

THE ACTIVITY OF THE NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY IN THE YEARS 1986-1990

The National Széchényi Library opened in its new building in the Buda Castle palace in early April 1985. After overcoming the difficulties of the first year it was able to begin substantive development work — along the lines that had already been traced earlier — under the management of the new director, Gyula Juhász, academician.

The outstanding historian brought with him the attitude needed to direct the national library and at the same time he urged the wider application of modern technical solutions, above all computerization, creating the conditions for the integration of the institution into the international information system.

To attain this goal he had to carry out numerous organizational changes with the help of the library's specially trained management personnel and its team of experts. Numerous changes of personnel were required and new people also had to be hired.

Unfortunately, the economic conditions did not favour the financing of modernization and development. But the library received support from the Ministry of Education, various Hungarian institutions, Hungarians living abroad and even from foundations (Soros, Volkswagen, Mellon, etc.) for the fullest possible attainment of the goals set.

The first two years in the castle building were still largely devoted to planning the reorganization and testing the ideas in practice, but in the course of 1988 the first steps were taken towards reshaping the organization and the execution of part of the tasks in a new set-up and in a new way.

In the following we report on the work of the library and the nature of these changes.

Acquisitions

In the period from 1986 to 1990 it was unfortunately precisely the field of fundamental importance to all collections that was placed in a difficult situation. This can be attributed to a number of causes.

There was an exceptionally sharp rise in the prices not only of foreign books but also of books published in Hungary. While in 1986 the average book price was 754 HUF, by 1990 this had risen to 1365 HUF. As a result, however much help the institution received to maintain the level of purchases, it was unable to do so and the quantity of books purchased — with the exception of foreign purchases — fell by 45% between 1986 and 1990.

The library, of course, received Hungarian publications through the deposit copy service. As a result of the change of political regime it became possible to publish many books which could not appear earlier. A great number of new publishers flooded the book market with important works and books of more dubious quality, but unfortunately, they quite frequently forgot their obligation to deliver deposit copies or were not even aware of this regulation. As a result, gaps arose in this respect too since it was often no longer possible to obtain these works subsequently.

One example is sufficient to give an idea of the great increase in the number of publications: in 1989 the number of periodicals received as deposit copies rose from the usual 150-200 titles (or title changes) a year to 786.

International exchange played a big and important role during this period; with its help we were able to find a satisfactory solution in particular for acquiring Hungarian-related material published abroad. Since more than half of the library's new acquisitions of foreign books and periodicals still come through this channel, we must further improve the efficiency of this activity in the future.

Despite every effort, purchases of books and periodicals fell by a total of 26% between 1986 and 1990.

The special collections expanded their holdings with highly valuable new additions. Unfortunately, these departments were not able to obtain everything they would have liked either: the supply grew steadily but funds available enabled them to acquire only the most important documents. (The list given in the annexe to the Hungarian text contains our most important purchases.)

Over the period concerned the library acquired 124,000 books, 37,000 annual volumes of periodicals and 444,000 documents in the special collections, representing a combined increase of around 600,000 units. With this the library's total stock amounts to 6,978,430 units.

Processing catalogues, current national bibliography work

It is the duty of the National Library to process its new acquisitions not only for its catalogues but also for issue of the titles and data of Hungarian publications in publications forming part of the Hungarian National Bibliography. In the last ten years or so it achieved this through double processing: the same work was processed in one department for catalogue purposes and in another for the bibliography. This situation had to be ended, in part by making the application of international standards compulsory and in part by making full use of the advantages of computerization. However, it was only under the conditions available in the new building that it became possible to rationalize the double processing.

Through revision of the work process and organizational changes, a processing system was successfully created for the books and periodicals arriving as deposit copies in which the results (data) of the different processing stations can be used by the subsequent stations and are made suitable for both the catalogues and the bibliographies.

The system introduced has been operating smoothly since 1988 and it also has the considerable advantage of being far more economical than the earlier system. In the case of current Hungarian books it has meant a reduction of 75—80% in processing and even when calculated for the full (including foreign) material, this "savings" is around 50%.

