



Report on activities in 2019 within the framework of UNESCO category II centre operation

I. Introduction

Based on the reputation it has gained in a prolonged period in the area of librarianship and in the academic sphere in the regional geographic territory of South-eastern Europe, IZUM is known as a renowned regional centre for the development of library information systems and current research evaluation systems within the region. With its professional and innovative initiatives, IZUM has been present in the region for almost three decades and has managed to gain a large amount of trust.

COBISS (Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services) is a reference model of a system representing the platform for the national library information systems and current research information systems in Slovenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo¹. The regional COBISS.net network interconnecting all of these is a practical example of complementary synergies, without which we cannot imagine a modern education and research system or cultural, technological and economic development. Libraries cannot take on their role if their work is not supported by modern information communication technology. Neither are they able to function efficiently as isolated islands, so they must connect with each other and provide conditions for dialogue and collaboration as one of the best bases for the development of each country and the international community as a whole.

IZUM provides the libraries in the region with:

- Proven organisational solutions and COBISS software for the automation of library functions with shared cataloguing within the COBISS.net network with user interfaces in several languages (Slovenian, Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Bulgarian and Albanian).
- Proven methodology and software to manage researchers' bibliographies within the COBISS system, applications for setting up a national research information system (SICRIS, E-CRIS), and evaluation of research results.
- A variety of training programmes (for librarians and IT professionals), the organisation of specialised workshops and the international COBISS conference.
- Server capacities for COBISS, SICRIS and E-CRIS applications and services.
- Support in the acquisition of financial resources for development activities (international development cooperation).

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

The long-term objective is to link and connect all higher education and research organizations as well as academic, special and public libraries in target countries into the COBISS.net network and establish compatible systems for the evaluation of research activity.

We recognise the following necessary steps:

- Motivate competent ministries and public authorities, research and educational organisations as well as libraries to recognise and accept the concept of national systems, linked into the COBISS.net network.
- Qualify the national COBISS Centres and national E-CRIS Centres as well as libraries for the implementation of organisational solutions and the COBISS/E-CRIS software.
- Co-finance the development of the national COBISS and E-CRIS systems (library equipment, staff training, managing researchers' bibliographies) until the satisfactory establishment of the said systems in the target countries.

II. Activities and tasks within the COBISS.net project

II.1 Summary

In 2019, 53 new libraries outside Slovenia (it is the record in all these years) joined COBISS.net in total, 12 in Serbia, six in Montenegro and in Republic of Srpska, 20 (!) in North Macedonia and two in Albania. There were also five libraries that left the COBISS.net (due to internal organisational reasons). The total number of libraries outside Slovenia included in the COBISS.net network was 460 on the last day of the previous year (1378 together with Slovenian libraries!).

	New libraries	Total on December 31
Albania	2	32
B & H	0	57
Bulgaria	0	2
Kosovo	0	1
Montenegro	6	43
N. Macedonia	20	72
Rep. Srpska	6	30
Serbia	12	204

In Kosovo ten new particular agreements on active collaboration were signed with ten libraries, so it is expected a major increment on total number of included libraries there within this year.

In 2019, the agreement on the implementation of the COBISS system in Serbia, Rep. Srpska, North Macedonia and Montenegro expired, and the new agreements were signed.

The COBISS.AL, COBISS.BG, COBISS.BH, COBISS.RS, COBISS.CG and COBISS.KS systems do not have their own computer capacities to maintain their own national and local catalogues and databases, nor do they have the capacity to run the COBISS applications and services. For this purpose, they use the hosting system of IZUM's server infrastructure. In the beginning of 2019 North Macedonia started to use IZUM's hosting system, too. Therefore, all the COBISS.net countries except Serbia are now using IZUM's facilities for maintaining their national and local catalogues, databases and running the COBISS services.

