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Czech historians have been only exceptionally interested in one of the world's most widespread hobbies, family history and genealogy. The growing interest of the public in the past of their own family, generated by the digitization and accessibility of the necessary data, has been however noticed also in the Czech Republic. The decision to organize a panel on the topic of genealogy and family history during the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of Czech Historians in Ústí nad Labem was a logical consequence of the current situation. On 20 September 2022, the session entitled *Poverty of History?! Genealogy, DNA and Family History* took place. Nine presentations were delivered to an unexpectedly large audience, which consisted mostly of academics but also of practicing professionals such as private genealogists and archivists. A full room has convinced us that public genealogy and family history is the topic that deserves our interest.

Five of these presentations can be found in the current issue of the journal. Our aim is twofold. First, we want to introduce international scholars and readers with the situation in the field of public genealogy and family history in the Czech Republic. As a first attempt, which may be sometimes rather subjective, we intend to contribute to the history of global family history using the example of the recent growth of the interest in genealogy in the Czech Republic. Secondly, our goal is to ponder on the relation between public genealogy and academic history and to reflect on the mutual benefits. In which ways can public genealogy and family history contribute to the field of history and vice-versa? We intend to advance their advantages and disadvantages on the example of historical demography.

The volume opens with the study entitled *Czech Civil Genealogy in the Past Quarter Century* by Markéta Burešová and Eva Vodochodská. The authors reflect about the position of genealogy in the academic area and discuss key factors that contributed to the growth of public genealogy in the past few decades: the increasing availability of literature and civic associations together with the development of internet and digitization of registers and other archival material. Czech public

is attracted also by international genealogical databases and the article describes the most used databases in the Czech Republic in detail. The today's genealogist has to educate themselves and this is an opportunity for universities and tertiary education. The second contribution by Martina Bolom-Kotari has the title *Transformation of Genealogy as an Academic Discipline: The Case of University of Hradec Králové*. The author notes the unsatisfactory position of genealogy and genealogy teaching at Czech universities but also highlights the changes that have been introduced recently. The author is the university teacher of genealogy herself and shares her own experience from teaching genealogy as part of historical and archival sciences study programs. Enormous interest of students in genealogy and family history, observed by the author, is a promising perspective for the future.

*Historical Demography and Genealogy. Their Approaches in the Past and Present* is the title of the fourth contribution by Václav Černý. The aim of the article is twofold. In the first part, the author reflects upon the development of genealogy (family tree building) in Western Historiography and in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, paying attention to the German context of Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 1930s and the period of communism which meant the closure of genealogical associations and general decline of the public interest. In the second part, the author argues the advantages of using genealogy as a method of historical inquiry in contrast to the methods of historical demography (family reconstitution method).

The fourth article introduces another aspect of public family history, i.e. the motivation of the public in collecting and compiling family histories and memories (in Czech named family chronicles) and making them available for others. Václav Kessler and Veronika Kršková profit from the Database of the Everyday Life preserved by the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Science, that contains hundreds of first-hand accounts collected from the public. Their study entitled *Memoirs, Recollections, and Family Chronicles of Ordinary People as Family History Media* emphasizes the importance of the collection for both genealogy and historical demography.

The volume concludes with a study by Radmila Švaříčková Slabáková that emphasizes the potential areas of interest for professional historians within the fields of public family history, family memory and (genetic) genealogy, such as the potential of family history to reveal alternative versions of the national past. In the study called *Why Should Historians Not Disregard Genealogy? From Family History and Family Memory to Investigative Genetic Genealogy* the author underlines the Czech perspective of research in these fields and contextualizes the place and status of (genetic) genealogy in the country. The article contrasts the optimistic views of researchers about public family history, based on its position in countries such as the US, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, with the far less favorable situation in the Czech Republic.

Overall, the studies document their authors' specific experience with genealogy, family history and the use of genealogical approaches. The goal of the volume is to open the discussion on the topic of Czech (and international) genealogy (family history) and its position as a public hobby, as a research area and as a university discipline. The studies address certain underestimation of genealogy, but this might have changed recently. The role of the public has been modified also: they are becoming not only the consumers of history, but also the producers of it. This is the fact that should attract the attention of historians.

