

150 YEARS OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATION: MEMORIAL EXHIBITION AND PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY



The press conference this September and the opening of the memorial exhibition in our library were highlights of the series of celebrations on the 150th anniversary of Transylvania's oldest scientific institute. In his opening address, General Director István Monok talked about the ever richer relations between the two institutions. The president of the Transylvanian Museum Association (EME), Ákos Egyed gave an account of the celebrations up to that point. This was followed by an overview given by EME chief secretary Eniko Bitay about the cooperation between the NSZL and EME, then by EME

the Association's former and more recent symbols and demonstrated the founder Count Imre Mikó's conviction, evident in his own life example, that only through humility, perseverance and humble dedication can one acquire genuinely valuable knowledge; this is the only way to create veritable culture. The idea of the museum as it appeared in early modern Europe was not a treasure store measured by auction prices, but much rather the home of a nation's cultural heritage, the seat of the national genius. EME symbols suggest a similar interpretation of the notion of museums. Mikó's famous motto (*Peragit tranquilla potestas quod violenta nequit* –

“The tranquil power will do whatever the violent cannot”) does not merely reflect the concept of a large-minded reformer: “the quiet power” here becomes an epistemological factor, suggesting the inevitable humility of the individual aiming to get familiar with the created world, the modesty of his profession.

The first display cabinet of the exhibition contained some documents related to the beginnings of EME. Without aiming at completeness, the primary focus was to evoke the ceremonial atmosphere of the Association's foundation.

The various formal regulations, standing orders, lists of names documenting the formal and organizational changes and the Section of Philosophy, Linguistic and Historical Sciences, which was the largest EME unit until the voluntary ceasing of the association after WWII, were shown in a separate cabinet. The Medical Section, which is the most populous unit at present, also featured in a separate cabinet. The other old sections, namely law, natural sciences and mathematics, were presented together in one cabinet.

The early occasional EME publications (*Yearbooks of Transylvanian Museum Association; Transylvanian Museum; Newsletter for Medical and Natural Sciences;*



General Director István Monok greets visitors and press representatives

president Ákos Egyed about the recently launched Digital Database of EME, and next by special collections director János Káldos's report on the NSZL and EME digitisation projects. Finally, one of the exhibition curators, Sándor Perjámosi briefly outlined the concept of the exhibition in the seventh floor catalogue space, which was followed by a guided tour of the display.

The opening poster of the exhibition in seventeen display cabinets and several wall tableaux represented

Museum Booklets) were also in a separate cabinet. Emphasizing continuity, next to the old documents the latest issue of the *Transylvanian Museum*, as well as new volumes in the *Museum Booklets* series were displayed. Above the cabinet introducing travelling conferences, that initially spread scientific findings and later became more professional meetings, there was a copy of the first traveling conference's poster in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) in 1906, the original of which is in the NSZL Collection of Posters and Printed Ephemera. There were three separate collages



Guided tour of the valuable exhibition

paying tribute to three early EME officials: Imre Mikó, the founder and first president of EME; Sámuel Brassai the guardian of the Natural Science Collection and first director of the Transylvanian Museum and thirdly Károly Szabó, EME's first librarian. There was the first volume of the *Transylvanian Historical Data* with Imre Mikó's own dedication to the Széchényi Library, Brassai's books covering several disciplines of science, his papers, pamphlets and his often reprinted primary school arithmetic book called *Socrates Calculating*, which was based on practical examples. Besides Károly Szabó's publication of sources related to Székely history, the Hungarian settlement and the age of Árpád, there was also the second volume of the *Old Hungarian Library*, which the author presented at a reading session of the EME Philosophy Section on 19th October 1883.

EME publications for professionals and the wider public were displayed by discipline in three cabinets. The first two were devoted to humanities and social sciences: philosophy, literature and linguistics, librar-

ianship, bibliography, the theory and history of literature, history, cultural history, ethnography and theatre history. The third cabinet contained natural sciences, especially the most up-to-date professional publications in medicine, mathematics, materials engineering, botany and agriculture. Together with the original documents shown in the cabinets, the photos and texts on the wall introduced the visitor to the history of the *Transylvanian Scientific Booklets* launched by Lajos György and the *Transylvanian Rarities* series edited by Elemér Jancsó. The last cabinet tried to

present the work of Professor Attila Szabó T., who

in the decades of the forced stoppage in a way replaced the whole linguistics institute by establishing his own school at the University of Kolozsvár primarily through his monumental series, the *Historical Dictionary of Hungarian Language in Transylvania* and also through his early papers on the history of place names, the dedication and hard work on which eventually led to the *Dictionary*.

Approaching from the

Transylvanian character of research into humanities in the interwar period, the "data millionaire" linguist's open perspective is almost symbolic. He breaks with the purist concept of earlier language history dictionaries and records numerous contemporary Latin, Romanian and German loan words as well in his *Dictionary*, acknowledging that our picture of the development of the Hungarian language in Transylvania would be incomplete and unprofessional without them.

Finally, it is to be noted that the series of wall tableaux with accompanying biographies introduced the famous scientists, scholars and public figures who contributed in diverse ways to the Association's intellectual wealth in the ninety years between 1859 and 1950.

The curators of the chamber exhibition were Sándor Perjámosi and the author of the present paper. The exhibition and the press conference were coordinated by NSZL's Directorate for Research and Academic Affairs and the Public Relations Department. We also owe our thanks to colleagues in the Photo Laboratory and the Storage Department.

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