

New Buildings of the National Film Archives in Prague

VLADIMÍR OPĚLA, Ph. D.
e-mail: Vladimir.Opela@nfa.cz

MICHAL WANNER, Ph. D.
Department of Archives Administration and Records Management, The Ministry of the Interior, Prague
e-mail: mwanner@mvcv.cz

New Buildings of the National Film Archives in Prague

ABSTRACT

Today the last stage of the implementation of building of the archive site of the National Film Archives begins. It focuses on the construction of the repository for the preservation of color films and written archival records. In addition, the proposal to build a new headquarters of the National Film Archives is ready to implement within the “care of the national treasure” program of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. The contribution will put these projects in a broader context of the construction of archive buildings in the Czech Republic in the last twenty years and shows the issues associated with the implementation of not only this project.

I nuovi edifici dell'Archivio nazionale del cinema a Praga

SINTESI

Comincia oggi l'ultima fase dell'attuazione della costruzione dell'Archivio nazionale del cinema a Praga. Essa si concentra sulla costruzione del deposito per la conservazione delle pellicole a colori e dei documenti scritti. Inoltre, la proposta di costruire una nuova sede dell'Archivio nazionale del cinema è pronta a essere attuata all'interno della “cura del tesoro nazionale”, programma del Ministero della Cultura della Repubblica Ceca. Il contributo consentirà di rilanciare questi progetti in un contesto più ampio della costruzione di edifici d'archivio nella Repubblica Ceca negli ultimi vent'anni e mostra i problemi connessi con l'attuazione non solo di questo progetto.

Nova zgradba Nacionalnega filmskega arhiva v Pragi

IZVLEČEK

Danes se pričinja zadnja faza izgradnje na lokaciji Nacionalnega filmskega arhiva. Gre za skladišče za hrambo barvnih filmov in spisovnega arhivskega gradiva. Poleg tega bo v okviru programa “Skrb za narodne zaklade”, ki ga je pripravilo Ministrstvo za kulturo Češke Republike zgrajena nova upravna stavba Nacionalnega filmskega arhiva. Prispevek predstavlja te projekte v širšem kontekstu izgradnje arhivskih zgradb v Češki Republici v zadnjih dvajsetih letih in prikazuje teme povezane z uvajanjem tudi drugih projektov.

Nové budovy Národního filmového archivu v Praze

ABSTRAKT

Príspevek je tvoren dvoma časťami. V prvej Michal Wanner rekapituluje vývoj archívnych budov v Českej republike v uplynulých dvoch desaťročiach. Konstatuje, že v tomto období bolo zprovozneno celkom 60 budov štátnych a mestských archívov. V letech po pádu totalitného systému tak bolo dohnáno zpožďenie, ktoré existovalo v zabezpečení archívov v predchádzajúcom období. Autor popisuje základné princípy, najvýznamnejšie archívne budovy a podáva prehľad významných pozitívnych i negatívnych skúseností z tejto výstavby. Ve druhej časti Vladimír Opěla, bývalý riaditeľ Národního filmového archivu v Praze (dnešný NFA) líči vývoj úložných podmienok tohoto archívu od jeho vzniku po súčasnosť. Podrobnejšie sa zaoberá aktuálnymi plánmi na druhou fázu výstavby NFA tvorenou novým depozitárom pre farebné filmy a novým sídlom NFA v Praze. Uvádja technické a konštrukčné detaily oboch budov.

Archive buildings in the Czech Republic 1990-2012

This paper is devoted to the currently most important event concerning archive buildings in the Czech Republic, namely the construction of the new buildings for the National Film Archives. In the context of Czech archives, however, it is not a solitary action. On the very contrary, the last two decades were marked by intensive activities in the field of construction of all types of archives, differing in the focus and nature of archival records stored in their premises. In 1990-2007 period, a total of 60 buildings of state and municipal archives were put into operation. Thus, the lack of archive premises prevailing in the previous period was made up for in the years following the fall of the totalitarian regime. Such an extensive development was a source of multiple positive as well as negative experience. Let me therefore start with some background information concerning this process that will illustrate its broader context, and follow with sharing a few main positive and negative experiences gained during this development.

Principles and methodology

The general principles governing the construction of archives in the Czech Republic in the monitored years adhered always to the recommendations of the International Council on Archives published in the *Archive Buildings and Equipment Handbook* by Michel Duchein. They were supplemented by a number of theoretical studies and information published by Czech archivists based on their knowledge acquired during their trips abroad and studies of relevant technical literature¹. The key role of methodological guidelines in the construction and reconstruction of individual premises was played by the guide called *The Collection of Type Projects – State Regional Archives and The Typology of Buildings – State District Archives* published by the Department of Archives Administration of the Ministry of the Interior in 1993 and 1994². Thanks to this manual the construction of archives in the Czech Republic could draw on more than 50 years of experience in this field abroad. At the beginning of 1994, the Commission for the Construction and Reconstruction of Archive Buildings was set up at the Ministry of Interior as a technical body and ever since it has played an important role both with respect to the process of reasoning and initialising the developments, expert evaluation of individual projects and application of the referred to principles in practice.

