

# Unknown history of Slovenian librarianship: Celje Public Library during World War II

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate and present the activities of the Public Library in Celje during German occupation during World War II. The research is based on a survey of archival sources – relevant documents are available in Celje Historical Archives (Zgodovinski arhiv Celje – ZAC). The article is divided in two parts, the first one presenting the condition of librarianship in Nazi Germany in general, and the second one focusing on a case study: the conditions of librarianship in occupied Slovenian city of Celje.

The city was an important administrative, commercial, industrial, traffic and educational centre in the area of Styria during the occupation. Its library operated according to standards and models applied to libraries in Germany. This was reflected in the overall library operation: selection and processing of material, layout, employee selection and work with users. Public libraries were founded by individual municipalities or groups of municipalities, which took care of the operation of libraries. Special government advisory centres (*Staatliche Volksbuechereistelle*) provided library's additional materials. Consequently, libraries played an important role in dissemination of the German language and culture in new border areas, which was regarded as their major aim. War conditions did not deter users from visiting libraries and employee complaints about the lack of financial means were not recorded. Towards the end of the war only the lack of paper was noticed.

**KEY WORDS:** Public libraries, World War II, occupation, German librarianship, Celje.

## Introduction

The article investigates and presents the operation of Public Library of Celje in Slovenia during the German occupation in World War II. The history of public libraries during the occupation was a theme which never attracted much attention. It is obvious – despite

the time distance - that this theme is still very uncomfortable, probably because of unpleasant memories and suffering and also due to the strong policy of germanization at that time. This research has been based on a survey of primary, ie. archival sources. All documents relevant to the description of Public Library Celje during the World War II are available in Zgodovinski arhiv Celje (ZAC).

With the process that began in 1941, during the first year of German occupation, libraries and schools served as a tool of systematic germanization. Slovene books were immediately removed, while books in German could be found on the shelves, and books with "inappropriate" content were excluded. These two actions provided the basis for the operation of public libraries during the occupation.

In 1933 libraries in Germany were without unified/single librarian legislation and they operated under legislations of individual countries (regions). Although the network of public libraries was strong in cities, rural areas were sometimes without them. Inside the librarians' community there was no common view on the functioning of libraries and their mission. Steig (1992: 6-9) writes about *Alte and Neue Richtung*, ie. two views: old and new. *Neue Richtung* defended the role of books as an active agent of culture and therefore appropriate library collections should be directly and firmly established. The *Alte Richtung* had a more tolerant view: books should be included in the library collection, regardless of whether readers demand and read them (regardless of type and quality).

In 1933, with the rise of National Socialism, the transformation of all elements of German society began and included the German library system. The Regulation on liability of cultural institutions to local communities was released in 1935, which deprived the jurisdiction of local (provincial) governments in public librarianship, outlined in accordance with the centralization of the new state. Consequently, the position of public libraries fundamentally changed in the Third Reich. Libraries became a place of informal education, a place of creation of a new man suitable to the new ideology. If the public libraries wanted to meet all the new challenges it was necessary to do many things: open new libraries, create a library network, increase library visits and output. Suddenly, it became important how books were chosen, how developed library collections were, which meant that the censorship was introduced into public libraries. The new government adopted a library law. This act prescribed where and how to establish a public library, what its operation should be and ensured the financial operation of the library.

Although Germany was perceived as a single state, it really was a union of states. Only Nazism wanted to harmonize the religious and historical diversity. It introduced a uniform law that previously had not existed in librarianship. There had been only provincial legislations before, and they were differentiated. Many librarians supported Nazism because they hoped that the situation in public librarianship under Nazi leadership would improve. Those who supported the idea of active policy in the development of

library collections (*Neue Richtung*) were certainly disappointed, they expected an act, not only a regulation. Even before the Nazi takeover the Prussian Ministry of Science, Arts and Education (*Ministerium fuer Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung*) took initiative to develop public libraries. It was intended to encourage the development of public libraries in Prussia and in the other German states.

However, Nazi thinking patterns and their implementation in the everyday routine of librarians was not immediate but gradual. First, it was necessary to determine in which governmental department public libraries belong. This issue was resolved in 1937, as libraries continued to be under jurisdiction of the Ministry for Science, Art and Education and not the Ministry of Propaganda. Situation of public librarianship was arranged by the Regulation on the functioning of public libraries. The Act which regulated this area was just a regulation and not an act that librarians hoped it would be, but it determined the following important matters: a) who can set up a public library, b) the operation of a public library, c) the tasks to be carried out by a public library and d) library book stock size (*per capita*).

For the operation of public libraries the statement made by German Prime Minister Adolf Hitler on 23rd March 1933 (cited in English by Welch (1993: 17–18)) and published in *Voelkischer Beobachter* was very important: "In relation to the political decontamination of our public life, the government will embark upon a systematic campaign to restore the nation's moral and material health. The whole educational system, theatre, film, literature, press, and broadcasting – all these will be used as a means to this end. They will be harnessed to help preserve the eternal values which are part of the integral nature of our people."

The totalitarian regime did not allow access to the texts of "inappropriate" writers. In terms of "detoxification" of people, those texts, if already published, were removed from library collections. Later, the censorship did not allow printing of "inappropriate" authors or themes, so that this elimination was no longer necessary.

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## 1. Library collections in Nazi Germany

Library collection is the heart of a library. The success of a library depends on the composition of the collection. Nazism is usually associated with ritual burning and disposal of books that were not suitable to the ruling ideology. This resulted in overshadowing of the professional work of librarians in building library collections. They had to find ways to design and complement the book collection, so that libraries would not be closed. It was an issue that the German public librarians faced when they were assigned a new role in the new society – the role of informal education and informal control of readers.

