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Francis, Simon; Tedd, Lucy A.; Dahl, Kerstin; Žihlavičková, Elena; Tetřevová, Milena

Published in:
Library Hi Tech

DOI:
[10.1108/07378830210444531](https://doi.org/10.1108/07378830210444531)

Publication date:
2002

Citation for published version (APA):

Francis, S., Tedd, L. A., Dahl, K., Žihlavičková, E., & Tetřevová, M. (2002). Training for professional librarians in Slovakia by distance-learning methods: an overview of the PROLIB and EDULIB projects. *Library Hi Tech*, 20(3), 340-351. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07378830210444531>

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tel: +44 1970 62 2400
email: is@aber.ac.uk

Training for professional librarians in Slovakia by distance-learning methods: an overview of the PROLIB and EDULIB projects

AUTHORS

Kerstin Dahl, Head of Systems, The Library, University of Lund, Lund, Sweden, kerstin.dahl@lub.lu.se

Simon Francis, Library Development Consultants, 27 Whitehall Gardens, Chiswick, London W4 3LT, England simon@sfrancis.demon.co.uk

Lucy A. Tedd, Lecturer, Department of Information and Library Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth, Aberystwyth. SY 23 1EW Wales lat@aber.ac.uk

Milena Tetřevov, PROLIB and EDULIB Director, The University Library, Technical University of Kosice, Letn 9, 043 83 Kořice Slovak Republic. tetrevova@lib.tuke.sk

Elena Źihlavnkov, Head of Library, Technical University of Zvolen, T. G. Masaryka 20, 961 02 Zvolen, Slovak Republic. ezihlav@vsld.tuzvo.sk

KEYWORDS: training, distance-learning, librarians, ICT, management

ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of the PROLIB and EDULIB projects which involved the development and delivery of distance-learning courses in the Slovak language to library and information professionals in the Slovak Republic. Six modules were developed: Changes in libraries and the need to manage change; Customer care in libraries; Internet and new information technologies in libraries; Management implications of information technology in libraries; Electronic publishing; and Digital libraries. Each course comprised a week of “face- to- face” lecture sessions, practicals and group discussions followed by three months of guided work through printed self-study workbooks and computer mediated Internet communication. The courses were held in training centres at university libraries in two towns in Central and Eastern Slovakia (Zvolen and Kosice). The initial project, PROLIB was funded by the European Union’s Tempus Phare Programme and involved partners in England, Sweden and Wales as well as in Slovakia. A complementary project, EDULIB, enabled the updating of course materials and the training of more librarians and was funded by the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The need for training of library and information staff worldwide has always been necessary and is even more so in the twenty-first century with all the developments related to the provision of information services via the Internet. This is evidenced, for instance, in the UK with the government providing £20m for training of public librarians in matters related to Information and Communications

Technology (ICT) as part of the People's Network (Sharpe,2001) and in South-East Asia with Unesco co-ordinating the development of a training package for library automation and ICT (Ornager,2000). In countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet republics the changes that have taken place since 1990 have resulted in major training needs for library and information professionals with decentralisation of management and the open access to information. The development of a two-week long multinational training course which has been held annually since 1997 is just one example of meeting this training need (Robinson et al., 2000).

An approach adopted in Slovakia has been to develop a range of distance-learning courses which are delivered, and have supporting material written, in the Slovak language. Full details are provided on the project's website [1]. Financial support for these courses was provided by the European Union (EU) and the Open Society Institute. The preparation of course materials, the delivery of the courses, the support for participants and the management of the whole process has all been carried out in Slovakia. Advice on the content of courses and practicalities related to the development of distance-learning course materials as well as the organisation of study visits to libraries in their respective countries has been provided by project partners in England, Sweden and Wales. The stages involved in planning, delivering and evaluating these distance-learning training courses in Slovakia are described in this paper. The project is seen as a success and the approach adopted could be used in other similar situations.

