



Report on the activities in 2014 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 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).

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-CIRS 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. Strategic reasons for development assistance to target countries

The **Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia for the period until 2015**, adopted by the National Assembly in July 2008, sets forth the Western Balkans as the first geographical priority. It further defines the substantive-thematic priorities, which include:

- *»Cooperation in science and technology, including the establishment of integrated library information systems and research information systems to support education and research, as well as cultural, technological and economic development;*
- *Providing training for experts from target countries, particularly (i) granting scholarships for various programmes in Slovenia and (ii) supporting education programmes for selected groups in target countries".*

Chapter 3.17 *Strengthening cooperation in science and technology and integration in research and information society* of the **Action Plan on the functioning of the Republic of Slovenia towards the Western Balkans in 2013**, among other things, includes the following:

- *»Implementation of the COBISS.Net project (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia). Transfer of Slovenian knowledge to the said countries; access to scientific and cultural treasures collected in the national and other libraries as well as in scientific and research institutions of the geopolitical area of South-East Europe; starting priorities (economic, commercial and political) in the said countries in light of the envisaged EU enlargement.«*

As an international development cooperation coordinator of the Republic of Slovenia, the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)** has referred to COBISS.Net as one of the most successful international cooperation projects in the region, primarily due to its long-term orientation. Unfortunately, however, the MFA further notes that it has "no possibilities" to provide any financial support from the funds of the Directorate for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Supposedly, the reason for this lies in the fact that funds for international development cooperation are still fairly decentralised over the ministries; COBISS.Net is an information infrastructure of education, science and culture,

which means that, in terms of content, it falls under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) and the Ministry of Culture. For this reason, COBISS.Net is not included in the **Framework Programme of International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2013–2015** as the Programme includes only the activities which are financed from the MFA funds, based on the following substantive priorities:

- *"strengthening good governance and the rule of law with emphasis on moving closer to joining the Euro-Atlantic structures,*
- *protection of the environment with emphasis on sustainable water management, and*
- *empowerment of women and care for the well-being of children".*

Until 2010, the project was occasionally financially supported by various ministries. Every year, however, IZUM faced many difficulties when trying to gather funds. In 2013, the **Government of the Republic of Slovenia** has been informed of the then Action Plan and has reached a special decision to recommend to the "ministries which implement the development assistance programmes to the Western Balkans countries to financially support the project". After that, however, the co-financing of the project came to a halt and all proposals for additional assistance to target countries were turned down.

III. Activities and tasks within the COBISS.Net project

In our role as a UNESCO regional centre, we divided all of IZUM's activities in 2014 into 10 topics:

1. Purchase of equipment and provision of installations in national COBISS centres
2. Translation of COBISS and E-CRIS user interfaces and manuals
3. COBISS applications instructors training
4. Purchase of computer equipment and provision of installations in libraries
5. Carrying out a postgraduate part-time study of librarianship (second Bologna cycle) in University of Skodra (Albania)
6. COBISS and E-CRIS user training
7. Co-financing the conversions of local databases (catalogues)
8. Co-financing the creation of bibliographic records for researchers' bibliographies in the national COBISS library systems
9. Conference COBISS 2014 – covering travel and accommodation costs for participants
10. Other – planning, coordinating, advising, etc.

Comparing to the year 2013 there are obviously some changes: there are no supports for ERA projects and access to foreign e-resources anymore. The main reasons are last year's results – there were quite lower than expected and we decided that costs are not eligible.

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

As for items 1 (Purchase of equipment and provision of installations in National COBISS Centres) and 7 (Co-finance of local databases (catalogues) conversions), there were no real activities carried out.

Successful realisation has been achieved on item 2 (translating COBISS user interfaces and user manuals and other material). Translations have been prepared into Albanian, Serbian and English for updates of all current user manuals; the copy-editing process was carried out with already translated materials for the existing courses. Work was also underway on the translation of materials for new courses, which included presentations as well as all other documents, required for holding courses (questionnaires, attendance lists, etc.).

