

The history of books and libraries in Bohemia

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While books were initially rare in medieval Bohemia, they would come to play an important role in the lives of all social classes by the end of the Middle Ages. The pace of that advancement was not, however, constant. Many factors contributed to spread of books and to their use, some of them pushed the advancement forward significantly, others less significantly. Books were initially a monopoly of the Church and its institutions but gradually, the circle of book users extended to the laity and more and more texts came to be written in vernacular languages.

Acknowledging the abundance of research into medieval books and libraries more generally, this overview will comment only on the most significant moments in the book culture of medieval Bohemia. There are two fundamental turning points in the history of Medieval Bohemian book culture – these were the establishment of a university in Prague, and the Hussite Reformation. To provide a brief overview of types of libraries, it is necessary to categorize them and study the development of individual categories. In any case, the Hussite period was the real turning point for a number of them.

Sources

The sheer abundance of sources provides the basis for a comprehensive overview of Bohemian book culture. The manuscripts themselves are the most significant source. However, the catalogues used to study Bohemian collections tend to be very old. As a result, the records are often incomplete and contextual information is often unavailable. Medieval library catalogues (produced primarily for library purposes) and inventories (produced primarily for proprietary record-keeping)

are essential sources for the history of library collections. These sources are simpler to use but they typically reflect the situation in a given library at a specific period of time. However, this type of source does not necessarily reflect the existing collections as a whole and above all, it is available only for a relatively small number of library collections. Also, the standard practice in Church institutions – to classify books as liturgical books, books belonging to church treasure and usually stored in church, and as other books, kept in the library – rarely led to the production of a full inventory of the books owned by a given Church institution. However, there are also numerous incidental mentions of books and libraries scattered within other sources, both diplomatic (e.g. testamentary records, Prague consistory court dossiers) and narrative. The collection of manuscripts in Prague chapter library, the largest extant collection of medieval codices possessed by a single institution, is a sad but revealing example of the state of sources exploration. Apart from manuscripts, the library also offers many registers, most of them dating back to the 14th century, and others to the 15th century. However, the history of this library has yet to be written: on the one hand, researchers often whine about a dearth of sources, on the other, nobody has attempted to explore this fount seriously, the sheer abundance of sources being one of the reasons.

A Growing Book Market

Over the course of the Middle Ages, methods for copying and obtaining texts diversified. In the Early Middle Ages, new monasteries depended on their motherhouses for their stock of manuscripts – the motherhouse would usually donate the basic books required by a new convent. Once a new institution was well established, the monks living in the cloister would take care of copying new codices. It goes without saying that the intensity of the copying activity depended both on external and internal situation of a given monastery. Some monasteries had rooms devoted to scribal work (*scriptoria*), some of which were in continual use and others only for limited periods. Each scriptorium tended to produce characteristic work, so that we can nowadays identify the originating centres for manuscripts scattered around the world. Though the 14th century witnessed a decline in this practice, individual monasteries continued to act autonomously: we have evidence of scribal activity among the Augustinian canons of Roudnice

during the 14th and early 15th centuries, while the Augustinian monastery founded at Třeboň thirty years later probably preferred having codices copied by external contractors. We have evidence that, from the mid-14th century, books were copied by dictation, boosting the production of identical texts. This method was used mainly at universities but, e.g. Jan Milíč says that this method was used to make copies of his own writings. The method of copying is sometimes recorded in the manuscript colophon using specific terminology: *pronunciacio* means taking of dictation, *reportacio* means copying the original text. Also, the types of errors to be found in the copied texts often reveal the copying method used. When the original text was copied out, one tends to find that the copy contains errors such as skipping or doubling parts of texts or misunderstanding abbreviations, while when a dictation was taken, one finds that the substitution one word for another that sounds similar is more common.

We have evidence that from the mid-14th century, there were professional wage-earning scribes copying books for a fee. In several rare cases commission contracts have survived – they specify the service required in detail, as well as the quality of the work to be done and deadlines. Another means to quickly reproduce manuscripts was the stationers' *peciae* system. An exemplar – the original to be copied – was split to smaller pieces (usually into quires) and these *peciae* were lent out for a fee and copied, the copies were then checked for errors. This model, common in the universities of Southern Europe, did not, however, take root in Bohemia. Manuscripts also spread as a result of *peregrinatio academica*, that is by way of touring students. Except for the usual book transport, we have evidence of requests for specific works (e.g. a request to bring theological and philosophical works by John Wycliffe to Bohemia). Events of wider significance also influenced relocation of manuscripts (for example, many masters and students left Prague after the Decree of Kuttenberg was issued in 1409).

