

THE NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY IN THE YEARS 1991-1993

Between 1991 and 1993 the work of the national library continued on the basis of the principles set out in previous years, that is, the main emphasis was on obtaining and processing the fullest possible range of Hungarian-related materials, although in addition to Hungarian studies, staff of the library also achieved important results in research in the fields of cultural history and library sciences.

Organisational changes:

A number of minor changes were made between 1991 and 1993. In 1991 the unit editing the Literature Studies Bibliography, and the Video Library of Historical Interview were organised into independent departments.

Changes in personnel:

Following the death of Gyula Juhász, director general, this post has been held since April 1993 by Géza Poprády, but there have also been substantial changes at the head of different departments too.

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In August 1993 the Personnel department classified the various jobs into salary categories and grades. There was no substantial increase in the numbers employed (850 persons) and fluctuation was around 10%.

Organisation of the collection, expansion of holdings

There was no change from previous years in the basic principles followed in the expansion of holdings, although amendments were made in a number of details. Financial difficulties arose mainly in the acquisition of foreign books and documents for the special collections. However we were able to counterbalance the negative factors arising in the area of purchases through international exchange activity. The library placed the main emphasis on retrospectively filling gaps in Hungarian-related materials and the collection was also enriched with a number of recently published works.

Among the special collections, the greatest expansion occurred in the Collection of Manuscripts (legacies of Géza Ottlik and Sándor Márai), although this department is also making major efforts to preserve documents.

The Oral History Collection, which preserves documents on audio tape, was established quite recently. The collection of old Hungarian printed materials was enriched with a few very rare incunabula, while the Map Collection acquired manuscript maps. Hand-written scores are the most important newly acquired musical documents, while original scenery and costume designs were among the main acquisitions in the field of theatre history. The Video Library has been expanded with life history interviews.

Processing, documentation work:

The processing work was determined mainly by the introduction of computerised data handling. The NEKTÁR system DOBIS/LIBIS cataloguing module was introduced on 6 April 1992. There were no hitches in the daily processing of current periodicals or in the classification of deposit copies. Recataloguing was slowed down by the shortage of personnel. However, the reconstruction of the catalogue of cadastral maps begun in 1990 was completed in the Collection of Maps.

Catalogue building, catalogue updating:

The technical conditions for card copying improved and it was possible to make this work continuous with the help of laser printing. In the Collection of Musical Scores we were able to eliminate the backlog that had been caused by a 15-year suspension in the supply of cards.

Current national bibliographies:

Work that had been carried out since 1976 to build the database for the Hungarian National Bibliography, Books was completed on a Siemens computer of the Computer Technology Research Institute, and the magnetic tape to be converted to NEKTÁR was also finished. On-line processing became routine, but the backlog accumulated during the change-over was not yet eliminated. However, the continuous updating of the national bibliography system, and working on the list of periodicals for the basic publication proceeded smoothly.

Documentation and bibliographic tasks for Hungarian-related materials:

- building the bibliographic and information database for Hungarian-related materials - (HUN)
- keeping a record of data on prominent Hungarians living abroad - (HUNG)
- overview of the foreign institutional system related to the Hungarian people

The HUN and HUNG databases were built continuously and compilation of the user' handbook was also completed in 1993.

The last basic volume of Hungarian Bibliography 1921-1944 was published in 1992, and work proceeded continuously on the bibliographies of Textbooks and of Hungarian Literature in Foreign Languages.

Catalogue publications:

Work on the series of catalogues of the Library's collections continued in the bibliography of manuscripts. We were able to publish one volume each year of the bibliography of Hungarian literature and literary studies. At the same time we were also able to re-examine the bibliography's scope of collection since there is a need to select the contents due to the sharp increase in the quantity of materials.

Readers service:

It is increasingly characteristic that the majority of readers expect the services of the National Széchényi Library to be not those of a national library but of a general library. However, the national library must take into account first and foremost the demands of researches who are able to meet their needs only in the collection of this library.

The use of the reading rooms is steadily increasing, especially during examination periods. During the three years the number of visits increased as follows:

1991: 167,364 1992: 183,575 1993: 194,972

In 1991 a computer catalogue and information service for readers was launched. To ensure the most efficient and well organised operation of this service, a Computer Information Group for Reader Service was formed in 1993. The tasks of the readers' service also include providing information by phone, an area where the demand has also considerably increased in recent years. Through its information activity too, the National Széchényi Library joined in all fields of international information co-operation.

Storage, circulation, security of holdings:

The capacity of the stores in the Castle provides increasingly limited possibilities for the library's growing collection. The number of documents used is rising steadily from year and as a result the central store has reached the limit of its performance capacity. This means that it will become necessary to introduce restrictive measures. A similar situation must be anticipated in the case of the special collections.

