

# Cataloguing the Slavonic Manuscript Collection of the Plovdiv Public Library – Problems and MARC 21<sup>\*</sup> Solutions

Antoaneta Lessenska<sup>1</sup>, Sabina Aneva<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ivan Vazov Plovdiv Public Library, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

<sup>2</sup>NALIS Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria

antoaneta.lessenska@gmail.com, sabina.aneva@nalis.bg

**Abstract.** The paper presents a standardised scheme for describing the whole Slavonic Manuscript Collection kept at the Plovdiv Public Library. This scheme will be used for generating a structured pool of palaeographic and codicological data with a view to integrating the respective digital objects (digitised copies of the respective manuscripts and metadata, i.e. the descriptions, to them) into a digital content management platform. The experience gained in creating the catalogue of the Plovdiv Library's Slavonic Manuscripts may be useful when discussing a unified methodology and a scheme for a machine-readable cataloguing of the Bulgarian manuscript collections in general. Besides, the principles of adapting the proposed standard to MARC 21 Bibliographic are enlisted. The template prepared, will be applied in ALEPH 500 and further developed in a related forthcoming activity.

**Keywords:** Medieval Manuscripts Description, Literary Heritage, Plovdiv Library, Codicology, Marc 21 Bibliographic, Machine-readable Library Cataloguing, Database, NALIS.

## 1 The Paper Catalogue of the Slavonic Manuscripts and the Cataloguing Scheme Developed

The *Ivan Vazov* Public Library in Plovdiv (henceforth PPL ('Plovdiv Public Library')) is the biggest manuscript repository outside the Bulgarian capital. Its collection comprises 356 monuments and so the library is among those public institutions in

---

\* MARC 21 ('Machine-Readable Cataloguing') is a US library standard established worldwide and recently translated also in Bulgarian (those parts used most by librarians in their everyday work). The Bulgarian translations are freely available on the NALIS website (<http://www.nalis.bg/>) under the Library Standards Section, where also an Online Multilingual Dictionary of MARC 21 Terms can be found. All these works are approved by the US Library of Congress and published on its MARC 21 website under Translations (<http://www.loc.gov/marc/translations.html#bulgarian>).

Bulgaria which are obliged to preserve the medieval manuscript heritage in our country, to popularise it and grant access to it.

The PPL manuscript collection has not been catalogued in a machine-readable form yet. For the Slavonic part of it – which is the third biggest collection of Slavonic manuscripts in Bulgaria – there is a manually written Inventory as well as two scholarly descriptions<sup>1</sup>. The library's efforts, therefore, have been dedicated to the creation of a catalogue of the PPL Slavonic manuscripts dated back to the 12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, which would offer standardised descriptions and would reveal the main palaeographic and codicological features of these monuments. A unified description scheme have been therefore created and used as consequently as possible.

The paper Catalogue of the Slavonic Manuscript Collection [3] gives more precise information by means of revealing the level of a codicological item without contextualising it in the corpus of the Bulgarian literary monuments preserved until today. The data in it are more compact than those in the scholarly descriptions mentioned and present the described items in a more general way. Its present purpose is to provide its users both with exact and reliable information as well as with unified terminology in the framework of the developed database and in accordance with the established methods in our national archaeographic tradition (mainly [4], pp. 55–80). The separate description areas have been well-balanced and the data in it have been formalised as much as possible. The common rules – in terms of unified terminology, structure, completeness and exhaustiveness – ensure standardisation of all the data elements and are compulsory when a pool of data is created to be processed for the needs of a publicly accessible electronic catalogue (OPAC).

The work on the manuscripts kept in the PPL repository was preceded by a thorough study of the available descriptions. During its existence, this Slavonic Manuscripts Collection has been scholarly described twice: by Prof. Benjo Tsonev in 1920 [1] and by Prof. Krasimir Stanchev in 1982 [2]. In addition to these two complete descriptions, there are some other secondary sources, which include detailed data on the objects under consideration. These are: a) Iliya Yovchev's catalogue, published in 1885 [5]; b) Nikolay Raynov's study on the ornaments of the PPL Slavonic manuscript collection [6]; c) Manyo Stoyanov's work on the illumination of the same manuscripts [7] and d) the Union Catalogue of the Bulgarian Manuscripts from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, published in 1982 [8].

The Paper Catalogue of the PPL Slavonic Collection [3] describes the 132 manuscripts in it. The Cataloguing Scheme, developed for its needs, has been designed in a way that follows as closely as possible the established in Bulgaria scholarly methods of describing manuscript monuments ([4], [9], [10], [11]) and that aims at an utmost unification of the separate descriptions. After the analysis of the methodology applied in the Bulgarian palaeographic practice, the following elements have been chosen to construct the Cataloguing Scheme:

1. *Sequential number* – the classical numeration comprised of a call number and an inventory number (the same as those applied in [1] and [2]);

---

<sup>1</sup> These scholarly descriptions are mentioned among the references below, see [1], which was published long ago and is now too difficult to find, and [2].