Archive buildings

In the period concerned, 7 state archives (including 72 state district archives) and 5 large municipal archives constructed a total of 60 buildings. Altogether 23 new archive buildings were built. So far the highlight among these activities has been the construction of the new building for the Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno opened in October 2007. The three largest new buildings – archive build-

1. Michel DUCHEIN, *Archive Buildings and Equipment*, 2nd ed., ICA Handbooks, K. G. Saur 1988, p. 232.

2. Synthetic literature as well as titles to here mentioned archival buildings: Václav BABIČKA, *Ústřední archiv českého státu, jeho dějiny a umístění*, Praha 2001, pp. 5-15; Vladimír CZUMALO, *Archiv mezi typem, místem, jazykem a krásou (Státní okresní archiv Semily)*, „Architekt“, 24(1995); Vladimír HORNYCH, *Archivní areál Praha-Chodovec*, „Stavba“, 6(1995), pp. 22-27; René GORNÝ [a others], *CFD-model solární energetické fasády a jeho využití pro výpočet provozních stavů fasády*, In *Sborník příspěvků konference Klimatizace a větrání 2002*, SPTP 2002, pp. 43-49; Bořivoj INDRA, *Výstavba budov okresních archivů*, „AČ“, 1994, pp. 151-155; Bořivoj INDRA, *Klimatizace ano či ne?*, „AČ“, 1995, pp. 50-53; Bořivoj INDRA, *Nový okresní archiv v Příbrami – komplexní řešení*, „AČ“, 1997, pp. 95-96; Bořivoj INDRA, *Neue Archivgebäude in der Tschechischen Republik (Archivní areál Praha)*, „Der Archivar, Mitteilungsblatt für deutsches Archivwesen“, 1999, n. 4, pp. 355-357; Bořivoj INDRA, *Der Neubau der staatlichen Archive in Prag*, „Archivalische Zeitschrift“, 84(2001), pp. 175-204; Bořivoj ONDRA - Vladimíra HRADECKÁ, *Nová archivní budova v Praze*, „SSH“, 26(2001); Bořivoj INDRA, *Archivní novostavby a problémy provozních nákladů*, „AČ“, 2002, p. 13; Bořivoj INDRA, *Výstavba archivních budov v České republice*, Praha 2004, 198 p.; Tomáš KALINA, *Archivní budovy jako informační pracoviště*, In *Zpravodaj pobočky ČSVTS při SÚA 32*, 1987, pp. 1-93; Tomáš KALINA, *K účelnosti adaptace historických objektů pro archivní účely*, „AČ“, 1981, pp. 20-47; Tomáš KALINA, *Novostavba Státního ústředního archivu a Státního oblastního archivu v Praze-Chodovci*, In *Státní ústřední archiv a jeho sídla*, Praha 2001, pp. 23-29; Vlastimil KOLDA, *Státní okresní archiv České Budějovice, obrazový soubor k otevření nové budovy*, České Budějovice 1996; Emil KORDIOVSKÝ [a kol.], *Státní okresní archiv Břeclav se sídlem v Mikulově*, 2001, 36 p.; *Moravský zemský archiv v Brně. Pamětní kniha k otevření novostavby*, Brno 2007, 116 p.; Martin PETROVKA, *Přesná klimatizace, proč a kam?*, In *Sborník příspěvků konference Klimatizace a větrání 2002*, SPTP 2002, pp. 190-196; Blažena PRZYBYLOVÁ, *Archiv města Ostravy v novém*, „AČ“, 1998, pp. 33-36; Dáša SEBEROVÁ, *Výstavba a rekonstrukce archivních budov státních okresních archivů na severní Moravě a ve Slezsku (Státní okresní archivy Frýdek-Místek, Jeseník, Karviná, Olomouc, Píseň, Šumperk, Vsetín)*, „AČ“, 1997, pp. 19-22; Ivo ŠULC, *Novostavba Státního okresního archivu v Chrudimi*, Chrudim 1999, pp. 27-29; Vlašáná Ludmila, *Archivní areál v Praze 4-Chodovci. Současný stav a perspektivy*, „AČ“, 1995, pp. 205-220; Miloš ZAVADIL, *Výstavba archivní budovy v Olomouci v letech 1991 až 1995, Slavnostní otevření budovy archivu v Olomouci*, Olomouc 14. 12. 1995.

dings in Prague, Olomouc and České Budějovice were designed to serve jointly the two state archives. Eight historically valuable buildings – castles and monasteries have been preserved thanks to their reconstruction for archiving purposes. In 29 cases, more or less extensive alterations of the buildings originally built for other purposes have been made. In 11 cases brand new buildings of repositories have been added to the reconstructed older buildings. Several of these buildings have been granted various architecture awards. In the course of the last twenty years, apart from the state and town archives also many buildings intended for the archives of universities, public and private organisations and companies were built.

