

FOUNDING CELEBRATION

The Founding Anniversary of the National Széchényi Library (2018)



On 25 November 1802, Count Ferenc Széchényi donated his library and his collection of numismatics and Hungarian history to the nation, by this laying the foundations of the Hungarian National Museum and the National Széchényi Library. At that time, the founder called the institution *Bibliotheca Regnicolaris*, referring to the fact that the collection constitutes the national library of the people living in the countries of the Lands of the Holy Hungarian Crown (at the time of the foundation these being: Hungary, Croatia and Transylvania). As early as 1802, many people expressed the idea that if the Kingdom of Hungary had not fallen victim to the policy of European great powers in the early 16th century, so if Matthias Corvinus could have remained independent, the *Bibliotheca Corviniana* would have constituted the basis of the Hungarian national library.

Most of our national institutions were founded in the 19th century, which was achieved through the creation of a civil society of culture, thanks to the strengthening of nation-states and national self-consciousness.

The National Széchényi Library commemorates the anniversary of its foundation every year around 25 November, paying tribute to the founder, Count Ferenc Széchényi. The two-day founding celebration usually includes professional gatherings for experts of library sciences as well as entertaining, educational programmes for the general public. We welcome those interested with open gates, the current exhibitions of the library and the programmes organized for this occasion are available to the visitors free of charge or with a significant discount. In 2018, as an annual tradition, on this day we provided a 50% discount of the fee of the annual reader pass.

Starting from 2018, we are promoting the founding celebration of the National Széchényi Library under the

title *Open Book*. In addition to our events free of charge, we held thematic guided tours for children and adults for the exhibitions *The Corvina Library and the Buda Workshop* and *Eternally Júlia – Faces and Question Marks*. Our exhibition entitled *The Corvina Library and the Buda Workshop* presented the codices and corvinas that once enriched the library of King Matthias, while in our exhibition *Eternally Júlia – Faces and Question Marks*, those interested could get acquainted with Júlia Szendrey's poetic career. Apart from the exhibitions, at the Ramazuri Puppet Theater's tale performance *Here is the King, Where is the King? – or Matthias, Truth in Disguise*, even the youngest could dive into the life of a royal court. Furthermore, in Uncle Lóri's fairy tale workshop, those interested could listen to other exciting adventures about the legendary king, while we offered additional experiences with the collaboration of the Csíki Family Handicraft Workshop. The restorers of the National Library showed the secrets of their craft through handmade codex bindings.

We addressed the children through the drawing competition *Illuminator Wanted at Buda* in which we looked for the most talented young illuminators who would illustrate the ruler's most royal deeds. 250 drawings were received for our call from more than 60 locations of the country from Mátészalka to Kaposvár, from Bonyhád to Szombathely; works being sent in even from Serbia.

Our open day was concluded by the concert of the Hungarian Culture Award-winning pianist Zoltán Thurzó entitled *Mysteriousness, Secrets, Visions*.

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Open Book – The Széchényi Code and Ady Open Day in the NSZL (2019)



The annual founding celebration is always of great importance in the life of the Library. In addition to the already traditional Research Session and the internal ceremony held exclusively for the staff members of the library, the open day of the National Széchényi Library usually takes place along a major exhibition or event. In 2019, it was held on 23 November, and the visitors and guests were welcomed all day long with a series of programmes.

The programmes were organized around three main themes: the first was a lecture and a roundtable discussion as part of the series of programmes organized in honour of the centenary of Endre Ady's death, the other was – certainly, related to the Széchényi family – an exhibition and a unique movie screening, and the third consisted of traditional guided tours in the library, featuring various curiosities.

The founder of the library, along with famous and lesser-known members and descendants of his family, played a decisive role in the history of Hungary, and they had been building the family's reputation in many fields and in many ways for centuries. In 2019, on the occasion of the autumn open day, the audience could visit the exhibition entitled *The Széchényis in Play* organized by the staff members of the Manuscript Collection. In connection with the exhibition, the visitors were invited to participate in a quiz game including questions related to sports, arts, economy, politics and travel. The participants were rewarded with valuable books.

As part of the museum pedagogy activities, the participants could discover the kinship between the different members of the family with the help of a cardboard game depicting the main building of the Széchényi Castle in Nagycenk. In the morning, a unique movie screening took place in the Ceremonial Hall. The 120th birth anniversary of hunter, writer Count Zsigmond Széchényi (1898–1967) who travelled around Afrika, was celebrated in 2018. His adventurous life was adapted into a monumental nature documentary. The premier of *WILD WORLD – In the Wake of Count Zsigmond Széchényi* took place shortly before our event, on 10 October 2019 at the Uránia National Film Theater. Thanks to the courtesy of the movie's leading producer and distributor, we could also screen the documentary at the notational library during the celebration of the founding anniversary. As our guest of honour, we welcomed the ninety-three-year-old Countess Zsigmond Széchényi, née Margit Hertelendy, who actively helped the creators of the documentary from the beginning. The screening was also attended by János Lerner, the director of the film, and Bence Vágvölgyi, who came up with the idea of this movie. They presented the creative process to the audience who filled the Ceremonial Hall and revealed interesting details about how the movie was made. Another curiosity was a fallow deer trophy killed by Zsigmond Széchényi displayed in the exhibition space, which was lent to the library by the Hungarian Natural History Museum

specifically for this occasion. In addition, a mini exhibition was set up to present the main stages and residences of the life of the famous world traveller, hunter and writer and some of his thoughts that have become mottoes. He was born in Nagyvárada (Oradea), travelled around the world and before the Second World War he lived in Úri Street, located close to our library. Anyone who looked through the pictures and read these texts could easily answer the list of quiz questions and the efforts of the participants were also rewarded.

