

SHORT

ARTICLES

FROM

CLOSED

DOORS

TO OPEN

GATES

# eSbírky

## - Culture Without Borders



Czech  
Republic  
Ivana  
Havlikova,  
Katerina  
Musilkova



In early November 2010 the National Museum, the largest museum institution in the Czech Republic, made public an online application [www.esbirky.cz](http://www.esbirky.cz) (meaning "electronic collections"), which aims to present collections of various Czech cultural heritage institutions online. It is the first portal in the Czech Republic that allows viewing of digitized collections of several institutions in one virtual place, which can be accessed without any limitations of time, money or geographical distance. Visitors only require Internet access. The development of the application took two years. It was originally intended only for presentation purposes at the National Museum, as part of its involvement in project ATHENA. It was also intended as a model project of integrating Czech culture institutions into the European digital library. The fact that the similar presentation appeared



National Museum,  
Prague

to be financially unrealistic, especially for regional museums, lead to the transformation of the primary portal [virtualni.nm.cz](http://virtualni.nm.cz)<sup>1</sup> to [esbirky.cz](http://esbirky.cz)<sup>2</sup> in the second half of 2010.

Joining the project is free of charge and open to all cultural institutions in the Czech

Hlavní strana > Institute > Národní muzeum > Historické muzeum > Numismatická sbírka  
1000 Kč, (Československo 1918 - 1939)

Katalogy sbírek podle:

- institute
- typu sbírky
- materiálu
- místa původu
- datace

podrobné vyhledávání  
o sbírkách  
kontakt

SHARE

ATHENA  
Access to cultural heritage  
networks across Europe

NÁRODNÍ MUZEUM

Název  
**1000 Kč,  
(Československo 1918 -  
1939)**

Autor:  
Neznámý autor - ateliér  
tiskárny

Datace:  
15.4.1919

Rozměry:  
šířka 12,0 cm výška 19,4 cm

Popis:  
Autor neznámý - ateliér  
tiskárny (lic podle kresby  
Alonza Earla Foringera, rub  
podle obrazu The Reapers  
George Fredericka Cumming  
Smitlie), rytina Robert  
Savage, tisk American Bank  
Note Co., New York. Státovka  
1.emise vydaná Bankovním  
úřadem Ministerstva financí



84

Uncommon  
Culture

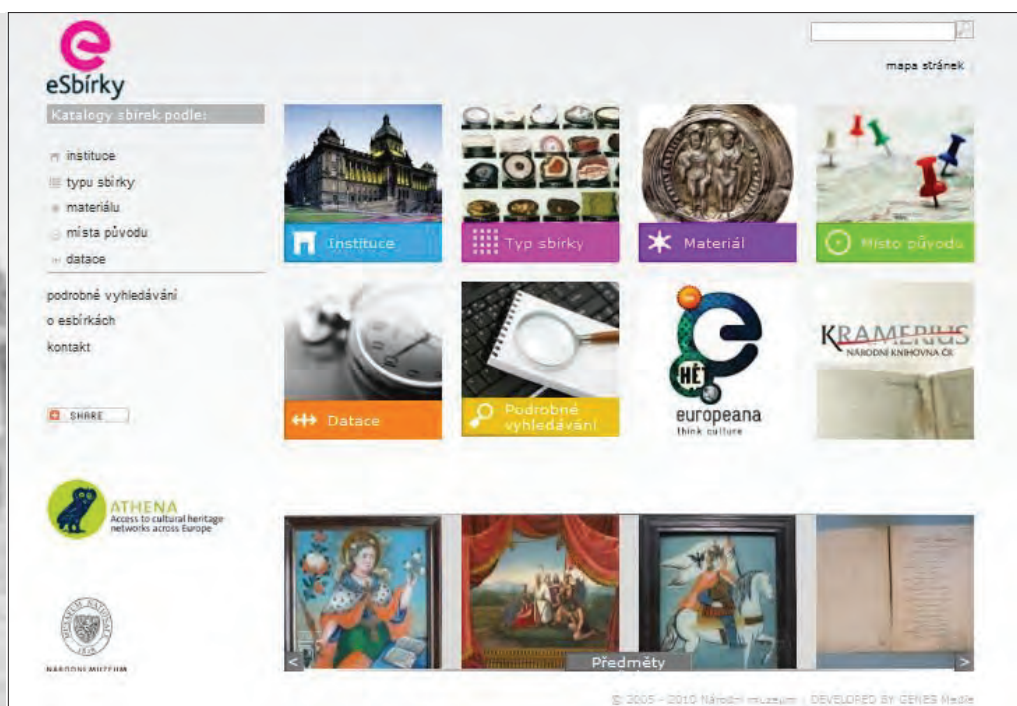
Although there remain many questions concerning museums in virtual environments (e.g. real vs. virtual visitor experience, loss of authenticity of digitized items and so on), the digitization and online presentation have become an integral part of the work of modern museums

