

TOGETHER AGAIN THE ONE-TIME VOLUMES OF THE KÖLCSEY LIBRARY



With the occasion of the Day of the Hungarian Culture, a chamber exhibition opened on the 22nd of January, 2014, in the National Széchényi Library, which presented the library of Ferenc Kölcsey. The exhibition was located in the National Relic Exhibition Area, and was open between January 22 and May 10, 2014.

The library of Ferenc Kölcsey was incorporated in the national library almost 30 years after Kölcsey's death, in 1867. 1158 volumes arrived to the building on the Museum Boulevard from Kölcsey's house in Szatmárcseke. The family wanted to sell up the more or less untouched collection, but the Academy made them renounce the idea, and they entrusted the legacy on the Academy of Sciences. In the mean time, the National Museum also showed interest in the collection. The two institutions came to an agreement according to which the manuscripts went to the Academy and the collection of books from the abandoned study from Cseke went to the former Library of the National Museum.

During cataloging, the librarians didn't think necessary to keep the collection together, thus the storage of the books happened according to contemporary methods, based on professional areas. They processed the books and the readers could access the descriptions of the books in the Munich alphabetical catalogue of

the time. Most of the headings existed only in this form until today. The electronic processing of these, as well as the publishing of Zoltán G. Szabó's book, entitled *The library and readings of Ferenc Kölcsey*,¹ published in the NSZL book-series few years ago, motivated the Retrospective Processing Department to reconstruct the collection, and once completed, to present through an exhibition the abundance of languages and genres that was characteristic to the one-time library. Besides masterpieces of world literature in original languages, important Hungarian, especially contemporary works, and the most relevant Hungarian periodicals, general and professional lexicons, language books, travel logs, works in philosophy, linguistics, art-theory, science of history, law and political science were also present in the studio-library of the poet, who read in Latin, Greek, French, German, English, Italian and Spanish languages also.

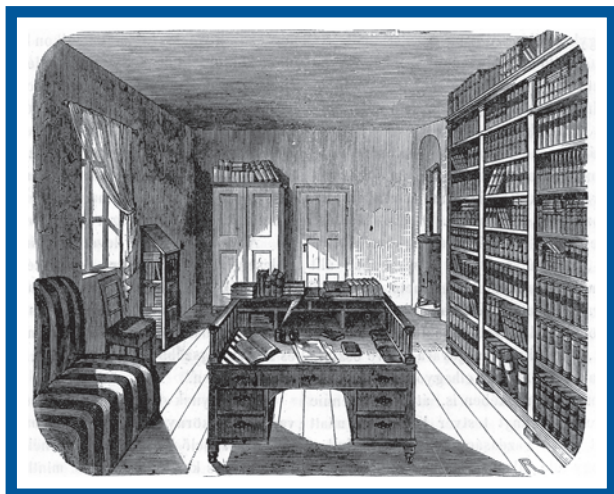
A few classical Greek and Latin works, highly appreciated by the poet, were also on display in the exhibition, for example a Livius Titus volume, which was made in the press of Johann Frobenius, in 1535; as well as works by famous representatives of the contemporary French, German, and English literature,

¹ Szabó G. Zoltán, *The library and readings of Ferenc Kölcsey*, Bp., OSZK-Gondolat, 2009 (Nemzeti téka) [National Bibliotheca]



The opening of the exhibition

philosophy and esthetics, like Walter Scott, Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Kant; the first edition, from 1821, of *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* by Hegel, or the play entitled *Angelo, tyrant de Padoue*, from 1835,



The one-time study of Kölcsey

written by Victor Hugo, who was twelve years younger than Ferenc Kölcsey.

One could see in the show-cases books by contemporary Hungarian authors, like Gábor Dayka, Sándor Kisfaludy, Vörösmarty, Ferenc Toldy, or the today less-known Lajos Bitnitz, as well as the most important Hungarian periodicals of the age. From the latter, special attention received the *Life and Literature*, published by Kölcsey and Pál Szemere, founded in 1826. Many writings of Kölcsey were published for the first time in this periodical, like *The Iliad Suit*, *Fore-speech*, *Critics and Anti-critics*. The collection included many works in science of history, political science and jurisprudence also. The visitors could look at, for example, the *Kleine Weltgeschichte*, written by K. H. Ludwig Pölitiz, published many times, as well as a work by a famous professor of Göttingen, A. H. Ludwig Heeren, or a work by the Heeren-disciple János Keresztély Engel, preoccupied by Hungarian history, entitled *Monumenta Ungrica*. The first volume of the liberal-spirited *Staatslexicon*, published by C. Rotteck and K. Th. Welcker, considered a novelty at the time, was exhibited also. From publications in natural sciences, popular sciences and travel logs, the exhibition presented the Hungarian edition of the abundantly illustrated *Universum* by Joseph Meyer, and the historical geography of János Mátyás Korabinszky, presenting Hungary.

The organizers of the exhibition, the writer of these lines among others, exhibited few of Kölcsey's letters also besides his books. The author writes in these letters about the difficulties of acquisition of certain volumes, about other authors and about his reading experiences. With

the exception of a few books inherited from his family, the poet himself acquired all of his books. He started to collect them during his schooldays in Debrecen. His one-time schoolmate, Ferenc Kállay remembered this period in the following way: „His main concern was the enlargement of his library, as far as he could afford it. [...] The small cob house with thatched roof, without lower hoarding, on the corner next to the college towards Mester Street, concealed in itself the child and then teenager Kölcsey for almost ten years. He lived in a small, barely one-and-a-half feet wide side-room, which hosted, as the sole moveable, a writing desk and a bed frame besides the books. [...]”²

The poet's collection is a remarkable private collection compared to other collections owned by contemporary Hungarian writers and scientists, and if we also take into account its location in Szatmárcseke, in a hidden part of the Hungary of the beginning of the 19. century, far away from literary and scientific life – this collection can be rightly considered quite exceptional.³ Sándor Lukácsy, who reviewed his library for the first time, rightly calls Kölcsey the most erudite Hungarian of his age.⁴

The collection-organization routine of our library paid no regard to smaller private collections for many decades. Due to deaccessioning of the collection, many publications belonging to valuable private collections were cleared from the collection. Ferenc Kölcsey's collection was not exempted either, and a few dozen of his books are outside of the institution's walls. Most of the volumes which remained in the Széchényi Library are part of the basic collection of the library, but some were included in the Collection of Early Books, in the Map Collection and in the Theatre History Collection.

Herewith, we would like to express our gratitude for the help of our colleagues from the Special Collections. We would also like to thank the Manuscript Collections of the NSZL and of the Library of the Academy for making it possible to exhibit few of Kölcsey's original letters. Last but not least, we thank the Somogyi Library of Szeged for lending us a one-time Kölcsey volume, and the Museum of Applied Arts for the help in the setting up of an interior in the exhibition space.

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² KÁLLAY, Ferenc, The childhood and youth of Kölcsey and a few of his original letters, Pest, Trattner-Károlyi, 1839, 17-31.

³ We know from surviving book directories that József Péczeli's library numbered 1400, Sándor Kisfaludy's library 2149 and János Batsányi's library consisted of little more than 1000 books. Cf.: Szabó, op. cit. 19-22.

⁴ LUKÁCSY, Sándor, Kölcsey's library, Könyvtáros, 1963, 477-478.