II.2 Development aid

In 2019, with the expected financial aid of (mostly) the competent ministries, but also other subjects of the Republic of Slovenia and international organisations, all planned IZUM's activities in the role of UNESCO's regional centre can be listed in following topical areas:

1. Co-financing the creation of bibliographic records for the purposes of researchers' bibliographies
2. Harmonising national library catalogues with the WorldCat global catalogue
3. Supporting the National COBISS Centres (help with providing the technical conditions, human resources, equipment and infrastructure)
4. Translating COBISS user interfaces, user manuals and other documentation
5. Training COBISS application instructors
6. Training librarians for COBISS
7. Co-financing the purchase of equipment and the installation arrangement in libraries
8. Co-financing the post-graduate librarianship study programme at the University of Shkoder
9. Co-financing the access to selected international e-sources
10. Planning, coordinating, advising and promotional activities

In line with the financial capacities and absorption abilities some of the topics were more prominent, some less, and some not at all. Because of the lack of expected financial resources, the activity range has been much lower.

Out of the activities listed above, only the following items were carried out to a satisfactory extent: 4 (translating), 5 (training instructors), partly also item 2 (analysis and preparation in Serbia and Montenegro), where the main obstacle are the demanding negotiations with a foreign partner (OCLC). With regards to item 8, there has been a blockade since 2013 and despite our optimism and great deal of enthusiasm, nothing had improved in 2019. We insist on having this item on the list, as that was also an explicit demand from the COBISS.net Council.

As part of item 4 (translating COBISS user interfaces and user manuals as well as other documentation), work was underway on translations of updates of all current user manuals into Serbian, English and Albanian, and editing was carried out for all currently translated existing courses. Also in the process of translation were materials for new courses, which include the course slides and all other documentation, required for conducting a course (questionnaires, signatory lists, etc.).

Training activities for librarians (item 6) in all countries were carried out primarily on the courses from the regular COBISS training programme. They were attended by 633 librarians in 56 repetitions and in the total length of 201 days.

In some countries, the procedure for acquiring cataloguing permits (*licences*) was successfully completed in 2019.

Summary of training results (note the Serbian increase!):

	Courses	Days	Participants	New CAT licences
Albania	3	9	20	5
B & H	3	13	33	14
Bulgaria	2	10	24	10
Kosovo	33	15	39	0
Montenegro	4	12	45	10
N. Macedonia	5	17	48	2
Rep. Srpska	10	37	105	66
Serbia	26	88	319	127

Item 5 (training COBISS application instructors) was carried out in Serbia (3 successful candidates for two courses), Republic of Srpska and Bulgaria (one successful candidate for one course, respectively).

II.3 Additional (regular) activities

In addition to the abovementioned tasks that are part of the international development aid programme, the following activities were carried out as part of the regular, horizontal, maintenance, infrastructure, and additional tasks:

- **Albania:** Two new libraries joined the system. Three special courses were carried out (one was unfortunately shortened due to heavy earthquake in Tirana). Five librarians were granted a cataloguing permit for cataloguing monographs.

- **Bulgaria:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. There is a new segment for exporting local data installed and one additional library started to use *COBISS/Acquisitions module*. In 2019, one course instructor acquired the licence for holding the course COBISS3/Cataloguing – Basic *and the other for holding the course* COBISS3/Cataloguing – Advanced. Ten librarians were granted a cataloguing permit for cataloguing monographs.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. Three special courses were carried out. Ten librarians were granted a cataloguing permit for cataloguing monographs and 6 for cataloguing other materials.
- **Kosovo:** After a breakthrough in 2018, activities were intensified. There were ten new libraries which officially expressed their intention to join the COBISS.net. Seven of them started with an educational process. Three special courses were carried out (with nine librarians).
- **Montenegro:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. Six new libraries were included. Four special courses (five instances) were carried out. Ten librarians were granted cataloguing permits for cataloguing materials other than monographs.
- **North Macedonia:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. Twenty (!) new libraries were included. Three special courses (five instances) were carried out. Exams for cataloguing permits for monographs were took place for the first time in the country and two librarians were successful. The migration of the COBISS.MK system to IZUM's hosting servers was realized in the beginning of the year.
- **Republic of Srpska:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. Six new libraries were included. One course instructor acquired the licence for holding the *COBISS3/ Cataloguing – Advanced*. Five special courses (ten instances) were carried out. 32 librarians were granted cataloguing permits for monographs and 34 for cataloguing other materials.
- **Serbia:** Obsolete web service COBISS/OPAC has been replaced by the new COBISS+. 19 new libraries were included. The project for implementation the cataloguing process with the authoritative control for personal names was concluded. Two course instructors acquired the licence for the *COBISS3/cataloguing – Basic* course and one for the *Use of inventory software* course. Eight special courses (26 instances) were carried out. 35 librarians were granted cataloguing permits for monographs and 92 for cataloguing other materials.

