

# MEMINI, ERGO SUM<sup>1</sup>: University Library “Svetozar Marković” (1926-2026)

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Review of the monograph: *A Century of the University Library in Belgrade: A Look into the New Millennium*. Belgrade: University Library “Svetozar Marković” and Kosmos Publishing, 2026

## 1 On Knowledge and Memory

The phenomenon of memory has long constituted one of the central preoccupations in the history of philosophy, arising directly from the fundamental question of the origins of human knowledge. For certain philosophers, memory is primarily a metaphysical category — it is anamnesis, the soul’s recollection of eternal truths apprehended in the realm of ideas prior to its embodiment. By contrast, others regard memory not as an a priori given, but as a product of experience and complex associative processes; within the framework of empiricism, memory is defined as an archive of sensory experience and an indispensable constitutive element of personal identity and continuity...

Even this brief historical and philosophical overview of select ideas makes evident that knowledge and memory are inextricably linked along the human path toward the comprehension of truth. Within this context, the vocation of a librarian is elevated to the level of a noble duty — the preservation of that truth.

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1. I remember, therefore I am: a variation on the Cartesian principle: Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am).

Memory is not merely the reproduction of the past; it is the force that enables the spirit of a species to shape future generations while simultaneously ensuring that spirit's own preservation. By caring for cultural heritage, libraries render it immortal, thereby guaranteeing the very survival of the cultural world. It is on this unwavering belief in the power of knowledge, and on a devoted concern for the indestructibility of human memory, that the present review of a significant anniversary — the centenary of the founding of the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade, an institution of the highest cultural, historical, and scholarly distinction — is grounded.

## 2 Set, Union, Intersection

The University Library “Svetozar Marković” is not merely an institution of cultural and educational significance; it is a foundation of Serbia's academic community. From the construction of the first building designed specifically to house the Library to the establishment of a modern center for digital literacy development and open science, through its sustained support for research activities and the education of successive generations of academic citizens, to the digitization of the cultural heritage entrusted to its care, the Library has built a community of people and books.

As one of the largest academic libraries in the Balkans and the parent institution for more than 230 faculty and institute libraries, the Library has become one of the central pillars of the library and information system of Serbia. With a collection of over 1.5 million bibliographic items and invaluable legacy collections, it is also the custodian of a significant intellectual heritage.

As such, the Library integrates collections, users, librarians, researchers, research scientists, and other libraries, weaving among them dense networks of interrelationships and becoming, simultaneously, their set, union, and intersection — a concept this monograph addresses at length.

## 3 Fans and Mirrors

The monograph *A Century of the University Library in Belgrade: A Look into the New Millennium* bears witness to the broad spectrum of activities that have defined one hundred years of the University Library's work. Starting from the core functions of library and information services — acquisition, cataloging, preservation, and lending of library materials and resources —

the scope broadens to encompass developmental activities in the domains of digitization, the implementation of advanced information technologies, and participation in international cooperation through membership in renowned professional organizations, and major international projects.

Conservation and restoration, evaluation of scientific work – citation analysis, education of users and librarians, as well as support for doctoral researchers, reference services, the development of portals for digitized content, the transcription of manuscript materials, the activities of the Library’s art center, the publishing activity, initiatives to increase the visibility of doctoral dissertations, and the retrospective digitization of dissertations — these and many other areas are presented and described in dedicated chapters of the monograph, each of which functions as a small mirror reflecting, from its own particular angle, the face of the University Library.

The Library’s human resources — its librarians — also represent a first-rate institutional asset. In the concluding section of the monograph, the name of every individual who devoted their professional vocation to laying the foundations of this institution is recorded. Alongside these names, the publication honors those who were entrusted with the care of the Library throughout its history: Uroš Džonić, Milica Prodanović, Ivo Frol, Miroslav Pantić, Stanija Gligorijević, Ivan Gađanski, Miroslav Ralić, Nikola Marković, Dejan Ajdačić, Bogoljub Mazić, Stela Filipi-Matutinović, and Aleksandar Jerkov. We must not forget the one whose name the Library bears: Svetozar Marković, who, during his short life, left a lasting mark through his advocacy for reform in Serbian literature and, above all, for social justice.

