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The importance of teachers' associations in the establishment of pedagogical museum in Prague

*Pomen učiteljskih društev za nastanek pedagoškega muzeja
v Pragi*

Izvleček

Leta 1880 je bila ustanovljena „Centralna zveza učiteljskih društev“ (Ústřední spolek jednot učitelských), ki je povezovala posamezna regionalna društva čeških osnovnošolskih učiteljev. Dejavnosti centralne zveze so bile precej široke. Prispevek bo na kratko predstavil centralno društvo, predvsem pa se bo osredotočil na problem nastajanja češkega pedagoškega muzeja in prva desetletja njegovega obstoja. Stalna razstava učnih pripomočkov (1890) je neločljivo povezana z Josefom Klika (1857-1906), izjemnim učiteljem, aktivnim organizatorjem in vodjo praških učiteljev, ki je bil dejaven tudi pri „Centralni zvezi učiteljskih društev“. Društvo je realiziralo mnoge projekte, med drugim je leta 1892 ustanovilo muzej Komenskega. Dediščina Josefa Klíka je del zbirke Narodnega pedagoškega muzeja in knjižnice J. A. Komenskega v Pragi, kjer so shranjeni tudi drugi viri na to temo.

Abstract:

In 1880 the “Central Association of Teachers’ Unities” (Ústřední spolek jednot učitelských) which unified other regional “unities” (associations) of Czech teachers of elementary schools was established. The activities of this Central Association were considerably wide. This contribution briefly introduces the Central Association itself, but will primarily focus on the problem of formation of the Czech pedagogical museum and the first decades of its existence. The Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids (1890) is inseparably connected with Josef Klika (1857-1906), an outstanding teacher and active organizer and leader of Prague teachers, who was also engaged in the “Central Association of Teachers Unities”. This Association realised many extraordinary projects, including the founding of the Comenius Museum in 1892. The inheritance of Josef Klika is a part of collections of The National pedagogical museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague, where mostly other sources on this issue are deposited.

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Ključne besede: učiteljska združenja, pedagoški muzej, muzej Komenskega, Josef Klika, Praga

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Among all manner of missions met by teachers' associations in Bohemia in the second half of the 19th century, there is also effort to found a pedagogical museum in Prague. This contribution tries to outline the history of these efforts in a broader context of origins and development of associations of teachers as such.

Beginnings of the associations' life can be noticed already in the first half of the 19th century; nevertheless the real boom of associations came only after the so called "great association act" was passed in 1867. This act was considerably liberal. The development of associations' life was really enormous after this act was adopted: while in the beginning of the 1870s, there were 3,367 associations in Bohemia, in the late 1880s there were already 10,547 of them (i.e. three times more).¹ Associations' life became a characteristic of Czech society in the last third of the 19th century, and naturally teachers were imbued by it as well.

Teachers as a professional group went through a distinct change in the late 60s of the 19th century: the concordat between the Holy See and the Austrian Empire of 1855 guaranteed a privileged position to the Catholic Church in the sphere of education (the church supervised both schools and textbooks). Nevertheless influence of the Church bowed after the lost war with Prussia and with accession of the liberal government in the Austrian Empire; this process culminated by issuance of the so called Hasners' School Act of 1869.

Teachers' associations - generally was used designation "teachers' unity" (*učitelská jednota*) accompanied by the name of the locality where the respective association worked - became a place where the new professional self-confidence of teachers, who were freed from a direct Church's supervision, was formed. An important mission of associations was protection of teachers' social interests, which means they operated as trade union *sui generis* (interest in social issues of course doesn't made from teachers' associations real trade unions). At the same time they played a great role at discussing topical pedagogical issues, and their enlightenment activity was also very important, no matter if they addressed members of the association (lectures on various pedagogical topics or focusing on current problems of contemporary schooling), or wider public (public lectures on themes from miscellaneous scientific disciplines, issuing of popularising publications etc.).

1 Laštovka, Marek [et al.]. Pražské spolky: soupis pražských spolků na základě úředních evidencí z let 1895-1990, Praha 1998, p. 36.

