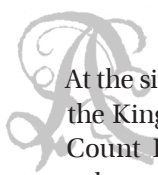


The Foundation of the Library of the
Hungarian Academy of Sciences





At the sitting of the lower chamber of the Diet of the Kingdom of Hungary on 2 November 1825, Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860) made a substantial financial offer that inspired a series of donations, and for this reason this day is considered to be the official date of the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Aristocrats, the gentry and ordinary citizens followed Széchenyi's example. On 17 March 1826 the Governor of Transylvania József Teleki (1790–1855) offered his family library in Pest in order to provide a basis for the activities of the Learned Society. The foundation of the Academy and its Library marked the end of a process.¹ Just as the National Library of the Kingdom of Hungary, the Hungarian National Museum or the national collections of Transylvania² were not founded by the sovereign (the Holy Roman emperor and from 1806 the Austrian emperor), neither was the Academy Library established by the country's monarch. These countries had not had a ruler of their own nationality since 1540, when János Szapolyai (1487–1540) died. This fact also accounts to a large extent for the

1. Jenő Berlász – Mária Sz. Németh: *Az Akadémiai Könyvtár múltja és jelene*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1956 (Publications Bibliothecae Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 2).
► 2. Ignác Batthyány (1741–1798), Roman Catholic bishop of Transylvania, in 1798 opened his library and museum collections in Gyulafehérvár (today Alba Iulia, Romania) to the public; in 1802 the Governor of Transylvania, the Calvinist Sámuel Teleki (1739–1822), offered his library and museum in Marosvásárhely (today Târgu Mureș, Romania) for common use; his successor as governor, the Lutheran

late establishment of such national institutions. Although the Palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary Joseph Habsburg (1776–1847) contributed to the realisation of the plans already in the month of the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and was an active participant in events, it is nevertheless important to emphasise the great efforts that were made by the intelligentsia, citizens, nobles, aristocratic leaders, and senior ecclesiastical figures of the Kingdom of Hungary, both of Hungarian and non-Hungarian origin, to bring about the decision to establish a learned society by the end of the first quarter of the 19th century.³ The Academy and its Library was the product of this process.

The Hungarian role model for the establishment of national collections was King Matthias (1458–1490), often mentioned nostalgically. This thought was perhaps best formulated by the writer on culture and education György Aranka (1737–1817): “It is oftentimes said by way of public example that, when King Matthias died, our hope of Hungarian or national sciences was extinguished.

Samuel von Brukenthal (1721–1803), did the same with his library and museum collection housed in his palace in Nagyszeben (today Sibiu, Romania). ► 3. In the process leading to the foundation, the multi-origin intelligentsia of the Kingdom of Hungary had a concept of “national” institutions. In 1802 Count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754–1820) established the *Bibliotheca Regnicolaris* (today the National Széchenyi Library), and his son István made his offer specifically to nurture the Hungarian language and Hungarian scientific and academic advance.

The exceptional monarch whose mind eclipsed his birth set about establishing a royal bibliotheca in Great Hungary, which was plundered.

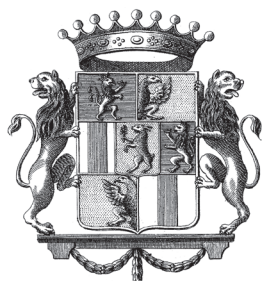
What remains is not in a national collection worthy of this name. It is time to start anew and to bring the dispersed, precious, moth-eaten and dust-covered volumes, as our nation's buried treasures, to the light of day for the benefit of the country, collecting them together to establish a Hungarian and general bibliotheca."⁴

The forerunners of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as an academic research library are to be found in the library history of the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. The first theological library established in Lőcse (today Levoča, Slovakia) in the early 15th century (*Bibliotheca Fraternalitatis plebanorum XXIV civitatum regalium Terrae Scepusiensis*) can be considered as such,⁵ and in some respects the court library of King Matthias, the *Bibliotheca Corviniana*, as well.⁶

For a long time university libraries as book repositories for academic communities were in the same neglected situation as the library of the Hungarian Learned Society. However, independently of this, there had been

several attempts to establish universities in the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania⁷ before the first *universitas* that continuously functioned from its foundation onwards was established (1635, Nagyszombat [Trnava, Slovakia] – Buda-Pest). In addition, significant academic libraries came into being at large grammar schools, colleges, law schools and seminaries.⁸