Some librarians themselves suggested a review of library collections. The majority of inappropriate books had a Marxist or pacifistic content, Jewish authors, were deemed

as “kitsch”, i.e. low quality literature that “spoils” the moral and culture of the German people. This category of “inappropriate” books was not unique; it had been changing over time. The titles and authors were not accurately determined, but rather depended on the current political situation. We also had lists of unsuitable books – at least at the beginning of Nazi regime – which varied from place to place; Steig (1992: 94-95) states that, before October 1, 1935 the Gestapo list contained only 33 authors, while in Bavaria there were 360 authors who were banned. After 1935 the list was unified, and comprised by the *Reichsschrittmuskammer*; lists were changed and amended. The list was released on 31st December 1938, contained a summary of previously published lists and was the most comprehensive. The comparison of forbidden titles between 1935 and 1938 shows that the proportion of books that could be classified under this category increased (from 33% in 1935 it had risen to 41% in 1938), but the percentage of books being classified as pornography decreased (from 33% in 1935 to 21% in 1938); the share of Marxist and anti-Nazi books remained almost unchanged. The Gestapo played a big role in cleaning the collections. It also could (and did) monitor the content. Steig (1992: 97) cites the case when the Gestapo discovered an anthology which included the work of Jewish authors in the branch library in Duisburg. Only the assurance of the library director of the loyalty of the librarian who was guilty of this error saved her from penalties for such an “ignorant” action.

When all “inappropriate” books were removed from bookshelves, an effective censorship could be established. The system of censorship was multifaceted. Thus, already in 1933 a system of control in the form of government and party offices for guidance was established (*Lenkungsstellen*), which had a leading political role of the transmission lines to all areas of book production. However, to avoid production of unwanted literature, the party made use of the less obvious assets: the seizure of such works, cessation in publishing of the national bibliography and ultimate reduction of the paper supply. Disobedient writers, publishers, booksellers and libraries could be punished. The basis for such actions were the following laws: Act on the protection of nation (*Gesetz zum Schutz der Nation*), adopted on 28th February 1933, the Government’s Cultural Association (*Reichkulturkammersetz*), adopted on 22 September 1933 and Act on the Protection of German Blood and German Honour (*Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*), adopted on 15th September 1933.

Most banned books did not end at the stake or in mills but in special warehouses. Along with the books the matching catalogue cards were removed. Catalogues in book format posed an interesting problem and caused unlikely extensive work for the librarians, as it was necessary to print a new book catalogue after every change. As the list of banned books changed some formerly banned books were returned into collection and were available to borrow.

It would be reasonable to expect that the libraries in urban environment had more liberal or Marxist literature in their collections. Such libraries subsequently lost more

books than libraries in less urbanized areas. This consideration was confirmed by the data cited by Steig (1992: 99–100). Following the large purchases of new material to fill the gap caused by the removal of material in the library in Hamburg, this library recorded the increased stock size, whereas other libraries in big cities (Berlin, Essen, Leipzig, etc.), did not manage to do it. Between 1933 and 1935, when censorship was the strongest, a library in Hamburg removed 24% of its stock. In some libraries, for example Essen, almost 69% of stock from 1934 was no longer included in 1938. In Munich that percentage was even higher and amounted to 76%. In smaller towns, the percentage of discarded books was only 6%, and in rural libraries it was even smaller.

Due to the removal of a large number of books, especially in big cities, it was necessary to partially replace the missing part of the fund. Libraries solved this problem by increasing purchase. Still, a difference in the size of the fund only in Berlin was minus 190 332 units (data for 1938). It is impossible to determine the time period libraries needed to replace the removed funds. The war which began in the following year certainly strongly marked library services, publishing and book trade.

Koch (2002: 13) states that the Public Libraries in Third Reich had three processes: a) “cleaning” of staff (*personelle ‘Saeuberung’*), b) standardization of libraries and their organizations (*Gleichschaltung der bibliothekarischen Organisationen*), and c) “cleaning” of collections (*‘Saeuberung’ der Buchbestaende*).

Even before the Nazi takeover the authorities in some German libraries did not allow purchasing of “inappropriate” literature for their collections. It was widely believed (Steig 1992: 80) that the task of public libraries was education. The route was via the scientific and entertaining-educational literature that should not be purely entertaining. German librarians considered it their duty to raise the cultural and educational level of readers, both by increasing their knowledge and increasing the complexity in the selection of literature. Rules on borrowing books confirmed their focus: the readers could borrow a limited number of novels per month. Library collections were “cleared” of “adventure novels” (which were “intended merely for entertainment”): it was not possible any more to find works of Jack London, R. L. Stevenson or Joseph Conrad, for example. Works of Karl May were excluded because they were the fruit of imagination; the author did not see any of the countries where his novels occurred. Even recognized and established writers like Thomas Mann or John Galsworthy were not included in the collections if their books did not meet the strict standards of librarians.

These public libraries standards (Steig 1992: 81) were well matched with the views of the National Socialists on what was appropriate reading for the German people. Works of Jewish, Marxist, pacifist or liberal authors were replaced with those that supported the Nazi ideology and values, *Mein Kampf* to start with. It was also necessary to add works of the philosophical precursor of Nazism Paul de Lagarde and Moeller van der Bruck – theorists of race, and books with militaristic and nationalistic content. Further, works like the Nordic sagas and legends, stories of heroism and loyalty were welcome.

Local myths and legends constituted an important part of the new collections. People were encouraged to borrow works on the theme of *Blut und Boden*, which emphasized the combination of racial purity and almost mythic rural compliance.