Item 5 has been blocked already in 2013 and regardless of our optimism and huge efforts the programme could not be started.

The item 4 has been focused only to Albania. We helped them by purchasing mostly printers and some PC's.

Items 3 and 6 (instructors and users training) was carried out on large scale (see below); exceptional success has been achieved in Albania.

Five Albanian libraries got the benefits of item 8 (financial support for creating bibliographic records).

The item 9 framework helped 120 participants from target countries to visit bi-annual COBISS Conference by covering their costs for travel and accommodation as follows: Albania (10 participants), Bosnia and Herzegovina (37 participants), Bulgaria (15 participants), Macedonia (3 participants), Montenegro (21 participants) and Serbia (34 participants).

Albania is taking giant steps. A very ambitious educational plan is going on, the number of included libraries is rising and lot of meetings and correspondence were taking place. The main goal, however, is to get the Albanian National Library to our road. We continued with our accelerated efforts to include new libraries in the COBISS.AL system and training new experts for the use of COBISS applications and services. In Tirana, seven different demanding courses from the regular training programme (three of them twice) were carried out for a total of 36 days. 47 attendants from 25 institutions took part.

In addition to holding the abovementioned courses from the regular training programme, as part of the training process for future cataloguers in Albania, training sessions for the acquisition of the required cataloguing permits (*licences*) for working within the COBISS system were carried out (creating and verifying test records, exams). At the same time, there were additional training sessions for local instructors for holding further courses. After completion, the participants of cataloguing-related courses continued the training process by creating their own records in test environments, while our "verifiers" checked them. The checking of test records for monographs, continuing resources and component parts is a very demanding task and meant a lot of extra work for our colleagues. In 2014, there were 11 exam dates (to acquire permits A, B1 and B2); 42 candidates took exams, only three of them failed. This means that 39 new permits were granted, so that there are currently (along with

the previously trained course instructor) 36 verified cataloguers with the required permits for creating new records in Albania.

Apart from training, there were also other activities for the inclusion of Albanian libraries in the COBISS system. Before a library actually joins the system, the current situation is checked and holdings minutes are prepared. Once the minutes are signed, the library is first included into COLIB (shared portal with data on libraries) and a training programme is created for the library. At the end of 2014, there were 25 Albanian libraries in the COBISS system (an additional 7 were added this year). New libraries were also added in Montenegro (1) and Serbia (2) as well as in the Republic of Srpska, which started the new year of 2014 as a new member of the COBISS.Net family (and successfully included 8 libraries throughout 2014). The total number of libraries outside Slovenia, participating in the COBISS.Net network, was 315 on the last day of the previous year.

In Bulgaria, the largest country in COBISS.Net and the only EU Member State in the region, we finally got a second library to the system. There were many activities regarding local databases analysis and conversion plans.

We expected some real push from Unesco regarding (especially) postgraduate part-time study of librarianship (second Bologna cycle) activities, but there were obviously no chances or opportunities.

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

- Albania: At the beginning of 2014, the web portal COBISS.AL went live and the *COBISS/OPAC V6.1* software was installed. The held courses and exams for acquiring permits are listed separately (see above).
- Bulgaria: Great effort was put towards the inclusion of new libraries in the COBISS.BG system. A large amount of work was done on the analyses for the conversion of existing catalogues of potential new members. A new library from Dobrič signed the agreement to join the system.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: The following courses were held: *Use of COBISS3 software: Records downloading and holdings*, *Use of COBISS3/Loan software*, *Use of stock-taking software*. The *COBISS/OPAC V6.1* software was implemented. A test stock-taking procedure was performed in one library.
- Montenegro: The following courses were held: *Use of COBISS3/Holdings software* (once), *Use of COBISS3/Loan software* (once), *Transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing* (seven times). The *Training* portal was activated and 22 test environments were prepared for the transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing. The new version of *COBISS/OPAC V6.1* software was implemented. Montenegro decided to abandon their own hardware system and began to use IZUM's hosting environment. The migration of all databases and catalogues as well as of the application environment from their own computer systems to IZUM's infrastructure (*hosting*) was of great importance.
- Macedonia: In four libraries, the COBISS3/Loan software module was implemented. In six libraries, the COBISS3/Loan test environment was installed. The following

courses were held: *Use of COBISS3 software: Records downloading and holdings* (twice), *Use of COBISS3/Holdings – serials* (once), *Use of COBISS3/Loan software* (twice), *Use of COBISS2/Cataloguing – records creation* (once). The new version of *COBISS/OPAC V6.1* software was implemented.