From the 16th century onwards, academic circles or reading associations appeared that set up collective libraries to further their common scholastic endeavours, or at least met at the home of owners of large private collections to discuss philological or other academic issues. The best known of these were the *Academia Istropolitana* and then the so-called "Pozsony Learned Society", which attracted academically minded aristocrats, Catholic and Protestant clerics and highly respected scholars with an international reputation (such as Carolus Clusius [1526–1609], Nicasius Ellebodus [1535–1577] or Johannes Sambucus [1531–1584]) to the same table from Vienna to Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia) and Némétújvár (today Güssing, Austria).⁹ No less important was the Sopron Learned Society, which was founded by the city's mayor, Christoph Lackner (1571–1631), at the start of the 17th century,¹⁰ while the small



C. LADISLAUS TELEKI
Vive Deo Patriae et Litteris.

Portrait and ex libris of László Teleki (1764–1821), a major contributor to the Teleki library who also fostered the idea of a learned society

► 4. György Aranka: *Egy magyar Nyelvművelő Társaságnak szükségessége*, cited in György Kókay: *Nemzeti könyvtárunk megalapításának visszhangja a korabeli sajtóban* = György Kókay: *Könyv, sajtó és irodalom a felvilágosodás korában*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983, 191. ► 5. Florian Holik: *Die erste gelehrte Gesellschaft in Ungarn*, *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, 2(1923) (Berlin–Leipzig) 383–399; Eva Selecká-Márza: *A középkori lőcsei könyvtár*, Szeged, Scriptorum, 1997 (Olvasmánytörténeti dolgozatok, 7); András Vizkelety: *Die Fraternalitas XXIV plebanorum civitatum regalium in Oberungarn und der Handschriftenbestand Zipser Pfarreibibliotheken = Pfarreien im Mittelalter, Deutschland, Polen, Tschechien und Ungarn im Vergleich*, hrsg. von Nathalie Kruppa, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, 327–338. ► 6. Csaba Csapodi: *The Corvinian Library: History and Stock*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973 (Studia Humanitatis, 1); *Bibliotheca Corviniana, La bibliothèque du roi Mathias Corvin de Hongrie*, comp. par Csaba Csapodi, Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi, Budapest, Corvina, Helikon, 1982; *Matthias Corvin, les bibliothèques princières et la genèse de l'état moderne*, publié par Jean-François Maillard, István Monok, Donatella Nebbiai, Budapest, OSZK, 2009 (Supplementum Corvinianum, II). ► 7. *Hat évszázad magyar egyetemei és*

főiskolái, László Szögi (ed.), Budapest, MKM, 1994; József Pálfi: *Református felsőoktatás Erdélyben*, Cluj-Napoca, EME, 2009. ► 8. Csaba Csapodi: *Ungarische Bibliotheksgeschichte. Vom Mittelalter bis zum Frieden von Szatmár (1711)* = *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 1984, 332–357; András Tóth: *Ungarische Bibliotheksgeschichte vom Frieden von Szatmár (1711) bis zum Österreich-Ungarischen Ausgleich*, *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 1986, 361–376; István Monok: *Les bibliothèques et la lecture dans le Bassin des Carpates 1526–1750*, Paris, Champion, 2011 (Bibliothèque d'Études de L'Europe Centrale, 4). ► 9. Klára Boross: *A pozsonyi humanista kör könyvei az Egyetemi Könyvtár antikva-gyűjteményében*, Budapest, ELTE EK, 2007 (Az Egyetemi Könyvtár évkönyvei, XIII), 157–186; István Monok: *Scholars' libraries in Hungary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: reconstructions based on owner's mark research = Virtual visit to lost libraries: reconstruction of and access to dispersed collections*, Papers presented on 5 November 2010 at the CERL Seminar hosted by the Royal Library of Denmark, Copenhagen, Ivan Bose-rup and David J. Shaw (eds.), London, CERL, 2011 (CERL Papers, XI), 57–69. ► 10. József László Kovács: *Lackner Kristóf és kora, 1571–1631*, Sopron, 2004.

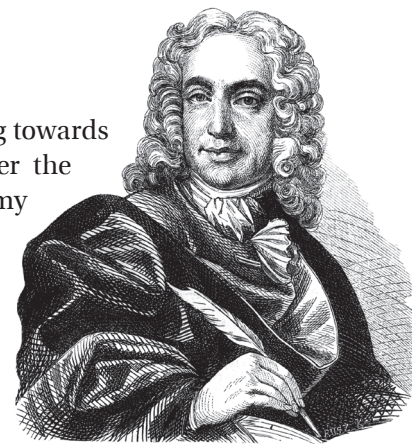
circles of readers traces of whom are evident in the tag *et amicorum* inscribed on books deserve mention as well.¹¹

In the second half of the 17th century and in the early 18th century a few Hungarian scholars were accepted as members of the academies of sciences that came into being in major cities such as London, Paris, Berlin and Saint Petersburg. It was in part due to this that in the 18th century several attempts were made to establish a Hungarian learned society. Of these, the most significant were the plans of Mátyás Bél (1684–1749), Lutheran priest and historian, in the beginning of the century and György Bessenyei (1747–1811), officer of the Imperial Guard and poet, in the second half of the century. The issue came before the Diet of 1791 but no actual progress was made until the end of 1825.

