



Report on activities in 2017 within the framework of UNESCO category II centre operation

I. Introduction

Based on the reputation it has gained in a prolonged period of time 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, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Albania, and also in preparation in Kosovo. 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).

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 2017, 21 new libraries outside Slovenia (ten more than last year!) joined COBISS.Net in total, 13 in Serbia, three in Montenegro, one in Macedonia and four in Republic of Srpska. One library in Serbia left. The total number of libraries outside Slovenia included in the COBISS.Net network was 365 on the last day of the previous year (1095 together with Slovenian libraries!).

Some important milestones within the COBISS.Net network in 2017 were also:

- Macedonia: All libraries in Montenegro now work with the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module and the COBISS3/Loan software module.
- Bulgaria: The National Library started to use online services for renewals and reservations, the project for implementing bibliographies is completed, the training of a lecturer for performing three courses has started, they also started to use the advanced SOLR search platform.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: All included libraries have transferred to COBISS3/Loan, one lecturer acquired the licence for performing the COBISS3/Loan training course, an intensive promotion for the use of services via COBISS/OPAC has started.
- Republika Srpska: The first inventory took place, they started to use the advanced SOLR search platform.
- Serbia: The additional training courses connected to the transfer of libraries from COBISS2/Loan to COBISS3/Loan were completed, an additional lecturer acquired the licence for performing COBISS3/Loan training courses, we witnessed a very successful accelerated transfer of libraries from the COBISS2/Loan to the COBISS3/Loan software module (only eight libraries remaining!).

In 2017, the agreement on the implementation of the COBISS system in Serbia and Montenegro expired and the new agreements were signed.

The COBISS.AL, COBISS.BG, COBISS.RS and COBISS.CG 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.

II.2 Development aid

In 2016, 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 ten different 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. Organising specialised information centres
10. Co-financing the access to selected international information resources
11. Co-financing the access to selected international e-resources
12. 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 (analysis and preparation in Serbia and Montenegro). 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 2017.

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 Albanian, Serbian and English 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 transparencies and all other documentation, required for conducting a

course (questionnaires, signatory lists, etc.). The entire text required for the mCOBISS application was translated into Serbian and Bosnian and partially also for COBISS+.

Training activities for librarians (item 6) were quite varied. The courses from the regular COBISS training programme were attended by 359 librarians in 37 repetitions and in the total length of 137 days. There were no regular trainings in Albania and Republic Srpska.

In all countries, the procedure for acquiring cataloguing permits (*licences*) was successfully completed in 2017.

Summary of trainings results:

	Courses	Days	Participants	New CAT licences
Albania				4
B & H	5	19	38	52
Bulgaria	2	8	22	4
Montenegro	4	14	42	25
Macedonia	3	9	35	152
Rep. Srpska				14
Serbia	23	87	359	289

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 and Kosovo:** In 2017, an online bibliography of one of the most important scientists in the Academy of Sciences of Albania was presented at a conference in Tirana. Based on this presentation, the director of the Albanian Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation sent a request to the Albanian minister to establish an inter-ministerial group to support online bibliographies of researchers in the same manner as the bibliographies in the COBISS.AL system. Apart from that, 4 librarians acquired the licence for shared cataloguing. The Protocol for the cooperation between Albanian and Kosovan Academy of Sciences and Arts was signed. According to this Protocol, the Kosovan Academy is obliged to use the same standards for creating online bibliographies as Albania.
- **Bulgaria:** In COBISS.BG, the project for implementing bibliographies is completed. In 2016, talks were started with the aim to include the COBISS3/Loan software module in the National Library "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodij" and in 2017 the national