- Republic of Srpska: In the youngest member country within COBISS.Net, seven new libraries joined the system in addition to the national library. We helped organise three courses for them, which were held by colleagues from other COBISS.Net countries (*Use of COBISS3 software: Records downloading and holdings* (twice) and *Use of COBISS3/Loan software* (once)).
- Serbia: Three courses were held: *Transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing*, *Use of stock-taking software* and *Use of COBISS3/Loan software*. As many as 21 libraries switched to *COBISS3/Cataloguing*, and six libraries started using *COBISS3/Loan*. We performed several specialised services (special reports, characters, scripts, etc.). Serbian National Library prolonged their contract for being part of COBISS.Net for another year.

OCLC/EMEA invited us to their internal conference as they consider us an important factor in the geographic area of South-Eastern Europe and would like to intensify our cooperation.

IV. Development (sub)projects

P1 – Establishing authority control for personal names within the COBISS.BG system

In 2014 the user interface for *COBISS3/Cataloguing* and *COBISS/OPAC* were tested. The impact of model of bibliographic and authority records in Bulgarian system to other national systems in COBISS.Net was analysed. The new structure is confirmed as being full scale reliable.

The users' testing plan has been forwarded to the 2015 (request by the Bulgarian National Library). The educational plan for future Bulgarian instructors for two new courses (*COBISS3/Cataloguing – the CONOR Redaction* and *The Transition to Cataloguing with Authority Control*) is prepared.

At the end of 2014, the Bulgarian National Library edited 36,961 new authority records via conversions and created additional 46,920 new records.

The project is finished!

R25 – Establishing of the Central Users Registry in COBISS.Net

Support for Cyrillic script has been implemented up to the testing phase. All partners are participating with their local registry records. Translations are going on.

R26 – Introducing the COBISS3/Cataloguing software module to COBISS.Net

The continuing task is going on. In 2014, the test environments are established in all COBISS national systems. The most intensive transition to the 3rd COBISS cataloguing generation is

taking place in Serbia. There were 26 test environments there and 22 libraries concluded their preparations and successfully started within new environment. Montenegro is also very successful – there are 22 out of 27 libraries now in testing phase of transition.

We will continue with this task in 2015.

R27 – Creating an authority records database for subject headings in the COBISS.BG system

The conversion of the Bulgarian authority records database for subject heading has been done in 2014. There are 11,797 authority records installed on the production level; all of them were verified in IZUM and the Bulgarian National Library.

