

žurnál

Magazine of Palacký University Olomouc, 2026/1

theme

Paths Around Us and Within Us



Palacký University
Olomouc

Monika Tomaneová '26



Palacký University
Olomouc

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cover – reproduction of a painting by Monika Tomanová
Paths Around Us and Within Us (oil on canvas)

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Dear students and colleagues,

Palacký University is a place of learning, discovery, and inspiration. Each new issue of UP Žurnál demonstrates the vibrant and dynamic world our university is creating – from science and education to cultural and social activities that intersect with the academic environment and enter the public sphere.

This edition presents a range of compelling themes and personalities who combine curiosity with the courage to forge new paths and the capacity to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. In addition to scientific themes, it introduces the university as a hub for art, creativity, and free thought. Art is an integral component of academic life – it enables us to better comprehend the world by illuminating important themes and providing a common language where facts alone may be insufficient.

I believe that this synthesis of science, humanitarianism, and artistic creation is what gives our university its strength and uniqueness. I am grateful to all who contribute their work, talent, and enthusiasm in shaping the diverse nature of university life.

Wishing you inspiring reading,

Michael Kohajda
UP Rector

The Mediterranean – the favourite destination for Czechs. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Czech tourists head for the beaches of Italy, Croatia, Greece, and Egypt, seeking rest and relaxation. Few realise, however, that the Mediterranean has attracted landlocked Czechs since the Middle Ages – and that many of them kept records of their journeys in the form of travelogues. These are being digitally processed by the project Digeocat & Lib. under the direction of Jiří Hrabal from the UP Faculty of Arts, thanks to whom we can rediscover popular destinations through the eyes of bygone travellers.

Czech digital library to escape at least into 19th-century periodicals and see what was being written then about the places that interest me. When you start leafing through these periodicals, you find that many of the texts were excerpted from published travelogues. Until the early 20th century, travelogues held a very privileged position among sources that allowed people to acquaint themselves with foreign countries and peoples. This role was later largely taken over by radio and film,” added the researcher, who specialises in travelogues from Dalmatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The travelogues were so compelling to Hrabal that in 2020, together with colleagues in geoinformatics from the UP Faculty of Science, the University of South Bohemia Faculty of Arts, and the Moravian Library in Brno, he founded the Centre for

Research on Travel Writing and the History of Written Representations of Intercultural Contact, later joined by colleagues from the universities of Granada, Udine, and Zagreb, who together created the project “Research into Representations of Intercultural Contacts in Czech Travelogue Texts from the Mediterranean up to 1918, Using Digital Humanities” – “Digeocat & Lib” for short.

The result is a globally unique tool which allows users to follow the routes of Czech travel writers on digital maps and learn about their perceptions of various cultures and aspects of life in Mediterranean countries from a digital library linked directly to a digital atlas. "The information in Digeocat can be sorted by several criteria, such as the traveller's mode of transportation, e.g. you get a completely different experience and perspective depending on whether you are walking, riding a camel, travelling by train, or sailing. It also influences the look of the travelogue."





Jiří Hrabal (b. 1973)

He teaches at the UP Faculty of Arts Department of Czech Studies, where his research focuses primarily on literary and cultural narratology, the history of literary and aesthetic thought, and textual interpretation theory. From 2023 to 2025, he was the principal investigator of the international project Research into Representations of Intercultural Contacts in Czech Travelogue Texts from the Mediterranean up to 1918, Using Digital Humanities. In his spare time, he translates contemporary Croatian and Bosnian poetry and prose.

The visual aspect of the manuscripts is also interesting – many travel writers included drawings in their notebooks. However, their sketches were not usually published with the texts. Researchers began to discover these drawings and sketches while working in the archives. Thanks to Digeocat, we can now see them for the first time and enhance the text with a visual experience.



Travelogues often contain passages that are not only of interest to those studying cultural differences, but which surprise the average reader to this day. For example, when young naturalist Antonín Frič (the future renowned professor at Charles University and director of the National Museum) was scouring Montenegro for a “Turk’s head” for Prof J.A. Purkyně’s collection...

Thanks to this digital library, one can read about our compatriots’ journeys to the Mediterranean from the 15th century to 1918. But why this region and period? “We went chronologically, from the earliest travelogues of Czech provenance to when the role of travelogues began to change and other media arose. Also, 1918 was when the map was redrawn. Throughout the whole period under review, there was relatively intense travel to the Mediterranean, which cannot be said about other parts of Europe – or the world,” Hrabal added.

The project thus sheds light on a unique genre of texts previously overlooked by researchers. “Travelogues do not form a dominant corpus of texts in any field. However, they contain an incredible amount of useful information for natural scientists, linguists, historians, and cultural anthropologists alike. We would like researchers from various fields to be able to find information that interests them and they cannot find elsewhere. For example, a sociologist can use our tool to quickly find what travel writers wrote about the relationship between religion and hygiene in the Balkans in the 19th century. You simply enter the given filters and in moments you get links to all the passages in the corpus related to those topics,” said Hrabal, who is now considering turning his attention to other, lesser-visited areas of Europe once the Mediterranean corpus is complete.

A diverse company of authors

Travelogues also differ from one another depending on the authors’ backgrounds. In addition to writers (incl. Jan Neruda), there were travelling teachers, businessmen, naturalists, soldiers, and priests, whose journeys were often initiated by some historical

circumstance. “After Dalmatia came under the administration of the Austrian Monarchy in 1815, a number of Czech-speaking officials were sent there, as they were able to communicate more effectively with the local Slavic-speaking population than the Austrian officials, who were not fluent in any Slavic language. Or in 1878, when Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia, and Czech soldiers were sent there. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the other hand were the era of the ‘grand tour’, when young aristocrats travelled to Western European countries to gain experience, receive an education, and learn languages. What’s interesting about these travelogues is that they are often written in multiple languages, depending on the country the traveller was staying in at the time,” said Hrabal.

The project also enriched his teaching. “When we learn about a particular region through the lens of travelogues, we follow a journey through a space that has changed over time, but we also gain insight into a different culture and local customs – I think this is fascinating for students, too. It is exactly the kind of critical reading of texts that is being called for these days, but few know how to teach it. Travelogues offer a wonderful opportunity for this, plus studying them leads to interdisciplinarity.” On the following pages, you can read about one of Jiří Hrabal’s students and the kind of adventures they can experience through their studies.

“In the future, we will try to expand Digeocat so that it can also be used in secondary schools, enabling teachers to integrate it into subjects such as history, geography, and Czech,” concluded Hrabal, whose professional love for Dalmatia also has a personal impetus – his Croatian wife.

The plan? Go south

She set off on a journey of nearly 800 km. By scooter. To follow in the footsteps of Vilém Dušan Lambl, a 19th C. Czech biologist, doctor, pioneer of modern paediatrics in the Czech lands, and political activist. For it was he to whom Lada Herudková would dedicate her paper at the international conference Bohemicon in Zagreb, Croatia. The same journey taken by Lambl that she also wrote about in her Master's thesis. "Now Lambl is my guide," said the student of Czech Studies and Art Education at the UP Faculties of Arts and Education.

Herudková learned about Lambl during a travel writing seminar at the Department of Czech Studies. "I wrote a term paper on Lambl, then my Master's thesis on him. He was young and enthusiastic, but also a doctor, so his writing is different. While he faced the same issues as others, he had his own distinct worldview – partly because he spoke fluent Serbo-Croatian."

She bought the scooter, which she named Rumilda, a fortnight before setting off. "I used to spend a lot of time in the Scouts, I love walking. Walking, though, I'd never get there in time. And I'm not big on cycling, so Rumilda was the perfect solution."

She mapped her route based on archival newspaper articles and her own research.

"I can't be sure I followed Lambl's exact route to Dalmatia. But I connected the individual places he wrote about in a way I could cover by scooter. Preferring cycling paths and less frequented roads, I went south from Prague through Linz and Graz to the Slovenian-Croatian border, and then to Zagreb."

Seventeen days on the road

Every day she noted the number of kilometres she had travelled, roughly 50 on average. She used hygienic facilities at campsites or fitness centres. Entire days spent on Rumilda with a rucksack on her back. Afterwards, resting in her hammock under the open sky with stars above, she would drift off into vivid dreams.

Whatever the weather, she tried to ride every day. Usually from 9 until evening, with breaks. One day, it rained relentlessly, and she had to find shelter at a bus stop in Austria where she spent the night and tried to dry her things out. But someone must have reported her, because the cops arrived in the wee hours of the morning, thinking she was a refugee. She got off with a warning.

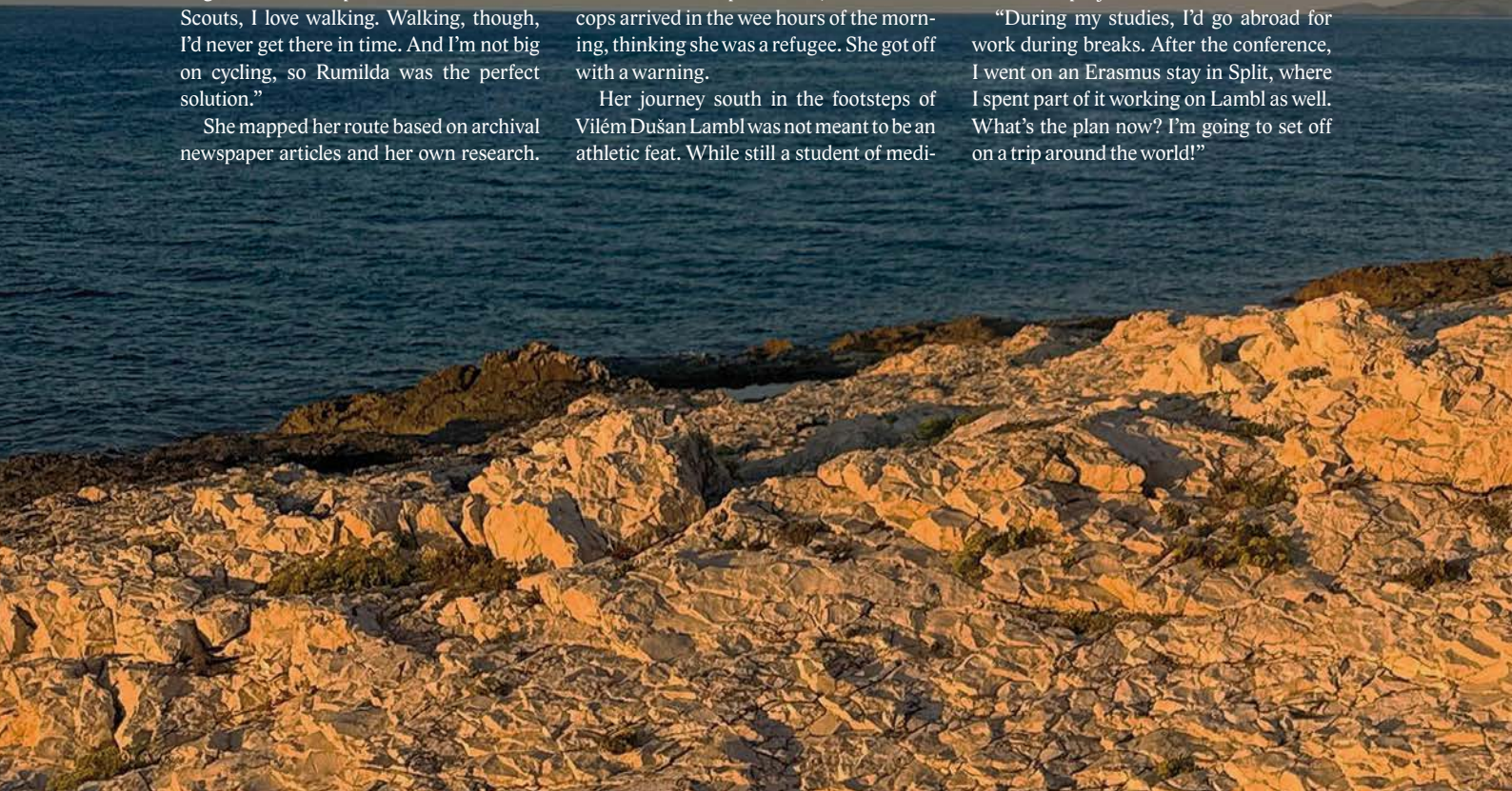
Her journey south in the footsteps of Vilém Dušan Lambl was not meant to be an athletic feat. While still a student of medi-

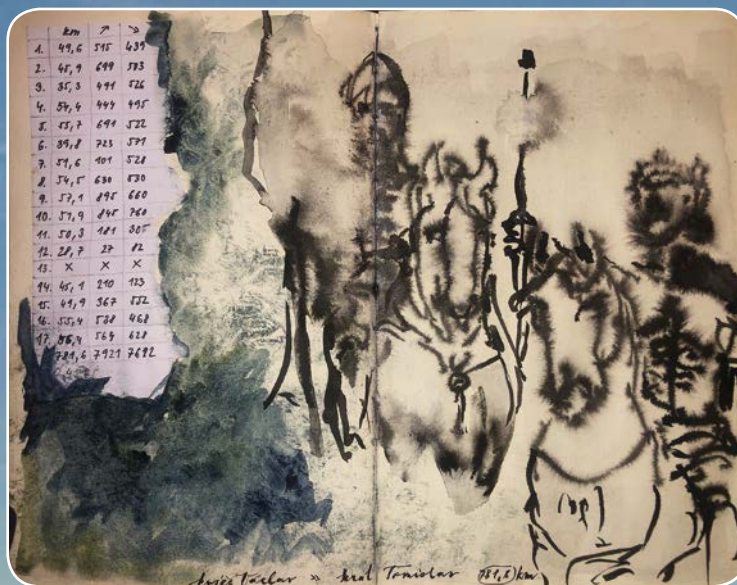
cine and Slavic languages, Lambl travelled throughout the southern Slavic countries, learned their languages, and wrote travelogues and articles. Like Vilém, Lada, too, would stop by the river every now and then, just thinking and gazing into the water or enjoying the genius loci of the places she was passing through. Her plan was simple: go south.

Bringing Lambl's trail to life through personal experience

"I sang to myself. And all the way to Zagreb, I had to keep counting my steps to alternate my feet. Uphill, I mostly carried my scooter, but I had brilliant downhill rides. At that pace, you notice the changing landscape more," noted the student from the University of Olomouc, who is a poetry lover. When she arrived at the conference, she was quite a sight for sore academic eyes. Very few people today experience the paths and pilgrimages of past generations. She came up with the idea thanks to the Digeocat & Lib. project.

"During my studies, I'd go abroad for work during breaks. After the conference, I went on an Erasmus stay in Split, where I spent part of it working on Lambl as well. What's the plan now? I'm going to set off on a trip around the world!"





Lada Herudková's handwritten diary entries



inauguration

text: Martin Višňa
photos: Vojtěch Kmenta



The deans of four faculties of Palacký University were officially inaugurated in the historic premises of the Military Hospital Olomouc. Jan Stejskal of the Faculty of Arts and Vojtech Regec of the Faculty of Education, symbolically beginning their second terms in office, retook their inaugural oaths and received their faculty insignia along with newly appointed deans Jan Říha of the Faculty of Science and Pavel Háp of the Faculty of Physical Culture. All four assumed leadership of their respective faculties in early February and will serve as deans for the next four years.

Dialects and geoinformatics? A perfect fusion in unique atlases

The diversity of dialects is something most languages have in common. While canvas shoes are called sneakers in the U.S. and pumps, plimsolls, and daps in England or sandshoes and sannies in Scotland, even a smaller culture such as the Czech-speaking one contains varied regional words for any object of daily use. For example in Czech, blood might flow from a wound in a “crkot”, “čuříček”, “cecór”, or “čûrek”.

And this is what the Czech Language Institute Department of Dialectology at the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) focuses on. Their experts go out to collect examples of spoken language dialects directly in the terrain. If you imagine the results of their work as dusty stacks of notes and large volumes of dull books, you're wrong. Thanks to a collaboration between CAS and cartographers and geoinformatics specialists from the UP Faculty of Science, atlases of Czech dialects are being compiled. The sixth volume was launched this spring as part of the exhibition “Critically Endangered Phenomena of Our Dialects” at the Prague headquarters of the CAS.

These atlases are engaging publications that offer both detailed maps of specific linguistic phenomena across the country and explanatory notes. “We also develop software for data collection, calculations, and analyses for linguists. We create audio-enhanced maps and atlases and organise exhibitions. Our work has been very well received both within the academic community and among people in the field,” says Prof Vít Voženílek from the Faculty of Science Department of Geoinformatics. Truly so – in the Map of the Year 2025 competition, their *Atlas of Czech Dialects – Local Plural Forms of Nouns* won in the category of Atlases, Map Collections, and Map Editions.

Voženílek admits that at first, he viewed his collaboration with linguists purely from a professional perspective: how to make their overly simple map more visually appealing. →



“But then I started thinking about how dialects relate to me, and I realised one thing. Whenever I visit specific regions, I’m always interested in what kind of landscape they have there, what the houses, villages, and people look like, and what they eat. And it dawned on me that the way they speak is an integral part of who they are. If a person from the east travels to the western part of the country and vice versa, their origin is recognised immediately, and even some prejudices arise. Language really is part of our identity.”

As Voženilek leafs through the individual atlases, he points out that evolution is inevitable. Some maps display data collected in the 1960s, a record of how the oldest generation spoke in villages back then. “Now we’re mapping the entire country again to find out what has changed – for example, whether words are disappearing or emerging.”