At the open days the popular guided tours in the library and the repositories are indispensable, which this time bore the title *Ferenc Széchényi's*





Countess Zsigmond Széchenyi, née Margit Hertelendy (centre) at the screening of the documentary

Heritage in Today's NSZL. The participants registered for these tours were guided by István Elbe and Tamás Mészáros. One of the main attractions of the guided tours was the Perczel Globe located in the Ars Librorum exhibition space. The copy of this globe was restored and reconstructed through digital restoration and it was first introduced to the wider public. The last segment of the guided tours was the presentation of the high technology that greatly facilitated the digitization processes in our institution, which, thanks to major developments, was acquired by the institution only recently. Szabolcs Györfly and the staff members of the Digitizing Department provided insight into spectacular digitization processes to the visitor groups.

Pál Horváth, our restorer, who has been working in the library for more than forty-five years, held an unconventional tour. He presented his collection of postcards, the topic of which was reading and books illustrated in the most various ways – lithographies from the turn of the twentieth century, as well as beautiful hand-painted French postcards.

Certainly, the admission to all of the programmes was free of charge and we offered a 50% discount on the annual library registration fee, too.

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Széchenyi Memorial Day – 2018, 2019



On 26 November 2018, from 10 am, the already traditional celebration on the 216th anniversary of the library's inauguration took place in the Ceremonial Hall on the 6th floor. After the national anthem, in his opening speech Director-General László Tüske greeted the attendees and gave a presentation on the achievements of last year. He also remarked that these achievements should be better communicated to the public, and he also pointed out the problems regarding KIFÜ (Governmental Information Technology Development Agency) and the hardship of the planned and ongoing building operations.

Then, Erzsébet Tokaji Nagy, the awardee of last year's Széchenyi Medal, held a lecture on Zoltán Szabó, Hungarian writer, sociography expert, editor and publicist, who started his career between the two World Wars. The lecturer's motivation behind discovering this ambitious career path was the fact that Zoltán Szabó's handwritten legacy has been kept in the NSZL's Manuscript Collection since 1989. The manuscript material of 127 kilos and 26 407 folios was categorized by János Kenedi, an expert of Zoltán Szabó's oeuvre; this work was sponsored by the Soros Foundation. The detailed lecture covered this oeuvre from the years spent at Piarist Grammar School, through the various roles at magazines (*Képes Világ* [Illustrated World], *Valóság* [Reality], *Látóhatár* [Horizon]) up until the emigration to New York and Bretagne after 1956.

After the lecture László Tüske festively announced that the awardee of the Széchenyi Medal in 2018 is János Heltai, academic researcher, university professor, doctor of philology of the HAS (Hungarian Academy of Sciences). When expressing his gratitude, the laureate recalled his career and told that he started working in the Early Hungarian Prints workgroup as a student in 1972. He was employed by the national library in 1975. He thinks of Béla Holl and Ferenc Hervai as his mentors and also of Gedeon Borsa, with whom he built up a closer relation when working on the third volume of Early Hungarian Prints. He learned it from him and embraces it up to this day that the only thing worth doing is quality work. He continued his speech by quoting Judit P. Vásárhelyi: 'in the team of Early Hungarian

Prints everyone has the right to correct the other. This is why we can carry out quality work'. Finally, he reminded the participants that the retrospective national bibliography has had and still has a great role in keeping the national identity awake.

In his laudatory speech, László Boka also recalled that the awardee has been working continuously in the editorial staff of Early Hungarian Prints since 1975. Following the path of his own mentors, he also excels in mentoring young researchers. As a professor of the University of Miskolc, he is also popular among students. His work as a teacher can be characterized by enthusiasm towards the profession, correctness, helpfulness, elaborateness, accuracy and a good sense of humour. He has worked with László Boka for the first time in 2008, in the Bible Memorial Year, through the occasion of the Bible exhibition. Apart from the exhibition, a prestigious conference was also organized by the curators (János Heltai and Botond Gáborjáni Szabó). In 2017, he was requested to be one of the curators of the exhibition *Ige-Idők* [Sermon Times] at the National Museum. The NSZL contributed with a large body of lent material to the major exhibition celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The speech praising the excellent professor and philologist was closed by the words of Péter Pázmány 'about the virtues of language': 'underneath good language there is honey and milk hidden: the language, if educates, it frees of ignorance: if sings, it rejoices: if rebukes, it improves: if encourages, it graces: if heartens, it solaces: if threatens, it impedes.'