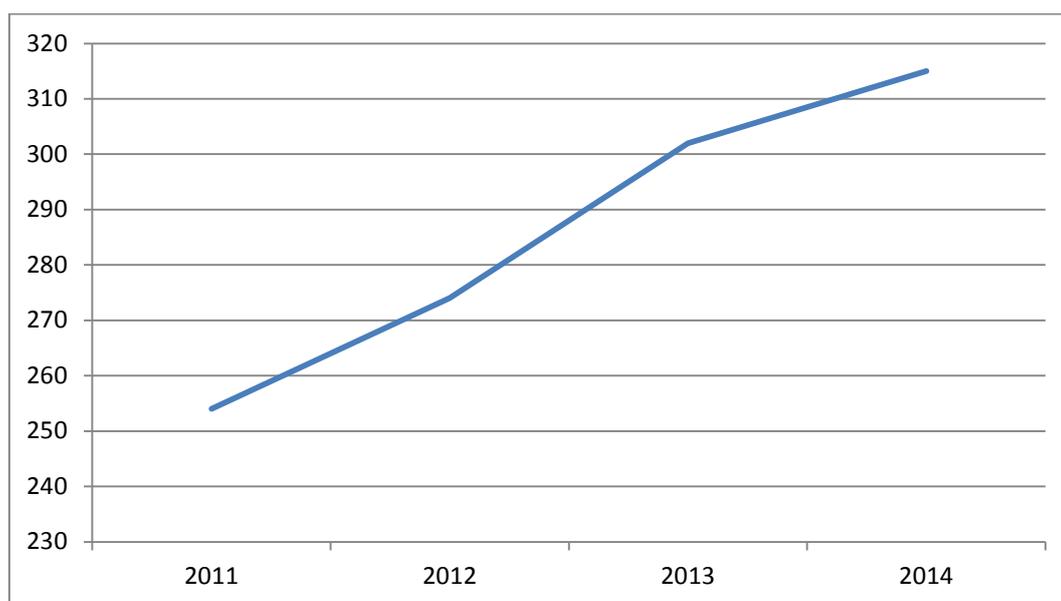
R28 – Introducing the COBISS3/Acquisitions software module to COBISS.Net

In 2014, we started with the introduction and implementation of the COBISS3/Acquisitions software module to other countries. In Serbia and Macedonia new instructors got appropriate licenses and in those countries the process of implementation has already started. On the other hand, Bosnia and Macedonia needed more direct help form IZUM.

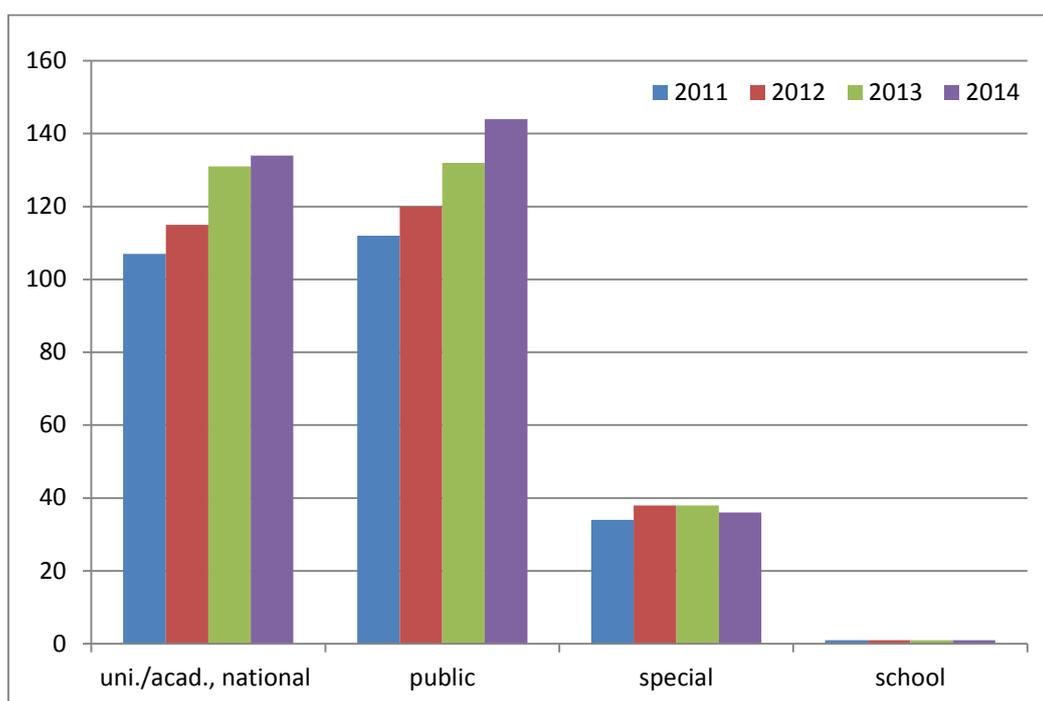
We will continue with this task in 2015.

V. Statistics

The following section is bringing up some statistics and graphs representing results and achievements of IZUM's work in the region in 2014. Slovenian libraries and their data are excluded (except in the bibliographic records cross-reference tables).