PROLIB and EDULIB

In 1997, one of the authors (Tetřevová), from the library at the Technical University of Kosice (TUK) in Slovakia was among the first cohort of students of an annually run distance-learning course for the professional development of librarians and practising information specialists in Central and Eastern Europe at the ICIMSS (International Centre for Information Management Systems and Services) at Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland (Sliwiska, 1999). ICIMSS has an international Advisory Board (with representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, the US as well as from countries in the region) and its teachers also come from a range of countries. The course at ICIMSS, which is held in English, comprised a number of modules covering:

- Information technology and its applications
- Strategic planning and managing the process of change
- Digital libraries – a comparative study
- Institutional policies
- Financial management
- Electronic publishing [2]

It was evident to Tetřevová that some of the topics covered in these modules would be relevant to colleagues in Slovakia and so, in March 1998, a proposal for funding was submitted to the European Union's (EU's) Tempus Phare programme. The Tempus Phare programme is designed to assist Central and Eastern European countries in the implementation of political and economic reforms since the late 1980s [3]. The resulting project, PROLIB, Professional Development Programme for Librarians, aimed to develop and deliver modules for the continuing professional

development of librarians in Slovakia and to extend the function of university libraries to become centres of advanced knowledge and for providing services in the area of continuing education as part of the process of lifelong learning. The concept from the start was that the modules would be prepared in Slovakian by the Slovak partners in the project with advice from western partners and would be delivered using distance-learning techniques. There is currently a lack of English language skills by many library and information professionals in Slovakia. However, this will change in the coming years as English is becoming the accepted second language in schools in Slovakia.

The broad objective of the PROLIB project as stated in the application for funding to Tempus Phare was: "To assure that the Slovak libraries are in a position to offer high quality services that are compatible with EU standards and are in accordance with the changing needs of the era." The decision as to which topics should be covered by the programme was based on the results of the user needs survey. The PROLIB project ran from December 1998 – March 2001 and received 331,000 Euros of funding.

As well as the development and delivery of the modules outlined later in this paper the activities and stated expected outcomes of PROLIB involved:

- short term visits to western Europe for 20 Slovak course developers and lecturers;
- training in open and distance-learning techniques for 20 Slovak course developers and lecturers;
- the setting up of a PC-based training centre at both the university libraries of Kosice and Zvolen and the purchase and installation of suitable equipment;
- the training of 180 Slovak librarians using the six PROLIB modules
- the improvement of the professional skills of 20 course participants during study visits to European Union libraries after the course;
- the improvement of English language skills of these 40 Slovak librarians by attending an English language course before the study visits;
- accreditation within Slovakia of the Professional Development Programme;
- management, dissemination and evaluation.

The Open Society Institute (OSI) was set up by the financier George Soros in 1992 and since 1994 its Network Library Program (NLP) has supported and contributed to the development of libraries in the Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics through funding a number of training initiatives and workshops [4]. In 1999 the NLP, which is administered by the OSI office in Budapest, Hungary, started a new initiative related to the setting up of regional training centres for the continuing education and professional development of professional staff in libraries and information units. Following the work undertaken on PROLIB during 1999 further funds of 29,680 US\$ (about 33,000 Euros) were made available for a complementary project known as EDULIB which ran from January- December 2000. The EDULIB project provided a continuation of the work that had been started during the PROLIB project in particular for further development

of the training centres in Kosice and Zvolen, the updating of the course materials for four of the six modules and for the training of 39 librarians.

In total 175 librarians from all types of library (national, academic, health, technical and special) participated in the modules. Fifteen trainees were accepted for each of the six modules which were run in the training centres in both Kosice and Zvolen (but in the event five people were unable to attend for various reasons). The modules were advertised via printed information leaflets and information on the project website. Trainees were selected on the basis of their application form and recommendations from their library director.

PROJECT PARTNERS

In accordance with the rules governing Tempus Phare projects there were a number of institutions involved as partners in the PROLIB project. At the start there were the following:

- a) Technical University of Kosice (TUK). TUK was founded in 1952 and has about 10,500 students in eight faculties. Staff from the TUK Library are involved in a number of regional and international projects. Kosice is situated in eastern Slovakia and is the second major city of the country. TUK was the formal contractor for the project and carried full financial and management responsibility for the organisation and control. These responsibilities were exercised through the Project Co-ordinator (Tetřevová).
- b) Slovak Library of Forestry and Wood Sciences, Technical University Zvolen (SLDK). SLDK was founded in 1992 and has about 3,000 students. Its library is a specialised scientific library for workers and researchers in forestry and woodwork. Zvolen is a historic city in the central area of Slovakia.
- c) Kosice Library and Information Network Consortium (KOLIN). KOLIN was founded in 1993 as a consortium of three university libraries, located in two towns in Eastern Slovakia (Kosice and Presov), and one regional state scientific library in Kosice. In 1995 KOLIN received funding from the Mellon Foundation to purchase and implement the ALEPH integrated library management system and to create a union catalogue of libraries involved in the consortium.
- d) The Slovak Association of Libraries, Bratislava (SAK). SAK was founded in 1992 with the aim of supporting the development of Slovak libraries on the basis of democratic principles and mutual co-operation. There are currently about 60 member libraries of SAK.
- e) Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava. The Ministry of Education is a government body responsible for education as well as continuing education in Slovakia. The Ministry is involved in the accreditation of courses.
- f) Lund University Library, Sweden. Lund University was founded in 1666 and has some 37,000 students making it the largest unit for research and higher education in Sweden. Lund University has a strong record of co-operating with a number of universities and research institutes worldwide. Being a deposit library and a national lending library for Swedish imprints the Lund University Library is primarily a research library but there are 180 independent departmental libraries of the

University. Dahl, the Systems Librarian at Lund University has been involved in a number of EU-funded projects in former republics of the USSR.

g) Library Development Consultants, London (LDC). LDC was founded in 1975 to provide impartial advice to clients on all aspects of library and information systems. It has undertaken work for clients throughout the world including Unesco, the British Council and the Open Society Institute. A consultant from LDC (Francis) was involved in the delivery of the ICIMSS course.

h) Department of Information and Library Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth (DILS/UWA). DILS/UWA developed from the College of Librarianship Wales which was founded in 1964. From the outset it has had an international outlook with a high quality teaching and research profile. Since 1986 students have been able to study for higher degrees by distance learning courses and now there are about 500 distance learners studying a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as about 150 full-time students. The Open Learning Unit (OLU) at DILS/UWA was set up in 1993 to support open and distance learning.

The number of partners increased in June 2000 so as to enable staff from other institutions to obtain funding for travel in the UK or Sweden. This was necessary according to the regulations of the European Training Fund (ETF) the body which oversees the Tempus Phare projects. The other institutions which became project partners were: The Forest Research Institute in Zvolen; The British Council in Bratislava; and The Regional State Library in Zvolen. One person from each of the project partners was a member of the PROLIB Project Management Committee which met regularly to monitor progress and make strategic decisions about the project.

COURSE MODULES

Prior to the setting up of the PROLIB project a number of training needs for Slovakian librarians were identified. These included:

- competence in the use of new information technologies(IT) in libraries;
- awareness of the influence of IT on the management of libraries;
- understanding, managing and coping with change in libraries(political, sociological, economic, cultural, educational, organisational and technological).

The main aim of PROLIB was to develop and deliver a Professional Development Programme for librarians working in all types of libraries in Slovakia. The programme comprised six “stand-alone” modules and the following provides a brief insight into the topics covered within each module.

Module 1 Changes in Libraries and the Need to Manage Change

- Analysis of the current situation in libraries
- Change strategies
- The skills of managing change
- Managing people for change
- Education and updating of skills
- Flexibility, accountability, and performance
- Building of the "Learning Organisation"

Module 2 Customer Care in Libraries

- The library for the customers
- Customer care as an attitude
- Changing the climate of the library
- The importance of people
- Physical factors of customer care
- The corporate 'Image'
- The processes of customer care
- Organisational policy, staff responsibilities
- Providing more with less, and improving quality
- Structures that encourage better customer care
- Understanding the needs of users

Module 3 Management implications of Information Technology in Libraries

- IT as a tool for better and more efficient services
- Analysis the objectives of the library
- Reorganisation and restructuring of the library
- Implication of IT for the staffing structure
- The effect of IT on the physical layout of the library
- Management information from IT
- Planning and implementing changes in the structure of the library

Module 4 Internet and New Information Technologies in Libraries.

