

FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR



The honorable readers hold in their hands a three-year issue of the herald of National Széchényi Library, our Bulletin. What makes this issue special is that since 2002, when the yearbook series of our institution started, there has not been such endeavor, and that the balance of NSZL (in view of the overload of our colleagues, and the complex and growing tasks with shorter and shorter deadlines) might appear somewhat ambiguous for the outsiders. The expectations of the 21st century, the digitization strategy and the long-term IT development of the institution, in addition to the historical challenge, require inter-institutional cooperation and well-considered grounding steps involving large workloads, structured change of views, and renewing tasks for the staff. At the same time, the question of whether the library is to move from the Buda Palace to another location is still open, and as our nominal budget has decreased even compared to the previous year, it does not provide enough to meet our professional goals on the required level. In the summer of 2016, a Government Decree decided that the library should not move to a new building and should continue its work in its previous location. However, the reconstruction works of the one-time Royal Palace, partly under way and partly in the planning phase, have not provided any details so far about how exactly this step would be realized. For reasons beyond of our control, the harmonization of the so-called Hauszmann-plan, including the reconstruction plans of the F Building and its infrastructure, and the tasks that result from the strategic goals for the whole sector, specified by the great-scale OKR project¹, approved from November 2016, has not been completed. Even under these conditions, the national library pursued to meet requirements and complete its tasks according to its best knowledge and noblest tradition.

The fruits of the background works of the OKR project, launched at the very end of 2016, will only be visible on the long term, and we hope to be able to

report on the (partial) results in our next issue. Much more good news we find when browsing among the main tasks of the previous years from other areas. The past three years are summarized in our publication accordingly. Widening views have been characterizing other leading European public collections, too (including libraries, museums, archives and other cultural institutions) in the past decade, as well as the necessary dilution of the earlier borders of institution and genre. Institutions have been moving towards the so-called hybrid institution form, due to the need for presenting and making available their treasures in the broadest spectrum and exploring and digitizing them in line with the information needs of our age. Anthropological research of cultural heritage and public collections has already proven that by the end of the first decade of the new millennium, these institutions are not only dedicated to collect objects and documents, but also, and primarily to interpret them; therefore these (national and leading) collections can successfully present themselves as non-neutral spaces, a continuous chain of dialogues, prestigious events, accompanying presentations, conferences and other community-building events. NSZL, since its foundation has been functioning like a collection of this sort, a classical library, a renowned research institute, a museum, and in the past 25 years, also a well-located cultural agora-space, and a dynamic publishing house. These tasks give a complex image to the institution, reinforcing its featured cultural-academic character, and complying with the requirements specified by our controlling authority for larger number of visitors/users and income. Our illustrated reports offer a detailed picture of the wide range of these results. Following the structure of the previous issues, also this three-year bulletin, edited by our Secretary of Research Franciska Dede, presents the memorial years (and the accompanying events organized around the anniversaries, prestigious conferences, and main pub-

¹ The OKR project aims at the long-term IT-development of NSZL and, through the National Library Platform, at the strategic renewal of the entirety of the Hungarian library system. The strategic plan was approved by a Government Decision on the 8 November 2016.

lications), institutional co-operation, the traditional NSZL Open Days, and the activities of other areas including the Library Institute, some Special Collections, the Restoration and Binding Department, and the Cistercian Abbey of Zirc under the patronage of the NSZL Directorate of Research.

National Széchényi Library is already 215 years old! Even within this long and successful story in which

it managed to remain the leading place of preservation and provider for the Hungarian written cultural memory, NSZL is looking forward to a serious and grand-scale transformation. In view of that, it is good to stop sometimes and summarize the steps behind us, to see that we have a lot to be proud of and take strength from it.

László Boka
Editor-in-Chief