

# Readers Ask, the Library Answers – What Are the Outcomes of Student Evaluations?

From May to June 2016 a regular student's evaluation was held at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. In this survey there were several questions regarding the libraries of the faculty. Namely: "How satisfied are you with the working of the library?", "What problems have you encountered?" and "What is your experience with the employees of the library? Can they help you and offer advice?" We received 952 answers to these questions.

We read all the answers and thought about them. Most commentaries were of a positive nature and the readers praised not only the services but also the librarians, some of those comments were beautiful and original (we won't forget the "kitten of a librarian"). We also appreciate the constructive criticism. Some complaints were well-founded, but unfortunately we cannot comply with some of the suggestions. It is simply impossible to meet the wishes of everyone (not enough cultural events/too many of them, for example). Some points of criticism reflect a lack of information on the readers' part, which we consider to be our fault. It seems we do not provide our readers with enough information.

The comments can be divided into general comments about the department libraries and comments about the Jan Palach Library, which is the biggest library of the faculty. There is no point in summarizing the majority of comments about the department libraries, as they were mostly general in nature. Those that were not of general nature will be consulted with the individual librarians, we will discuss the reasons behind

them, and we will try to find possible solutions. The complaints ranged from non-functional bells to short term loans in the library of English studies and early opening hours in the Špork Palace Library.

Some of the readers commented on the library in Jinonice. This library which unfortunately does not belong under the Faculty of Arts Library, but we have forwarded these comments to the staff. Sometimes the readers even evaluated the the Faculty of Education Library on Magdalény Rettigové 4. However, the Faculty of Arts has nothing to do with this institution.

## **Study Areas**

Many of the readers complain that there are not enough study areas. Yes, unfortunately that is true. We lack space, which applies to the whole faculty. But the libraries at the building on Celetná come out the worst. The Faculty of Arts Library has more than a million volumes of physical documents. We cannot even fit in these books. A part of them is located in depositories in Prague or even outside the city. The ideal library from a librarian's point of view is located in one building. All its books are freely accessible so the readers can browse them. It would have at least a thousand places for students to sit down and study and it would be open 24/7. From your remarks it is obvious that even students desire such a library. Alas we reside in the historical buildings in the centre of Prague, the library is composed of 26 libraries both small and big, the books are at all possible locations and the students often have to place an order to get the books they want, because they are located in the archive or in cabinets all across the faculty. This is not an ideal situation or even comfortable one for everyone involved. But it is what it is. We plan to place navigational guides about the available study rooms of the libraries in the building of Celetná, which you can use even though you usually go to a different library.

## **Printing and Copy Problems**

Multi-functional copy machines are placed all across the faculty, which are not managed by the library or even by the faculty itself. They are rented out and managed by an external supplier. This is a very favourable option for the faculty at large: the printing is of high quality, it is cheap and the employees have less to worry about, because the machines themselves notify the supplier, who is responsible for their maintenance, when there is a problem. The quality of the maintenance is proportional to the price of the printing. This is a prefect system until a problem arises. Unfortunately if there is a problem, the statistical probability it will happen in the library is very high. 40 % of all printing and 20% of copying across the faculty happens in the Library of Jan Palach. The librarians cannot do anything with the machines themselves. They can only report the problem to the external supplier. At the present time there is one librarian who is in regular communication with them. We are also negotiating for a librarian from the library of Jan Palach to be trained to be able to maintain the machines. Should it come to pass, the problem might be solvable in a shorter time period and with more flexibility.

## **Copy-machines Settings**

After logging in into the faculty computer students have to often set up the printing machine again. It is an inefficient and fruitless task, which only takes time. By the laws of Murphy it always happens when the student had to be somewhere else five minutes ago with that one single printed piece of paper. Yes, we know. The computers are managed by the faculty's It – Services division (IT). We are co-operating with them so we can remove the issue. It is an on point remark and we thank you for it. We can already disclose that the IT department is preparing some new features from the beginning of the new academic year. For example it will be possible to send documents for print from your mobile devise or even from

your home computer, it will also be possible to print from an USB flash disk. These and other technical changes should improve the current situation with the printing.