Pic 1: COBISS.Net Libraries Growth (total)



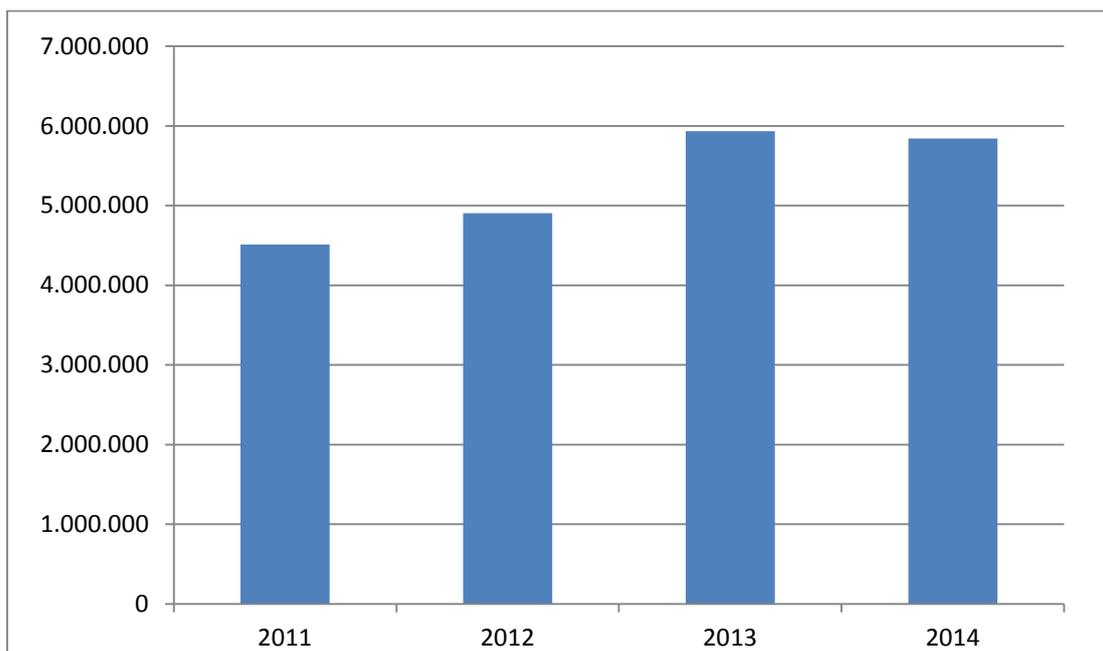
Pic 2: COBISS.Net Libraries (per library type)

Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records - 31. 12. 2014									
	COBIB.SI	COBIB.SR	COBIB.MK	COBIB.CG	COBIB.BH	COBIB.BG	COBIB.AL	COBIB.RS	Total
Monographs	2.649.249	1.830.233	401.578	279.779	382.821	477.582	68.907	70.233	6.160.382
Comp. parts	409.832	122.493	26.092	8.190	872	22	371	212	568.084
Serials	110.394	71.376	11.600	3.031	7.905	39.600	2.329	118	246.353
Articles	1.233.994	750.346	115.137	72.398	14.490	423.689	7.833	5.821	2.623.708
Perf. works	114.341	2.378	354	101	310	0	55	0	117.539
Other	7.698	3.734	257	0	488	1	34	1	12.213
Total	4.525.508	2.780.560	555.018	363.499	406.886	940.894	79.529	76.385	9.728.279
w/ RSR code	1.448.948	160.044	3.510	16.858	11.617	0	563	1	1.641.541

