



Report on the activities in 2013 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 Southeastern 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 link 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 within 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 international COBISS conference.
- Server capacities for the COBISS as well as SICRIS and E-CRIS applications and services.
- Support in acquiring financial resources for development activities (international development cooperation).

II. Activities and tasks within the COBISS.Net project

In our role as a UNESCO regional centre, we divided all of IZUM's activities in 2013 into 11 topics:

1. Cooperation in the ERA 2013 project
2. Carrying out a postgraduate part-time study of librarianship (second Bologna cycle)
3. Purchase of computer equipment and provision of installations in libraries
4. Access to foreign e-resources and related adequate technical aid and user training
5. Purchase of equipment and provision of installations in national COBISS centres along with staff training
6. Translation of COBISS and E-CRIS user interfaces and manuals
7. Operation of national COBISS centres and/or national library associations
8. COBISS and E-CRIS user training
9. Organising and gathering data within the national E-CRIS systems
10. Creating bibliographic records for researchers' bibliographies in the national COBISS library systems
11. Other – planning, coordinating, advising, etc.

In line with the financial capacities and absorption abilities some of these topics were more prominent, some less, and some not at all. At the start of the year, the focus was on point 1 (Cooperation in the ERA 2013 project) and 5 (Purchase of equipment and provision of installations in National COBISS Centres along with staff training). Later on, the focus shifted to points 5 (Purchase of equipment and provision of installations in National COBISS Centres along with staff training), 6 (Translation of COBISS and E-CRIS user interfaces and manuals), 7 (Operation of national COBISS centres) and partly 8 (COBISS and E-CRIS user training), while practically no activities were carried out in relation to points 3, 9 and 10. Point 2 (Carrying out a postgraduate part-time study of librarianship (second Bologna cycle)) received special attention in the period between May and November and a vast amount of effort was put into it during that time.

Most of the work was directed towards Albania, where after last year's successful breakthrough when Albania actively became the 8th country in the COBISS.Net family, we continued to put our efforts into training the first libraries and experts to use the COBISS applications and services. In Tirana, nine demanding courses from the regular training programme were conducted which in total amounted to 35 days. The courses *Cataloguing library material*, *Use of COBISS3/Cataloguing software – Beginner's* and *Cataloguing monographs* were conducted twice each, and the course *Use of COBISS3/Holdings software – monographs and serials* was conducted three times. In order to successfully conduct these highly demanding courses, it was necessary to purchase (as part of point 5) some crucial computer equipment. The courses were attended by 27 participants from 18 institutions¹.

In addition to conducting the abovementioned regular courses, as part of the training of future cataloguers in Albania, the process of training for the acquisition of adequate permits (*licences*) for working in the COBISS system (creating and verifying test records, exams) was carried out. At the same time, additional training was taking place for local instructors for another three courses (*Use of COBISS3/Cataloguing software – updating CONOR*,

¹ The list of institutions and course participants is available as part of the project documentation.

Cataloguing continuing resources, component parts (articles) and non-book material, Use of COBISS3/Cataloguing software – Advanced) along with the preparations for these courses to be conducted in 2014 (depending on the number of course attendants who have the necessary knowledge that is the precondition for attending the courses). The participants of courses related to cataloguing continued the training process after completing the courses by creating their own records in test environments, which were then verified. Checking test records for monographs is a very demanding task and from May onwards, there was increased activity so that future Albanian cataloguers could get ready for their first exam as soon as possible. In the summer, four cataloguers successfully passed their exams, followed by eight successful candidates (along with two unsuccessful ones) in autumn and another six in December, which means that, along with the previously qualified instructor, there are now 19 cataloguers who were granted the necessary permits for creating new records.

In addition to training, other activities for the active participation of Albanian libraries in the COBISS system were also carried out continuously. Before the actual inclusion, a stock-taking procedure must be carried out. After the holdings minutes are signed, the library firstly joins COLIB (shared portal with data on libraries) and prepares a training programme. In the beginning of 2013, only one Albanian library was included in the system, this number increased to 11 by May and at the end of the year there were 18 libraries in total. New libraries were also included in Macedonia (3) and Serbia (11). The total number of libraries outside Slovenia that participate in the COBISS.Net network is now 301, with new special activities for the inclusion of school libraries underway.