- Distributed networks
- Client / Server technology
- Structure of documents and encoding standards
- Internet toolsets (Telnet, WWW, Databases, OPACs)
- Electronic output formats
- Internet and the librarians
- Availability of resources online
- Collection management and the Internet (Virtual collections)

Module 5 Digital Libraries

- Resource identification, verification, navigation
- Search engines
- Information retrieval strategies
- Z39.50 Protocol and OPACs
- Cataloguing and exchanging bibliographic information across the Internet
- Specific information resources useful for librarians

Module 6 Electronic Publishing

- Evaluation and quality of websites
- The publishing process
- Management of a website
- Legal and security issues
- Planning, production and editorial issues
- Functional publishing
- Publishing, promotion and advertising
- Evaluation for quality of own site

A self-study workbook was prepared for each module. These workbooks were structured and written in a “user-friendly” way that helped the trainees make sense of the subject content. Learning objectives, summaries, exercises and feedback were provided so that the trainees could chart and check their own progress. Distance learning enables learners to study “in their own place and own time” and allows them to plan study routines to fit in with work and home commitments. In order to overcome potential isolation the trainees were encouraged to keep in touch with their “class mates” via electronic mailing lists which enabled group discussions between the trainees and the module instructor. In addition the trainees were supported by the academic instructor who provided feedback every two weeks or so on the assignments.

The development and delivery of these modules was carried out by staff from three of the Slovak partners in the project (TUK, SLDK and KOLIN) with assistance from the non-Slovakian partners who were each allocated responsibility for specific modules. The delivery of the modules comprised one week long face-to-face teaching which took place in the two Learning Centres that were set up at TUK and SLDK as part of the project. In each learning centre there were 15 PCs and so each module was available for 15 librarians in each of the two locations. In addition, each module involved three months of computer-mediated distance learning for the participants. All teaching, course materials and distance learning communication used the Slovak language although some of the introductory lectures during the face-to-face sessions were taught by non-Slovakian lecturers and so were translated into Slovakian. Trainees were expected to spend 140 hours on each module of which 24 hours were spent at the residential courses, 80 hours on self-study of the printed materials and 36 hours in preparing the assignments and taking part in the distance-learning activities.

PREPARATORY PHASE

As with many such projects the main planning stage took place before the submission of the application to the Tempus Phare programme. Once the PROLIB project was accepted a preparatory phase took place in which partners came together at a workshop to discuss roles etc., course developers and lecturers learnt about developing course materials for delivery in distance-learning mode and also visited some libraries in the UK and/or Sweden and then sat down to the task of writing the workbooks and developing the assignments.

Workshop

In April 1999, 27 people participated in a two-day workshop organised at the Technical University of Kosice. This was the first meeting of all the partners involved in the PROLIB project and, following the first formal Project Management Committee meeting, there was opportunity for detailed discussion of the methods by which the objectives defined in the proposal could be attained. Formal presentations took place and, in addition, a training needs analysis of the course developers was conducted, in order to develop a clearer picture of the educational aims of the planned programme which was to be developed and delivered.

Training the trainers course

In September 1999, 21 Slovaks who were to develop and/or deliver modules came to DILS/UWA for a week-long intensive 'Training the Trainers' course run by staff from the OLU (Tedd et al., 2000). Each module was to be developed by three people and would be delivered in each of the two centres by two, usually other, people. The course developers/lecturers consisted of university teachers in particular subject areas and library management, information and technical staff. Some of these people had little, if any, experience of teaching, and had also had very little previous professional involvement with educational issues. Background information concerning the course developers and the trainees had been gathered during the April workshop including the contexts in which they were working, and in which learning and teaching would take place. Through discussions with each group involved with the respective modules a picture gradually emerged of how each module would be approached and delivered, what resources would be required and how assessments would be devised. The programme for the week was designed to provide the opportunity for the participants to:

- learn about the principles and methodology of open and distance learning;
- discuss the issues presented;
- work in separate module-related groups to plan and discuss ideas for the modules, and then share these with the whole group;
- have access to OLU staff for advice and discussion;
- have access to the technology used at DILS/UWA for supporting distance learners.

The training week was divided into three sections: Development workshops, Group work and discussions and Presentations. Each of the sections was related to a "stage of learning" of the learning paradigm: conceptualisation; construction; dialogue (Mayes and Fowler, 1999). The methodological progression

from the general to the specific produced a powerful group momentum, culminating in the group presentations. These showed that the participants:

- had developed a clear understanding of topic areas;
- showed competence in using open learning tools and skills;
- were able to apply their knowledge to their own situation.

The end result provided an ideal motivational 'launch pad' from which further work on the modules could proceed.