The first teachers' association in Prague was established in 1867, followed by associations in other cities soon – only in 1870 32 teachers' associations were established and the number continued to increase also in the following years;² the minimum number of members of one association fluctuated between 10-20 persons, larger association could have over 50 members.³ Teachers' associations were overwhelmingly organised according to the regional principle – members of one association had one common employer, i.e. a relevant district education office. It is necessary to point out that the associations were divided also according to nations – teachers from Czech and German schools were united in different associations (and then the associations of Czech teachers became centres of the Czech patriotic movement). This paper deals only with Czech associations and we leave entirely aside the largest association “Central School Foundation” (*Ústřední matice školská*) founded in 1880, which aimed specific objectives – the purpose of its existence was the formation and support of Czech schools in areas where the ethnic German population predominated (similar in the territories with superiority of Czech population served “Deutscher Schulverein”, founded also in 1880).⁴

Whole land teachers' conventions provided with an opportunity of multi-regional meetings. The first one was held in Prague in 1870, the second one year later in the Moravian town Přerov. However, while striving to organise other conventions, teachers met with problems from the side of state administration.⁵ Already in the 70s the effort aroused to found a central organisation, which would cover relevant regional teachers' associations. This idea was managed to be implemented in 1880, when the “Central Association of Teachers' Unities”⁶ (*Ústřední spolek jednot učitelských*) was established. So the activities of teachers' association were characterized by a strong base at the regional level which after some time felt the need to establish a central organization, not as it might be in other cases when the strong central organization established local branches. And so a great professional teachers' organisation was established that became a strong partner at negotiations with the “Land Board of Education” (*Zemská školní rada*)

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- 2 Pulpán, František. *Dějiny Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách*, Praha 1931, p. 5.
 - 3 Otcovský, Ivan. *Soupis učitelských a školských spolků v Čechách do roku 1900: soupis podle politických okresů z r. 1880*, Praha 1977, p. 10.
 - 4 Details in Otcovský, Ivan. *Soupis učitelských a školských spolků v Čechách do roku 1900: soupis podle politických okresů z r. 1880*, Praha 1977, p. 17-19.
 - 5 Cikhart, Roman. *Padesát let Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách 1880-1930*, Praha 1932, p. 54-55 (in addition to the information about the first teachers' conventions is also given a list of conventions until 1920).
 - 6 Pulpán, František. *Dějiny Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách*, Praha 1931, p. 7.



The "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" - Teachers Hall of Fame (room Nr. I.), photo from the early 20th century. (All photographs are from sub-collection of photographs of the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague)

not only in terms of organisation of whole land teachers' conventions.⁷ The Central Association provided state administration with its positions to educational legislation, fought for detaching of education from the Church's influence, and promoted higher education of teachers: a never implemented dream was a university education also for primary school teachers, but even though the Central Association was not successful in this direction, it still contributed to a reform of teachers' institutions and supported self-education of teachers.⁸ One of the biggest topics was the fight for higher salaries for teachers – the issue of material

7 The mission of „Central Association of Teachers' Unities“ is simply and clearly expressed in the first statutes - the three main tasks of the Association are: 1) to support the education of teachers 2) to improve the teaching and the school system 3) to defend and promote the interests of teachers - according to Pulpán, František. *Dějiny Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách*, Praha 1931, p. 7.

8 Cikhart, Roman. *Padesát let Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách 1880-1930*, Praha 1932, p. 16-21.

security of primary school teachers was discussed each and every year, nevertheless it was never solved to teachers' satisfaction.⁹

Besides the fight for a better legal and social status of teachers, the "Central Association of Teachers' Unities" devoted itself to issues linked directly to school and teaching: as a platform for expert discussions served – apart from annual conventions – newly established professional periodicals.¹⁰ To improve the level of visual teaching, there were organised exhibitions of teaching aids both during the whole land teachers' conventions, and by particular teachers' unities within districts. However, the "Central Association of Teachers' Unities" began from its very establishment to strive for permanent exhibition of teaching aids – their collection should become one of component parts of the pedagogical museum one day.¹¹ Even though the Central Association represented considerable number of teachers, it was beyond their limits to finance the pedagogical museum – therefore they decided to ask the city of Prague for support. But the municipal council did not react to the proposal of 1880. For that reason teachers decided pragmatically not to ask for the establishment of the pedagogical museum, which would document systematically the past and the present of Czech education, but they asked only for the establishment of a permanent exhibition of teaching aids. Support was promised to this request in 1881, but it took nine more years till a suitable room was found and prepared, and the exhibition was opened to the public.

