

In Memory of Zlata Dimec

I met Zlata the first time in 1996, when I hosted a week long workshop organised by CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) in Stockholm. CERL is concentrated primarily on making bibliographic information regarding the hand press production of Europe available, and the workshop dealt with hand press resources from different aspects. I remember Zlata well from that occasion, she took very active part in the discussions and her face vividly revealed how concentrated she was on the different problems. This was actually a characteristic feature of Zlata, this ability to focus on a problem and trying to find solutions.

Very soon after that occasion Zlata was elected to CERL's executive committee, where we met regularly during a number of years. This was at a time when CERL worked very hard to consolidate its database, and files from different sources were converted and included in the Hand Press Book database, the HPB. UNIMARC was the chosen vehicle, and the Slovenian records, which had UNIMARC as their original format, were naturally a very important contribution. The building of the database meant a lot of work for the file owners, and more than once several of us sat together with CERL's project manager and consultants scrutinizing records from different files, comparing and finding similarities as well as differences. Zlata was very concerned that the records she delivered should not have any systematic aberrancies. She eagerly took notes of what she would see to (not that it was very much!), once she got back to work at home.

In the committee work she won great respect for her serious and thoughtful approach to the more general issues as well. She was always concerned that a decision should be in line with the guiding principles and no exceptions made which could undermine that.

We continued to meet, in CERL and at IFLA conferences and got to know each other a little more. We met in many places, in Stockholm again, and in Ljubljana, where Zlata organised a meeting. It was, as usual, long, tough meetings – I remember especially that we were battling with character conversion problems at that time. After the meetings Zlata had arranged for a number of comforting social gatherings, when we learnt a little of Slovenian food culture and could relax together.

We didn't talk shop all the time, families, politics – and cats, we both had cats – were common topics. It was very easy to be with Zlata, she talked with other

people, not to them. She was interested in other people's views and gave her own freely to develop a discussion, but she didn't seem to care about winning the argument. Zlata had a definite, natural integrity about her without ever pushing herself forward – but she wouldn't be pushed either. I think she is one of the least conceited persons that I have ever known.

Unfortunately, Zlata had to leave the committee work in CERL, due to financial constraints, but we kept in touch, even in other contexts. When a small, completely informal group of people in different countries in Europe started to discuss (over e-mail) FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and how to possibly use it in a practical way, Zlata was one of us. She contributed a fantastic, comprehensive UNIMARC record example, with all "bells and whistles", as the English say. She knew her profession profoundly.

In the autumn of 2000 I met a colleague of Zlata's at a conference and asked her to give Zlata my very best regards. Then I learnt for the first time that she was very ill. It was a sad tidings, indeed. In CERL we then kept check with her condition, and we learnt about the different treatments she had to go through. I wrote to her at times when I thought she would have some strength to read it and got replies back. We were all happy when she seemed to get well and started to come back to work. Although I fully realise what a serious illness she had to deal with, it was a shock when I got a mail that it was back. Then it didn't last long before the death message came. I think I still hadn't fully grasped how serious the condition was. I was actually about to write to her, precisely in those days, but pressed by all the everyday duties said to myself, I will write to Zlata tomorrow, then I will have better time. Well, I had, but Zlata had not. Naturally, I cursed myself, even if Zlata at that moment probably barely had strength left for her closest family.

I am so sad that she is dead.

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