Finally, Director-General László Tüske handed over the long-service awards of 2018 in cooperation with István Moldován, Secretary of the Employees' Trade Union of Public Collection and Cultural Institutions. The 10 years' award went to Erika Bayer, Ildikó Beöthy, Anna Boreczky, Attila Csobán, Tünde Duchonné Kálmán, Edina Faragó-Sebestyén, Gábor Farkas Farkas, Zoltán Fazekas, Erika Földi, Mónika Gorács, Petra Harkainé Perhócs, Petra Havas, Orsolya Koppán, Bence Kovács, Anna Nagy, Lajos Nagy, Péter Paulik, Gábor Raffai, Bernadett Simon, Jennifer Simon, Katalin Szabóné Kozma, Zsófia Szádeczky-Kardoss, Katalin Tengerdi, László Tercsi, Eszter Tóth, Ágnes Varga

and Kornélia Vasné Tóth. Awarded colleagues of 20 years were János Benke, Kinga Fehérné Gaál, Éva Galambos, Imre Héder, Boglárka Illyés, Péter Perger, Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi and Loránd Tóth. The award for 25 years' service went to Bálint Baráth, László Beyer, Diána Horváth, Krisztina Lendvai and István Molnár. Colleagues receiving the 30 years' award were: Andrea Bogláriné Soponyai, Zoltán Dobó Kocsis, Lászlóné Gyoroki, Marianna Kocsisné Szakács, Balázs Koós and Iván Rohács. The 35-year-long service awards were given to György Danku, Ferenc Takács and Mihály Zichy. And last but not least, the colleague receiving 40 years' award was Gábor Szita and our two colleagues celebrating their 45th year at the library now were Attila Borsos and Judit P. Vásárhelyi.

On 25 November 2019, the festive event was traditionally organized in the Ceremonial Hall. Following the national anthem, Acting Director-General Judit Hammerstein expressed in her festive greeting words that she finds this celebration to be a beautiful tradition, an important occasion and part of our organizational culture, which plays an important role in building our community and she expressed her gratitude for the work of the colleagues in the past year.

Following this, János Heltai, the recipient of Ferenc Széchényi Memorial Medal in 2018 held a lecture. He first talked about his almost 40-year-long career in the national library, then he remembered with love, respect and gratitude about his masters and about those who took part in the professional work of the editorial board of *Early Hungarian Prints*: Jenő Berlász, Ferenc Hervay, Gedeon Borsa, Béla Holl and Judit P. Vásárhelyi. Secondly, he presented our institution based on Jenő Berlász's book entitled *Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár története* [The History of the National Széchényi Library], primarily focusing on the circumstances of the founding and the main sources of acquisition.

At the end of the lecture, Judit Hammerstein announced that the recipient of this year's Széchényi Memorial Medal is Edit Rajnai, academic researcher, staff member of the Theatre History Collection.

In her laudatory speech, Ildikó Sirató, Head of the Department, expressed that Edit Rajnai had spent more than 20 years in service of the national library. She started her career as reference librarian. Now she oversees the collection of theatre-related small prints; fulfils a leading role in the handling of the whole collection and in the organization of various workflows. Her research of theatre history has sources primarily in our collection. Her knowledge and methodological preparedness are accompanied by a precise language use: she prepares the next generation of philologists. Her last major publication which appeared in 2018, was the edition of the first part of the diary of theatre director Gyula Miklósy (1886–1888). She also took part in the organization of many exhibitions: she is known by many for her creditable knowledge and work, and she is a respected and loved representative of her field.

The choir of the NSZL lead by Mária Eckhardt performed Michael Haydn's Christmas responsorium in the honour of this festive event.

Last but not least, Judit Hammerstein and Krisztina Szabó, Secretary of Public Collection and Culture Employees' Trade Union handed over the long-service awards of 2019. The 10 years' award went to József Bakos, Boglárka Bán, Ágnes Bessenyei, Attiláné Csaba, Marianna Führlingerné Gál, Éva Kaposváriné Dányi, Eszter Kovács, Anikó Masudné Bogár, Antalné Mánfai Miklós, Balázs Mikusi, Róbert Nagy, Krisztina Szabó, Róbert Szvorényi and Hilda Turai. 20 years' awards were handed to László Boka, Andrea Góczán, Péter Kelemen, Ildikó Nagyné Varga, Szilvia Nick, István Moldován and Kincsó Tamás. The award for 25 years' service went to István Hovánszki, Domokos Dániel Kis and András Székely. The 30 years' awardees were: Erika Havasi, Eörs Kállay, János Paizs, Márta Szilasiné Szmrtnik and Gergely Vitányi. The 35-year-long service awards were given to Ágnes Honffyné Felhő, Cecília Jóssáné Tóth and Ágnes Pap. Finally, the colleague receiving 40 years' award was Zsófia Györgyné Borsa.

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