

# Slavic Treasures in the Midwest: The Lilly Library's Czech Language and Literature Collections <sup>1</sup>

By Lori Dekydtspotter

You might not expect to find one of the most comprehensive Czech language and literature collections outside of the Czech Republic in the Midwest, but it resides and continues to flourish at Indiana University's Lilly Library in Bloomington. The collection is widely consulted by local and visiting scholars and is used by professors from a variety of disciplines for classroom instruction. The rich Czech literature and political history materials are often showcased in Lilly Library exhibitions as well—such as the book cover art of Josef Čapek that was featured in the exhibition, “Translating the Canon: Building Special Collections in the 21st Century” (May 21-Sept. 1, 2012), curated by Breon Mitchell. The artistic genius of the Čapek brothers, Josef Čapek (1887-1945) and his younger brother Karel Čapek (1890-1938), was celebrated in a special exhibition curated by Indiana University MLS graduate student, Julie Cismoski, at the Lilly Library in 2011. The Lilly is fortunate to be able to partner with specialists across the Indiana University (IU) campus, such as Slavic & Central Eurasian Cataloger, Carl Horne (Cataloging: Area Studies Cataloging Section, Wells Library, IU Bloomington), to draw on the language and subject expertise necessary to describe fully these rich collections.

The Masaryk manuscript collection consists of correspondence, papers and ephemera from Alice Garrigue Masaryk (1879-1966)—teacher, sociologist, politician and daughter of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. There were many firsts for the Czech philosopher, sociologist and legendary statesman, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937). Not long after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on November 14, 1918, Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia, an office to which he would be re-elected three times (1920, 1927, and 1934). In 1927, Masaryk, then 70 year old, became the first president of a democratic state to travel to Palestine, albeit on an unofficial visit. Purchased in 2009, the Lilly Library's collection of 291 black and white photographs chronicles this historic voyage (Figure 3).

In order to describe this collection of travel photographs, it was necessary to draw clues from the pictured landmarks as well as the brief descriptions printed or typed on the backs of the images. Searching several names (i.e., Masaryková, Benzoni, Mladějovská) that were written on the backs of some of the photographs led to an article by Miloš Pojar in

which the author details Masaryk's 1927 trip to Palestine: “It was the very first visit of any head of a democratic European state to Mandatory Palestine” (p. 160). Taken as a whole, the photographs provide an unusually detailed record of a journey that began in France and continued on to such destinations as Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Greece. In his article, Pojar explains that Masaryk and his entourage departed from Southern France on March 9, 1927, on a three month adventure that would take them to the Middle East. Masaryk was joined in his travels by one of his daughters (Dr. Alice Masaryk), the Marquise of Benzoni, Dr. Mladějovská, Dr. Maixner, and his secretary, Dr. Kučera, as well as four others (security personnel and a staff member). The photos in the Lilly Library collection are dated from March 11 to April 29, 1927. Since these particular photographs have been numbered in pencil on the backs, one can surmise that the collection is lacking some of the photographs in the series (i.e., the beginning of the trip (Mar. 9-10) and the last leg of the voyage (Apr. 30-May 25)).

The photographs provide contemporary glimpses of the destinations that Masaryk visited. Among the photos of Egypt, for example, are several which include archaeologist Howard Carter (taken with President Masaryk) on the site of the Tutankhamen excavation (“Tut-Auch-Amonova”) and several of British Egyptologist, Cecil Mallaby Firth (taken at “Sakkâra u Kahýry”) (Figures 3 & 4). The photographs of Jerusalem feature historic sites and cities such as Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Dead Sea, and the Mount of Olives. Other shots document Masaryk's stops in Jordan, Palestine, and Greece (pictures include Athens, Delphi, Corinth, Mycenae, and Olympia).

In addition to the Masaryk papers, which were donated to the Library by Masaryk's daughter, Alice Garrigue Masaryk, the Czech holdings include related material from Ruth Crawford Mitchell (1890-1984), former Treasurer of the Masaryk Publications Trust. Special collection libraries such as the Lilly Library benefit greatly from the subject-expertise and careful planning of collectors such as Mitchell. The Lilly Library has held outstanding Czech literary collections for many years, including extensive collections of such authors as the Romantic

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks goes to two former Lilly Library Directors, William R. Cagle and Breon Mitchell, for providing information on how the Czech collections were first acquired. Photography by Zach Downey, Lilly Library.

poets Karel Hynek Mácha and Petr Bezruč. The first Czech collections came to the Lilly Library in the early 1960s largely through collector Hannah Beneš (daughter-in-law of Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia from 1935-1938), IU Professor Robert Burns, and IU President Herman B Wells. Later, Ruth Crawford Mitchell donated the Alice Garrigue Masaryk papers; next the papers of Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart (1887-1970), a major figure in post-World War II Czechoslovakia and close acquaintance of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Jan Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, were purchased.

