



In Memory of Prof. Maria Mladenova

Recollections of the joint activities and friendship with Prof. Maria Mladenova, DSc

Maria Lovdjieva

Petko and Pencho Slaveikovi House-Museum, Sofia, Bulgaria
kirilova.m@abv.bg

*I realized that the profession of a librarian
is all in one: science, technique, art,
sacramental action and philanthropy [1].*

A year ago Professor Maria Mladenova left us. She was a remarkable scientist — bibliographer, pedagogue, researcher, a real awakener for the sleeping minds of many of our contemporaries. She has devoted more than 40 years of her life as a lecturer at the Library Institute, which later became the University of Library Science and Information Technologies, and has made great efforts for its development and prosperity, for the education and professional growth of hundreds of students. Prof. Maria Mladenova was the first dean of the University of Library Science and for the first time she introduced the discipline “library ethics”.

Simultaneously, Prof. Maria Mladenova taught the course in “Library and Information Activities” at the University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”. Over the years, she wrote numerous bibliographies, books, reviews, articles, etc. She served as editor and peer reviewer for other authors as well. Until the very end, she occupied her mind with multiple new projects and ideas for research and publications.

I first met Prof. Maria Mladenova in the early summer of 2016. Intensive preparations had begun for the celebration of the 180th anniversary of the birth of the prominent Bulgarian Revival activist and public figure

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Published: September 2, 2021, Updated: June 2, 2022

Citation: Maria Lovdjieva, In Memory of Prof. Maria Mladenova: Recollections of the joint activities and friendship with Prof. Maria Mladenova, DSc, Biomath Communications 8 (2021), 2109021, <https://doi.org/10.11145/bmc.2021.09.021>



Photo 1: Opening of the exhibition, dedicated to Nestor Markov, in IMI-BAS, July 1st, 2016.

Nestor Markov. I worked continuously with the archive in preparation for a large exhibition dedicated to N. Markov at the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” and a scientific session at the Institute of Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

At the same time, Prof. Mladenova worked on a project of the Pleven Regional Historical Museum and the Pleven Community Center “Saglasie 1869”, entitled “The Revivalist Nestor Markov and the Pleven Awakeners” to write a biobibliography for the famous Bulgarian.

And thus, one day we met in front of the Bulgarian National Library’s building. She had contacted Prof. Svetoslav Markov from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (one of Nestor Markov’s grandsons) because she was interested in Nestor Markov’s publications kept in the family archives of his heirs. Prof. Markov readily provided her with everything preserved by his family.

From this day on began our joint work on organizing the celebration of Nestor Markov in Sofia. We worked together almost every day, new and



Photo 2: Prof. Mladenova at the presentation of her biobibliography of N. Markov in Pleven.

new materials were discovered, the pile of bibliography slips was expanding. It turned out that Nestor Markov was a deeply respected and famous person almost until the middle of the 20th century. We understood that a lot of hard work was ahead of us. We quickly reached unanimity and synchronicity, time pressed on us and we knew what awaited us. Usually, Prof. Mladenova was in the library before me and stayed until the end of working hours.

Our first joint event was the exhibition, organized by the library of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Arranged with skill and proficiency by the senior librarian Vanya Grigorova, the exhibition focused on Nestor Markov's legacy as a mathematician and teacher, on his textbooks and the first collection of mathematical problems in Bulgaria, as well as on the French-Bulgarian and Bulgarian-French dictionaries he compiled.

Prof. Mladenova opened the exhibition and held a speech on the great educator, public figure and lexicographer. This was the first time I heard



Photo 3: Prof. M. Mladenova speaks about the work of N. Markov at the opening of the exhibition at the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” in Sofia on January 10th, 2017.

her speak in front of an audience and she shone as an inspired, sincere and knowledgeable speaker. Her audience — mostly consisting of mathematicians — was involved and attentively listening. The same happened at all events that followed in Sofia and other cities throughout the country. The exhibition was later shown once again at the central building of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in early November 2016.