The volume of the material processed can only be evaluated on the basis of the reports published since 1988, giving annual average figures. These show that the full current processing (including also the foreign material) involved the bibliographical description of 12,300 works in approx. 12,900 items. In the case of periodicals this was the case for 2,000 titles. The volume of work done each year covered 5,100 items in the bibliography of serials 15,000 items in the repertory and 16,000 items of "Hungarica" material. (Hungarica = library material relating to Hungary, Hungarian people or Hungarian language.) Naturally, this is only one aspect of the processing activity as a whole; no mention has been made here of the description of foreign works, recataloguing, corrections, etc.

Processing was done in the special collections too, in many cases together with the rearrangement of sections of the stock.

For technical reasons there were problems with the supply of cards for the catalogues, but the modernized production of cards and the introduction of on-line cataloguing is solving this problem too.

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As already mentioned, the reform of the current Hungarian national bibliography was made from 1988. The annual volumes, the booklets and the indexes for the various publications always appeared on schedule. A quarterly entitled *New Periodicals* which became very popular and a comprehensive publication covering a new area were added to the existing bibliographies in booklet form.

The descriptions were continuously added to the database set up by the library in the second half of the seventies. Since then the volume of records stored in it has been growing at a steadily increasing pace and by the end of 1990 reached a total of close to 307,000.

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The documentation and registration work on Hungarian-related material (so called *Hungarica*) is closely related to the national bibliography work. Although the library has been carrying out work in this field ever since it was set up close to two centuries ago, developing it to make it increasingly intensive and better organized, in the past five years greater emphasis than ever before has been placed on it. In 1988 it set up a documentation department for *Hungarica* and modern operating conditions were created (personnel, computer processing, etc.).

Building on the results so far, work has been carried out in three areas, based on three databases. The bibliographical database and information system of this section covers and keeps a record of foreign publications pertaining to Hungary, in part to keep a record of works of lasting value and in part to provide continuous and up-dated information. The "Hungarica" register of names stores the main personal data of outstanding persons of Hungarian origin who have gone abroad or lived (live) abroad in the 20th century and of those who carry out outstanding activity for the communities there; the aim of this record is the same as that of the one mentioned previously. The function of the institutional database is to cover the foreign institutional system related to the Hungarian people and to take stock of the library collections which can be of use in Hungarian studies. This record has not yet been stored on computer.

These databases also give the possibility of using publications. As a result of the computer processing, the two publications terminated in 1989, the Foreign Publications in Hungarian, and the Review of "Hungarica" Literature, have been replaced from 1990 by two annual volumes covering the material processed. These have now been incorporated into the national bibliography system, as: Hungarian National Bibliography. Hungarica Material Published Abroad. Books. and Hungarian National Bibliography. Hungarica Material Published Abroad. Articles. The publication in printed form (cards and indexes) of information on Hungarian-related material continued. This form of processing covers a wider area and gives more detailed information than the bibliographical records.

This work is providing increasingly effective assistance for researchers in Hungarian studies in Hungary and abroad and at the same time enables us to inform the outside world on Hungarian culture and our presence in world intellectual life.

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Besides publication of the current national and Hungarica bibliographies, retrospective work is also being carried out in the customary fields and manner.

The first booklet of Addenda to Volume III of Régi Magyar Könyvtár (Old Hungarian Library) edited by Károly Szabó was published and the second is ready for printing.

The addendum to Volume VII of the Petrik bibliography covering previously unknown printed materials in Hungarian has been published.

Work continued on the processing of items intended for Volume 3 (1636—1655) of the Old Printed Materials from Hungary, as well as on the editing of the publication.

Two volumes of the Hungarian Bibliography 1921—1944 (the 3rd and 5th) have appeared and work on volume 4 and the comprehensive index is well advanced.

The Linguistics, Literature section of the Hungarian Bibliography 1961—1975 has been published on microfiche.