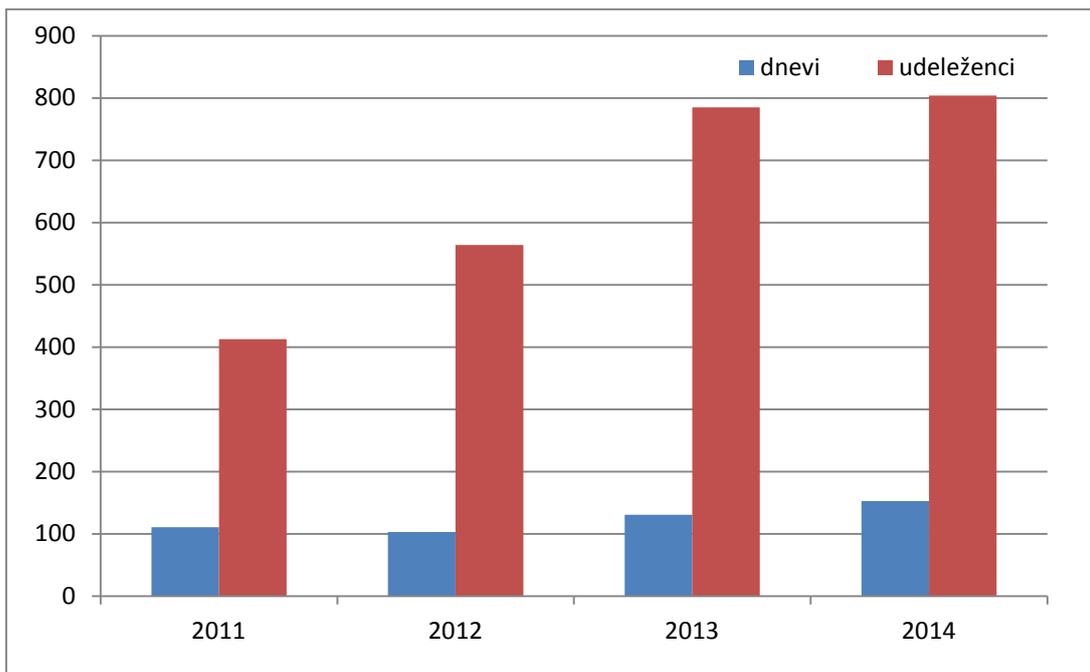
Pic 3: Union catalogues COBIB bibliographic records

Bibliographic records exchange from 1. 1. 2014 until 31. 12. 2014									
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.SI	0	907	104	79	159	17	0	15	1.281
COBISS.SR	4.283	0	382	645	1.101	296	0	103	6.810
COBISS.MK	1.087	3.166	0	48	70	102	0	0	4.473
COBISS.CG	1.412	16.984	399	0	298	36	0	0	19.129
COBISS.BH	1.123	2.025	40	83	0	4	0	0	3.275
COBISS.BG	24	56	4	1	2	0	0	0	87
COBISS.AL	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
COBISS.RS	336	6.444	224	1.315	625	1	0	0	8.945
Total	8.270	29.583	1.153	2.171	2.255	456	0	118	44.006