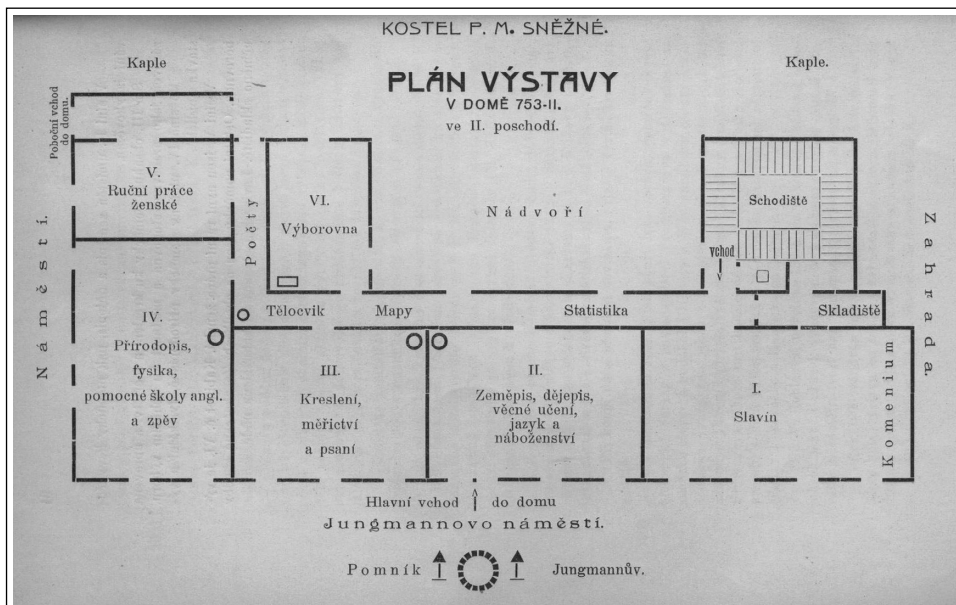
It happened primarily thanks to unremitting efforts of a Prague teacher, author of numerous textbooks, and designer of teaching aids, Josef Klika (1857-1906), who was significantly engaged in the Prague teachers' association "Budeč" and served as a secretary of the Central Association for several years. For Klika it was very important that teachers have the possibility to familiarise themselves thoroughly ideally with all teaching aids, which were available on the market, to try them and only then to decide, which of them they would use in teaching.¹² After the exhibition committee headed by the chairman K. Urlich and secretary J. Klika managed to arrange premises for the exhibition, to get a regular annual subvention from the city of Prague, and examples of teaching aids from most

9 Details in Kodedová, Oldřiška - Uherek, Zdeněk. *Kapitoly z dějin českého učitelstva (1890-1938)*, Praha 1972, p. 9-22.

10 In addition to the Journal of the Association („Věstník Ústředního spolku jednot učitelských“) with supplement „Czech school“ („Česká škola“) was from September 1897 published biweekly „Czech teacher“ („Český učitel“) and since 1905 „Revue for Teaching aids“ („Revue učebných pomůcek“), after the First World War a magazine „School reforms“ („Školské reformy“). Information about the associational press taken from Cikhart, Roman. *Padesát let Zemského ústředního spolku jednot učitelských v Čechách 1880-1930*, Praha 1932, p. 57-59.

11 Details about initial efforts on the establishment of the czech pedagogical museum see Šimek, Jan. *Úloha spolků v počátcích pražského pedagogického muzea*, In *Muzejní spolky včera a dnes. Sborník příspěvků ze semináře k 20. výročí obnovení Včely Čáslavské*, Čáslav 2011, p. 84.