Among the bibliographies of periodical titles, special mention must be made of Margit V. Busa: Hungarian Serials' Bibliography 1705—1849 (Magyar Sajtóbibliográfia 1705—1849) which fills a gap for this period.

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Among our catalogue publications two excellent works appeared in 1990: Catalogues of the 16th Century Printed Materials in the National Széchényi Library, and Manuscript Maps in the National Széchényi Library's Map Collection. I. Separate Manuscript Maps. Both works are of very great value for specialized researchers throughout the world.

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In the case of our only specialized bibliography, *The Bibliography of Hungarian Literature and Literary Studies* the material covering the period from 1980 to 1983 has been published, as well as the cumulative index for 1976—1980, and the retrospective bibliography for 1971—1975.

Reader's services, information activity

Under the conditions in the Castle building many changes have occurred in this area of work too since this department has been most strongly affected by the improvement in external conditions. By 1986 the old and new staff members had already gained experience but there still remained much to do in the following years too. Workers in this department had a great deal of work, ranging from setting up the new catalogues and providing information booklets to placing orientation signs for readers, in order to ensure the conditions for sound and calm work. On the basis of practical experiences more comfortable facilities were provided for readers by setting up the separate newspaper reading room and reserving a separate room for the use of current periodicals.

Under the improved conditions there was a great increase in the number of readers. In 1985 the number of registered readers was less than 14,000 but by around 1990 this figure had reached 21,000—22,000 a year. Each reader visited the library an average of five times a year.

There was a great increase in the number of college and university students who were able to study and read here in peace, making free use of the extremely valuable reference library of 70,000 volumes placed in the reading rooms. This facilitated the work of all visitors, since in many cases it meant eliminating the time required to obtain books from the stores.

The strong increase in the number of university students had an unfavourable influence on the use of the library by researchers who did not find the silence and calm among the young users that they require for their work. As a result their numbers began to decline and they tended to prefer the reading rooms of the special collections which provide good conditions.

Observing this tendency, the library will make efforts to change this situation and the unfavourable composition of readers, restoring its scholarly character in this field too.

There has been very dynamic development in expansion of the means available to the reference (and reader's) service, naturally leading to a substantial rise in the level of information.

Besides numerous other factors, an outstanding role was played in this by the possibility of using the computer databases in giving information and compiling written references. This department has been able to draw not only on our own records and reference library but, joining in the international information system, it was able to provide information on world standard in response to queries.

The central reader's service gave an annual average of 600 answers in writing to queries, approximately half of them from abroad.

The reference activity of the special collections naturally referred to their special fields. They helped researchers who came here from abroad and also provided exhaustive written information in reply to many queries.

Protection of the holdings

As a consequence of the intensive use of books and periodicals (approx. 1.2 million documents were moved for use by readers or librarians) and because parts of the holdings has to be moved due to lack of storage, the physical state of the collection naturally deteriorated. This was even more the case for newspapers and old, unique documents. The library therefore devoted and continues to devote ever greater attention to protection of the holdings. Outstanding results were obtained in this area over the period concerned.

Besides attempting as far as possible to bind the stock and repair any damage found, the library has always laid great stress on the question of rescuing older newspapers, partly by recording them on microfilm and partly by the use of methods which belong in the category of restoration procedures. Of course, such a degree of restoration of the original material could only be achieved for the most valuable serials (the most important Hungarian papers, decaying Hungarian newspapers published abroad). The two forms of preservation frequently brought results when used in combination: before recording on microfilm most of the newspapers were in need of repair or even restoration.

The restoration work also extended to the codices, manuscripts, old books and a wide variety of valuable and unique documents. Their rescue represented an inestimable gain for our collections.

It can be said with confidence that this activity was carried out in a way that is recognized to be at world standard since our restorers not only applied the methods they have learned but also carried out research and experimented with new procedures, applying them with full success in their practical work. It is not by chance that the Budapest University Library entrusted the restoration of their almost entirely decayed codices to our library's experts — including the development of suitable methods — and they solved this extraordinary task.