Study visits for course developers

In August 1999 a study visit to London was organised by LDC for those involved in developing the three management-based modules. The aim of this visit was to provide those responsible for writing the modules the opportunity to experience good examples of professional practice. Libraries visited included the British Library, Birkbeck College, Institute of Education, Roehampton Institute, School of East European Studies, South Bank University, the UK Library Association and the British Library of Political and Economic Science. In addition much time was spent with staff from LDC (Francis) in discussing the possible structure and content of these modules.

Following the training the trainers course in Aberystwyth the six people who were to develop the modules on Electronic Publishing and Digital Libraries stayed for a further two weeks to work on these modules and to benefit from advice given by relevant staff at DILS/UWA. In addition visits were made to libraries such as the National Library of Wales, the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, and the Information Services department of the University of Wales Aberystwyth.

Finally the three people who were to develop the course on the Internet and new technologies visited Sweden in November 1999 for discussions and visits with staff from Lund University.

Development of modules

Between September 1999 and November 1999 those involved in developing the first two modules worked extremely hard to produce the necessary workbooks. In her report to the second Project Management Committee in December 1999 one of the developers of Module 1 described the written package to support the module as comprising 161 pages, 24 case studies, 40 various tasks and exercises, 41 bibliographic references and six tasks which the trainees were supposed to submit every two weeks. It was necessary to include a large amount of information in the course workbooks as such information had not previously been published in Slovak library journals or in other material available in the Slovak language. The development of the modules was shared between three partner organisations. Staff from TUK developed three modules, staff from KOLIN one module and staff from SLDK two modules. All modules were taught in both training centres in Zvolen and Kosice.

Setting up of training rooms

Training rooms were set up at the training centres in TUK and Zvolen. These comprised 15 PCs, servers, suitable data projection equipment, colour printers and other relevant office equipment.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The major phase of the PROLIB project was the implementation phase which lasted from November 1999 to February 2001. During this time the courses were delivered, the 40 people who had performed best at the assignments took part in an intensive two-week long English language course and the highest performing 20 of those went on a study visit to see libraries and information centres in either the UK or Sweden.

Delivery of modules

Each module comprised :

- Residential element – lasting for one week in either Kosice or Zvolen
- Distance-learning part – this lasted over a period of three months during which each participant had to submit six pieces of work(later reduced to five) to the tutor
- Evaluation – this consisted of a written test and an oral (or Powerpoint) presentation of a final piece of work. This was assessed by an examination committee of three people – the two lecturers from the course and a Chairman (who was either a Library Director or a Subject Specialist)

In total there were 21 people involved in developing the modules, 29 people involved as lecturers and 12 people involved as tutors to support the trainees during their studies. Of the lecturers 11 were university teachers, 16 were librarians and two (Dahl and Francis) were involved in introducing the modules about which they had provided advice. In addition there was one member of the TUK library staff who provided the technical support (e-mail, web access) throughout the delivery of the modules.

From the start the concept had been that the courses developed by one partner institution or training centre would be provided to the second training centre and that each course would be held twice, once in Kosice and once in Zvolen. This duly happened according to plan. Because the courses were delivered in parallel by different lecturers in Kosice and Zvolen some people who were lecturers were not the people who had been responsible for developing the module materials.

The first two modules, Changes in libraries and the need to manage change and Customer care in libraries were held in November 1999. A member of staff from LDC (Francis) provided some introductory sessions to the modules and staff from DILS/UWA (Tedd and a colleague) attended and were able to assist the project co-ordinator (Tetřevová,) in developing evaluation forms and so on. The second set of two modules took place between April 2000 and July 2000 with staff from Lund (Dahl) and LDC(Francis) providing introductory sessions. The final set of two courses took place between September 2000 and December 2000. In total 175 trainees started the courses and 117 (67%) successfully completed all the course work and assignments.

The students were given technical and administrative support during the whole distance learning period. For each student a PROLIB e-mail account was established. For each course a mailing list was established for mutual discussion between students, tutors and the course administrators. The project website provided study links, self-assessment questions, assignments and other selected study materials.

Retraining in English

English courses for those who had performed well in the courses were provided in both Kosice and Zvolen. In Kosice the courses were provided by native English speakers from the British Council offices. In general this course was aimed at improving the participants' abilities to communicate in English in areas relevant to their work, with particular regard to language and vocabulary in the field of library and information studies. In addition the course focused on "survival language skills". In Zvolen the course was delivered by a member of the Department of foreign languages at the Technical University.

