Initially, this contribution will acquaint you with the genesis of bibliography in the Czech lands and its advancement up to the year 1992 when the Czechoslovak Republic disintegrated and split into two independent national bibliographies - the Czech and Slovak. Next, we will talk about the achievements of our team over the last 15 years in consequence with changes caused by computerised data processing. Finally, we will comment on international collaboration of our team and perspectives and views of the Czech historical bibliography into the future.

The project of continuous periodical bibliography on the Czech history would recently have celebrated one century of its existence. A significant Czech historian Josef Pekař, editor of the Czech Historical Magazine, stood at its birth. The first Bibliography of Czech History was issued as a supplement to the above-mentioned magazine still at the time of the Hapsburg Monarchy in 1905. On 48 pages, it captured more than 12 hundred partially annotated bibliographic records on literature published in 1904. In further years, the extent of bibliography steadily grew and bibliography exceeded the dimension of a mere supplement to a magazine. After World War I, it was published as a separate publication issued by the Historical Club, which was an association of Czech historians managed by Josef Pekař.

The project of one- or two-year almanacs successfully worked until World War II, when the publishing of bibliography, together with most other Czech professional periodicals, was terminated.

The post-war period, connected with the advent of communism after 1948, did not favour publishing historical bibliography. In the 1950’s, the newly established Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences took charge of publishing bibliographic catalogues. The Prague Historical Institute collaborated with the Slovak Historical Institute at issuing bibliographic catalogues. It supplied data on Slovak history into the collective volume The Bibliography of the Czechoslovak History. The integrity of bibliographic catalogues, however, was restricted due to the political climate and unavailability of foreign literature. In addition, there was little interest in elaborating and technically and personally equipping this task.

The years from 1966 to 1970, from 1978 to 1979 and from 1982 to 1989, created further gaps in the continuous series of bibliographies. In the 1980, a provisional solution was applied, that is preparation of five-year outlines of selected bibliographies, which the Historical Institute issued in consequence with international historical congresses. However, these were not adequate substitutions for unpublished volumes of bibliographic year-books, a fact that both the users and reviewers realized even at the time of their creation.

This uncertain period showed the necessity of the Bibliography of Czech History for the Czech historical community. After 1989, the programme of restoration of continuous periodical historical bibliography became one of the key tasks of the reformed Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. However, it was not until the
second half of the 1990’s that a relatively stable bibliographical team was formed and the Bibliography of the History of the Czech Lands was started once again in the form of a computer database since the year 1990.

Our bibliographic team currently counts three female workers who are graduates of history and archival science. One typist assists us three times a week. This team enters about 10,000 to 15,000 bibliographic records into the database per year, compiles and prepares for print one annual almanac of about 500 to 600 pages, prepares searches for the institute’s scholars and students and performs other smaller tasks.

Entering data into the operating database is still carried out in the DOS environment, in the CDS-ISIS programme, version 3.07. The database serves as a continuous collection of bibliographic data from the most recent scholarly literature. It originated in 1990, succeeding the previous method of file cards. It contains records of professional historical and non-fiction monographs, articles, reviews and reports, that appeared in magazines and collective volumes of historical orientation and other related scholarships with a thematic connection to the Czech milieu.

It is thus possible to search for works by Czech authors from Czech as well as general history published both in the Czech Republic and abroad, contributions on Czech history by foreign authors regardless of where they were published, and translations of historical literature published in the Czech Republic. At present, the database contains more than 115,000 master file numbers. The total number of bibliographic entries, however, is much larger, as the reviews and reports form one item with the reviewed publication.

Regular publishing of bibliographic year-books originated in the second half of the 1990’s, that is after moving the Historical Institute and its library to a new building. With one exception, we have been able to publish one volume of a printed bibliography per year since 1997. However, we are unable to catch up with the delay which bibliography gained at the beginning of the 1990’s. There is a number of reasons.

The biggest reason is our effort to capture the growing number of predominantly regional literature published especially by museums and archives. With a little exaggeration, if this trend continues, there will not be a single town or village without publishing its history. The number of monographs and anthologies on the history of municipalities is growing year by year.

These are not mere humble brochures, but increasingly frequently there are epic publications sponsored by regional administration and elaborated by teams of erudite historians. The amount of literature published by universities established after 1992 is growing, too. There are also more and more translations of professional and popular historical literature from foreign languages and contributions to the Czech history published abroad.

