

*Guardians of the Memory
Пазители на паметта*

EXPERIENCES FROM BRINGING TOGETHER DIGITALLY THE HETEROGENEOUS HERITAGE OF PLOVDIV

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National Library Ivan Vazov – Plovdiv (Bulgaria)

Abstract. National Library Ivan Vazov in Plovdiv is the second biggest library in Bulgaria.

It functions as the second national depository of Bulgarian printed output and has contributed significantly to preserving the national cultural and historical heritage. This article offers an overview of the library's history and current developments in the field of digitization.

Keywords: digitization; Plovdiv; cultural heritage; Bulgaria; public library

National Library “Ivan Vazov” in Plovdiv is the second national repository of Bulgarian textual heritage. The library has played an important role in the preservation of Bulgarian culture and history. It is the first cultural institution in Southern Bulgaria, established as a Regional Library and Museum of Eastern Rumelia in 1879, on the personal initiative of Yoakim Gruev, then Director of the National Enlightenment Directorate in Eastern Rumelia.

After the Unification, the established legislature regulated equal rights and obligations for the two national libraries – in Sofia and Plovdiv. That is why the National Library in Plovdiv has developed as an archive of the Bulgarian books and periodicals, a Bulgarian historical archive, a rich repository of manuscripts and Revival literature, unique collections of rare and valuable publications.

The Library has maintained exchange links with libraries abroad since 1886.

Some of the significant moments of the library's history are:

- 1879 was the year when the library was established. Yoakim Gruev ordered the creation of a Regional Library and Museum of Eastern Rumelia and thus began the period of initial collection of library holdings.
- Three years later, in 1882, the library is officially open to the public.
- In 1897 the formation of the Archive of the Bulgarian Book began, by virtue of the Law on the depositing of printed publications in the national libraries (in Sofia and Plovdiv).

- In 1898 the Regulations for the National Libraries in Sofia and Plovdiv came into force.
- In 1904 the library began publishing its Yearbook, initially containing the annual reports of the library, but gradually became a solid and renowned scientific publication.
- In 1949 the unique collections “Manuscripts”, “Bulgarian historical archive”, “Bulgarian Revival literature”, “Rare and valuable publications”, “Portraits and photographs” are collected in a separate department – “Special Collections”.
- 1979 was the year of the first automation through the introduction of the computer system IZOT-0310 and information search devices UPDML 9002-02 and IPU IZOT-0320.
- In 1980 was the first subscription to the AGRIS (FAO) database, which was stored on magnetic tapes.
- In 1994 a local library-information network was established.
- In 2008 the Digitization Center is created.
- In 2017 the Digital Library becomes available online.

Today, the Plovdiv National Library is a cultural institute that continues to dynamically enrich and develop the traditions of its prominent founders. Patrons annually realize approximately 118,000 visits and loan 300,000 library documents. The library's holdings are comprehensive and amount to over 1,900,000 library units - scientific, fiction, manuscripts, old-printed, rare and valuable publications, rich reference books, Bulgarian and foreign periodicals, audiovisual and electronic documents, original works of art, personal libraries.

The library has successfully collaborated with a number of Bulgarian and foreign partners who are involved with the idea of collecting and preserving the public memory and the cultural heritage. The library has a public information center, two foreign language cultural centers – DEUTSCHER LESESAL and AMERICAN SPASE, a digital center, a conservation and restoration laboratory, a publishing house, bindery and digital printing facility.

Concerning the library's digital collections, some noteworthy projects in which we have participated and have submitted digital content will be summarized below. The library's goal is to continue the work on these projects, to make them long-term and sustainable.

We have submitted digital copies of 95 of our Slavonic manuscripts from the period from the XII to the XVIII Century to the Manuscript collection in NALIS Repositorium, a prestigious academic digital library, founded by the Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the American University in Bulgaria. The process of uploading more scanned manuscripts from the XIX century is under way.