Within point 6 (Translation of COBISS and E-CRIS user interfaces and manuals), translations were prepared into Albanian of the updates of all current user manuals and translated materials for the existing courses were verified. Work was also underway on the translation of materials for new courses (*CONOR, Cataloguing articles and serials, Cataloguing – Advanced*), which, in addition to the presentations, also includes all accompanying materials required for conducting courses (questionnaires, attendance lists, etc.) All the work done as a part of this point was focused on Albania, but also concerns the Republic of Kosovo as these countries share a common language.

With the signing of a separate Agreement for the entity of the Republic of Srpska, a new COBISS centre was founded in Banja Luka and as of 31 December 2013, a new central shared catalogue has been established.

Despite increased activity with regards to point 2 (Carrying out a postgraduate part-time study of librarianship (second Bologna cycle)), the project of organising a post-graduate study following the curriculum of the University of Ljubljana has not come to life yet at the University of Shkoder. A call for applications was published for 30 scholarships (with a side note that the study would be organised if enough candidates applied and if additional financial means would be secured), and 20 candidates applied (13 from Albania and 7 from Kosovo). In the beginning of August we had to inform the candidates that due to the lack of response and insufficient financing we had to abort all activities with regards to the abovementioned study, but that we would reassess the possibilities of organising the study at the end of the year, provided that we could secure the required financial means. In relation to this, several talks took place at our Ministries and other potential partners.

In Albania, changes were made to the political administration and we are successfully making connections with new people. Direct talks have proven most successful and we expect that some changes will take place in Albania shortly that will have a positive impact on the further development of COBISS.Net in this country. In Kosovo we also made contacts with some people from their state administration, but the situation there is much less transparent. With regards to expanding the concept of COBISS.Net to Albania and Kosovo, we have also strengthened diplomatic activities with the help of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ambassadors of the Republic of Slovenia in Albania and in Kosovo.

In Bulgaria, we are about to finish the data analysis for conversion procedures. For the head of the acquisitions department we organised a special training session for course instructors (for the COBISS3/Acquisitions course) here at IZUM, and then checked if she was qualified to carry out the course in their environment independently in Sofia.

In Istanbul we attended the two-day regional forum of UNESCO chairs and UNITWIN university networks that was co-organised by the UNESCO Venice Regional Office for Science and Culture and the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO. The forum was dedicated to the linking of academic environments, civil societies, local communities, research and also political subjects. Due to the proven socio-economic consequences of brain drain from South-eastern Europe, such meetings are also a good opportunity to promote regional pillars of excellence and competitiveness and to exchange best practice results. IZUM was invited as a significant factor in this geographic region, and we also presented our activities and our mission at the forum.

III. Development (sub)projects

P2 – Establishing authority control for personal names within the COBISS.BG system

The model of authority records with access points in two scripts, Latin and Cyrillic, required adaptations of the entire COBISS software. In the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module, the entry of fields with authority control had to be updated, along with synchronising bibliographic data with authority data, changing and updating some software controls and parts of the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module. In COBISS/OPAC and in the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module, most displays of bibliographic and authority records were updated and changed, enabling the simultaneous display of personal names in both scripts. Major changes were also made in the bibliography display module. In 2013, there were two iterations of in-house software testing.

Parallel to the work on the COBISS software, the updating and translating of the documents for the *COBISS3/Cataloguing – Beginner's* course was taking place. This course is also the basis for the preparation to the *Transition to cataloguing with authority control* course.

After the establishment of the CONOR.BG production environment in 2012, the updating of the initial version of the CONOR.BG database is now taking place at the National Library. In 2013, 30,520 records were updated and 25,898 new records were created.

With regards to the activities for 2013, we completed the following phases: analysis, identifying demands, planning, implementation and in-house testing up to the partial preparation of user documentation. Not completed yet are the phases of the final in-house

verification of software solutions, user testing and validation and installation of software solutions and user training.