## **Biblioboxes**

A bibliobox is both a rather nifty and not so great a tool at the same time. It helps readers return their books when the library is closed. At the same time they are rather unfortunate when we take into consideration the fragility of books. A heavy book put into the bibliobox can break the ligature of the other books. Allows us to complain a little here; we in the library of Jan Palach would very much appreciate, if you would please return books during the opening hours at the counter. It's only a few meters and a biliobox won't save you from a fine anyway. We did try to find a solution to their placements. The perfect solution would have been for them to be placed in an accessible place on the street so the readers could return the books even when the building of the faculty is closed. Unfortunately our buildings are not in a campus but in the centre of town. Many of our employees regularly find empty beer cans and other trash behind the windows on the ground floor. What would we find in the bilioboxes? There were few remarks upon the placement of the bibliobox at Celetná, where it is placed at a higher floor. Here unfortunately the reason behind it is that our faculty is only a guest of the rector's office, so we have to abide their conditions.

## **Differing Opening Hours Across the Libraries**

As it was mentioned above our library is spread across 26 libraries in total. All these libraries cooperate, but most have also a certain amount of autonomy. In your comments you mentioned that it is very hard to go to several libraries in one day; for example to borrow a book in one and pay a fine in another. That is certainly true. In certain libraries the opening hours are adapted to the class timetable, in others

the librarians work as secretaries, and sometimes it is required that the libraries cover as many opening hours as possible and provide study areas for the whole day. Despite it not being an easy task we will attempt to align and unify the opening hours better. Thank you for the idea.

## **Jan Palach Library**

Most comments and reviews were for the Jan Palach Library, the central library for undergraduate students and for the department libraries in the main building. This library is the newest addition and therefore is the only one that was designed as a library in the first place.

## **Cold or Hot?**

You mentioned many times that it is cold in the blue study room or hot in the computer room. This is an everyday problem even for the librarians. They too get hot or cold. We work with the facilities office which contacts an external supplier who manages the air conditioner. Unfortunately it is only hardware and outside the weather does what it wants. When the weather changes abruptly (it gets cold), the company managing the air conditioning sets machine to a heating setting. And then it gets warm again. And so the process circles into a loop. Not to mention that sometimes malfunctions inevitable. We are a rather big institution and malfunctions do happen. The librarians try to solve everything at once (they themselves don't want to sit in the cold) however they have yet to learn how to be technicians as well.

## **Clean Up**

Librarians naturally love order and tidiness and delight in having a clean library where everything is in order. However, a lot of people come into the library and so even though the library is cleaned every morning, there can be some gaps. We try to solve them as soon as possible. The windows by the street are another topic altogether. Your comments and remarks

were well-founded. The library was closed the first half of July and during that time some small repairs were made. There is also a windows washing planned that will encompass the whole faculty in September.

### **Security Alarms on the Books**

It happened rather often that books lent in the library of Jinonice would set off the alarms in the Jan Palach Library and vice versa. This problem is not because of the security gates but because in Jinonice they use a different frequency for their security microchips. We have been working on a solution with the library to coordinate the frequencies the security gates don't get set off at, at either library. In the past we have had the same problem with the national library, where they informed us that our books are setting off their alarms. After we changed the settings of our security we solved that problem.

### **Longer Opening hours and Weekend Opening Hours**

Weekend opening hours are a real problem. Most comments had some sort of solution included how to make it happen. Some included using students instead of employees but that is impossible. Students are not allowed to manage any library without the supervision of an employee. There were some proposals to make another exit by demolishing a part of the wall in the library, which is by the street, which is not possible at all. Weekend opening hours are not possible just now. We had a try out weekend opening hours in 2013 on Saturdays and unfortunately it did not work out. The maximum students that came during that time were 4. But we can work out something with longer opening hours. At this time the library is open till 20.00 except Friday. The building of the faculty closes at 21.00 and we will attempt to negotiate and prolong the opening hours.

