

## **The Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: The first Bulgarian research and academic library**

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**Abstract.** The Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (CL-BAS) is the oldest and the largest research library, established 150 years ago in 1869. Since then, the institution has seen several stages of development, key to which has been the objective of the purposeful and systematic building of a relevant national and foreign books collection of a high research and informational value.

The BAS Central Library is the first research library with its own local computer network and website. 2003 sees the introduction of the automated library system ALEPH500, while in recent years efforts are expended on library digitalization. It plays a leading role in the building of the National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS) by providing access to its bibliographic records in the Union Catalogue of the academic libraries and digital collections of the NALIS Repository.

**Keywords:** Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, digital collections, international library exchange, special libraries, special bibliography

The Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (CL-BAS) is a general scientific library responsible for setting up and organizing the national library fund as well as for performing library information services providing Bulgarian and foreign literature and access to foreign data bases in the fields of natural, engineering, medical, agro-biological, social sciences and humanities. It publishes the periodicals “Problems of special libraries” and “Bulgarian Studies/Bulgarica”, special bibliographies, bio-bibliographies, reference books, and monographs.

The BAS Central Library is the first Bulgarian scientific library, established in Brăila, Romania in 1869 as a book collection of the Bulgarian Learned Society (BLS) and is the first national scientific library before the Liberation. The first Statutes of the Society devoted five articles to the library regulating the international book exchange, the contents of its stocks, their organization and maintenance (Ustav na BKD 1869, 4-5, 12, 16). The first librarian was Vasil D. Stoyanov, succeeded by Vasil Drumev, who compiled the first library inven-

tory list. The next librarian was Todor Peev, who contributed greatly for the development of the international publication exchange.

After the War of Liberation of 1877-1878, on the initiative of prof. Marin Drinov, the BLS member, Todor Ikonov, transferred the library stocks from Brăila to Sofia, where the library resumed its activities in 1882. It was again governed by Vasil D. Stoyanov, who also functioned as a director of the National Library. After 1897 Aleksandar Teodorov-Balan and Ivan Peev-Plachkov played a prominent role in the library organization. The intensive development of the international publication exchange continues (Kazanski 1987, 117-138). The first alphabetical card catalogue was created. The Vatican Apostolic Library opened a Bulgarian section with the "Periodichesko spisanie na Balgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo" ("Periodical Journal of the Bulgarian Learned Society").

According to the new BAS Statutes of 1911, the status of the Academic Library is specially regulated. BAS members are required to deposit their published works to the library. In 1913 a systematic catalogue on Friedrich Zönnen's system was composed and in 1926 a new alphabetical catalogue, named "main catalogue", was compiled. The new BAS building was completed in 1929 and has housed the library since then.

Thanks to the generous donation of the BAS member, Stefan Panaretov (the first Bulgarian ambassador to the USA) a specialized reading room, bearing his name, was opened in 1935 that, by the will of the donor, was reserved for "professors and students". The reading room can accommodate up to 32 readers and a sociological survey of the attendance and readers' interests, unique for Bulgaria, was conducted in it.

In 1938 Aleksandar Panchev was appointed library director with, successively, Bozhana Bozhinova-Troyanova and Rada Bukureshtlieva as librarians.

Originally the first Bulgarian scientific library was being developed by way of a broad donor movement and international publication exchange. After 1911 it grew into a national academic library, containing valuable sources for Bulgarian history as well as publications of world scientific centres. A noticeable advance in the activities of the BAS Library took place after 1928 when an accelerated development of its operations began: acquisition of new books (with increased international publication exchange), literature processing and reader servicing.

Over 90% of periodicals were acquired by international publication exchange and the number of book exchange links was over 100. In 1931, for the first time, a large number of PhD dissertations from Berlin University were received (Kazanski 1987, 117-138).

The Library also received a number of donations from BAS members and patriotic Bulgarians. Such are the collections of Nikola Milev, Felix Kanitz, Marko Balabanov, Nikola Nachov, Nikola Sakarov and many others (Argirova, Peycheva 1994, 92-97).

The Library bought Prof. Vasil Zlatarski's valuable collection of over 4,000 volumes.