The third in-house testing of COBISS software modules showed an adequate adjustment of the modules COBISS3/Cataloguing, COBISS/OPAC and bibliographies to the new model of bibliographic and authority records.

At the end of 2013, the National Library of Bulgaria informed us that the main corpus of authority records is edited. In 2014, they will be editing authority records for persons with three authority access points.

The project will be continued in 2014.

R26 – Linking the COBISS and WoS systems within COBISS.Net

For records downloaded from the Web-of-Science (WoS) database instructions were prepared for editing them in the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module. The links to the records in WoS in bibliographies are implemented in the COBISS.AL system as part of the developmental task *Bibliographies – further development*. For all other systems the automatic linking will be enabled after the implementation of the service *Slovenes in WoS and Scopus*, V2, when the pairing of records in Cyrillic script will also be implemented.

R27 – Establishing a central register of users within COBISS.Net

The Central Register of Users (CRU) is fully established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Srpska and in Montenegro. In these countries, the login to COBISS applications is carried out via the CRU web service. In Macedonia, the local user data (name, surname, username and privileges) was copied to CRU_MK. The situation is similar in Bulgaria. Before CRU is fully established in Macedonia and Bulgaria, the problem of support for Cyrillic script must be solved.

R28 – Introducing the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module to COBISS.Net

In the second half of 2013, we started introducing the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module to other countries within COBISS.Net that are currently still using the COBISS2/Cataloguing software module.

The software, the COBISS3/Cataloguing user manual and the documentation for the *Transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing* course were translated to Serbian. In parallel with the translation process, the software was tested in Serbian and the requested changes and updates were defined. Part of the changes were already implemented in 2013, the rest will be included in the beginning of 2014.

With the aid of ARNES' (Academic and Research Network of Slovenia) web conference VOX, we held a presentation of the COBISS3/Cataloguing software, which was attended by 27 leading cataloguers from national libraries and COBISS centres.

After the presentation, the COBISS centres responded quickly and both the Serbian and the Macedonian COBISS centre immediately sent a request for training a course instructor for conducting the *Transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing* course. For the process of training future

course instructors, we prepared a mentoring programme for future course instructors here at IZUM, for which we use ARNES' VOX web conference. The course instructor from the Serbian COBISS centre acquired his permit in 2013, while the future course instructor from the Macedonian COBISS centre is still in the process of acquiring a permit.

In 2013, we prepared test environments for the national systems of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro for the purposes of user testing the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module. In COBISS.SR, we prepared a course environment and the first course for the work group for testing the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module took place in it in December.

We will continue with this task in 2014.

R29 – Creating an authority records database for subject headings in the COBISS.BG system

Before the establishment of the shared cataloguing system in Bulgaria, a test conversion of the authority database for subject headings to the COMARC/A format was performed. As it was established that there are about 25% of records where the authority and variant access point are the same, these records had to be corrected before the database could be used. The records were edited at the Bulgarian National Library.

In 2013, we tested the operation of the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module in a test database of records for subject headings and removed all the errors when checking and saving records. We also updated the files with the missing translations.