The most remarkable archive building has become the set of archive buildings of the National Archives in Prague and the State Regional Archives Prague and the Prague City Archives in Prague Chodovec called the Archive Premises. At the International Building Trade Fair FOR ARCH 1995 this building was awarded the honorary prize and the Construction of the Year 1995 title.



The Archive Premises in Prague-Chodovec

Another significant construction is the new building of the Provincial Archives Opava in Olomouc, where also the State District Archives Olomouc is housed. It was designated the first “intelligent building” in this Moravian metropolis. Of similar importance and of larger size is also the new building of the State Regional Archives Třeboň in České Budějovice, used also for the State District Archives České Budějovice, the reconstruction of the building of the State Regional Archives in Zámorsk and the City Archives in Ostrava. The remaining buildings are smaller buildings of state district archives (now the offices of the state regional archives) in individual administrative centres (with storage capacity from 3.865 to 10.000 meters of archival records). Among these buildings the most significant are the buildings in České Budějovice, Semily, Benešov, Příbram or Chrudim.

In general, construction of repositories and smaller administrative and operational (service) buildings has been given preference to. The idea of underground repositories was deliberately ruled out when designing the archive buildings. The reason was that such spaces necessitate thorough and costly insulation against soil moisture, permanently installed dehumidifiers and ventilation equipment and lead to higher energy consumption. In case of power supply interruptions the archival records would be at greater risk here than in the above the ground repositories. That is why in majority of buildings the sandwich (multi-layer) walls have been opted to achieve high thermal inertia.



The Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno

Past experience

An extensive debate has taken place on the location of archive buildings. The question was whether they should be located in town centres or in the suburbs. There is, however, not a single answer to this question, since both the alternatives have their pros and cons and everything depends on the particular circumstances.

In a number of cases the constructions had to accommodate to specific conditions, taking into account the actual situation at the location and its prior development. In a few cases necessary funds failed to be raised and a solution has been adopted that was from the beginning clearly not optimal in a long-term perspective. Fully unsatisfactory have proven to be constructions financed from pooled investment funds which facilitate having two or more buildings under a single roof. Following the administrative reform, such concept, however, generates insoluble situations. Today extremely problematic also appear to be many renovations and reconstructions of historical, particularly listed premises that fail to meet the requirements of modern archiving. At some places, after a few years the second stage was implemented, during which an annex or a superstructure was added to the already existing building which helped optimise the situation. Where the capacity of the central premises was insufficient and the location in the historical town centre and other things prevented the extension of the existing premises, branches or repositories have been constructed. Nonetheless, this solution has not always proven ideal for the running of the archive. The best results have been achieved by reconstruction of buildings originally built for a different purpose into operational buildings together with the construction of a new repository. It has also become obvious that each reconstruction is limited by certain dispositions (conflicts of needs of archiving operations and requirements for heritage conservation, necessity of thorough insulation, demanding technical requirements on safeguarding the parameters of inner environment in repositories, difficult separation of individual parts of the operations, problems related to vertical communication etc.). An exception are the reconstructions where only the perimeter walls are left and the inner parts of the building have to be completely rebuilt. In such cases the costs substantially rise and equal or, due to the costs of demolition, exceed the costs of construction of a new building.

Rather than from major conceptual mistakes, the constructions have suffered from problems in their actual implementation. They consisted in inability of archivists to articulate their needs as well as in mistakes made by designers, but most often in poor quality of work of building firms. The role of construction supervision has proven essential since where it was absent or inadequate mistakes were made.

Much experience has been gained as to the orientation of buildings, the necessity to also take into consideration the plans of future urban development, the use of air-conditioning, etc. The archives in the Czech Republic have for a number of years followed the trend of exploiting the natural air ventilation, while the air-conditioning is perceived as only an additional element helping to compensate for extreme climatic conditions or create suitable environment for special materials³.