Special attention was paid to standards of production quality - particularly the fiction. The new state promised an uncompromising struggle to achieve a higher quality of literature. The German authors were given greater incentives for their work. Public libraries invested a lot of effort in working with young people between sixteen and twenty-five years of age. They also developed other modern approaches to library work. The German librarian Werner (1938: 414-424) describes the experience of librarians from Wilhelmshaven with free access. In the early 1937 the library changed the panel system to open access. Visitors were given free access to an alphabetical catalogue, and a new card catalogue was arranged. Each book had a special card with content layout. The numbering was abandoned for periodicals and newspapers and instead they were ordered by title. Furthermore, the books were arranged in individual groups, which were further divided. The author cites the example of the field of history, which included the sub-groups World War and the Germans along the border and abroad (*Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtum*). Fiction was divided with great care, historical novels were placed in the field of history, fables and stories about animals in the area of nature. Librarians noticed that the books which no one borrowed for months were in circulation again. The books that represented the foundations of National Socialism were most borrowed by young people, particularly students and apprentices. Librarians noticed that young users borrowed less fiction and were more interested in the professional literature, particularly history.

### 1.1. Librarians and users

Education and selection of employees was very important in public libraries. In Germany in the pre-war time the number of librarians, as well as students of librarianship increased. Steig (1992: 172) gives the following details: in 1937 there were approximately 700 librarians employed in the public libraries, two-thirds of staff were women. 302 students graduated in librarianship in the spring of 1940, and 520 more in the fall of 1941. Although women dominated the workforce, the most important positions were held by men. For many women this profession represented one of few options (in addition to the profession of teacher, secretary, or bank clerk) to be employed in the country in which the dominant ideology "assigned" women primarily the roles of housewives and mothers. The intention to increase a number of men employed as librarians was not achieved. In 1935, ninety-three librarians with doctoral degrees were members of the VDV (*Verband der Deutsche Volksbibliothekare* = Association of German Public Librarians), but only twelve were women. None of these women had an important position in public libraries. Women who were in lower positions replacing men received a lower wage for equal work.

Public librarians evaluated books through the prism of national socialist values and guided users to the literature that would create better members of community and the Nazi state. Not only that public libraries reviewed their collections and removed all “inappropriate” books, but they tacitly agreed with “Nuerenberg laws” (laws on the protection of the Aryan race). So they introduced new rules of cataloguing and classification adjusted to National Socialism. In 1935 the Hamburg library introduced the following classification groups: Germans in the border areas and abroad, National Socialism, leading German personalities, home and folklore, race. It was suggested to reconsider/change the rules of cataloguing. The suggestion was justified by the argument that the new rules were more conform to the way users think, more adapted to new reality. Since that time much attention was paid to young readers. This resulted in the number of young users growing much faster than the number of older ones. The fact that young users got a lot of attention was recorded in a professional journal *Die Buecherei*. There is a section in *Neue Jugendbuecher* (1938: 287), where various authors present new books for the young.

## 2. Case study – Public Library in Celje

After capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 17th April 1941 the territory of Styria and Gorenjska became parts of the German state. The commissioner of the politically independent city of Celje (Ferenc 2004: 7–11) was a Nazi officer Anton Dorfmeister from Graz. Nazi authorities decided early that the German military administration in Lower Styria (Spodnja Štajerska) should be a short term solution and soon it was replaced by a civil administration with the task to prepare Lower Styria for the actual and formal union with the German Reich, as Province of Styria (Steiermark Gau). Transfer of government was nonviolent and quiet; everything was already prepared and coordinated before the German attack on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In Celje, everything that was Slovenian was expeditiously removed from everyday life – books included. *Volksbuecherei der Stadt Cilli* (Public Library Celje) was reopened on 16th March 1942. The library was located on the 9 Marktplatz.

One of the most important documents, which shows why the library was opened so quickly, is a note by Gerhard May (an influential member of the German minority in Celje before World War II). In a note *Zur Eroeffnung der Erste untersteierischen Volksbuecherei* (The opening of the first Lower Styria Public Library) he wrote that the books are an important weapon in the defence of the language at the border and abroad. He said that each municipality must have a public library because only books, newspapers and radio helped to keep the Germans (as a nation) in the (lower) Styria after 1918. The text was clearly written before opening the library as it was composed in the future tense (... *eroeffnet wird* ...) and contained powerful propaganda and an ideological message. The text is interesting and gives the insight into the perception of libraries as state ideological apparatus:

In the beginning of the war, the Supreme Command of the army (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) declared that Public Libraries are very important, and they reopened many previously closed Public Libraries. It was stated that libraries are not a luxury but an indispensable weapon for strengthening the internal front. Book or a good book serves the purpose of building a German man who will be internally and spiritually strong. We Styrians know very well how important is a book in the popular fighting along the border or overseas. During the decades when we were separated from German nation by this unnatural boundary, books, radio and newspapers were an important weapon in the fight to preserve the German spirit. Written and spoken words were the carrier agent of the German spirit. It was the word that helped us to maintain contact with other (German) people. It helped us to maintain the rebellious spirit and fostered optimism and hope. Styrian Heimatbund prepared a comprehensive program for Public Libraries. Each municipality, each place with a school should have a public library. In every respect the book is a spiritual weapon. The book serves the acquisition of speaking skills and allows to be settled in the German soul. Inhabitants should be taught German in language courses and knowledge will become stronger through the book later at home.