As codices were copied, the number of books available grew; libraries also bought and sold manuscripts, so books moved between institutions. The oldest evidence of such additions to Bohemian libraries shows that manuscripts were purchased abroad (e.g. Prague canon Vincencius bought some legal manuscripts in Italy in 1158, king Wenceslas II donated money to buy codices for Zbraslav monastery (in 1292) and John IV of Dražice, Bishop of Prague, brought many books to Prague in 1330's that he had probably bought in Avignon, having spent

many years there). An internal book market was a later development for Bohemia, and transactions usually saw the exchange of existing books and collections rather than new ones. The number of codices available for sale varied considerably. The Hussite movement was an epochal moment in the history of Bohemian book culture. As many monasteries, and their libraries, were destroyed, the value of manuscripts also dropped – there was little market for them. However, every single purchase and sale was specific, and could easily defy general trends. Production for the book market did not develop much; we have no evidence of books being copied without being previously commissioned. However, since the invention of the printing press was such a success, we can assume that as of 15th century, certain books would be printed even without a previous order. However this assumption is based only on general analogies.

Number of surviving manuscripts

We can only estimate the percentage of manuscripts that have survived to the present day. Sources generally agree that the percentage is only one-digit, the question is what one-digit number exactly. Complicating the establishment of a good estimate is the fact that in the cases of some libraries, where losses have been low, we know what proportion of their texts has survived. Yet, where the losses have been very great, we know little or nothing about the original size of those collections. The library of the Augustinian canonry in Roudnice nad Labem serves as an example of a library where a large part of the collection survived. Despite the canonry ceasing to exist in the late 15th century, of some 500 manuscripts, more than one third have survived to this day. Of the collection of the College of the Bohemian Nation, comprising over 1450 books, was already partially dispersed during the 15th century, at least 125 codices survived to this day; however it is likely that there are more books coming from this library in the National Library of the Czech Republic (NK) that have not been identified yet. On the other hand, no manuscripts coming from a number of Dominican or Greyfriar (Minorite) monasteries in Prague survived.

The poor rate of preservation may be demonstrated using the Provincial Statutes of Ernest of Pardubice of 1349. All clergymen in the Church province of Bohemia (in the Middle Ages, there were some 2000 rectories in Bohemia and about 1000 rectories in Moravia, plus the monastic clergy) were required to be

acquainted with the Provincial Statutes. What makes the Statutes important is that they were the first Bohemian incunabulum published and we have 84 extant manuscripts which is, overall, a lot, but just a fragment considering the original number. Every one of the aforementioned rectories must also have had several liturgical books. Some of the original manuscripts would have perished due to wear and tear and have been replaced by newer copies, yet at any time, the number of codices in this category must have been a five-digit one at any given time. In case of most liturgical books we do not have enough indicia to identify where exactly they were used, however, considering the overall volume, probably not even ten percent survived to this day.

Institutional libraries

The first manuscripts, known to have circulated in the territory of present-day Bohemia and Moravia in the 9th century, appeared as a result of the process of Christianization. They were liturgical books to be used by the new religion. After the fall of Great Moravia, the territory ruled by the House of Přemyslid spread beyond its original central Bohemian domain and the number of churches, built in the newly established settlements, grew. However, the turning point did not come until 973 when the diocese of Bohemia was established, followed by establishment of the first male Benedictine monasteries shortly afterwards. This stimulated the production and acquisition of a greater number and variety of manuscripts. The oldest female convent, St. George's convent at Prague Castle, played no significant role in book circulation at this early stage.

However, we have no information as to the scope of these collections and we can only speculate *per analogiam* that apart from liturgical manuscripts, they comprised also biblical and theological books, and, most likely, canon-law codices, too. At first, monasteries depended on books they were given by their motherhouses. The first scriptorium in the Duchy of Bohemia was established at Břevnov monastery around 1050, under the abbot Meinhard († 1089). Fragments of manuscripts produced by this scriptorium have survived and comments by individual scribes prove that after the 1050s the Břevnov library contained manuscripts extending beyond the basic theological scope (the quadrivium, attributed to Boethius). The Chronicle of the Monk of Sázava mentions that Děthard, the abbot of Sázava, who procured the books necessary for his

monastery in 1097 at Břevnov, proving that Břevnov Abbey was able to supply other monasteries with books, too. After the diocese of Olomouc had been reinstated in 1063, new Benedictine monasteries and chapters were founded, resulting in a growth in the number of book recipients during the 11th century. Yet, the early period book production was dominated by older institutions, such as Břevnov. The newer houses, such as Rajhrad, which was a very important contributor to several extant medieval collections of books, only became important later.

Břevnov, being at that time the most substantial monastery in Bohemia, was the origin of several lavishly illuminated manuscripts commissioned by Bohemian customers in the 11th century. However, both of a pair of related codices (St. Vitus apocalypse and Zábřdovice evangeliary) and a group of four illuminated manuscripts finished to honour the royal coronation of king Vratislaus II in 1085 were produced abroad. It is likely that Bohemian producers were incapable of creating such complex manuscripts at that time.