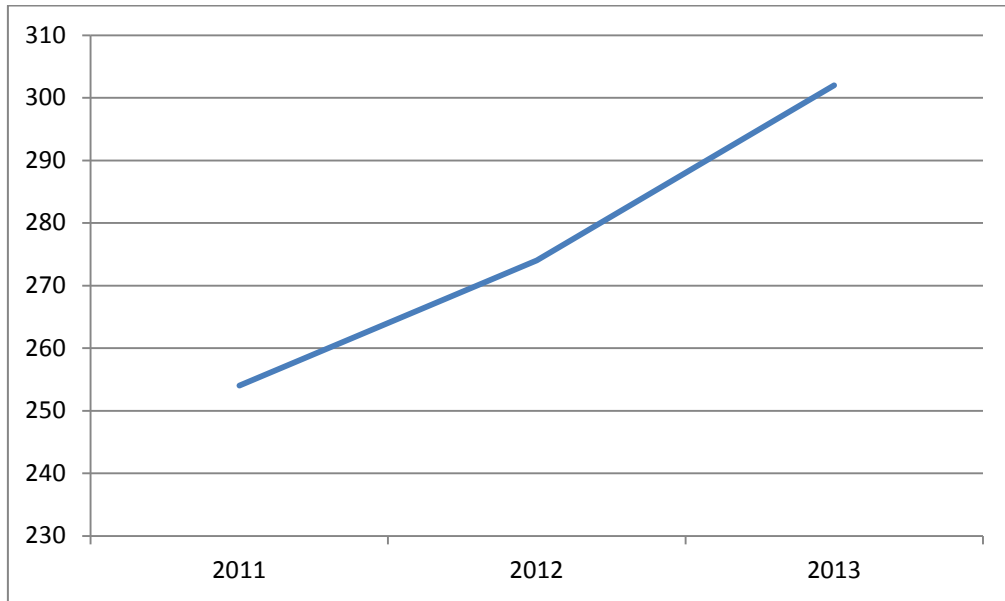
We will continue with this task in 2014.

R30 – Implementation of web bibliographies within the COBISS.AL and COBISS.KO systems

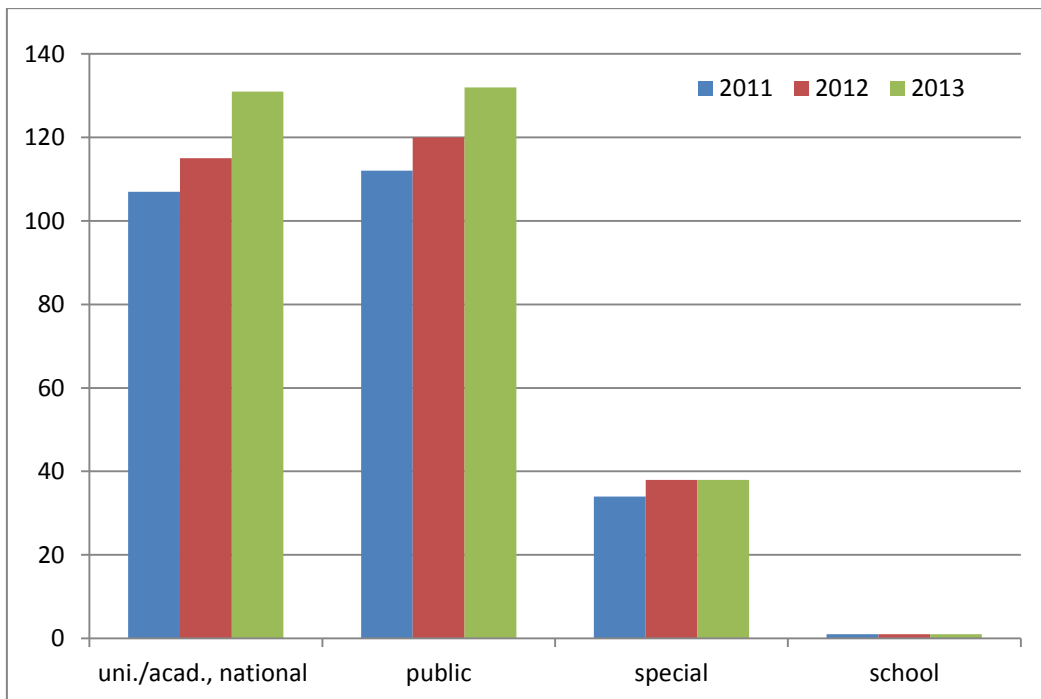
As part of the developmental task *Bibliographies – further development* the bibliographies were implemented for the COBISS.AL system in English, but we had not received all the translations by the end of the year, so these will be added to the application at a later time. The activities for COBISS.KO were not carried out due to the unresponsiveness of the participants from Kosovo.

IV. Statistics

The following section is bringing up some statistics and graphs representing results and achievements of IZUM's work in the region in 2013. Slovenian libraries and their data are excluded (except in the bibliographic records cross-reference tables).



