

SZÉCHÉNYI MEMORIAL DAY: CELEBRATING THE BEGINNINGS

25TH NOVEMBER 2011



Unlike in previous years, in addition to events offered to a limited circle, the 2011 Memorial Day provided a rich program for the general public as well. For NSZL staff the celebrations started in the sixth floor auditorium at 9 in the morning by handing out the Ferenc Széchenyi Medals and the awards for long-term service. First, General Director Dr. Andrea Sajó greeted the 100-year old Jenő Berlász.

Outlining the excellent professional's career, she pointed out that he had started his first job within the National Library in 1936 and contributed to its prestige all through the long years of his service. At the time of the 1956 Revolution, he was a member of the Revolutionary Committee of the Academic Library, and after the Revolution came back to NSZL where his immediate boss was Dezső Keresztury, an academic also transferred from the Academy Library. From 1969 Berlász was the head of the historical information provision of our Readers' Service, staying with his much loved national library up to his retirement in 1976. After the

introduction, Jenő Berlász's letter of thanks was read out by his daughter Piroska Berlász. The exceptional historian emphasized that today the NSZL is Hungary's greatest and best known collection as a result of several generations' conscientious professional work.

After greeting Jenő Berlász, the 2011 Széchenyi Medal was handed over. This year the acknowledgement of an outstanding contribution to the library was given to Gábor Németh, the head of the Antal Reguly Museum Library at Zirc. As stressed in László Boka's laudation, the awardee's main ambition has been to bring his institution up to the standards of the 21st century. This goal is very well reflected by the considerable technical development in electronic processing, by the numbers of temporary exhibitions supplementing permanent displays, the talks for professionals and for wider audiences and museum pedagogy workshops. Gábor Németh is a determined, innovative and demanding director, consistent in his requirements

towards himself and his colleagues. Afterwards, in line with our traditions, last year's awardee Ágnes Pusztai gave a presentation, talking about the birth and historical background of microfilming. It transpired that NSZL had regularly used this technique as soon as the early 1960s, initially putting mainly manuscripts and old prints onto this carrier. Because of the sad state of press documents, since

1963 more than half of microfilm stocks produced have been of periodicals.

Today microfilm is still very important for stock protection in our library.

As it is already a tradition with us, awards for long-term service

were also handed out on this day, with the help of General Deputy Director Péter Szemerei and Trade Union Head György Lukács.

For ten years of service awards were presented to Imre Balogh, Éva Bartos, Gyöngyi Bíró, Mónika Borbély, Katalin Csonka, Eszter Deák, László Drótos, Miklós István Fehér, Judit Gyórfi, Róbert Horváth, Annamária Kulcsár-Szabó Ernőné Gombos, Judit Katona, Gábor Kazsoki, Mária Kazsokiné Kalcsu, Dorottya Moldováné Szabados, Endre Pastyik, Barbara Payer, Ferenc Rácz-Fodor, Rita Ráczné Radó, Edit Rajnai, Katalin Bászler Ribán, Miklós Rimár, Szabolcs Schmiedt, Anita Szarka, Andrea Tóth, István Varga and Kornélia Vlahosz.

For twenty years of service awards were presented to Imre Bocz, István Elbe, Luca Győri, Dániel Kiss, András Sobor,



Andrea Sajó is handing over the award to Gábor Németh



László Boka is congratulating Gábor Németh

Anna Sóti Mucsi, Júlia Zsuzsa Szendrei, Enikő Szijártó and Erzsébet Tokaji Nagy.

For twenty-five years of service awards were presented to Márta Béky-Halászné Nagy, Lujza Erdélyi, Ferenc Földesi, Péter Kajkó, György Lukács and Marianna Subiczné Huszák .

For thirty years of service, three awards were presented: recipients were Veronika Erdős, Tiborné Gazdag and Erzsébet Kundi.

The morning celebrations in a closed circle were followed by the event *Generations holding hands – or the value of a mission*, starting at 11 o'clock, hosted by Zoltán Nagy, former head of the Microfilm Collection. Recollections of the characters and paths of predecessors and masters and their decades of arduous work within the Széchényi Library were followed by informal group discussions. Márta Sebestyén, one of the giants of Hungarian folk singing also had contributed.

The public celebrations started at 12.30. As from this day onwards all young people over the age of sixteen can subscribe to the National Széchényi Library, many secondary school students arrived before noon. Dr. Miklós Réthelyi, Minister of National Resources handed over the reading cards to the first ten subscribers. Young readers, their teachers and other visitors coming to the event were first greeted

by General Director Dr. Andrea Sajó, who stressed the significance of the day on which the National Library opens its gates to the youngest generation, and subsequently handed over the floor to Minister Réthelyi. In his address, he emphasized the Library's unique significance as the only location of a number of invaluable documents. He also remembered the library's founder, Ferenc Széchényi the enlightened aristocrat, to whom we owe this fundamental institution of our national culture. Quoting the words of Jorge Luis Borges, he called the library a tool that extends our memory. The closing of the opening session was taking group

photographs. Finally, the ten newly subscribed students, arriving from the Ferenc Rákóczi II and the Lónyai Street Reformed Secondary Schools, were taken on a library tour in the company of Minister Réthelyi, Director Andrea Sajó and the Director of the Information Provision Department István Elbe.



Miklós Réthelyi is greeting the newly subscribed 16-year-olds

The events of the Memorial Day were very popular, attracting large crowds. We had two exhibition openings as well on this day: In the sixth floor Manuscriptorium display area, under the title of *Please enter, the gods are present here*, the versatile art historian and ethnographer Arnold Ipolyi's first years were introduced, while the Collection of Maps showed *Items from Ferenc Széchényi's map collection*. The



Concert by Márta Sebestyén
and Ferenc Sebo

exhibition tours at two different times of our *Enterprise, culture and the middle class* focusing on Gustav Heckenast, the 19th century publisher were very well attended. Visitors had a chance to operate the Columbia hand press on which the *Twelve Points* of the Hungarian Revolution were printed on 15th March 1848. In addition, 19th century costumes could be tried on, and computer games and puzzles were available.

Meanwhile, in the sixth floor auditorium, the first stage of NSZL's annual conference was starting under the title of *Tradition and revival: The future of reading and writing in the light of communication technologies*. The opening address was given

Getting acquainted with restricted stocks



by László Boka, NSZL Director of Research and Academic Affairs, followed by the keynote speech of psychologist and linguist Csaba Pléh, head of the Department of Cognitive Science at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, entitled *The future of reading and writing in the NET world*. Rita Péterfi then talked about the relationship between teachers and books, while Attila Nagy about the cornerstones of reviving reading development. Apropos of a “not quite classic” manuscript, Ferenc Földesi investigated the conditions and possibilities of publishing texts on the web that are not easily accessible and cannot be produced as books. Theatre historian Ildikó Sirató, head of our Theatre Collection discussed drama theoretical and aesthetic reception problems of written and staged versions of dramatic texts.

It was already late afternoon when the most persevering could attend the *Patriotism in the romantic*



A library tour

age conference of the POLIS International Cultural Association, organised to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Italian unity.

Overall, the Széchényi Memorial Day on our 209th anniversary was successful on several levels, and was very well attended due to our colourful program. Over two hundred people bought yearly reading cards, 145 of them as first time subscribers. Of the under-eighteens 108 young people subscribed for the first time and another 42 purchased daily passes. The popularity of our exhibitions is reflected by the 261 tickets sold on the day. We owe sincere thanks to all our colleagues who made every effort at making the Memorial Day a veritable success.

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