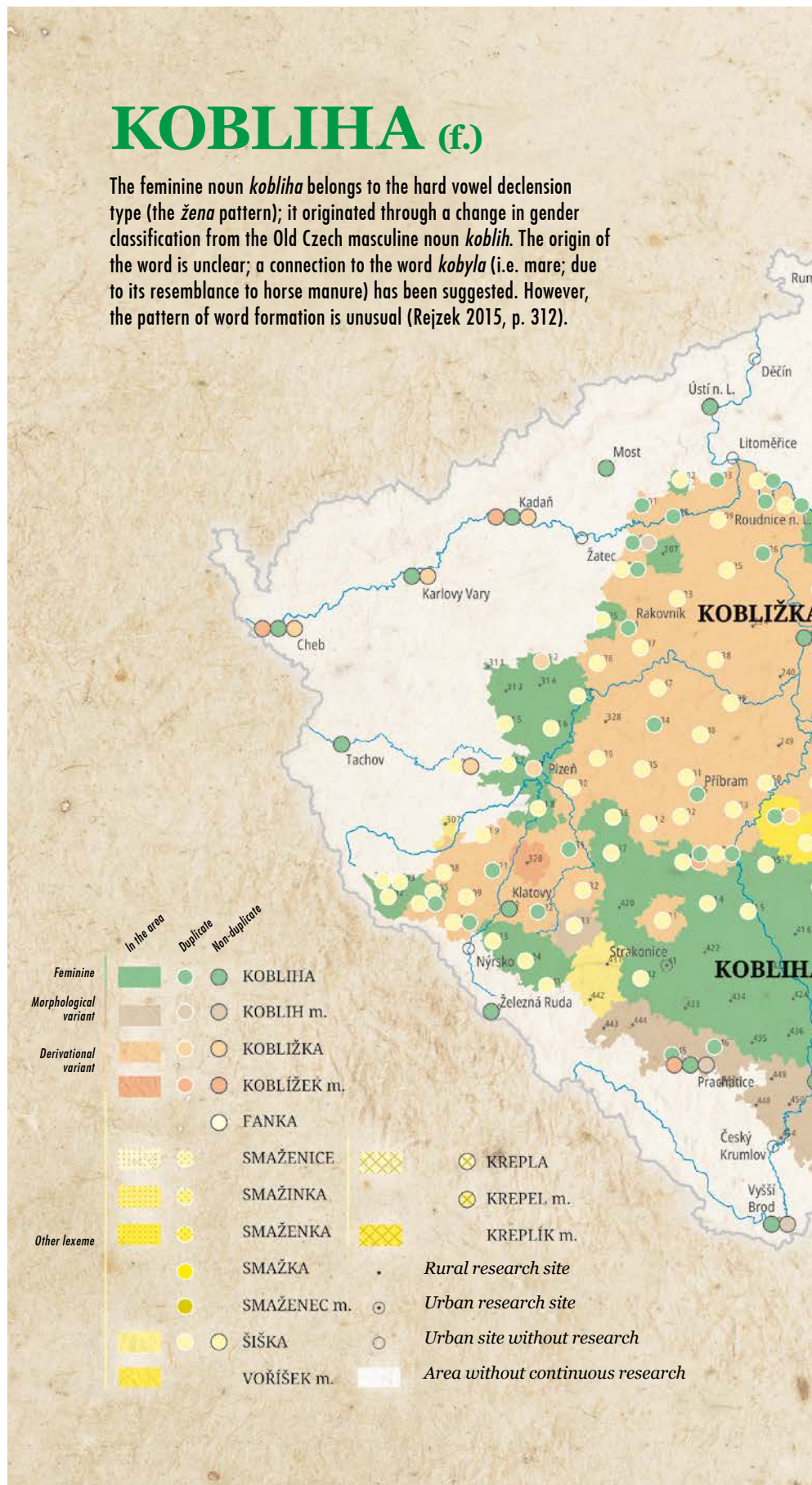
The dialect atlas has thus brought together researchers from several disciplines in a fruitful collaboration. Geoinformatics experts have offered linguists the opportunity to use various technologies that not only save them time in processing their research but also help popularise this field among the general public. And as Voženilek notes, countless maps are created, but not every map is fortunate enough to be printed. Many serve their purpose and then disappear. The atlases of Czech dialects are among the lucky ones.



Excerpt from the *Atlas of Czech Dialects*: Nominative singular of feminines. A good example of how the atlas is organised is the word *kobliha* (jelly doughnut).

KOBLIHA (f.)

The feminine noun *kobliha* belongs to the hard vowel declension type (the *žena* pattern); it originated through a change in gender classification from the Old Czech masculine noun *koblih*. The origin of the word is unclear; a connection to the word *kobyła* (i.e. mare; due to its resemblance to horse manure) has been suggested. However, the pattern of word formation is unusual (Rejzek 2015, p. 312).



Tribute to Karel Eliáš



Karel Eliáš, lawyer, university professor, and the main author of the current Czech Civil Code, has received the highest honour Palacký University can bestow: *doctor honoris causa* for his exceptional scholarly achievements and creative contributions in legal science and legal culture. “Prof Eliáš is regarded by the academic establishment and the broader legal community as one of the most significant figures in Czech legal science and legal culture in general,” noted the Faculty of Law dean, Václav Stehlík. (eha)

Slovak ex-president hosted by Palacký University

Who is exploiting the vulnerabilities of democracy? How can we protect it so that we are not the last generation to experience it? Slovak ex-President Zuzana Čaputová reflected on questions such as these in Olomouc, where she, as a guest of Palacký University, delivered the traditional annual lecture in honour of Josef Ludvík Fischer, the first rector of Olomouc’s reinstated university. “At the heart of democracy’s resilience is the individual, the citizen – and above all, their trust in democracy. Despite the difficulties, democracy is the best system – and this conviction is the source of its legitimacy,” she said, adding that democracy is endangered by the mindset of a segment of society that feels neglected and overlooked. (ipu)



Thank you to media figures and science communicators



Through their work, they give the university a public face, credibility, and intelligibility. And the university appreciates this. That is one of the reasons why the UP in the Spotlight event was held for the second time. Its goal is to thank and honour scientists who popularise science and regularly appear in the media. More than forty of them gathered at the UP Faculty of Science’s Fort Science, accompanied by their loved ones. The gala evening also featured entertainment: its participants competed in a knowledge quiz. (luz)

Sports Day!



Football, dragon boat racing, chess, hiking, a race, paddleboarding, and a bike ride. All of these and a plethora of other physical activities were offered at the traditional UP Sports Day, during which students and staff competed and had a blast together. (ipu)

Winners at the university championships



Spring sports at UP traditionally feature rope-climbing and track and field championships organised by the Faculty of Physical Culture (FPC). On the 4.5-metre rope climb, Tereza Kappelová (FPC) was the fastest woman, while Martin Mlčoch (FPC) was the fastest man – he also won the 8-metre rope climb. The best performances in track and field were delivered by student Martina Mazurová (Faculty of Medicine), who put the shot 15.06 m, and Adam Brázdil (FPC), who won the 100-metre dash with a time of 11.25 seconds. (vim)

kaleidoscope

Medics on the Street provide care to those in need

The Medics on the Street association operates at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, combining medical studies with practical assistance for the unhoused and socially disadvantaged. Student volunteers visit places where these people can



be found and provide them with necessary medical care. “The most common treatments involve chronic wounds, such as leg ulcers and poorly healing wounds from injuries. We also encounter burns and frostbite. Skin and fungal infections are also common, as are various types of pain and acute health problems. When we encounter a problem that exceeds our capabilities or expertise, we encourage clients to seek professional help,” said one of the volunteers, Ján Grabczak. (cak)

Talk on media at the Faculty of Education



Václav Moravec discussed the principles of how public media operate and their status quo in a packed auditorium at the Faculty of Education (FE). The Czech journalist, TV host, and university teacher spoke as part of the World of the 21st-Century Media lecture series. This series of lectures and debates with prominent figures from the Czech media scene, the primary goal of which is to introduce students and faculty to key topics related to the contemporary world of mass media, is organised by Kamil Kopecký and Michal Kříž at FE. (ipu)

Secondary school and university students helping out together



Nearly four hundred secondary school and UP students participated in the third Student Volunteer Day. The event, organised by the UP Volunteer Centre, saw a record number of participants and schools this year. Students from the Grammar School of the Teutonic Order, Grammar School Olomouc-Hejčín, and Slavonic Grammar School set out to help. Together with university students, they lent a hand at locations such as the Flora Olomouc Exhibition Grounds, Šternberk State Castle, Olomouc Technical Services, the Pohoda Chválkovice Senior Citizens' Home, and the Svatý Kopeček Hospice. (ipu)

science

text: Vendula Lužná
illustrations: Monika Tomanová

The science of water, water everywhere

The planet Earth is 70% water, the human body is more than half water, some cucumbers are 97% water.

It's no wonder, then, that water in all its forms is not only the subject of scientific research, but also its uses and the many methods involving its application. Let's take a look at a few practical examples of how we view water at Palacký University. Let's dive into the depths of science!

Using iron to combat environmental disasters

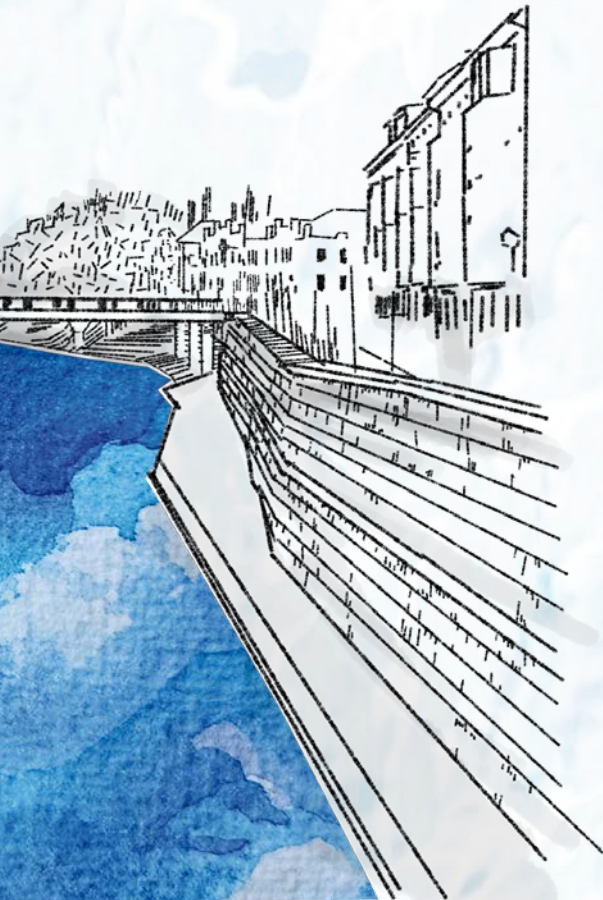
Pesticides and heavy metals are often to blame for drinking water shortages. Nanotechnology can be used to purify water so that it is safe again for both the environment and people. Researchers from the Environmental Nanotechnologies group at UP CATRIN have been working on this for a long time, including having developed special patented tablets made of ferrous nanoparticles that can remove arsenic, chromium, halogens, and pesticides from water. The technologies developed by CATRIN scientists have been used in the event of environmental disasters – both locally, in the Olomouc region, and internationally, such as in Colombia, where they helped clean up a river contaminated by local tanneries.

Where would flood waters go in Olomouc?

Where would flood waters have gone in Olomouc during five-, twenty-, and hundred-year floods before flood control measures were implemented? Scientists from the Department of Geoinformatics helped create a new 3D interactive model of the town, on which visitors to UP Faculty of Science's Fort Science can learn this and more. In addition to showing flood patterns, it also indicates where noise levels are highest in Olomouc and where residents feel safe or at risk.

FLOOD MODEL





Aquatic therapy

Spending time in the water is good not only for relaxation but also for physiotherapy, utilising the laws of physics and the properties of water. Thanks to buoyancy, movement in water puts less strain on the joints; higher water temperature also has a positive effect, helping to reduce muscle tension. Thanks to support from the UP Endowment Fund, Eliška Vodáková is developing aquatic therapy for children with special needs and neurological difficulties at the UP Faculty of Physical Culture. In her practice, she has helped dozens of children improve their motor skills and confidence in the water and enhance their enjoyment of movement.

Tears as a gateway to cancer detection

Tears are not just an expression of emotions – they contain many biological substances that can reflect processes occurring within the body. Experts from the UP Faculty of Medicine Institute of Molecular and Translational Medicine, together with their colleagues from University Hospital Olomouc, are studying tears to identify proteins that could be helpful in the detection of cancer. Specifically, they are focusing on aggressive brain tumours known as glioblastomas. These are among the most dangerous tumours of the central nervous system – not only because of their aggressiveness, but also because they often invade surrounding brain tissue, which significantly complicates treatment and surgical removal. Glioblastomas can affect a person's speech, memory, movement, and personality; early diagnosis is crucial. Collecting tears is simple and non-invasive.

CANCER
DETECTION

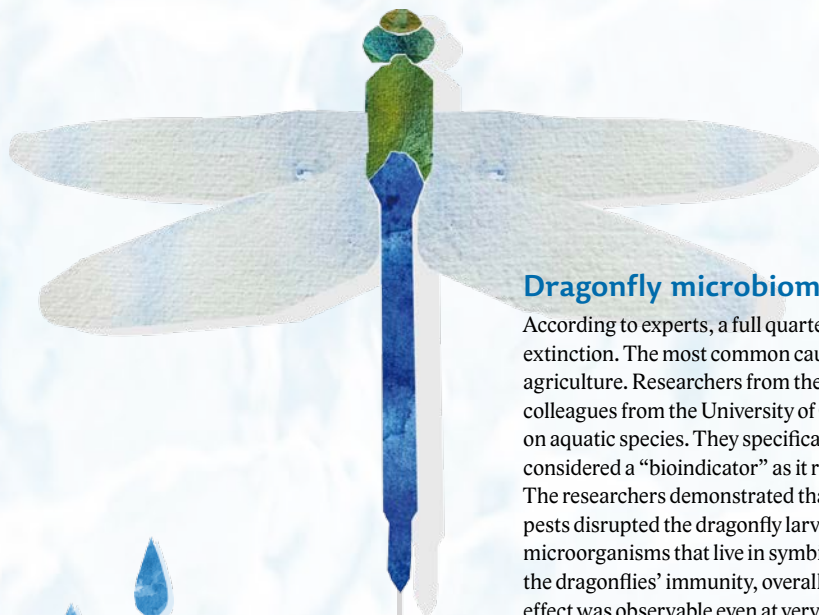


Like a fish in the water

The UP Faculty of Physical Culture offers a truly scientific approach to being in the water. The pool at the BALUO Application Centre is equipped with a camera system – so you can have yourself filmed while swimming and then work with experts to finetune your style down to the smallest detail. Perhaps it may result in similar performances as those by the fin swimmers and “classic” swimmers associated with the faculty, such as Zbyněk Svozil, Zuzana Svozilová, Filip Látal, and Barbora Janíčková – Czech and international medal winners. →

TEST POOLS





Dragonfly microbiome threatened by pesticides

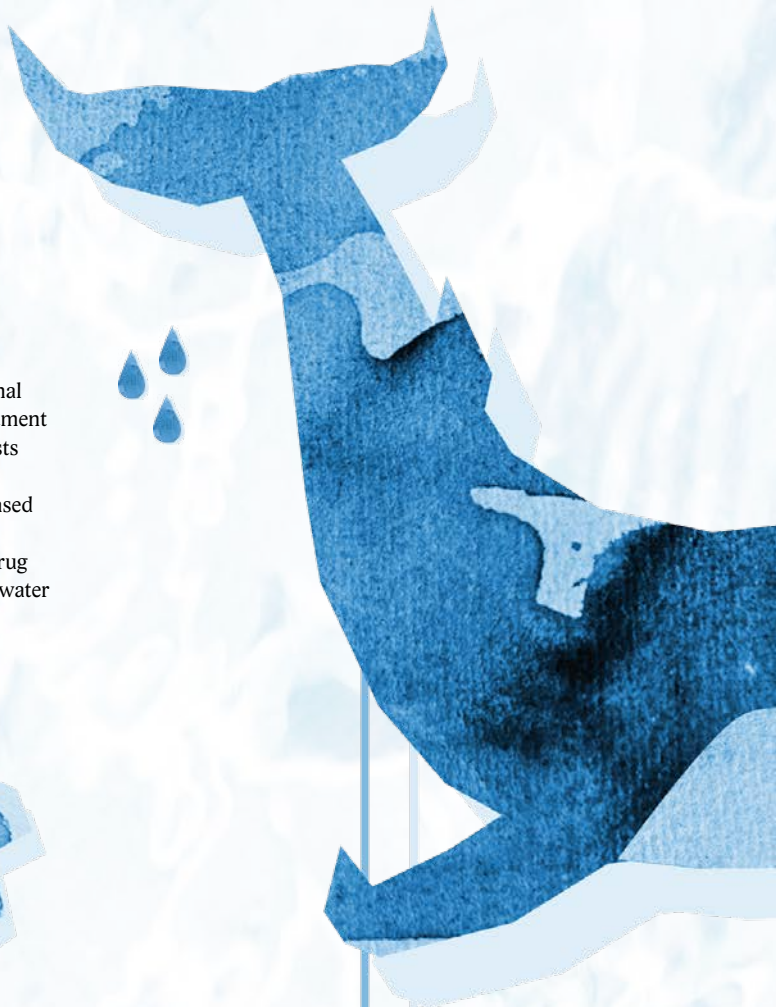
According to experts, a full quarter of freshwater species are threatened with extinction. The most common causes are environmental pollution and intensive agriculture. Researchers from the UP Faculty of Science, together with their colleagues from the University of Ostrava, studied the impact of pesticide use on aquatic species. They specifically chose the common darter – a species considered a “bioindicator” as it reacts strongly to environmental cleanliness. The researchers demonstrated that insecticides used in the fields to control pests disrupted the dragonfly larvae microbiome – the community of beneficial microorganisms that live in symbiosis with them. Disrupting this balance weakens the dragonflies’ immunity, overall health, and ability to cope with stressors. This effect was observable even at very low concentrations of insecticides in the water. The research thus demonstrates how intensive agriculture affects even species found primarily outside the areas where these substances are applied.