2. *Title* – it follows the genre typology of the monuments
  - 2.1. *Individual title* – any alternative title or other denomination accepted by the scholarship
3. *Dating* – reduced to a quarter of a century (when possible)
4. *Orthography*<sup>2</sup> – presence of certain orthographic peculiarities, presence of jers (Б, Ъ) and yuses (Ѧ, Ѧ);
5. *Script* – characteristics of the type of writing, belonging to a particular school;
  - 5.1. *Local (geographic) peculiarities* – regional variants of the type of script,
  - 5.2. *Ruling of columns* – the number of the text columns,
  - 5.3. *Ruling of lines* – the number of the lines (in case of doubt, the range of varying is given),
  - 5.4. *Hands* – identification of the number of the copyists and of their handwritings;
  - 5.5. *Inks* – colour of the inks,
  - 5.6. *Text segmentation* – and related punctuation,
  - 5.7. *Diacritics*;
6. *Content*;
7. *Scribe's note* – just the paratextual additions by the author or the copyist,
  - 7.1. *Colophon* – those folia are enlisted here, where there is a paratextual addition by the owner of the manuscript or the person who ordered the manuscript;
8. *Codicological description*:
  - 8.1. *Quantification*:
    - 8.1.1. *Number of folia* – if there are folia, added with a later binding of the codex, their number is given as a Roman numeral (followed by the number of the folia in the main body of the codex),
    - 8.1.2. *Number of quires* – availability, type, place and way of marking,
    - 8.1.3. *Dimensions* – height and width of the page in mm,
    - 8.1.4. *Size of the text area* – height and width in mm,
    - 8.1.5. *Number of the sections in the codex* – constitution (number of folia in a section, i.e. quaternion, senion, binion,<sup>3</sup> or other) and quantity,
    - 8.1.6. *Missing folia* (separate and/or within the quires) – location and, if possible, exact number;
  - 8.2. *Overall condition* – it is marked as excellent, very good, good, satisfactory or poor; here, also, the data on the missing parts are given, on any torn-outs, spots and other damage,
    - 8.2.1. *Restoration* – yes/no – date and place;
  - 8.3. *Medium* – paper, parchment or mixed, plus brief data related,
    - 8.3.1. *Watermark* – the identifications by B. Tsonev and K. Stanchev are fully reflected here; some watermarks in the collection under consideration

---

<sup>2</sup> Recension (or redaction) is a debated term in the Slavonic Medieval Studies – cf. e.g. [12], [13], [14], [15]. Besides, when differentiating the manuscript monuments by this feature, a complex analysis is necessary: paleographic and codicological, text critical and culture-historical. So we have not included this point in the scheme.

<sup>3</sup> binion = 2 bifolia or 4 folia; quaternion = 4 bifolia or 8 folia; senion = 6 bifolia etc.

have been identified by Radoman Stanković [16]<sup>4</sup> and in these cases we refer to his publication<sup>5</sup>,

- 8.4. *Binding* – yes/no – in case of its absence, the way of preservation of the manuscript is described,
  - 8.4.1. *Medium* – what are the covers made of and what are they covered with,
  - 8.4.2. *Appearance* – general condition,
  - 8.4.3. *Technique applied and ornaments*,
  - 8.4.4. *Original/modern binding*
9. *Decoration* – general characteristics; type and location of both illumination (miniatures) and other decorative elements (initials, rubrics, paraphs, pointers etc.)
10. *History*:
  - 10.1. *Origins*;
  - 10.2. *Previous owner and location* – data about the migration of the monument (the information in this field is derived from the work on the PPL Manuscripts and Old Prints Inventory)
11. *Acquisition* – date and type (gift, purchase etc.);
12. *Literature*:
  - 12.1. *Previous descriptions and call numbers* (all beginning with ИЏ, HP, MC, CK – corresponding to [5], [6], [7] and [8] respectively),
  - 12.2. *Editions* – the available edition(s) of the catalogued manuscript (including its study),
  - 12.3. *References* – papers mentioning the respective monument (even in the case of a single reference);
13. *Notes* – additional information related to the item described or referring to the palaeographic album created ([3], pp. 184–210);

A brief description of the PPL collection's content, with an emphasis on its main characteristics – chronological, culture-historical and related to the genre or literary form – may well be presented in the following way.