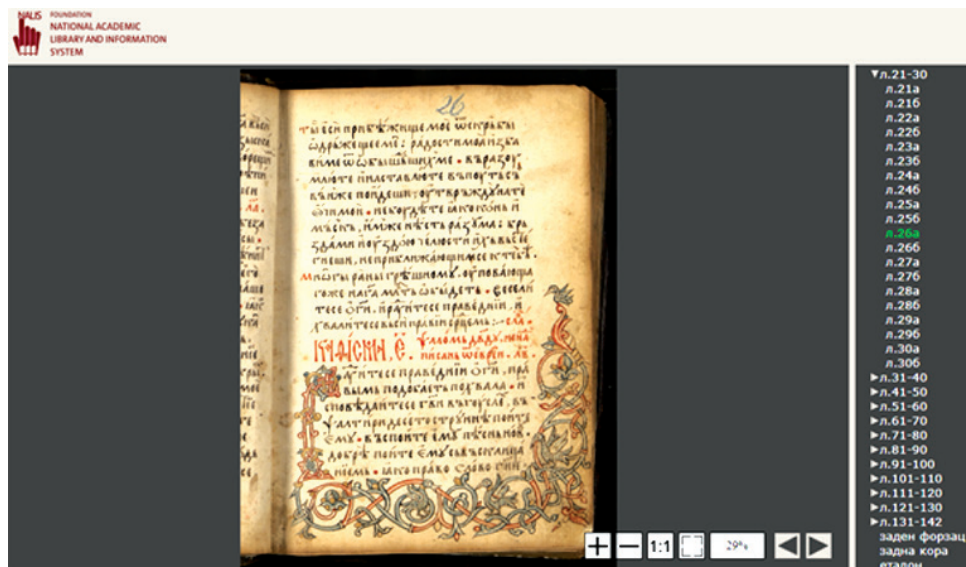


Fig. 1. An example of a page from Markovski psalter, 1638 (No. 5(207)) displayed in NALIS Repository

We have participated in Europeana Photography - A project featuring some of the most prestigious photographic collections of archives, libraries and museums. Europeana Photography is subsidized through the European Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program, 2012 – 2015. The consortium includes 19 representatives from 13 Member States – leading private and public photographic agencies, museums and organizations. Europeana Photography aims to document: historical moments, landscapes and people, homes and clothing, social and economic changes in Europe.

The National Academic Library Information System Foundation (NALIS) participates in the project with 15 000 images provided by Bulgarian archives, libraries, museums and private collections; the largest photographic collection of which is that of National Library Ivan Vazov.

For the project EMBARK, National Library Ivan Vazov presented four Slavonic manuscripts from the XVI and XVII centuries. EMBARK started in September 2010, organized by a consortium of the National Library of the Czech Republic, the Institute for Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the National Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the National Library of Serbia, aiming to include samples of the manuscript and documentary heritage from the Balkan region in the Manuscriptorium digital library. Recently the connection with the EMBARK team was resumed with the intention to submit more manuscripts for the project.

A very important project for us was “Digital Cultural and Historical Heritage Project of Plovdiv Municipality”. The project aimed to digitize movable and immovable cultural and historical heritage from the territory of Plovdiv Municipality – 50,000 units from the collections of the region’s foremost cultural institutions - National Library Ivan Vazov, Regional Museum of History, Regional Ethnographic Museum, Regional Archaeological Museum, the Old Plovdiv Institute and the City Art Gallery. Within the project, a new digital center was established in the Old Town, four mobile digital stations were created to digitize the immovable heritage, and the existing Digital Center in the National Library Ivan Vazov received new equipment. The project was completed in April 2017, and an online portal was created, which displays the digitized holdings of the participating institutions. A decision was made to develop our part of the portal into a Digital Library.

As a result of the two-year effort, National Library Ivan Vazov created a Digital Library that offers and will continue to offer rich and varied digital content. It is available online at <http://digital.plovdiv.bg/BG/Pages/LibIvanVazov.aspx> and promotes the unique possessions the Library keeps and preserves. On the eve of Plovdiv - European Capital of Culture 2019, the integration of objects from the Digital Library into EUROPEANA will be forthcoming.

THE DIGITAL LIBRARY HAS NINE COLLECTIONS:

BOOKS, which currently are 188 – most of them are Statues of professional organizations from Plovdiv and the region, from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The library has a very rich and unique collection of books and in the future we will present paleotypes, first printed Slavic publications and the first printed books in the Bulgarian language from the XVI to the end of the XVIII century, Bulgarian Revival literature, more Statutes of professional organizations from Plovdiv and the region, first editions of the classics of Bulgarian and foreign literature, first translations, books with original, specific binding and print, editions of unusual format.

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS is a collection of newspapers and magazines. Up to the present day in the Digital Library may be viewed 212 full-text titles, with a total of 19,000 separate issues. Because the library is an archive of Bulgarian periodicals of national importance, the collection of periodical publications of the National Library in Plovdiv is of special interest. Particularly valuable are the newspapers and magazines from the East-Rumelian period: Maritsa newspaper – the first Bulgarian newspaper after the Liberation, “Narodniy glas”, “Nezavisimost”, “Polojhenie”, “Saedinenie”, “Yuzhna Bulgaria”, “Narodat”, “Samozashtita”, “Borba”, “Borba za kokal”, “Vestniche”, “Nauka”, “Zora”, “Uchilishten dnevnik”, “Zemedelets” etc., as well as the Revival-period collection of periodic publications.