INVERTEBRATE
MICROBIOME



Light for clean water

The pollution of rivers and groundwater is often also due to the remnants of pharmaceuticals. Antibiotics, painkillers, and hormonal contraceptives present in the water evade current wastewater treatment procedures and harm both animals and humans. A team of scientists from the UP Faculty of Science, the University of Ostrava, and the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava have developed a carbon-based material that reacts to light. This powder, when exposed to UV or ordinary light, triggers a chemical reaction that breaks down the drug residues in water. In the future, this method could be used in wastewater treatment plants to complement the current range of technologies.



A university initiative to save the whales

The open seas are not the property of any single country; they belong to all of us. Dolphins and whales are among the most iconic creatures of the open seas. Although commercial whaling was banned back in 1986, it still persists by some countries, putting these species at risk of extinction. Although the ocean does not wash the coast of Bohemia, we should not be indifferent to its fate, therefore experts from the UP Faculty of Law decided to establish the Czech Academic Initiative for the Rescue of Whales and Dolphins, which anyone can sign, and which will subsequently be submitted for consideration by the European Parliament.

SAVING
THE WHALES



Mosquito outbreaks in stagnant waters

When water, high temperatures, a suitable water hole, and an absence of predators come together during the summer season, a mosquito outbreak occurs – mosquitoes overpopulate a given area to the point that they make life difficult for all of us, also posing health risks. Due to increasingly frequent weather fluctuations, new breeding grounds for mosquito larvae are created during extreme rainfall and flash floods. Rising air temperatures accelerate their development, and the problem is born. Visitors to the Litovelské Pomoraví region are well familiar with this: the local floodplain forests are ecologically beneficial, however causing repeated mosquito overpopulation. Experts from the UP Faculty of Science Department of Geoinformatics monitor mosquito populations as well as water levels and air temperatures in high-risk areas, enabling them to intervene in a timely manner. Thanks to innovative technology – in which designated locations are sprayed with an environmentally friendly product that specifically targets and kills mosquito larvae – scientists can combat these infestations sensibly without completely eradicating the unwanted insects, as the larvae are an important link in the food chains of other organisms.

MOSQUITO
MONITORING



Rainwater management at UP under control

Palacký University has long been committed to contributing to a sustainable future. For example at the Faculty of Science, there are several tanks that collect rainwater. The infiltration tanks on the premises of the faculty's main building serve to retain, slow down runoff, and gradually absorb rainwater. The system collects rainwater from the building's roof which would otherwise be drained into the sewer system. A total of seven infiltration tanks in the vicinity of the faculty now help reduce the load on the sewer system during heavy rainfall, supporting the natural replenishment of groundwater, and improving microclimatic conditions around the building. Also, the new building in the university botanical garden, constructed entirely according to the passive standard, features a retention tank. Here, the tank is complemented by other eco-friendly elements, such as a green roof and a heat pump.

Unknown deep-soil dwelling beetle discovered in Chile

Although the ancestors of the small-bodied, wingless *Badmaater* beetle inhabited the world long before birds or flowering plants appeared on Earth, they remained hidden from researchers. Until recently. An international team of scientists – including researchers from the Czech Advanced Technology and Research Institute (CATRIN) at Palacký University – discovered several specimens deep in the soil of central Chile. According to genetic analysis, the beetle belongs to an ancient evolutionary lineage, which experts have newly described as a separate family, naming it *Badmaateridae*.

“Although the biodiversity of beetles outside industrially developed countries remains largely unexplored, the identification of an entirely new family is exceptional. The origin of the new *Badmaateridae* family dates back to the Late Triassic, roughly 220 million years ago. This means it emerged at the same time as mammals, 60 to 70 million years prior to birds and about 90 million years prior to flowering plants,” said Ladislav Bocák, the study’s corresponding author and head of the Biodiversity and Molecular Evolution research group at CATRIN. The unexpected discovery by scientists from Canada, Spain, and the Czech Republic was published in the journal *Systematic Entomology*.

Scientists involved in the international World Soil Fauna Project found several specimens after digging pits about half a metre deep, floating the soil samples, and subsequently drying the organic material. As a result of their adaptation to underground conditions, these beetles have

small bodies, measuring roughly one millimetre, and are blind and wingless.

“The beetle’s appearance and body structure provided almost no clues as to its phylogenetic relationships. Only certain features suggested it might be closely related to the Elateridae family, which includes the well-known fireflies, click beetles, and long-horn beetles. However, thanks to advanced technologies, we were able to extract a sufficient amount of DNA even from such a small specimen, identify 4,200 genes, and compare them with potentially related groups. This allowed us to confirm that it belongs to an entirely new family and to determine the age of this group,” explained Dominik Kusý, another co-author of the study.

Badmaater represents a new addition to the growing list of lineages at the family and subfamily levels whose larvae – and sometimes even adults – dwell deep in the soil. However, even if other similar lineages were discovered, these groups would represent only a fraction of elateroid beetles. One reason may be the limited knowledge of soil fauna in many parts of the world. Another possible explanation is the fact that blind and wingless species are unable to disperse over long distances and are therefore particularly vulnerable to extinction.

The holotype (the specimen used as a reference for the description) of the newly discovered beetle will be housed at the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago, Chile. Additional specimens (paratypes) will be on display at the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids, and Nematodes in Ottawa and at the Natural History Museum in London.



An AI therapist can help... if you ask the right questions

“Yes, but...” That, in a nutshell, is the answer to the question of whether AI can be useful in psychotherapy. According to psychologist Barbora Kutá (pictured) from the Olomouc University Social Health Institute (OUSHI) of the UP Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, who specialises in this field and has also contributed to the development of an app designed to support mental health and wellbeing, when communicating with an ‘AI therapist’, asking the right questions and not trusting its every word is crucial.

During her studies Kutá compared the effectiveness of online interventions using specialised and general AI chatbots. Her conclusions: such interventions can help reduce symptoms of depression or anxiety and improve well-being.

But there are related issues, such as the pitfalls of communication with these assis-

stants and the relationships users form with them. “Their undebatable advantage is that a person who needs help doesn’t have to wait to start addressing their problems. Plus, they are anonymous, so you’re not being judged or criticised face-to-face,” she explains.

However, as a psychologist, she does see potential problems. “Granted, sometimes a pat on the back is enough. General AI models are, by their nature, validating. They reassure you ‘it’s okay to feel this way’ or ‘it’s ok to have those thoughts’. In most cases, they won’t challenge you at all – unless you specifically ask them to. So it is important to be able to ask precisely what the problem is and be realistic about what you can expect to get out of them.”

Another rule? Don’t trust everything AI models say. “Write something like, ‘OK, but couldn’t there be an alternative?’ Question

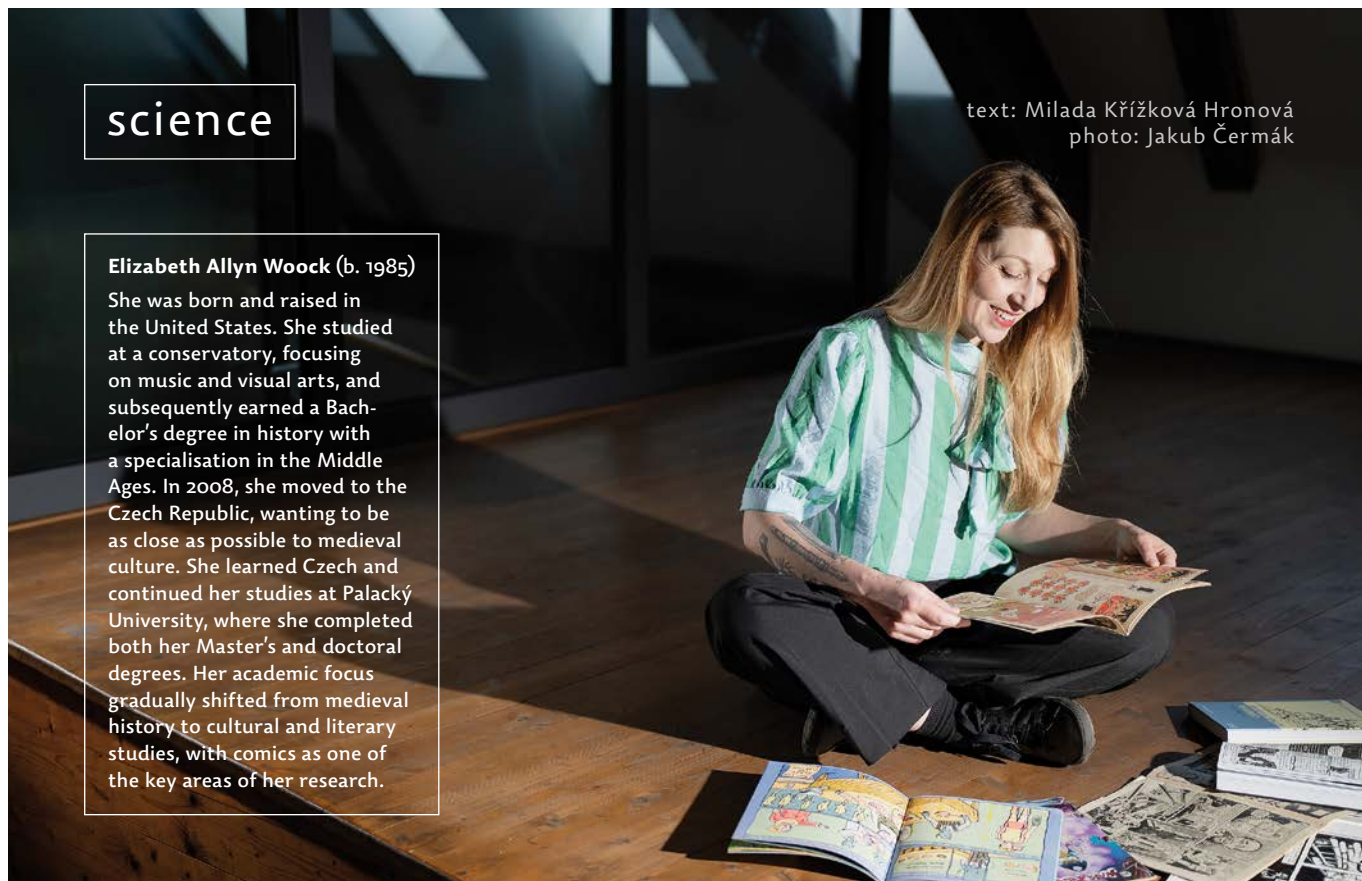
the answer, and immediately you can get suggestions that might broaden your perspective. But you have to ask. It is absolutely essential to keep in mind that you are the person asking the questions, you are the one who is responsible for the direction of the conversation – unlike when you go to a live therapist, who can guide the conversation professionally. During an in-person psychiatric session, mutual emotions also play a role; you don’t get that online,” Kutá noted.

She first dipped her toes in the waters of AI while still a psychology student at the UP Faculty of Arts. She sees its use in psychotherapy as another option, and foresees a number of interesting findings in the future; the research is still in its infancy and is complicated by the incredibly rapid development of chatbots. At the same time, she believes in the power of human contact; also in yoga, which she teaches.



Elizabeth Allyn Woock (b. 1985)

She was born and raised in the United States. She studied at a conservatory, focusing on music and visual arts, and subsequently earned a Bachelor's degree in history with a specialisation in the Middle Ages. In 2008, she moved to the Czech Republic, wanting to be as close as possible to medieval culture. She learned Czech and continued her studies at Palacký University, where she completed both her Master's and doctoral degrees. Her academic focus gradually shifted from medieval history to cultural and literary studies, with comics as one of the key areas of her research.



I'm the comics plumber, says Elizabeth Allyn Woock

Elizabeth Allyn Woock uses comics as a surprising tool for understanding history. Through them, she is able to capture even what is difficult to explain in words. According to this graduate of Medieval History, working at the UP Faculty of Arts Department of English and American Studies, we not only see images, but also “read” them.

— **Why comics? How did you get into them?**

I studied Medieval History and also explored the art and religious aspects of the Middle Ages in depth. It is a period full of profound visual codes that appear in paintings, literature, and even in the physical space itself. Once I learned to read these meanings – in iconography, monastic architecture, or even in the poetic space of song lyrics – I began to perceive them in the contemporary world as well. For me, comics represent a natural continuation of this multilayered visual language, where both symbolism and spatial arrangement

convey meaning. I began studying comics as a researcher when I became interested in how the present engages with the Middle Ages as a theme or narrative backdrop. Besides, I enjoy creating my own comics. This format is a natural extension of my own academic writing.

— **What do you focus on in your comics?**

Most of us see images, but we often forget that they can also be read. A comic story isn't created solely by following the text, but also through the interpretation of images, composition, colour, lines, and all the layers of meaning they convey. Although we often compare comics to film or language, they are in fact a distinct medium. I focus on what may not be immediately appealing – the basic analytical tools and concepts that enable a deeper understanding. I like to say, with a bit of hyperbole, that I'm a comics theory plumber: I lay the pipes so that other researchers have the infrastructure for their interpretations.

— **During the panel discussion on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, you also spoke about the importance of role models. Who were yours?**

I have many. In the areas of creation and project management, I'm inspired by filmmaker John Waters and cartoonist Lynda Barry. I admire their courage to experiment and pursue even the most unusual ideas. But I also find inspiration elsewhere: in the breadth of Umberto Eco's thinking, in the work of Mieke Bal, in the music of Antonín Dvořák, and in Dolly Parton's philanthropy. Role models don't have to be famous people, though. It could also be the carefree nature of my pet rabbits, the kindness of my neighbour, or the patience of the cashier I regularly see at the corner shop. If we're lucky, inspiration is right at our fingertips. And if not, it's worth seeking out. Role models help us imagine a life we might otherwise never have seen.



WOMEN IN SCIENCE



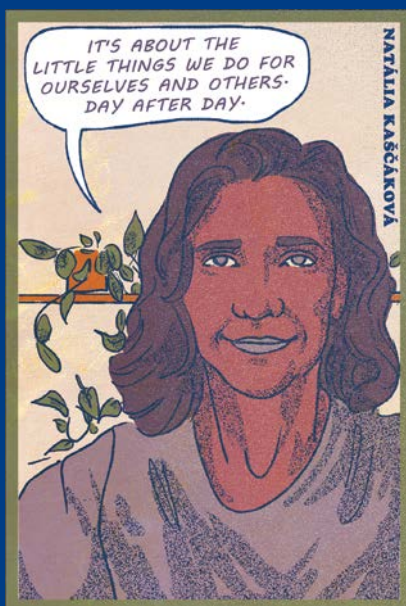
ASTA ZUKAUSKAITE



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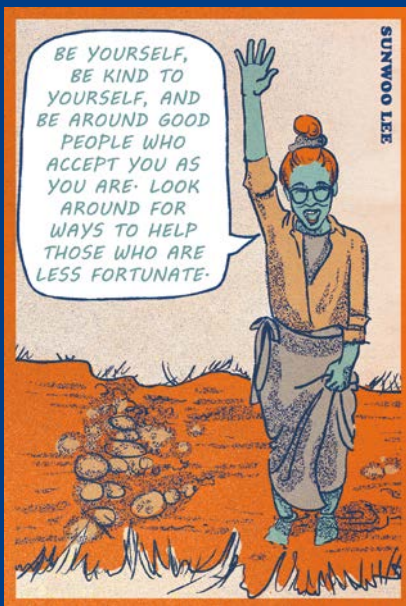
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Women in Science

Science knows no boundaries. On February 11, the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Palacký University regularly commemorates their important role. UP has also created a website featuring stories of Czech and international female scientists representing various university departments. This year, Elizabeth A. Woock has additionally prepared this set of cut-out cards featuring international female scientists from UP.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE





theme

text: Vendula Lužná
photos: Jakub Čermák

Our university for society

Our university is no longer just about teaching and research behind the closed doors of brick-and-mortar buildings. Its students, faculty, researchers – in short, everyone who has Palacký University in their DNA – are increasingly stepping into the public sphere and, in times of instability and crisis, helping society navigate the world around us in a clear, confident, and transparent way. We demonstrate that society as a whole can benefit from the work of our university community.

Our world is changing rapidly, bringing new challenges – from technology to previously unimaginable conflicts and climate change. To thrive in these times, we need the university not only as an educational institution but as a living organism, a network of connections that invites dialogue. Even if we don't always realise it, under our shared brand we form a unique community of people whose activities enrich the city, provide solutions to today's complex challenges, and show the way forward in uncertain times.

UP to the Future with science at our back

The new UP to the Future campaign also aims to strengthen the image of an open and modern university, emphasising the values of an institution prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Under the banner of resilience, sustainability, and responsibility, our ambition is to show that the academic community works for society as a whole.

