gateway, which in turn connects to ALEPH, Z39.50, HTTP and

other clients. These in turn address diverse information sources. It is obvious at first sight that conceptually, MetaLib is not very different from a parallel browser. It does, however, differ in its scope and in the universal character of resources and interfaces allowed by it. MetaLib can search not only catalogs, but also all usual information resources, and it is not limited to any predefined interfaces. It, of course, uses Z39.50 for communication, but it can also communicate using its own interface. The typical resources for searching include catalogs, full texts, databases and archives. The services offered by MetaLib are user-tailored, and the system must therefore have the means and data necessary for the authentication and authorization of its users. (By authentication we mean checking the user's identity by means of a login and a password, or, alternatively, assigning the 'anonymous' status. Authentication is used for opening of specific personalized profiles. Authorization is a process by which, on the basis of the login and the IP of the user's address, his/her status, home institution, etc., access rights to resources are allocated in accordance with internal definitions.) Authorization is resource-related, and the system must therefore also maintain and manage data on resources. All the above data are put together in the so-called KnowledgeBase.

The KnowledgeBase also includes a description of processes such as resource handling. MetaLib will typically rephrase queries into a format that is appropriate for the resource selected, will send the queries and receive answers (results), transform them into its own format and output them. It will offer deduplication and if requested, will perform it. If it is operated in conjunction with SFX, it will also offer extended services.

MetaLib basically gets data, analyzes data and presents them, or jumps to provide extended services. As a result, the concept of MetaLib is simple. However, the SFX system for extended services is complicated. In order to gain at least some insight into the way it operates, we will need to dynamically differentiate the entities of the information world according to what role we assign to them at any particular moment. The entity through which we have just made a search, i.e. the entity we are in, will be called the source. After the search is completed, the source may offer extended (additional) services to us; the simplest service is constructing a hyperlink, i.e. taking a step aside. The location or the entity where the service is being provided is called the target. SFX can then be characterized as a system

providing and coordinating cooperation between sources and targets. SFX may be visualized as an 'observation tower' from which one can reach a variety of resources such as OPACs, ILL, full text resources, Web resources, citations, etc. Let us assume that MetaLib (which is one of the possible SFX sources) has found a record and used an SFX icon to offer extended, and for the moment unspecified, services. By activating the service (by clicking the SFX icon), the user will generate a source (i.e. MetaLib) request and will send it to the SFX system (to the SFX server). The request is in the so-called OpenURL format, and it contains record metadata, user identification, and source identification only. Hence, OpenURL does not contain any data about targets. The SFX server will process the OpenURL (it is, just like MetaLib, equipped with a knowledge base), and will offer concrete extended services to the user according to the record (which was the reason for sending the metadata) and the user (which is why the identification data were sent). The user then may decide to activate one of the services.

What needs to be done before a specific system can actively use MetaLib, and perhaps also function as an SFX source and/or target? As a first step, Czech (and Slovak) libraries would need to contact the National Library, and then, for technical details, the Computer Science Center of Charles University. The connection with MetaLib can be accomplished more quickly and easily if the system to be connected has the Z39.50 interface, but other possibilities also exist. While only systems that are able to generate the OpenURL can be SFX sources, practically any system can function as an SFX target.

## 7 Outlook

By the end of 2002 full Czech and English versions of the UIG will exist. It is expected that most of the major Czech libraries (regional libraries, central specialized libraries plus union catalogs of universities), some Slovak libraries (the virtual Czech and Slovak union catalog CASLIN), most of the STM libraries, and a number of other foreign libraries and resources will be actively participating in the project (that is to say, will make their resources available to it). Their number in the original

knowledge base is constantly growing, and their selection for the UIG will depend on users' interest in individual resources). Besides foreign full-text resources, domestic full-text resources will also be included (negotiations about required standards are underway).

The copy cataloging functionality will be made operational not only for ALEPH, but also for other library systems used by Czech libraries. The development of the subject authority file of the National Library will continue, and experience from this area will continue to be provided to other libraries.

Application of conspectus in the National Library will continue, and experience from this area will continue to be provided to other libraries.

A series of one-day seminars on UIG has started in the National Library training center. Other workshops will be organized as a part of the project STM Portal and at regional level. Presentations of the UIG will be made at national events (Automation of Libraries, Contemporary Libraries, RUFIS), abroad (Conference on Union Catalogs in Tallinn), and in print media (media from the above events, *Národní knihovna*, *Knižnica*, and other journals abroad have shown interest); at the end of the year, a short monograph in Czech and in English will be published at the conclusion of the R&D pilot project.

UIG financing will be provided through the VISK governmental grant program, and it will become a broadly used and indispensable tool for both users of libraries and librarians.

At some as yet undetermined later time, more resources and institutions will be included.

The copy cataloging functionality will be extended to include the format selection option for records copied (UNIMARC, MARC21), which will facilitate the use of international resources and the transfer of Czech (Slovak) libraries to the MARC21 format.

The existing functionality will be continuously enhanced and extended.

The conspectus concept will be implemented in a number of Czech libraries (in addition to the National Library).

Czech libraries will start cooperating in the development of their collections and in the building of thematic gateways.

Training sessions on the UIG will continue at different levels. Presentations of the UIG will be made at important events at home and abroad (IFLA conference in 2003).

Financing of UIG operations will be provided via VISK, or via conjunction with other national programs of the Ministry of Education and other ministries. The UIG will become an even more utilized and indispensable tool for both library users and librarians, and it will be also introduced to some non-library environments.