Carefully chosen books serve the internal development of man. Public libraries are part of the German construction of new society. The library is arranged by local community and this will be maintained. Library will become a place of residence (city / town) of culture. It is located in an old house which is a protected monument (Haus dr. Gollitsch, Marktplaz 9). The main room is used as a place to borrow books, behind the lending counter is the repository of books. The main room is furnished in a home-style: wooden walls, beautiful stove, elegant furniture from home larch, green shutters, woodcuts (*Holtzschnitzereien*), lamps - all the work of local craft. Catalogue is placed here. In this space, readers are advised to choose book(s) and borrow them. It is not a trade place but the place of culture, where people can feel like at home. At the opening of the library collection contained 3.110 units of books. The number of books now exceeds 4.000 units. Part of the collection is from previously existing libraries, part of it was bought by the city and most of it was a gift of 'Staatliche Buechereistelle fuer den Reichgau Steiermark' and 'Patenschaftsgabe des Volkbundes fuer das im Ausland Deuschtum an die Steiermark'.

Operation and updating the library collection will be provided by donors and the city. The city needs a cultural renewal. Head master of library is native but she studied and worked in modern libraries in Germany, in Stuttgart, Leipzig and Berlin Saarbruecknu. All this guarantees that the library will be governed to the latest trends and will be an example of how to run public libraries.



Public library must not be exchanged with lending library (*Leihbuecherei*) because the latter is company whose aim is to make profit. Therefore the lending libraries keep in their collections books that are ranked among the 'kitsch' and 'sund'. Public library is an institution for educating people and is subordinate to the Minister for People's Education and Education, established by the National Office of Public Library (*Staatliche Volksbuechereistelle*). They take care of the criteria which must comply with all aspects of book writing creativity. These books are aimed at the further education. Public library is an intermediary between the book and people. This library will give people a good book. Most readers cannot find themselves in the jungle of books. In Germany almost 30.000 books were issued in 1939. Therefore it is important that librarians give advice to readers in the literary as well as in psychological terms. Librarian's work also includes non-formal education. Due to the high criteria of librarians, the library aims to offer its users the best works of the German creation, not because of the volume of material but because of ambition of employees to inspire people with love of books. Book is our friend and assistant, upon its aid we can learn. It transfers the wealth of the German spirit, even to those who are excluded from the spiritual life or they are living on the edge of it.

Public Library in Celje (Cilli Volksbuecherei der Stadt) is not only the first of Lower Styria's library, but it is also the most beautiful. It is the only one that is established according to the new German librarian standards. Tomorrow you will have many equivalent imitators (those that will follow you).<sup>1</sup>

Further development could be seen in Report on the Library from June 9, 1941:

Because of the important role of Celje as a centre of large district (*Grosskreises*) it is required to found a library. In fact every municipality should have a public library. After consultation with the Chief of the Office of People's Education (*Leiter des Volksbildungsamtes*) we will establish Central Public Library in the District building (*Kreishaus*). It is without doubt that the municipality will contribute a promised share.<sup>2</sup>

This introduction was followed by a detailed report on what happened with the Slovenian public library before the occupation with many details on the operations of library, especially financial. Big library needs good governance to set its own operation as well as for further action. What is needed is good professional education. They agree with the Office of popular education that Mrs. Waltraut Dunkler-Winkle is suitable for this position. She was trained in Leipzig and had several years of work experience.

1 May, Gerhard: Die Stadt der Volksbucherei Cilli, ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

2 Ist-Bestand, Prozentauler Anteil der einzelnen Sachgruppen am Gesamt-Buchbestandt. ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

Waltraut Dunkler-Winkle was born and grew up in town of Sevnica. Her nationality was German; the German minority (after World War I) in Slovenia addressed themselves *Volksdeutscher*. What work took place in the meantime was partially surveyed in the aforementioned text by Garhard May. The library was opened by a very solemn, that testifies the list of invited guests. The library network was built in a very systematic manner so in 1942 and 1943 in the district of Celje there was the Public Library of Celje and also 53 other library locations.

## 2. 1. Library and its collection

From leaflet *Volksbuecherei der Stadt Cilli*<sup>3</sup> in which the library was presented we can read that library was opened for citizens who were older than 10 years. Books could be borrowed only personally, by card which was not transferable. Each reader could borrow two books at once: one fiction and one nonfiction book. The lending period lasted four weeks and could be extended – subject to no demand for borrowing. If the period of lending was exceeded the library charged late payment. The membership fee was 20 pfennig, for each additional family member or young people under 18 it was 10 pfennig. For each copy of the material rental charge had to be paid – 10 pfennig for adults and 5 for children.

Like most German public libraries Celje library was also set up with the panel system. It was a modern design, as the collection was placed in storage in separate interest areas, after *numeris currens*.

The comparison of interest fields, which were catalogued on the presentation of collection *Volksbuecherei der Stadt Cilli* with those published by F. Werner (1938) in *Die Buecherei*, shows that each of the expert group covered the same areas. The basic logic of science was therefore centrally regulated, the decision of librarians in the library where each book will be ranked was autonomous. The classification followed the recommendations of the profession, but decisions were affected by the environment in which each public library operated. Employees had to know how to present books to users.

The composition of the collection was, according to *Ist-Bestand, Prozentauler Anteil der einzelnen Sachgruppen am Gesamt-Buchbestandt* as follows:

Literature (*Unterhaltende Gebiete*) represents 60.7% of collection:

- Novels, stories, short stories 42.9%
- Fairy tales, sagas, anecdotes, folk tales 1.9%
- Poetry 1%
- Living image 3.8%
- Travel and research 5%

War stories 5.1%  
Animal stories (fables) 1%.

The scientific section (*Wissengebiete*) represents 36.6% of collection:

Country, population, movement, politics, law, economy, defence 6%  
History 5.3%  
Knowledge of the country and its people 3.8%  
Local studies 2%  
Sciences, mathematics 10.5%  
Fine Arts 2.5%  
Music 0.8%  
Literature, theatre 1.2%  
Writings and languages 0.3%  
Philosophy, history of religions 2.6%  
Engineering, arts, crafts 1.5%  
Trade, transport 0.1%.