The research conducted by our scientists focuses on understanding the con-

temporary world and the new challenges that are emerging, and offers solutions to the problems society faces. We place great emphasis on explaining scientific discoveries in an accessible way – not exclusively in the media – so that the work from which the public can benefit is easy to understand and trustworthy. Expert findings show that only by relying on hard data, rather than mere opinions, will we be able to address the problems that arise almost daily.

Citizen science – in which people directly participate in data collection – brings research to the public in a unique way. A good example is COLOSS, in which beekeepers record bee colony losses, and this data is analysed by Faculty of Science (FS) experts Jiří Danihlík and Jan Brus. A record-breaking over 9,000 beekeepers participated in last year's colony loss survey, making COLOSS one of the largest citizen science projects in the country. Based on the data collected, researchers can subsequently propose measures for how to better care for bees.

Meanwhile, researchers from the Faculty of Physical Culture (FPC) led by Michal

Vorlíček are making primary school pupils' commutes to Olomouc schools safer. The process is simple: schoolchildren identify dangerous areas in a survey, which are then evaluated by the Office of the Olomouc City Architect, eventually transforming the city into a safer space that is welcoming to all its citizens.

Ondřej Filipec from the Faculty of Law (FL) has also turned his research topic into a public initiative. Together with his colleagues, he founded DemocraTICon, a nationwide secondary school competition focused on the knowledge and skills essential for preserving democracy in our society via Technology, Information, and Critical thinking. This year's DemocraTICon finals took place in Olomouc in early April.

Adolescents in the spotlight

In recent years, the younger generation has been hit by several crises they have had to cope with. For many of them, the Covid-19 pandemic severed social ties and made attending school more difficult. Now they face uncertainty in the form of armed conflicts and a changing climate. Several re-

In the new university campaign UP to the Future, we want to gradually introduce members of the university community who embody the values of resilience, sustainability, and responsibility – and who are either dedicated to science and research, or embody these values through their leisure activities, from volunteering and helping the university community to sports. Some of these individuals took part in a group photo shoot at the campaign's launch.



Standing from left to right: Lucie Tungul (FL), Barbora Přibyllová (FS, FA), Nina Kadášová (FMD), Jana Pelclová (FPC), Romana Mazalová (FA), Elizabeth Woock (FA). Seated: Marta Sýkorová (CMFT), Petra Kührová (CATRIN), Sára Filipová (FMD).



Standing from left to right: Michal Vorlíček (FPC), Matúš M. Jedinák (FMD), Ondřej Filipek (FL), Daniel Pospíšil (FL), Pavel Flekač (FE). Seated: Lukáš Kučera (FS), Karel Lemr (FS), Petr Baďura (CMTF), Jan Tomáščík (FS), Ondřej Němčák (UP Project Service).

search projects at UP are therefore focusing on their ability to adapt and succeed in society. In the Healthy Generation project, researchers from the OUSHI institute at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (CMFT) are collecting and comprehensibly interpreting data on the habits and behaviours of children and adolescents – whether it concerns sleep, diet, or substance use. And that's not all – they've also recently launched the Healthy Generation Academy, which offers recommendations, guides, and activities for parents and teachers.

The ReDiKid project also aims to strengthen the digital, mental, and physical resilience of the younger generation. Led by Jana Pelclová from FPC, it brings together experts from across our university and beyond. In this project, researchers monitor the behaviour of the youngest generation and develop recommendations and educational materials for parents and teachers, with an emphasis on something that might seem obvious – sports. According to research, regular physical activity is key to strengthening our resilience.

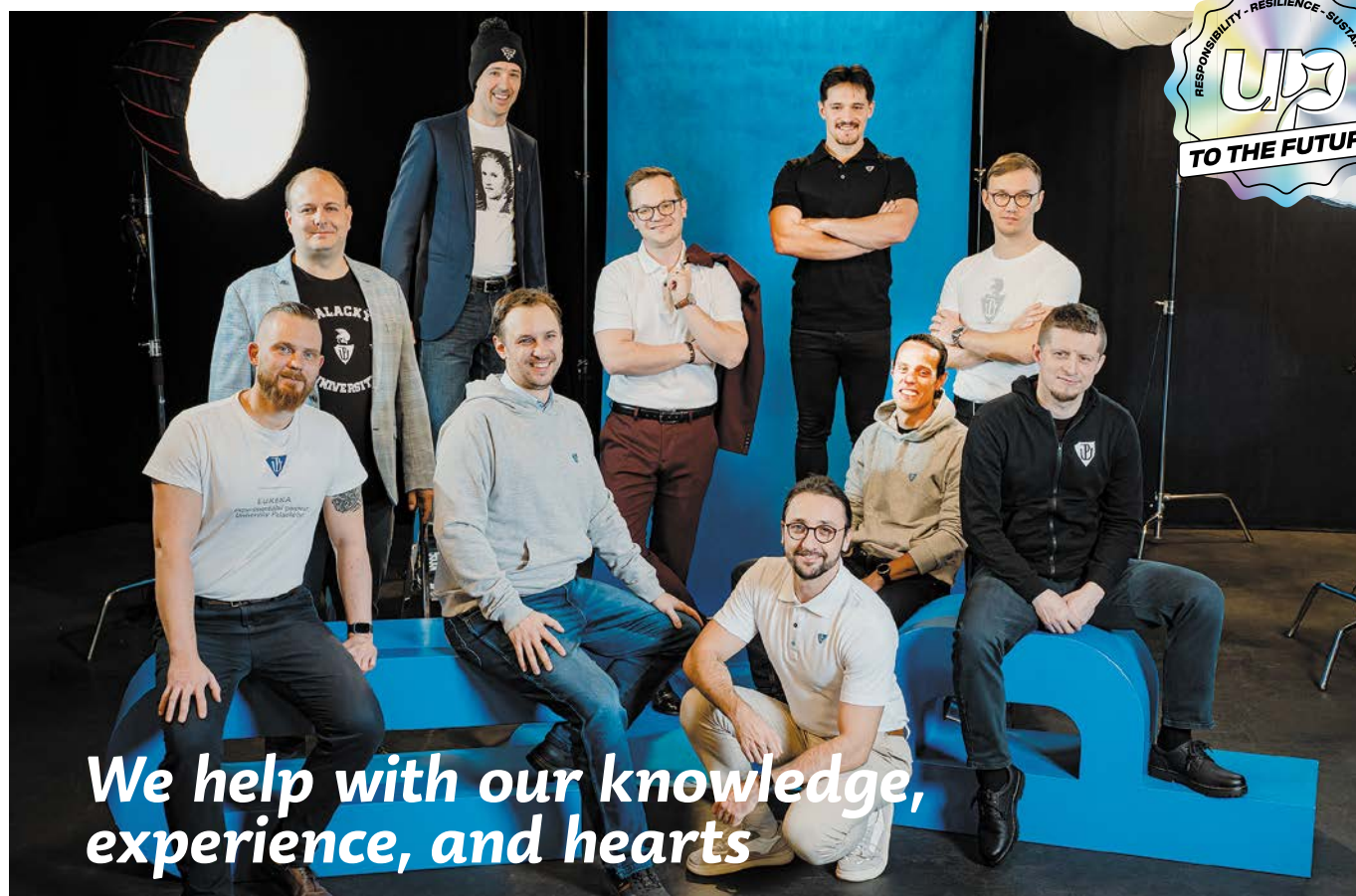
Another major topic today is the use of modern technologies and orientation in the online environment. The E-Safety project, led by Kamil Kopecký at the Faculty of Education (FE), systematically addresses this issue. In addition to conducted re-

search, the project offers a helping hand to anyone who doesn't want to get lost in digital technologies – be they children, parents, teachers, or seniors, educational programmes, informational materials, and video courses are available for them. E-Safety collaborates with the Czech Ministries of Education and the Interior and also the Czech Police.

The university shapes the town's image

The university influences the public space of the city as well as the entire region by prioritising sustainability and environmental protection in its buildings, planting flower meadows on its grounds, providing nesting sites for various species of birds and insects, and so on. Thanks to the university, bike-sharing has returned to Olomouc. Students and staff actively participate in charitable activities; they donate blood during regular campaigns, assist in crisis situations, and organise events that shape the image of Olomouc as a university town. To sum up, when we function as a community embodying the values our alma mater has instilled in us, we have much to offer the world around us!

In addition to the projects mentioned above, the university offers many others – see the following page.



A few of the UP activities entering the public space

UniON – Civic University

The topics covered by UniON are not taught in school but their understanding contributes to active citizenship. The project is aimed at secondary school students, seniors, and the general public in the Olomouc Region. Talks by UP experts focus on financial and information literacy, politics, the EU, law, volunteering, and more. There are also lectures focused on raising awareness about human health.



Student Legal Clinic

The Student Legal Clinic at the Faculty of Law helps students navigate the legal world. Students work under the supervision of faculty members or practicing attorneys who are experts in their respective fields. The clinic is primarily intended for those who cannot afford the services of an attorney for financial reasons, and it focuses on a wide range of legal issues, most commonly in the areas of civil law, family law, debt collection, and insolvency.



Course on Positive Change

How does one cope in turbulent times? The new Course on Positive Change prepares participants for this challenge through an interdisciplinary series of interactive lectures focused on building mental resilience, mental health care, first aid, crisis management, orientation in the changing job market, and the ability to make responsible decisions in the uncertain conditions of today's world. This optional course at the Faculty of Arts comes with a micro-certificate and is open to the public for a fee.



University of the Third Age

Palacký University is also committed to providing high-quality education for seniors. Its University of the Third Age (U3A), celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, is the oldest of its kind in the country, offering a wide range of courses each semester for seniors covering topics from history and psychiatry to media literacy.



Olomouc University Social Health Institute (OUSHI)

This specialised unit at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology offers therapeutic services to the general public, ranging from individual to group and family therapy. As part of the diagnostic process, you can have your stress levels measured, for example, and then consult experts.



Centre for Applied Physical Activities (APA)

This centre operating under the Faculty of Physical Culture offers the public services such as the rental of adaptive sporting equipment. It organises clubs for children with various types of challenges and courses for families with visually impaired children.



Fort Science

The university's science centre is more than just exhibits. Fort Science also hosts educational programmes for schools, afterschool science clubs, and summer camps.



E-Safety

The E-Safety project, established at the Faculty of Education, offers not only educational programmes and materials but also free online counselling for the public. Caregivers and children can use this service to seek advice on how to handle situations related to risky online behaviour, ranging from cyberbullying and data misuse to sexting.



Matěj Dostálék (b. 1984)

Vice-Rector for Communications and Social Responsibility. For a decade, he helmed Fort Science, a science museum under the auspices of the UP Faculty of Science. For many years he also worked at the festival Academia Film Olomouc, including as its director. He has a degree in theatre and film studies from the UP Faculty of Arts.

text: Vendula Lužná
photo: Jakub Čermák



Resilience isn't about defence – it's the ability to go on

How can we prepare for stressful situations and emerge even stronger from the crises we face? Matěj Dostálék, UP Vice-Rector for Communications and Social Responsibility, believes that resilience can be built up over the long term, and is not reserved for individuals alone.

— What does resilience mean to you personally, and how do you view it in the context of the university?

I don't see resilience as the ability to "grin and bear it": it's rather the ability to adapt and change. Being able to respond to uncertainty, learn from crises, and throughout all, not lose one's values. A resilient institution is not one that stands its ground, it is one that is able to move in the right direction.

I grew up in the 1990s in a community of mountain cottage keepers – a specific way of life, in specific climatic conditions, one you cannot manage without the help of neighbours who are, essentially, your competitors. It strongly shaped my conviction

that true resilience does not arise from individuality, but from community.

— How does the concept of resilience apply to university management?

Today, a university is much more than just a place for teaching and research: it's a community. And its resilience arises from trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility. We have seen this in recent years – during the pandemic, helping refugees, and during local crisis situations. Students, staff, and alumni have been able to pull together and act swiftly, in solidarity, and with empathy. Out of such experiences, the community becomes stronger, more confident. This is real resilience.

— How does the theme of resilience relate to the new concept "UP to the Future"?

UP to the Future is a framework for talking about the future from a clear position, one devoid of pathos. Responsibility, sustain-

ability, and resilience – the values championed by UP to the Future – are not just buzzwords, they are competency skills for the 21st century. We want students to leave not just with a degree, but knowing that they can and should make a difference – in their surroundings, their city, their society.

— So how can a university build students' resilience?

Resilience isn't learned at lectures, it's learned from experience. Volunteering, student initiatives, leadership programmes, community work – all these help shape individuals who are not afraid to accept responsibility. The university should provide a safe space for that and provide opportunities for personal growth beyond the curriculum.

Resilience is not limited to a few strong individuals, it is the result of cooperation. And the university plays a unique role in helping society thrive – with reason, values, and humanity.

success



Lukáš Novák wins competition in predicting depression

Lukáš Novák, an assistant professor at the Olomouc University Social Health Institute (OUSHI) at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, won the WARN-D machine learning competition, which was aimed to predict the onset of depression using advanced data methods, including AI. The international competition was organised by a recipient of one of the most prestigious international mental health grants, Eiko Fried of Leiden University, the Netherlands.

The researchers' goal was to create a model capable of detecting the onset of depression as early as possible, with a real clinical

impact. A total of 246 teams from around the world participated in the competition. Lukáš Novák worked with unique data, including psychological factors and data from smartphones and smartwatches, from approximately 1,750 young adults who were monitored over a period of two years.

"For me, this award isn't just a personal achievement, but above all another step toward one of the goals of mental illness research – to identify the risk of developing depression early. That's one of the reasons I entered the competition – I believe it has real potential to advance research toward providing practical help," said Novák. (per)



Petra Čechová awarded for best poster

Petra Čechová from UP CATRIN won the award for best poster at COSY COST ACTION CA21101. At the international conference focusing on molecular systems, she presented the poster "Geometry and Phase Behaviour of Nonlamellar Lipids in Confined Environments", captivating the audience with her commentary on the topic. "I was so happy to receive the award because it's not easy to explain this topic concisely. While preparing for the presentation, I tried to draw on the knowledge of science communication I've gained at CATRIN," said Čechová.

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is an agency that funds research and innovation networks. It helps connect research initiatives across Europe and enables scientists to develop ideas by sharing them with their colleagues. The goal of the COSY COST initiative is to provide computational and experimental building blocks for understanding the behaviour of molecules in systems that restrict their movement. The platform has brought together more than 400 participants from 45 countries. Čechová is also the coordinator of FemCOSY – an initiative within COSY COST that focuses on supporting women in science. (srd)

Two 2026 Gratias Award winners affiliated with UP

On the occasion of World Social Work Day, the Czech Minister of Labour and Social Affairs presented the 2026 Gratias Awards. Among the six recipients, two are affiliated with Palacký University: Alexandra Salamonová and Martin Bednář.

Alexandra Salamonová, a student of andragogy at the UP Faculty of Arts and a graduate in social and humanitarian work from the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (CMFT) and from Caritas – Higher Vocational School of Social Work in Olomouc, received the award in the social counselling category. She works as a social worker at the Nový Jičín Citizens' Counselling Centre.

Martin Bednář, a graduate of special education at the UP Faculty of Education, long-time director of the aforementioned school, and a member of the UP Faculty of Theology Department of Christian Social Work, received the award for his significant contribution to social work. His lifelong focus has been on the development and improvement of the quality of social services and social work.

"The Gratias Award is an expression of respect and gratitude for work that has a real impact on people's lives," summarised Aleš Juchelka, Czech Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, during the awards ceremony at Prague's Municipal House. (map)





Markéta Dudková receives international award for rheumatology research

Markéta Dudková, a physician at the Third Department of Internal Medicine – Nephrology, Rheumatology and Endocrinology – at University Hospital Olomouc (UHO) and the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (FMD), received one of this year's International Medis Awards for Medical Research from the President of Slovenia. This international competition recognises outstanding research achievements by physicians and pharmacists from Central and Eastern Europe.

"This is an extraordinary achievement in my career so far. It would not have been possible without the support of the entire rheumatology team at the Third Department of Internal Medicine who participated in this project. Special thanks go to the department chair, Prof Pavel Horák, and Associate Prof Eva Kriegová from the Department of Immunology at FMD and UHO, under whose leadership the research was conducted. For me, this award

represents not only a great honour but also confirmation that our work is meaningful," she said.

Dudková specialises in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), a serious autoimmune rheumatic disease in which the immune system attacks the body's own tissues. The award-winning study examines the role of Toll-like receptors, which are a key component of innate immunity. "We compared the activity of these receptors in patients with SLE to that in healthy individuals, and we also investigated differences among patients with various manifestations of the disease, particularly those with kidney and central nervous system damage. The results could contribute to better diagnosis of active disease and organ damage in patients with SLE. At the same time, they may help explain why treatment may not work the same way in patients with the same diagnosis," she explained. (vim)

Best Judoka and Olomouc Region Athlete of the Year: Renata Zachová

Renata Zachová, a student at the UP Faculty of Physical Culture (FPC), has been named Judo Athlete of the Year for the second time. Her results last year also earned her the title Best Athlete of the Olomouc Region, and her achievements were rewarded by the Olomouc Region and Palacký University.

"Last year was truly successful. I defended my European gold medal, placed third at the Summer World University Games, and also at the Grand Slam in Tokyo, which is my favourite event. I'm very happy and grateful that it all worked out this way," said the judoka from the Olomouc Judo Club, where she trains under the supervision of Jiří Štěpán from the FPC Department of Sports, after the awards ceremony at Olomouc City Hall. He, too, was honoured – the Czech Judo Federation awarded him a 6th dan, a white-and-red belt, for his many years of work and lifelong contribution to judo.

