

In this thesis I explore 16th century book covers. The cover protects and decorates the book and is therefore treated in the following text as an inseparable part of the book. Since book covers have rarely been studied in the past, I have included below a section (Chapter 1) on existing literature - both Czech and foreign - on the topic. Thanks to Gutenberg's invention of a new kind of printing press, and thanks to new fonts, easier typography and unprecedented development of xylographic illustration (especially in Germany), the book changed beyond recognition in the second half of the 15th century and at the beginning of the 16th century. In addition to these profound changes, or - rather - as a result of these changes, the book became cheaper and began to spread among all social classes (Chapter 2). Moreover, it is by no means surprising that all these developments were to have a seminal influence on the book cover (Chapter 3), which became simplified and lighter in comparison with what it had been in the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, all metal components - one of whose functions, incidentally, had been to protect the book - gradually disappeared, the only exception being small metal clasps, used to keep the books shut tight. The need to produce quickly as many book covers as possible forced bookbinders to find new covering materials (skins of various kinds with which wooden boards or millboards - which were used for the core of the cover - would be covered) as well as some faster and cheaper decoration techniques.