12 Klika, Josef. *Stálá výstava školská v Praze, dějiny myšlenky, rozvoj a zřízení její*. Praha 1890, p. 7.



Ground plan of rooms on Jungmannovo náměstí (Jungmann Square) in Prague, where between 1896-1916 the "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" was located (including collections "Teachers' Hall of Fame" and "Comenius Museum"): I. "Teachers' Hall of Fame"; "Comenius Museum"; II. Geography, history, visual teaching, languages, religious education; III. Drawing, geometry, writing; IV. Natural history, physics, special schools (England), singing; V. Women's handwork; VI. Committee Office.

of Czech firms dealing with production of them, the "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" was opened to the teachers' public in 1890.¹³ Its purpose, that is to serve for improvement of visual teaching at schools, fulfilled very good from its very beginning, even though it began to face with lack of space to exhibit all teaching aids and also the annual subsidies for running the exhibition ceased to be sufficient. Running the exhibition was provided by volunteers from Prague teachers, who took care for both exhibits themselves, and performed various administrative tasks (all of them as volunteer without any reward).

Josef Klika functioned as a secretary of the "Permanent Exhibition" in the first years, but his organisation soon took a turn for a different direction: 1892 was the 300th anniversary of the birth of J. A. Comenius and Klika became one of the main organisers of these celebrations (he himself was an excellent expert in the

13 National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague, sub-collection Archive of documents, sign. 15-21, Denník stálé výstavy školské v Praze, p. 17.



"Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" - Geography, history, visual teaching (room Nr. II.), photo from the early 20th century.

work of J. A. Comenius and popularised his thoughts in several publications).¹⁴ The "Museum of Comenius" was founded also from his initiative – a collection of objects, which were linked in any way to Comenius: pictures and sculptures of him, prints of his works (no matter if original editions of the 17th century or later editions), or publications about him. The Museum was opened on the day of Comenius birthday, March 28th, 1892 and after the jubilee celebrations it was attached as a parallel collection to the "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids".¹⁵

In 1892, there existed the "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" and the "Museum of Comenius" in Prague, in the same building and administered by one exhibition committee. Members of the exhibition committee were until

¹⁴ In the jubilee year 1892 prepared Klika 3 publications about Comenius, each focused on different group of readers - Klika, Josef. Jan Amos Komenský: Čech, učitel národů, křesťan, charakter. Praha 1892, 193 p.; Klika, Josef. Komenského život a práce. Praha 1892, 106 p.; Klika, Josef. O slavném Čechu Komenském. Praha 1892, p. 40.

¹⁵ National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague, sub-collection Archive of documents, sign. 15-21, Denník Musea Komenského, p. 2.



*"Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" - Drawing (room Nr. III.),
photo from the early 20th century.*

1905 elected from those teachers who organized and managed "district teachers' library". After 1905 matters of library and the exhibition were separated and the committee of the "Permanent Exhibition" was elected directly from members of "district teachers' convention" (under the law were members of "district teachers' convention" all teachers of the district, which for the "Permanent Exhibition" meant all teachers from Prague).¹⁶

These two collections were considered to be the basis for the pedagogical museum. According to teachers' ideas the museum should have been designed more generally, to concentrate on documentation of the past, to have its own printing house and to publish, to organise lectures and to fulfil also some research tasks in the field of pedagogy. No matter how vivid the thoughts of such a museum were, teachers' organisations unifying teachers of schools of lower levels did not start the realisation of the museum that was planned this way till the end of the 19th century. It was not a sign of lack of abilities of their representatives,

¹⁶ Jandl, Antonín. *Stálá výstava školská v Praze, její vznik a vývoj od r. 1879 do r. 1909*. Praha 1909, p. 8.

more likely it was a result of realistic appreciation of their own possibilities: it was obvious that the museum would not manage without financial support of the land or the state, and they did not succeed in getting this support. Primary school teachers were therefore satisfied with existence of the “Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids”, which was growing enjoyably thanks to their efforts.

