

Secrets of Books

The remarkable world of the internal structures of bookbinding materials, the corridors of wood-destroying insects in wooden boards and the reappearance of disappeared texts is presented in the exhibition Secrets of Books. Several years of efforts devoted to finding safe and non-invasive methods of revealing hidden information in books within the framework of the NAKI II national project [DG18P02OVV024 "Use of Imaging Techniques for the Study of Hidden Information in Books"](#) have culminated in a certified methodology, technical papers and finally this exhibition.

The value of library documents lies primarily in their ability to carry information. However, over time, written records are threatened by light damage, chemical processes and mechanical damage. There are many specimens in the library collections that carry hidden information. These pieces of information can also be hidden in the structure of the bookbinding, in the layers of materials or under younger modifications and restoration interventions. These are elements such as fragments of manuscripts used as part of a bookbinding, fragments of original historical materials, but also defects or biological attack. Inscriptions, notes, provenance signs and other textual or pictorial information that have often been intentionally removed or damaged by material degradation are searched for. The information recorded on the paper may also be hidden if the sheets are glued together or fused by fire, water, other substances or microorganisms. Another hidden element, for example, are lost texts due to chemical and physical causes or those that have been purposely removed or rendered invisible by the action of the book user.

The aim of the NAKI project was mainly to verify and chart the possibilities and safety of selected non-invasive imaging technologies to extract information from illegible texts, information hidden in bookbindings or in the material used. The project included a survey of a selected comprehensive library collection focused on papermaking and other production marks, the technology of bookbinding production, the occurrence of historical manuscript fragments or prints recycled in bookbinding, removed or lost texts, documentation of hidden information, analysis of materials and dyes and diagnosis of physical condition and damage to materials. The research was carried out in the collection of the Slavonic Library, one of the largest and most important Slavic libraries in Europe. The collected data was subsequently provided for scientific and historical research. The project also included a methodology for adjustment, tuning and comparison of digital images of different imaging techniques.