The bulk of the Slavonic Manuscript Collection are the monuments of the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, about 90 in total, followed by the 16 14<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts, the 11 13<sup>th</sup>-century ones and further 10 dated back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of the manuscripts – 106 – were written on paper, the parchment ones are 24. Two of the codices are a combination of parchment and paper. As far as genre is concerned, there are three main groups: Liturgical Books (the biggest one comprising 78 codices), Biblical Books (33 in total) and Miscellanies (18). There are 2 other codices that remain out of the groups mentioned. The diverse content of the PPL collection is indicative also of the process of migration of literary monuments – both in the Middle Ages

---

<sup>4</sup> He dealt with that as a research associate at the Department for Archaeography of the National Library of Serbia.

<sup>5</sup> Of the 108 manuscripts studied, 76 watermarks' identifications were taken from the secondary sources namely: 45 from [1], 23 from [16] and 8 from [2]. The remaining 32 watermarks have been identified during the preparation of the paper catalogue [3] and, due to the lack of proper technical conditions, after only direct work on the manuscript fragments in the PPL collection.

and in more recent times. The major literary centres in Bulgaria in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Etropole, Karlovo, Adzhar, Kuklen and Kotel) are present with manuscripts here.

The Scheme proposed above reflects the following points for the first time:

- Important data on the structure of the manuscript codices: the number and composition of the sections, the type of numbering (if any) and its place on the folio;
- Number of the missing folia and of the folia added later to the manuscripts – they have a separate codicological significance;
- Precise dating of 31 manuscripts – it is based on a filigranologic analysis;
- Data concerning the overall physical condition of the manuscripts and concerning their restoration (if any);
- Information about the history of the manuscript, their transition, the place they were found at, the type and date of acquisition at PPL;
- Bibliographic references of the described manuscripts.

The Paper Catalogue of the PPL Slavonic Manuscripts Collection gives detailed, yet still not complete, information about the collection and presupposes its future processing with a view to achieving some scholarly completeness. The first step to be done in this respect is the planning of the future work in describing the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Slavonic manuscripts at PPL after the proposed scheme for description. The experience gained in the creation of the paper catalogue may well be used in a long-term project aiming at the creation of a database combining data related to the archaeography, codicology and literary history of the Slavonic manuscript heritage in Bulgaria. It can be also the starting point for discussing a unified methodology and scheme for a machine-readable description of the Bulgarian manuscript collections.

## **2 The Machine-Readable Catalogue of the PPL Slavonic Manuscripts Collection and the Adaptation of the Cataloguing Scheme to MARC 21**

The idea to adopt a scheme for cataloguing of manuscripts to the MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data is not new. The first attempts in this direction were done at the Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 2005 in relation to the cataloguing of its collection of microfilmed manuscripts gathered from various foreign libraries. A template was created then and successfully applied to the bilingual description – in both Bulgarian and English – of these extremely valuable items. This template had a different purpose and so the emphasis was rather on the parameters of the microfilms than on the codicological features of the manuscripts themselves [17].

The work on the first MARC 21 template for cataloguing Slavonic manuscripts began at the end of May 2013. It has been based on the standardised cataloguing scheme described in the first part of this paper. The template has been created in conformity with:

- The logic of both MARC 21 and AACR 2 ('Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2 edition);
- The peculiarities of the ALEPH 500 Library Information System and the additional services it offers;
- The specifics of the manuscripts as a type of material.

In order to preserve all the elements of the standardised cataloguing scheme, used to describe the PPL manuscript collection, and to integrate it as a whole in the MARC 21 Bibliographic, the MARC 21 fields have been grouped by their meaning. All the fields that are related to an area of a bibliographic description or to a kernel of thematically selected information (i.e. each of the points in the scheme above) have been put into single MARC 21 field to ensure a quick orientation in the record. This approach ensures a much easier indexing and, so, a more adequate search and retrieval. The whole codicological information, for instance, is inserted in field 300 (Physical Description), and the whole information related to the binding is placed in the subfields of the 563 field (Binding Information).

The work on the template has not finished yet. It is going to be tested within the next six months, for which period the bibliographic data of at least one fourth of the PPL Collection will be registered. What will be checked in this way will be the opportunities this template gives for cataloguing items varying in their content and physical characteristics. After the verification of the final version of the template, the whole collection will be catalogued and then an extended template will be created to include the English version of each respective Bulgarian description. The bibliographic records will then enrich their informative significance.

The preservation of our manuscript heritage is an important and responsible task. It requires a complex approach and efforts by both librarians and renovators, as well as by other specialists. The work on machine-readable cataloguing of the PPL Slavonic Manuscripts Collection and on its integration into certain online library catalogues (OPACs and/or union catalogues) will contribute to the better awareness of the PPL collection's treasure and will stimulate the further digitisation of these items to allow a larger audience to have access to them.