Secondary school teachers took over the initiative in the matter of a broader conceived pedagogical museum and founded the “Society of the Czech Pedagogical Museum” in 1906.¹⁷ In their plans they anticipated documentation of the past and the present Czech education, a broad enlightenment and publishing activity, and even a research pedagogical section.¹⁸ But secondary school professors did not manage to obtain financial support from the state administration, and therefore the project was not able to be implemented in the originally planned scope. The Museum Society succeeded in the creation of a voluminous and valuable library of pedagogical literature, acquired under the administration of the “Museum of Comenius”, and the collection of inheritances of various excellent teachers called the “Teachers’ Hall of Fame” (*Učitelský Slavín*) and on December 3rd, 1916 the “Pedagogical Comenius Museum” was inaugurated. The “Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids” was located in the same building, and its committee collaborated closely with the museum’s committee, but rejected strictly the inclusion of teaching aids collection in museum.¹⁹

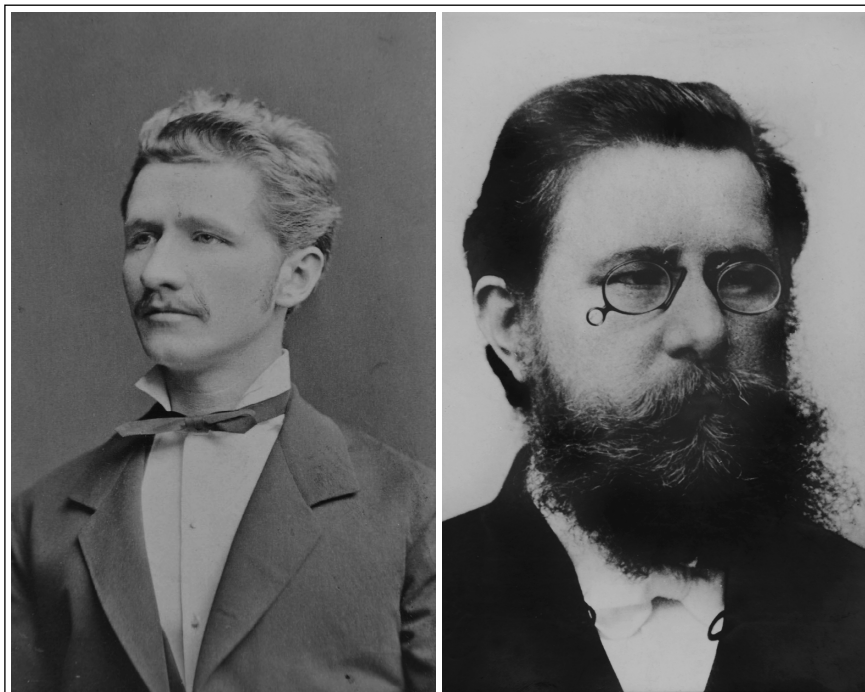
The situation of the “Pedagogical Comenius Museum” changed only after the Austria-Hungary ceased to exist, when the “Pedagogical Institute of Comenius” was founded in the Czechoslovak Republic its activity was very similar to the concept formulated by the Museum Society. Because many members of the Museum Society took influential positions in the Ministry of Education, a plan for fusion of the Museum with the Institute was adopted – it seemed that it would bring a bright future for the Museum, since it gained access to state subsidies. Unfortunately the “Pedagogical Institute of Comenius” was abolished in 1925, and together with it the Museum came to an end as well. It was renewed only in the 50s of the 20th century (only the “Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids” and pedagogical library survived the year 1925, and existed autonomously in the following decades).

In conclusion it is possible to say that although teachers’ associations did not manage to realise a broadly conceived pedagogical museum in the 19th century, there originated its basis in a form of the “Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids” and the “Museum of Comenius”. In the view of limited financial resources

17 This Society sought to establish an institution called “Pedagogical Comenius Museum” - one part of this museum should be the collection of objects and publications connected with J. A. Comenius which was called “Museum of Comenius”.