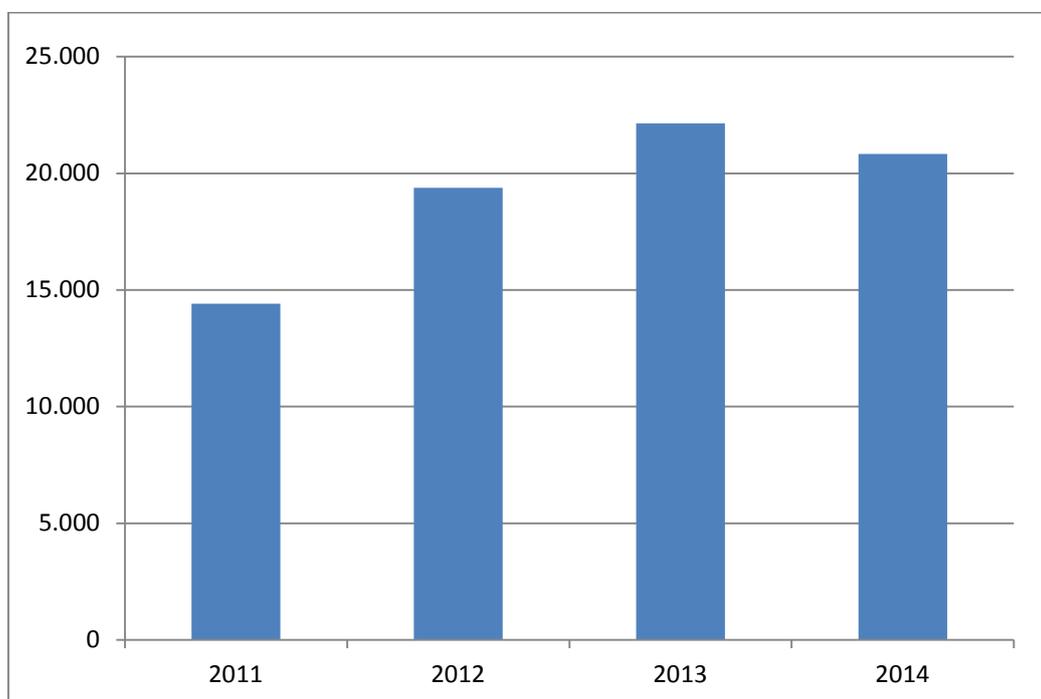
Pic 4: Bibliographic records exchange



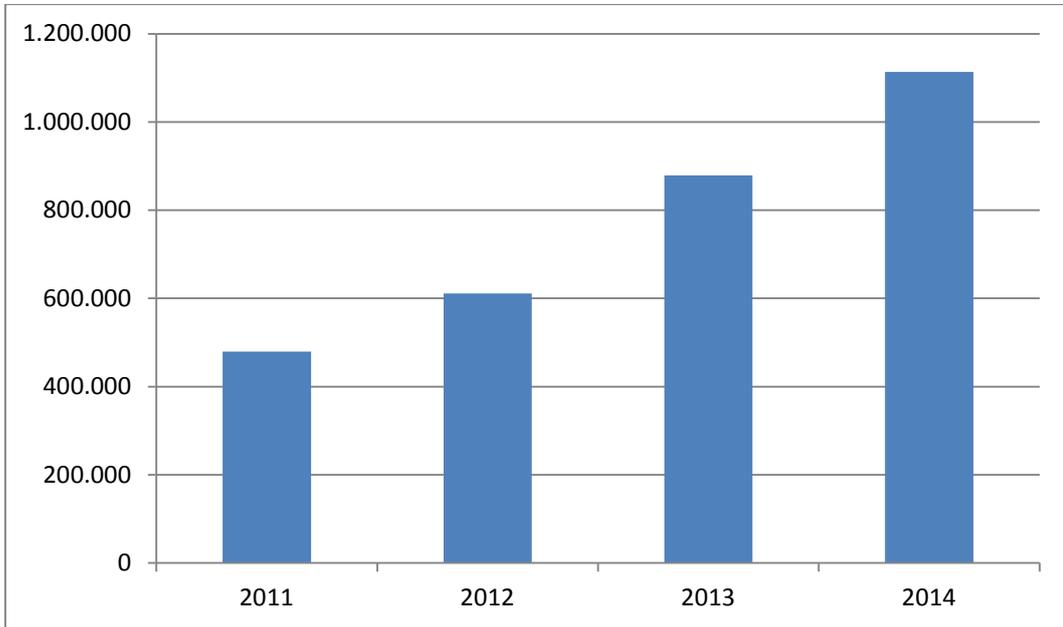
Pic 5: Searching in union and local catalogues