A major issue seems to be the rapid technology and social development of the society and thus also of the community of researchers. While on the one hand, the number of researchers and their needs and thus also the use of archival records considerably grew over the last twenty years, on the other hand the launch of scanning technologies changed the way of making the archival records accessible. Of specific and pivotal importance is the introduction of digital archival records and amendments to legislation related to mass implementation of electronic records management, changes in the way the archival records are selected and processed. All these changes are conducive to continuous changes in requirements for the size of spaces devoted to research rooms, operational spaces, file rooms and specialised repositories

In conclusion, probably the most pressing issue is the ever more challenging fundraising that is necessary for the maintenance of installed technologies as well as state-of-the-art archive buildings in the world full of economic crises and administrative reforms.

Michal Wanner

3. Čeněk KADLEC - Pavel GOŠ - Bořivoj INDRA, *Sborník typologických projektů – státní oblastní archivy*, Praha 1993, 92 p.; Jiří VÍTŮ - Bořivoj INDRA, *Typologie budov – státní okresní archivy*, Praha 1994, 32 p.

Half Century Long Journey

Film Archive, that was part of the section of Czechoslovak Film Institute, had its film collections deposited in very unsatisfactory places

- in a tower, a stable, and in vaults of the Gothic castle Kost
- in the former brick-kiln in Všetaty Town
- in a cellar of a former bakery in Prague
- in the cellars, ground-floor, and 1st floor of a not fully built-up inn in Třebší (copies and negatives on a highly flammable base/nitrocellulose base)



- in the production premises of FA in Prague

For these premises were overfilled with films, Czechoslovak Film Institute got a one-time Nazi concentration camp's garage in Hradištka pod Medníkem (40 km from Prague) and it adapted it as its vault for films on safe base (capacity 140.000 boxes of 35 mm films).



New film material was deposited there by degrees as well as the films from the above mentioned unsatisfactory places in the frame of running general inventory of film collections. The films on highly flammable base were stocked in the vault in Třebšín (250 tons). The general inventory was ended in 1974 and both vaults were completely overfilled with films. That is why Film Archive, in 1975, suggested to construct a new modern and air-conditioned depository for archival color film material according to the FIAF Recommendation (-5°C , 30% RH). This project was not accepted and FA only received finance to enlarge its current vault's capacity. No construction firm was ready to realize this extension and therefore the FA employees decided to build it up by themselves. That was in 1977-1979 (capacity 50.000 boxes of 35 mm films). In 1980-1981 they full-ended the reconstruction of the original depository in the way so that it improved the temperature and humidity conditions.

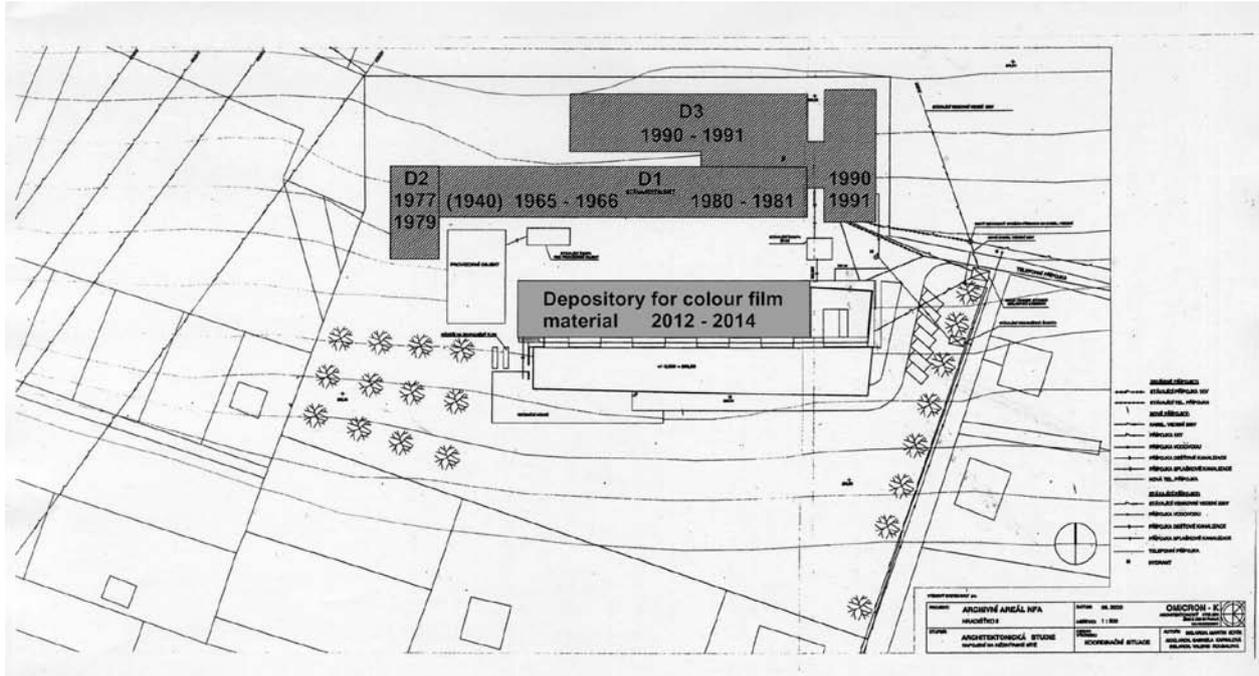


In the same way they, by self-help, built in 22 stalls in the Třebosín vaults (which were originally divided in 5 large scale sections) in 1981-1984, and they secured the installation of air-conditioning (8°C, 40% RH).