Protection of the holdings:

The Book Restoring Workshop, set up in 1988, a purely entrepreneurial unit of the National Széchényi Library, became self-supporting by 1992 as a result of work undertaken at cost price for other libraries.

We have been able to obtain premises for the Collection of Microfilms and for the Newspaper Holdings Protection Department and as a result the way was opened for creation of the Library Microfilm Centre.

Binding:

Close to 4,400 volumes were bound in our own workshop and at the same time the library had around 4,000 periodicals bound by external entrepreneurs.

Restoring:

Under the Corvina programme, between 1983 and 1991 our staff members restored 35 hand-written codices, including 12 authentic Corvinas. The library displayed the restored codices in an exhibition held in 1992. The success of the exhibition can be seen from the fact that our restorers have since received important orders from abroad and from within Hungary. The other restoring department dealt mainly with protecting the collection of newspapers; although considerable time was also spent on the special collections.

Microfilming, reprography:

The major task of the Collection of Microfilms was to film all newspapers being in bad condition. By 1993 50 million newspaper pages had been filmed, which in practice units can now be read on microfilm, and with the colour copier purchased at the end of the year, copies can now be made from negative and positive films.

Central services

Deposit copies:

Many publishers do not comply with the provisions of the regulation in force. As a result we estimate that we succeeded in obtaining approx. 90% of publications for our library. In 1991 1.4 million documents reached the library; within this total there was an increase in small print materials and periodicals, while the number of books, scores and maps declined. However, the provision of deposit copies video films causes many problems.

International exchange service:

The aim of exchanges was to acquire publications in Hungarian that have been issued abroad, and to supply Hungarian libraries beyond the borders with books published in Hungary. This activity extended to practically the whole world.

Surplus copy centre and storage library:

The role of the Surplus Copy Centre grew in the period from 1991 to 1993, as a result of taking over the full or preselected holdings of libraries that were being closed. The operation of the storage library was endangered because of the large quantity of books received.

Interlibrary lending and information on location:

Due to deterioration in the economic situation, fewer requests were made for loans from abroad, but despite the declining demands, the average time spent here to obtain a document increased substantially due to the repeated requests.

It is the task of the central catalogue to obtain reports on new acquisitions from as many libraries as possible because it is only in this way that they can satisfy the requests for information on locations. However, it is a big loss for the catalogue that the narrowing of the circle of larger libraries also resulted in a quantitative decline in the incoming card material.

National periodicals database:

In 1993 we were able to replace the list of locations published earlier with a long delay, with modern data carriers, and in addition the NPA local network was also successfully created. The editorial staff checked the database and also modernised the system of classification.

Development in the automation

As a result of our activities, the DOBIS/LIBIS integrated library system was introduced and by the end of the period the book catalogue operated by the system came into function. In addition to the IBM 9377 computer network, the ETHERNET network was also created.

The task for the period was introduction, application and further development of the DOBIS/LIBIS system. The on-line Readers' Catalogue has been available since autumn 1992. The principal consideration in creating the Cataloguing module was the document-type processing of books.

Work was continued on the creation and development of smaller data files based on a micro computer system. In the interest of standardising bibliographic data exchange in Hungary, the National Széchényi Library elaborated the first version of the Hungarian MARC format.

Simultaneously with the introduction of DOBIS/LIBIS, the teaching of knowledge needed to use the system was also elaborated.

Public relations

Our public relations are concentrated in two fields: exhibitions and presentation of the library. The larger exhibitions were organised by the Cultural and International Affairs Office and the smaller ones by the department concerned. The outstanding event of 1992 was the exhibition on The Nation's Library, organised for the 190th anniversary of the foundation to the library.

Naturally, the public came not only to see our exhibitions: many people wanted too see the library building and its installations, the collections and how they were arranged.

Domestic and international relations

The library's leading experts undertook very important tasks in Hungarian and international professional activity. One result was the introduction in 1993 of Hungarian Standard 3424/12. Bibliographic description. Component Parts of Serials which was completed by the end of 1992.

The library's international relations were basically determined by the lack of funds; it was only possible to maintain the most important relations, the rupture of which would have caused irreparable loss to the national library.

The National Library as a scholarly research centre

The institutional research projects are linked to the functions of the national library which meant that the institution also carried out important tasks as a research centre.

The library management gave the fullest support to individual work done by researchers because this also greatly raised the standard of the library's work. It is an indication of the value of the scholarly work done by our staff that during this period four of our colleagues earned Candidate Degree, a PhD degree offered by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.