Signa Vides

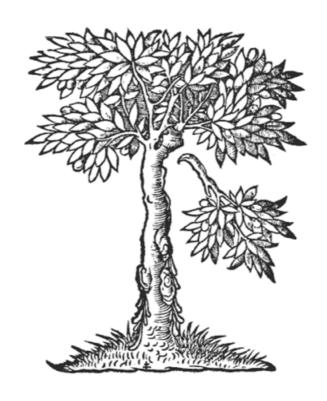RESEARCHING AND RECORDING PRINTERS' DEVICES

CERL PAPERS · XIII

Signa vides

Researching and recording printers' devices

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EDITED BY

Michaela Scheibe and Anja Wolkenhauer

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Melinda Simon

Cataloguing printers' marks in Hungary. Achievements and objectives

József Dankó (1829–1895), a titular bishop and university professor in Vienna, along with being a passionate collector of books and engravings, was the first scholar to study printers' marks in Hungary. In 1881 he was elected as a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and his inaugural speech was published five years later in Budapest.[1] In one chapter of nearly 30 pages he summed up all available information on printers' marks. His bibliography lists nearly all published European scholarship on printers' devices, although he was not particularly interested in these works nor in Hungarian marks. He was the first author to write on printers' devices in Hungary but his book remained an isolated initiative which was not followed up by later scholars.

Intensive study of the subject began at the end of the 19th century. As the Hungarian printing industry grew bigger, a need emerged for scholarly professional journals.[2] These articles were mostly written by amateur printers who at times fought real battles on the symbolic meaning of certain early Hungarian printers' devices.[3]

In the first decades of the 20th century, scholarship in old marks diminished, and was replaced with an interest in contemporary printers' marks, in line with France and Germany. Attention was first given to Art Nouveau devices[4], followed by the typo signet.[5] This was accompanied by publications on the theory of designing modern printers' marks.[6]

The need to gather all Hungarian printers' marks and publish them in a professional journal was first expressed in 1910 by Gusztáv Wenczel (1856–1919), a proof-reader at the *Athenaeum* printing company.[7] This endeavour was started a decade later by Gyula Végh (1870–1951), who was the president of the Hungarian Bibliophile Society and director of the Museum for Applied Arts, along with being a noted book collector.

His research resulted in a slim book, printed in 800 Hungarian and 200 German copies[8]. It focused on the marks of German booksellers who established their businesses in the Hungarian capital and supplied the Hungarian dioceses with liturgical works and schoolbooks. The book ends in 1527, the year of the defeat of Mohács and the professional bookselling business ceased for over two hundred years. Nevertheless, there were several printing-shops in Hungary at the end of the 16th century using marks. Gyula Végh originally planned to publish additional volumes on those marks but unfortunately was unable to achieve this.

Végh's bibliography includes the major European works on the subject, although his foreword firmly places his work as a reaction to Paul Heitz's series. The quality of this first Hungarian catalogue of devices reached the same level as similar European publications at the time. Végh gave all the necessary information for subsequent research and woodcuts were reproduced in their original sizes and colours.

Despite the late start of Hungarian research on this subject, it was followed by thirty to forty years of slow but steady development. Two short articles were published in 1946[9] but the Communist takeover halted research and little was published on the subject over the next four decades.[10] The Hungarian Bibliophile Society was dissolved, the printing industry was nationalized and the new political leadership was not in favour of "bourgeois pseudoscience".

At the end of the 1980's, a new generation of researchers began to study printers' marks, as the regime was weakening and therefore their work was tolerated. They were all employees of the National Széchényi Library and the first to publish their articles in foreign journals.[11] In the 1990's and at the beginning of the new millennium, interest on printers' marks increased, which resulted in several new articles and monographs.

However, a modern and targeted research needed firm foundations. At the turn of the millennium there was no comprehensive bibliography on Hungarian scholarship on the subject. Furthermore, all the articles written at the beginning

of the 20th century were in very inaccessible journals. The first aim was to gather all articles on the subject, regardless of length, and republish them together. This was important for both library professionals and academics. This endeavour involved searching through all Hungarian professional journals and around 200 books. The first collection appeared in 2009, the second a year later[12] and the third and last one is ready, but yet unpublished for financial reasons.

In the course of this work, I discovered that several of the modern studies were published in a foreign language, despite being originally written in Hungarian. Unfortunately all the original manuscripts were lost and so I had to translate these French, English, German and Italian papers into Hungarian. They were published for the first time in Hungarian in the first two collections.