The new government, in 1990, adopted FA's proposal on new depositories of the archive in Hradištko. The 1st phase was ended in 1992:

- construction of depositories for b&w negatives and duplicate copies
- construction of depositories for non-film material collection (posters, promotional material, stills, text documents)
- construction of depositories for library collection
- construction of a new management premises building.



The 2nd phase should follow – construction of depositories for color film material which already had building permission, but the Ministry of Culture of Czech Republic didn't provide finance for this 2nd phase.

The NFA came into being by transformation of Czechoslovak Film Institute on 1.7.1992, as the youngest national institution in Czech Republic.

The Czech Government adopted a program Care for National Treasure in 2007 to support national heritage institution. Two constructions for National Film Archive were admitted;

1. Depository for color film material
2. National Film Archive seat in Prague

Depository for color film material

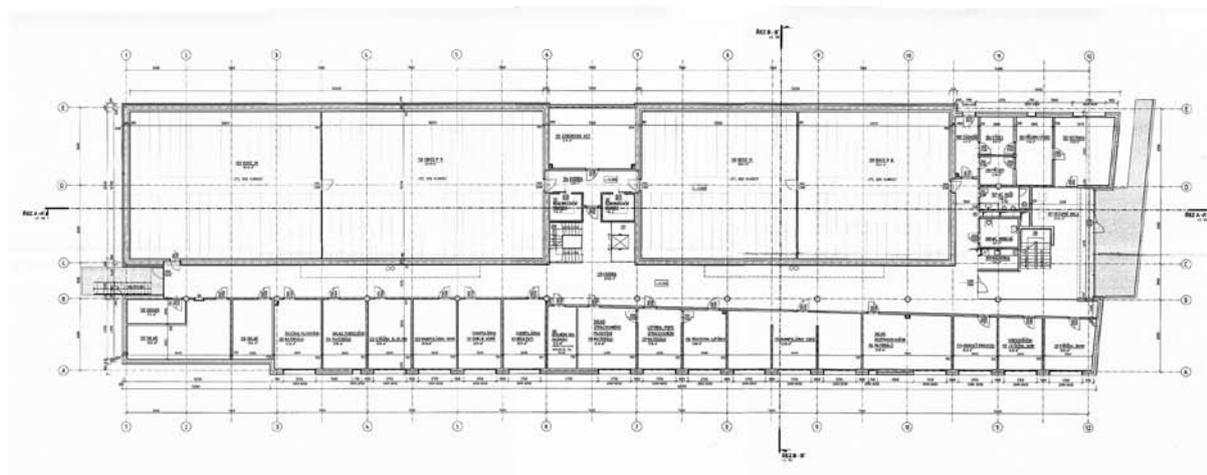
The planned building has four floors, two subterranean, two above-ground ones. The centre of the building is depositories for color film material preservation (13 m x 69 m). These are situated in two subterranean and one over-ground floor. They are divided in four sections and fit with compact shelves. Stocking of the film material from and into the depository is lead over air-conditioning area. The depositories of large posters of contemporary documentation and the depository of library are placed on the 2nd floor.

On the western side of the building there are archive places of work (cut/editing rooms, workplace for periodical control, photo studio, photographic laboratory, digital laboratory, server, safe deposit room, film material cleaner machine, a few help-depositories and technical workplace, library and written archivalia workplace).

On the 1st subterranean floor there's boiler room and engine room for air-conditioning, transformer station, garages, and other service help-places.

On the southern side of the building there are public relations places: foyer, security workplace, receipt-delivery of material, video editing-room, cut-room, multimedia research room, conference rooms, and sanitary facility. The whole building is wheelchair accessible (barrier-free).

The building is surveyed by permanent security service, including technical means (electrical fire-prevention signalization, close TV circuit, electronical entry control system, cca 200 alarm detectors).