library started to use the COBISS3/Loan software module as well as the online services for renewals and reservations. In 2017, the training of a lecturer for the courses COBISS3/Cataloguing – Beginners' Course, COBISS3/Cataloguing – Advanced Course and COBISS3/Cataloguing – Updating CONOR. They have also started to use the advanced LUCENE/SOLR search platform for searching the local database.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In the COBISS.BH system, the transfer to COBISS3/Loan was completed in 2017, while 9 libraries started to use the COBISS3/Loan software module. Additionally, one lecturer acquired the licence to perform the COBISS3/Loan training course. In the NCC, a great emphasis was given to the promotion of the use of services via COBISS/OPAC.
- **Montenegro:** There were no special activities in the COBISS.CG system in 2017 besides the fact that 3 new libraries were included.
- **Macedonia:** In 2017, 1 library was included in the COBISS.MK system. All 15 libraries in the systems have transferred to the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module and all libraries use the COBISS3/Loan software module.
- **Republika Srpska:** In 2017, 4 new libraries were included in the COBISS.RS system, which means that 19 libraries in total were included in the COBISS.RS system by the end of 2017. All libraries use the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module. The COBISS3/Loan software module was included in 2 libraries. National and University Library of the Republika Srpska was the first library in the COBISS.RS system to perform an inventory. They also started to use the advanced LUCENE/SOLR search platform for searching the local database.
- **Serbia:** In 2017, 13 new libraries were included in the COBISS.SR system, which started to use the COBISS3 software after the inclusion. 2017 also witnessed active work regarding the direct inclusion of the COBISS3/Loan software module in the COBISS.SR system and the transfer from COBISS2 to COBISS3. This resulted in 33 installations of the COBISS3/Loan software module, 17 of which were transfers from COBISS2/Loan to COBISS3/Loan. In 2018, 8 more transfers to COBISS3/Loan still need to be performed. An additional lecturer acquired the licence for performing COBISS3/Loan training courses.

Albania is the only country within the COBISS.Net family where, despite almost 30 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.

Kosovo is also one of our desired target countries. We had promising contacts with Academia for Sciences and University, both in Prishtina. We have been hosting a librarian from Kosovo for four years now. She was employed with the intention to acquire the required education in Slovenia (second cycle Bologna Master's degree in librarianship), take all the courses from the COBISS training programme and pass the national professional librarianship exam.

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 November 2017. The main topic was international development assistance for financing the COBISS.Net project presented together by IZUM and UNESCO a year before. Among other things the initiative for organizing a meeting at a higher level (ministers and UNESCO's high officials) was adopted.

II.4 Active event participation

We were invited by the Permanent UNIMARC Committee to their regular meeting in Lisbon. Our colleague Ms G. Mazić is 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 do not specify details as they are of not particular relevance for IZUM as UNESCO Center.

Unfortunately, we were not invited to any UNESCO events that relate to Southeast Europe (with the exception of the Congress World Open Educational Resources in Ljubljana).

III. Development (sub)projects

In the scope of development (sub)projects, IZUM additionally performed three development tasks in accordance with its approved Annual Work Programme. These three tasks were aimed at the area covered by IZUM as the category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

R29 – Implementing the COBISS3/Loan software module in COBISS.Net

In 2017, we continued to implement the module and organise the migration to the *COBISS3/Loan* software module within COBISS.Net. Again, 21 migrations from the *COBISS2/Loan* software module to the *COBISS3/Loan* software module were performed (three in COBISS.BH, one in COBISS.MK and 17 in COBISS.SR) as well as 32 direct installations of the *COBISS3/Loan* software module.

The implementation of this software module is finished in all COBISS.Net systems except in Serbia; there are still eight libraries waiting for it (delayed due to lack of resources at the Serbian National Library).

R30 – Implementing the Authority Control in COBISS.SR

In 2017, the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module has been upgraded for authority control issues for Serbian environment. The National Library in Serbia accepted the implementation

plan. There was a presentation for participant of leading libraries in the country, new training materials od authority control were prepared and the plan for training for new instructors has been set up.

R31 – Including the CONOR.BG into the Bulgarian COBISS/OPAC

In 2017, the CONOR.BG (Authority database) was added to the COBISS/OPAC web portal (under the tab “Other databases”). The Slovenian solution was complemented by searching and displaying possibilities in other scripts.

IV. Statistics

The following section contains some statistics and graphs representing results and achievements of IZUM’s work in the region in 2017. Slovenian libraries and their data are excluded (except in the bibliographic records cross-reference tables).