Practical help in everyday life represents 2.7% of the collection:

Education 0.2%  
House, garden, agriculture 1.5%  
Health care 0.2%  
Gymnastics, games, sports, crafts 1.2%.

According to the document *Soll-Bestand, Prozentauler Anteil der einzelnen Sachgruppen am Gesamt-Buchbestandt*, the composition of the collection was expected to be slightly different:

Literature (*Unterhaltende Gebiete*) should comprise 60.5% of collection:

Novels, stories, short stories 42.5%  
Fairy tales, sagas, anecdotes, folk tales 1.5%  
Poetry 1%  
Living picture 5%  
Travel and research 7%  
War stories 3%  
Animal stories (fables) 0.5%

The scientific section (*Wissengebiete*) should comprise 35% of collection:

Country, population, movement, politics, law, economy, defence 6.5%  
History 5.5%  
Knowledge of the countries and people 4%  
Local studies 1.5%  
Sciences, mathematics 4.5%  
Fine arts 2.5%  
Music 0.5%

Literature, theatre 1.5%  
 Fonts and languages 0.5%  
 Philosophy, history of religion 2%  
 Engineering, arts, crafts 4.5%  
 Trade, transport 1.5%

Practical help in everyday life should comprise 4.5% of collection:

Education 0.5%  
 House, garden, agriculture 1.5%  
 Health care 1.5%  
 Gymnastics, games, sports, crafts 1%.

No record can be found of how they planned to dispatch discrepancies between the desired/recommended and the actual situation of collection. One possible strategy which was implemented in the German public libraries to fill gaps caused by discarded materials – at least until the beginning of the war – was stepped up purchases. Since Volksbuecherei der Stadt Cilli operated exclusively in time of war it was more difficult to carry that out.

The report by the Zgodovinski arhiv Celje (ZAC)<sup>4</sup> is not dated – but it must be a later date – and it indicates that the stock had a total of 6.000 units. The composition by professional fields was as follows:

Group	Percentage	Number of copies
fairy tales, sagas, novels, short stories	42%	2520
songs, dramas	3%	180
history	5%	300
war experiences	3%	180
folk art	4%	240
machinery and exploration, travel	7%	420
fine arts	2.5%	150
music	0.5%	30
philosophy, religion	2.5%	150
education	0.5%	30
theatre	2%	120
politics, war, science	6%	360
local studies	1%	60
home, garden	1%	60
games, sports, crafts	1%	60
health care	1.5%	90
natural sciences	4.5%	270

fauna	0.5%	30
technique	4.5%	270
economy, industry, transport	2.5%	150
living image, memoirs	5%	300
miscellaneous	0.5%	30
total	100%	6,000 units

Preserved documents reveal that the founders contemplated a large-scale library, since the library needed:

- a) a room for lending books (80 m<sup>2</sup>): a catalogue should be stored in it, a table for sorting books and a lending desk;
- b) the storage (60 m<sup>2</sup>), which would be separated from lending room by a counter, two offices, the first would be used as the entry or record of members and is to be directly related to the lending area, a small dressing room, a toilet;
- c) reading room (between 50 and 60 m<sup>2</sup>), which could be furnished with eight tables, each table is expected to have four seats to read, at the entrance of reading room would be a cloakroom and a bathroom.

However, it is not known whether these plans were realized and there is nothing written of the actual size of premises in which the library operated.

The efforts of the new occupation authorities to open the new public libraries in Styria as soon as possible is confirmed by an undated letter addressed at Rudolf Mirbt<sup>5</sup>, the head of the Office of the German libraries abroad (*Mittelstelle fuer Deutsches Auslandsbuechereiwesen and Verbindung mit der Abteilung fuer Auslandsbuecherein des VDA*). The letter mentions that the library in Celje should receive a gift of 2.000 new books. Total number of 22.000 books was given to public libraries in Styria. The Maribor public library received 6.000 books, libraries in Celje and Ptuj each received 2.000 books, and other books were distributed to other public libraries in Styria. Dr. Drews in Graz and Mrs. Dunker in Leipzig took care of book purchasing, and distribution was provided by the National Office of Public Library (*Staatliche Volksbuechereistelle*) in Graz. Books were a gift donated by the German People's Alliance for the Lower Styria (*Patenschaftsgabe des Volkbundes fuer das im Ausland Deutschtum an die Untersteiermark*).

The letter states that thus far the Volksbuecherei der Stadt Cilli had received 980 units as gift, of the total of 2.000 books it was promised to receive. There were four additional cases waiting in Maribor for Mrs. Dunker who would choose the rest of the books in Graz, so that the Celje library receives the total of 2.000 books. At the end of

<sup>5</sup> ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

the letter the hope was expressed that the library would receive a new gift of books in the following year.

This letter may have been written in March 1942 because it reported on four cases of books received. The letter entitled Supplement to the formation of the Public Library Celje (*Nachtrag zu "Ueber die Entstehung der Stadt der Volksbuecherei Cilli"*) is dated 11 March 1942.<sup>6</sup> The aforementioned four cases contained 478 new books. The number of books received (as a gift) rose from 980 to 1.458. On that day the public library had 3.110 books. Books could also be borrowed by offices, schools and businesses - in today's terminology - there were cards for legal persons and inter-library loan. Loan was possible outside the time when the library was open to other visitors according to the following schedule:

a) adult visitors:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 18h - 20h

Wednesday 12h - 13h

b) young visitors:

Monday, Friday 17h - 18h

Wednesday 11h - 12h.