**Ground floor**

Other specifications:

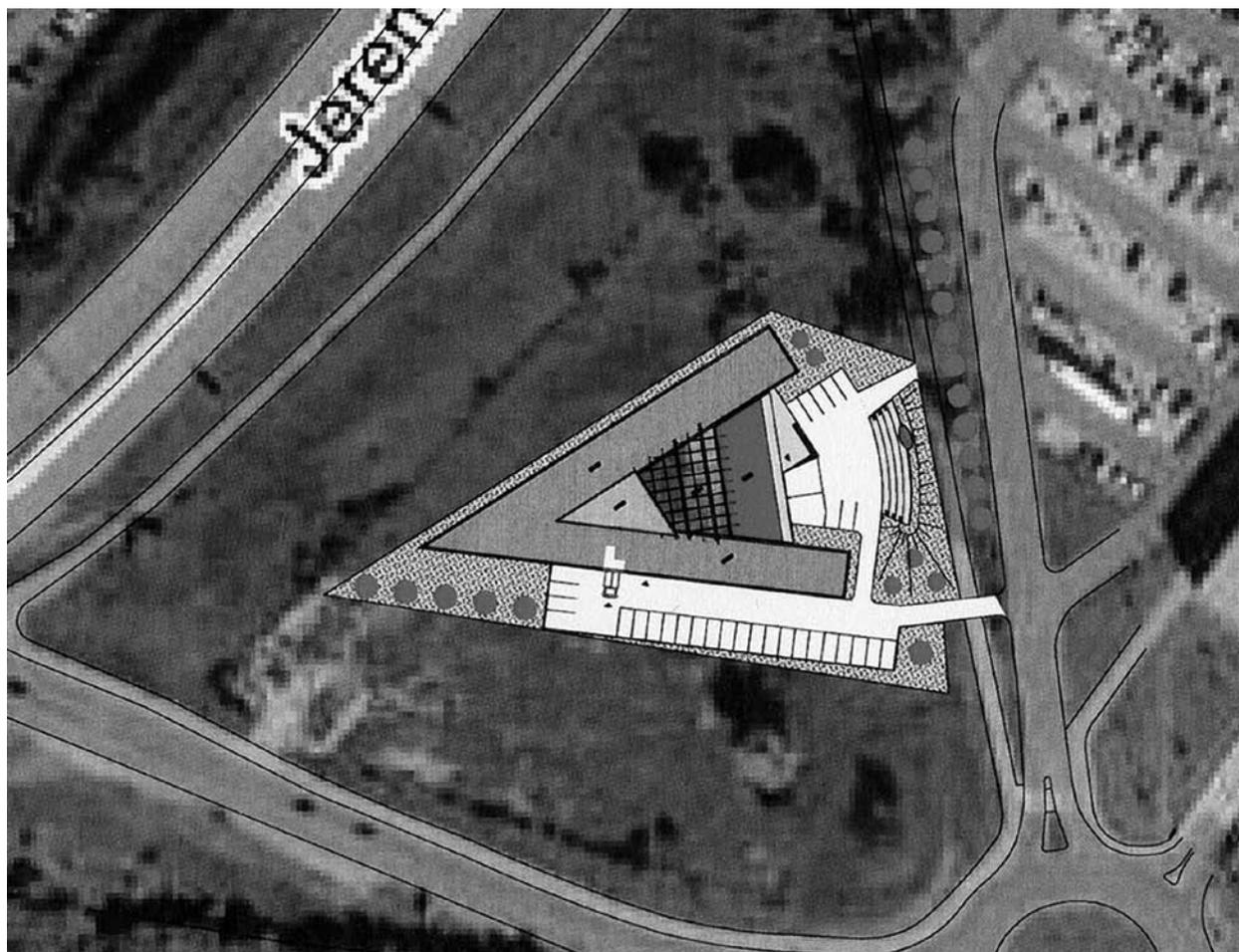
built-up grounds	1.820 m ²
utility grounds: vaults	2.944 m ²
other	1.820 m ²
surround grounds	21.500 m ³
1 elevator, 2 main stairways	
Vault capacity for color film material	432.388 boxes of 35 mm films
Construction costs cca	6.000.000 €

NFA Seat construction in Prague

National Film Archive is the youngest national cultural institution. At the same time it is one of the oldest film archives in the world and, considering its scope and collection quality, it counts among ten of the most significant film archives in the world.

In the present the NFA workplaces are situated in 5 hired localities in Prague. The aim of the construction is to centralize them in one joint centre that enables NFA to extend its activities.

The project of National Film Archive's new building (the project was worked out by Engineer Architect Kotík, Omikron-K) has 1 basement and 4 floors. It is designed in the way that the public relations rooms are separated from the places off-limits for public so that it wouldn't come to intermingling of people with archival material movement.