## 8 The CASLIN Uniform Information Gateway and the CASLIN Union Catalog of the Czech Republic

The parallel existence of UIG, which, as discussed above, is among other things also a virtual union catalog, and of CASLIN, a real union catalog, frequently raises questions such as: which is better, the real CASLIN union catalog or the virtual UIG union catalog? Do we need UIG now that we have the CASLIN real union catalog (and vice versa)? Will we need the CASLIN real union catalog once UIG has been put in full operation?

To begin with, it should be made clear that this is not a question of competition or a fight for a 'place in the sun' between CASLIN UC and the CASLIN UIG. On the contrary, it is necessary to make an all-out effort to ensure that the two systems operate smoothly and complement each other. In an ideal situation, UIG would be linked to a well-functioning real national union catalog and other union catalogs, including foreign and international ones. In certain respects, the UIG offers greater opportunities than a real union catalog. However, in other respects it offers fewer. With respect to resources, it offers more than CASLIN UC, thanks to its direct integration of foreign resources and extended services. But because of its broad sweep, it cannot provide for a comprehensive integration of all small Czech libraries. This can be done much better in CASLIN UC. With respect to functionality, the UIG's advantage is that it can search for and localize documents in libraries both in the Czech Republic and abroad, down to the level of current status of library items. Catalogers using the records downloading function will certainly appreciate the ease of selecting (or even permanently preselecting) the libraries, including foreign libraries,

from which the institution in question wants the records to be downloaded. For their various departments, institutions may even define different preselected menus (i.e. lists of institutions) for records downloading. The choice of formats (UNIMARC or MARC21) will make it easier for Czech libraries not only to use foreign resources, but also to switch from UNIMARC to MARC21. The UIG does not, however, nor will ever, provide for online cataloging into a common database. The absence of a common physical database of bibliographic records is an essential characteristic of virtual union catalogs.

When the real union catalog is placed under ALEPH, Czech libraries will have both the real and the virtual catalogs available in smoothly cooperating software environments. ALEPH and MetaLib have both been developed by Ex Libris, and that common cradle is apparent. It will be up to us to put that advantage to use. Clearly, good software support in itself is no guarantee of successful implementation and of frequent use of a union catalog. Issues that need to be carefully considered with regard to the development and use of union catalogs include strategic and conceptual ones. In many libraries, work processes will also need to be carefully re-evaluated, and in many cases substantially changed, to provide for a purposeful integration of the development and use of union catalogs into these processes. For several years, it seemed that the main problem lay in the shortage of technologies for cooperation within the union catalog. Of course, it is much easier to avoid cooperation when the technical tools available and needed for such cooperation are not on a par with those that the potential cooperating libraries are used to. However, with improvements in these tools, it becomes more and more obvious that the management of Czech libraries will have to surmount a much more difficult obstacle: namely, the natural human resistance to change.

## 9 Conclusion

By the end of 2002, good-quality virtual and physical union catalogs will both be available to Czech libraries. The two catalogs will complement each other. It has seemed that the main obstacle to shared cataloging is the imperfection of technical tools. But technical tools are getting more and

more sophisticated, and a significantly more serious challenge is posed by the lack of willingness to cooperate and substantially transform work processes in Czech libraries. May one hope that the situation will get better in the foreseeable future? The solution may come from an integration of electronic information resources with library services. Although UIG seems to be an extremely powerful technical tool, the full integration of electronic information resources to library services will also require human resources.

To generate resources for such integration, Czech libraries will have to reorganize and streamline their work processes, just as libraries in other countries did, and they will have to muster the will to cooperate and share responsibilities. The fact that user and economic pressures are markedly more subdued in the Czech Republic than in others is no advantage: because we are not forced to cooperate and share responsibilities, a lot will depend on our ability to self-start.

Integration of electronic information resources is a challenge that libraries abroad have had to deal with in recent years, and Czech libraries will have to do the same. We have so far been able to turn a blind eye to the issue of full-scale integration of electronic sources, because the pressure from library users has not been as great as in some other countries. We keep on saying that we will go ahead with integration when the time is right and when we have sufficient resources. We ignore the fact that the time was right long ago, and that processing, storing and providing access to electronic sources (including remote ones) has for a long time not been a luxury, but an absolutely standard library activity. This is underscored by the agenda of library conferences, seminars and workshops, or the websites of some libraries in other countries.

All of us like to process and provide access to classic documents. We have been doing that for long, we are accustomed to it, and we know how to do it. The regular arrival of a certain number of books for complete, original cataloging gives everybody a feeling of pleasant certainty. This feeling is even stronger when catalogers have a certain amount of backlog. We do not care that in Czech libraries one and the same book is processed many times. Their procedures are set, and shared cataloging means an unwelcome interference and a loss of that certainty and a loss of splendid isolation.

We do not care that Czech electronic resources are not processed at all and are irrevocably lost, and that neither contemporary nor future users will be able to access them. Expensive foreign resources lie idle in many Czech libraries, insufficiently advertised and utilized. Sometimes libraries themselves cannot use them, and cannot advise other users either. They say they do not have the time for these luxuries.

Integration of electronic resources is no luxury. Allocating vast resources to multiple activities related to classic documents, and especially to their repeated cataloging, is a luxury. It is unhealthy and untenable when, in one area, everybody does what everybody else does and could do better cooperatively, while another, equally important, area remains a no man's land. This observation gives us the hope that shared cataloging will be introduced on a nationwide basis.

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