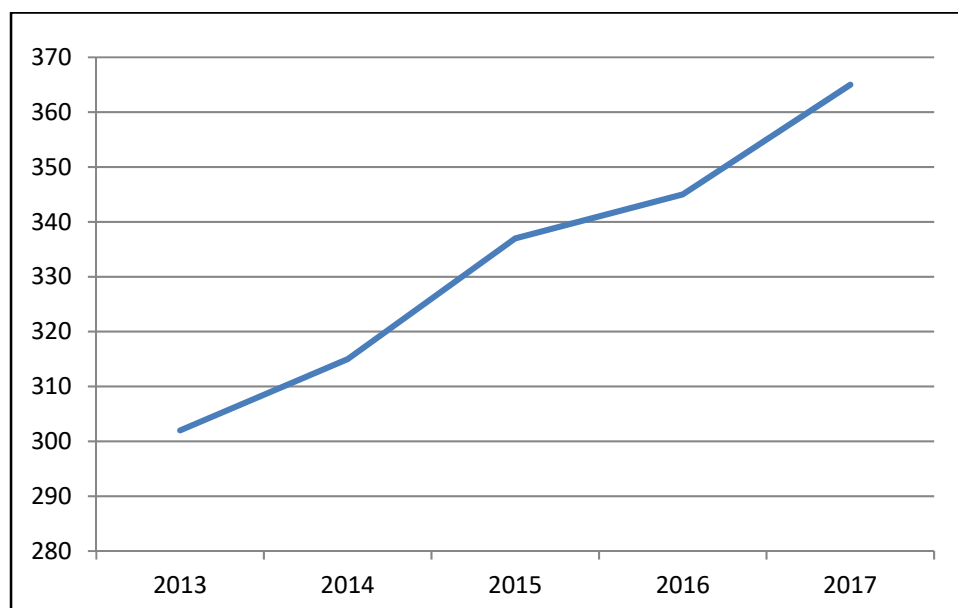


Fig. 1: COBISS.Net Libraries Growth (total)

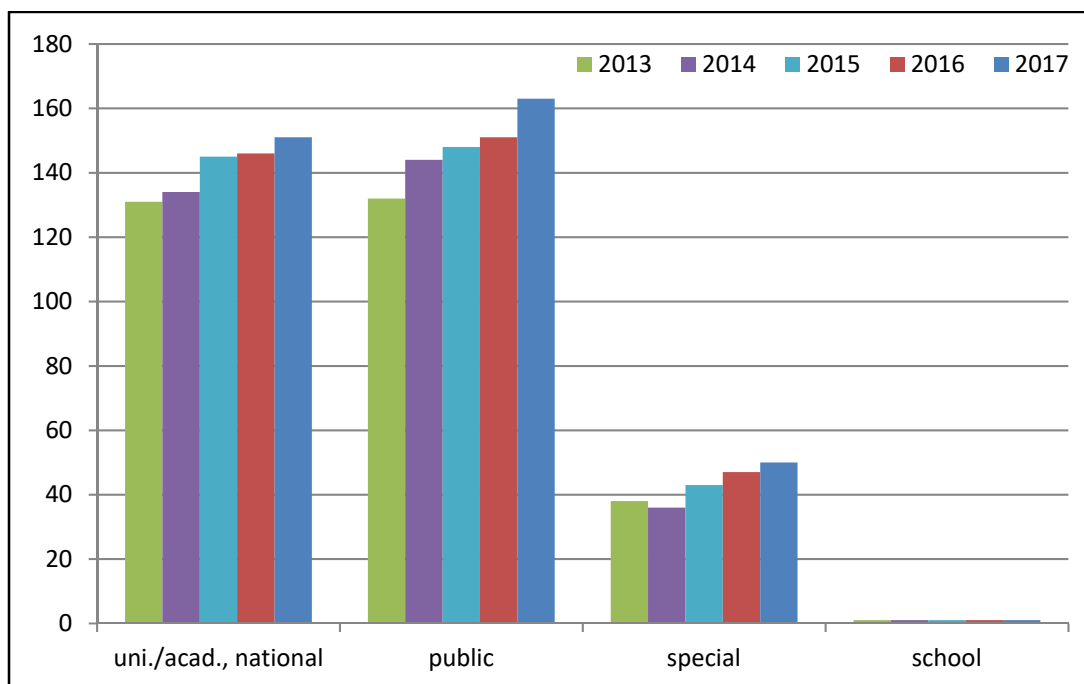


Fig. 2: COBISS.Net Libraries (per library type)

Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records – 31. 12. 2017									
	.SI	.SR	.MK	.CG	.BH	.BG	.AL	.RS	Skupaj
Monographs	2.938.574	2.120.960	432.114	342.776	432.666	525.638	93.484	160.817	7.047.029
Comp. parts	470.061	157.959	29.766	12.939	1.650	3.848	501	565	677.289
Serials	140.187	74.900	11.810	4.830	8.621	40.807	2.569	403	284.127
Articles	1.374.851	835.216	126.493	102.385	18.558	439.204	9.016	8.949	2.914.672
Perf. works	149.710	2.610	459	249	337	1	76	2	153.444
Other	8.708	4.406	217	9	495	2	36	6	13.879
Total	5.082.091	3.196.051	600.859	463.188	462.327	1.009.500	105.682	170.742	11.090.440
w/ RSR code	1.695.083	217.261	5.629	25.162	17.502	0	1.932	1.259	1.963.828

Fig. 3: Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records

Bibliographic records exchange from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2017									
COBISS.Net	From COBIB.SI	From COBIB.SR	From COBIB.MK	From COBIB.CG	From COBIB.BH	From COBIB.BG	From COBIB.AL	From COBIB.RS	Total
COBISS.MK	670	1.280	0	328	227	74	58	220	2.857
COBISS.CG	1.620	7.740	813	0	1.312	22	24	1.288	12.819
COBISS.BH	1.675	1.994	227	494	0	14	10	349	4.763
COBISS.BG	38	42	22	6	1	0	0	3	112
COBISS.AL	167	134	19	13	21	17	0	20	391
COBISS.RS	1.575	27.157	1.126	4.156	2.120	35	9	0	36.178
Total	16.785	39.585	5.243	6.684	5.799	420	138	2.893	77.547