In the early 1990’s, bibliographic almanacs, still dealing with the Czechoslovak history, contained an average of 5,000 entries, out of which about 1,000 entries were related to Slovak history. After the division of Czechoslovakia, the 1993 bibliography contained some 4,600 entries. Since that time, literary production has a growing tendency.

This year’s bibliography on the year 2000 already contains more than 9,500 entries, that is more than a double. Due to a significant growth of literature, which needs to be bibliographically elaborated, it is necessary to accept the reality of slower preparation of printed bibliographic almanacs. The authors of this report do not think, however, that it is time to entirely abandon the printed version of bibliography.
Publishing the historical database on the Internet by the Institute of History in 2000 provided access to the current stage of the database. This database is updated every three months. Preparation of a CD-ROM with the Bibliography of the Czech Lands database followed. Since 2006, it has been issued as a regular supplement to the annual bibliographical almanac with a new version of data increased to 10 - 15,000 entries per year. The CD-ROM is produced in a technique similar to the Czech National Library database. Contrary to the Internet database it provides the users with a broader chance to create their own recherché and its operation is relatively simple.

The CD-ROM comes in Czech and English versions, which can be easily switched over. There are many ways how to search for information, mainly by means of indexes. These are: author index, title, biographical, geographical and key word indexes. It is possible to navigate in alphabetical order. Fulltext search with direct query is prepared, but is currently rather slow. A filter allows for viewing the entire database or individual books or articles.

The top part of the screen contains information on the selected entries in an abbreviated form; the bottom part contains details of the open entry. Entries coming from individual magazines and almanacs are mutually linked to the source document.

Entries, which are marked, can be stored in a box and we can continue working. We can transfer the finished searches to the text editor and further modify and print it.

As we have mentioned, the CD-ROM should be issued annually as a supplement to the bibliographic almanac and should contain an updated version of the database, what means larger by 10 - 15,000 entries every year.

There are two databases created by the Institute of History of the Czech Republic available on the Internet. Firstly, it is the database of 100 almanacs on the Czech historical scholarship flagship, the Czech Historical Magazine. Secondly, there is the complete operational database of the continuous periodical bibliography of the Czech history entitled “Database Biblio”. The author of the Internet WWWISIS v. 4.0 database is Jan Zápotocký, who collaborated on the CD-ROM technical realization. The data search is in a Czech, English and German versions. The Internet database, however, is not capable of such an extensive elaboration and print of searches as the CD-ROM is. On the other hand, it contains the latest data due to its quarterly upgrade. At present, it contains more than 115,000 entries.

The data can be searched by means of Boolean operators “and”, “or” and “not” or by means of indexes. It can also be roughly located by the year of publishing. It is not necessary to use Czech diacritic marks, but the records will also appear without them. The entries can be displayed either in a standard format or in an abbreviated form. From the home page, it is possible to view a list of abbreviations of excerpted magazines and almanacs (this is not necessary on the CD-ROM, as all the abbreviations are in full forms there). Attachment of excerpted magazines and almanacs is in a state of preparation. We intend to achieve this task by the end of this year.

From the statistics point of view, searching for data in the bibliographic database indexes is frequently used. Just like in the CD-ROM version, it is possible to search in an author index, biographic, geographic or key-word indexes. The entry can be located either by listing, or by typing the full or partial term. Each term in the index works as a hypertext link.

References to the source document are particularly useful in the recherché strategy of thematic almanacs. As an example, we present
a searches to the query for the term “Berlin”, in the geographical index, which appears in the right-hand field. Each entry is accompanied with its database number, the number of entries within the searches and the total number of entries in the searches. All blue prints work as hypertext links. The final two entries on the page show the link to the source document. On opening the source document, in this case a thematically focused almanac “Documents and Studies of Terezin”, the complete content of the almanac, in which we can search for further data in blue printed links, will open.

The Internet database brings benefit and, we admit, even a little joy to our bibliographic work in the form of statistics. Reflections of the Czech historical bibliography in Czech professional historical papers are not great and we meet with personal historians’ comments only very seldom. Whether the Czech community of historians is so modest and undemanding, or merely tactful, we don’t know. Statistics about the Internet database don’t provide information on the quality of its content, but we can at least figure out the fact that it has found its users and that the number of them grows every year.

As far as the use of the database in the course of a week is concerned, it becomes clear that it is used primarily by students and scholars as a reference tool on weekdays. At weekends, the database is used by far fewer users. In the course of the year, the database is least used in July and August - during the school holidays.

From the geographical point of view, Central European users find the broadest use of the database. In first place, obviously, it is the Czech Republic, followed by Slovakia, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland. In other countries, the database is only used sparsely. Outside Europe (perhaps with the exception of Japan and the USA), there are only random visitors who find their way to the database.