Pic 1: COBISS.Net Libraries Growth (total)



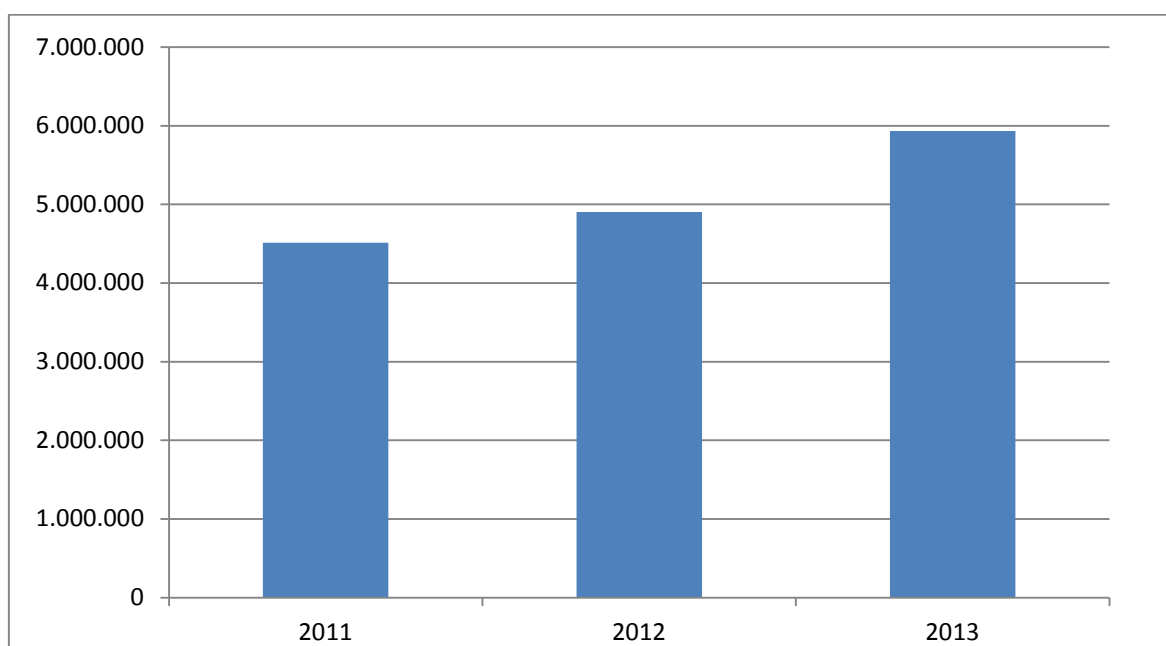
Pic 2: COBISS.Net Libraries (per library type)

Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records - 31. 12. 2013								
	COBIB.SI	COBIB.SR	COBIB.MK	COBIB.CG	COBIB.BH	COBIB.BG	COBIB.AL	Total
Monographs	2.559.856	1.744.173	388.467	260.003	368.509	450.460	59.590	5.831.058
Comp. parts	389.925	113.785	24.963	5.846	652	20	371	535.562
Serials	106.793	70.235	11.470	2.542	7.785	39.236	2.325	240.386
Articles	1.186.267	701.198	111.838	59.083	12.494	416.216	7.833	2.494.929
Perf. works	104.007	2.343	353	30	307	0	55	107.095
Other	7.039	3.471	255	0	488	1	35	11.289
Total	4.353.887	2.635.205	537.346	327.504	390.235	905.933	70.209	9.220.319
w/ RSR code	1.367.779	143.744	2.974	13.277	9.244	0	325	1.537.343