The increasing number of new institutions and the arrival of new orders (the Premonstratensians and the Cistercians) were significant for the spread of books within Bohemia. The international connections of the Cistercians, in particular (i.e. maintaining close relationships with their convents of origin, especially through meetings of their general chapter), accelerated the uptake of new cultural impulses of all kinds, not just books. From the viewpoint of extant manuscripts, the era of Jindřich Zdík (1126–1150), bishop of Olomouc, was important. More than ten manuscripts, including works by his contemporaries, dating back to Zdík's episcopate, survive to this day in the Olomouc Chapter Library. There is evidence that manuscript copyists also worked as document scribes, and thus it is possible to identify more precisely where and when these codices were produced. We also have evidence that at that time (1130s-40s) the nearby Benedictine monastery of Hradisko (on the outskirts of Olomouc) had a scriptorium; scribes working there cooperated with the bishopric, and also applied themselves to the writing of history.

There is very little evidence of an interest in written culture at other institutions, but the fragmentary documentation of activities of certain figures or monasteries does suggest the existence of other substantive centres of writing. In the diocese of Prague, canon Cosmas produced manuscripts, continuations of

older annals. His writings show that he must have been familiar with a broad catalogue of texts, and the scope of his Chronicle and the dedications of its individual parts show that he must have worked within a very busy copying shop. Strahov Monastery, established around 1140 by the aforementioned Jindřich Zdík, established its scriptorium within the first ten years of its existence. Nine manuscripts survive from that workshop, one of them dating back to 1150; today these nine manuscripts are scattered around other libraries. Some sermons contained in one of them, the so-called Homiliary of Opatovice, a collection of homilies dating back to 1150s, deal with local saints and probably also reflect the situation of Bohemian state at that time. There are liturgical manuscripts dating back to the second half of the 12th century preserved, among others, in St. George's convent. As for extant library collections dating back to late 1190s, we must also mention foundation of the Cistercian monastery in Osek. Jarloch, the abbot of Milevsko monastery, was active till 1228 and his historiographic works survived as an autograph.

In the thirteenth century, with the foundation of many new towns, reformed religious orders and especially the mendicants (Dominicans – Order of Preachers, Greyfriars, Augustinians – Hermits of St. Augustine) began to arrive in Bohemia. The Dominicans directed their attention to the spreading of the word of God in towns, which meant that they had to be erudite and well read. However, the libraries belonging to these orders were, in general, wrecked during the centuries to come. The Augustinians of the monastery of St. Thomas at Malá Strana in Prague (founded in 1285) certainly had a good collection of books. The brethren taught at monastic schools and at Charles University in Prague – after all. John of Neumarkt bequeathed them his books, including some works that were rarely found in Bohemia. The library catalogues of St. Thomas also show incipits and explicits, which was a rather unusual practice in Bohemia at that time. As there are some that do not have a match in the current collection one can assume that in early 1400s, the monastery library comprised at least 170 manuscripts. New foundations of more ancient religious orders, the Cistercians in particular, also accumulated significant book collections. The library belonging to Vyšší Brod Monastery (Hohenfurth Abbey) founded by the Rosenbergs (1259) has not been fully explored yet but apart from a constantly growing stock of books there is also a list dating back to the end of the 13th century comprising some 45

books. Owing to Joseph II's suppression of the monasteries, many codices from the Cistercian foundation at Zlatá Koruna have ended up in National Library, with others dispersed among other libraries. The last significant Cistercian foundation was the Zbraslav Monastery (1292), built as a royal necropolis. Writings by the convent's members reflect both spiritual life and quotidian matters (these include Petr of Zittau's *Chronicon Aulae Regiae*; Malogranatum or, later on, the works of Matouš of Zbraslav). The library must have been affected by Hussite plundering and suffered under Zikmund Lucemburský's management. Nevertheless, the list from 1522 mentions 195 convent books and 23 church (probably liturgical) books. It is, however, quite possible that the list included new and printed acquisitions.

In the 14th century, two further monastic orders arrived in Bohemia. These both strongly affected the local book culture, despite the fact that the spectrum of existing institutional libraries was expanding and Charles University of Prague had become the chief producer of manuscripts and the prime mover of literary activities in the second half of the 14th century.

In 1333, Bishop Jan IV of Dražice brought Canons Regular of St. Augustine to Roudnice nad Labem. This order grew through the diocesan support (brought to Bohemia by the bishop Jan of Dražice), with royal and noble foundations coming later on. Unlike the older orders, the Canons Regular flourished in the pre-Hussite era, most likely because they usually just took over a city parish church and became an inherent part of a given city body. The canonry of Roudnice, for example, had the support of the bishops of Prague and others as their extensive library proves. Before it was suppressed at the end of the 15th century, some 500 manuscripts went through Roudnice canonry, the majority of which came from the pre-Hussite times. Most of these were donations from the founder himself and from Arnošt of Pardubice, his successor. Reviewing of the books in this library has not, it should be mentioned, shown that the monastery of Roudnice was a centre of the *devotio moderna* movement.