Fig. 4: Bibliographic records exchange

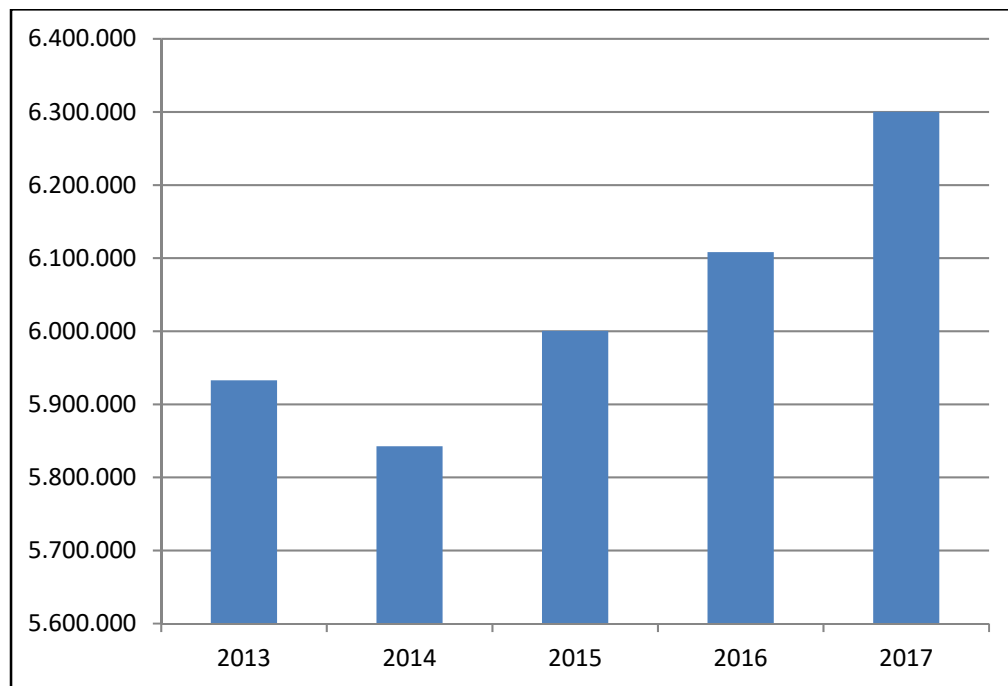


Fig. 5: Searching in union and local catalogues

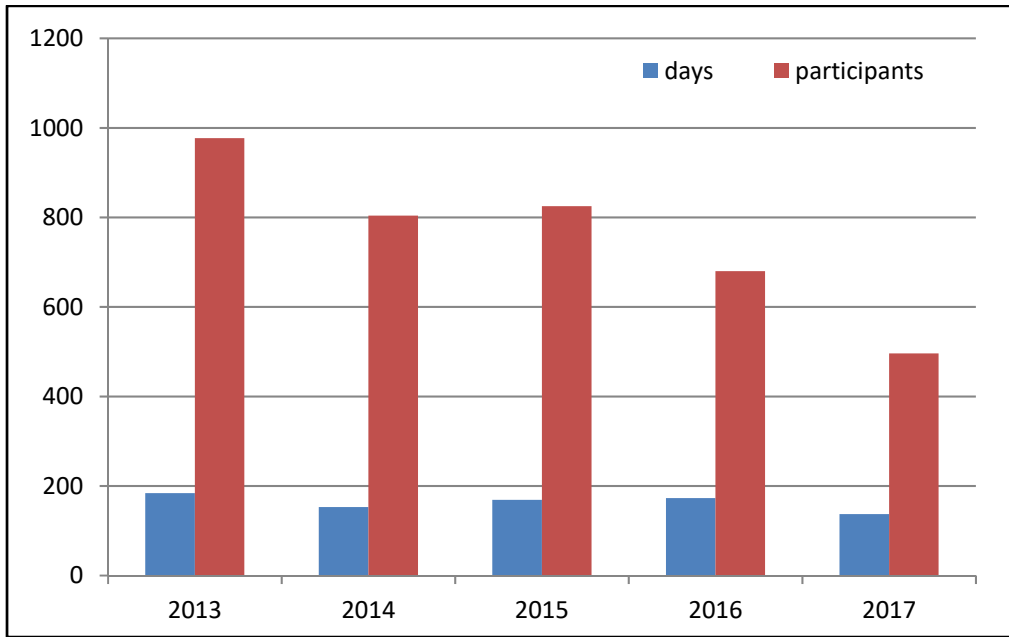