Anyone from the age of ten could become a library user (*Die Benutzung der Buecherei ist ueber 10 Jahre Alten Volksgenossen gestattet*). Time of lending was separated into adult and youth programs. We can conclude that special attention was paid to young visitors.

A new loan schedule started on 29th May 1942:

Monday 7 - 12.30 and 16 - 20

Tuesday 7 - 12.30 and 16 - 20

Wednesday 7 - 16

Thursday 7 - 20

Friday 7 - 12.30 and 16 - 20

Saturday 7 - 12.30.

In total, the library was open 56 hours per week.

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<sup>6</sup> ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

## 2.2. Employees

The selection of employees was done carefully. Immediately after the German takeover of the city of Celje, as already mentioned, Waltraut Dunker, born in Sevnica, having finished librarianship in Leipzig, took over the library.

The preserved archival material does not allow the complete reconstruction of library staff; some conclusions can be drawn indirectly. There is no data on the number of employees, but from the *Haushaltsplan fuer das Jahr 1942* and from presented library's opening hours, one can conclude that there were more people in the library. It would be impossible that all the work was done by one person. In the *Haushaltplan fuer das Jahr 1942*, the first item was *Personalkosten* – staff costs.

The document sets out four items for paying:

1. running the library (*Bibliotheksleitung*)
2. assistance in the library (*Buechereihilfe*)
3. temporary assistance (*Voruebergehende Aushilfskraft*) and
4. help of students (*Buecherkind*).

It suggests that in addition to head of library there was another librarian who worked permanently. Other items (3 and 4) probably meant occasional assistance. As an additional argument for more employees, one can bring up the fact that employees were not only dealing with users and books, but also with the preparation of exhibitions. The need for external assistants is seen from the document entitled "Writing and Printing: January's exhibition at the Public Library of Celje" (*Schrift und Druck: January-Ausstellung der Cillier Volksbuecherei*) by Gerhard May.<sup>7</sup> The document is without date, it was intended to be either the opening speech or a brochure-guide at the exhibition. The text speaks about the exhibition of old prints in the time span of four centuries. Thus, visitors could see exhibits from medieval manuscripts to modern books. The author was impressed by the handwritten initials, printing of letters, from which the text must be correctly drawn. In particular, it highlighted a number of books displayed as the Bible from 1475 and *Beryl of Tuebingen (Lektionar) Act* from 1499, the text was printed in the Rotonda – version of Gothic script. From 16<sup>th</sup> century it was possible to see the German edition of *Codex Justinianus*, two-colour *Großbuch der rechtslinien Satzungen*. There was a lot of interest to see this book. It was possible to see Ingolstadt print, and there were also classic prints from Venice, dated in 1571.

The "Marburger Zeitung" published on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1944 an article entitled "The March of Celje Public Library Exhibition" subtitled "The Book of Herbs and Medicines from the 17th and 18th Century" (*Maerausstellung der Cillier Volksbuecherei: Kraeuter- und aus dem Arzneibuecher 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*). The article states that at the

exhibition in February in Celje visitors could see beautiful baroque wooden sculptures and valuable old books on herbs and folk medicine. The exhibited works *Das Weyland hoechsteruehmtrn Kayseri* and *Johann Hotmedici Zwoelter Dispensationen oder der Schatzkaestlein Artzneien* were both printed in 1692. The author of the article states that there were some recipes in these herbal and medical books, some of which are still useful, while the others seem charlatanic to the 20<sup>th</sup> century men.

Another letter reveals one more task of librarians from Celje. The letter was sent from the Prussian State Library, Office for Official prints (*Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Stelle fuer Amtlichte Drucksachen*) to the Office for the culture of the city of Celje (*Cilli Kulturamt der Stadt*) is preserved among other reports and correspondence related to the business and operation of the Public Library Celje.<sup>8</sup> Dated 14<sup>th</sup> August [19]43, it states:

Prussian State Library (*Die Preussische Staatsbibliothek*) is mandated to collect all of German book production. The working group included both official as well as unofficial publications. The National Library therefore asks all official and unofficial publications to be sent in one copy. For any assistance in collecting this material, the library thanks in advance, in particular, should be grateful for the following items:

Seebacher, Augusta: Heute Graf von Cilli und nimmermehr. Bilddrucke nach Zeichnungen. Herausgegeben vom der Stadt Kulturamt Cilli. – 1942, 4 Blatt, 13 Tafeln.

We can conclude that the broadcast of official and unofficial publications, which was issued by Stadt der Kulturamt Cilli, was carried out by the Public Library of Celje. From the extant material we can safely say that the cooperation between the library and the municipal Kulturamt der Stadt Cilli was very good. Gerhard May (1943), the head of the office, published an article in the “Marburger Zeitung” about the September exhibition entitled “Public Library of Celje: Maribor in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century” (*September-Ausstellung der Cillier Volksbuecherei: Eine der Stadt Marburg Originalansicht aus dem 17. Jahrhundert*). Together with other preserved documents, this article shows that city officials and city librarians closely cooperated.