Albania is the only country within the COBISS.net family where, despite 32 libraries being included in the system, the national library still refuses all cooperation. Despite our many visits and intense correspondence there is no progress in sight. The issue is quite concerning as the national library is unwilling to cooperate due to emotional and unrealistic reasons. IZUM is still willing to actively help but it is obvious that more convincing and diplomatic efforts will be required.

The COBISS.net Council (composed of the directors of National Libraries, heads of the National COBISS Centres and representatives of institutions performing E-CRIS activities)

met in August 2019 in Athens (during the IFLA Conference) for the fourth time. The main topic was activity survey.

The midterm *UNESCO Action Plan 2020 – 2023* was prepared and is to be discussed in the next COBISS.net Council call.

II.4 Active event participation and organisation

IZUM hosted the Permanent UNIMARC Committee regular meeting in May. Our colleague Ms G. Mazić is still the elected chair of this important body. We had the opportunity of direct discussions with the individual performers of technical and developmental operations, in which we could explain to them our dilemmas, present our proposals and demonstrate our actual work.

We also participated at ALA and IFLA conferences and some other events, but we will not specify the details here as they are of no relevance for IZUM in the role of a UNESCO Centre.

Together with our Macedonian, Montenegrin and Serbian partners, we organised the COBISS Days or COBISS presentations in their respective countries. We were invited to present COBISS activities in two conferences in Croatia and Bulgaria.

Unfortunately, we were not invited to any UNESCO events related to Southeast Europe.

III. Statistics

The following section contains some statistics and graphs representing results and achievements of IZUM's work in the region in 2019 Slovenian libraries and their data are excluded (except in the bibliographic records cross-reference tables).

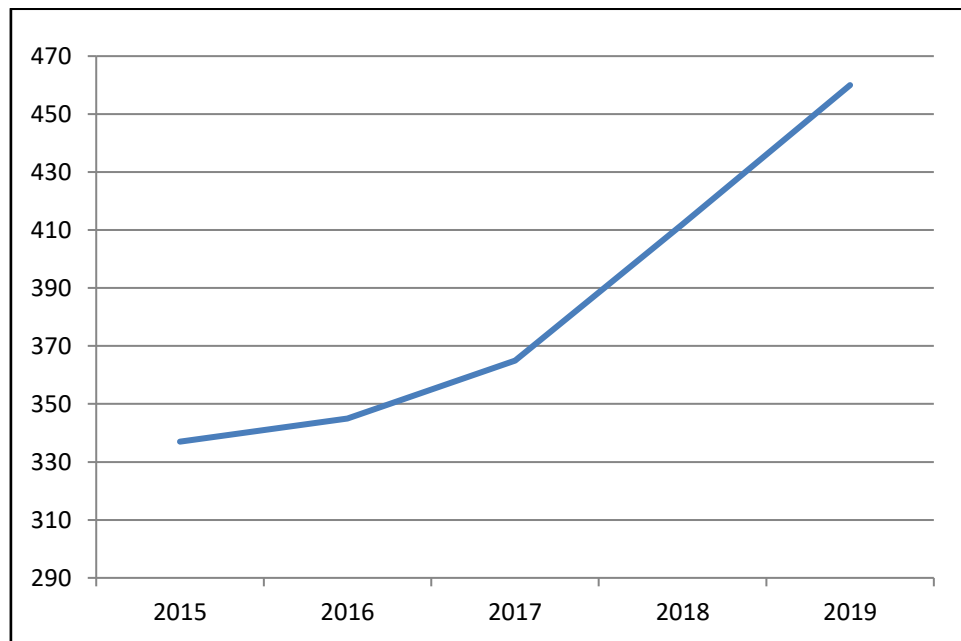


Fig. 1: COBISS.net Libraries Growth (total)