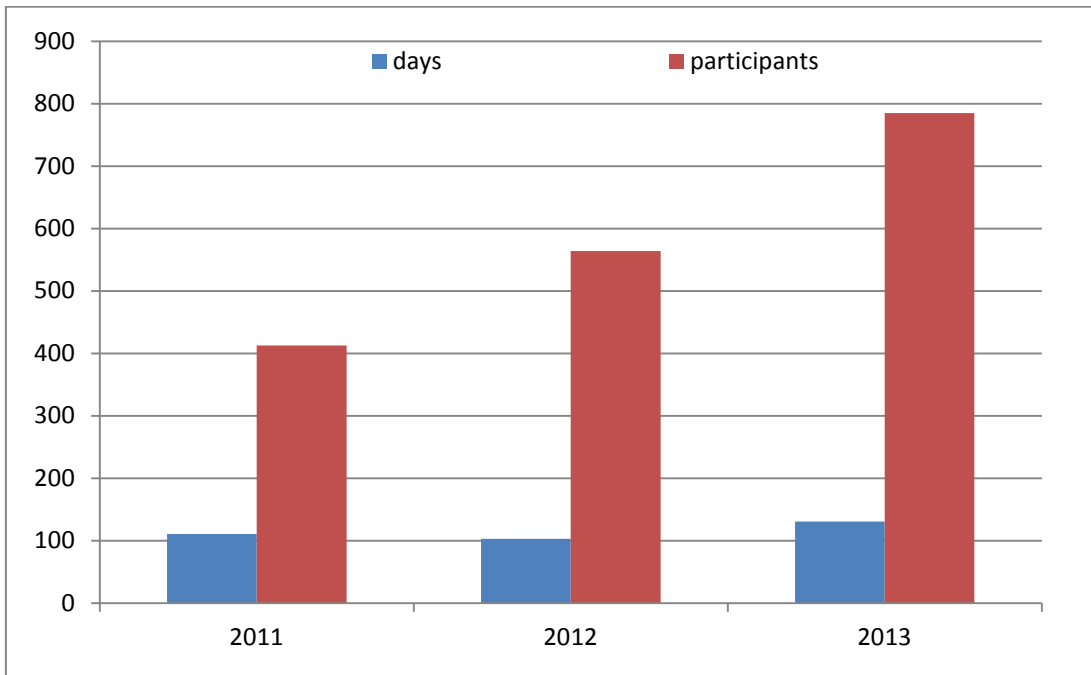
Pic 3: Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records

Bibliographic records exchange from 1. 1. 2013 until 31. 12. 2013								
COBISS.Net	from COBIB.SI	from COBIB.SR	from COBIB.MK	from COBIB.CG	from COBIB.BH	from COBIB.BG	from COBIB.AL	Total
COBISS.SI	0	1165	165	63	91	4	0	1.488
COBISS.SR	5189	0	552	879	2021	315	0	8.956
COBISS.MK	661	3727	0	36	57	88	0	4.569
COBISS.CG	892	19877	99	0	472	11	0	21.351
COBISS.BH	1405	8691	118	169	0	7	0	10.390
COBISS.BG	5	38	34	4	1	0	0	82
COBISS.AL	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	8.154	33.498	968	1.151	2.642	425	0	46.838