### 2.3. Users

The library in Celje was obviously well organized as it regularly, monthly and annually, published statistical reports. Zgodovinski arhiv Celje (ZAC) holds two annual statistical reports, covering the period from 1 April 1942 to 31 March 1943 and from 1 April 1943 to 31 March 1944.<sup>9</sup> According to the reports, the most borrowed fiction were novels,

8 ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

9 ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.



stories and short stories (36.08%), followed by important group consisted of youth books, which represented 20.48% of loans. In the first period, from 1 April 1942 to 31 March 1943 (*Rechnungsjahr*), the library borrowed 20.908 units while during second period from 1 April 1943 to 31 March 1944 the total of 30.000 books was borrowed. Composition of the users in the years 1943/1944 was as follows:

men (total number of 441)

- A 34 workers, craft assistants, trading assistants
- B 156 Wehrmacht soldiers, Waffen-SS and police officers  
(previously 563 of which 138 in Celje, and 425 in the lazaret in Novo Celje)
- C 162 mid-level officials, employees of small traders and artisans (previously 107)
- D 18 craftsmen and women in managerial positions  
(previously 26)
- E 71 academic professions, artists, officers (previously 61)

women (total number of 538)

- I 20 workers, domestic helpers, farmers (previously 15)
- K 276 employees in offices, traders, etc. (previously 202)
- L 37 women in the professions and in managerial positions  
(previously 26)
- M 21 wives of workers / married to A (previously 11)
- N 184 housewives/married with C, D, E (previously 168)

young people between 10 and 18 years (total number of 1031)

- P 286 schoolchildren at the folk school, apprentices, young workers (previously 154)
- R 160 male college students (*Oberschueler*) (previously 125)
- S 450 schoolgirls, apprentices, young workers (previously 238)
- T 135 female college students (*Oberschuelerinnen*)  
(previously 103).

If we compare these figures with those from the previous year it is evident that the number of users increased in all categories, except in groups B and D. The number of soldiers was significantly reduced and thus there was no lending in lazaret in Novo Celje. Category 'young people' increased the most in the total number of library users, increasing from 620 to 1031. Three-quarters of users were Slovenes (the text uses the term *Untersteirer*).

The statistical report for the period 1943/1944 shows that the rental of books was distributed as follows: male users were evenly divided between borrowing narrative (*Erzählende Literatur*) 51.4% and educational literature (*Belehrende Literatur*) 48.26%. Women preferred fiction 66.68%, while educational literature accounted

for 33.32%. In the category of youth the result was the following: 49.66% fiction and 50.34% educational literature.

To outline the success of the Public Library, it is appropriate to present the document dated 1 September 1942.<sup>10</sup> The Celje Public Library had following structure of readers (*Am 1. 9. 1942. hat die Stadt der Volksbuecherei Cilli an Lesern*):

men total number 190

women total number 198

young total number 113 and

soldiers and officers in army hospital total number 396.

The total number of users - including soldiers - was 897 in less than six months.

## 2.4. Expenses

The document "To the issue of the establishment of the modern Public Library in Celje" (*Zur Frage der Errichtung neuzeitlichen Volksbuecherei and Cilli*) shows that Celje was given the role of the border city and cultural centre of the southern part of Lower Styria. Such an important place needs a good public library. A collection of 8.000 to 10.000 books was planned, which should suffice for the needs of the area of Celje's library (location to be considered had 8.000 residents and additional 18.000 in suburbs). Although many municipalities chose to establish different cultural centres such as museums, galleries, etc. libraries played the most important role. Its role in Celje is evident from the space requirements as well as from the work on the library collection. Significant means were provided for the purchase of books (8.000 books, of which 6.000 books for adults, 1.500 books for youth and 500 units for the reading room) - total cost of equipment was 46.250 RM, for books 7.750 RM, administrative costs (e.g. mail) were 2.374,35 RM, construction and maintenance of catalogues 300 RM, and the design of work space 1.002 RM, all together 57.676,35 RM. Books aimed for the reading rooms were more expensive. 10 RM was intended for a single copy, while the estimated price for children's literature was 3,50 RM. Estimated costs of annual maintenance amounted to 19.000 RM (including salaries, rent, electricity, heating, etc.).

This amount (57.676,35 RM) in June was above the sum envisaged in 1941 by the establishment of public library (5.000 RM). The annual contribution for the regular operation of the library was also higher (2.000 RM). Although the library itself had income from borrowing and membership fees, it was too small to fill the income gap between the two figures. Even at the time when they prepared for the reopening of the library, Gerhard May wrote that the city library must be arranged and maintained -

from all this we can conclude that an agreement was reached on the amount of funds for the operation of the Public Library. It is not possible to record the total amount of funds that were invested in the operation of the library. Taking into account that it had the status of a border library and the border was a kind of “window shop”, there was no limit of resources needed for its operation.

## 2.5. Final years

The last preserved monthly report of the Public Library in Celje dates back to 14 July 1944.<sup>11</sup>

In June 1944, the total of 2.856 books was borrowed, 36 new members were enrolled, with a mileage allowance the library earned 316 RM, it received 187 new books and there were 307 warnings.

The library also received 34 new books from the National Library Centre (*Staatliche Volksbuecherstelle*) in Graz. Furthermore, we learn that the book lending in July was very intensive. In particular, adult books represented an escape to a different, more beautiful world. Users did not want to borrow books with political or war content; novels with war content were ignored. In particular, they wanted to borrow books that helped them forget everything. As it was customary, children returned books before holidays, but did not borrow any new ones – during the holidays there was less reading. And finally, the report states that the entire second edition – 3.120 copies – of Guide to Celje written by dr. May was sold out, from the first edition remained only 726 copies. Thus, the library also had a task of selling books. The report does not reveal who the publisher of that city guide was. The Cobiss search shows that the author was Gerhard May: *Cilli: Stadt, Landschaft, Geschichte: eine Einfuehrung*. The book was published in 1943 by the *Verlag der Kulturamtes der Stadt*. It can be concluded that the cultural and educational spheres in Celje were closely intertwined. The size of the edition was impressive – the second edition had 3.120 copies.

The monthly report dated 20 March 1944<sup>12</sup> reported on the air raids, but they did not disrupt the visit to the library. Visits were most intensive in February 1944, when 3.032 books were borrowed. In the same month the total number of new readers was 85, and 166 warnings were sent. There was 287,50 RM income.

