A small encyclopedia of terms

Script. Is a set of graphic marks that can be sorted into words. They make it possible to capture thoughts, so ideas and opinions can travel through time as well as from place to place.

Script, and later books, developed over a long period of time. For the purposes of communication ancient people used ***a stone, a piece of wood, clay platelets*** dried in the sun and later burned in the fire. More advanced cultures used hides in the form of ***a parchment*** (pergameneous codex) or Cyperus – ***papyrus*** (volumen), which they formed into a smooth unbroken and light sheet for drawing or imprinting from.

While in ancient Egypt, books were written on velum made from cane, starting in the Middle Ages, books were written on parchment in Europe and in the Czech lands. It was made out of the skin of new-born lambs. One book needed several such skins. It was possible to write on both sides of the parchment. It was translucent, pale yellow, with a smooth thick face, sanded and glazed.

From the beginning of the 14th century, people in Bohemia were writing on paper in addition to parchment. Paper was made in China in about 100 BC. After that, Arabians spread the use of paper to the rest of the world. The invention and expansion of the letterpress also contributed to the replacement of parchment with paper. Paper was easier and cheaper to print than parchment.

The town book *The Old City of Prague*, listed in 1310, is evidence of the oldest use of paper. The first paper mill in Bohemia – Zbraslavská – was founded in 1499.

Writing-kit – people wrote on parchments with pens made out of quill feathers cut at the end. In the nineteenth century, the first pens with metal-tipped pens appeared.

Medieval Pilseners used the liquid obtained from oak galls and vitriol as ink. This ink became brown over the course of time.

Shape of books (look and size) – books came to Bohemia in the form of codes. The shape originated from parchment sheets folded into fourths – that´s how the double-sheet came into being, several double-sheets formed a folded sheet or fold. The folds were sewn together after that. This is how books to the present day. The first code, or špalíček, arose at the beginning of A.D. The word code ("codex" in Latin) originally meant a tree trunk. The volumes were protected by a wooden cover covered with plates of precious metal and chryselephantine or precious stones. Bookbinding thus provided work for craftsmen such as goldsmiths, carvers, lapidaries, and ivory carvers.

Book format. From the end of the 15th century, books were marked according to the number of paper folds that influenced the size of the book or format. In the case of one fold, it is called folio, two folds, quarto, and in case of three folds, octavo. Inconsistent dimensions

caused different-sized books. The only uniformity was in the number of sheets in a folded sheet or fold from one single sheet.

Today, format is determined according to the size – height and width of the book-in centimeters.

Medieval books usually omitted the author's name. Titles were usually based on the first words or endings. The first printed books imitated manuscripts.

The front pages, as in the modern books of today include the author's name, title and details of the publication and printing) were not used until the 16th century.

Book decoration – Old books used to be marked with rubrics and initials. A *Rubric* is a highlighted letter-usually done in red. *Initials* – marked the beginning of the book, chapters and paragraphs. The initial letters had a bigger size than the following text. They were decorated with different motifs in the creative spirit of the day. The books were also decorated with various ornaments, animals, plants, and mythical beings.

The 14th and 15th centuries brought rich decoration, whose themes displayed were very often not related to the content, and mainly filled space on the page. Vines, plant tendrils running out of the initials often framed the whole page.

Renaissance decor was influenced by ancient art. It brought fancy colors and square-shaped gold frames. People were making manuscripts for sacred purposes. Hymn-books, songs collections, and books began to be decorated with portraits.

Letterprint decoration was done by hand. This included also the rubrics and initials. Graphic techniques, especially woodcutting, were developing. Advancement in image and text printing developed together. The rise of woodcutting can be dated to the 15th and 16th century.

The 17th and 18th centuries preferred copperplate. Copper plates appeared and were much more accurate and precise than woodcuttings. Since it was not possible to print together with the text, special pages and attachments to the texts appeared. Styles such as Baroque, Rococo, and Classical appeared.

Books included stories or were specialized. The printing of books in foreign languages predominated in Bohemia, as there was a greater market for them. The Czech market was too small, and illustrated books were expensive to produce.

In the 19th century the copperplate was replaced by siderography, which lasted longer and made it possible to publish more printings.

Book binding –After the invention of the letterpress book binding became simpler than it was in the Middle Ages. The binding covers a sewn book packet with leather or cloth. In contrast to present, when we put books on our shelves vertically, in the Middle Ages books

lay flat on the shelves. Covers protected a book against dust and vermin, such as mice and insects. In the Baroque era the binding was richly decorated and imprinted and, as today, books stood on the shelves with the binding facing the readers. The bindings, mainly in monasteries, and including older Gothic books, were white-limed and imprinted in order to provide a uniform look.

Letterpress brought as significant a change as the Internet today. German Johannes Gutenberg, born in the early 15th century, is considered its inventor. A revolutionary device was a composition casting machine for creating particular *letters´* casting. The invention of this *type of casting*, i.e. pewter and antimony –was used for casting particular letters. The construction of a suitable printing press was inspired by the winepress, making printing ink necessary. The oldest preserved printing dates to 1454.

In the beginning the letterpress was kept secret from the public. Its expansion throughout Europe wasn't until around 1460. By the end of the 15th century, about 27 000 titles had been printed. These books are called *incunabula* and they are prized as the oldest books.

The introduction of the letterpress to Bohemia is debatable. *The Trojan Chronicle*, a book about the Trojan conquest is still considered to be the oldest Czech first printing. At the conclusion we read: "from the birth of the Son of God we count 1468". Some researchers believe that it is taken from an earlier draft and that the printing was actually earlier. The first Czech printing house probably began operating in Pilsen in the 1480s. But we don´t know the name of the printer or the place where this first Pilsen printing house was situated.

Books, letterpress and libraries in Pilsen

So that you wouldn´t have to carry the knowledge that doesn´t fit into your small head as I fit water in a gibbus, your wise ancestors started to compile knowledge in books. They were copying for years and because humans are different us camels, they were lazy and were always looking for ways to simplify life, they invented the letterprint. And just imagine that the first book in Bohemia was printed right here in Pilsen! If you'd like to know more about the great-great-great-grandmothers of your textbooks and favorite books, come with me on a trip to Pilsen's libraries!