Another significant foundation was the canonry in Třeboň founded by the Rožmberk family in 1367. The founding family took great care to stock the monastery's library with basic theological literature. (Petr II of Rosenberg did not forget his other foundations either and provided necessary books to the Greyfriars and Poor Clares in Český Krumlov.) During the 15th century, a number of other donors helped to enrich the library of the Třeboň canonry. This canonry

enjoyed rather exceptional good-fortune in the years that followed. The Hussite movement did not affect it much, unlike most other Augustinian monasteries, which either perished or have never entirely recovered. The activities of Oldřich Kříž of Telč († 1504), one of the canons of Třeboň, were rather atypical, too. Oldřich was a scribe and a collector and left some 30 books to the monastery, mostly copied by himself. His legacy included a number of unique extant texts. The scope of the Třeboň library evidently reflects the force of this strong personality. Many manuscripts also survived in the library of a daughter house in Borovany and in the library of the Rokycany canonry.

The other order brought to Bohemia in the 14th century were the Carthusians. Copying books was prescribed in their Statutes. This care shows in the extant remains and parts of book collections from the charterhouse in Prague, destroyed in 1418, to some extent those from the charterhouse in Královo Pole, and above all those from the Tržek foundation, which moved later on to Dolany and then to Olomouc. The Carthusian order produced several figures whose activities are well documented, for example Michal, the vicar in Prague who worked also in other charterhouses outside Bohemia, or prior Stephen of Dolany, a strong opponent of the Hussite movement.

In general, the pre-Hussite era is perceived as a period of decline in traditional monastic institutions, economic stagnation affected their ability to care for spiritual life. This general tendency surely does not apply absolutely though. At the beginning of the 14th century, Kunhuta († 1321), daughter of Přemysl Otakar II, left a strong mark on Bohemian book culture. Kunhuta (Kunigunde) was an abbess of the convent of St. George. The convent's scriptorium, where the canons most likely worked, had already been created under Kunigunde's predecessor Žofie, but under Kunigunde, it stepped up its manuscript production. This exclusive scriptorium operated throughout the 14th century until the beginning of the 15th, producing a number of breviaries, some of them illuminated, for the St George nuns. Elizabeth Richeza (Eliška Rejčka) had a collection of at least eight, strictly liturgical manuscripts, copied and illuminated for her Cistercian convent in Old Brno.

A double house of Greyfriars and Poor Clares, founded in Český Krumlov in 1350, was another significant foundation of the Rosenbergs. The Greyfriars' library is one of few partially extant libraries of this order in Bohemia – some 90

manuscripts have been identified. The fact that some lecturers from Franciscan “general schools” taught at Charles University in its early days proves the excellent intellectual and literary background of some of their monasteries.

Throughout the 14th century, the number of manuscripts grew constantly both in Prague’s chapter library (as documented in book catalogues dating back to the second half of the 14th century), and in Olomouc chapter library (where a list from 1413 documents approximately 170 existing books).

For all Bohemian and a number of Moravian Church institutions, the Hussite movement was the seminal turning point. For many, it was also the end. Luckily the end of a monastic house did not always mean the perishing of its books. Sources do mention burning and other acts of violence, yet the extant remains, even if scattered around, prove that at least parts of collections were preserved (for example the libraries belonging to the Augustinian canonries in Roudnice and Sadská or to the Carthusians in Prague). On the other hand, the saved books could, and sometimes had to, serve as source of funds to cover expenses incurred by monks living in exile and thus, they sometimes passed into in others’ hands. For example, the Cistercians of Plasy or Pomuk lost their libraries this way. Hussite attackers were well aware of the great value of manuscripts and they frequently preferred to sell rather than destroy them. However, the fact remains that many monasteries were not re-opened, which contributed to general decline of significance of monastic libraries. The Prague chapter and its library, while forced to move both persons and collections, was only a little damaged by the Hussites. The Olomouc chapter library remained entirely intact. Both institutions kept growing throughout the 15th century through donations and bequests, both from persons of general significance (e.g. Augustin Käsenbrot, the Bishop of Olomouc) and from persons known primarily for their book collections (in Prague, Jan Herttemberger of Locket).