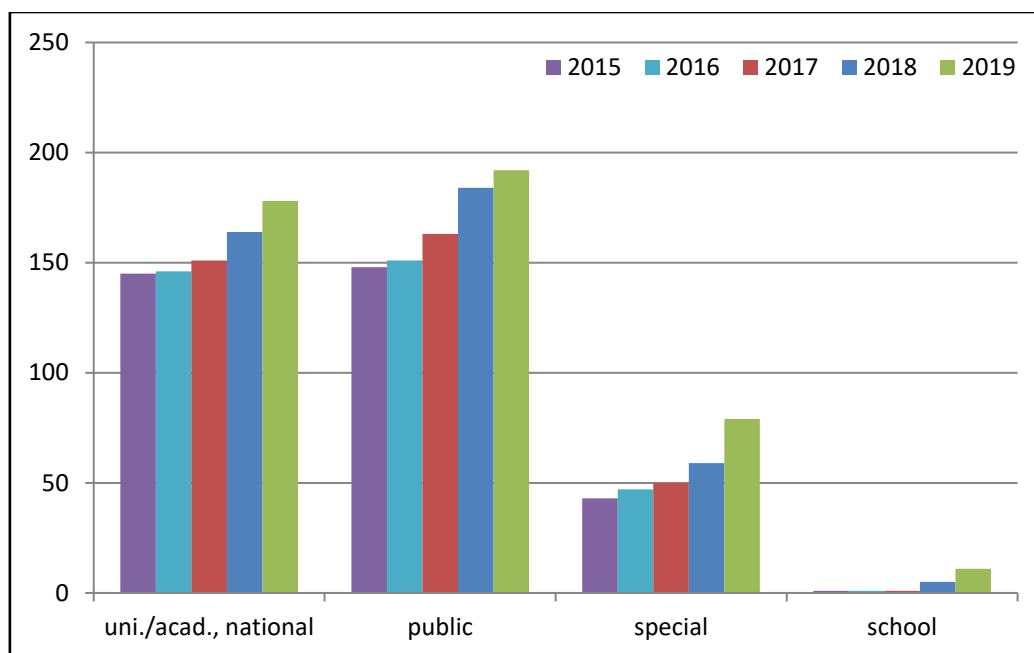


Fig. 2: COBISS.net Libraries (per library type)

Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records - 31 December 2019									
	COBIB.SI	COBIB.SR	COBIB.MK	COBIB.CG	COBIB.BH	COBIB.BG	COBIB.AL	COBIB.RS	Total
Monographs	3.115.132	2.313.213	458.100	390.226	478.955	553.589	106.923	222.323	7.638.461
Comp. parts	511.597	184.306	32.609	15.989	2.573	9.439	767	901	758.181
Serials	149.009	77.321	11.977	5.896	9.342	41.578	2.725	2.264	300.112
Articles	1.468.355	879.438	135.030	121.880	22.585	447.649	11.166	10.503	3.096.606
Perf. works	177.435	2.789	520	259	366	1	77	2	181.449
Other	9.836	5.279	218	39	519	3	36	21	15.951
Total	5.431.364	3.462.346	638.454	534.289	514.340	1.052.259	121.694	236.014	11.990.760
w/ RSR code	1.858.181	262.617	8.091	31.285	23.274	0	3.534	2.774	2.189.756