Study visit to the UK

Thirteen Slovakian librarians, many of whom had never travelled to the UK before, came on a two week study visit to the UK in September 2000. For the first week they were based at DILS/UWA and participated in some of activities organised for students attending the study school for the distance learning Masters course in library and information science. Visits were arranged to a number of local libraries/information centres including:

- a) National Library of Wales which included talks from staff involved with digitisation issues, the Keeper of Manuscripts and Archives and staff from the Department of Printed Books as well as a tour of this copyright library [5].
- b) Celtica multimedia exhibition and supporting printed and electronic information services which staff from the centre described [6].
- c) The Hugh Owen Library on the main University of Wales Aberystwyth campus where the Director of Information Services, spoke on the management of change in a university information service and this was followed by a talk and demonstration of a range of the electronic information services that are made available for students, as well as a tour of the library [7].

Time was allocated for the participants to investigate the range of electronic and printed information sources and services available to students at Aberystwyth and the Slovaks were all issued with local e-mail addresses and were given a full introduction to all the information services facilities available.

For the second week, visits were made to a number of institutions in England. At the University of Birmingham a very impressive series of speakers described a range of developments in Birmingham's Information Services and the visit was completed by an interesting guided tour [8]. At Birmingham Public Libraries, one of the largest public library services in the UK and Europe, time was spent hearing about and seeing many of the services offered [9]. At the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, the Head of Technical Services (Peter Burnett) gave a presentation on the provision of electronic information services. In Oxford and, through his work on the NLP of the Open Society Institute was able to make direct comparisons with developments in Central and Eastern Europe [10]. In Oxford there was also a chance for a visit and talk at Blackwell's bookshop [11]. In London, the Systems Manager at King's College London gave an introduction to the use of the ALEPH library management system as well as a tour of the library buildings in the Strand [12]. Several of the Slovaks were using ALEPH and so it was interesting for them to "compare notes". The final group visit was to the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economic where talks on the "Investors in People" programme and electronic library developments were given [13].

The study visit participants were greatly assisted by the fluent English of one participant (from the British Council Library in Kosice) as she was able to translate into Slovakian some of the points made during the various visits.

Study visit to Sweden

Seven participants from different types of library visited Lund University in Sweden in late February 2001. The purpose of this visit was to give the participants an overall feeling of how information technology is used in different types of libraries. Most of the time was spent in the main university library of Lund [14]. As the library is very old and serves students and researchers from all faculties in the university the difference in their information needs were described during a visit to the reference and information department. The handling of electronic journals and paper-bound journals was shown during a visit to the serials department of the University. Discussions about metadata were held at NetLab, the research and development department within Lund University Libraries which is involved in a number of international projects [15]. In addition there were discussions about the building of the libraries' websites and how the rather complex computer network is set up.

A full day was spent at Bibliotekstjänst (BTJ) AB, a Swedish company that develops and supplies a range of information services and media products to libraries, booksellers, publishers and so on [16]. In addition two half-day visits were arranged to Lund Public Library [17] and to Malmo Public Library [18].

As with the study visit in the UK the participants had time to spend being "ordinary" users of the library at Lund University and had passwords so as to use the range of electronic information services available.

EVALUATION PHASE

A Project Management Committee comprising one member of each project partner was established from the outset and was chaired by the Project Co-ordinator. Four management meetings took place during the period of the PROLIB project (in Kosice, London, Lund and Zvolen) during which strategic decisions about the project were made and activities, including the state of the finances, were reported. Members of this committee worked out a detailed time-schedule for the project and monitored its progress. A mailing list was established to enable effective communication between members of this committee. A detailed evaluation scheme was developed during the first meeting of the management committee. The primary criteria identified were:

- meeting the needs as identified in the needs analysis
- fulfilment of quality criteria for all courses to be developed
- gaining feedback from participants of the courses organised
- keeping within the budgetary and time constraints of the project.

Here are some of the results from the questionnaires given to participants :

a) Based on 159 replies received related to questions on the face-to-face course:
What was the best?