In general, the book collections belonging to parish churches were the smallest of institutional Church libraries. A network of parishes began to be constituted in the second half of the 13th century, which helped to promote Christian principles among the peasantry. However, the difference between a “library” belonging to a country parish church and a “sanctuary” serving the same purpose e.g. in a royal town would be immense. The visitation protocols of Pavel of Janovice archdeacon of Prague (1379–1382) provide useful insights into the

smallest collections of country churches. These protocols usually registered three to seven liturgical books. Such books were often used to record important local events, and often these notes make it possible to match the extant manuscript with a specific location: in Štěpanice, missal NK VI B 25 had been used this way since the beginning of the 14th century; the missal of Načeradec dates back to the same period. We can reconstruct a small-sized collection of five manuscripts that spent some time in the Charvatce parish thanks to (damaged) ownership records – but this was probably not a normal method of record-keeping. The fact that the Charvatce parish was administered from the Roudnice Monastery probably also played a role. Parish churches in towns needed better collections of books in order to provide pastoral care, however our knowledge of contents of their libraries is based mostly on random accounts. We know that in 1427 the library in Trutnov comprised nearly 50 books because a receipt was issued that gave their number; other lists of books in the collections of town churches also mention many books. However, since these collections were of books being bequeathed to the parish church, these lists do not fully reflect the collections actually held by the church. Two exceptionally well-preserved libraries are to be found in Český Krumlov and in Brno. Most of the codices from the chaplain's library in Český Krumlov were moved to the National Museum's Library. St Jakub church library in Brno comprises 127 extant manuscripts. The variable number of books in parish libraries may also reflect the differing personalities of individual priests and their interest in collecting books – other sources show that the personal libraries of individual priests often ended up in parish libraries and thus dramatically increased the size of those collections.

The turning point for the history of education and libraries was the foundation of the university in Prague by Charles IV in 1348. Instruction at the new university, comprising four faculties (from which the faculty of law existed as an independent university for a certain period later on), got underway slowly and used lecturers from the “general schools” that were in Prague. As of the 1360s, the teaching took on a regular form and the staff became more permanent. Each university college had its own library. We have good information about the collections belonging to colleges of Charles, the Bohemian nation and the Virgin Mary. Carolinum (the Charles College) was established in 1366 for 12 masters and received a generous book donation: Charles IV bought a library belonging to the

deceased Vyšehrad dean Vilém of Lestkov, comprising 114 books and gave it to “his” college. The library must have grown from other donations and copying, but the latest inventory lists coming from the 1370s (the latest one from 1377) register some 200 books. We can assume that thanks to its importance, that the Charles College had the largest library of all the colleges. Book registers from other colleges list more books but they are much younger. The catalogue from the Virgin Mary College (established in 1439) dating back to a continuous period from 1449 to 1463 and comprising 785 books shows that this post-Hussite foundation library grew constantly by 30 books a year; however only five of them have yet been identified. The College of the Bohemian Nation was established around 1403 and its library catalogue was created in 1460 and lists 1079 books. However, the call numbers belonging to books that were not present at the time of the catalogue’s creation were not included. Including the circulating books, the total number of books in the library was 1453. A much higher number of books has survived from this library – so far, 125 books have been identified and as time goes by, more codices are likely to be identified in the National Library collection where practically all of them are now stored. The Sorbonne in Paris was the only other medieval university that could pride itself on a four-digit number of books (1720) as a register from 1338 proves. Evidence for the numbers of manuscripts, whether at older university colleges (Cambridge, Oxford, other Paris colleges) or at newer foundations from the 14th century (Erfurt, Heidelberg) proves that they possessed only hundreds of books. Thus, the libraries belonging to the individual colleges of the university of Prague were among the largest ones in Europe.

The Prague’s university became less important as new universities were established in Central and Western Europe in the second half of the 14th century and at the beginning of the 15th century. A more dramatic change came with the Kuttenberg Decree issued in 1409, when thousands of masters and students belonging to the three non-Bohemian university nations left the university. During the Hussite period, the masters at Prague stopped teaching entirely, a fact reflected in the partial scattering of the books belonging to the afore-mentioned College of the Bohemian Nation.

The University of Prague was slow to resume its activities in the post-Hussite period. Despite efforts to re-establish instruction at other faculties too, only the Faculty of Arts functioned continually. There were foreign students in

Prague in the 1430s and 1440s, but most Bohemian Catholics studied in Italy or elsewhere, as, since George of Poděbrady, the university had been purely Utraquist.

It is much more difficult to reconstruct the book collections that belonged to other medieval schools. Chapter and monastery schools mainly used the libraries that belonging to their motherhouses; the same applies to the parish schools that supplied singers to “motherhouse” parish churches. In towns, however, students were also instructed in more practical matters and in the course of time probably used both private collections belonging to school administrators and rectors, alongside the collections belonging to towns and schools. The expanse and state of preservation at Jáchymov library is undoubtedly unusual, even if the collection is newer. We do not know much about the aforementioned town libraries; we assume that Prague Old Town library was created shortly before the Hussite wars, but the 15th century does not reveal much more information. Clerks working in town offices probably used manuscripts relating to their field – containing in particular epistolographic, legal and historical texts, and forms (many copied out texts from the Old Bohemian Annals are to be found in exactly this type of town legal and historic collections). As for individual extant manuscripts, it is difficult to prove whether they come from town or private collections; the extant materials most likely derive from both these origins. For example, legal anthologies currently held by the National Museum Library (KNM) were not donated by the towns, even if town councils are to be found among donors of books. On the other hand, manuscript IV E 28 written and bound by Jan Trubač, a servant of New Town councilmen, could be a remnant of a New Town library.

