

Mikes Kelemen Program - Preserving the written heritage of overseas Hungarians

2016/02/05



For three years now, NSZL staff has been participating in Mikes Kelemen Program organized by the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad of the Prime Minister's Office. Documents arriving from overseas in Hungary have been stored and systemized. Until the end of 2015, some 72 m³, approximately 55-60,000 documents have arrived in Budapest.



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The program focuses on preserving the diaspora's material heritage, offered by the communities involved and also by private individuals, collecting its elements in a systematic manner, transferring them to Hungary and making provision for their appropriate utilization. The first collecting period lasted from January 2014 until September 2014 and, according to estimates, a huge amount of materials equal to 100,000 volumes of books has been collected.

Until the end of 2015, nearly 34,000 documents have been registered.

Being the national library of Hungary, one of the main tasks of National Széchényi Library is to build as complete a hungarica collection as possible. Incoming donations provide a huge, unmatched resource for filling in the gap in the field of foreign hungarica. So members of our staff examine documents one by one, and those of the documents which are needed in the national collection (some 5 to 10%) get into NSZL's stock. Dedication can be found in a lot of volumes. These documents get into the stock of National Széchényi Library even if there is already another copy of the given work in the Library collection because these texts increase the source value of documents from the point of view of research into the history of diaspora. It is especially advantageous if we happen to find completely new titles or copies of other editions of well-known titles. However, the greatest chunk is that of swap copies which help fill in the gap where needed, if NSZL has owned only one copy of the publication, a damaged item or a fragmentary volume of a periodical.



[3]Reviewing the stock, it can be stated that people who have donated meant to help and were guided by the principle of saving culture. The majority of incoming items are books but the greatest value is represented by gap-filling copies of dailies, journals and almanacs. Print and audio musical works, cassette tapes, photographs, CD-ROMs and small prints, such as posters, leaflets, invitation cards, calendars, etc. are also highly valuable sources.

Documents, which are not included in NSZL's stock, will be offered to other Hungarian public collections, education sites and to libraries operating beyond the borders of Hungary.

On December 2, 2015, on the occasion of the 5th session of the Hungarian Diaspora Council, the most interesting items of print, manuscript and audio documents, which arrived in Hungary until the

end of 2015 and have already been systemized, were presented in the framework of a mini exhibition at the Castle Garden Bazaar. Below you will find some of the major works presented at the mini exhibition and you will see how interesting and varied these documents are.

One of the precious dedicated works exhibited is the volume entitled *Az európai irodalom története (History of European Literature)* (Budapest, Nyugat Kiadó és Irodalmi RT. [1936.]), with the following dedication: "Sent to József Reményi, with love, by Mihály Babits". Mihály Babits' bequest is kept by the Manuscript Collection of National Széchényi Library, so this item is of special importance to the Hungarian national library. We presented, among others, a book of poems by György Kemény entitled *Orgonavirágok (Lilacs)* (Detroit: State Press, date of publication unknown), with the dedication: "With Hungarian love: György Kemény, Detroit, May 1, 1941".





[5]50 éves az Amerikai Magyar Szövetség. Emlékkönyv (*The American Hungarian Federation is 50 Years Old, 1906-1956*) is an essential document, just like various ecclesiastical publications including, among others, *1891-1981 First Hungarian Reformed Church Cleveland, Ohio. Album* or *Golden Jubilee Saint Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church 1926-1976. Cleveland, Ohio.*

It is moving and exciting to see what kind of books people leaving their homeland took with themselves. It is all the more interesting as they had had to think twice what to pack in their already jammed suitcases. Beautiful and even big, heavy volumes were carried away, such as *Petőfi Sándor Összes Költeményei (Collected Poems of Sándor Petőfi)* published in Budapest by Athenaeum R. Társulat (1889), because they were considered to be useful. Many of those leaving Hungary wanted, by all means, to repatriate and buy land from their savings in the US. For example, someone took the railroad map of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: *Prochaska's neue Eisenbahn-Karte von Österreich-Ungar 1892* published by Verlag von Karl Prochaska.