It is never possible to enumerate all the names deserving of recognition; yet from the year in which — through the generosity of the Carnegie Foundation — academic knowledge found a home of its own, an unbroken line of benefactors began. These donors saw in the development of this institution not only a common good, but also a pledge of their own lasting legacy. By bequeathing legacy collections, gift collections, and precious archival materials, the great figures of Serbian culture entrusted to the Library the heritage they had created or preserved themselves. Among these bequests is the legacy of towering figures of language and history: Vuk Karadžić, Stojan Novaković, and the brothers Ruvarac; of literary creators: Isidora Sekulić, Vojislav Ilić Marambo, Anica Savić Rebac, Zmaj, and Laza Kostić; as well as of intellectuals and educators such as Dositej Obradović and Sava Tekelija — and these are just some of the names whose “small libraries of great people” and manuscript legacies have merged into the precious treasury of the University Library.

Many editions and documents from these collections have been given a new digital form, thereby enabling yet another renewed, virtual life. A portion of these materials has also been featured in curated presentations that have traveled the world, appearing under the spotlights of major international conferences where they represented Serbia, its history, culture, and science.

## 4 Searching and Research Activities

The development of a shared cataloging and bibliographic database constitutes the central pillar of library activity and therefore merits particular attention. For the purpose of data standardization and efficient resource sharing, the University Library has been committed to this activity since the late 1980s, when the first efforts toward a joint database for the libraries of the former Yugoslav republics were initiated. From this foundation, through the combined efforts of the three keystones of the Serbian library system — the National Library of Serbia, the Matica Srpska Library, and the University Library “Svetozar Marković” — the Virtual Library of Serbia emerged, which today serves as the primary working tool for librarians and a fundamental prerequisite for professional development.

The search system grounded in shared cataloging is the principal source of metadata within the library network of Serbia. It provides the foundational infrastructure for projects requiring accurate and verified information about library materials. Thus, this database served as an indispensable prerequisite for the creation of the eNauka portal — one of the most significant resources for the Serbian academic community today, the sustainability of which is owed in no small part to the diligent efforts of librarians.

The sustained investment in the development of search capabilities, from bibliographic databases to full-text databases and researcher databases, has substantially strengthened the research potential of Serbian science as a whole. In this way, the University Library has actively fulfilled the primary purpose of its existence: the development of resources to enhance access to the materials and sources essential to scientific progress. By serving researchers, the University Library has simultaneously cultivated its own research capacities, both within the field of library and information science and in related disciplines. This is evidenced by the fact that, within a relatively short period, the Library’s organizational structure has accommodated dedicated units concerned with the development of scholarly potential and the education of emerging academic researchers.

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Considered as a whole, the monograph *A Century of the University Library in Belgrade* permits the conclusion that the Library's history represents a continuous effort toward the gathering of knowledge — i.e. its localization. At the same time, the Library physically consolidates information about that knowledge through the catalog format, stores and preserves its material carriers, and thereby achieves manifold and varied control over its documents collection — which is the primary task of any library. As a further development of this function, the Library employs contemporary information tools to create interconnections among physically separate documents, constructing new relationships between them through advanced contextual search systems. It is precisely at this point that tradition and modernity meet, where care for the preservation of historical heritage encounters an awareness of the Library's own role in shaping contemporary access to knowledge and learning.

Finally, let us return to memory and remember that the knowledge preserved within the University Library "Svetozar Marković" belongs to the corpus of world knowledge, which bears upon its face the stone countenance of eternity — for knowledge is as old as time itself. Thus, the book commemorating one hundred years of the Library's existence will remain part of this corpus as a testimony that will serve as a reference source for researchers, students, and the cultural public alike, enhancing the international visibility of Serbian science and culture while securing a representative account of the Serbian academic tradition.

May these few solemn and cordial words serve as a birthday gift to the Library, in honor of knowledge and in celebration of memory.