There are also continuously maintained lay libraries – these would be mainly royal and aristocratic libraries, but a similar practice of passing book collections from one generation to another may well have existed among burghers, too. In Bohemia, we have evidence that, as of the close of the Přemyslid era, the Kings of Bohemia were collecting books. Direct sources are scarce though, and the earliest ones come from the Luxembourg period. Charles IV had a library that, to some extent, accompanied him on his travels, but we have very few references to it. He certainly used libraries of nearby Church institutions. Not only was Charles IV a writer but he was also an active donor, and both these facts prove

his interest in books. The remnants of his son's Wenceslas IV collections – no fewer than ten richly illuminated codices – prove his love of books also. Under Sigismund of Luxemburg, the royal library was scattered and partially destroyed. Yet, John Henry of Luxemburg was fond of books, as his letters show. Evidence dating back to the post-Hussite period is also scarce. We assume (and sometimes we have evidence) that some manuscripts were donated to Vladislaus II of Hungary (NK VIII H 76), but it is beyond any doubt that Vladislaus was not as keen on books as his predecessor Mathias Corvinus. Extant books of hours or books of prayers that belonged to Bohemian kings (Wenceslas IV, Ladislaus the Posthumous, George of Poděbrady, Vladislaus II of Hungary) or to other ruling family members (Sophia of Bavaria? or Anne of Bohemia?) were used for private purposes and therefore did not belong to the institutional royal library.

The nobility tried their best to copy the royal court but the evidence of aristocratic book collections does not date so far back. In the case of the Rosenbergs, Southern Bohemia's most prominent family, the earliest evidence for a book collection dates back to the second half of the 14th century. The nobility was undoubtedly interested in the arts (including books) before that time, their interest goes back as far as the German language minnesang (towards the end of the Přemyslid era) and earlier Bohemian works (Alexandreis, Chronicle of Dalimil, fragments of extant Czech legends). Despite there being fragments of manuscripts containing both German epic poems and Czech texts, we cannot assume that these were property of noblemen. They are most likely remains of copies that belonged to the persons that disseminated these texts, who would either be itinerant artists or chaplains of noble origin. Individual noble families certainly used the libraries belonging to their monastic foundations. Likewise, lower nobility probably used libraries belonging to the parish churches that they had patronage rights to, or libraries belonging to nearby spiritual administrators. Some of the extant manuscripts in the Rosenberg library of the 15th century include family ownership notes, with some containing the names of individual family members. It is impossible, however, to identify exactly which book collections they belonged to. (In 1390, Oldřich of Rosenberg makes a testamentary disposition regarding four books, which means the books were his personal property; in case of another Oldřich of Rosenberg in 1418, in view of the number of books, the object of inheritance was probably a family library, or a part

of it). There is no doubt that the 15th century saw the nobility take an increased interest in written books. The aristocratic milieu can take credit for a number of codices, including the Czech translation of the Bible. Nevertheless, even in the most influential ruling families, some members were enthusiastic about books (and family libraries) while others were not. The bibliophilic Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkowitz laid the foundations of his family library, whereas Václav Pluh, the heir to the library founded by his ancestor Jan Jr. Pluh of Rabštejn († 1473), sold it to the Premonstratensian canons of Schlägl.

Personal libraries

So far, we have dealt with institutional libraries, even though a number of them had private donors. We have evidence of private libraries dating back to the early 1300s. It is beyond any doubt that individuals owned manuscripts, especially liturgical ones, even before this time. Compared to institutional libraries, it is not that easy to obtain information about personal libraries. They were usually rather short-lived and usually ceased to exist when the owner died. Moreover, when evidence exists, it is sometimes awkward to determine exactly what type of library we are dealing with – e.g. it is difficult to differentiate between a collection that belonged to a specific family member and one that belonged to the family in general; between a library that belonged to a priest and that which belonged to his parish; between the manuscripts that belonged to town offices and those which belonged to clerks working there). As these libraries were usually rather small, it was unnecessary to register the books by call numbers. There is thus no record of what library the books belonged to, even though they may include ownership notes. It is also more difficult to reconstruct these libraries. It was rather common for a personal collection to be dispersed over several locations, even in cases where the given person had close relations with an institution that had a library (as e.g. was the case of Adam of Nežetice). The death of a library's owner was not the only reason for books being scattered; owners sometimes donated the books before they died. However, books were often dispersed as a result of testamentary bequests. Wills, are a common source of information for book historians –not only as evidence for the contents of a library but also for its existence.

Bearing in mind the above restraints it is obvious that the secular clergy – from the highest-ranking clerics all the way down to parish priests – started building their private book collections in the 14th century and by 1370s persons involved with the University of Prague were also building up private collections.