A special chapter could be devoted to journals, the true and indispensable keepers of reports on the Hungarians living in the United States, on their everyday life and events, about their thinking and feelings. At the exhibition, we presented copies of *American Hungarian Panorama: a tengerentúli magyarság képes magazinja (American Hungarian Panorama: magazine of overseas Hungarians)* published by MIXMEDIA Inc., New York, 2002, *Képes Világhíradó - Illustrated World Review* (Toronto, August 1963), *Californiai Magyarság - California Hungarians* (Thousand Oaks, December 21-28, 2007) and *Magyarság: Az Egyesült Államok bányász-és gyárvidékének hetilapja (Hungarians: weekly of the mining and manufacturing region of the United States)* published in Pittsburgh (December 28, 1951). The first groups of Hungarians arriving in the 1880s worked in the surroundings of Pittsburgh, in mines and steel factories and they also settled here (In: Julianna Puskás: *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban 1880-1940. Emigrating Hungarians in the United States, 1880-1940*), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982. p. 188).

It is interesting that until now, National Széchényi Library has owned only the index of the journal entitled *The Etude: Music Magazine. Special Issue: the Music and Musicians of Hungary* and published by Theodore Presser Co. Philadelphia in October, 1930. From now on, our Library collection will include this unique hungarica magazine, too.

All over the world, Hungarians commemorate the anniversary of 1956 and many prints related to this topic have also arrived. In addition to a lot of posters, playbills and invitation cards, one of the tiniest but all the more emblematic documents is a worn ticket featuring the following text: *1956-os Forradalom Emlékünnepély 2007október 21(Ceremony to Commemorate the 1956 Revolution, October 21, 2007)*. Donation: \$ 15. Robert Wagner High School, 220 East 76th Street, New York City.



[6]It may be less known that the Collection of Posters and Small Prints of National Széchényi Library has been collecting obituaries, too. Duplicates included, some 700,000 obituaries are kept in National Széchényi Library and in 2003 an agreement was made between NSZL and the Genealogical Society of Utah, in order to systematize, microfilm and digitize the entire collection. Data of Hungarian emigrants residing in North America can also be included in the collection, since many such documents can be found among the donated items. Wedding invitation cards and cards inviting to various other events, leaflets, posters, etc. also arrived. At the exhibition, we presented, among others, the card inviting to *The Hungarian Legacy in America: the History February 26 - March 26, 2006, Museum of the American-Hungarian Foundation*, the leaflet of KMCSSZ - *Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség 1998 tavasza (Spring 1998 of the Association of Hungarian Scouts Abroad)*, the brochure of *Zathureczky Ösztöndíj Alapítvány (Zathureczky Scholarship Foundation)*, the playbill advertising the program entitled „*Jönnek a három királyok*” (“*The three kings are coming*”) by *Vers Hangja Irodalmi Kör (Sound of Poem Literary Circle)*, December 14, 2008 and the card inviting to celebrate the 50th anniversary of János Arany Hungarian

From the point of view of research, the knowledge of Hungarian radio broadcasts is of vital importance, so we paid special attention to presenting the most interesting items from among the incoming audio materials.

At the venue of the exhibition, the audience could listen to audio materials in English and in Hungarian selected by the staff of NSZL's Collection of Historical Interviews.

An English-language compilation can be of source value: it was made for the 30th anniversary of the Revolution of 1956 by Hungarians in Canada, and it contains a summary of the revolution and

reports on how the situation looked like from Canada as well as interviews with Hungarian emigrants and eyewitnesses. Related to the subject is the audio cassette entitled *Marching to Freedom Remember 1956* (1987), which was placed in the showcase together with its script.



[7]Audiocassettes entitled „5 órai tea” *Tánc, Dalok. Műsorvezető Takács Teddy* (“5 o’clock tea” *Dance and songs. Presenter: Teddy Takács*) preserve the history of days gone by and reveal onetime leisure and entertainment forms. In our Hungarian-language compilation, visitors could listen to the pre-recorded cassette of Radio WXEN, which had been given to radio listeners as prizes. Personal and national history is evoked by three reel-to-reel tapes in two boxes: *Riportok – Esztergályos Károly* (*Reports – Károly Esztergályos*), *Kecskeméti Gólyás Ház, 100 éves a villamos, emigrációm* (*Kecskemét Stork House, Tram is 100 years old, My emigration, The way I became a journalist, etc.*).

Archival materials will be owned by the National Archives of Hungary. At the mini exhibition, we presented four manuscripts belonging to Károly Nagy’s bequest, one of them being *Béla Szoboszlay’s letter to Károly Nagy* (Frankfurt am Main, March 1, 1958).

With the help of our catalogs and registers, documents, selected from the items arriving in Hungary in the framework of Mikes Kelemen Program to enter the stock of the Hungarian national library, will be available to everyone, following processing, based on the conditions of use of the given part of library collection. The most interesting items will continuously be presented on [NSZL blog](#) [8], on the site of the Acquisition Department dubbed *Csepp a tengerben* (*A drop in the sea*).

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