

“15 YEARS – 15 BOOKS”

CELEBRATING THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUNGARIAN ELECTRONIC LIBRARY



The Hungarian Electronic Library (MEK) is one of the oldest and most popular internet services in Hungary. It began 15 years ago with the aid of the National Information Infrastructure Development Program (NIIF), a service which still operates today at mek.iif.hu. In 1999 the National Széchényi Library supported the program by creating a new department to maintain and develop program services. Also in 1999, the MEK Association was created: a non-profit civil service organisation that supports MEK's content services and online publications, promotes the social equality of the underprivileged, and gives Hungarians living outside of the country digital access to their cultural heritage. In 2003 the program underwent a major renewal in terms of content, appearance, and service, simultaneously redirecting to mek.oszk.hu. In time, electronic journals were added to MEK's services, resulting in the 2004 launch of the Electronic Periodicals Archive and Database (EPA). The EPA aims to provide full access to online and offline digital journals, as well as archiving selected journals in a similar manner to the MEK, offering them to the public at epa.oszk.hu. In 2007 a third database, the Digital Archive of Pictures (DKA), was added to complement the services relating to books and journals. This stores a selection of online photographic journals and collections at keptar.oszk.hu.

Over the years the growing number of librarians responsible for maintaining and developing the MEK made significant improvements in providing customers with a highly valuable internet library service, as well as increasing the popularity of the world wide web. The long-standing services of the MEK reflect the values of libraries and their importance to society on the internet. As well as collecting and providing documents, a large number of contacts have been established between supporters, research institutes, universities, civil organisations and libraries. The MEK also continuously provides customer care and support services to those who need it.

The “15 Years – 15 Books” program was initiated by the MEK Association (mek.oszk.hu/egyesulet) as part of the MEK's 15th anniversary celebrations. The original concept was to persuade 15 Hungarian authors – including those living outside of Hungary – to donate one or more of their volumes to the MEK in order to make them accessible on the internet. The driving force behind the idea was to promote the availability of quality contemporary Hungarian writing on the internet in digital form. The painful truth that there are hardly any contemporary, home-produced books on the internet

was clear to all of us: librarians working with the electronic database, customers of e-books and users of e-libraries alike. This void is particularly noticeable when comparing the Hungarian situation to that of other European and overseas countries. Naturally, there are hundreds of real or imagined causes making it difficult to solve this problem. One of the main limiting factors is copyright law – or at least the shadow thereof – which can make it harder to establish relations between the authors, publishers, and the services of internet libraries. The current initiative therefore also aimed to unravel the myth that only documents with expired copyrights should be considered eligible for reproduction on the internet. Success is at hand, especially given that the works of contemporary authors also strive for new formats of publicity. In the case of these 15 works, the intentions of the authors and publishers merged successfully with the desire for electronic publicity without any major difficulties. We intend to repeat this anniversary program annually, steadily increasing the number of contemporary authors and their works available in the electronic database, and keeping alive the belief that everything is possible when intention, respect, and goodwill are present on both sides. The works donated to the MEK can be found at mek.oszk.hu/html/15.html.

The 15 books:

Author	Title
Attila Bartis	11 Short Stories (Tizenegy novella)
Judit Berg	Tales From Beyond the Milky (Mesék a Tejútton túlról)
Zsigmond Bődök	Hungarian Inventors in the History of Transportation (Magyar feltalálók a közlekedés történetében)
Vilmos Csányi	Malion and Thea (Malion és Thea)
László Darvasi	Underneath the Line (A vonal alatt)
Ágnes Heller	The Radicalism of Philosophy (A filozófia radikalizmusa)
Ottó Hévízi	The Rites of Deliberation (A megfontolás rítusai)
Zoltán Kenyeres	Established Words (Megtörtént szövegek)
László L. Lorincz	The Little Ones (A kicsik)
István Nemeskürty	Requiem for an Army (Requiem egy hadseregért)
Kristóf Nyíri	On the Intellectual Life of the Monarchy (A Monarchia szellemi életéről)
Szabolcs Szilágyi	The Warsaw Chronicle (Varsói krónika)
Mihály Vajda	Tales of Sunset (Mesék Napnyugatról)
József Vekkerdi	Folk Tales of Gipsy Dialects (Cigány nyelvjárási népmesék)
Vera Zimányi	Lepanto, 1571 (Lepanto, 1571)

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