

## Special and Legacy Collections of the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade

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The publication *Knjigohranište Univerziteta u Beogradu: posebne biblioteke i legati* (The Book Repository of the University of Belgrade: Special and Legacy Collections) is the third volume in a collection dedicated to the history and work of the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade. The collection *Knjigohranište* was launched in 2021 to mark the centenary of the construction of the first academic library in Serbia. The first volume, titled *Počeci* (Beginnings), addresses the founding of the Library, while the second — *Projekti izgradnje i rekonstrukcije* (Construction and Reconstruction Projects) — documents the original building period as well as subsequent expansion projects. The present volume, dedicated to special and legacy collections, was edited by Svjetlana Đelić, Svetlana Pucarević, Dragana Mihailović, and Dr Tatjana Brzulović Stanisavljević, and represents a collaborative effort by more than 15 authors — librarians of the University Library — whose individual contributions constitute this collected volume.

The title *Knjigohranište* draws attention to a prominent yet often overlooked inscription displayed in the entrance hall of the University Library, above the bust of Andrew Carnegie: *Let it be known that this book repository was established and founded as the fruit of a noble thought and a generous gift of the Carnegie Foundation, and that by the grace of God it was opened on the 24th of May, 1926.* According to available sources, this inscription was not composed spontaneously; rather, a dedicated committee oversaw its formulation in the period leading up to the Library’s opening in 1926, and this version was selected as the most fitting among several proposed alterna-

tives. The collection *Knjigohranilište* as a whole thus endeavours to uncover lesser-known aspects of the history and institutional narrative of the University Library in Belgrade — aspects that have frequently remained obscured or have not received adequate attention. Comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and clarity are the guiding principles of the entire collection, and these are particularly evident in the most recent volume, which presents the Library's gift collections.

## 1 Thematic Scope of the Publication

All gift collections held by the University Library carry the call number PB, designating them as “special collections”. These collections constitute undoubtedly the most valuable and significant portion of the Library's holdings, as they contain some of the oldest and most precious publications, manuscripts and old and rare printed books, unique archival materials, etc. In certain instances, the University Library has become the custodian of extraordinary material assets, including the legacies of Isidora Sekulić and Vojislav Jovanović Marambo. The Library currently holds 37 received and catalogued gift collections, each bearing the name of its donor or the individual who originally formed the collection. The publication notes, however, that the present overview represents a cross-section taken immediately prior to the celebration of the Library's major centennial anniversary (1926–2026), as new valuable collections have already been announced and are in the process of being acquired, processed, and incorporated into the holdings.

Although the special collections vary considerably in scope, composition, content, and value, the third volume of *Knjigohranilište* does not present a selection, but rather a representation of *all* special collections, applying a strictly formal principle — the collection's assigned number, i.e., its call number. This approach ensures that every collection, including those less widely known, is accorded its proper place within the whole. Moreover, several collections — particularly those that have been received by the University Library more recently — are described in print for the first time in this publication. Thus, presented side by side, are the special collections of Petar Budmani, Dr Svetozar M. Marković, Miroslav Premru, Otto Karmin and Dr Heinrich Christensen, Gedeon Dunderski, Luka Čelović Trebinjac, Prince Božidar Karađorđević, Andrew Carnegie, Dimitrije Ruvarac, Joca Vujić, Slobodan J. Jovanović, Branimir Čosić, Jovan Aleksijević, Živojin P. Simić, Stojan Novaković, Aleksandar Stojanović, Manojlo Maša Nikolić, Rudolf Sardelić, Dimitrije Mitrinović, Isidora Sekulić, Aleksandar

Belić, Vojislav Jovanović Marambo, Momčilo Milošević, Mihajlo Pupin, Radoslav Perović, Vojin Milić, Miroljub Todorović, the Austrian Library, Janko Radovanović, Zagorka Golubović, the Francophone Centre, Vid Vukasović, Branislav Krstić, Momčilo and Miroslava Popović, Slobodan Žunjić, and Bogdan Bogdanović.

The survey of all special collections in the publication is complemented by several texts that represent a significant added value to such an undertaking. At the beginning, the volume includes two introductory essays that address, among other matters, *the very concept of a legacy collection*, that is, a gift collection. One of these essays explicates the key distinction between a gift collection and a legacy collection, while the other examines the meaning of related terms — such as legator and legatee — which are frequently misunderstood, and presents the legislative framework governing this area. At the other end of the volume, a supplementary section contains several shorter texts devoted to those donors whose gifts did not formally constitute a distinct gift collection, but instead became part of the Library's general holdings; among these donors are Anica Savić Rebac, Uroš Predić, Ranko Bugarski, etc. The publication concludes with a review authored by MA Dušica Grbić, an Archeographer advisor at the Matica Srpska Library and one of the most acknowledged experts on this subject. The review does not merely offer an evaluative opinion of the publication; it also provides additional valuable insights into the place of special collections within the national scientific circle and culture.

The collected volume *Knjigohranilište* on special and legacy collections has thus acquired a multifaceted function: it reveals a specific segment of the University Library's holdings (the special collections), while simultaneously processing one of the most significant concepts in library and information science (legacy collection, gift collection); and, through mentioning other donors, it draws attention to the far-reaching cultural and social significance of the act of donation — an act through which valuable heritage has been preserved for future generations, even under unfavourable material and historical circumstances.

## 2 Overview of the Gift Collections

Each contribution on a special collection, as stated in the introductory notes, contains several obligatory elements: *a biography* of the donor or the individual whose name the collection bears, accompanied by *a photograph* where available; information regarding the *mode of acquisition* and the collection's

“path” to the University Library; a *description* of the collection in terms of its overall scope, with particular attention to the most valuable works it contains; and, finally, *selected bibliography* pertaining to the collection. Despite the fact that every contribution adheres to this structure, each text nonetheless bears the individual imprint of its author, who has approached the particular special collection in the manner deemed most appropriate for conveying its value and significance.

All texts are richly illustrated — featuring images of covers, title pages, bookplates, signatures, dedications, and other visual elements — which enrich the publication both visually and informatively.

The collected volume *Knjigohranilište Univerziteta u Beogradu: posebne biblioteke i legati* aspires to be comprehensive, factually substantiated, and professionally relevant, not only for the study of the work and collections of the University Library “Svetozar Marković,” but also for library and information science more broadly. However, in addition to its extensive corpus of material, this substantial publication endeavours to convey a deeper idea — one that, as stated in the introduction, concerns “people who love books, both those who collected and preserved them, and those who have continued that mission in the awareness of their duty to present the acquired and preserved heritage to others.” In doing so, the volume draws attention to the personal, humanistic dimension that it partially illuminates — a dimension that is frequently absent from institutional histories: the dedication of great bibliophiles, both those who owned the collections and those who recognised their worth. For it is ultimately that dedication, and that love of books, which sustains a library institution, shapes its history, and positions it within national culture.