### **Not Enough Sockets**

There were some comments that there are not enough sockets in the library. This is caused by us not informing you enough. Students look below the tables, the sockets are also there!

## **We Don't Have the Books that Students Need**

The system of acquiring books into our libraries works this way: we follow the book market, we follow the statistics of the loans (which books you want), we communicate with the teachers and we follow the lists of recommended literature. We buy books from regular distributors, but we also look for books that are not as common, either new or older. We also resupply books that have lot of loans from second-hand bookshops. Books that are not available at all we scan and provide via electronic loans. So we buy what we can. The users can also inform us about books they require and they can provide tips for new acquisitions. So if you have any tips on what books we should buy that we don't have or we have too few of write us an e-mail at [kjp@ff.cuni.cz](mailto:kjp@ff.cuni.cz) and if we can find it, we will buy it and we will let you know about it.

## **Not Enough Fatboys (sitting pillows)**

We know you love them. We started buying them as an alternative for sitting chairs into places that are near the fire exits and for spaces which need to be freely accessible. Unfortunately they have few downsides as well. They are hard to clean and maintain. Not to mention that according to our opinion, there is the maximum amount of them placed in the Library of Jan Palach. We just can't fit more in. So we do not plan to buy more in the near future, only to replace the current ones when their time comes. But we do plan to make some more comfortable sitting spaces in the library in the future.

## **Undeliverable Reminders**

Sometimes you complain that you haven't received an e-mail reminder that the term of loan is approaching its end.

Students have mentioned it when they find out about the fine, when they return their loans and now we came across it in the evaluation. Whenever a reminder is sent out we receive its copy. So all e-mails that are sent (to the addresses you provided us with in your application) are either sent out or come back as undeliverable. So the problem lies with your e-mail. In the past we had a problem that seznam.cz filtered our messages as spam. We contacted the provider and they added our address to the list of safe addresses. So all we can say to this issue is to update your e-mail contact information with us, and check your spam box. If you encounter a concrete problem you can also write to Pavlína Vejmelková at [pavlina.vejmelkova@ff.cuni.cz](mailto:pavlina.vejmelkova@ff.cuni.cz) who will address your problem.

### **Not Enough Computers for Guest Students from Different Faculties**

The only way to log into our computers is with a login from our faculty. For students from different faculties it is more complicated. The only way they can log in is, if they have an active account in the domain of Jinonice with a password. They can use a computer with a yellow label in the computer room in the library of Jan Palach, which is connected to the domain Jinonice automatically. From any other computer they can login, if they write „jinonice\" before their username. If they do not have an account in Jinonice they can request one. For more information please visit <http://uvt.cuni.cz/UVTENG-11.html>.

### **Loud and Quiet Zones within the Library**

You alerted us that there is a lack of quiet zones and also a lack of places where one can study in groups. We have a solution and we are working on it. There will be completely new places in the Library of Jan Palach, which would be only silent and some places where a hushed conversation is allowed. We have it all figured out. We will talk it over with the architect of the faculty and after that the realization can



come into being. We wanted to make it happened by the start of the new term. Our ideas however were more complex and require a more thorough solution then we first thought. Please have patience with us; the result will be worth it.

We try not to stagnate. We, as librarians, try to not only manage the regular opening hours and the standard services, but we also try to provide more comfort to our readers. We have a lot of ideas and inspiration, but there are many restrictions we have to navigate and that cannot be changed. The libraries go through a steady progress which sometimes can pass unnoticed even if you are using the results of these changes. From the above one can think that the evaluation is mostly negative. But that is not true. Thank you for taking the time to review and comment and we are very grateful for all the praise we got from you. We will try to accommodate you to the best of our abilities.

Klára Rösslerová

Director of the CUFA Library