Secondly, apart from republishing this literature, it was important also accompany it with a modern historical interpretation. This was done in the latest book on the subject, which contains a historical analysis of both the European and Hungarian literature.[13] A systematic review of the word usage of Hungarian authors revealed a high degree of uncertainty and inconsistency in the definitions, and I have collected not less than 38 different terms used by different authors. Thus there was an urgent need to establish which of these should be used as "official" terms, which are acceptable as an alternative and which are completely wrong. A whole chapter of the book deals with the problem of Hungarian terminology.

Last but not least, it was important to place the Hungarian literature in an international context. In order to do that, I attempted to compile a complete European and American bibliography of printers' and publishers' marks, published in this book. An overview of scholarship in the field was fundamental from another point of view, too. Even a superficial survey of the literature reveals shortcoming in the scholarship: works in German, Italian, English and French are almost exclusively cited. There are hardly ever allusions to works written in other languages, such as Danish, Swedish, Dutch or Polish, apart from those

written by speakers of those languages.[14] Thus several works have simply fallen out of or never entered the "canon" of specialised literature. At the end of this paper I propose a list of terms, which could be corrected and completed by fellow researchers.

After assembling the work of our predecessors, cataloguing followed. I published two volumes of a catalogue of Hungarian printers' devices with Judit V. Ecsedy in 2009[15] and 2012.[16] Both volumes are written in Hungarian and in English.

Hungary is a small nation with a small publishing and printing industry, and these two volumes were possible only because of a relatively small number of printers' and publishers' marks. German, Italian or Austrian researchers would not be able to publish 18th century devices due to the huge quantity of material.

The easiest way to gather printers' marks from the 19th century would have been to use an official journal which published them when a company was registering its mark to legally protect it. Such a Hungarian journal existed[17] but unfortunately there are no printers' or publishers' marks in it. It appears that in the 19th century there was no need to protect these marks, as there was no real threat of counterfeiting.

The second easiest method would have been to examine a single-leaf collection but none is extant in Hungary. Although József Dankó had a great collection of woodcuts and engravings, it disappeared after being sold at an auction after his death.

Thus the only way to gather 19th century printers' and publishers' devices is from the publications themselves. It means examining one by one a huge amount of books, booklets and commercial prints for a small number of new devices. I began this work in October 2008 in the closed stacks of the National Széchényi Library and it is still in progress. So far I have examined ca. 8.200 shelf metres of books, with roughly 2000 shelf metres left.

Compared to the earlier period, where printers' and publishers' marks were

esteemed valuable and often cut out, 19th century marks were not valued. Often librarians cause the worst damage by stamping, inscribing and sticking labels on the devices. Therefore I have to check often 4–5 different copies of the same book to get one impression suitable for reproduction.

However, I think it is possible to publish four more catalogues although there is the issue of the exponentially growing amount of printers' and publishers' marks in the 20th century. The following diagram shows the number of Hungarian devices from the beginning until 1989, with a comparison to Polish marks.

These numbers are naturally small compared to the Low Countries, Germany or Italy. Thus it is better to compare the situation with other Central European countries with similarly developed printing sectors. The Polish printers' marks published by Katarzyna Krzak-Weiss[18] show approximately the same quantities[19], although her book ends at the middle of the 17th century. She listed 31 marks until 1650, so I estimate twice as many (62 marks) for the entire century. The only Czech publication includes only 9 Czech printers' marks from the 16th and

17th centuries, and so it is unhelpful.[20] Unfortunately no Croatian catalogue has been published so we only have these numbers to estimate the average in Central Eastern Europe.

Regarding the 20th century, after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, Hungary's territory was reduced to one third of its previous extent. The number of Hungarian marks without this territorial change would have been around 3000, and it would be impossible to currently publish such an amount in print. However, it is clear that these 1200 marks can be subdivided, as follows:

1488 - 1800 (300 years)	1801 - 1900 (100 years)	1901 - 1920 (20 years)	1921 - 1945 (20 years)	1946 - 1989 (40 years)
131	345	~500	~500	~200

The first line should be drawn at 1920, as the Treaty of Trianon caused several changes in the publishing and printing industry. The second division should be the year 1945 due the political changes caused by the presence of the Red Army. This division ends in 1989 due to the political and economic changes.

I estimate that the first two periods will include around 500 printers' and publishers' marks each, while the last period will contain around 200 devices. I have to stress that these 40 years in the end could be treated as 3 different periods: 1945–1949 (publishers went bankrupt, many new ones were established, these were dissolved after publishing just a couple of books); 1950–1985 (four decades of political uniformity with a very reduced number of publishers and presses, therefore few marks) and 1986–1989 (the regime weakened, new publishers were appearing and tolerated, but these were not long-lived).

