

## **ECONOMIC INSTITUTE LIBRARY AND CERGE LIBRARY, A MERGER AND MODERNIZATION OF TWO LIBRARIES IN PRAGUE\***

**By Stanley Kalkus**

When describing the merger and transformation of two distinct economic libraries established under different circumstances in different political setting we must take into consideration not only these facts but also the conditions of the society preceding this action and the state of public affairs at the time of the actual merger and transformation. It did not concern only moving of books and equipment, planing of space allocation, preparing budget, but also it included the most difficult task of dealing with personnel and educating them to accept the necessary changes. In that process it is necessary to learn to recognize outside factors influencing the decision making and the implementation of new and different organizational rules. There was no library with open stacks and with primary concept of service to all users in the Czech Republic at the time of the reorganization and merger.

But let us start with description of the institutions and their libraries prior to the merger. The Economic Institute = EI is being described as a new institution of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic established in 1992 in order to carry out high quality theoretical and empirical research. The Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic is the official successor of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and the EI is a successor, if not official, of the Institute of National Economy (Narodohospodarsky Ustav), of the Prognostic Institute (Prognosticky Ustav) an institution working directly for the government, and of a special information center. The library collection is usually given as consisting of 200.000 volumes transferred from the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of National Economy, and and of about 10.000 volumes transferred from the Prognostic Institute. The special information center and its research and analytical studies section was part of the Academy library. There were thirty two employees working in these three units, half of them professional librarians and information workers. The new economic institute (EI) inherited the library and about 8 staff members.

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CERGE (The Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education) was established as a western type graduate school with a research center in March 1991, after some preparation period that begun in 1990 with the assistance of the Department of Economics at the University of Pittsburgh. It first shared spaces and facilities, especially the library, with the Central European University in Prague (Soros Foundation). The CERGE library holdings were completely integrated with the CEU library and that created some problems when the Library was separated from CEU library collections and transferred to the new quarters of CERGE/EI. Transferred were about 5,000 titles and a sizable periodical collection, and two library positions paid from CERGE funds. Some dispute accompanied the transfer of the library, particularly its cataloging data, but the actual physical separation of the collection was also a problem.

The initial result of the merger of the two libraries was sort of a chaos. Collections were held separately and located in about seven separate rooms. Most employees were paid by Academy of Sciences with bonuses provided from CERGE financial resources, the two CERGE librarians were paid from CERGE resources at somewhat higher rates.

Let us briefly examine the parent organizations and their structures. CERGE is a completely new organization established in 1991 as an independent unit of Charles University with technical and professional assistance of the Department of Economics at the University of Pittsburgh. Financial support is provided to CERGE by various foundations, corporations and government organizations as well as by the government of the Czech Republic through Charles University. The EI was established a year later in 1992 and since its inception working hand in hand with CERGE was financed by the Czech Academy of Sciences. The Academy of Sciences also provided a building to house the CERGE/EI and that was where the CERGE library was moved to be integrated with the library that belonged to the former National Economy Institute of the Academy of Sciences and the with the collection of the former Prognostic Institute. Things have changed considerably since 1992 when the two organizations were created and merged at the top level.

The merger at lower levels, but especially at the library level were a bit more complicated. Practically all EI support and administrative personnel were employees of the former three institutions of the Academy. CERGE employees were all new and from the beginning paid at higher levels than EI employees. Most outside funding was coming from sources such as the United States Agency for International Development (AID), Austrian Government, Westinghouse Corporation, Mellon Foundation, The Soros Foundation and some other sources. In the beginning funds were channeled almost exclusively through CERGE. From

the library point of view the wide variety of financial sources was a nightmare, accounts were kept separately for all the sources moneys were received from. There really was no such thing as an annual budget. First two years the Austrian support was so generous that there were more than sufficient funds for purchase of new books and for periodical subscriptions. Even funds for salaries were sufficient and it was possible to provide bonuses to Academy employees in order to equalize their pay with that of CERGE employees and to hire some student help. But there still was this unhealthy atmosphere, the division of staff, who works for whom, in spite of the fact that the top management wanted one organization and one library. The problem was that even the top management did not always know where the next grant is coming from. Requests for equipment (furniture, computer hardware and software) were prepared without a definite assurance that there will be funds to procure them. Although there was no budget as such for purchases, salaries were an exception so one could expect little or no problems with employees. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Institute's leadership for example wanted a US style open stacks library with extended and weekend hours of operation. The open stacks were accepted but the library hours that was an utopia with the employees used to entirely different, or perhaps we might say indifferent situation. This was not unique to the CERGE/EI library but it could be said it was the standard situation in practically all of the libraries in the then Czechoslovak Republic. It was a slow educational process but the positive results are beginning to show now.