In addition to Renata Zachová, who successfully completed her Bachelor's degree and began her Master's, another FPC student, swimmer Barbora Janíčková, was also recognised among the best athletes in the Olomouc region. Among other achievements, she placed 9th at last year's World Aquatics Championships in Singapore and was undefeated at the Czech Academic Games. Both athletes received the UP Rector's Award for their performances and for representing the university.

Zachová's achievements were also acknowledged by the Olomouc Region, which ranked her third among the best athletes in the category of individuals. An honorary award in the regional poll went to another athlete associated with UP, Martina Dvořáková, a graduate of the Faculty of Health Sciences, who competes in fire-fighting sports and, among other achievements, contributed to the Czech team's victory at the CTIF European Fire-Applied Sports Championship. (vim)





Stela Levická succeeded at an international conference for young scientists

Doctoral student Stela Levická ranked among the top six at the Novus Scientia 2026 international conference in Košice, Slovakia with her presentation focused on an international comparison of ocular tonometers. Amidst strong competition from young scientists representing various countries, she thus confirmed the high standards of her research.

This year's event was attended by 70 doctoral students, who were divided into two specialised sections of 35 participants each. "The conference took place in a friendly atmosphere. We were all in the same boat, so to speak, because the goal of every one of us is not only to conduct research but also to successfully earn a doctoral degree," said Levická, who is studying Optics and Optoelectronics at the UP Faculty of Science.

The Novus Scientia conference is a traditional professional gathering of doctoral students from mechanical engineering and related technical faculties. Its main goal is to present the results of doctoral research, share expertise, and establish professional collaboration across institutions and countries. The programme covered a wide range of topics, including automation, mechatronics, and robotics; technology and materials engineering; management and digital engineering; structural and process engineering; and specialised engineering processes.

"Each section had its own expert committee, which asked questions after the presentations. I really appreciate that the presentation itself also served as a good rehearsal before my dissertation defence," said Levická. (cho)

Renáta Šínová is Lawyer of the Year in Family Law

Renáta Šínová, a teacher at the UP Faculty of Law (FL) and attorney, has joined the ranks of lawyers who can add the title Lawyer of the Year to their names, taking first place in this year's Family Law category. This prestigious nationwide competition is organised by the Czech Bar Association and the media and educational group EPRAVO.CZ.

Šínová has long focused on sensitive family law disputes, particularly in the areas of child custody and the protection of vulnerable parties in legal proceedings. She also raises awareness of family law among the general public. "This award is extremely important to me, and I value it greatly. Above all, because I see it as feedback from those around me, which really helps me feel confident that working to advance family law is worthwhile. At the same time,

it's also a commitment – I don't want to 'rest on my laurels' under any circumstances, because there's still a great deal of work ahead of us, particularly in the fight against domestic violence," said Šínová.

Václav Stehlík, dean of the faculty, congratulated her on her success. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Associate Prof Šínová on the award she received thanks to her long-term work in the field of family law, both in academia and in practice. Her bridging both areas is very valuable, and not only her clients but also our students benefit from this. I'm very grateful and I wish her much strength and energy for her future work."

Šínová has been associated with the UP Faculty of Law since she graduated in 2001. She works at the Department of Private Law and Civil Procedure. (eha)



UP has new professors

Among the new professors who received their letters of appointment from Czech President Petr Pavel and Minister of Education Robert Plaga during a ceremony at Prague's Carolinum in early June were several faculty members from Palacký University. This highest academic rank was

awarded to social psychologist Konstantinos Kafetsios (FA), physicians David Krahulík and Martin Loveček (FMD), natural scientists Tomáš Takáč and Tomáš Václavík (FS), and FPC experts Dagmar Sigmundová and Michal Botek (pictured in the centre with the president and minister). (vim)



Kateřina Trulleyová received the Karel Schwarzenberg Prize

Kateřina Trulleyová, a UP Faculty of Law graduate currently employed at the UP Faculty of Education, received the Karel Schwarzenberg Prize for her work *Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Analyzing the Taliban's Policies and the European Union's Response*. The Academic Council of the TOPAZ think-tank awarded her first place in the sixth annual student research competition.

In her award-winning work, Trulleyová examines the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power and the response of the international community, particularly the EU.

She focuses on the debate over recognising "gender apartheid" as a new crime against humanity, thereby drawing at-

tention to the serious violations of the rights and freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as to the need for a stronger international response.

"For me, this award confirms that both the topic and the approach I took to it are meaningful even beyond the scope of my academic obligations. I see it as encouragement to continue the work I consider important, and at the same time as an opportunity to raise awareness of the issue. Furthermore, it is a great honour for me to receive an award bearing the name of Karel Schwarzenberg, a longtime advocate for human rights and a prominent figure in Czech and international politics," said Trulleyová, who accepted the prize in the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. (map)

Individuals associated with UP presented with the City Prize

Representatives of the City of Olomouc honoured five prominent figures and one exceptional talent by awarding them the 2025 Olomouc City Prize. Four of the laureates, who received the statuette of a girl with a branch during the ceremony at the Archbishop's Palace, are affiliated with Palacký University: Květoslava Princová (CMFT), Tereza Pařízková (FE), Jiří Kratochvíl (FPC), and Jaroslav Burian (FS).

The City of Olomouc has been awarding this prize since 1998 to recognise significant achievements and works by individuals associated with the city. With the addition of the 2025 awardees, the total number of recipients (more than 120 to date) honoured for their contributions to science, culture, and society has grown by five. Moreover, an award for exceptionally talented young people under the age of 30 was also presented. (vim)



The main benefit of walking? A good mood



We often do not even recognise it as something beneficial, let alone a sport. Yet this is a basic form of physical activity that plays a significant role in our lives. Walking. We talked to Beata Barbořík Brošová – who, among other things, is a Nordic walking instructor – about all the ways walking can benefit us and whether we really need to walk 10,000 steps a day.

Medical students know her as an indispensable liaison with the physicians-teachers at the First Department of Internal Medicine – Cardiology at the UP Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and University Hospital Olomouc. Physiotherapy students at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences also encounter her in their classes. And she is affiliated with the UP Faculty of Physical Culture, where she studied Recreation Studies and where you can work out with her at the BALUO Application Centre. As an instructor, she even works with hospital patients, and not just those with heart conditions.

— What are the benefits of walking? Why should one walk regularly – even if they don't like or pursue other physical activities?

The most important benefit I'd highlight, especially nowadays, is that it puts you in a good mood. If you're not confined to a hospital bed, taking a walk outdoors in the fresh air lets you clear your mind of worries; you can just let your thoughts wander as you stroll through the countryside at your own pace. That's what I really love about walking. Then, of course, there are the health benefits. Like other physical

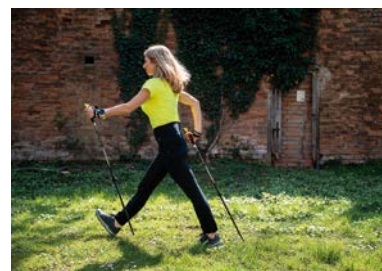
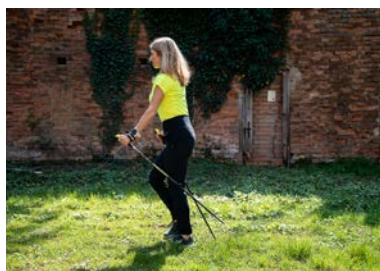
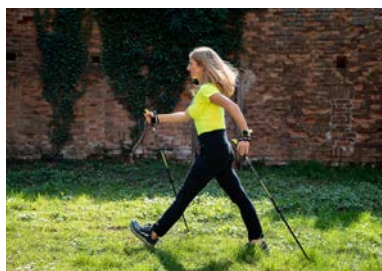
activities, it strengthens the cardiovascular system and muscles and has a positive effect on physiological processes in the body, optimising blood sugar levels, etc. A walk after a meal improves digestion. For some people, the social aspect is also important – going out with someone else.

— Your practise Nordic walking – simply put, walking with poles. What added benefits does that have?

Compared to “regular” walking, it engages the muscles of the upper body and is also good for the brain. Nordic walking requires a specific technique, and coordinating the movements of the opposite upper and lower limbs takes practice. I've worked with people who've had strokes; for them, this kind of exercise was very difficult, but they were glad that it forced them to work and strengthen their brains.

— They say we should walk 10,000 steps a day. What do you think?

Everyone is different: this was a general recommendation for healthy people. I've seen cases of women who actually overexerted themselves every day just so their watch would show they'd reached 10,000 steps. The impact on one's health and well-being may not always be positive. There are studies that suggest even 6,000–8,000 steps a day have a positive effect on health – and that's what I'd stick to. Anyway, it's definitely a good idea to incorporate walking into your daily routine as much as possible, at least half an hour a day.



text: Ivana Pustějovská
photos: Jakub Čermák

interview

Pavel Nováček

Let's not cast ourselves
as martyrs – let's just
try to live sensibly



Pavel Nováček (b. 1961)

Scientist, environmentalist, teacher, writer, photographer. He graduated with a degree in Environmental Protection from the UP Faculty of Science. His professional focus is on global environmental problems, sustainable development, and the study of possible futures (foresight). He is the founder of the International Development Studies programme at UP. For several years he headed the Department of Development and Environmental Studies at the UP Faculty of Science, where he continues to work as an associate professor. He has been active in various international organisations, such as being a member of the Planning Committee of the Millennium Project (Washington, D.C.), and he also served as chairman of the Czech Association of the Club of Rome. He is the author of a number of academic and popular science books, such as *Lidský příběh – Hledání udržitelného rozvoje a jeho smyslu* (The Human Story: The Search for Sustainable Development and Its Meaning, 2017), *Světopsis: Letem proměnlivým světem* (Globography: A Trip Through a Changing World, 2016), and many more.

When I look at his CV, it seems he has always been ahead of his time: his work has foretold what was to come, including the difficulties that lie in store for humanity. He graduated with a degree in Environmental Protection at a time when it was more weird than attractive, specialising in global environmental problems and challenges and sustainable development when many of us were not only not giving thought to such things, but had never even heard of them, and he even founded the International Development Studies programme at UP. So who better than Associate Professor Pavel Nováček from the UP Faculty of Science to tell us where our world is headed and how we might fit into that scenario?

— I'm almost afraid to ask what you're doing now, because it's likely to catch up with us in the future.

No need to worry: my current focus is foresight, the study of possible futures. The goal is not to predict what will happen, rather to try to map a range of possible scenarios of what might happen under certain circumstances. Not just risks, opportunities also. We almost never get the future right, and we need to take that into account. Nevertheless, I think it's a good idea to be prepared for all possible situations. Like Nassim Nicholas Taleb said, there will always be something we are not prepared for, in his words, a "black swan", and we should strive to be "antifragile", i.e. resilient. In other words, when faced with unexpected situations, pressures, or mistakes, to have the ability to grow stronger, improve, and become more resilient.

— We've already been through quite a lot: the Covid pandemic, a war on our doorstep, the refugee wave. Yet it seems that, again and again, we keep getting caught off guard. Could any of these have been foreseen?

Most of what you've just listed. That Covid-19 or something similar would come along, yes – we just didn't know when or in what form. As a reminder, take for example the Spanish flu pandemic after World War I. The interesting thing about the Covid pandemic was rather how unprepared we were. Similarly, given long-term trends in the world, the migration wave could also have been expected. But German Chancellor Merkel's "We'll manage it!" was naive. And the war? In my opinion, we're not acknowledging that it could affect us far more in the future than it has so far.

— What new threats or risks lie ahead of us? Apart from further pandemics and wars....

I think they will be linked to the environment and the associated decline in biodiversity. I see risk in damaged ecosystems that cannot be repaired. Nature will probably find her way again; the question is how we humans will find ours.

— How will climate change affect us?

To be honest, we don't exactly know. Even the best models today only predict what will happen if the temperature rises by two or three degrees. And if it's more...? In 1998, I had the opportunity to spend some time with Prof Josef Svoboda, the world-famous polar environmentalist. He pointed out that due to climate change and global warming in the northern hemisphere, we may lose the Gulf Stream, which could lead paradoxically to very significant cooling. So take your pick. That is why I answered that we really don't know. We know what could logically happen, but whether it will or not... One thing is certain: we are playing with something we don't really understand, and we won't be able to significantly influence the consequences.

— Is the current system of global cooperation actually going to be effective when it comes to protecting the planet? For it is one which supports nationalist interests, which will definitely manifest themselves in a certain isolationism.

Likely a different system will gradually form, as the current one no longer reflects the changes that have taken place. When I remember the early 1990s, I think about the huge hope and optimism the fall of communism brought us. Not just in Central and Eastern Europe. In the global perspective, this was the time of Francis Fukuyama and his book *The End of History and the Last Man* about the progress of humanity, where he optimistically concluded that the final clash of the great ideologies had ended, liberal democracy had won, and from now on things would simply be fine-tuned according to local conditions.

— And then Samuel P. Huntington responded to Fukuyama with his *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order*...

Yes, Huntington countered, saying the world would become more complex and future conflicts would not be between countries, but between cultures, civilisations. Still, there was an effort to establish some form of international order, a set of rules for global management. Note, I'm not talking about global governance, but about rules we can agree on. Like when we come to a stoplight, we go on green and stop on red. General rules that could

save our lives. Similarly, the 1995 book *Our Global Neighbourhood* focused on the changing world, not only analysing the world order then, but also warning of the need to reform the systems of international institutions including the UN to respond to the new global challenges.

— We've been talking about sustainability. Isn't an illusion? I'm asking this because I sort my plastics, but then I see mountains of them being burned while sewage flows into the sea. So what if Europe goes green, but the rest of the world doesn't?

Rationally, it may seem pointless from your perspective – you're in the minority and most of the world behaves differently. But allow me a small historical digression. Just five hundred years ago, very few would have predicted Europe would be as successful as it is today. It was a continent torn apart by wars and epidemics – at that time, people would have bet rather on the Ottoman Empire, China, or Japan. But thanks to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and above all the use of fossil fuels to power steam engines, Europe became the leading power at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. And to this day, much of the world is trying to follow in our footsteps, to achieve our level of material goods and quality of life. But if by relying on fossil fuels we have pointed the way towards development in one direction, perhaps now is the time for Europe to point to an alternative path. For since the mid-20th century, we have been learning that this path to success has its downsides, including environmental pollution. Don't forget that there aren't 1.5 billion of us in the world anymore like in 1900, but 8.5 billion. And we all have demands on material. So I wouldn't stop sorting waste.

— Various sustainability initiatives are already urging us to buy less and support local businesses. Do you think we can voluntarily limit ourselves, and still meet all our needs?

I think it's necessary to approach everything sensibly. Not to go overboard. People should try to act sparingly, more modestly – whether it comes to energy consumption, water, or transport. But don't be extreme. If you take things too far, you can get the impression others aren't as conscientious as you are, feel they aren't doing their share, and then you end up feeling bitter: "I've made sacrifices and it's for nothing." Let's not make victims of ourselves. Let's not cast ourselves as martyrs. Let's just try to live sensibly, each according to one's own means.

— As a scientist used to working with facts, verifiable data, aren't you amazed that in 2026, scientific findings are sometimes put on the same level as obscure theories?

We must think rather highly of ourselves when we call ourselves "rational beings", "Homo sapiens", or even "wise", yet from time to time we feel the need to behave irrationally. Perhaps we as humanity are in a phase when we do not fully appreciate what we have, and might lose it. Who knows.

— We've been talking about the world – how it was, how it is, how it will be. In your profession, you've travelled to dozens of countries. Has it changed the way you see the world?

Definitely. Ever since I was young, learning about foreign countries and cultures has fascinated me, and I've tried to turn that knowledge into something useful. I've had the incredible luck to become a teacher, and I've been able to put what I've learned on my travels into my work. It was beneficial to visit and really get to know a number of places, to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening there and why. You can't study everything from behind a desk.

— Is there still an advantage to personal travel experience when we have easy access to the whole world on social networks? Do you still recommend your students to go out into the world?

I am deeply convinced of the value of personal experience. It's priceless. Yes, you can study all sorts of things searching the internet, but social networks cannot replace personal contact with other people and other cultures. Of course, we don't all have to travel in such an insane manner as we often do. Here we are again with moderation. Everyone has to find that happy medium for themselves.

— By the way, what about you, an environmentalist, and your carbon footprint?

I reckon I'm headed for Environmental Purgatory... Hopefully they'll give me credit for putting my experiences to good use in my work.

— Do you view nascent AI with fear or hope for the world?

I'm worried what its progress may cause. I believe that future generations will come to terms with it, but until we learn how to work with it, it could cause chaos.

— Are we at all mentally prepared for such rapid technological development?

I'm convinced that we are not. But the futurist Alvin Toffler had already written about this in his 1970 book *Future Shock*. Even then, he warned that changes – whether technological, social, or cultural – were happening so fast we were unable to process or adapt to them. And now the rate has multiplied. Some experts say that everything is ok, AI is just evaluating data, no need to worry. Others, with the same qualifications, are saying: Stop it now! We don't know where this is going. So take your pick. We're heading into unknown territory.

— What worries you the most today? Sorry, but to me you're kind of a catastrophe scientist.

I sincerely hope not! I certainly don't want to be. But what worries me? I suppose the semantic confusion, day in and day out. I don't want to moralise. But it is as though the situation where there used to be things on which the vast majority of people agreed on – regardless of their education – no longer exists. Today I'm not able to see eye-to-eye with some people, and I wonder where they get the opinions on which they base their arguments. It's possible they see me in the same light. It seems we are living in a time of chaos, confusion, which is evident not only in world events but also in our private lives. We are losing touch with friends, family, colleagues who used to share our views, and though we may still care for them, we no longer comprehend them.

