
Exhibition of Globes and History of Their Making

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The Map Collection at Charles University was established in 1891 and was moved to Albertov 6, Prague 2, in 1913 where it still remains today. Following this, the Faculty of Science was created in 1920 and with it, the state map collection. Alice Warner, a Journalism student from the De Montfort University, Leicester, England, visited its latest exhibition, which highlights the historical globes produced by a prominent Czech company.

After World War Two, many confiscated documents were added to Charles University's map collection. Because individuals were so determined to make this the biggest collection in Czechoslovakia, maps from the National Library and the National Museum were also added to the assembly at Charles University. The last inventory was taken in 1980, and at that time, there were 130,000 maps, plus 3,337 atlases and 85 globes. They include many different maps and pieces of work, including historical, astronomical and military, which makes it varied and very interesting. About half of the collection are old prints, and the earliest dated works at Charles University are from the 16th century. Students and teachers alike can use these maps for their studies. Individuals are able to use the electronic copies of the maps or use the Map Collection room to study the originals, which greatly benefits Charles University and furthers the studies of the students.

The exhibition of globes and a history of their making 'J. Felkl and Son, a Globe-Making Factory', was opened in the Map Collection on May 4, 2017. It runs until November 30, 2017. The exhibition is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. every Wednesday and showcases a family firm, J. Felkl and Son, who have been working in Prague and later Roztoky by Prague (Roztoky u Prahy) for nearly a century. It was the largest globe-producing Austro-Hungarian company which produced some of the best globes of its era in many different sizes and languages. There is also a book published about the family and the company by Dr. Eva Novotná, the author of the exhibition and director of the Map Collection, which furthers the story of this great family, and which is available to buy now.

Jan Felkl and Son was originally run by a father and his three sons. Jan Felkl, the founder and father, ran the company until 1887. The globes were produced in a small factory in Roztoky u Prahy, a small town just outside of Prague. There were many scribes who worked on these globes including Josef Erben, Josef Jiří Bohm, Otto Delitsch and Stanislav Nikolau. There were also special writers for the globes that were produced in different languages (aside of Czech and German); these included Polish authors Frantisek Waligórski and Miroslaw Suchecki; Ivan Tomšič working in Ljubljana or Giovanni Schiaparelli in Milan. There were so many globes to be produced in different languages and types, the company had to grow and more people with different knowledge had to be involved in producing the globes.

In 1865 the company started the production of its largest globe which had 18 inches in diameter, and by 1873 it was making 15,000 globes per year, all by hand. This was a very long and expensive process, but there was no other way to make globes in those days, and they were very popular. To make these old globes, they began by creating two hollow halves of a sphere made out of plaster which would then be glued together and left to dry. Workers would then use tools and machines to get the smooth finish that they desired. After this, the print to go on the globe would be in the shape of curved diamond-shaped strips which were inter-connected so that they would fit together perfectly on the spherical shape. These would then be cut out by hand and could be stuck down easily and simply. This is how the regular globes were made; there were however also a lot more complicated globes made by this fascinating company, including folding globes.

J. Felkl and Son had patents for two special globes including the folding globe. The folding globe looks like an ordinary globe at first glance. However, upon closer inspection you can see a small knob which opens the outside hollow globe, to reveal a smaller globe inside. This means that you could transport the smaller globe; it was a smaller travel version of the original globe. This is a creation from J. Felkl and Son; they were famous not only for their globes but their compelling ideas too.

Most of the globes that were produced, were made for schools to use as teaching aids, because this was the most profitable market. Most of the schools around the 19th century had not seen a globe before and therefore this was a new and incredible tool that they wanted to use. However, during both of the world wars, the company struggled to make or deliver its products and therefore the public found J. Felkl and Son unreliable. As a result it got fewer orders especially from abroad, so it solely became a factory making globes as teaching aids for domestic schools. The company ceased to exist in 1955.

There are 15 globes currently on show in the exhibition at Charles University, although this changes throughout the time that the exhibition is open. There are globes in 17 world languages including Czech, Russian and German. The globes

on show also illustrate the story of the world evolving into what we know today. For example, some of the oldest globes that were made are not divided by state but have areas divided by indigenous tribes. In addition to this, there were different globes created after the 19th and 20th century revolutions and other state forming changes, some showing the Austro-Hungarian Empire and others showing states evolving into what we know today.

The globe exhibition illustrates in a very interesting way that the world has evolved, and how different writers saw the globe. For example, the words that they use vary on the different globes for certain parts of the world map. Furthermore, to find out more about this interesting family and the journey that they went on to produce these formidable globes, Eva Novotná, the author of the exhibition, has published her book which is now available to purchase.

***Alice Warner** is currently studying Journalism at De Montfort University, in Leicester, England. To add to what she has learnt on her course about writing structure and text, she joined a short summer internship with iForum, hoping that writing and editing for the Charles University publication would be beneficial to her and heighten her knowledge. Alice wishes to pursue a career in print journalism.*