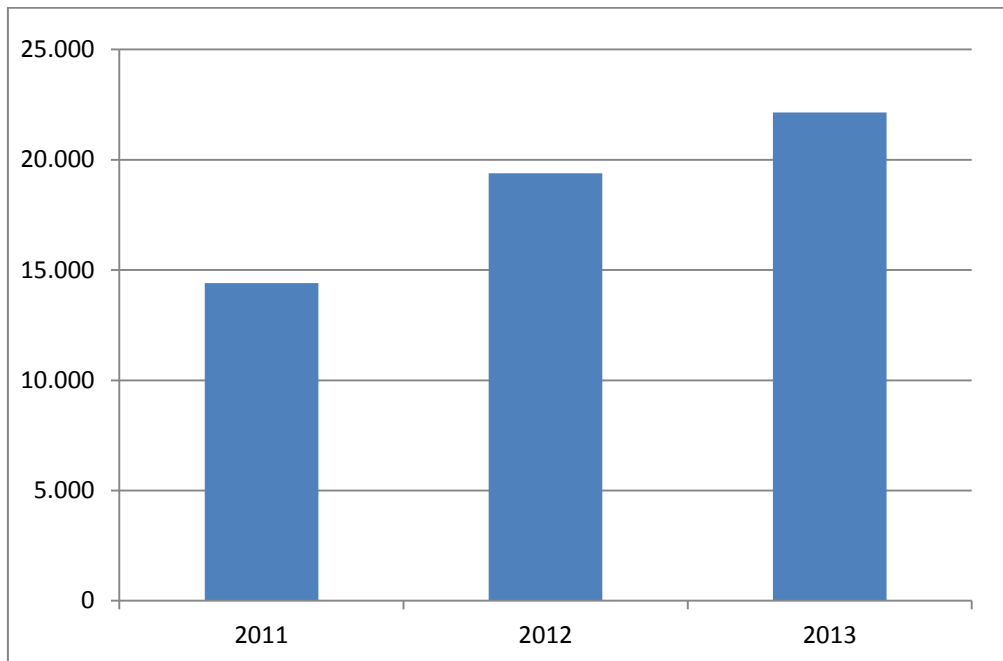
Pic 4: Bibliographic records exchange



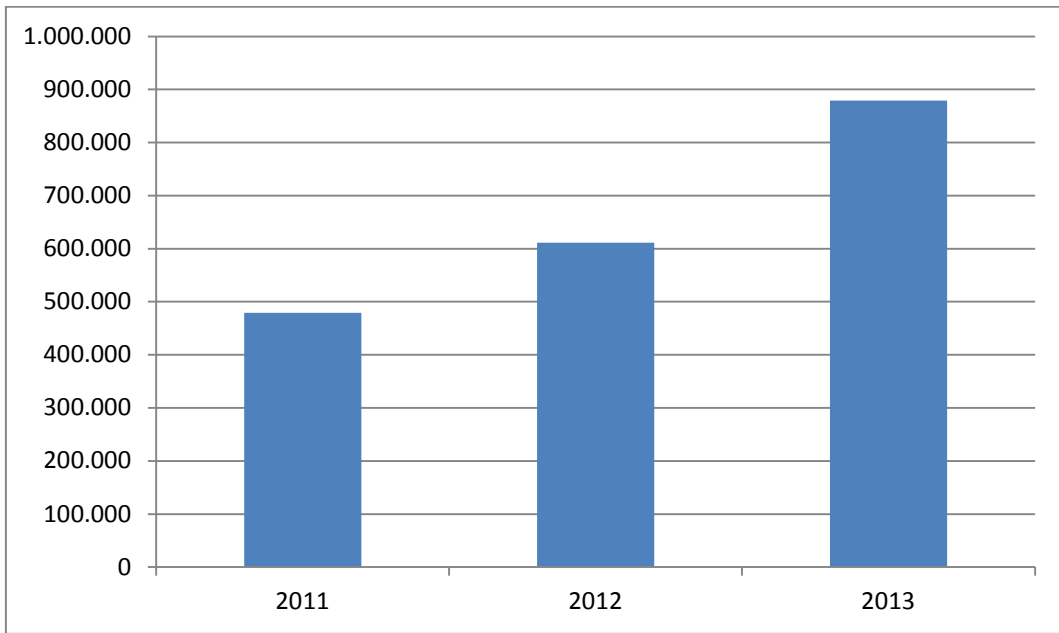
Pic 5: Searching in union and local catalogues