In the end I would like to publish a catalogue of marks of serials and those associations and institutions which weren't professional publishers but occasionally published books.[21] This would mean that we will have a complete inventory of the marks used in Hungary, which could be augmented later by

fellow Hungarian researchers.

In order to do this the methodology of the publication must be changed, because the 300 marks included in the last catalogue were practically the maximum possible in one volume. That is why the 500 marks planned to be published next cannot be done in the same way.

The typical page layout of the first two yellow catalogues included a serial number, the image itself (in its original dimensions), data on the mark, a textual description of the image and of the motto (if there was one) and basic data on the printer or publisher who used the device.

For the 20th century, as there are often 4–5, and sometimes even 20 different marks linked to one single company, it seems best to place them on a single page. But if this is done, something must be left out. Data on the mark or the textual description cannot be deleted, because these are essential for a future keyword search database. Thus data on the companies themselves will be left out.

When first publishing the Hungarian marks I considered this important as there is no Hungarian equivalent of the *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*, and little information is available on the publishers and printers using these marks. Taking into account non-Hungarian users of the catalogues it seemed relevant, but in the end less important than the marks themselves.

Therefore there will be have several marks on one page (in their original dimensions), each with its own data (in a simplified structure, without doubling it) and one single textual description.

Finally I plan to create an online database of all the Hungarian devices published (with the necessary corrections made in the meantime). This will be searchable by name, by city, by technique and so on – and there will be a full text search option of the descriptions. That is why I deliberately use stereotyped phrases in the descriptions, so that future searches can be clear and effective.

Regarding my personal research interests, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to write comprehensive studies on early printers' devices. The

number of marks are small and early Hungarian marks are often poor copies of famous Western European printing houses' devices. We have already published all Hungarian devices from the 18th and 19th centuries and I have collected a considerable number of devices from the 20th century. A future angle would be to attempt to analyse this material, which is rarely done.

Even highly regarded and recent European scholarship on the subject is focused on the first three centuries of printers' marks.[22] 18th and 19th century marks are referred to with great disdain. For example, for Annemarie Meiner they are "meaningless and inartistic", "negligent", "just copies of antique marks", "they have lost the character of a mark and they became simple decorations", they are "either too big and violent or too small and irrelevant", in short: they are "devoid of style and tasteless".[23]

There has been only one serious attempt to study printers' and publishers' devices from the 19th and the 20th centuries in Reinhard Würffel's two consecutive books.[24] He gathered a huge collection (2800 devices in 2000, 11.000 devices in 2010) but never gave the exact source of the images, nor reproduced them in their original sizes. He was working on a third collection of marks when he died in March 2014.

With little academic interest in the modern era, I believe it is possible to break new ground when I examine marks from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

One of the most interesting questions is the migration of designs, as in some cases I can trace several stages of a successful design in three to four different countries. Naturally this type of research could be improved with more data on modern devices. There are intriguing cases of a new type of heraldic devices and it is possible to observe and describe political ideologies in the printers' and publishers' marks. There is a different attitude to traditionalism and new types of devices (e.g. clichés bought from type foundries and altered in some way). New symbolic elements appeared (e.g. famous sculptures and buildings) and allusions to classical printers' marks gained additional meaning, often becoming

visual commonplaces.

The identity of the designers of modern printers' marks also raises new challenges. In the 19th century, to save money, the managers of the printing-houses often ordered some of their employees to design a device for them. As these people were not famous artists, due to a lack of biographical data they are extremely hard to identify.[25]

Last but not least, there is an exciting phenomenon seen exclusively in libraries built in the United States between 1890–1940.[26] The builders and the decorators of these premises frequently used printers' marks as decorative elements. The number of devices, popular marks, techniques employed, placement of the images and sources used when choosing them – these are all important aspects of this research.

I am convinced that printers' and publishers' marks of the 18th, the 19th and the 20th centuries will produce many interesting discoveries, which we will endeavour to find in the course of our cataloguing.

A proposed list of definitions in European languages for the term printer's and publisher's mark. Any corrections or additions are welcome.

