The Prague Spring Archive
http://scalar.usc.edu/works/prague-spring-archive/index

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In early 1968, Communist Party leader Alexander Dubček introduced a series of liberalizing reforms in Czechoslovakia under the slogan of "socialism with a human face."[1] In August that same year, the countries of the Warsaw Pact, led by the Soviet Union, invaded Czechoslovakia. By year's end, the "Prague Spring" was over, with the reforms mostly reversed and Dubček removed from power. Fifty years later, the University of Texas at Austin introduced an engaging new resource that uses material from the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Presidential Library, including telegrams, internal memos, and letters from State Department officials, which offer a window into the U.S. response to the tumultuous events of 1968.

The Prague Spring Archive, launched in early 2017,[2] represents a collaborative effort among librarian for European Studies Ian Goodale, the LBJ Presidential Library, and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at UT–Austin. The homepage of the website describes it as a "portal to the digitized archives of the LBJ Presidential Library's collections on the Prague Spring,"[3] and "portal" is apt here. Aside from a few thumbnail images, the bulk of the material is not hosted on the website itself. Instead, the website provide researchers with a point of entry to digitized material housed in Texas ScholarWorks, the University of Texas Libraries' online repository. Though an impressively robust resource, the repository contains an amount of material that could easily overwhelm even an experienced researcher. The Prague Spring Archive, by contrast, is an easily-navigated website that highlights key documents from two digitized archival boxes.

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[1] "Gorbachev Calls For Socialism with a Human Face," *The Washington Post*, accessed on July 15, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/11/27/gorbachev-calls-for-socialism-with-a-human-face/eda17b7b-febe-4872-bdbd-d221f823b1b1/

[2] "Prague Spring Website Launched," *Tex Libris*, accessed on July 15, 2018, https://blogs.lib.utexas.edu/texlibris/2017/01/20/prague-spring-website-launched/

[3] *The Prague Spring Archive*, accessed on July 15, 2018, http://scalar.usc.edu/works/prague-spring-archive/

Researchers familiar with websites built using [Scalar](#) will immediately recognize the attractive interface, but others may experience a learning curve. Fortunately, the homepage of the website offers a birds-eye view of the resource and points out the easily-missed hamburger menu in the upper left-hand corner of every page. This menu, as well as the one on the homepage (see figure 1), allows users to jump to specific parts of the website. Otherwise, they can opt to follow the paths laid out by Scalar that take users from page to page.

Below you will find links to our guides to Box 179 and Box 180 of the archival holdings, a page on key figures in the Prague Spring, a timeline of events in the Prague Spring, a collection of key documents from Box 179 and Box 180, a guide to using Texas ScholarWorks to search and download additional documents, and a finding aid for the physical collections housed in the LBJ Presidential Library. More content on additional archival boxes will be added in the future. The site can also be navigated using the drop-down menu in the top left of your screen ( ).

Box 179
Box 180
Key Figures
Key Documents
Timeline
Guide and Finding Aid
About

Continue to "Box 179"

Figure 1: The homepage of the archive features a menu, allowing users to navigate the site as they choose.

According to a blog post introducing the resource by European Studies librarian Ian Goodale, "the Prague Spring Archive portal has been designed to replicate the original archival structure of the physical materials in the LBJ Library within a digital framework, allowing the user to 'read' and explore the archive on their computer."[4] Following the paths laid out by the website takes the user through folder-level overviews of each box. Clicking on a folder yields a brief summary of the folder's contents, a link to the ScholarWorks view of the folder, and links to key documents (see figure 2).

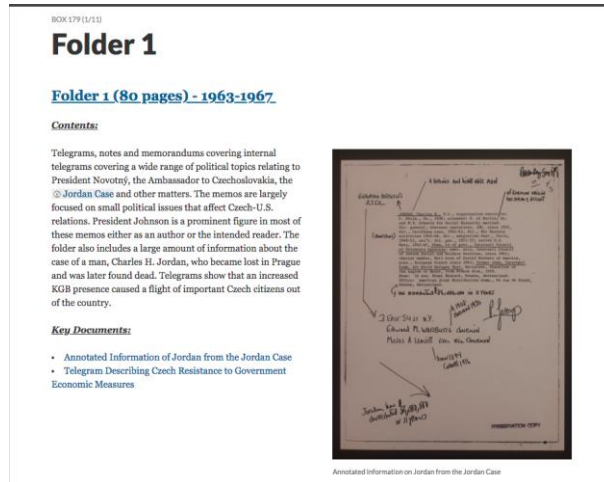[4] https://blogs.lib.utexas.edu/texlibris/2017/01/20/prague-spring-website-launched/

The resource contains several other features. First, the "Key Figures" page provides brief biographies of figures, both in the U.S. and in the Eastern Bloc, who were instrumental in the Prague Spring and the subsequent international reaction. Clicking on a person's name takes the user to a list of all ScholarWorks items they have authored. This list provides valuable background information for users who are unfamiliar with the history of the Prague Spring, which makes its placement at the end of the website (that is, users who are following the "paths" will come to this resource after looking through the two boxes) hard to understand. Another resource, the "Timeline" page (see figure 3), suffers from similar misplacement at the end of the website. The dynamic scrolling feature, which includes photographs, is engaging but misses an opportunity to integrate material from the collection.

Figure 3: The Timeline highlights key dates in the Prague Spring, accompanied by photographs from the internet.

Perhaps the most helpful of the additional features here, and another that may have been of more use at the beginning of the website, is the guide to ScholarWorks. This guide, which includes a number of helpful screenshots, explains how to perform a search and how to view the item-level metadata for documents in ScholarWorks. A PDF of the finding aid to the physical collections is also provided. The finding aid helps a great deal in explaining the significance of the documents in this resource, in particular by providing a definition of "National Security File." It would have been helpful if the introduction to the Prague Spring Archive had pointed out this information from the finding aid for the benefit of researchers lacking a strong background in U.S. foreign policy. Additionally, information justifying the choice of files 180 and 181, which at present form the entirety of the digitized material linked to in the resource, would have been welcome, perhaps along with the introductory material on the homepage.

The Prague Spring Archive makes the documents of the LBJ Presidential Library more easily accessible to researchers interested in the Prague Spring. According to the blog post introducing the collection, the Archive will add more boxes and resources for teachers at a later date.