Central services

It has been not in connection with the delivery of deposit copies that this did not run smoothly, despite the fact that a new regulation on this obligation appeared in 1986. This contained an important new feature: it extended the scope of documents concerned to include audio documents. In 1989 the deposit copy obligation was also extended to video films.

Unfortunately, the negligence on the part of publishers adversely affected not only the national library but also the approx. 70 Hungarian libraries which expand their holdings from this source too.

Although there was no decline in the number of documents received — around 1.2—1.4 million a year — this was due to the considerable increase in the proportion of periodicals within the total volume.

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The role of the international exchange service became increasingly important in expanding the stock both of the national library and of the other libraries which were able to benefit from it. Works which did not fall within our field were passed on to the libraries concerned.

It is especially important for our own institution that this form of cooperation greatly assisted the acquisition of Hungarica material for our collection.

The exchange service sent, 30,000—40,000 Hungarian books and 4,000—4,500 periodicals abroad each year and received, from around 5,600 partners, 8,000—9,000 books and 2,000—2,500 periodicals.

For over a decade now the exchange service has undertaken the important mission of providing assistance in the form of books for foreign institutions with a Hungarian interest as well as, in justified cases, for private individuals. It used every possible means to carry out this task.

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The Duplicate Copies Centre and the Storage Library also played an important part in ensuring that holdings which had become superfluous in the various institutions went to the right place. The Centre collected approx. 25,000—30,000 volumes a year and, drawing on its own reserves as well, it redistributed 35,000—45,000 volumes a year.

A survey was conducted in the Storage Library — located in Törökbálint — on the utilisation of the material in interlibrary lending. The results of this were positive and if certain conditions are provided this task can be undertaken.

For years the question of utilisation of duplicate copies and storage in the storage library has been given much attention by the library management and public opinion. A number of agreements have been reached on rationalization, especially as regards the foreign newspapers which occupy a great deal of space.

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One of the most useful forms of cooperation among the libraries of Hungary and the world is interlibrary lending which enables all researchers to obtain works not available where they live. The Széchenyi Library takes an active part in this. The country received around 200,000 requests a year, of which around 30,000 were addressed to our institution. With the help of the union catalogues of our library information could be given on the foreign works available in Hungary, but if the publication sought did not exist in the Hungarian collections, the request was forwarded to our foreign partners. The department concerned handled approx. 12,000 such requests a year. We succeeded in obtaining 10,000—12,000 documents a year, a growing proportion of them in the form of copies.

It was increasingly difficult to provide the funds needed for this. By the end of the period concerned foreign exchange equivalent to 3.5 million HUF had to be devoted to this purpose. The assistance of 20,000 USD received from the Soros Foundation eased the problem somewhat.

We received 1,200—1,400 requests a year from abroad which we were able to satisfy from our own holdings (in the form of copies) and more frequently from the collections of other libraries. We received postal coupons from abroad to a value of only the foreign exchange equivalent of 0,2—0,3 million HUF for our services. It can be seen that our demands were around ten times greater than the requests received from abroad.

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The function of the union catalogues is to meet the demand for information on location as fully as possible. The union catalogue of books (approx. 4,5 million cards) and the two editorial teams of the union catalogue of foreign serials, that is, of the National Periodicals Database (Database of foreign periodicals in Hungary) and of the retrospective location list which covers material from the 17th century to 1970 (the location of approx. 100,000 foreign periodicals) are able to provide information.

Registrations were sent to the union catalogue of books by 220—250 libraries a year. Information on location of a total of close to 30,000 items were requested and we were able to locate almost half of these in Hungarian collections.

Two volumes — covering 1985 and 1986 — of the register of social science handbooks were published and the combined volume for 1987—1989 is to be published in 1991.

The second volume of retrospective list of foreign periodicals (covering H—K) was published in 1990.

We received 2,500—3,000 queries a year regarding locations earlier than 1970; the number of queries showed a slightly declining trend.