Nestor Markov’s biobibliography compiled by Prof. Mladenova [2] was eventually completed, containing more than 300 titles, both publications of Nestor Markov and many articles by his contemporaries and later authors. The book also includes a wonderful introduction prepared with care and deep understanding by Prof. Mladenova. Naturally, the presentation of the project in Pleven on November 1st, 2016 went brilliantly.

Two weeks later, a session, entitled “Nestor Markov and his contribution to lexicography and education”, was held at the Institute of Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The session was organized by the Institute. Prof. Diana Blagoeva was the one working most actively.

The session was opened by Prof. Iliya Todev, Director of the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. 16 reports were presented, including “Teacher Nestor Markov and his activities in Harmanli, Haskovo and Pleven” by Prof. Mladenova and the report by Dr. Tsvetanka Pancheva “There were such Bulgarians or a bibliography about the teacher, educator and statesman Nestor Markov”. The good organization of the session and the collection of the reports is due to the high professionalism of Prof. Diana Blagoeva from the Institute of Bulgarian Language [3].

The work for the central event was forthcoming — the big exhibition in the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”. Thanks to the authority of Prof. Maria Mladenova, the management provided the central and western foyers for the exhibition, which was to open on January 10th, 2017.

The exhibition was representative, it traced the life, the literary, social and state activities of Nestor Markov. The Institute for Historical Studies readily provided the preserved archives on the subject. As early as January 2nd, both Maria and I, and the great-grandchildren of Nestor Markov — Svetoslav Markov and Mario Markov, began arranging the boards and the personal archive of the patron.

The work was slow and physically tiring, but Maria never gave up. We were worried — there was a severe snowy winter — will there be people to honor the event? On January 10th, the hall was full. Once again, the inspired speech of Prof. Mladenova impressed the visitors and they looked at the exhibits for a long time and with interest. After the speech of Prof. Mladenova, the mathematicians Acad. Petar Kenderov and Acad. V. Drenski made exciting statements. The interest in the exhibition continued and the library management decided to keep it until the middle of February. We were very proud!

The event resonated and we started receiving invitations by various museums in the country to visit and present the exhibition. We decided that the result of the efforts made should be shown primarily in the cities related to the activities and the memory of Nestor Markov. Our first visit was to Stara Zagora. It was followed by visits to Haskovo, Harmanli, Gabrovo, Tarnovo, Varna, Plovdiv and so on until the end of 2018 in the Sofia Library.

And everywhere we visited, the wonderful words of Prof. Mladenova caught the attention of the guests. All the library directors welcomed with respect and joy their teacher from the University of Library Science, and

she was proud of her students, while Prof. Mladenova was proud of her students seeing their successful careers at their chosen profession. These were touching and exciting moments when a teacher saw the result of his many years of work.

During the two years we traveled together around the country, Prof. Mladenova published numerous articles in the periodical press dedicated to N. Markov. I can say that she became the most passionate popularizer of the work and his life activity of the man she called the “Titan of the Bulgarian Revival”. During all this time, Prof. Mladenova worked without interruption for other obligations she had — reviews, opinions, conferences, editorials. Among all these tasks, she dedicated some of her precious time to assist me in the bibliography format styling of the indices supplementing the book I was preparing about Nestor Markov. She insisted that a respected author should be demanding in the arrangement and layout of the material, she did not allow careless attitude to the commitments and for me these were important and memorable lessons.

Imperceptibly, our official relations had passed into cordial and sincere friendship. I still admire her absolute devotion to books, her ability to work — she was reading all night, and during the day she did not stop writing and making commitments to new projects. Our friendship lasted for a short time, we had many plans for future research as well as, for a new edition of the bibliography about N. Markov. We last met in February 2020 at the Youth Theater at the presentation of the book about Radichkov and made a promise to see each other soon. Prof. Maria Mladenova, with her dedication, integrity and love for library science, remains a shining role model for everyone who has been close to her.

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