Fig. 3: COBIB union catalogues bibliographic records

Bibliographic records exchange from 1 January 2019 until 31 December 2019									
COBISS.Net	Prevzeto iz COBIB.SI	Prevzeto iz COBIB.SR	Prevzeto iz COBIB.MK	Prevzeto iz COBIB.CG	Prevzeto iz COBIB.BH	Prevzeto iz COBIB.BG	Prevzeto iz COBIB.AL	Prevzeto iz COBIB.RS	Skupaj
COBIB.SI	0	1.368	171	495	287	16	13	165	2.515
COBIB.SR	4.442	0	1.362	757	953	355	226	1.087	9.182
COBIB.MK	623	748	0	172	181	133	122	194	2.173
COBIB.CG	1.996	6.352	589	0	775	51	32	859	10.654
COBIB.BH	1.851	2.283	242	445	0	15	13	455	5.304
COBIB.BG	35	69	28	6	3	0	2	15	158
COBIB.AL	109	59	33	6	12	4	0	4	227
COBIB.RS	2.320	20.564	623	1.977	1.978	32	8	0	27.502
COBIB.KS	18	6	21	4	1	2	250	0	302
Skupaj	11.394	31.449	3.069	3.862	4.190	608	666	2.779	58.017

Fig. 4: Bibliographic records exchange