In the 14th century, the first group was represented by bishops Jan IV of Dražice and Arnošt of Pardubice. Some manuscripts found in Roudnice Monastery either mention Jan of Dražice as a donor, or contain his coat of arms. Arnošt of Pardubice, apart from his private donations, took care to supply both monasteries and other Church institutions with necessary codices. Based on extant remnants and scattered mentions we assume that they both donated dozens of manuscripts. This is also true of John of Neumarkt bishop of Litomyšl and Olomouc and the theologian Adalbertus Ranconis de Ericinio. Only individual codices have survived from the collections that belonged to a number of other ecclesiastical donors. The previously mentioned collection of 114 books belonging to Vilém of Lestkov was one of the largest but it is difficult to say how unusual this was. When discussing 15th century private libraries, we must not forget Adam of Nežetice, vicar general to the Archbishop of Prague, Václav Hněvsín of Krumlov administrator of the archbishopric Prague, Jan of Dubé dean of Prague nor Hilarius of Litoměřice. The book collections belonging to these men have survived mainly in Prague Chapter Library, which was the least troubled library in the years to come and its book collections did not move that frequently. This is the case of the largest library kept within the Prague Chapter Library comprising more than 170 books belonging to master Jan Herttemberger of Loket († 1498), a figure who has gone practically unnoticed in the literature on Bohemian book collecting. As of the 14th century, the numbers of books in priestly collections often ran to double figures; in some exceptional cases, we know that they copied the books themselves (e.g. Balžek of Dobřany).

The largest libraries belonging to masters of the University of Prague could also boast dozens of manuscripts. Based on remnants of 15th and early 16th century libraries that we are currently aware of, this would have been the case for Jan Šindel, Prokop of Kladruba, Prokop of Plzeň or Václav Koranda Jr. Depending on their stance on Utraquism, these collections are now held either in Prague's Chapter Library or in the National Library, where they were moved from the individual college libraries belonging to the University of Prague.

Larger book collections that belonged to monks are rare – brethren living in monasteries generally used the libraries belonging to their monasteries. Should a monk have owned a book collection, the evidence usually shows that that monk spent only part of his life in the monastery – usually the final stage. This was true of the aforementioned Oldřich Kříž of Telč, who had copied out many manuscripts on his travels around Bohemia before he joined the Třeboň canonry in 1478, where he carried on copying and collecting books. However, we do not know whether “his” books were perceived as his own or as belonging to the canonry.

The earliest evidence of private lay libraries comes from the second half of the 14th century. We have already mentioned the library that belonged to Oldřich of Rožmberk. Based on his literary work, we may also assume that Tomáš of Štítné had a library. As a result of the decreasing importance of Church libraries, the general laicization of education and owing to the proliferation of Czech texts, lay libraries became more and more important in the 15th century. These lay collections include the small collections that we only learn of by coincidence, such as the collection belonging to a doctor Martin from Třeboň. His will and the extant books prove that he collected books for practical reasons, since they are medical books. Lay collections also include rather large assemblages of texts too, such as those belonging to Alexius of Třeboň or Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkowitz, collected, to a certain degree, for bibliophilic reasons.

The invention of the printing press and swift distribution of printed books during the following fifty years changed all libraries radically. Collections dating back to late 1490s and early 1500s comprised manuscripts, incunabula and old prints, however the proportions of books in each category varied. Three well-documented private libraries from Bohemia may serve to demonstrate this: while two thirds of extant books belonging to Václav Koranda Jr. († 1519) were manuscripts, printed books predominated in the libraries belonging to Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkowitz († 1510) and Václav of Rovné († 1531), the Rosenbergs’ chancellor, even though Václav also copied out manuscripts by himself. The proportion varied, depending not only according to the extent of an individual owner’s interest and their financial resources but also according to the subjects that interested them: some works did not exist in a printed edition and thus manuscripts remained the only option.

Manuscripts in modern times

This does not mean that manuscripts disappeared completely; certain types of books continued to be produced as manuscripts. This was true, for example, of large liturgical codices – a specialized workshop in Prague, belonging to Jan Táborský of Klokotská Hora continued to make them into the 16th century. The reasons for this were manifold. Manuscripts of this type were not used frequently enough to justify the costs of printing, it was complicated to print a text with music and, last but not least, the production of such codices was usually tailored to the preferences of individual patrons. They often wanted their book to contain illuminations, representing the donors, whether individuals or guilds. Even less extensively decorated liturgical books containing music were produced as manuscripts later on.

Another category of manuscripts contains those books, of various kinds, that were created for purely personal reasons. These could be lecture notes, extracts from texts focussed on a certain field, individual hand-written stages of works published in the end as printed books, medical manuscripts, hand-written collections of cooking recipes and personal prayer books. It is not rare to find manuscript copies of printed texts in this kind of book – obviously, owners preferred spending a great deal of time copying out the books, rather than spending a lot of money for a printed version. Another kind of manuscript falling into this category was the memorial book or autograph book (*album amicorum* or “stammbuch”).