For financial reasons work on the NPA (Database of foreign periodicals in Hungary) proceeded with difficulty and it was only from 1988, with the aid of funds obtained in applications from the IIF (Information Infrastructure Development Program) and support from other sources that we were able to load the database located in the Computer Centre of the Central Statistical Office. After that we were able to prepare the magnetic tape of the NPA for loading into the ISIS database which ensures the on-line access to data of the NPA. In 1990 we were able to supply the version supplemented with the material for 1987—1988 to the IIF, which can be regarded as an almost unparalleled success.

In 1989, with the support of the ministry, we were able to issue a four-volume publication containing the data for 1985—1986, produced in high quality with a laser printer.

The editorial team of the National Periodicals Database had direct access from 1987 to the French analog system, the CCN (Catalogue Collectif des Publications en Série), and it was able to advance in its work with the use of other technical possibilities too.

The National Periodicals Database receives 8,000—10,000 requests a year for information on location.

Automation

In the field of computer developments, substantial positive changes — which can be regarded as milestones in the history of the library — occurred during the five-year period as a result of the favourable external and internal conditions. In the second half of the decade the systems of grants in Hungary gave special support to library automation too. In recognition of its central role in building the Hungarian databases and disseminating the services, many applications submitted by the National Széchényi Library won full or partial support. The funds, hardware and software obtained in these grants, supplemented by the library's own resources, created the foundations for the integrated computerization of the library technological processes. From 1986 the new management treated the creation of developed library services in the national library based on the application of modern technology as a priority task. When the organizational frames of the institution were reconsidered, the departments responsible for the developments were brought under central management. To ensure the coordination of development conceptions, a working committee for professional analysis, consultation and coordination was formed from representatives of those participating in the library technology work processes. The principles for development of the computerized library technology system of the National Széchényi Library (690/1988 sz. VT) were elaborated and approved. These define the aim of the system, the principles concerning the development work, the concentration of funds and the computerization, and the planned stages in the implementation. They stipulated that until the main-frame computer system comes into operation, the developments are to be concentrated on micro computer applications, but applications for this purpose must always keep in sight the requirement of uniformity and convertibility to the integrated system. The more important micro computer developments included the Hungarian Studies Database, the KATAL (Cataloguing system for foreign books), the system of records of periodicals, etc.

The conception for the National Széchényi Library's library technology information system, NEKTÁR (Comprehensive Information System of the National Library) was adopted in 1990. The hardware and software conditions for the introduction of NEKTÁR were provided by the IBM 9377/80 computer purchased in the mean time, the DOBIS/LIBIS integrated library software and the related program developments adapted to the requirements of the national library. The network linked to the computer gives both in-house and external users access to the system.

The services of the library also appeared in modern forms: on-line searches can now be made in the National Periodicals Database and the Hungarian Studies Database on the computer network through the IIF central computer, and both the operating program and the data files of the MNB IKB data recording system are available on a floppy disc service.

With all these results, closer integration of the computer development activity into the Hungarian informatics infrastructure has begun. Already over the short term the creation of this infrastructure has had a significant influence on the professional work of the National Széchényi Library, as well as on the development activity of other libraries in Hungary.

Exhibitions. Public Relations. Historic Library

The library not only places its collections at the disposal of readers, but as one of the repositories of Hungarian culture it creates contact in a wider area with the Hungarian public and foreigners visiting the country.

One way of doing this is by organizing exhibitions which present to the public artistic and cultural documents and works of relevance not only to Hungary but practically to the whole world. The library has excellent possibilities for this in its new building.

It is impossible to cover the whole of this activity here, at the most the themes covered can be listed.

However, one exhibition must be mentioned individually, not only because of its outstanding significance but also because it could not have been held without international cooperation and help. On the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the death of King Matthias, an outstanding figure in Hungarian history, the library organized an exhibition entitled "Bibliotheca Corviniana 1490—1990", presenting more than half of the surviving volumes (216 in all) of the world famous collection which was dispersed in 1526. The volumes known as Corvinas, found in Hungary and in different parts of

the world were readily placed at our disposal by the libraries, enabling us to assemble the largest collection (131 volumes) of treasures from the library of King Matthias ever seen together since 1526. The success of the exhibition is reflected in the fact that it attracted more than 200,000 visitors.