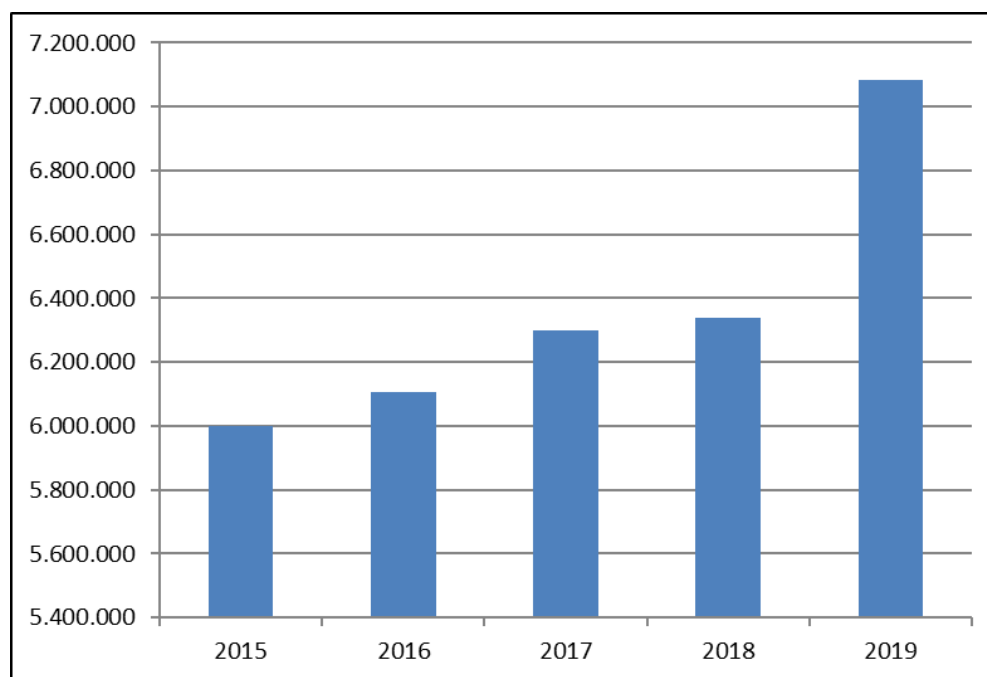


Fig. 5: Searching in union and local catalogues

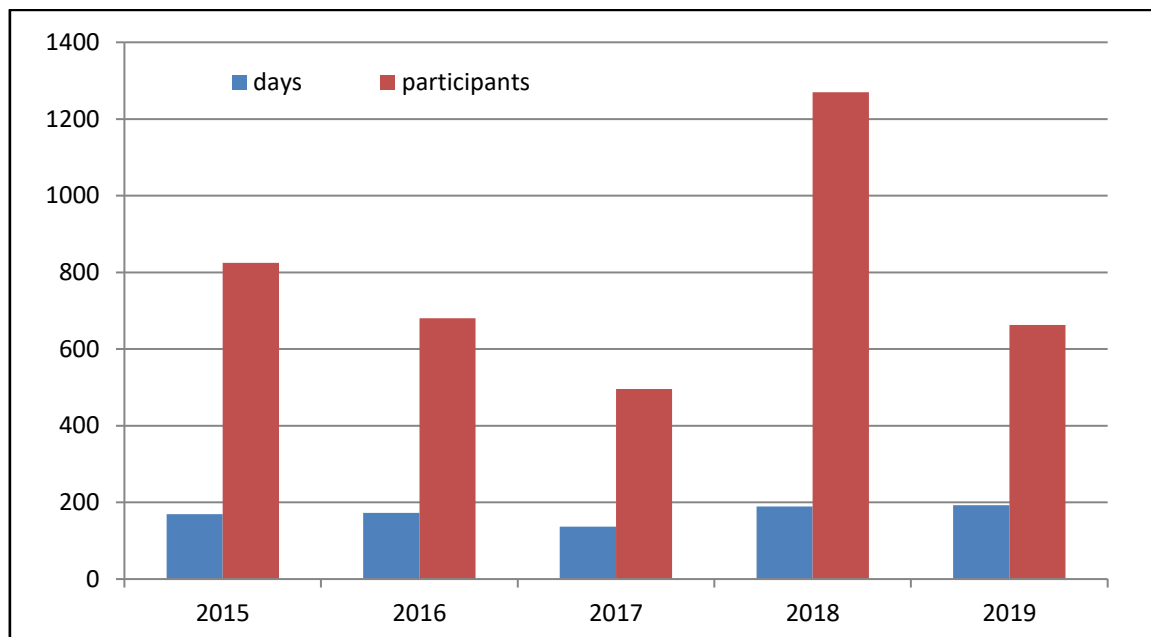


Fig. 6: Training and seminars

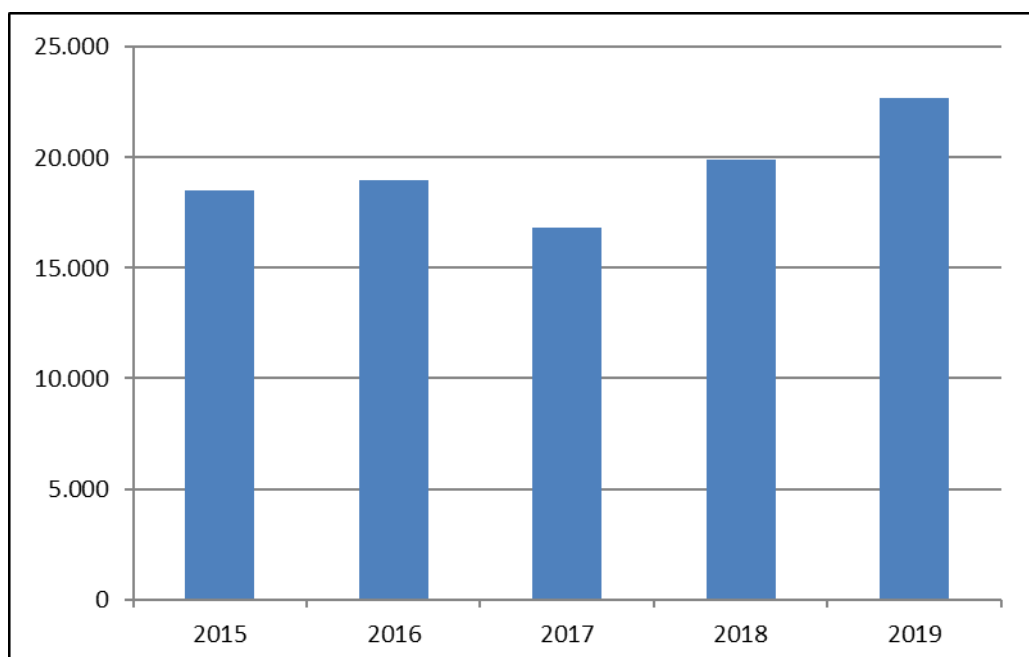


Fig. 7: Web bibliographies' printing

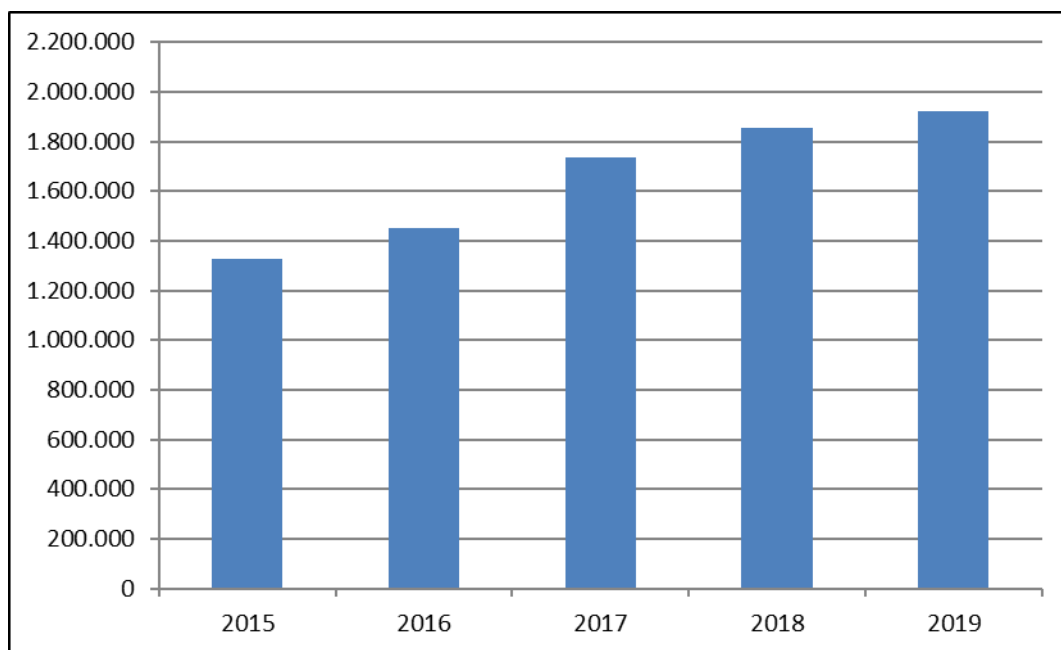


Fig. 8: Loan/Circulation (total)

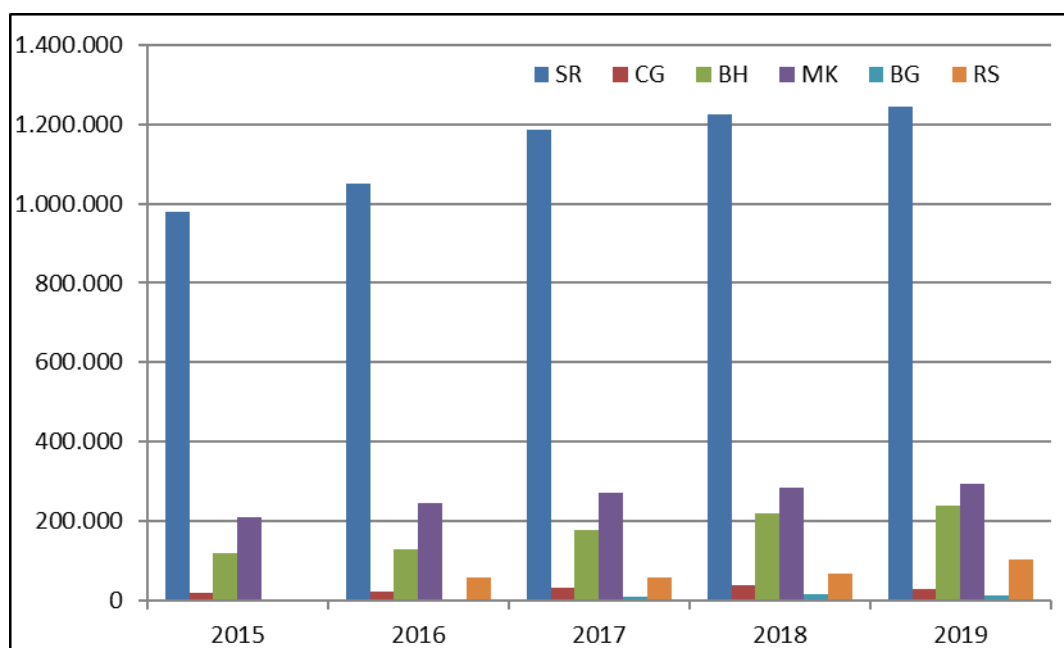


Fig. 9: Loan/Circulation (per country)