The modern era saw a switch from using manuscripts as a direct source of knowledge to using them as a historical source. Thus, manuscript collections were gathered to establish first public libraries. In Bohemia, the first wave of gathering came in the 1770s: libraries belonging to universities in Prague and in Olomouc provided the basic corpora of books to create public libraries, and books, both manuscripts and printed editions, also came from the collections belonging to monasteries suppressed by Joseph II. This way, parts of libraries belonging to the Augustinian canons regular of Třeboň, to the Cistercians of Zlatá Koruna and the Benedictine convent of St George in Prague ended up in the library in Prague (today's National Library), codices from the Dolany Carthusian monastery moved to Olomouc and later on ended up in the Olomouc library. Other significant institutions were permitted to exist and kept extending their book collections; the

greatest ones include e.g. monasteries in Vyšší Brod and Osek (the Cistercians), Strahov and to some extent Teplá (the Premonstratensians), Český Krumlov (the Greyfriars) or Rajhrad (the Benedictines).

Book collections from the “remaining” libraries formed basis of collections of other institutions, particularly of the National Museum Library (KNM) and the Moravian Library in Brno (MZK). In case of the National Museum Library, the collection was built up through donations of various sizes and significance: sometimes individual books were donated, sometimes hundreds (of manuscripts) and sometimes tens of thousands (of prints). The National Museum Library, however, did not acquire its collection continuously. Its medieval collections come from the monasteries of the Augustinian canons in Roudnice and in Rokycany, and codices from the chaplain’s library in Český Krumlov. The Rokycany and Český Krumlov collections were donated to the National Museum Library by Church representatives with national sentiments, however, collections were acquired from aristocratic libraries with growing frequency. Several of these acquisitions are worth mentioning: the acquisitions of Prague Lobkovic library, part of the library belonging to the Thun-Hohensteins from Děčín (call numbers XXIII and XIX, respectively in the National Library) and small section of the Dietrichsteins library from Mikulov (nowadays part of the Moravian Library in Brno) between 1918-38 (the First Republic). Post-1948 the relocation of complete collections was not that significant, although these relocations frequently resulted in damage to and theft of books. Collections belonging to Church were usually returned to their owners as part of post-1989 restitutions. The last significant relocations of larger collections took place as the National Library bought parts of the libraries belonging to the Premonstratensians in Teplá and to the Greyfriars in Cheb.

Current summaries of history of libraries in Bohemia are based on data from library catalogues and inventories, mostly gathered by I. Hlaváček: *Středověké soupisy knih a knihoven v českých zemích (Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et historica, Monographia XI)*, Praha 1966 (Medieval Lists of Books and Libraries in Bohemia) and: *Nachträge zu den böhmischen mittelalterlichen Bücher- und Bibliotheksverzeichnissen, Mediaevalia Bohemica* 1, 1969, pp. 306–315. I. Hlaváček also wrote the article *Přehledné dějiny českých a moravských knihoven do počátku novověku* (Summary History of Bohemian and

Moravian Libraries up to the Modern Period) (approx. 1526), in: J. Cejpek – I. Hlaváček – P. Kneidl: *Dějiny knihoven a knihovnictví v českých zemích a vybrané kapitoly z obecných dějin*, Praha 1996 (History of libraries and librarianship, and selected chapters from general history) (2nd enlarged edition 2002). For a summary of the general history of books and libraries and an analysis of individual manuscripts, see the continually updated bibliography compiled by the Department for the Cataloguing and Study of Manuscripts of Masaryk Institute and Archives of CAS, and their journal *Manuscript Studies*. The database is being converted to electronic format (<https://www.mua.cas.cz/node/400> – quoted on April 30, 2017). The same CAS department also produced another basic handbook that lists manuscripts in Bohemian collections, including catalogues, lists and other selective literature – the four-volume *Průvodce po rukopisných fondech v České republice*, Praha 1995–2004) (1. Rukopisné fondy zámeckých, hradních a palácových knihoven; 2. Rukopisné fondy archivů v České republice; 3. Rukopisné fondy muzeí a galerií v České republice; 4. Rukopisné fondy centrálních a církevních knihoven v České republice). (Guide to Manuscript Collections in the Czech Republic; 1. Manuscript Collections in Chateau, Castle and Palace Libraries; 2. Manuscript Collections in the Czech Republic Archives; 3. Manuscript Collections in the Czech Republic Museums and Galleries; 4. Manuscript Collections in Central and Church Libraries in the Czech Republic). A concise guide compressed in one volume, published as *Průvodce po rukopisných fondech v České republice*, Praha 2011 (the Guide to Manuscript Collections in the Czech Republic), may be less detailed but, in many cases, shows new, updated data.