Republic. During the first two months of operating, six other cultural institutions also joined. These were mostly museums that felt the need to present their work using modern technologies. However for the Museum of Czech Tramping the virtual environment of eSbirky is the only presentation channel, the only place where it exists. The institution is undertaking efforts to establish the real museum. In the meantime, we can follow the creation of the real museum institution step-by-step thanks to eSbirky. The portal currently presents a total of 10 000 items including photography and audio items, and in the future will also include audio-visual records.

structured to be attractive to the general public and the professional community as well. In addition to the online presentation eSbirky is the virtual reading room. eSbirky offers searching based on the following categories: institutions, type of collection, material, date, and place of origin. The short interactive presentation called "Objects of the Month" is aimed at the general public. It seeks to draw attention to interesting artefacts from various collections, which can be also seen as links to various thematic areas. Finally, through the presentation eSbirky can react to various cultural events such as the birth of important people and various anniversaries.

From the beginning the portal has been structured as a user-friendly environment that allows visitors to use information at several levels. The browsing and searching engines are

An important element of the portal is eCard. This is an interactive element that communicates information about collection items, but also about eSbirky and the participating



*Anna Karolína Torskánská.*  
Watercolor by Johann Nep. Ender, 1821  
31,2x27,4 cm  
National Museum, Prague



*Jan Křtitel*  
Folk art, 19th century  
Format: 42 x 55 cm  
National Museum, Prague



institutions especially to the younger generation accustomed to electronic communication. Ecard also serves as original electronic and promotional material of eSbírky which allows users to modify its content. An integral part of eSbírky is also connection with the social networks such as Facebook or Twitter. Users of these networks may comment upon, rate and discuss artefacts.

What is the future of eSbírky? We continue to work on the online presentation intensively. Right now we are developing an online game application for child visitors called little eSbírky, which will follow professionals working in museum institutions. Through the right format we will show what happens behind the scenes at the museum. The tasks for the near future are virtual exhibitions, which are extensions to projects similar to

eSbírky in the world. Appropriately chosen attractive themes may increase interest in visiting eSbírky and the institutions themselves as well. The eSbírky portal will thus become a virtual exhibition hall, which will allow presentation of items which are not easily exhibited for various reasons such as poor condition, large size, high cost of presentation or lack of security. The next feature of the application will be the ability to create user accounts, which will allow visitors to work creatively with a presentation and to design and curate their own exhibition.

There is a lot of work to do. The emergence and development of cyberspace provides new opportunities not only for communications with the visitor in the virtual world (outside the physical museum environment), but also for the development of museums. Although there





Legitimace Ferdinanda Urbánka  
Driving licence, 1898  
National Museum, Prague



*Mater verborum*  
Latin dictionary, manuscript, 13<sup>th</sup> century  
National Museum, Prague



remain many questions concerning museums in virtual environments (e.g. real vs. virtual visitor experience, loss of authenticity of digitized items and so on), the digitization and online presentation have become an integral part of the work of modern museums. Visitors have already found their way to the virtual place. It is the turn of museum professionals to become more involved in online presentation and communication. We hope that the number both of museum institutions and presented items will increase in close future so that eSbirky becomes the real aggregator of digital resources.



Moravian dish, 1726  
Silesian Museum

1 [www.nm.cz/](http://www.nm.cz/)

2 [www.esbirky.cz/](http://www.esbirky.cz/)