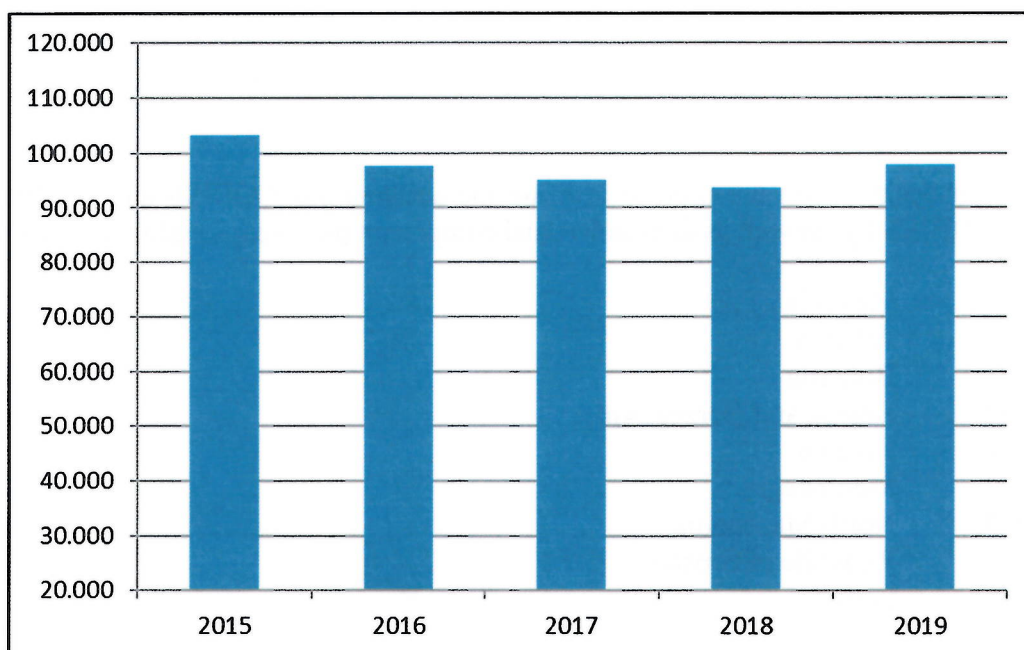


Fig. 10: Loan renewals and reservation – via COBISS+ (ex COBISS/OPAC)

IV. Conclusion

We are proud of our achievements; we started cooperating with UNESCO in 2011 with 254 libraries outside Slovenia. At the end of 2018, there were 412 libraries outside Slovenia in the system – that's an increase of over 60% (see Fig. 1). With relatively humble means we successfully strengthened the trust in Slovenian information technologies throughout the South-eastern European region. To this day, there was no additional financial support for this purpose and under such conditions it is difficult to compete on par with the efforts of the governments of other European countries, who, systematically via intergovernmental diplomacy and international agreements and various developmental aid programmes, strive to gain the trust and affection of the Western Balkan countries to use the technology they have to offer. Thus, we were forced to slow down several planned activities.

Maribor, 30 June 2020



Aleš Bošnjak, PhD

Appendix

Two-letter designations are used to indicate the autonomous COBISS and E-CRIS systems within COBISS.Net as well as their individual component parts (e.g. catalogues and databases):

.SI	Slovenia
.AL	Albania
.BG	Bulgaria
.BH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
.KS	Kosovo
.CG	Montenegro
.MK	North Macedonia
.RS	Republic of Srpska
.SR	Serbia