Albanian	tipogragfik simbol	botues simbol
English	printer's device printer's mark	publisher's device publisher's mark
Bulgarian	pecatarski znaka	izdatelskie znaka
Czech	tiskařský signet signet tiskaře knižní signet	vydavatelský signet signet vydavatele emblém nakladatelství znak nakladatelství
Danish	typografisk mærke	forlaeggermærke
Estonian	tüpograafiline märk	kirjastaja märk
Finnish	kirjanpainajamerkki	kustantajamerkki
Dutch	drukkersmerk	uitgeversmerk
French	marque d'imprimeur marque typographique	marque d'éditeur
Hebrew	simle madpisim	simle molim
Croatian	tipografski značka	izdavački značka nakladni emblem
Polish	znak drukarski sygnet drukarski	znak księgarski sygnet księgarski znak wydawnictwa
Latvian	tipografinis ženklelis	leidėjas ženklelis
Lithuanian	spaustuvininko ženklas spaustuvės ženklas	leidėjo ženklas

German	Druckermarke Buchdruckerzeichen Signet	Verlegerzeichen
Norwegian	signet boktrykkermonogramm	forlagsmerk
Italian	marca tipografica	marca editoriale sigla editoriale
Russian	tipograficeskaa emblema	izdatel'skie marka emblema izdatelsztva
Portuguese	marque d'estamper	marca de llibreter marca de editor
Romanian	marcă tipografică	marcă editorială emblemă de editură
Spanish	marca tipografica marca de impresor	marca del librero marca del editor escudete del editor
Swedish	boktryckarmärke tryckarmärke	förlägsmärke
Serbian	štamparski znak štamparska oznaka	izdavački znak izdavačka oznaka izdavački emblem
Slovakian	tlačiarenský signet	vydavateľský signet emblém vydateľstva znak vydateľstva
Ukrainian	drukars'ka marka drukars'kyj znak	vydavnyčyj znak
Turkish	dizgi amblemi	yayınevi amblemi

Notes

1   József Dankó, A francia könyvdísz a renaissance korban [= The French book illustration in the Renaissance] (Budapest: Magyar Tud. Akadémia, 1886), 125–152.

2   E.g. Grafikai Szemle [= Graphic Review], Magyar Nyomdászat [= Hungarian Printing], Magyar nyomdászok évkönyve [= Almanac of Hungarian Printers].

3   E.g. Károly Firtinger (1847–1903) was employed as a typesetter and later as a proof-reader at the Pesti Könyvnyomda Rt., one of the biggest printing companies in Hungary. He was one of the founders of the Professional Association of Printers and also the editor of the journal Typographia between 1872–1881. He published several articles on printers' marks in Hungarian professional journals and was the correspondent of the "Deutsche Buch- und Steindrucker" under the pseudonym Pannonius. His career resembled that of another self-educated scholar of Hungarian printers' devices: József Tanay (1857–1929).

4   Ignác Gondos, 'Az impresszum [= The imprint]', Magyar Nyomdászat, 12 (1908), 386–387.

5   Tiposzignetek [= Typosignets]', Magyar Grafika, 12 (1931), 63–64.

6   Jenő Vértes, 'A betűöntödei anyagból készült szignetről [= On the signet composed by using typographical material]', in Grafikus művezetők évkönyve 1932, ed. by Sándor Müller (Budapest: Magyarországi Magántisztviselők Szövetsége Grafikus Művezetők Szakosztálya, 1932), 95–104.

7   Gusztáv Wenczel, 'Francia nyomdászjelvények és jeligék [= French printers' marks and mottoes]', Magyar Nyomdászat, 5 (1910), 157–158; 6 (1910), 188–189.

8   Gyula Végh, Régi magyar könyvkiadó- és nyomdászjelvények: I. Budai könyvárusok jelvényei 1488–1525 [= Old Hungarian printers' and publishers' marks: I. Publishers' marks of booksellers in Buda] (Budapest: Magyar Bibliophil T., 1923); Julius von Végh, Ungarische Verleger- und Buchdrucker-Zeichen: I. Ofner Buchhändlermarken 1488–1525 (Budapest 1923).

9   Mihály Kun, 'Mütyürkék, monogramok, szignetek [= Nick-nacks, monograms,

signets]', Magyar Grafikai Kérdések, 2 (1946), 35–6 & 49; Mihály Kun, 'Tiposzignet-változatok egy téma körül [= Variations on a typosignet]', Magyar Grafikai Kérdések, 2 (1946), 100–2 & 113–27.

There were only two exceptions to the rule: Gedeon Borsa, 'Adalékok a [10] középkori budai könyvkereskedők történetéhez [= Some additions to the history of the booksellers in Buda in the Middle Ages]', Magyar Könyvszemle, 75 (1955), 296–98; János Ötvös, 'Huszár Gál nyomdászjele [= The printer's device of Gál Huszár]', Egyháztörténet, 3 (1958), 186–88.