For the duration of the period between the establishment of the Academic Library in 1869 and 1944 the ratio between the number of books and periodicals kept constant - 47,039 volumes of books and 8,250 volumes of periodicals. The

process of setting up the library stock manifests an attempt to rationally use various ways for literature acquisition (Argirova, Peycheva 2000).

After the Second World War, when the Royal Natural Science Institutes, the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute, the Ethnographical Institute, the big agricultural institutes and agricultural stations with their libraries were attached to BAS and when libraries to the newly established institutes were created, the Academic Library grew into a proper Central Library with a system of special libraries in different branches of the sciences. It started to carry out centralized cataloguing and international publication exchange (Argirova, Beslova 1991, 844-851). In 1949 the Library was granted the status of the scientific institute of library studies and special (subject) bibliographies.

Academician Nikola Mihov was officially appointed the first director of the BAS Library in 1945. He was succeeded to the position by Prof. Elena Savova, who governed it for forty years (1947-1988) and from 1992 to 2013 - by Assoc. Prof. Dincho Krastev (Krastev, Kazanski 2015, 756-765). It was during the latter period that the real automatization of the Library was conducted, which otherwise nominally, but ineffectively, started as early as 1975.

In 1958 the BAS Central Library set up the first Bulgarian Department for Scientific and Technological Information and in 1970 it became a National Centre for Special Bibliographies. It produced over 70 personal, field-specific and general bibliographies as well as over 20 academic reference books in Bulgarian, Russian and English.

“Problems of special libraries” is a thematic periodical, published by the BAS Central Library. It is a successor to the “Proceedings of the CL at BAS” (1959-1973), of which seven volumes were issued. These publications are a direct reflection of the functions and responsibilities of CL-BAS as a national coordinator in the area of special libraries and special bibliographies in Bulgaria. Nine volumes of “Problems of special libraries” were published in the 1975-2001 period. They were dedicated to various topics such as BAS library network, library automatization and information provision, library information services, the improvement of library bibliographical activity, BAS’s international book exchange, BAS special libraries, etc. The contributors to the volumes were the research associates at the Central Library, Associate Professors M. Kadankova-Radoslavova, L. Velinova, M. Argirova, Tsv. Staykova, N. Kazanski and others.

The periodical “Bulgarian Studies/Bulgarica” is a biannual publication by the Council for Bulgarian Studies Abroad with the assistance of the BAS Central Library. The journal’s objective is the distribution of updated bibliographies in the field of Bulgarian studies and to effect contact between Bulgarian scientific institutions, on the one hand, and foreign Bulgarian studies researchers, on the other.

In 1996 BAS General Assembly ratified “The Statutes of the CL-BAS”, which regulate the Library’s status and operation, and established it as a modern information institution in the new circumstances of today.

The CL-BAS is the first scientific library in Bulgaria with a local computer network and an internet site.

Among the most significant achievements of the BAS Central Library is its 2003 introduction of the automated library system for managing library information resources ALEPH500; the making of an electronic catalogue; the retrospective conversion of traditional catalogues; the provision of a constant access to foreign databases; the creation of a unique database of microfilms of old Bulgarian manuscripts (Argirova, Aneva 2007, 20-45).

The Library participates in a number of international projects (EUROMECUM 1994; Cholpanova, Kazanski, Tsacheva 1995; Zentralbibliothek der Bulgarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1999; The Russian imperial books 2007) and particularly those funded by the European Commission such as: Athena (2008-2011), Carare (2010-2013) and Linked Heritage (2011-2014). The Library's participation in the project AthenaPlus (2013-2015) is of special significance. The project includes 40 participants from 21 EU member states and its main objective is the provision of an online access to more than 3.6 million digital objects in Europeana - both from the public and the private sector.

The BAS Central Library provides access to over 10,000 digital objects with half of them being from Bulgarian museums, galleries, private collectors, produced by the end of 2014 and the other half was produced over July and August 2015. The BAS Central Library is one of the 20 European institutions that were selected to participate in the MOVIO virtual exhibition with its collection of digital copies of atelier photo portraits made by the prominent Sofia-based photo Petar Papakochev.

Another large-scale project realized by the CL-BAS is "The Russian immigration in Bulgaria". It gives the opportunity of an easy access to important factual information about the biographies, bibliographies, archives, museum artefacts, photographs and other documents related to the activities of Russian immigrants in Bulgaria after 1919.