Fig. 6: Training and seminars

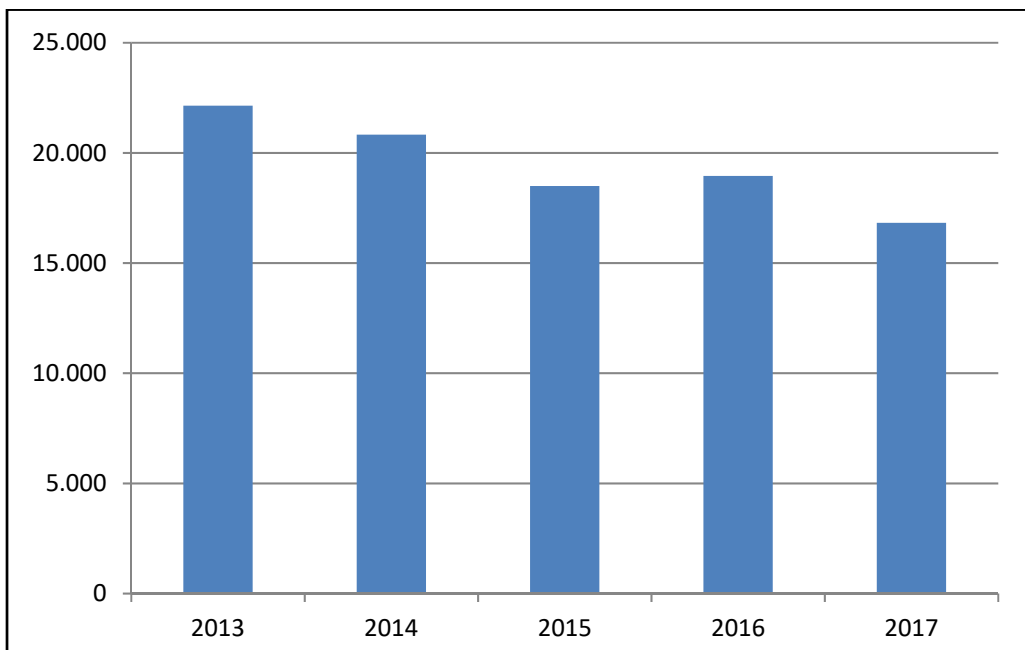


Fig. 7: Web bibliographies' printing

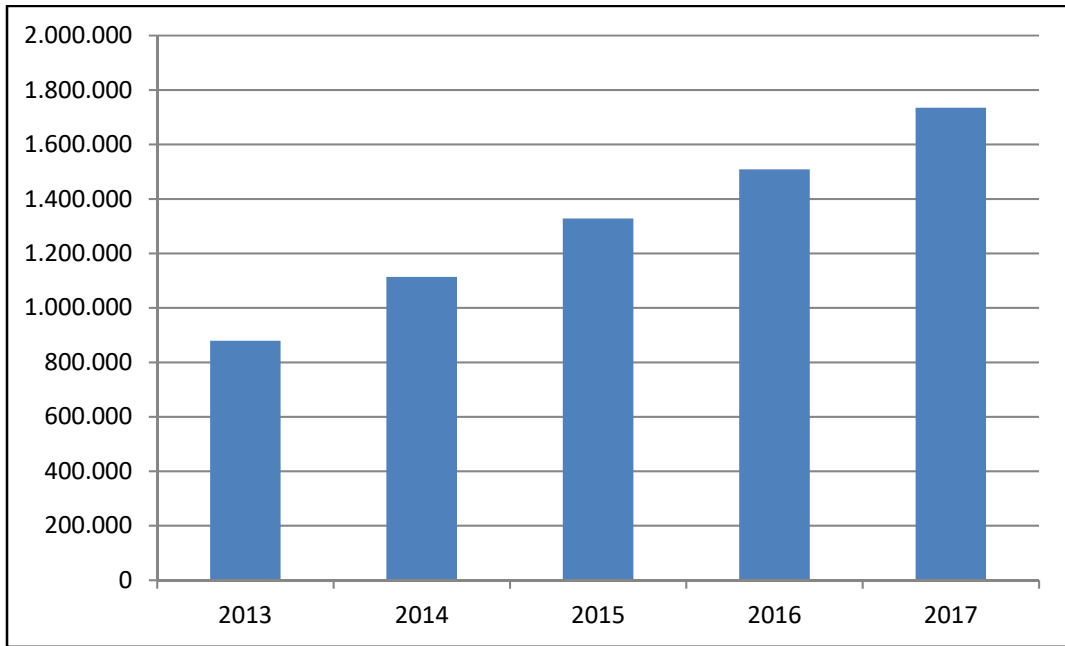


Fig. 8: Loan/Circulation (total)