E.g. Erzsébet Soltész, 'Ungarische Druckerzeichen im 16. Jahrhundert', [11] Gutenberg-Jahrbuch, 67 (1992), 125–33; Gedeon Borsa, 'Il rapporto dei primi editori di Buda con Venezia e le loro marche (1480–1526)', Il Corsivo 3 (1999), 9–32; Judit V. Ecsedy, 'The printer's device of the Elzeviers in Hungary', Quaerendo 21 (1991), 125–38; Gedeon Borsa, 'L'activité et les marques des éditeurs de Buda avant 1526' in Le livre dans l'Europe de la renaissance: Actes du XXVIIIe Colloque internationale d'études humanistes de Tours, julliet 1985 ed. by Pierre Aquilon and Henri-Jean Martin (Paris: Promodis, 1988), 170–81.

Melinda Simon, Kiadói és nyomdászjelvények: Szakirodalmi szöveggyűjtemény [12] [= Chrestomathy on printers' and publishers' marks], 2 Vols (Szeged: Juhász Gyula Felsőoktatási Kiadó, 2009-10).

Melinda Simon, Kiadói és nyomdászjelvények: Hagyomány és korszerűség [= [13] Printers' and publishers' marks: Tradition and modernity] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2014).

E.g. Leonid Markovich Soskin, Izdatel'skie marki Petrograda-Leningrada [14] (Moscow: Novyĭ Svet, 1995); Mogens Haugsted, 'Ældre danske bogtrykker- og forlæggermærker I-III', Fund og Forskning 2 (1955), 39–58; 3 (1956), 44–61; 4 (1957), 7–23; Arthur Sjogren, Något om aldre svenska bokforlåggaremårken (Stockholm, 1914); Steme editoriale = Buletinul cărţii. Bucharest, 1923.

Judit V. Ecsedy and Melinda Simon, Kiadói és nyomdászjelvények [15] Magyarországon 1488–1800 [= Hungarian printers' and publishers' devices

1488–1800] (Budapest: Balassi-OSZK, 2009).

16   Melinda Simon, Kiadói és nyomdászjelvények Magyarországon 1801–1900 [= Hungarian printers' and publishers' devices 1801–1900] (Budapest: Balassi-OSZK, 2012).

17   The Központi Értesítő [Central Bulletin] was extant between 1874–1949 (around 112.000 pages altogether).

18   Katarzyna Krzak-Weiss, Polskie sygnety drukarskie od XV do połowy XVII wieku (Poznań: Wydawnictwo „Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne", 2006).

19   3 devices in the 15th century and 73 devices in the 16th century.

20   Hana Beránková and Marie Růžičková and Anežka Baďurová, Signety tiskařů a nakladatelů ze 16. a 17. století v tiscích z fondu Knihovny Akademie věd ČR (Praha: Knihovna Akademie věd ČR, 2002).

21   I have gathered so far around 240 marks of serials and around 140 marks of associations and institutions.

22   E.g. Giuseppina Zappella, Le marche dei tipografi e degli editori italiani del Cinquecento, Vol. I–II (Milano: Editrice bibliografica, 1986) [closing year: 1500]; Henning Wendland, Signete. Deutsche Drucker- und Verlegerzeichen (Hannover: Schlüter, 1984) [1600]; Peter van Huisstede and J. P. Brandhorst, Dutch printers' devices 15–17. century (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1999) [1700].

23   Annemarie Meiner, Das Deutsche Signet (Leipzig: Schmidt, 1922).

24   Lexikon deutscher Verlage von A - Z: 1071 Verlage und 2800 Verlagssignete vom Anfang der Buchdruckerkunst bis 1945, Adressen - Daten - Fakten - Namen, ed. by Reinhard Würffel (Berlin: Grotesk, 2000); Würffels Signete Lexikon deutschsprachiger Verlage, ed. by Reinhard Würffel (Berlin: Grotesk-Verlag, 2010).

25   E.g. Melinda Simon, 'A jelvényrajzoló Butkovszky Bertalan [= A designer of printers' marks, Bertalan Butkovszky]', Magyar Könyvszemle 3 (2014), 353–66. The person in question was a printer at several different companies in the first part of the 20th century. Although unknown to Hungarian scholarship, I have

identified at least 15 devices designed by him.

Melinda Simon, 'Funkciótlan vagy funkcionális? Nyomdászjelvények, mint [26] könyvtárépületek díszítőelemei [= Functional or not? Printers' devices as decorative elements on library buildings]' in Apró cseppekből lesz a zápor. Bakonyi Géza emlékkötet (Szeged: Juhász Gyula Felsőoktatási Kiadó, 2008.