— Where does a person find the hope that it won't all end, that we'll survive the next catastrophe... and the one after that?

Despite all the uncertainty and confusion in this world, I am deeply convinced that life does not end with death. That doesn't mean we should give up and stop trying. I think we're here in this world to learn something, and even if things don't always work out the way we want them to, everything will be ok. I believe that.

— So, in addition to facts, faith also helps scientists. How do you reconcile the two?

Quite easily. The American palaeontologist and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould said that science answers questions about how the world works. But it can't prove or disprove its meaning or significance. Only faith, in the broadest sense of the word, can help with that. Faith and science are not at odds with one another; they go hand in hand. Not everything is within our capacity. But one should try to do the best one can.

festival

photos: A. Šrejber,
T. Helísek, M. Sacherová

Academia Film Olomouc: When Science Rules the City



More than 8,000 visitors, 600 films in competition, 350 members on the organising team, and a 61-year history. All this and much more in one festival. This is Academia Film Olomouc (AFO), the international festival of popular science films organised by Palacký University, which reenergised the city at the end of April and beginning of May. Filmmakers from all over the world gathered in Olomouc to once again provide the public with a unique opportunity to see documentaries and other media that best reflect current trends in the popularisation of current scientific research.

For more than six decades, AFO has been presenting science as a natural component of life. This year's festival sought to find a Common Language, its main theme.

"It was lovely to see our ideas and plans take form, such as the experiment with the outdoor spring cinema on the Upper

Square, where the screenings were a great success with audiences. At the same time, I am so delighted that films which went through our workshop for film professionals are returning to the festival in their final forms and are so good they are winning awards from international juries and audiences alike," said AFO Director Eva Navrátilová.

For those who missed a film during the festival or were unable to get to Olomouc, you have the unique opportunity to view selected festival films from the comfort of your own home via the special Watch and Know online platform, a joint project of AFO and the Prague Science Film Fest organised by the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague. In addition to films screened at both festivals, you'll also find there a number of interviews, concerts, and additional interesting content. (vys, ipu)

2026 AWARD WINNERS

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Best Film: **Nuisance Bear**

Best Science Communication Prize:
Phenomena

Prize for Best Czech or Slovak Film:
Při zemi (Resilience)

Prize for Best Czech or Slovak Science
Communication Film: **Mořeplavci
pravěku (Stone Age Voyagers)**

Prize for Best Short film:
The Last Observers

Prize for Best Immersive Work:
Out of Nowhere

Prize for Best First or Second Film:
Snow Leopard Sisters

Student Jury Prize:
Menopause Mystery

Czech TV Audience Award:
Phenomena

European Spotlight Award:
**Killing Time: The Science of
Boredom**

Award for Contribution to Science
Communication:
Czech Society for Ornithology

text: Eva Hrudníková
photo: Jakub Čermák

portrait

A full-page portrait of Michal Bartoň, a middle-aged man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue suit and a white shirt. He is standing on a metal staircase with a perforated metal wall behind him. He is leaning his right hand on a metal railing and has his left hand in his pocket. The lighting is soft, and the overall tone is professional.

Michal Bartoň

My journey from academia to the Constitutional Court bench



If you were to leaf through the history of the UP Faculty of Law (UP FL), you would come across his name at least twice. He has already made an indelible entry in it, even though he still has many promising years ahead of him. He was the first of the reinstated faculty's graduates to be made Associate Professor, and is the first UP FL graduate to don the robes of a constitutional judge. Michal Bartoň – a long-standing pillar of the Department of Constitutional Law.

It was 1994, and eighteen-year-old Michal Bartoň, a mathematics student in an Olomouc high school, was choosing a university. Just a few hundred metres from his school, the newly fledged UP FL had been open a mere three years. “My grandmother said to me, ‘Look, a new faculty has opened there – wouldn’t you like to try Law?’” Bartoň recalls. At the time, he wasn’t particularly keen on law or even history. “It was due rather to curiosity and circumstance that I ended up studying Law. Even then, it struck me as something very practical. Besides, I didn’t want to leave Olomouc.” If he hadn’t passed the entrance exams, he would have gone to the neighbouring Faculty of Science, awash in mathematical equations, vectors, derivatives, and integrals. He would have been accepted without any tests.

When he looks back on his Master’s studies at the new faculty, he smiles and his eyes light up. Altogether, there were about 90 students in his class; everyone knew each other, the atmosphere was intimate and friendly. Things were kind of made up as they went along. “The programme was in its infancy. We were a bit like laboratory rats, but that made it all the

more interesting. Experts from Prague and Brno assisted with the teaching. That diversity of different schools and perspectives was a plus.”

Bartoň’s professional expertise is in organisational constitutional law and human rights. “When it comes to human rights, I focus on political rights, which typically include the freedom of expression, the right to assemble, the right to associate, and the right to vote. That includes the prohibition of discrimination, and issues relating to judicial protection of basic human rights,” he enumerates. He is not exactly certain what attracted him to constitutional law and has kept him there ever since. It was probably a number of subconscious impulses, given that constitutional justice was a completely new concept in the post-revolutionary 1990s. He was also attracted to the overlap between law and politics. His teachers, including Pavel Holländer, Antonín Procházka, Vlastimil Ševčík, and Eliška Wagnerová, also played a role – all of whom were Constitutional Court judges and strong personalities.

He began teaching at UP FL immediately after graduation. Other legal professions did not entice him. “My choice of specialism – constitutional law – doesn’t really fit the typical work of an ordinary lawyer. Practical application of constitutional law is somewhat rare. But I never thought about going anywhere else – my work at the faculty fulfilled me.” The change came in 2013, when an offer landed on his desk to become an assistant judge at the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic. Because it seemed like a fitting symbiosis of academic work and practical consti-

Michal Bartoň (b. 1976)

UP FL graduate. He completed his Master’s and doctoral studies at the Faculty of Law in Brno. In 2012, he was appointed Associate Professor in the field of Constitutional Law and Law & Government Studies. He has been working at UP FL since graduating in 1999. His resumé includes serving as UP FL Vice-Dean, as a member of the UP Academic Senate, long-standing chair of the UP FL Senate, and head of the Department of Constitutional Law. From 2008 to 2013, he was a member of the work committee of the Legislative Council of the Government of the Czech Republic. After 2013, he served as an assistant judge at the Constitutional Court. He is also the editor and main author of the book *Základní práva* (Human Rights; Leges, 2016), co-editor and co-author of *Listina základních práv a svobod. Komentář* (Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. A Commentary; C.H. Beck, 2020). On 18 December 2025, President Petr Pavel appointed him Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic.

tutional law, he accepted. And as he himself shows, that symbiosis was functional, strong, and lasting.

Three years ago, when nominations were sought for new constitutional judges, UP FL sent a recommendation for Bartoň to the Czech president. “I was very pleased that my home faculty recognised my abilities and work. At the same time, though, I wasn’t counting my chickens before they hatched. Many institutions took part in the nomination process. I had just made it onto a long list, that’s all,” he says modestly.

His “chickens” started “hatching” last June, when Bartoň was contacted directly by the Office of the President for the second round of nominations for Constitutional Court judges. “I’d already decided that if it ever happened by chance – for I didn’t really expect it – I’d give it a shot. I quickly thought it over once more and discussed it with my family. Then I wrote that I was flattered and I would provide all the necessary

documentation,” he says, describing his life-changing decision.

The four-month nomination process had begun. It started with an appearance before the President’s advisory panel, then a face-to-face meeting with President Petr Pavel himself, and finally a plenary “grilling” in the Czech Senate. “It wasn’t small talk with the President. He made it clear he wanted to vet the candidates before sending anyone to the Senate. Those were some rather stressful months, and demanding in terms of time,” he says, describing a period of one meeting after another.

He was installed as constitutional judge last December. “It is a public service. One accepts it promising to fulfil one’s duties to the best of one’s ability. I’d like my decisions to be understandable even to non-lawyers, so that they are legally precise but avoid legalese,” states the most junior of the fifteen judges. He will wear the dark blue robe with accents in the national colours for ten

years. The rules of the Czech Constitutional Court allow judges to teach. He has gone from being the head of the Department of Constitutional Law to, as he himself says, an ordinary staff member. “I’ve reduced my teaching load. It’s also good for the department. Moreover, judges don’t have tenure: I have something to fall back on.”

Bartoň’s work week follows a strict schedule. He spends three days at the court in Brno; the other two days he can work from home. Those days are spent trying to devote some time to UP FL students and the department. And the weekend? “Ideally, it should be free, but I often need to prepare for plenary sessions, reviewing complex cases.”

When he needs to clear his head, he has his family, walks, cycling, and skiing. “I sometimes play guitar; that’s my major form of relaxation,” the Constitutional Court judge, academic, and mainstay of the faculty band STAGnace [StagNation], reveals with smile.

“When it comes to human rights, I focus on political rights, which typically include freedom of expression, the right to assemble, the right to associate, and the right to vote. But that also includes the prohibition of discrimination, and issues relating to the judicial protection of human rights.”



Zdeněk Červínek

Head of the UP FL Department
of Constitutional Law

For me, as for many of our students and graduates, Michal Bartoň is, above all, a guide into the world of constitutional law, the heart and soul of our department and faculty. Someone you can turn to anytime for advice or a consultation, who will never turn you away, despite his workload. Students appreciate him as an outstanding teacher who can explain even the most complex topics clearly. As his former PhD student and now colleague, I hold Michal in the highest regard as a leading expert in constitutional law and human rights, whose publications have made a significant contribution to the development of our field. I believe that his new “mission” at the Constitutional Court will meet with equal success. He possesses all the qualities a judge should have: a sense for justice, knowledge of the law, and moderation in both his judgement and conduct.



Václav Stehlík

UP FL Dean

I know Michal, having worked with him for more than 25 years at our faculty. I therefore have had the rare opportunity to see him both on the job and at friendly, informal gatherings. Professionally, Michal is known for the high quality of his teaching of constitutional law, as well as for his unique contributions in the form of publications focusing, among other things, on freedom of expression and human rights. I know him to be a very hard-working and methodical person with an eye for detail, and also someone who places great emphasis on finding conceptual and well-reasoned solutions. The standout feature of Michal’s character is his modesty. Personally, what I admire most is Michal’s intelligent sense of humour. Spending time with him is always a bit of an intellectual challenge for me, but he’s also a great sounding board and inspiration. I consider him a colleague without peer and a close friend.

survey

The world through the eyes of students

Every academic year, our students set out to gain experience in the world. Through exchange programmes, summer schools, internships, and scholarships, they have the opportunity to study and work at universities and institutions abroad, where they expand their knowledge and gain valuable insights. These stays also allow them to discover new countries, cultures, and everyday life abroad.

What is life really like out there? What should you not miss when you go abroad? In the following survey, you'll find answers and interesting tips from our students. (ipu)



Finland

Marie Johánková

Physical Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences

I completed a study programme at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. Even though Finland is called the "Land of a Thousand Lakes," you won't find any in the city of Pori, where the main campus is located. But what you shouldn't miss is a trip to Yyteri Beach, a 30-minute bus ride from Pori. If you're not into swimming, just stay on the bus a few minutes more and you'll arrive at Reposaari Island, where you can explore the vast forests and pick blueberries and mushrooms. Or you can take a stroll through town and admire the idyllic wooden houses. Another thing I wouldn't want to miss when visiting Finland is definitely trying the local liquorice. It's also sold mixed with sweet candies, but if you want to experience the true power of liquorice, I recommend trying "salmiakki".



Estonia

Ivana Hmírová

General Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry

I completed a semester-long study programme at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Tartu has a magical atmosphere, ideal for strolling the streets and the park near the cathedral. I recommend visiting the Estonian National Museum and the Mõku Bar, a must-go for international students. Don't forget to take a trip to Saaremaa Island, famous for its windmills, lighthouses, and peaceful nature, or to Tallinn. The "summer capital" of Pärnu with its beaches is also wonderful. Make the most of your time by travelling around the Baltic states – spend a weekend in Riga and Vilnius. I also recommend visiting Finland, where you can experience the northern lights. Erasmus is mainly about the people, and the memories you make will stay with you for a lifetime.

Vietnam



Václav Lipina

Musicology, Faculty of Arts

I'm currently on a five-month internship in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi. I work for the Czech Centre at the Embassy of the Czech Republic, which promotes Czech culture in Vietnam. Life here is completely different in many ways – commuting to work every day on a motorcycle through chaotic traffic, eating street food on the sidewalk on small plastic stools, and having friendly interactions with the locals. To anyone planning a trip to Vietnam, I'd recommend celebrating the Lunar New Year (the biggest holiday in Vietnam) and visiting natural places such as Cát Bà Island, which offers beautiful scenery with jungle, mountains, and breathtaking views.

Hungary



Nurgul Zhussipova

Theology, Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology

After my maternity leave and online studies, the summer school in Pécs on the theme "The Search for Peace" was extremely enriching for me. Despite the long journey from Kazakhstan via Istanbul, the experience was well worth it. What captivated me most was the international atmosphere and the opportunity to engage in dialogue with teachers from all over Europe. Everything is within easy reach in Pécs, which is great for studying. I must highlight the local theological college and the hospitality of the organisers. If you go there, don't miss the historic centre – it's a small but generous town where study and tranquillity blend perfectly. I'd love to thank the faculty and Vice-Dean Opatrný for this opportunity!



Marie Princová

Applied Physics, Faculty of Science

As part of my Master's programme, I spent half a year on an internship at CERN – the European Organization for Nuclear Research. CERN is located on the Swiss-French border, so you can explore two countries at once! Be sure not to miss Geneva with its Saint-Pierre Cathedral and the Jet d'Eau fountain. In the evening, head back to one of the surrounding French villages at the foot of the Jura Mountains with their cozy bakeries, and spend your weekends exploring the spectacular Swiss mountains and strolling around Lake Geneva. As a particle physics student, I still draw on this cultural and professional experience to this day.



Martina Drásalová

Physical Education and Biology Teaching, Faculty of Physical Culture

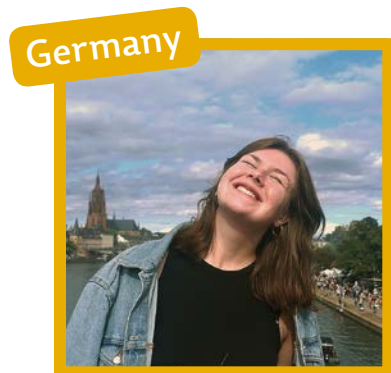
Campus life was one of the best experiences of my studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. I had the opportunity to meet students from the world over, get involved in local clubs, and participate in student events. A major perk was free access to the gym, swimming pool, and climbing wall. About a four-hour drive from Edmonton are the Rocky Mountains, home to Banff and Jasper National Parks, which offer stunning natural scenery with mountain hikes and iconic lakes. Winter sports enthusiasts will love it. And while you're in Edmonton, go and enjoy the atmosphere of an Edmonton Oilers NHL game!



Martin Mach

Theoretical Legal Sciences, Faculty of Law

As part of my studies, thanks to the excellent international office at the Faculty of Law, I set off for Taiwan. Studying at a university ranked in the Top 100 is full of bureaucracy – you can do nothing without a stamp – which, for a laid-back person with a more relaxed approach to deadlines, is as much of a slap in the face as an 8 a.m. Monday lecture. But Taipei will captivate you. The city has a unique atmosphere with its bustling night markets and is full of contrasts, where ancient temples huddle in the shadow of skyscrapers. Plus, just beyond the city lies beautiful, unspoiled nature. I recommend everyone to try the street food and to climb Elephant Mountain for a view of Taipei 101.



Jana Mrkosová

Social Sciences and Fine Arts, Faculty of Education

Out of my two Erasmus+ experiences, I'd like to mention the one in Frankfurt. At the Czech School Without Borders Rhein-Main, I tried my hand at an incredible variety of tasks, from teaching to managing the entire school. What I value most is the opportunity to glimpse the incredible world of language mixing. And Frankfurt itself? Even though I was warned about the city's dark history, it has forever grown dear to my heart. Walking through its streets felt so vibrant, diverse, and completely different from anywhere else. The tall skyscrapers added a sense of security to every journey: under their watchful eye, I felt safe and at home. Just one walk beneath them, and you'll fall endlessly in love with Frankfurt.

I'm not an imposter, I'm an advisor!

Why me? I've been asking myself this question pretty much my whole life. Paradoxically, mostly in situations that might promise success. Could it be imposter syndrome? No way! I'm not successful enough for that.

For the fourth year in a row, an offer to become a youth advisor to British Ambassador Matt Field has been popping up on my social media feeds. I've always wanted to apply and to be a voice bringing a scientific perspective to the diplomatic and political arena. Yet it was never the right time. I didn't feel competent enough, and because of a paralysing fear of failure, I preferred not to even try. So why try it right now? Am I now more resilient to failure? This year's call was the final one, so there was no room left for hesitation or doubt. I mustered what little courage I had left and opened the application form with determination. I filled it out, sent it off, and

tried to drown out that annoying, unsettling voice in my head with the desperate conviction that, after all, I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

A few weeks passed, and an email notification popped up on my phone with the subject: British Embassy Prague. Outlook was loading slowly. Maybe just a few seconds, but it felt like hours. I opened it and read it. Once. Twice. Maybe even a third time. I'm in there. They've chosen me. I'm going to be a Youth Advisor! For ten months, I'll be a Youth Advisor for Matt Field. I was immediately overcome by a wave of euphoria, joy, and pride. Forty minutes of pure excitement, jumping around the room. Then came the second wave of emotions. Why me? What was so special about my application? Did they make a mistake? Won't they be disappointed when they really get to know me? After all, my English isn't that

good, and someone else is surely better suited for this. My joy gave way to anxiety, and I began to drown in a sea of my own insecurities.