The exhibitions held covered a wide range of subjects. The library made efforts to present its own treasures, holding commemorative exhibitions on the work of outstanding individual librarians and it also covered aspects of Hungarian literature and history. It placed great emphasis on introducing the works of Hungarian artists living in Hungary and abroad (drawings, engravings, paintings, etc.), and it also organized exhibitions on foreign artists and the development of different cultures.

Some of the exhibitions also travelled abroad and we organized Hungarian book exhibitions in other countries, including Albania, Belgium and Moscow.

The library itself can be regarded as a special form of exhibition since it operates in the former royal palace and received numerous groups for visits each year. In 1986 more than 560 groups were received, including at least a hundred foreign groups in that year and each of the following years, who came to admire the beauty of our building and the treasures of our collection. There were very large numbers of Hungarian visitors too.

In the town of Zirc located in the Bakony Mountains, there is a historic library in the former Cistercian Abbey. This collection is attached to our library and attracted 55,000—75,000 visitors a year. The beautiful library rooms in the Baroque building impress visitors with the value and richness of the collection they house and also with their famous inlaid furnishings.

Researchers also visited the collection, giving life to this historical collection by using the volumes.

Hungarian and international professional relations

As a consequence of its central position, its national coverage and functions, the library maintained continuous relations with related institutions in Hungary, took part in solving problems of Hungarian library affairs and at the same time informed professional circles on its own activity.

It is now impossible to give a full picture of its international relations since these cover practically the whole world, partly in individual form and partly as organized relations.

Although cooperation with the former CMEA countries completely ended by the end of 1990, the library took part in the work carried out up to that time.

In contrast, the western relations became steadily wider and more intensive, guided among others by the efforts to modernize the library. Numerous references have already been made to these.

Activity related to the ISDS IC was continued in the same way as in the past. Our relations were strengthened when our colleague Judith Szilvássy served for a year as acting director of the international centre and also by the fact that in 1990 the Hungarian centre tested the OSIRIS program and gave an opinion on it for the guiding body mentioned.

We carried out our tasks undertaken under the NPAC program of the Washington Library of Congress.

We continued to provide data for the Bibliography of the History of Printed Books and Libraries project and for the RISM (Répertoire des Sources Musicales).

We successfully joined in the work of the SIBMAS (Société Internationale des Bibliothèques et Musées des Arts du Spectacle).

From 1988 the secretariat of the Hungarian National Committee of the FID has operated in our library.

From 1989 we joined IFLA, in the national library and stock protection-conservation section.

Our staff members also took part individually in the work of foreign scholarly organizations, associations and societies. We are unable to report on this here.

Mention should be made, however, of the international events we organized: the coordination pre-conference of the IFLA, the consultation and meeting of the Director's meeting of ISDS centres, the meeting of the FID presidency, a seminar of Hungarian and Finnish experts on retrospective national bibliographical methods, a meeting of participants in the work on the RISM, and an international conference on book and paper restoration organized by the National Széchényi Library and the Restorers Section of the Technical Association of the Paper and Printing Industry. Naturally, this list too is far from complete.

The library as a centre of scholarly research

Like the national libraries of other countries and faithful to its own traditions, the National Széchenyi Library also carried out independent scholarly activity. In Hungary it operated as a research centre regulated by the law.

The research conducted in the institution can be divided into two main groups:

- the institutional research, and
- the individual research.

Within the frame of institutional research, this exceptionally important professional task which is one of the basic functions of the national library received support from the national research funds, through the grants application system.

In the five years concerned the library (including the Centre of Library Science and Methodology) submitted 29 applications and received support for 15 of these projects.