18 Patočka, Josef. *Pedagogické museum Komenského v Praze*. Praha 1919, p. 8-9.

19 Jandl, Antonín. *Stálá výstava školská v Praze, její vznik a vývoj od r. 1879 do r. 1909*. Praha 1909, p. 27-28; more details are present in typescript *Stálá výstava školská* (without author and dating, probably 1945-48), deposit in National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague, source Archiv dějin učitelstva, inv. č. 278/368, p. 12-14.



Josef Klika (1857-1906), as a 33-year-old teacher and later. He was one of the founders of the "Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids" and "Comenius Museum." (All photographs are from sub-collection of photographs of the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague; some also on web: http://www.cesonline.cz/arl-ces/cs/detail-ces_us_cat-psb0002573-21-Fotografie-filmy-videozaznamy-a-jina-media/)

of teachers' associations – and particularly considering that foundation of a pedagogical museum was not among the utmost priorities of their activity – it can be viewed as a success. Talking about importance of teachers' associations it is necessary to add that a decisive role at formation of the "Permanent Exhibition" and the "Museum of Comenius" was played by selfless personal efforts of individuals – particularly of Josef Klika, Karel Urlich, Adolf Frumar and other members of the first exhibition committee.

The today's "National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius" in Prague was de facto established in 1956, when the Ministry of Education heard out the long-term efforts of teachers and historians after the restoration of the pedagogical museum. The situation then was favourable, because the year 1957 was marked by great celebrations of 300 years since the publication of Comenius didactical opus magnum "Opera Didactica Omnia" (it was published in Amsterdam in 1657). Museum supporters pointed to the fact that it would be a great opportunity to revive the defunct "Museum of Comenius", which was founded in 1892, at the 300th Comenius's birthday jubilee. As mentioned, the "Museum of

Comenius" founded in 1892 was not an independent museum institution, but the reference to the "museum" established at the previous Comenius jubilee fulfilled its function and the museum was restored in 1956.

The today's "National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius", which employs almost 50 employees, is divided into two organizational units: the first part is a museum, which manages five sub-collections (archive of written documents, historical sub-collection, sub-collection of photographs, sub-collection of books and textbooks, sub-collection of school equipment and teaching aids) and the second part is a public library focused on textbooks, literature for children and specialized literature from branches as pedagogy or psychology. We could ask whether the today's relatively large pedagogical museum in Prague would exist if hundreds of Czech teachers-volunteers in the late 19th century did not sacrifice so many hours of their free time with efforts for the establishing and maintenance of its ancestors: Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids, Museum of Comenius and Pedagogical Comenius Museum. I personally believe that the role of teachers and teachers associations was in this regard irreplaceable.

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Summary

The importance of teachers' associations in the establishment of pedagogical museum in Prague

Jan Šimek

In 1880 the “Central Association of Teachers’ Unities” (Ústřední spolek jednot učitelských) which unified other regional “unities” (associations) of Czech elementary school teachers was established. The activities of this Central Association were considerably wide, the range of questions discussed at the annual general meetings included matters from questions concerning material provision of teachers (in the last decades of the 19th century it was a significant part of the agenda of Association) to the practical issues of teaching methods. This contribution briefly introduces the Central Association itself, but primarily it will focus on the problem of the formation of the Czech pedagogical museum and the first decades of its existence.

The idea of establishing a museum was partially realized in 1890, when the “Permanent Exhibition of Teaching Aids” (so not directly the museum which was originally intended) was opened. The formation of the Permanent school exhibition is inseparably connected with Josef Klika (1857-1906), an outstanding teacher and active organizer and leader of Prague teachers, who was also engaged in the “Central Association of Teachers Unities”. Therefore this contribution cannot omit this extraordinary personality of the movement of Czech teachers in the last decades of the 19th century.

In fact, Josef Klika is a good example to demonstrate, how the strong individuality was able to realize through the Teachers Association so many extraordinary projects, e. g. the founding of the Permanent exhibition /1890, the founding of the Comenius Museum (1892) or the publishing of the Encyclopedia of Education, the greatest scientific and editorial project of Czech teachers in the 19th century. The inheritance of Josef Klika is part of the collections of The National pedagogical museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in Prague, where mostly other sources on this issue are deposited.