The current stage of bibliographic entries in the Internet database on literature published after the year 2000, it means entries, which have not yet been published in print is almost complete, so thanks to the Internet and CD-ROM, we are succeeding in publicizing the continual periodic historical bibliography of the Czech history to the public with just a little more than one-year delay, in spite of the six-year loss in publishing printed almanacs.

Over the past years the bibliographic team has performed further research and publishing tasks besides the continuous periodical bibliography. Among the larger projects, we mention indexes to the one hundred annual volumes of the essential periodic Czech Historical Magazine from the years 1895-2002. The database, counting more than 42,000 entries, was issued on a CD-ROM in 2002. It is also put on the Internet within the bibliographic databases produced by our Institute. With some gaps, bibliography of the Czech history has existed in printed form since 1904. However, there is not enough power to create a continuous computerised database of a retrospective Czech historical bibliography at present. Assuming that the Czech Historical Magazine referred to largely significant historical production, a database of its indexes is a partial substitution for this retrospective.

In 2000 and 2005, our bibliographic team prepared two volumes of Selected Bibliography on the Czech History for the years 1990-1999 and 2000-2004. They were created to commemorate two world historical congresses and their direction conforms to those events. They only capture literature printed in world languages and are aimed at foreign users.

The bibliographic team also played a significant role in the preparation of three volumes of lexicons by historians Jaroslav Pánek and Svatava Raková Scholars of Bohemian, Czech and Czechoslovak History Studies published in print in 2004 and as a CD-ROM
one year later. The CD-ROM, however, is a document with hypertext links in .pdf format, thus it is not created as a database.

Since the second half of the 1990’s, collaboration with the Herder-Institut in Marburg on data exchange and preparation of collective bibliographic publications has been a great inspiration and help in our efforts to modernise the Czech historical bibliography. Collaboration on the international project Documentation of Literature on the history of East Central Europe provided further hints for improvements of our pursuits, a chance to compare and, last but not least, obtain a number of valuable, hardly accessible bibliographic data from all around the world. We provide the Herder-Institut in Marburg with the most significant data from our database. Yearly, it amounts to some 3,500 to 4,000 entries on literature published in the Czech Republic and literature commenting on the Czech history which was published in Central-East and East Europe. In return, we obtain records on the Czech history published in Germany and Western Europe.

The bibliographical team continues collaborating with the bibliographic department of the Institute of History of the Slovak Republic. Identically arranged databases, which come from the time of united Czechoslovakia, allow exchanges of entire databases between both institutes. This collaboration, however, has been stagnating over the past few years. The only significant outcome, apart from the regular exchanges of databases, is our help with putting the Slovak bibliographic database on the Internet.

The work of the bibliographic department of the Institute of History has come through a number of changes over the last few years, but we still cannot claim that the current situation is ideal. The data are still processed in the DOS environment and each future presentation is carried out by means of various conversions. In addition, the department has no full time software specialist, so further research proceeds fitfully and costs the bibliographers much time and effort, which might otherwise be used for bibliography. Continuous periodical bibliography is not perceived as a scholastic pursuit among the Czech historians, but rather as a mere category of librarianship which has to perform the greatest possible performance with the least possible inputs. The current situation of the Czech historical bibliography is thus regarded as completely adequate by the Czech historians.

Moreover, the database created by the Institute of History, which was completed in the early 1990, does not conform to the criteria of the international exchange format. It means that the bibliographic team meets with difficulty in negotiations on collaboration with libraries. This is why an attempt to find a partner capable of helping us with the transfer of the data into the MARC 21 international exchange format presents the greatest task for the bibliographers. Dealings with the National Library of the Czech Republic look promising. The library has shown interest in elaborating articles from our bibliographic database.

International collaboration with the Herder Institute in Marburg is very important to us. We intend to further develop it in the coming years not only for data exchange, but also because it is a progressive team with new bibliographic ideas and conceptions, which we are finding very useful and inspiring. We wish to further develop collaboration with the Slovak Historical Institute, keeping in mind the seventy years of mutual history within the Czechoslovak Republic, i.e. the time where the current Czech and Slovak workers of the bibliographic departments spent a great part of their lives.

We suppose that international collaboration will play an increasing role in further development of national historical bibliographies. This is why we consider entering the Czech bibliography into international projects to be very important. Our department is too
small to come up with its own projects, but we will be happy to take part in new forms of collaboration, if it is in our technical and personal potential.