

CULTURAL HERITAGE DAYS 2016 – METAMORPHOSIS AND SYMBIOSIS



In 2016, National Széchényi Library joined for the second time the Cultural Heritage Days of the Carpathian Basin, and on this occasion, we invited visitors to take part in historic walking tours to get to know the building.



The main entrance (only the Atlas statue remained as original)

After the severe damages of World War II, and long decades of reconstruction works, the Krisztinaváros wing of the Royal Castle became the new home of National Széchényi Library. The library started functioning in this building in 1985, with interior spaces remodeled in the style of Socialist Realism, a look they keep till today.

Our national library is about to renew again, which involves the entire reconstruction of the building. During the project, the interior spaces might regain their original look, but it will not be easy to reconcile the changes with the functions of the library. Could a modern, 21st century library work in a reconstructed historical environment?

The visitors who joined our hourly walking tours, were looking for answers to this question, and learnt about the amazing history of the building. They were allowed into spaces that keep memories of the original Royal Castle, and working places of the library usually closed from public view.

Although the annual Cultural Heritage Days are primarily meant to present the *built* cultural heritage, the organizers of the related activities at NSZL wished to call the attention to the national library's work as

a keeper of Hungary's *written* culture. Therefore, on this occasion, an exhibition on the 7th floor displayed a row of decorated books restored with the support of the Prime Minister's Office, accompanied by a slide show that summarized this work.

Apart from the walking tours of building history, we offered our visitors two temporary exhibitions of our library's treasures. On the 5th floor we presented the albums illustrated by "Hungary's drawing prince" Mihály Zichy, and on the 6th floor, they could see rarities from the library of the renowned Hungarica collector, Gyula Todoreszku, including exceptional items of the history of book binding.

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The original look of the main staircase (Krisztinaváros wing of the Royal Palace)