Impostor syndrome isn't just about excessive modesty, nor is it a desire for attention. It creeps in like a quiet, persistent voice that systematically questions every achievement you have. It convinces you that you were just lucky. That you fooled someone – in short, that you're a fraud. It's heart-wrenching how quickly it can drown out what should be pure joy.

However, this time, I didn't let it win. I'm far from ready for everything it takes, but I've been given an opportunity, and now it's up to me what I do with it. Maybe that voice in my head won't go away. Maybe it'll speak up every time something goes well. But I no longer want to ask, "Why me?" but rather, "Why not?"



text: Milada Křížková Hronová
photos: Jana Šindelová's archives

alumna

Jana Šindelová

Creative work is élan vital, the elixir of life



Her art includes drawing, graphic works, artistic productions, and performance pieces. Her works can be found in collections around the world, from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, to the Klatovy/Klenová Gallery, Czechia. She also collaborated for twenty-five years with the late Václav Cigler, the renowned Czech sculptor and glass and jewellery artist. “My quarter-century with Václav will never be over,” says Jana Šindelová, a Palacký University alumna.

She studied graphic art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague under Jiří Lindovský, master draughtsman and graphic artist, and later in its intermedia studio under Milan Knížák, the artist and performer, former Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and former Director of the National Gallery in Prague. However, she gained some of her earliest experience at the UP Faculties of Education and Arts.

“When I was little, I used to go to gymnastics and draw at the People’s Art School under the guidance of Libuše Našová. In high school, I used to go to an afterschool art club led by Petr Skyva in Šternberk. It wasn’t so long ago that I was surprised by an essay written by a classmate, which began by saying that steam locomotives were still in use during our childhood and the compartments were heated by stoves. I don’t actually remember that, but I used

to travel by local train from my small town,” recalls the visual artist, art theoretician and curator, reflecting on her early days in the arts.

She had already decided in high school that she wanted to pursue a career in fine arts. It happened after an art opening and a meeting with graphic artist Alena Kučerová at the Music Theatre in Olomouc. Her university education began in 1989 also in Olomouc.

“It was a wonderful time. Brilliant, inspiring artists arrived at the uni, turning it into a creative environment. I had the great fortune to be taught by graphic artist Ondřej Michálek; illustrator, sculptor, and jewellery designer Pavel Herynek; painter and creator of happenings and land and body art projects Vladimír Havlík; and painter Jiří Krtička. For art history, I had art historian Milan Togner and theoretician, poet, and painter Alena Nádvorníková.”

While studying in Prague, out of curiosity she enrolled in a summer school in Salzburg led by American sculptor Kiki Smith.

“At the time, I felt the absence of a strong female artist figure. There were twenty of us on the course, and Kiki taught us about the human body, starting from within: I was assigned the lymphatic system. There I met some of the world’s artistic elite.”

Another turning point in her career came when architect, artist (and now her partner) Michal Motyčka introduced her to Václav Cigler in 2002. “I involved my students at UP in our collaboration.” She later celebrated Cigler’s 90th birthday by organising a retrospective of his drawings at the Olomouc Museum of Art.

Now Jana Šindelová is at the point in her career when she can take a look back on things. Her work with Cigler and Motyčka produced more than a hundred projects. She is the co-author of nine publications and won the 2001 Graphic Artist of the Year award. She plans to organise an exhibition of Cigler’s jewellery and publish a catalogue for a major exhibition of glass sculptures entitled Vidět [To See] at the Miroslav Kubík Gallery in Litomyšl.

She continues to see her creative work as a tremendous gift. “Awards are certainly flattering and open doors to further exhibition opportunities, but the creative process itself is the élan vital, the elixir of life. So, too, my collaboration with Michal and Václav, which continues today through our foundation. Cigler was a visionary; he wasn’t interested in aesthetics, but in the work itself. His artwork was the result of seeking the best solution. He pushed the boundaries of the many fields of art he worked in. Now it is up to us to rediscover his work.”

A Space Created by Light I | 2023 | silkscreen print, 700 × 1000 mm



Jana Šindelová (b. 1970)

Visual artist, art theoretician, and curator. She produces drawings, prints, and site-specific works. She graduated in Art Education from the UP Faculty of Education, in Art Theory and History from the UP Faculty of Arts, and is an alumna of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In her doctoral thesis, “Václav Cigler and His School”, she analysed Cigler’s perspective on the visual arts via movement, space, and time.

photo: Jakub Čermák

reflection

Huang Xiao Rui | A physician who combines traditional and modern rehabilitation methods to aid patients who have suffered a stroke. She studied medicine in China, where she specialised in clinical rehabilitation. She came to Olomouc four years ago to work at the clinic. She is a doctoral student at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences.

我最初来到捷克，是因为捷克的康复医学在全球享有很高的声誉。阅读了Karel Lewit等等很多捷克医生们的著作和文章之后，我被这几十年形成的对康复的理解深深的震撼，并且结合自己的临床经验产生了很多共鸣。他们通过文字教会了我如何思考临床问题，让我体会到临床康复的魅力。所以我决心来帕拉茨基大学健康科学学院继续学习、深造自己。刚到Olomouc的时候，一开始还是有些不适应。最大的文化差异对我来说是来自医疗系统。在中国我是一名医生，但捷克的医疗系统与我熟悉的中国医疗系统差异较大。不过，在老师和朋友们的帮助下，大约用了两到三个月的时间，我就熟悉了医疗系统，也适应了这里的公共交通和生活环境。在读博期间，学院的老师们给予了我极大的支持、指导与信任，并为我提供了许多宝贵的锻炼和开阔眼界的机会，不仅使我在学术能力和专业素养上得到了质的提升，也提高了我演讲、团队协作等等很多方面的能力。

我很喜欢奥洛穆茨的整体氛围。这是一座安静而富有历史底蕴的大学城，周围自然环境优美，人文气息浓厚，居民们也很友善。来自世界各地的学者们汇聚于此，使这里既适合潜心学术，又充满活力。学校提供的各种实习和交换活动也非常丰富，使我有足够的机会和其他国家的学者们进行交流。我非常幸运能来到帕拉茨基大学健康科学学院学习，在这里的这段经历以及团队的老师和朋友们将是我一生宝贵的财富。

What drew me to the Czech Republic above all was its globally recognised reputation in the field of rehabilitation. After reading the works and articles of many Czech physicians, such as Karel Lewit, I was deeply impressed by how knowledge in this discipline has developed here over the past decades. I found much in common between their approaches and my own clinical experience. Thanks to their publications, I learned to think differently about clinical problems and came to appreciate the true depth and beauty of clinical rehabilitation. That is why I decided to enrol at the Faculty of Health Sciences to further my education and continue my professional development.

Upon arriving in Olomouc, adaptation was not easy at first. The biggest cultural difference was the healthcare system itself. In China, I worked as a doctor, however the Czech system is significantly different. With the help of my instructors and friends, it took me about two to three months to become fully familiar with it. At the same time, I learned my way around public transportation and adapted to local living conditions. During my doctoral studies, the faculty professors provided me with significant support and professional guidance. I gained a wealth of valuable practical experience and broadened my horizons. All of this led not only to an improvement in my academic abilities and professional competence but also to the strengthening of my skills in public speaking, teamwork, and other key competencies.

I really came to love the local atmosphere. Olomouc is a peaceful university town with a rich history, surrounded by beautiful nature and a vibrant cultural scene. Its residents are very friendly. Researchers from all over the world gather here, making it an ideal place for both dedicated academic work and a diverse social life. The university also offers a wide range of internships and exchange programmes, thanks to which I had the opportunity to interact with experts from various countries. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to study at the Palacký University Faculty of Health Sciences. The experiences I've gained here, along with my faculty contacts and new friendships, have enriched me for life.

Art doesn't win wars, it shows what we believe in and what we stand for

Plans are underway at Palacký University to establish an art collection. The project initiator is Barbora Kundračíková of the UP Faculty of Arts Department of Art History and also a curator of the modern art collection at the Olomouc Museum of Art. The goal is to create a “living” collection. The artworks will not be hidden away in dingy storerooms: they are to be displayed in UP’s corridors, lecture rooms, and public reception areas. People will talk about them in situ and ex situ, and contemporary art will become an integral part of the school’s daily life. Art will naturally become part of the lives of everyone who studies, works, or visits UP. As Barbora Kundračíková points out, such a collection is also important for the institution itself: it demonstrates the values that matter to it in today’s rapidly changing world.

— Is building an art collection another way of fulfilling what is known as the university’s “third mission” – i.e.,

in addition to education and research, working with and for society?

Yes, maintaining an art collection is indeed part of an institution’s social responsibility. We would thus like to join the long list of leading private and public universities and colleges that have such collections. This tradition is not yet very common in this country; Masaryk University in Brno is the main exception. In my view, university collections do have a vital social role to play. An art collection helps to create a collective image. It shows the framework of what values are important to us. Nor should we forget that every collection represents a relatively large sum of money that can be put to good use.

— What should the university collect?

Any collection of this kind should be linked to contemporary art and, at the same time, to alumni or personalities who have some connection to the university. It should also be open to loans and donations, which would naturally also include works from earlier periods.

— Whom have you contacted so far?

I first turned to the university itself, which has established artists known not only in the Czech Republic but also internationally, such as Robert Buček, Vladimír Havlík, Magdalena Turzová, David Jedlička, Libor Novotný, and many more. Nor should we forget those who have long been personally associated with the university or are emeriti, such as Ondřej Michálek. It is worth reflecting on these personalities; they have been a long-standing part of the university and have influenced the arrival of new generations. This is the foundation; we can then build upon that with other quality artists. My preference would be Central Europe in its broader sense – also incorporating Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states – in short, areas where “things have been happening” on a long-term basis, where there has been significant social upheaval and the “fight for democracy” is ongoing. It makes sense to select works that are controversial, even problematic. Of course, with contempo-



Barbora Kundračíková is the driving force behind the creation of the university art collection.





rary art, you're always taking a gamble; you never know in advance whether an artist will make a name for themselves or not. But I think that if we select good artists and specific topics in a broader collection, we can't go wrong.

— **How many works should we acquire?**

I think the university has the means to acquire three to five works a year; ten works is a sustainable limit. The crucial point here is that they should not be hidden away but displayed directly in public spaces at the uni. But we're just at the very beginning. Our vision is now gradually taking shape first in the premises of the Rector's Office, thanks to our rector, who is actively supportive of the initiative. Each semester, we have been selecting new artists and themes to consider. Specific acquisitions will be added gradually. A website is being set up; together with students,

we will be introducing the individual artists there; this year, the Department of Art History is launching a regular discussion series on contemporary art...

— **Will it be costly?**

The cost of individual works is expected to range from hundreds to thousands of euros. This leaves huge room for university donors and supporters. The university will have to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place, including the care of the works, their location, insurance, etc.

— **Aren't you worried about how people will react to contemporary art in historic buildings? We are, after all, the oldest university in Moravia.**

I believe that Palacký University has enormous potential, well beyond its region. The cultural world itself is diverse; it isn't afraid of discussion, controversy, playfulness, or missteps. Art naturally involves self-reflec-

tion, and I believe that every major institution needs this, too. Let's not be afraid.

— **How do you envision the university collection in, say, a decade from now?**

Ideally? One hundred works of art displayed in lecture rooms and corridors, with people walking past them and discussing them. The artists are proud to have been selected for the collection, they talk it up, and the university has become a player in the cultural space on the global level. Art is a soft power; it doesn't win wars, but it does send a clear message about who we are, what we believe in, and what we stand for. The idea is to visualise the spectrum of values in which we live. Every institution, including a university, must be transparent, it must be sexy, and that means being visual, open, and sensual. Let's go for the fascination, let's go for the wonder. Art must be a feast for the eyes. Once we can manage that, then we can move on to the more complicated stuff which lies beyond.

The university is not only a place of research and teaching, but also of beauty. Many of its students, teachers, and alumni have been, are, and will undoubtedly continue to be creators of interesting works of art. At the same time, the university is a place where art is created and also presented in various forms – whether it be concerts, exhibitions, literary readings, film screenings, or arts festivals of all kinds. Art is simply part of Palacký University. This is why we have decided to present a small artistic taste of what UP can do on the following pages.

science and art

photos: Václav Svoboda
digital editing: Kateřina Kašparová

The beauty of the hidden world



Arabidopsis thaliana
cross-section of a leaf

A classic model organism
for molecular biology

We all know that science is important. But we don't usually appreciate how surprisingly beautiful it can get. All you have to do is look beyond what the human eye can normally see.

An electron microscope opens up a world of extremely small structures such as viruses, bacteria, and the delicate surfaces of plants, discovering details that would otherwise remain hidden. However, these very details often reveal unexpected beauty. Images from an electron

microscope resemble abstract paintings, landscapes, or the fine textures of fabrics. Václav Svoboda from the UP Faculty of Science Department of Biophysics therefore showcases them not only as scientific findings but also as a visual experience.

The images are either left in their natural black-and-white form, or digitally coloured. "I try to use colour to highlight the structures, layers, and depth. The goal is not to embellish reality, but to enhance its interpretation," adds Kateřina Kašparová, an

Olomouc artist who contributes to the final appearance of the images. According to her, every image is a dialogue between science and aesthetics. "When working with colour, I think about what the image wants to convey. The microworld is incredibly fragile and architecturally perfect at the same time."

Visitors to the exhibition "Structures of the Microworld" at the UP Faculty of Science Botanical Garden had the opportunity to view Svoboda's & Kašparová's work this spring. (ipu, cho)

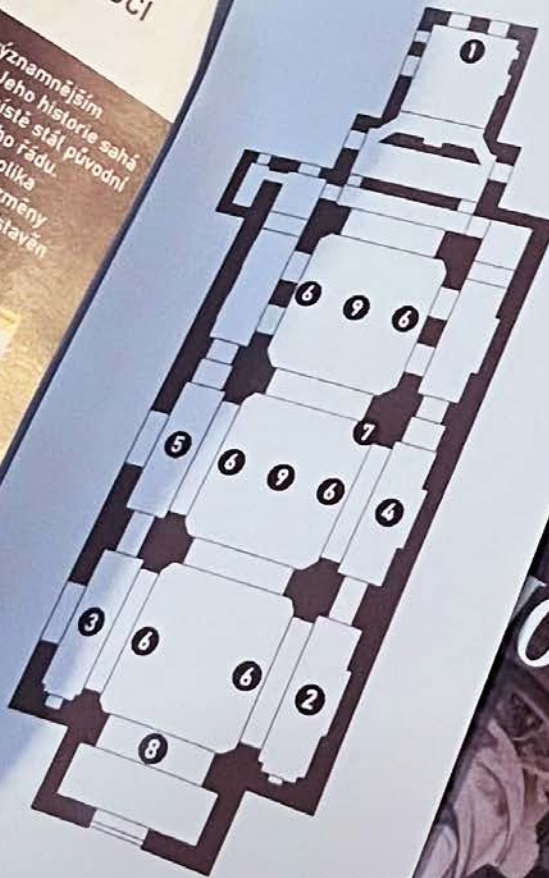


HISTORIE A UMĚLECKÁ VÝZDOBA KOSTELA SV. MICHALA V OLOMOUCI

Kostel sv. Michala patří k nejvýznamnějším sakrálním stavbám Olomouce. Jeho historie sahá až do 13. století, kdy na daném místě stál původní raně gotický kostel dominikánského řádu. V průběhu staletí prošel chrám několika přestavbami, přičemž nejzásadnější změny nastaly na konci 17. století, kdy byl přestavěn do barokní podoby.



Tuto stavbu vedli renomovaní architekti Giovanni Pietro Tencalla (1629–1702) a Domenico Martinelli (1650–1718), a to mezi lety 1676 a 1699. Barokní architektura kostela sv. Michala je zcela výjimečná, jelikož chrám niká unikátní sestavou tří monumentálních pilířů. Tato architektonická kompozice je v našem prostředí velmi neobvyklá, a v Evropě se vyskytuje jen u několika kostelů.



1. Hlavní oltář
2. Oltář Panny Marie v naději
3. Oltář sv. Šebestiána
4. Oltář sv. Filomény
5. Oltář sv. Sarkana
6. Lavice
7. Kazatelna
8. Vstupní
9. Vstup do chrámu

Students help revive the story of the Church of St. Michael

A Palacký University student team – Natálie Nosková, Jan Malý, Anna Rýcová, and Eliška Vykydalová – prepared a bilingual brochure and an information panel for the Church of St. Michael in Olomouc. Visitors can now learn about the history, interior, and artistic value of this prominent Baroque landmark. The project, born out of a collaboration between two courses, subsequently received funding through the IGA Student Grant Competition. The students were supervised by Jana Zapletalová, head of the Department of Art History. The materials were printed by UP Press. (map)

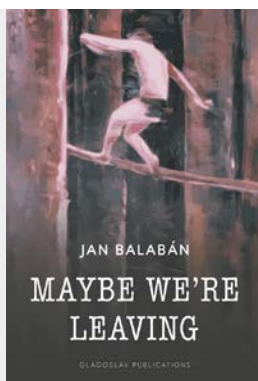
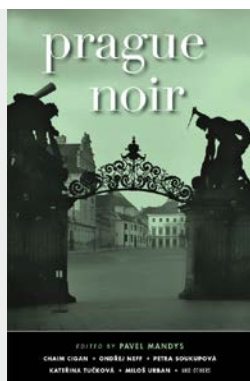
Read UP: 4 summer reading tips by UP alumni in English!

