



LIGUE DES BIBLIOTHÈQUES EUROPÉENNES DE RECHERCHE
ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Manuscript Librarians Group

Czech Lands – Backgrounds

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Introduction

Some of the most important Czech manuscript libraries have a continual tradition of keeping manuscript books since the Middle Ages (e.g. National Library of the Czech Republic, Library of the Premonstratensian Canony at Strahov, Library of the Cisterciensian Monastery at Vyšší Brod, etc.) or since the early modern era (e.g. Research Library in Olomouc, Castle Library at Kynžvart etc.). On the other hand, some of them are founded newly in the 19th and 20th century (e.g. Library of the National Museum, Moravian Land Library in Brno). Generally, tradition of manuscript work in the Czechlands is very long and stable.

Reminder: “manuscript” in the Czech tradition usually means “manuscript book” or “codex”, not “letter(s)”, “personal papers”, “inheritance” etc. Those types of documents are considered as archival materials (like charters, administrative records, etc.).

National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague

- Department of Manuscripts and Early Printed Books – Stakeholder of the largest manuscript collection in the Czechlands, with more than 10.000 manuscripts. Core of the collection are manuscripts of the medieval Prague university, Jesuit academy and university from the 16th-18th century as well as libraries of secularized monasteries from the 2nd half of the 18th century. Most part of the manuscripts are already described in printed catalogues; their entries are converted into electronic records and processed into Manuscriptorium.
- Section of [Manuscriptorium](#) – Manuscriptorium is a digital library provided by the National Library of the Czech Republic that intends to become a virtual research environment for the written cultural heritage until the end of the 18th century (see also [Memoria - Digitization](#)). At present Manuscriptorium contains more than 250,000 catalogue records, more than 36,000 compound digital documents (fully digitised manuscripts and other books), and more than 41,000 full texts (editions of primary historic documents). There are c. 50 Czech partners and c. 50 foreign ones, i.e.

Manuscriptorium contains catalogue records and documents from Austria, Belarus, Croatia, the Czechlands, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and Ukraine.

[Library of the National Museum, Prague](#)

Manuscript collection of the Czech National Museum originated in relation to the founding of the Czech National Museum in the 1st half of the 19th century. It contains several thousands of manuscript books and fragments as gifts of the Czech people during the Czech national revival. Most part of manuscripts are described in a printed catalogue; their entries are converted into electronic records and processed into Manuscriptorium.

[Library of the Strahov Monastery, Prague](#)

Manuscript collection of the Library of the Premonstratensian Canony at Strahov, Prague, has its origin in the Middle Ages, but a very important part of items originated from the 16th-18th century. All manuscripts of the modern era are described in a printed catalogue. On the other hand, the catalogue of medieval manuscripts is not yet finished. Few entries are converted into electronic records and processed into Manuscriptorium in connection with digital copies of the manuscripts.

[Moravian Land Library, Brno](#)

Manuscript collection of the Moravian Land Library originated in the 1920s in relation to the founding of the University Library which was the predecessor of the Moravian Land Library. Most part of the manuscripts is catalogued either in printed or in electronic form; some electronic records are available via Manuscriptorium in connection with digital copies of the manuscripts.

[Research Library, Olomouc](#)

Manuscript collection of the Research Library in Olomouc originated in the 16th century in relation with founding of Jesuit college. At the end of the 18th century libraries of secularised Moravian monasteries were added to the collection. All medieval manuscripts are described in a printed catalogue, some entries were converted into electronic records and processed into Manuscriptorium in connection with digital copies of the manuscripts.

Library of the Cistercian Monastery, Vyšší Brod

Manuscript collection of the Cistercian monastery at Vyšší Brod originated in the Middle Ages and has continuity until the present time. All manuscripts are described in a printed catalogue. On the other hand, no electronic records are available, nor digital copies. At present, the library of the monastery is accessible only with great difficulty.

[Castle Library, Kynžvart](#)

The manuscript collection of the Castle Library at Kynžvart has its origin in the 17th century in relation to the loot during the Thirty Years War that was kept by antecessors of family of Princes Metternich. All medieval manuscripts are described in a printed catalogue and most part of the entries was converted into electronic records and processed into Manuscriptorium, in connection with digital copies of the manuscripts.

Other memory institutions (libraries, archives, musea)

All manuscript collections in the Czech Republic are listed and described in:

Průvodce po rukopisných fondech v České republice.

- I. *Rukopisné fondy zámeckých, hradních a palácových knihoven.* Ed. Marie Tošnerová. Praha: Archiv Akademie věd České republiky, 1995
- II. *Rukopisné fondy archivů v České republice.* Ed. Marie Tošnerová. Praha: Archiv Akademie věd České republiky, 1998

- III. *Rukopisné fondy muzejí a galerií v České republice*. Ed. Marie Tošnerová. Praha: Archiv Akademie věd České republiky, 2001
- IV. *Rukopisné fondy centrálních a církevních knihoven v České republice*. Ed. Marie Tošnerová. Praha: Archiv Akademie věd České republiky, 2004

Manuscript Commission of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague

The Manuscript Commission deals with:

- listing and describing manuscript collections in the Czechlands (see above, sub 'Other memory institutions')
- cataloguing manuscripts
- creating an electronic database of manuscripts (only at the very beginning now)