MANUSCRIPTS

The collection includes Slavonic, Greek, Ottoman and Persian manuscripts on parchment and paper from the 11th to the 19th century. The library’s collection of

Slavonic manuscripts preserves some of the most precious medieval literary monuments in the scientific world, such as the Kyustendil palimpsest from the end of the XII century, the Slepchen apostle (fragment) from the second half of the XII century, the Kichevski triodion from the second half of the XIII century, service book of Daniel Etropolski from 1592, Pop Yovkov pentikostar from 1636, Sliven Damaskin from the first half of the 17th century, etc. The manuscripts from the XVII century – Markovsky Psalter from 1638, Pop Avramov menaion from 1660, the menaions for May, June and September of Krustyo Gramatik and so on, are remarkable in exquisiteness and beauty.

GRAPHIC PUBLICATIONS is a collection of art prints, lithographs, etchings, engravings, posters, original paintings, etc. Especially interesting are the projects for monumental works – a total of 95 projects for large-scale wall murals, frescoes, ceramic tilework, most of them realized in many Bulgarian towns. The projects were created by renowned Bulgarian artist such as Dimitar Kirov, Yoan Leviev, Encho Pironkov.



Fig. 2. Yoan Leviev, Anna Grebenarova. Design for ceramic piece, 1966

CARTOGRAPHIC PUBLICATIONS presents valuable possessions of the library such as the oldest map of Bulgaria, created by a Bulgarian and printed in Bulgarian language – “Map of the present Bulgaria, Thrace, Macedonia and the adjacent lands”, issued with the help of Dimitar Hadzhi Russet for the benefit of

the newly-established Slavic-Bulgarian School in Ruschuk. The map was printed in Strasbourg in 1843. Of significant interest are the “Map of Sanjak Philibe” from 1819 and 1876, “Plan of the City of Plovdiv and the Region” from 1827, “Plan of the town of Philippopolia” from 1878, Plans of the city of Plovdiv by Joseph Schnitter and others.

* The PHOTOGRAPHS digital collection has a lot of potential for development because the library houses approximately 4,000 photographs and postcards of portraits, events and sites of historical significance. Photographic documents with different genre characteristics, featuring portraits of persons, group portraits, photographs of events and sites. The portraits of persons form a major part of the fund, including portraits of Bulgarian Revival figures, religious leaders, statesmen, politicians, monarchs, military personnel, revolutionaries and civilians, connected with Bulgarian history (such as Vasil Levski, Yoakim Gruev, Nayden Gerov, Lyuben Karavelov, Zahari Stoyanov, Tsar Ferdinand, Tsar Boris the III-rd). There are also portraits of foreign high-ranking military, diplomats, monarchs, scholars and heads of state such as the Ottoman sultans Murad the V-th, Abdul Aziz, Abdul Medzhid, the first Greek King and Bavarian Prince Oton the I-st, Russian imperial generals and governors, monarchs and military personnel.



Fig. 3. Dimitri Ermakov. Plovdiv, Sahat Tepe, 1876

The ARCHIVES DIGITAL COLLECTION will also be developed in the future.

The Bulgarian historical archives in the Plovdiv National Library are valuable not only for studies and research on the past of Plovdiv and the Plovdiv region,

but they also have a nationwide value, revealing key moments from the political, economic and cultural development of Bulgaria. The documents cover the period from the XII to the XX centuries, the most numerous being from the second half of the XIX century – the time of the active national struggle for the independence of the Bulgarian church in which the city of Plovdiv, after Constantinople, played the most significant role. The archival funds are mostly personal and only a small part of them are of institutions and organizations. Here are the archives of prominent political, business and cultural activists from the Bulgarian Revival, as well as from after the Liberation. The archives of over 50 prominent personalities of national and local significance are preserved in the Bulgarian Historical Archives, among which Nikolay Pavlovich, Yoakim Gruev, Georgi Gruev, Lady Emily Strangford, Branislav Veleshki, The Agushevi Collection, Dr. Stoyan Chomakov, Lyuben Karavelov, Dragan Tsankov, Dimitar Dushanov, Temporary Russian Administration (1877 – 1879), Eastern Rumelia (1879 – 1885), Stoyu Shishkov, Konstantin Velichkov, Nikolay Raynov, Ivan Vazov, Geo Milev, Yordan Yovkov among others.

In the future we will also develop our AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTS collection. The software platform of our Digital library allows us to publish audio and video file formats. The library has a rich collection of classic films on 35mm reels – masterpieces from the birth of cinema in 1895 to the early 40's of the XX century, including classic films by the Lumiere brothers, David Griffith, Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Fritz Lang, John Ford, Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Luis Bunuel, Orson Wells and others. The library also has a large collection of recorded music, with an extensive collection of approximately 16,000 vinyl records.

The library also has an interesting collection of SHEET MUSIC PUBLICATIONS. Of particular interest is a the manuscript “Bulgarska kitka”, which may be seen in the Digital library. It was created in 1881 by the Czech composer Franz Schwestka especially for the needs of the newly established brass musical ensemble of Plovdiv.

We will continue to look forward to the challenges in the field of digitization and to form successful partnerships, so that we may preserve and present our rich collections in the best way possible and to the benefit of our patrons.

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