Our university is not only where study, science, and research take place, but is also a breeding ground for remarkable literary talents who regularly win prestigious awards and shape the landscape of contemporary Czech fiction. For your summer reading, we've selected four titles written by our alumni that meet the finest literary standards – and are available in English. Detective and mystery crime stories, highly existential and intensely psychological

ary nominations and awards for her books for adults and children. *Prague Noir* also serves as a one-of-a-kind guide to both traditional and off-the-beaten-path locations in Prague – which comes in handy during the summer travel season!

If you enjoy the short story genre but don't like switching from one author to another, pick up one of the most distinctive books of modern Czech literature. *Maybe We're Leaving* is a collection of twenty existential

ers, who also delighted in passing on his craft to students at Palacký University during creative writing seminars. His probably best-known novel, *Burying the Season: Blue Dřevnice Waltz*, has been published in English by the London-based Jantar Publishing. It's a bittersweet mosaic of stories about people from Bata's Zlín, grappling with the hopeful end of World War II as well as the arrival of totalitarianism and the renaming of the city to Gottwaldov after the first com-



narratives, plus a wild children's adventure in a locked museum.... Discover the inspiring mark our university has made on Czech literature!

Summer is the perfect time for light reading, and detective stories are no exception. If you're having trouble choosing just one, why not read fourteen! Because they're short stories, this volume allows you to discover many more Czech writers at once – including two with ties to our university. The collection *Prague Noir* features a total of fourteen stylistically diverse crime and mystery stories penned by fourteen Czech authors. Michal Šykora from the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, the doyen of the Czech crime fiction school, whose popular detective novels have been successfully adapted for the screen in many cases, also contributed to the collection. The second UP connection in the book – published in English by New York-based publisher Akashic Books – is a short story by alumna Markéta Pilátová, an accomplished writer who has garnered liter-

ary nominations and awards for her books for adults and children. *Prague Noir* also serves as a one-of-a-kind guide to both traditional and off-the-beaten-path locations in Prague – which comes in handy during the summer travel season!

If you enjoy the short story genre but don't like switching from one author to another, pick up one of the most distinctive books of modern Czech literature. *Maybe We're Leaving* is a collection of twenty existential

stories by Jan Balabán, a graduate of Czech and English studies at Olomouc's university. The protagonists of his short stories include an alcoholic with a penchant for pure alcohol, an engineering designer with a pathological fear of birds, a young girl suffering from an incurable illness, patients in a mental asylum, a woman numbed by a dysfunctional marriage, and many more. Each and every one of the protagonists finds themselves at a turning point, teetering on the edge of an abyss, in situations where their lives may take a completely different direction – or remain forever as they have been. These masterfully portrayed, poignant micro-stories of fictional, yet utterly authentic and genuine people from the Ostrava region have been published in English translation by the London-based publisher Glagoslav Publications. Among other accolades, the book also won the Czech Book of the Year and Book of the Decade.

Antonín Bajaja was one of the most prominent post-revolutionary Czech writ-

er, who also delighted in passing on his craft to students at Palacký University during creative writing seminars. His probably best-known novel, *Burying the Season: Blue Dřevnice Waltz*, has been published in English by the London-based Jantar Publishing. It's a bittersweet mosaic of stories about people from Bata's Zlín, grappling with the hopeful end of World War II as well as the arrival of totalitarianism and the renaming of the city to Gottwaldov after the first com-

If you're looking for summer reading to enjoy with your children during the holidays, we recommend *A Long Night of a Museum Mouse*, written by another Palacký University alumnus – poet and writer Radek Malý. If you or your kids have ever wondered what a museum looks like after closing time, this book gives you a chance to peek behind the veil of the museum's night-time secrets. Get ready to meet educated museum mouse Elvira and curious pigeon Emil during a chase by the ever-present night watchman amidst countless pitfalls and adventures that a museum at night has to offer. After reading it, we recommend heading to the Czech National Museum to explore it for yourselves – during official opening hours, of course!

Ota Blahoušek: 2nd prize in the Jazz World Photo competition

By day, he's the Secretary for Research at the UP Faculty of Science's Laboratory of Growth Regulators. But in his free time, he's a photographer, specialising in nature photos and also cultural events. It was his concert photography which brought him international recognition this year: 2nd prize in the prestigious Jazz World Photo competition.

This year, 120 photographers from 29 countries the world over entered the competition. "It was a huge surprise for me! I almost never enter photo competitions, for I know these days there are so many breathtaking and excellent photos being taken in every field of photography. I'm quite critical of my own photos, and tend to see their flaws rather than their strengths. So this year has been massive for me. Remember, no Czech entrant has ever won first place in the history of this competition," said Blahoušek.

Photography is something that has always fascinated him. After graduating from the UP Faculty of Science (UP FS), he started working at the new Laboratory of Growth Regulators, a combined research workplace of UP FS and the Institute of Experimental Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, where he also started taking science photos. In his words, science photos are an entirely different beast from concert photos. "Science photos are all about technical precision – sharp focus, proper lighting, faithful reproduction of reality. They should not be altered; the essential information must remain. For concert photos, emotions are key. Great photos have the same effect on me as listening to great music: I get goosebumps. And in the moment when I press the shutter at an excellent concert, that feeling is multiplied. In fact, if I'm at a concert without my camera, I feel like I don't enjoy it as much," Blahoušek admitted.



Ota Blahoušek (left) at the awards ceremony of the Jazz World Photo competition, which took place during the Jazzinec international jazz festival in Trutnov, Czechia.



UP Literary Competition: Science essays can be interesting

Poetry, short stories, and now also popular science essays. Palacký University honoured the winners of the 32nd annual Student Literary Competition at a ceremony during the Olomouc Student May Celebrations. This year's competition also introduced a new category that combined literature and popular science.

The competition has a long history at the university, supporting creative writing regardless of students' faculty affiliation. "The annual student literary competition confirms that a wealth of exceptional texts and distinctive voices are emerging from

the university. In addition to their literary quality, we were also delighted this year by the successful expansion of the popular science category," said Aleš Prstek, Director of UP Press, which organised the competition in collaboration with other university workplaces.

Žurnál always publishes examples of interesting student work for its readers. And since popular science essays are the new feature in this year's edition, you can read one of them here. Its author, Doubravka Kolářková from the Faculty of Arts, received Honourable Mention.

COMPETITION RESULTS

POETRY

1st place Magdaléna Ordeltová, UP FA

2nd place Jiří Dvořák, UP FS

3rd place Marína Štefáníková, UP FS

SHORT STORIES

1st place Daniel Háek, UP FA

2nd place Sarah Hermanová, UP FS

3rd place Katrin Unarová, UP FA

ESSAYS

1st place Magdaléna Ordeltová, UP FA

2nd place Ningxin Han, UP FL

3rd place Martin Valenta, UP FS

HONOURABLE MENTION,
POPULAR SCIENCE ESSAYS

Life isn't fair. But for whom?

Doubravka Kolářková

Each year, as the first signs of spring appear and the birds start their courting, the countryside resounds in a symphony of bird-song. Some birds end their songs with a descending, drawn-out melody, while others finish with a rapid, high-pitched chirp. But then comes a year, a March, when silence follows winter. There is no birdsong. There are no birds. Silent spring.

Rachel Carson named her global bestseller after the absent song of birds due to extinction. In *Silent Spring*, published more than fifty years ago, she warned that if people did not start to take responsibility for their impact on nature, they would bring the destruction of nature and themselves.

Many tried to "silence" the warning words screaming from the pages of her book. "Typical hysterical woman," claimed the chemical firms. It is hard to say whether Carson, who died shortly afterwards, had any inkling that *Silent Spring* would become a standard in the emerging battle to protect centuries-old trees, threatened species of animals, clean water and air, or safe working conditions – the struggles we are waging today perhaps more than ever.

The reason this book represents a significant milestone in our understanding of our relationship with nature is that it highlights multiple issues regarding our use of the environment. It also answers the question of who actually bears the brunt of the conse-

quences of a devastated landscape, polluted water, and soil saturated with chemicals. It describes the unjust reality.

When I first read *Silent Spring*, I was surprised by my own sense of dismay. One of the first publications on the subject – I asked myself, how come no one had ever thought of it before? Everything Carson wrote seemed clear and logical.

But the answer to my question soon became a realisation of my own superficiality. These thoughts hadn't really crossed my mind either, until I read Carson. Nor had she given a name to the concept of the unequal impacts of environmental devastation. It took another decade, until sociologist Robert Bullard, the father of environmental justice, came along.

Since then, the world has been transformed by numerous campaigns and environmental policies that have replaced the established practices of the last century. So is it still worth examining this concept, more than a half-century later? Things have changed, haven't they?

Farmer or industrialist?

One of the stories Carson tells in her book focusses on workers in the San Joaquin Valley of California who were planting cotton, some of whom fell ill and even died. The same thing happened to orange pickers in Riverside, California, to farmers' cows in Massachusetts, and to many others.

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Thanks in part to Carson, we now know that both humans and animals were poisoned by DDT, an industrial insecticide used at the time to prevent damage to American crops. Farmers were unaware of the deadly danger posed by the substance; apparently nobody knew about it.

But that wasn't actually the case.

Thanks to scientific research, we know that the US government, the chemical and agricultural industries, and even the health authorities were aware of the potential danger. And that is precisely why these stories have become examples of environmental injustice – people were unable to work in safe conditions, all the more because they were unaware of the risks. A small group of farmers took home wages – for which some had paid with their lives – while the rest of society reaped the profits of the harvest, far removed from the risks involved. The industries mentioned above profited most of all.

If you think we've made progress over the last fifty years, and today there are only isolated cases like this, you're sadly mistaken.

From the global perspective, Bangladesh – among the lowest producers per capita of carbon dioxide emissions – is one of the countries most at risk from the climate crisis fuelled by CO₂. Rising temperatures are causing changes to the rainy season and air pressure, increasing the risk of both flooding and prolonged drought. Also threatened are Brazil's indigenous peoples – from gold mining, which is polluting their rivers with mercury, destroying their livelihoods, and leading to deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. And the extraction of "black gold" – oil – poses a constant threat to the inhabitants and entire ecosystems of the Niger Delta. Oil spills there have been devastating just about everything around them – and there have been more than 8,000 of them in the past two decades alone.

And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

But what role do we, the people of Central Europe, play? Are we farmers or industrialists?

The truth is, from the global perspective, we are more like industrialists. We live in the Global North, which is responsible for 92% of the world's emissions, yet the Global South pays a heavier price for their impacts – in the form of longer heatwaves and higher levels of air pollution. Large industries which have headquarters in the North profit from their industrial operations in the South, where they have a negative impact on the inhabitants.

The North is the major driver of environmental injustice. Our demands and the culture we have created are fuelling a complex and vicious circle of consumption, one gradually spinning out of control. We can (and should) blame the big companies which, driven by profit, strive to produce more and more, faster and faster, and are willing to resort to dangerous methods to do so. However, we must not forget that they would derive no profits if there were no market for their products.

So, if we are in the position of industrialists (so to speak), with neither our health nor our safety at risk, why should we concern ourselves with environmental justice? After all, life cannot be fair to everyone....

Before I answer that question, it is important to point out that the distinction between farmers and industrialists is not entirely clear-cut. Let's examine the other side as well.

Coal profit and loss

You may have noticed a while back that coal mining in Czechia came to an end, after an incredible 250 years, with the closure of the last mine in the Ostrava-Karviná region. Some missed that news, others probably just chose to ignore it, but for others it was a defining symbol that marked the end of an important era.

One of the side effects of coal mining and combustion in the Ostrava region was the significant deterioration of its air quality. I, too, remember the "smog holidays" that schools announced when the air was so polluted that lessons were cancelled. This went on even several years after the coal industry fell into decline.

Inhabitants (including the mine owners) who were far enough away to avoid the negative effects profited from the products extracted or manufactured in the Ostrava region, at the cost of locals' health problems and limited educational opportunities. We, children in the eastern part of the country, could do absolutely nothing about it – we had no choice, just like many other groups who live in incomparably worse conditions in today's world.

I could try to persuade you to show empathy towards other people, which is, of course, one of the key factors in environmental justice. But the truth is, I don't know how many of you in all honesty would find this argument strong or convincing enough. The reality is, there may come a time when you yourself will need empathy.

So it doesn't really matter which perspective we take – whether we are farmers or industrialists. The fact that we are on one side today does not mean that we or our children will not be on the other side in the future.

The difference between a horse and a horse

In addition to environmental injustice between people, there is another area where we also can make a difference. Animals can also be "farmers". And as you've probably guessed, in such cases, the vast majority of people tend to side with industry once again.

Unlike the human world, where people are divided into disadvantaged and privileged groups – the latter of which are not actually affected negatively in the initial phase – animals almost always fall into the former category. The unequal distribution of the environmental impacts of human activity can be seen by comparing wild animals, pets, and farm animals. One group is threatened by deforestation, the second by selective breeding, and the third by the inhumane conditions in which they are forced to live. Each is threatened in a different degree and by different factors, but none of them have any choice in the matter, like farmers. However, animals are even less able to cope with their conditions than people.

And this makes the influence of our society, which has shaped their lives, all the more visible. Not all animals are equal, but they are even less equal when compared to humans.

If any of you readers wish to object to the social framing of animal life, arguing on the basis of "naturalness", here's a riddle for you: Do you know the difference between a horse and a horse under Czech law?

From a natural perspective, none. Both horses are animals of the same species, and I believe that (hopefully) most of us would agree that they deserve the same level of care, respect, and empathy. It is not natural for any horse to have a whip cracked across its hindquarters while a bit is clamped in its mouth. Those are human inventions. Just like human rights.

And that's what sets them apart. Depending on whether we keep horses as work animals or as pets, we are legally permitted to treat them differently, even though the Animal Welfare Act applies equally to both.

Generally speaking, there is a global trend in modern society whereby we protect farm animals less than pets, as can be seen from other examples as well. If you were to keep a dog chained up for life, or separate it from its mother within a day, today's rule of law might even send you to prison (which is a good thing), and the whole of society would certainly be outraged by your actions (also a good thing). However, on large-scale dairy farms this is common practice and is permitted by law as "tethered corralling" and the separation of the calf within 24 hours of its birth is something many are happy to forget when they can buy a litre of milk on sale for 50 cents.

So why don't animals deserve to be treated fairly, not only as members of the same species, but also as part of the world to which we humans also belong? Perhaps it is precisely these issues that the concept of environmental justice can highlight. Perhaps it can even help to set things right, so that we can create a fairer world not only among people, but among all living creatures.

What is important, but does not exist

The animal example is important for another reason. I mentioned the first phase of environmental inequality. However, there exists a second phase, which in English is described as "environmental blow-back". This little-known concept refers to perhaps the most natural instrument of justice the world has. A law of nature that will ultimately affect even those who initially benefit, at the expense of others, from a clean environment, an abundance of food, and safe employment.

Simply said, it is something like this: at some point, nature will simply turn on us and give us a well-deserved kick in the pants – if we industrialists fail to show empathy towards other living beings and the natural world around us. After all, none of us knows when, where, or in what form we will be born.

In closing, however, I must set the record straight on one more point, so that my words are understood correctly: the world is not black and white. We aren't all either farmers or industrialists, it's far more complicated than that. But we all belong to this world in some way and have an impact on it. Just as we can harm it, we can also improve it.

Environmental injustice existed before Carson described it and Bullard gave it a name, and it is still with us today. That is precisely why we should pay attention to it.

Moreover, it will always be with us. Life is unfair. There will always be places where the water is cleaner, and other places with more wildfires or fewer mineral resources. What's important is to have boundaries – fair and just boundaries – that we decide not to cross. And the current ones are obviously not enough.

That is precisely why it is important to learn about environmental injustice, to find out how it works and what goes on within it, and to identify its various phenomena – especially those that we can influence.

Perhaps we will then realise that we don't want the kind of world we live in. That we don't want people to go hungry, animals to suffer, nature to be destroyed; that we want a world where we can still hear birds singing in spring a hundred years hence. A world – even if it may never be entirely fair – at least a little bit more just.



The literary awards ceremony took place on 6 May as part of the UP Olomouc Student May Celebrations. Authors of the best entries received cash prizes and the opportunity to have their works published on the competition website (poetry and short stories) and in selected media (essays).



student May celebrations

photos:
Vojtěch Kmenta

Queen Dina

"Be curious, be kind, endeavour to be of service to others" – that was the message of Dina Štěrbová, the famous mountain climber, humanitarian worker, and former long-serving lecturer at the UP Faculty of Science, to students when crowned Queen of May at this year's UP Student May Celebrations in Olomouc. The main locale of the students' holiday programme this year was the Olomouc outdoor summer cinema, which featured concerts headlined by the electrifying group Vypsaná fixa, outdoor activities, and presentations by student and non-profit organisations, including a "road" version of the popular television show AZ Quiz. (vim)





Monika Tomanová

She received her Bachelor's degree in bioorganic chemistry and Master's degree in organic and analytical chemistry at the UP Faculty of Science. For several years, she worked as a researcher at the Department of Organic Chemistry and created the artwork for a number of scientific journal covers. Today, she primarily cares for her two-year-old daughter and dedicates herself to her own artistic work. She has been painting since childhood, and in recent years it has become her main creative pursuit, along with graphic design projects. In her paintings, she explores colours, meanings, and connections that also reflect her scientific way of thinking.



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