Over the past decade, the library has added significantly to its Czech holdings, building further upon the Masaryk papers and focusing in recent years on Karl and Josef Čapek, Jaroslav Hašek, and Nobel-Prize winner, Josef Seifert. The Lilly Library now holds one of the best collections in America of all of these authors. Contemporary Czech authors particularly well-represented include: Václav Havel, Miroslav Holub, Milan Kundera, and Bohumil Hrabal. The growing collection of material from literary translators at the Lilly Library includes several archives of Czech interest—in particular the papers of the Catbird Press, which specializes in translations of Czech literature, the papers of poet and translator David Young, which include significant correspondence and manuscripts by Miroslav Holub, and the literary archive of translator Michael Henry Heim, which includes significant correspondence with Milan Kundera about the translation of Holub's novel, "The Joke."

In addition to serving the needs of scholars both near and far, the Lilly Library offers cultural enrichment opportunities year-round and is open to anyone interested in its collections. For more information, visit the Library website ([www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/](http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/)). One can also read about new acquisitions and current exhibitions on the "Lilly Library News & Notes" blog at <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/blog/>.

### Resources:

Čapek, Karel. (1920). R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots). Praha: Aventinum.

Čapek, Karel. (1922). *Továrna na absolutno*. V Brně: Polygrafie.

Catbird Press mss., ca. 1983-2003, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Masaryk mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Masaryk mss. II, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Masaryk Publications Trust mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Masaryk, T.G. mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Mitchell mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

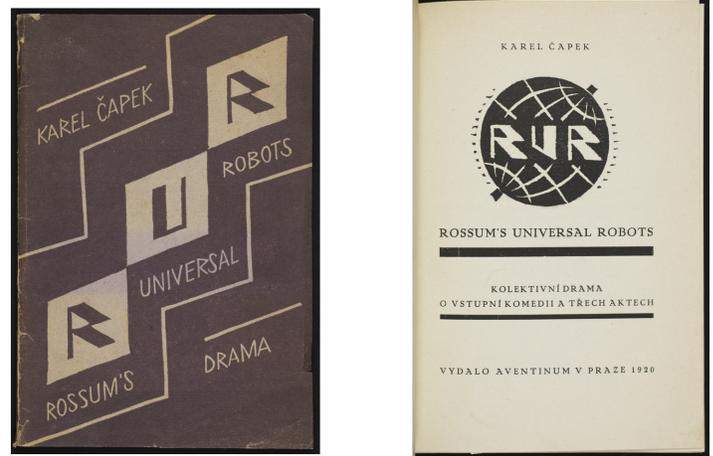
Mitchell mss. II, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Pojar, Miloš. (2002). T.G. Masaryk's relations with Jews. *Judaica Bohemiae*, 38, 160-182.

Tomáš G. Masaryk travel photographs, Mar. 11-Apr. 29, 1927 (DB217 .M3 Lilly mss.)

Young, David mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

### Figures:



**Figure 1.** Cover and title page of the first edition (1920) of the Karel Čapek's science fiction play, R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots). The play introduced the word robot (robota, or forced labor, in Czech).



**Figure 2.** Cover art of *Továrna na absolutno* (1922) written and illustrated by Karel Čapek.

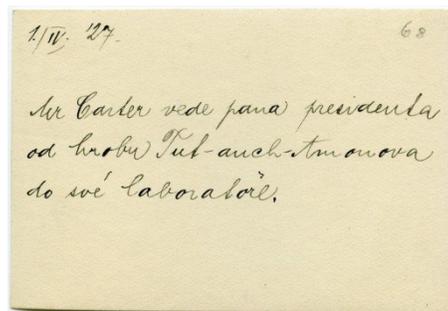


**Figure 3.** Lilly Library's collection of 291 black and white Tomáš Masaryk 1927 travel photographs (DB217 .M3 Lilly mss.)

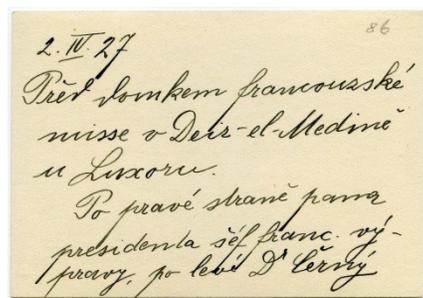
## About the Author



Lori Dekydtspotter is the Head of Technical Services at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, where she has worked since 1996. Lori also teaches two courses for the Department of Information & Library Science, Indiana University, in the history of libraries and rare books cataloging. Her current work, in collaboration with colleague, Cherry Williams, focuses on the importance of special collections outreach, especially with grades K–12, and the use of primary sources.



**Figure 4.** Front and Verso. Tomáš Masaryk pictured in 1927 with English archaeologist and Egyptologist Howard Carter (right) visiting the Tutankhamun site (DB217 .M3 Lilly mss.)



**Figure 5.** Front and Verso. Masaryk (center) and Carter with Czech Egyptologist Jaroslav Černý (left) (DB217 .M3 Lilly mss.)