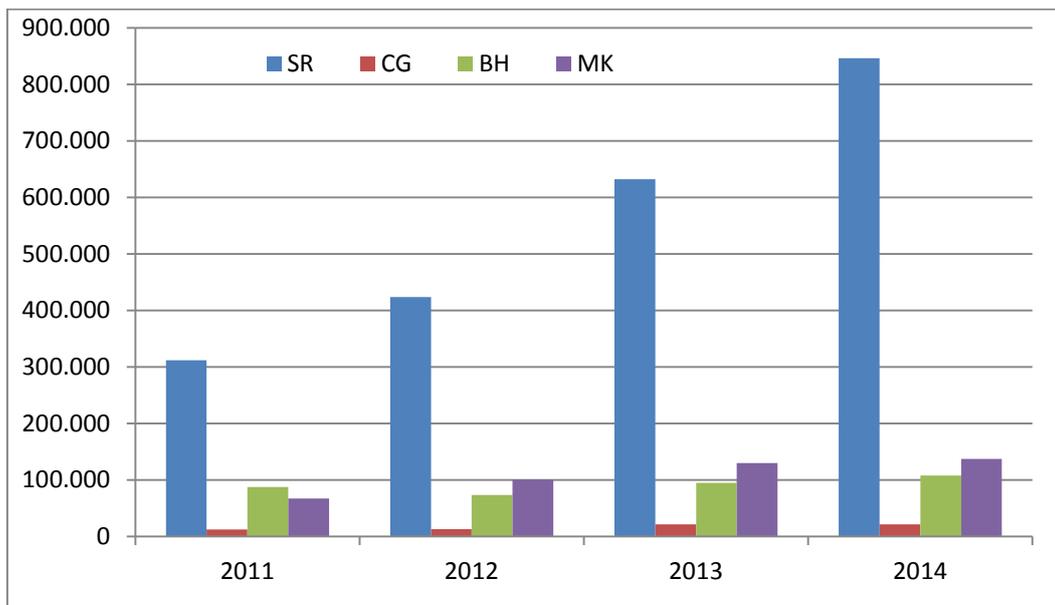
Pic 6: Training and Seminars



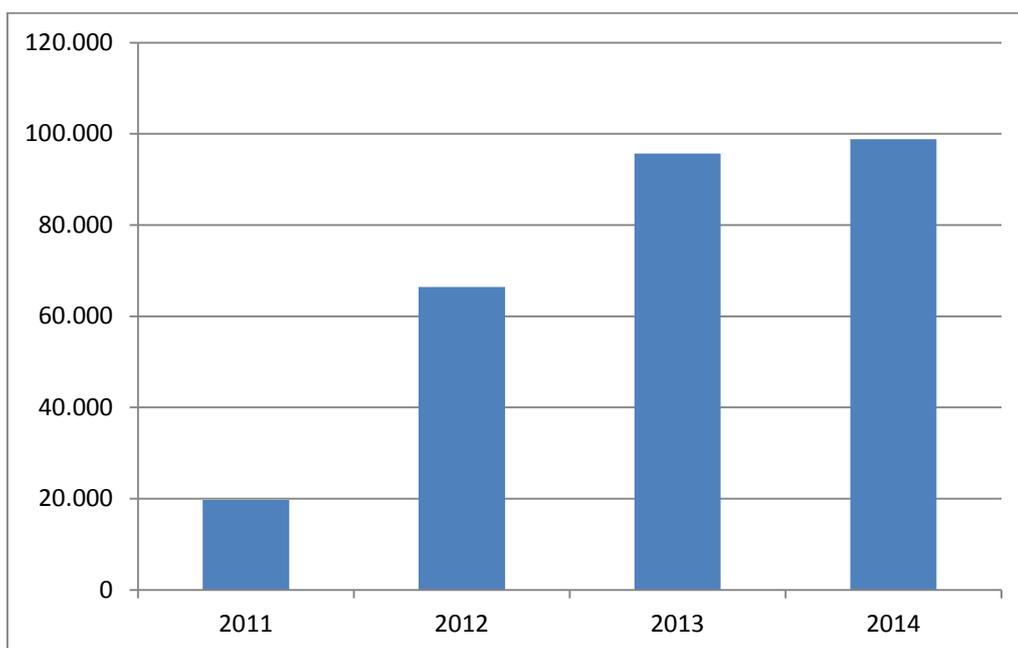
Pic 7: Web bibliographies printing



Pic 8: Loaning/Circulation (total)



Pic 9: Loaning/Circulation (per countries)



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

VI. 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, there were 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, 18 April 2015

Davor Šoštarič