By this time, besides providing an institutional framework for academia, the objectives of the Learned Society to be established also included fostering the Hungarian language. This was a particularly important criterion in a country where Latin was the official language until 1844.¹² The use of this common language, however, concealed much discord and tension

which rose to the surface by turning towards a national language and thus, after the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, cultural organisations were set up one after another for the various ethnic groups living in the Kingdom of Hungary. These provided the basis for the national institutions of the states that came into being after World War I.

The aristocrats and intelligentsia urging the establishment of the Hungarian Learned Society were themselves bibliophiles and it is no accident that almost all of them, as owners of private libraries, enriched some kind of public collection by donation: that of the school run by them, the University Library in Pest, the National Library, and then the Academy Library founded in 1826. From the outset, the preservation of the written cultural tradition and encouraging research into it at an academic level were the duty of the libraries. This is one of the reasons why Ferenc Széchenyi included this issue in the deed of foundation, even defining the level of educational attainment for library staff.

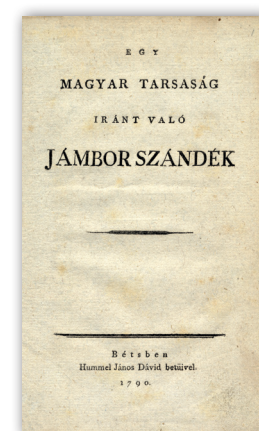


Mátyás Bél



Title page of the work of György Aranka

István Monok



György Bessenyei

Title page of the work of György Bessenyei and his signature

► 11. István Monok: *L'uso pubblico dei libri nell'Ungheria del Cinque e Seicento*, *La Bibliofilia*, CXIV(2012), Nr. 2, 215–229. ► 12. István Monok: *Identité culturelle, identité nationale: Les bibliothèques en Hongrie et en Transylvanie au XVIIIe siècle*, = *Un'istituzione dei Lumi: la biblioteca. Teoria, gestione e pratiche biblioteconomiche nell'Europa dei Lumi*, Convegno internazionale. Parma, 20–21 maggio 2011, a cura di Frédéric Barbier, Andrea De Pasquale, Parma, Museo Bodoniano, 2012 (Caratteri, 7), 195–214. ► 13. Following the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the non-Hungarian intelligentsia and aristocracy established their own “national” cultural associations one by one: *Matica Srpska* (1826), *Matica Hrvatska* (1842), *ASTRA (Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român)*, 1861), *Matica Slovenská* (1863). ► 14. András Tóth: *Geschichte der*

Universitätsbibliothek Budapest (1561–1918), *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*, 1969, 197–242. ► 15. István Monok: *Les bibliothèques aristocratiques en Hongrie au XVIIIe siècle et la fondation de la Bibliothèque Nationale = Pour une étude des bibliothèques aristocratiques, bourgeoises et conventuelles: « Le lecteur et sa bibliothèque »*, éd. par Jitka Radimská, České Budějovice, 2003 (Opera Romanica, 4. Editio Universitatis Bohemiae meridionalis), 377–392; István Monok: *History of the Hungarian National Library*, Alexandria, The Journal of National and International Library and Information Issues, 18(2006), 143–149. ► 16. *Örökségünk, élő múltunk: Gyűjtemények a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtárában*, Gézáné Fekete (ed.), Budapest, MTA, 2001 (Publicationes Bibliothecae Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 37[112]).

SZEKI GYÖRFY TELEKI JÓZSEF
S TESTVÉREI ADAM SAMUEL LÁSZLÓ
GYÖRFY TELEKI LÁSZLÓ FIAI
ÉS ENNEK ÖZVEGYE BÁRÓ MÉSZÁROS JOHANNA
EMLEKENEK
KIK XXX-EZER KÖTETTEL
S EHHÉZ CSATOLT ALAPÍTVÁNYAIKKAL
EZ AKADÉMIA KÖNYVTÁRÁNAK
ALAPJÁT MEGVETETTÉK