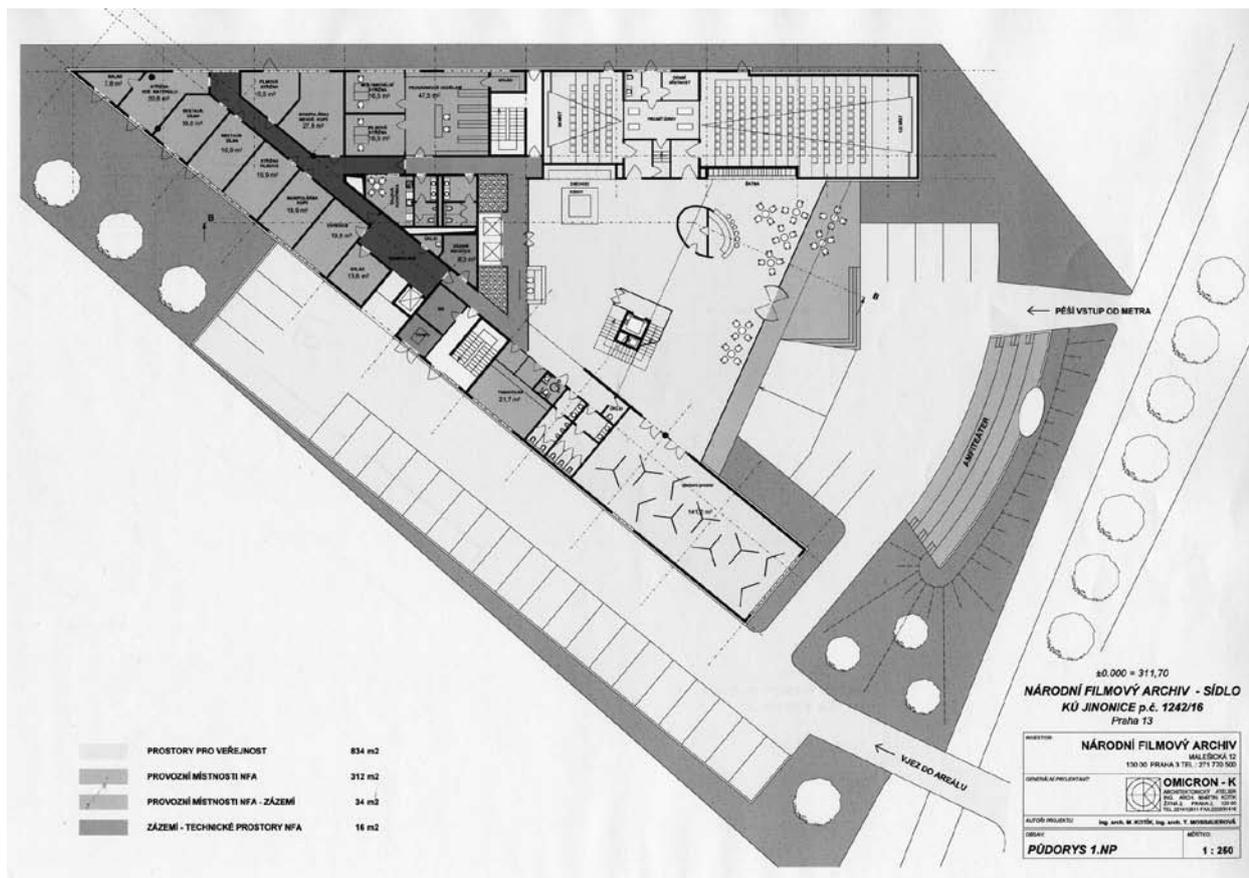
Basement

Technical equipment of the building is situated there (air-conditioning engine room, control room, sanitary services, library depository, and portal of Czechoslovak film)

Ground floor

Elemental part of NFA activities intended for public: reception, 2 cinema halls (40 and 120 seats), they enable screening of films (inclusive nitrocellulose ones) and new media, gallery and conference hall, sale-shop (publications, multimedia), small café.