The first librarian hired to run the CERGE/EI library was an American, a capable young man who however did not speak one word of Czech and was to completely dependent on translations by his staff. The library staff at that time was not nearly as fluent in English as it is now after five years of free English language lectures and a lot of practice. The fact that the librarian was almost totally dependent on interpretations and also explanations of Czech labor laws and management customs placed him in a very disadvantaged position. Needless to say this librarian did not stay very long. During this difficult initial period of merger there was another monumental task given and that was to plan and execute moving the library to new quarters within the building. To move all the library materials to for that purpose renovated space in order to have the library on one floor, the main floor, with a possibility of expansion, meant to empty all kinds of small storage spaces, decide what goes where and also weed out the entire collection. Weeding the collection was in itself a sizable job successfully accomplished only with the help of the members of the faculty. First the CERGE collection of about 5,000 titles of all new mostly English language books on economics were moved onto the new shelves and then the weeding of the Academy collections was

started. The numbers will tell us to what it amounted to. The number of volumes given for the Academy and Prognostic Institute at the time of merger was 200.000 and 10.000 respectively. At last years count the library collection consisting of the CERGE collection and items integrated into the new library was given at 30,000 volumes. There are more titles to be added from the old collection, but at least half of the Academy collection was weeded out. Some works were not on subject of interest to the new collection being built. Many were duplicates of marx)leninist philosophy and party propaganda. Some of the weeded materials were offered to other libraries in Czech Republic, some were saved for possible exchange purposes, and most were simply disposed off.

The present day situation is more optimistic. There is a library budget, limited in scope and still not completely stable, but it does represent some sort of continuity. Acquisition of new books presents some problem, mainly the selection of new publications. Standard services offered by publishers and wholesalers in most western countries are beginning to be available for some Czech and some West European publications, but not for US publications and these comprise about 70% of all new acquisitions in economics and reference works. The library staff today is almost completely new consisting of seven professionals, one clerk and seven student aids. The library director was hired in 1994 and was able to introduce most of the planned changes, such as extended weekday hours and weekend hours for the benefit of students and the faculty. Library is open to public during regular hours and the result is manifold increase of number of users. All library staff members must be able to communicate in Czech and English since the teaching language is English. Students at CERGE come from almost all Central and East European countries, and the teaching faculty at CERGE and researchers at EI are about equal divided between the Czech and Western professionals and experts. Many more financial sources were added to those that made the creation of this institution possible. Other new improvements include the selection of ILS ORACLE and it is presently being installed. The selection process was lengthy and difficult because of language requirements, availability of service and cost of purchasing and servicing of the system. Servicing was a problem and so was the language capability. Although ORACLE does not solve all these problems as yet, when all the parameters were taken into consideration it seemed to be the best choice for CERGE/EI needs. Also and that is of outmost importance, the staff seems to be comfortable with the system. New PCs were installed and CD)ROMs in the fields of economics and finances are subscribed to. In 1994 the library became a depository library for the World Bank. The special feature of the library collection is a unique section on the economic transformation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Some basic data on the Library:

Total area of the library: over 500 sq meters (increase of 85 sq meters during 1966)

Seating capacity: Reading room over 40, other 10

Total number of volumes: over 40.000

Periodical subscriptions: 350

Equipment: 8 PCs, 1 CD)ROM player, 2 photocopiers, 1 microfiche reader

About 5000 records in ISIS system are now transferred into ORACLE system

Library is used daily by over 70 users, more during school year, less during Summer months

Library has Internet address and www homepage

The proposed plans for the library call for about doubling the library space, increasing CD)ROM and on)line access to data bases, and also increasing interlibrary loan services.

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