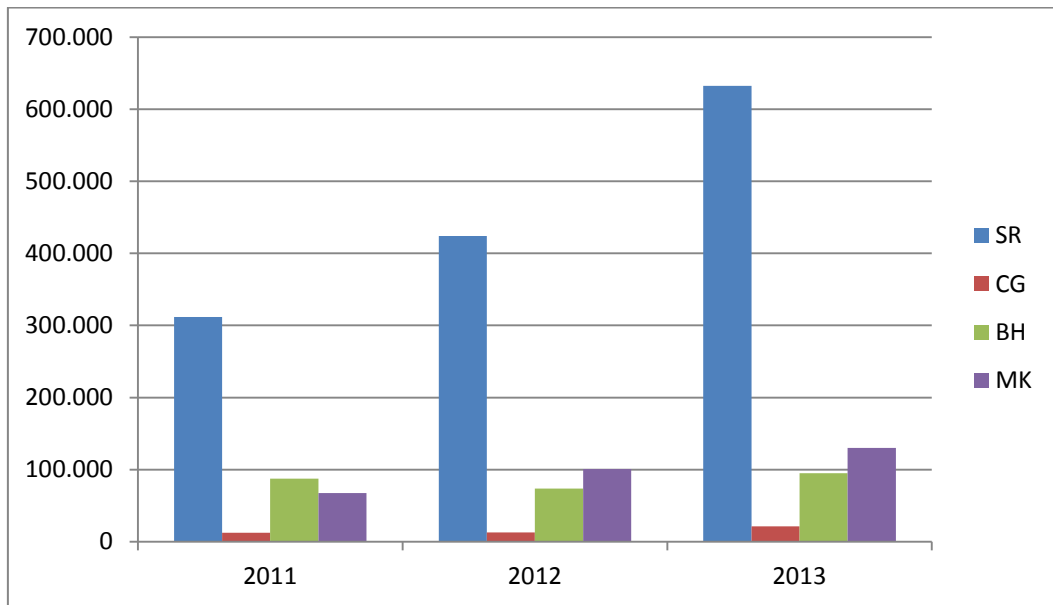
Pic 6: Training and Seminars



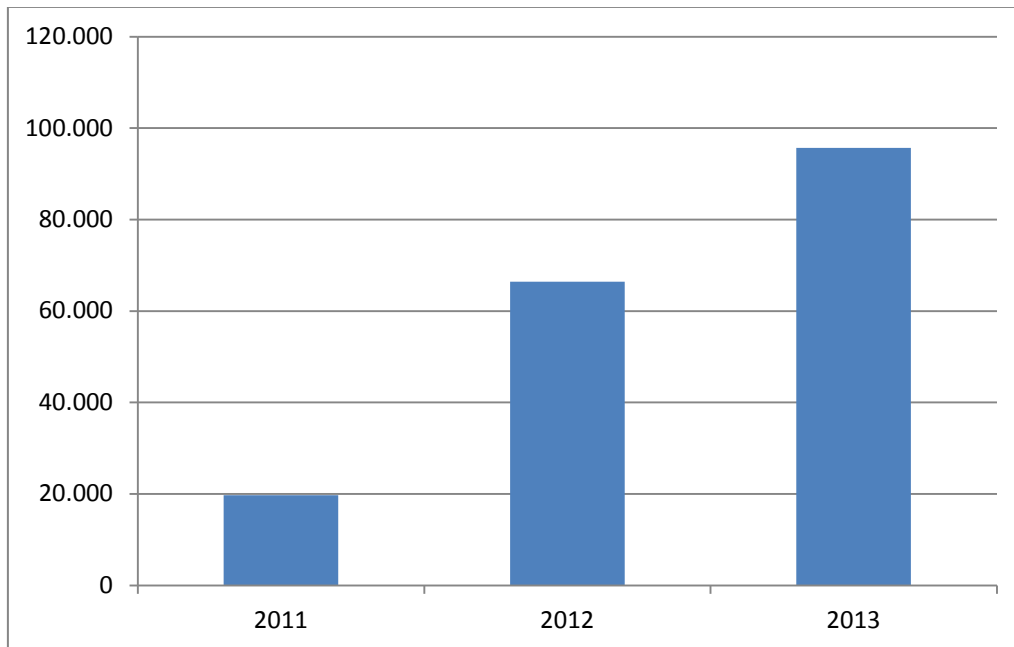
Pic 7: Web bibliographies printing



Pic 8: Loaning/Circulation (total)



Pic 9: Loaning/Circulation (per countries)



Pic 10: Loan renewals and reservation – through COBISS/OPAC

V. **Conclusion**

With relatively humble means we successfully strengthened the trust in Slovenian information technologies throughout the South-eastern European region, and even achieved a successful breakthrough in Albania. To this day, only the Slovenian Research Agency (SRA) is providing some additional means 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 (among other things, we had to cancel the traditional COBISS conference).