The Széchenyi Library in the narrow sense — to list only the main areas and without giving details — received large sums for Hungarian studies and for the creation of databases for these, for work on the retrospective national bibliography, to promote publication of the catalogue of 16th century old books in Hungary, for research on methods of holdings' protection, prevention and restoration, and for the solution of individual questions covering a few minor areas but which come within the scope of the library.

The management of the institute supported the range of so-called individual research and staff members performing scholarly work by allowing them to devote time to this purpose, generally one day a week. It took advantage of this possibility provided by the law because it considers that it needs staff to carry out the internal tasks and information activity who are fully acquainted with the methodology of research and who are able to answer the questions of readers and scholars on a high level because they themselves have a greater than average knowledge in given fields. Around 80 staff members a year benefited from a time allowance for this purpose. Although the themes were chosen individually, they were closely related to the library's field of interest (theoretical questions of library development, history of the national library, scientific study of sections of the holdings, Hungarian studies, history of manuscripts, printing house, books and publishing, history, literature, press history, theatre and music history, cartographic history, etc.) which meant that they formed an integral part of the library's activity.

The decision on authorization of the themes and evaluation of the results were made by the chairman of the Scientific Committee, Director Gyula Juhász, on the basis of the opinion of the committee.

It is thanks to these individual research possibilities that a number of talented young staff members earned university doctorates and four were awarded academic degrees.

This time allowance also helped those concerned to publish writings in both Hungarian publications and abroad (on the annual average they published 120—150 books, studies and bibliographies).

Many staff members taught at colleges, universities and high-level courses, presented papers at Hungarian and foreign conferences, and took part in the work of national and international scientific organizations and committees.

There is perhaps no need to mention that the members of the top management of the institution played an exceptionally active role in the areas listed.

It is worth mentioning here that our director, who highly esteemed both library work and research activity, awarded a Széchenyi commemorative medal and reward to colleagues in recognition of outstanding activity carried out in the interest of the library, as well as large rewards to our researchers who earned a candidate's degree in the year concerned. These awards have been made each year since 1989 at the Széchenyi commemorative session held on the anniversary of the death of our founder. On the same occasion, prizes were also awarded to the winners of the Keresztury Competition. (Any staff member of the library can submit a study for this competition established by Dezső Keresztury, academician, outstanding writer and scholar; prizes are awarded to the best entries.)

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The library's publishing activity was determined by its status as national library and its operation as a scholarly workshop. Absolute priority was given to the national bibliographical publications. These were followed by the "major" publications, which also received state targeted support and sponsoring.

Due to the fact that our own printing plant was moved to another location, we were able to issue only a few other publications. During the period concerned only the volumes for 1982 and 1983 of our yearbook appeared, together with very few of the booklets and volumes in our two series.

Among the most important publications of the five years, besides those already mentioned, two must be given special mention. One was the volume which appeared in 1986 but was linked to the exhibition held in the previous year for the opening of the library: *Codices in Mediaeval Hungary*. The valuable studies and large number of illustrations and the commentary on them, printed on a very high standard, gave visitors and researchers a closer insight into the bibliographic treasures of mediaeval Hungarian culture.

The *Bibliotheca Corviniana 1490—1990* appeared, like the former work, on the occasion of one of our finest and most valuable exhibitions in 1990, for the five hundredth anniversary of the death of King Matthias. The introductory study and the illustrations raise this far above the level of customary exhibition catalogues.

Many other valuable publications could be mentioned, but we are only able to list these in the annexe to the Hungarian text.

Our distribution activity was impeded by the contraction of the market, as well as by the work of rearranging the stock of publications and also due to the undeveloped state of our publicity work.

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Summary

Looking back over the period from 1986 to 1990 in the life of the library, it is perhaps not immodest to conclude this report by noting that the goals set for the first five full years in the new building not only proved to be realistic, but were also attained in all fundamental areas. The activity of the institution is being further developed on the basis of the results achieved although unfortunately it is increasingly dependent on the economic possibilities. This is a problem for the future though: the essential thing is that the foundations have been laid and the conditions created for modern library work.