Librarians continued the work on the Youth Catalogue (*Jugendkatalog*), which would be a great asset to the library. The universal catalogue for young between 12 and 18 years of age would cover all areas and issues of concern to young people: entertainment (*Unterhaltung*), politics, history, natural science, local studies (*Heimatskunde*), technology, sports, games etc. It was very important that this catalogue was printed,

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11 ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

12 ZAC, box no. 75, folder sg. 449.

it was necessary to obtain a license for printing and paper, since only such a catalogue - printed - would fulfil its mission: it would guide young people into the world of books. With its help young people would be able to choose the books and borrow them. From December [1943] to March [1944] the librarians performed less popular but very necessary tasks - book cleaning. As reported by the Head of Library Waltraut Dunker it is unimaginable how much grease was accumulated on books. Gasoline and magnesium were used to remove it, but - as it was written by the author Ð they were obtained with shrewdness and deceit (*List und Tuecke*).

What happened between August 1944 and May 1945 cannot be reconstructed from preserved documents. Public Libraries belonged to the Ministry of Education at the time of occupation and in the archives we could not find documents that would help describe events at that time. It is highly likely that libraries shared the fate of schools. All schools were closed for the most part in 1944/1945.

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## Conclusion

The Public Library of Celje in 1941-1945 operated according to library standards in the Third Reich. Categories of readers for keeping statistics were identical and the processing of books was unified. Employees were selected among graduates of librarianship schools in Germany. It might be said that the period of the war brought new development to the library profession, although this is unfortunately only one part of the whole picture. Libraries are books and people - employees and customers. When the ruling ideology requires that books that do not conform to the current ideology must be excluded from collections, when employees were chosen not only by professional skills, but also by national or linguistic background, all previously positive trends fade.

The Celje Public Library was part of 'Border libraries'. Special attention was devoted to that kind of libraries in the Third Reich. The Regulation (*Die Buecherei* 1938: 39-47) in Chapter V described frontier/border libraries - they were referred to as *Grenzbuechereiwesen*. Because of special political importance those libraries were paid special attention to enable them to perform their duties. The selection of heads of these libraries was very careful, and the employees were trained as well. Despite the good operation of the library, we cannot ignore some of the less bright sides of library work. It is more than obvious that librarians - at least initially - agreed with the interventions of censors and removal of 'inappropriate' books from collections. Very often they were involved in drawing up lists of 'inappropriate' books. Only few of them dared to read or to borrow books from the 'prohibited fund'.

From the existing documents it cannot be said that librarians reported on their users individually. However, they monitored the mood of the population, and it was described in monthly reports. Libraries and librarians had the same role as other parts of the state apparatus.

Based on our research we could also find what the special position of border libraries was and how it reflected on their work, especially in the influx of books and other resources. Surprisingly we found out that this worked and was respected even in the time of war, especially in 1944, when there were shortages of goods and the hope for the end of the war faded.

August Pirjevec, one of the few professional librarians in Slovenia at the pre-war time, in his work *Libraries and librarianship* (1940) specifically mentioned the phenomenon of border libraries and the importance of libraries in Germany of that time. It was as if he knew what would happen to Slovenia and personally him as his life ended tragically in the Dachau concentration camp.

The Third Reich with its ruling ideology and libraries which should help educate people in the spirit of the new ideology left only ruins. Professionalism of libraries and librarians in Germany is certainly something that is interesting if we could ignore what purpose they served. It would probably be embarrassing to compare the level of development of libraries after World War II, which, for ideological and national causes, could not build on this tradition. It took many years to build new library collections, set up catalogues and work with users to reach that level. On the other hand from this experience we must remember that library science in Nazi Germany should be a warning that sometimes good intentions, as a sincere desire of German librarians for quality literature in their collections and work with their readers/users, could be a road to the horrors of censorship and prohibited funds, all in the name of a 'higher' culture.

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## Sažetak

### **Nepoznata povijest slovenskog knjižničarstva: Javna knjižnica u Celju tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata**

Cilj je rada istražiti i predstaviti djelovanje Javne knjižnice u Celju tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata. Rad je podijeljen u dva dijela, u prvom se općenito govori o stanju u knjižničarstvu u nacističkoj Njemačkoj, a drugi se dio bavi djelovanjem Javne knjižnice u okupiranom Celju. Istraživanje se temelji na arhivskim dokumentima dostupnim u Povijesnom arhivu u Celju (Zgodovinski arhiv Celje - ZAC).

Celje je tijekom okupacije bilo važno administrativno, trgovinsko, industrijsko, prometno i obrazovno središte Štajerske. Celjska je knjižnica djelovala sukladno standardima i modelima važećima za sve njemačke knjižnice, što se odražavalo na njezino cjelokupno poslovanje: izbor i obradu građe, izbor zaposlenika i rad s korisnicima. Javne su knjižnice bile utemeljene municipalnim sredstvima, a grad je brinuo o njihovom poslovanju. Usto, posebno je državno savjetodavno tijelo (*Staatliche Volksbuechereistelle*) osiguravalo dodatne materijale. Knjižnice su u novim pograničnim područjima imale važnu ulogu u diseminaciji njemačkog jezika i kulture, što se i smatralo njihovom temeljnom zadaćom. Ratne okolnosti nisu odvratile korisnike od posjeta knjižnici, niti su se zaposlenici žalili na nedostatak financijskih sredstava. Kako se rat bližio kraju, zamijećen je tek nedostatak papira.

Doprinos radnje je rekonstrukcija poslovanja Javne knjižnice u Celju tijekom vrlo burnog povijesnog razdoblja, što je tema kojoj do sada nije pridavana veća pozornost.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** javne knjižnice, Drugi svjetski rat, okupacija, njemačko knjižničarstvo, Celje.