

Report on a visit to Prague 3 – 7 December 2018 by Steve Russ supported by the BSHM Small Grant Scheme.

The specific purpose of the visit was to investigate a more exact dating of Bolzano's early mathematical publications through study of the relevant volumes of the *Accessions Kataloge* in the archives of the Národní knihovna (National Library) at Hostivař (about 12km outside Prague). Initially I focussed on a few large volumes covering 1793 – 1825. Each catalogue contained about 5000 entries. I was particularly interested in the *month* of publication of Bolzano's works of 1804 and 1817. (In the latter year two works were published and the bibliographies are divided on which they consider came 'first'.) The specific dating question is part of a broader question of which publications (and when) were available to Bolzano and other scholars in Prague in the early 19C. This question is of pressing interest not only to myself but to several new 'early career' researchers into Bolzano's mathematics.

The accession catalogues (handwritten in German Kurrentschrift) had been surveyed briefly on a visit to the Archive (and the Director Mrs Hekrdlová) in June 2018. They gave the date and cost of purchase of each book so I had reasonably strong expectation of success assuming that Bolzano's own works – as a 'local lad' – would not be long delayed between publication and incorporation into the Library. Unfortunately things were not so straightforward.

After studying these catalogues for a few hours – on Tuesday and Wednesday (4th and 5th Dec) it became clear that they included no books published in Prague, or Bohemia. The Director (in whose office I conveniently worked) did not know why this should be the case. On the Wednesday afternoon I enquired from various librarians (including Dr Renáta Modráková and Dr Alena Richterová) at the main National Library about this with no success. On the Friday morning – during discussion with Dr Claire Midl (a librarian at the French section of the National Library) – I learned that in 1801 a law had been passed declaring the National Library to be a library of 'legal deposit' meaning they no longer purchased volumes published in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, instead the publisher of any such volume was legally obliged to deliver a copy to the Library. And the catalogues labelled 'Accessions Kataloge' were not accurately so-described – they were records only of *purchases* made by the Library.

Subsequent to this visit I have been – slowly! – trying to find out whether, and where, there might a true accessions catalogue, or at least lists of books available to readers at given times. I am still following up promising leads on the exact dating of Bolzano's early works with Prague librarians as well as Peter Schenkel (Innsbruck) and Edgar Morscher (Salzburg) and others, as well as the more general question mentioned above. I shall report further when I have been successful!

Nevertheless, in spite of this set-back, there was a major beneficial 'spin-off' from the visit. On the Thursday of the visit I had long discussions with a colleague Dr Kateřina Trlifajová (and some other Prague scholars interested in Bolzano) about a possible symposium at the 16th Congress on Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science and Technology being held in Prague in August 2019 (<http://clmpst2019.flu.cas.cz/>). This led to my submission of a proposal for a symposium containing ten papers on the theme of 'Bolzano's mathematics and the general methodology of the sciences'. The symposium and all ten papers have been accepted for the event (5th – 10th August 2019) – with the date of our symposium being the 8th August. Details of the papers and authors are linked from bernardbolzano.org. There is no doubt that without my visit last December we should not be having this symposium (the deadline for submissions was 15th December – extended to 9th January). As organizer of the Bolzano symposium I shall make sure the role of the BSHM Small Grants is duly acknowledged! The Congress as a whole has over 800 presentations over 6 days so it's a fine opportunity, not only for our symposium, but to make Bolzano's work better known.

Steve Russ
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