## References

1. Tsonev, B.: Opis na slavianskite rŭkopisi i staropechatni knigi v Plovdivskata narodna biblioteka [Description of the Slavonic Manuscripts and Old Printed Books at the Plovdiv Public Library]. Sofia (1920)
2. Stanchev, K.: Opis na slavianskite rŭkopisi v Plovdivskata narodna biblioteka "Ivan Vazov", postŭpili sled 1920 godina [Description of the Slavonic Manuscripts at the Plovdiv Public Library Acquired after 1920]. Sofia (1982)
3. Lesenska, A.: Opazvane i dostŭp do slavianskoto rŭkopismo knizhovno nasledstvo na Bŭlgariia – sluchaiat s Narodna biblioteka "Ivan Vazov" Plovdiv: Diplomna rabota [Preservation and Access to the Slavonic Manuscript Heritage in Bulgaria – the Case of the Ivan Vazov Public Library in Plovdiv: MA Thesis]. Sofia (2013)
4. Kodov, Kh. Raikov, B.: Printsipi i metodi za opisvane na slavianskite rŭkopisi. Istoricheski pregled i metodicheski ukazaniia [Principles and Methods for the Descriptions of the Sla-

- von Manuscripts: A Historical Overview and Methodological Recommendations]. Изв. на НБКМ, no. 14 (20), 55–80 (1976)
5. Īovchev, I.: Katalog na knigite v Oblasnata biblioteka i muzei. Postupili do 1-ĭ ianuariĭ 1885 [A Catalogue of the Books at the Regional Library and Museum Acquired before 1 Jan 1885], Plovdiv (1885)
  6. Raĭnov, N.: Ornament i bukva v slavianskite rŭkopisi na Narodnata biblioteka v Plovdiv [Ornament and Letter in the Slavonic Manuscripts in the Plovdiv Public Library]. Sofia (1925)
  7. Stoianov, M.: Ukrasa na slavianskite rŭkpisi v Bŭlgariia [Illumination of the Slavonic Manuscripts in Bulgaria]. Sofia (1973)
  8. Khristova, B., Karadzhova, D., Ikonomova, A.: Bŭlgarski rŭkopisi ot 11 do 18 vek, zapazeni v Bŭlgariia. SvoĊen katalog [Bulgarian Manuscripts from the 11th to the 18th Century in Bulgaria: A Union Catalogue]. Vol. 1. Sofia (1982)
  9. Stanchev, K.: Printsipi i metodika za opisvane i katalogizirane na slavianskite rŭkpisi [Principles and Methods for the Description of Slavonic Manuscripts]. In: Slavianska paleografiia i diplomatika. Vol. 2, pp. 167–172. Sofia (1985)
  10. PreporuĊitelien spisŭk na nazvaniata na srednovekovnite slavianski rŭkopisi spored zhanrovata im tipologiiia [A Recommended List of the Denominations of Medieval Slavonic Manuscripts according to Their Genre]. Informatsionen biuletin na SIBAL, no.11, pp. 20–29. Sofia (1987)
  11. Dzhurvoa, A., Sŭĭkova, G., Boiadzhiev, A.: Rabotna karta za paleografski, kodikologichni i konservatsionni danni [An Initial Map for Palaeographic, Codicological and Conservation Data]. Archeografski prilozhi, no. 20, pp. 210–235. Sofia (1998)
  12. Velcheva, B.: Za lokalizatsiata na slavianskite rŭkopisi (tezisi) [On the Localisation of the Slavonic Manuscripts]. In: Slavianska paleografiia i diplomatika. Vol. 2, pp. 128–137. Sofia (1985)
  13. Ivanova, K.: Pravopisno-ezikovi problemi pri opisvaneto na iuzhnoslavianskite kirilski rŭkopisi [Orthographic and Linguistic Problems in the Description of South Slavic Cyrillic Manuscripts]. In: Slavianska paleografiia i diplomatika. Vol. 1, pp. 103–109. Sofia (1980)
  14. Ivanova, K.: Pravopis, proizhod i tekstova redaktsiia na slavianskite rŭkopisi [Orthography, Origin and Text Redaction of the Slavonic Manuscripts]. In: Opisanie i katalogizirovaniie srednovekovnykh rukopisey Описание и каталогизирование средневековых рукописей, pp. 41–47. Sofia (1984)
  15. Kristova, B.: Za resavskite bŭlgarski rŭkopisi ot 15-18 v. [On the Resava Bulgarian Manuscripts of the 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century]. Palaeobulgarica, no. 4 (XV), pp 50-55. Sofia (1991)
  16. StankoviĊ, R.: Rukopisi srpske redaktsije u Narodnoj bibliotetsi “Ivan Vazov” is Plovdiva. Vodeni znatsi i datiranje. In: Arkheografski prilozhi, no. 26–27, pp. 189-261. Sofia (2004–2005)
  17. Aneva, S.: Application of MARC21-Concise format for bibliographic Data in Bulgarian Libraries: the Case of the Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In: Slavic and East European Information Resources. Vol. 8, no. 2–3, pp. 137–150. New York (2007)