New ideas, lectures	30.2%
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Lecturers	28.3%
Overall organisation	19.5%
Practical work, examples	14.5%
Workbook	10.1%
Technical equipment of training room	1.9%
What was the worst/unclear?	
Few practical examples given	9.4%
Little time given to some topics	6.3%
Course run over a weekend	5.0%
Too much theory	3.8%
Not enough discussion	2.5%
Not long enough	1.8%
Varying level of trainees	1.6%
Terminology	1.3%

b) Based on 109 replies received to the questionnaire about the distance learning part

	Yes	No
The study required more time than I expected	76%	16.4%
I will recommend the course to my colleagues	86.5%	2.6%
I understood what the goals of the course were	97.1%	0.4%
Assignments were clear and understandable	88.5%	8.2%
The evaluation from lecturers was helpful and motivating	84.6%	1.2%
I was satisfied with the technical support	76.9%	11.6%
I am satisfied with the work of my tutor	91.3%	0.2%

c) Based on 114 questionnaires completed after the final test

What was the worst part of the course?	
Too many assignments and not enough time	15.2%
Face-to-face course took place over a weekend	6.0%
Administration and support	4.9%
Student workbook	4.5%
Distance learning part	3.8%
Too much work at the end of the course	3.8%
Technical support	2.6%
Residential week	2.3%

5. Conclusions and the future

The objectives of the PROLIB project were ambitious and responded to a demand for the continuing professional education for librarians in Eastern and Central Slovakia. In May 2000 the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic accredited the TUK for the provision of the first four courses. As part of this accreditation TUK will be responsible for archiving the study and teaching materials and all documentation. The accreditation lasts until 2005. Accreditation for the remaining two courses was granted in July 2000. In general those involved in the project felt that much had been achieved through:

- the choice of Western and Eastern European project partners who covered not only the necessary professional needs and skills but also the “human aspects” necessary for successful completion of projects such as: good communication skills; reliability; personal involvement; ability to work extremely hard to meet tight time schedules and effective co-operation
- the right mix of modules to meet the demand for continuing education
- the choice of computer-mediated Internet Communication as a delivery medium

In her final report on the PROLIB project Tetřevov notes some of the key successes as:

- having the possibility to be involved in producing modules in an innovative way;
- having the possibility to exchange ideas with other colleagues from varying backgrounds in Slovakia and from Western Europe
- enabling trainees to establish new IT possibilities in their home institutions
- enabling trainees to use e-mail and the Internet regularly
- providing an opportunity for trainees to apply knowledge acquired during study visits to their home institutions.

The effect of this training on the immediate target group should, in the long term, positively influence the provision of information services and lead the way towards a “learning society” in Slovakia.

A further spin-off from the PROLIB project was the development of IT capabilities in Kosice and KOLIN libraries through the donation of PCs. LDC arranged for the donation of 43 superseded 486 and Pentium PCs from the universities of Greenwich and North London to the KOLIN Consortium. Funding for the transport costs was provided by the Mellon Foundation, and the Ministry of Education in Slovakia provided certificates that exempted the donation from Customs dues on arrival in Slovakia.

Some problems did arise. Most notable was an unfortunate delay in the transference of initial funds from the European Union which affected the timing of various of activities. In projects of this nature the selection of reliable project partners is essential to ensure good co-operation so that the expected outcomes can be reached within the given time schedule. In this case individuals from the various partner organisations were known to others beforehand and all progressed smoothly.

In September 2000 the OSI organised a meeting of the co-ordinators of training centres in 17 countries(mainly those in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) in Budapest. A presentation on PROLIB was given by Tetřevov and the approach adopted within PROLIB of computer-mediated distance learning was considered to be unique in the region. It is hoped that the experiences of the PROLIB project will prove to be beneficial to others in the region. In March 2001 the OSI also funded six librarians from the region for a six-week study visit to the Mortensen Centre at the University of Illinois in the US. One of the module developers from Zvolen was selected for this opportunity.

In June 2001 the British Council, Slovakia and the OSI in Budapest and the Technical University in Kosice funded a 3-day seminar in Kosice at which those who had travelled to Sweden, UK and USA were able to compare their experiences and relate how the lessons learnt from those experiences were being

applied in the development of services in their libraries in Slovakia. This was a fitting end to the 2-year project in which it was evident that major changes had been effected in a number of Slovakian libraries as a result of the PROLIB project.

During 2001 the courses developed within PROLIB will continue to be run at both Zvolen and Kosice although participants may now have to pay towards this. In addition further courses will be developed covering Intellectual Property Rights and library management systems. In July 2001 the PROLIB training centre received a second grant from OSI (for 14,600 US\$ or 16,391 Euros) for a project to be known as EDULIB II which will last until February 2002.

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