The Library also provides digital objects from the collection "Bulgarian Revival books 1807-1878" in the World Digital Library. This is an international project launched by the USA and UNESCO that offers free internet access to various major sources from around the world. Its main objectives are to promote international friendship and cooperation in the field of culture, to increase the volume and variety of online cultural content and to provide texts and images to experts, students, lecturers and the wider user audience.

The BAS Central Library had a leading role in building the National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS). It submitted its records to the NALIS Union Catalogue - the national catalogue of Bulgarian academic libraries and actively participates in the NALIS Foundation initiative for retrospective conversion of catalogues and digitalization of rare and significant publications. These two extensive projects contributed a lot to revealing the richness of literary sources to academic or general readers and users (Naydenova 2016, 727-732).

As a founder in the NALIS Project the BAS Central Library submitted its digitalized collections at the end of 2011. The purpose of this undertaking is to provide an easy and quick search of digital objects through the NALIS Repository as well as their free accessibility (as far as the policies of the respective libraries allow for it). At the moment, the BAS Central Library's digital objects are 3,815 (240,298 files):

The issues of “Spisanie na Balgarskata akademiya na naukite” (“Journal of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences”)

The literary heritage of Marin Drinov

Felix Kanitz’s library (titular pages)

Bulgarian Revival books

Sections of Felix Kanitz’s personal library

“Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniya, nauka i knizhnina (1889-1963)” (“Folklore and Ethnography Collection (1889-1963)”)

The issues of “Periodichesko spisanie na Balgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo” (“Periodical Journal of the Bulgarian Learned Society”)

Slavic manuscripts from the British Library (microfilms)

The issues of “Uchilishten pregled” (“School Review”)

Foreign rare and valuable incunabula

Periodika i literatura (Periodicals and Literature). Vol. 6

The “Mir” (“Peace”) newspaper

The “Zora” (“Dawn”) newspaper

It is an ongoing process and the number of digitalized objects constantly increases. Thus, for a decade, one of the main activities of the BAS Central Library is the digitalization of the Bulgarian cultural-historical heritage and that is the reason the Library has participated in various projects of this kind, the most recent of which is the national programme “Cultural and Historical Heritage, National Memory and Social Development”.

The development of digital tools for studying, presenting and publicizing the Bulgarian cultural-historical heritage, including the creation of information systems and platforms with the geolocation of the cultural-historical heritage in Bulgaria, so that it can be studied, preserved, publicized, and turned into a socially beneficial resource, is the essence of that scientific programme. The BAS Central Library’s participation in the national programme “Cultural and Historical Heritage, National Memory and Social Development” is an aspect of the Library’s effort to create multiple digital resources and thus successfully joins the process of developing the digital information and educational environment.

For 150 years now, the BAS Central Library has been building a general stock of Bulgarian and foreign literature. It consists of unique library documents from 41 personal libraries, organized into 12 specialized collections, among which are the collections of: 901 microfilms of manuscripts (Slavonic and Greek); 1,677 microfilms of Greek, Arabic, Persian, Georgian and Slavonic manuscripts, 162 ancient Greek printed books, etc.

At the moment, the BAS Central Library methodically manages a library network of 48 special libraries at the 34 scientific units of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and provides the library and information service of the BAS as a comprehensive national scientific centre. With its stock of more than 2,000,000 library items, the Central Library has had a substantial contribution to building the national library and information resources of the country.

The main mission of the BAS Central Library is to service Bulgarian sciences and by combining traditional and modern technologies and services to develop itself as a modern library and information centre with integration links

with other Bulgarian and foreign libraries. Its leading strategy is inextricably related to the BAS strategy, to national interests and to global trends in the preservation of the cultural-historical literary heritage and the information provision of scientific and applied research. Its activity is directed towards:

- creating and participating in national and international information networks and systems, agreements, coordination and cooperation projects in building the academic fund and data base for the information provision of the scientific and applied research and products (Kazanski 2016);

- performing research, applied, publication and implementation activities in the area of library studies, special bibliographies, and library and information technologies;

- maintaining and expanding the active exchange of library documents and information with similar Bulgarian and foreign ones;

- providing information about Bulgarian science to national and international institutions, publications, computer networks and systems (Kazanski et al. 1994);

- providing an instructional and training base for students in Library and Information Studies.

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