

HUNGARY

NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY

DR ISTVÁN MONOK — GENERAL DIRECTOR

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2002 – 2003

The most important event in 2002 was the series of events held to celebrate the library's bicentenary. Our programme of exhibitions, international relations and scholarly events were all arranged in this spirit. The anniversary year coincided with the season of Hungarian culture in Italy, offering an excellent opportunity to re-examine our Italian relations in the light of Hungarian cultural history and, more specifically, the history of the national library. During the year we held two big manuscript exhibitions jointly with Italian libraries.

The first was held in Budapest – in co-operation with the Austrian National Library and the Herzog August Bibliothek of Wolfenbüttel – the second was in Modena in the building of the Biblioteca Universitaria Estense. Books from the 15th century library of King Matthias were exhibited in both. In Hungarian cultural policy the cult of Matthias and the history of the Bibliotheca Corviniana have always been linked with the idea of a Hungarian national collection. The choice of theme was therefore intentional: While Count Ferenc Széchényi established the national library in 1802, Hungarian cultural awareness links the idea of the „first national library” with the Corvina library. The Italian, Austrian and German co-operation shows that Hungarian cultural history is most closely linked to these three European cultural communities. This does not mean that French, Dutch, English or other influences have not come to the fore in different periods of our history, but it is important to emphasise that, after co-existence and co-operation with the peoples of Central Europe, these three cultures have exercised a continuous and active influence on our culture.

In the anniversary year civil organisations recognised the work of our library with two awards: the name of the National Széchényi Library was entered in the Golden Book of Hungarian Heritage (Hungarian Heritage Prize) and on world intellectual property day (April 26) declared by the UN World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), we received the Millennium Prize for the protection of intellectual property.

Thanks to co-operation between our maintaining body, the National Library Board and the Library, decisions were made during the year which enabled us to raise the standard of the IT system with a one-off, special support. As a result, all our librarians now work on modern PC workstations, the speed of the intranet is a uniform 100 Mb/sec, and our external connection has been raised to 155 Mb/sec. We have been able to purchase the latest version of our service-providing software and add new modules to the integrated system. MOKKA program, the Hungarian Shared Cataloguing System, has become part of our Library and the necessary funding is part of our basic budget. By the end of the year we completed the database test runs and in early 2003 we will begin joint work with 1.7 million records.

A decision has been made on the retrospective conversion of the library's catalogues, but the financing of this work did not begin in the course of the year. In addition to the central finding catalogue of foreign periodicals found in Hungary, we have also begun to record the census of periodicals published in Hungary.

We have standardised our stock of copying machines. We now meet our copying and printing needs with multifunctional machines linked in a network with an external service provider. In this way we have been able to terminate the many flat-rate maintenance contracts with external firms and instead of 35 machine models we now have only one (Xerox).

During the year a modern, air-conditioned and controlled humidity store was completed, unfortunately at a considerable distance from the building. In addition to organising technical and personnel security, we have begun to move the holdings of museum value. The store's capacity of 7500 linear metres of shelf space will temporarily solve our storage problems.

Our library issued publications worthy of the anniversary year, of interest to specialists in the humanities and the general public. Our series of publications are gaining popularity, not only for their attractive appearance but also for their contents.

Our exhibitions have made an important contribution to making our library better known and we have succeeded in increasing our coverage in the scholarly and general media. Our extensive network of international relations is most active in the territories in the Carpathian Basin that once formed part of Hungary. Without this network it would be impossible to locate, catalogue and obtain documents of Hungarian relevance found outside Hungary. Unfortunately, it must be said that there was no improvement this year either in the weakened position of the national library within the system of institutions operated to provide cultural services for Hungarian communities outside Hungary.

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