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The Charles University has been fortunate enough to be able to host some very active Erasmus students, who have, besides the obligatory attending classes, socializing with their Erasmus peers and exploring Prague and the Czech Republic, also found the time to take up an internship or voluntary project while studying in the country. One of the most popular institutions for a short-term internship during the Erasmus study stay in Prague has, for a number of students, been the National Library of the Czech Republic - namely the department in which digital text versions of documents are prepared for the international virtual library Manuscriptorium. This has been especially popular with students of Information Science, Literature, History and Archive Science.

We asked Mr. Tomáš Klimek from the department to share his experiences of working with the Erasmus students with us. He explains: "The National Library of the Czech Republic (more precisely its Department of Manuscriptorium Digital Library) has been cooperating with Erasmus students studying at the Charles University in Prague since the summer semester of 2010/11. There are around 10 students interning at the National Library each semester which means that so far we have had approximately 30 student interns in total. The students who work with us prepare digital full text versions of historical texts, which will be published in the Manuscriptorium Digital Library.

Their work consists of basic training concerning the XML mark up languages and becoming familiar with an XML editor. Then, the students will be able to transfer texts from an old book or other material, which is provided to them in its modern text edition, into XML format by adding structural tags using a pre-prepared structure. Finally, they correlate the text with the format of the original document (e.g. to a scanned page from an old book).

Students can choose the text they will work with according to their paleographical skills and knowledge of the language of the original document, which is usually Latin. This means that students with only basic knowledge of the historical script can work on preparing texts which would be boring for the more advanced workers and, vice versa, the most experienced students can prepare versions of the more difficult documents, which can help them to improve their editorial or language skills.

This type of work is lends itself well to cooperating with student interns and both sides benefit from this cooperation. Most of the students are happy with the nature of the work and the visible results help to increase their motivation. Being able to use both knowledge of the humanities and of Information Technology is also attractive to many students.

On the other hand, this type of work demands a high number of working hours even from the experienced employees and would not be possible without being able to take on external employees or interns. The results of our work, including that of the student interns, are very useful for scholars such as historians, art historians, linguists, musicologists, and geographers, who deal with manuscripts and early printed books, as well as students of paleography, etc. At the same time, the new material can be a good base for research into the area of computerisation, where images are converted into texts.

There are also some other jobs connected with creating our digital library of historical written documents which would be suitable for interning students. Over the coming months, we also plan to cooperate with several full-time interning students staying in Prague for a longer period of time on an Erasmus Practical Placement, so we hope that we will further our relationship with Erasmus students in a very positive way."

One of these full-time interning students will be **Katarzyna Sycz**, originally from the University of Poznana, who is an Erasmus student at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University for the academic year of 2011/12. We have asked her a number of questions about her experience in the National Library so far, over the winter semester of 2011/12.

Katarzyna, I really liked your reason for applying to the Charles University in Prague. In your application, you said, "I am applying for a place in the Erasmus exchange programme so that I can finish my studies knowing that I have made use of all of the opportunities that my university has offered me and therefore having had the best possible education". This is actually one of the best reasons I have seen so far and it says a great deal about you as a well-motivated student. Your wish to make the most of your study stay abroad also led to your internship application to the National Library.

What were your main duties during the internship, did you get along well with the National Library staff and what do you think you have gained from the experience so far? Did your internship complement your studies?

Thank you. It's very nice of you to quote my reason for applying. During my internship at the National Library, I worked for the Manuscriptorium Digital Library and my duties were focused on the preparation of electronic versions of historical

documents. The work consisted of both structuring of the texts and correlating their parts to images of the original documents.

The purpose of this task was to enable the public to access historical documents and to facilitate the search for particular passages. The texts that I worked on were written in Latin. This may sound quite complicated, but on the whole the work was not too difficult – I occasionally struggled with some parts of the Latin texts, but I could always ask for help if I needed it.

Working with the National Library was very enjoyable. Mr. Tomáš Klimek, who supervised my work, patiently explained what I had to do; he was also always willing to help and answered all of my questions with a smile. It was a very interesting experience. There's proof that I enjoyed it - I am applying to do an internship in this institution again, this time for a longer period of time. In my opinion, this type of work is very necessary and I would like to broaden my knowledge in this field. Last year, at my home university in Poland, I studied Linguistics and Information Science. My work in the National Library was closely connected to my fields of study. I am not planning to continue my studies in Poland at the moment, but I might possibly go to another country in the future.

Your previous internships in Poland were in a different field – journalism. When you compare these two fields, what do you find interesting about both of them?