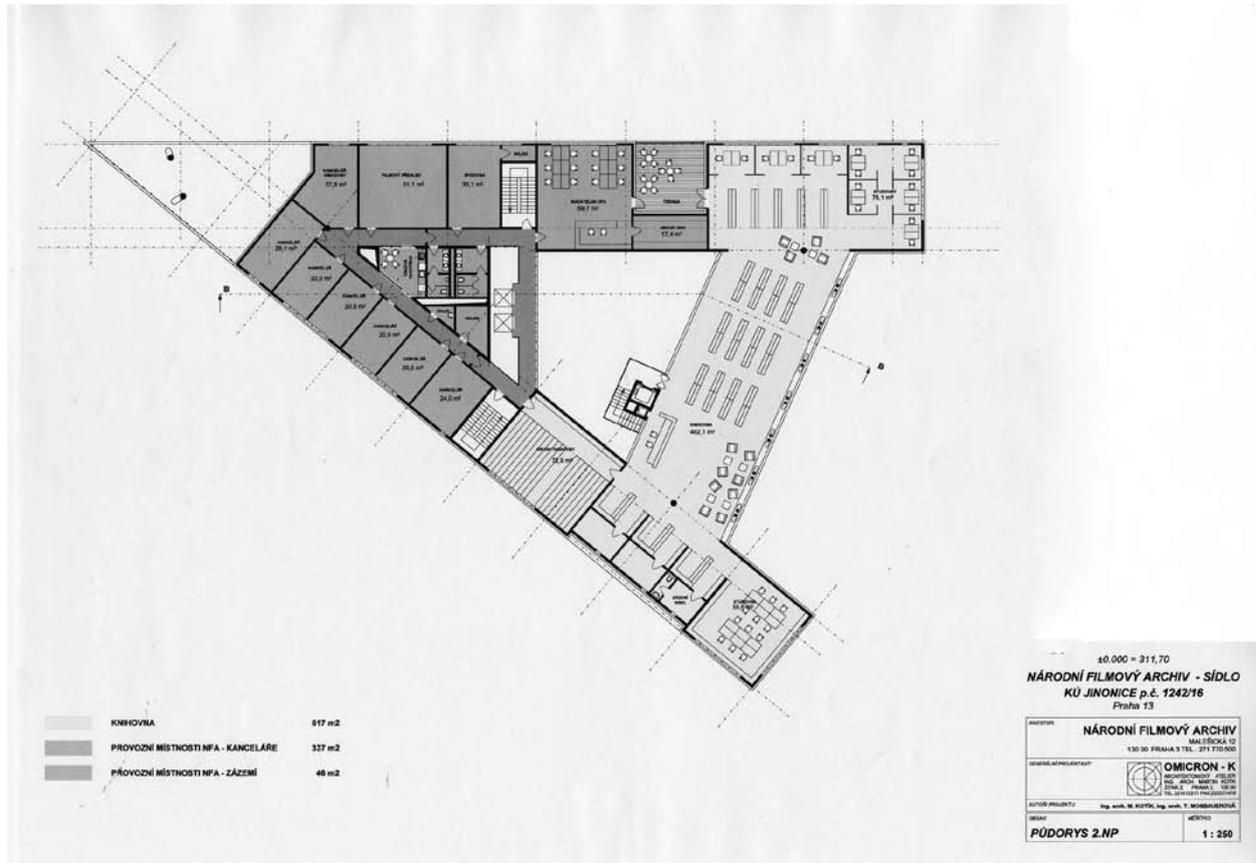
On this floor there are also situated workplaces for communication with professional film public (program workplaces, film dispatch, cut-rooms). In the western part of the building (not accessible for public) there are film restoration places.



1st floor

On this level services of specialized film library and department of written archivalia for public are centralized: reading-room (books, magazines, and periodicals), intranet and internet, multimedia study (video-audio), researchers' room (written archivalia).

In the places not accessible for public there is the specialized library workplace and Film Review redaction.



2nd floor

NFA management centre, Economical Dpt., Film Historians Dpt., Theory and Film History Dpt.

3rd floor

It is reserved for Technical Dpt., IT Dpt., Written Archivalia Dpt., including Digital Laboratory, Photo Laboratory, and Recording Studio.

An open-air cinema for summer night's screenings will be in the amphitheatre.

Other specifications:

Lot size	3.995 m ²
Built-up grounds	1.610 m ²
Utility grounds	3.100 m ²
Surround grounds	26.529 m ³
Construction costs cca	12.000.000 €

The construction and location decision has been issued.

Vladimír Opěla

SUMMARY

The paper is composed of two parts. M. Wanner summarizes in the first one the progress in the construction of archive buildings in the Czech Republic in the last twenty years. He states that a total of 60 archival buildings were constructed or reconstructed in this period. So after the fall of the totalitarian regime the deficit, which ruled the area in previous years, was caught up. Author describes principles adopted prior to the construction, as well as Czech and foreign literature which were base for the construction. He describes the most important buildings - Archive estates in Prague, Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno etc. This process was source of the lot of positive as well as negative experience. The largest one now recognized is the art to maintain these archive buildings with all modern equipment in a world full of changing economic conditions and administrative reforms. In the second part written by V. Opěla, former director of the National Film Archives in Prague (hereinafter NFA), an overview of the development of storage conditions of the archives since its inception to the present is provided. He notes the significant progress was made in the early nineties of 20th century with the emergence of specialized depository for b/w films and film documentation. At present the construction of specialized depository for color films and NFA new headquarters in Prague are realized. Author describes in detail the technical and functional characteristics of these new buildings.

Original scientific article

Submitting date: 30.03.2012

Acceptance date: 30.06.2012