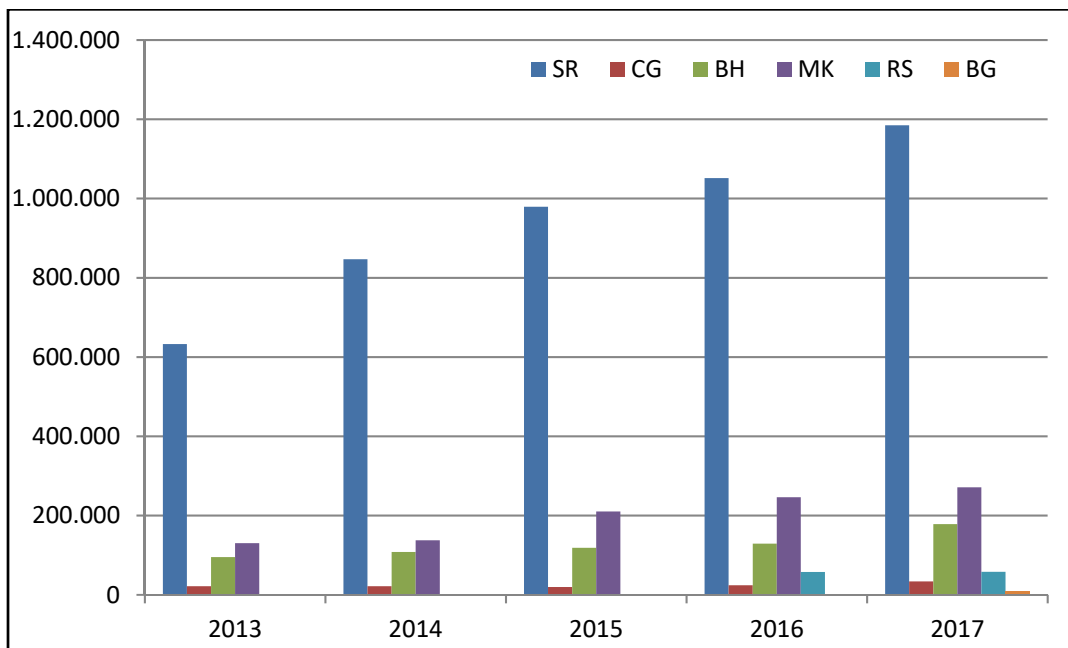


Fig. 9: Loan/Circulation (per country)

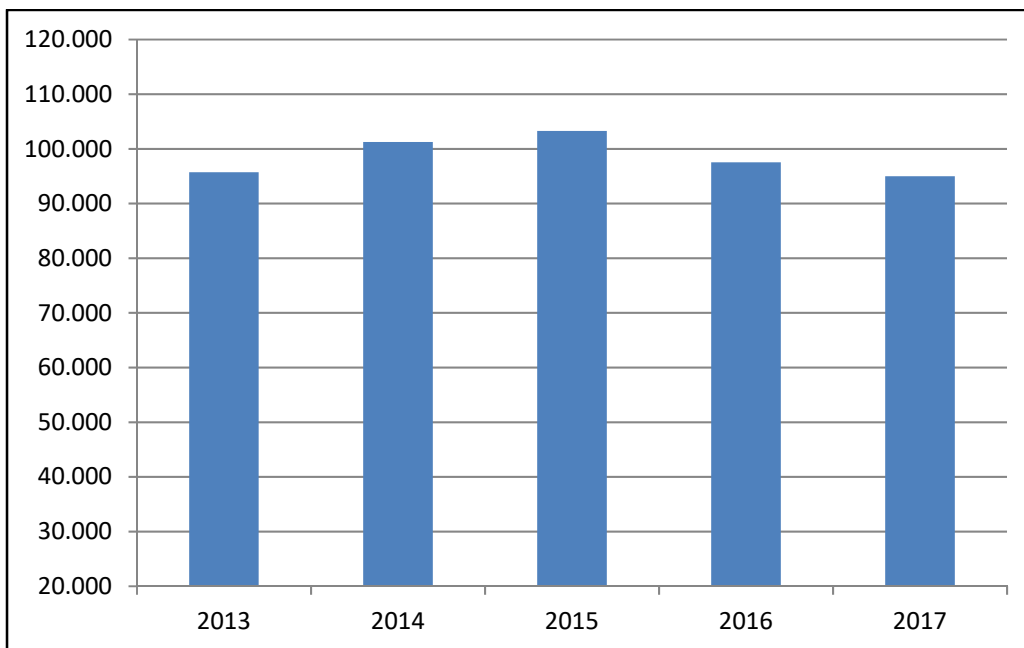


Fig. 10: Loan renewals and reservation – via COBISS/OPAC

V. Conclusion

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.

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
.CG	Montenegro
.MK	Macedonia
.RS	Republic of Srpska
.SR	Serbia