First of all, I should say that these fields of work are not that different. In the publishing houses where I had worked previously, I focused mainly on standard text editing, the tasks that corresponded to my knowledge and experience gained from my specialisation in editorial work. Typical journalistic work, like writing articles and interviews, was only a small part of my tasks.

I am actually more interested in the process of the creation of books, from the initial proof-reading to the printing. I find this last phase especially interesting. At the University of Poznan, I had the opportunity to work in a traditional printing house for a short period of time, where everything was done manually.

My main duty in the publishing houses was proof-reading and wording. This was what personally gave me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction.

Working in the National Library in Prague was another chance to see how one can undertake research through studying books, and in the case of my internship, how to make the most valuable works available to a wide range of readers. I think that these days, this type of work, in a day and age when most people cannot imagine working without a computer, is extremely important and modern.

After finishing the short-term internship in the National Library this winter (an internship that can be attended during a full-time study stay), you have approached the library to arrange a long-term internship after the end of your study stay at Charles University. Will this exchange be part of the Erasmus programme again? If so, what is the difference between the Erasmus Study Stay and the Erasmus Practical Placement for students from the University of Poznan? What do you expect to gain from this long-term cooperation with the National Library?

Yes, I would again be part of the Erasmus programme. I'm currently in the process of applying for the Practical Placement, but I'm not yet sure if I will receive a nomination from my home university in Poznan, so please keep your fingers crossed for me!

The main difference between applying for the Erasmus Study Stay and the Erasmus Practical Placement programme at my university is that, for the latter, the students must find a company or establishment which would want to hire them independently. The recruitment process is only open until the limit for the number of places for this scheme has been reached. Of course, the recruitment committee will consider the requests based on the compliance of the planned Practical Placement with your field of study. Students may apply for the Erasmus Practical Placement for a period of 3 to 6 months, during which they will receive a scholarship.

In the case of the Erasmus Study Stay, the procedure focuses more on academic matters; for example, one of the additional procedures is a conversation with a language teacher, who will examine the student's level of proficiency in a foreign language.

However, Linguists and Information Science students are not the only ones who benefit from the short-term internships in the National Library which accompany Erasmus study stays. These internships are also appealing to Historians, Art Historians and students of Archive Science. We have asked **Marion Fay**, a History student who joined the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in the academic year 2010/11 and is originally from Université Paris 12 - Val De Marne, to share her opinion on the opportunity with us.

Marion, you are a History student. When you joined the National Library for an internship last year, you were able to gain experience of a possible future career for yourself. Did you enjoy the experience? What was working with the electronic versions of the old books and manuscripts like?

I was very happy when I received the advertisement for this internship. At the time, I was in the third year of my bachelor's degree and I had started to think seriously about what I wanted to do after completing my studies.

The first time I went to Klementinum, the seat of the National Library, I was amazed. I liked to work with the old manuscripts, even in the electronic version, as I hadn't had the opportunity to work with that kind of documents before. Also, my supervisor, Mr. Tomáš Klimek, was very kind.

What were your duties in the National Library and did you get on well with the other staff? Has the internship influenced your future career ambitions?

To start with I found the software we were using to be quite complicated, but I was fine after a few days. I had to search for certain words within a Microsoft Word version of a document and then within the original manuscript version. Then, I had to link both documents together.

There was a nice atmosphere in the office and Mr. Klimek was very patient and supportive.

At the moment, I am planning to work in the field of protection of historical heritage. My internship in the National Library helped me to realise that I wanted to have a career in this field.

As a French student of History, you most likely attended the classes offered by Assoc. Prof. Martin Nejedlý in the Faculty of Arts (these classes were Czech-French History Seminaire and Historical Atelier). What did you think of his classes? Did you find it interesting to meet many French as well as Czech historians? Were there any topics which you particularly enjoyed?

Yes, I attended Mr. Nejedlý's classes and I really enjoyed them. They were both very interesting. The topics were very diverse and often quite original, too! I particularly enjoyed Laurent Vissière's lecture on aliens. The only thing I would possibly change, if I could make a suggestion, would be to include more Czech history topics.

You had an excellent opportunity to compare the traditional work of historians (teaching and research) in Mr. Nejedlý's classes and the modern work of historians in the National Library last year. Would you consider either of these careers?

I'm currently studying for a master's degree in medieval History of Art, so firstly I have to write my thesis. I do really enjoy research, but I do not want to spend my whole life doing it. As I have already mentioned, I would like to work in the field of protection of historical heritage and to undertake practical field work.