

**Opera Bibliothecariorum**

*István KIRÁLY V.  
Faculty of History and Philosophy  
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj*

**Keywords:** Lucian Blaga Central University Library – Cluj (Romania), the scientific activity of librarians, researcher librarians, bibliography

**E-mail:** philobib@bcucluj.ro

\*

Not only books but libraries also have “their fate”. Of course, fate in the sense of vocation: they make the fate of books easier, namely they make possible for books to have the fate they deserve, even if they are used over-kindly or, on the contrary, unkindly by the fashions of the day and “actualities”.

The library is, after all, “only” an institution, its fate therefore lies mainly in the librarians, in the librarians’ fate. Consequently, it is not at all indifferent – and not only for the library – who the librarians are. However, we usually consider “librarianship” a profession practiced by the employees of the institutions called libraries in order to preserve, enrich, and process their collections, as well as to put them to the disposal of the readers, nowadays usually called “users”. Librarianship is therefore a profession the “working objects” of which are some kind of information carriers and the results/products of which are exactly the new and specific information (e.g. the many kinds of catalogues and indices) and services related to – the systematization, processing, etc. of – these information carriers. Though this common belief – which often penetrates into the professional consciousness of librarians too – is not erroneous, it misses precisely the essence of things; namely, the fate of libraries, the librarian him/herself.

Of course, there are several kinds of librarians; that is library employees who are specialized to, able to perform, and charged with several kinds of professional tasks; and whose fate is therefore connected to the fate of libraries – and, obviously, of books –, and vice versa.

Many elevated and deprecatory things have already been written about both libraries and librarians. I do not want to increase the number of these writings or to question them. My present thoughts rather

originate, on the one hand, from the experiences of a particular individual concern, and, on the other hand, are connected to the publication of a volume which contains the extensive list – bibliography – of the works published by the Central University Library of Cluj as well as of its librarians between 1990 and 2007.<sup>1</sup> This University Library – besides being an imposing, elegant building cared by real historical responsibility – is one of the representative institutions of Cluj, the fate of which has depended essentially, since its beginnings, on the fate and proficiency of the librarians activating there. Therefore it has never been indifferent who these librarians are and what they understand from their own senses related to and originating from the library.

The birth of the University Library of Cluj is naturally related to the creation and the conception of the University of Cluj, in which the library and its personnel had a particular importance. Therefore the leadership of the Library founded in 1872, at the same time as the University, was entrusted to the famous bibliographer, scholar, and writer, Károly Szabó. He was followed by literary historian Zoltán Ferenczi, and the also famous literary historian Pál Erdélyi. For an assistant director a high calibre scholar and librarian, Farkas Gyalui was appointed. Under their leadership the library employees were also people whose library and scientific activity can still be considered valuable and who remained the leading members of the library after 1918 too, in recognition of their scientific, professional, and human value: Antal Valentiny (working in the library since 1907), István Monoki (working in the library since 1907), or the historian Lajos Kelemen (working in the library since 1902).<sup>2</sup> In 1920 Eugen Barbul, Doctor in literature and philosophy was appointed director, who had already published numerous scientific papers as the member of the University Library of Budapest. Under his leadership, on the one hand, the most valuable Hungarian scholars remained the employees of the library, while, on the other hand, several new scientifically well trained and talented intellectuals – usually

---

<sup>1</sup> See: *Opera Bibliothecariorum – Publicațiile științifice, profesionale și literare ale bibliotecarilor din Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” – 1990-2007 (Opera Bibliothecariorum – The Scientific, Professional, and Literary Publications of the Librarians of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library 1990–2007)* Repertory by: Ana Maria Căpâlneanu, Gabriela Morărescu, Poráczy Rozália, Daniela Todor. Collaborator: Doina Ciuruș. Preface: Florina Iliș (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2008), 201+18 pages.

<sup>2</sup> For Farkas Gyalui the special position of “technical director” was created in 1920 which ceased to exist after his retirement.

having a doctor's degree and publications – were employed., such as the important folklorist and later director, Ion Muşlea, the lawyer Sabin Mureşan, the art historian and later academician Virgil Vătăşianu, or the physicist Vasile Lupan. The interwar Romanian library legislation honoured these librarians as the “scientific personnel” of the library, while Director Barbul, in his short monograph written in 1935, spoke with open pride about the scientific – by this understanding more than library science! – erudition and the publications of this “scientific personnel”.<sup>1</sup> In any case, the University Library of Cluj had been – since its foundation until 1948–1949 – in every respect a European library, which moreover, at least in Central Europe, was one of the best; naturally, due, first of all, to its librarians.

Although in an extremely contradictory and “specific” manner, the tendency to employ in the University Library of Cluj scientists and researchers who published papers not only in the field of librarianship, but also in other scholarly fields as well continued also after 1948–1949, in the years of the communist regime in spite of the general counter-selection. All the more, as the library, then and there, became a kind of “elephant graveyard” for the university as well as for the scientific and cultural circles. In this way the excellent bibliographer Leona Váczy (employed since 1941) remained in the institution, and thus the poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga, the literary historian and translator Ernő Balla (1950), Zsigmond Vita (1961), Tibor Horváth (1961), Dénes Gábor (1958), or, later on, the then younger historians, Nicolae Bocşan (the future Rector of the University), Stelian Mândruţ, Adrian Rusu, or philosophers such as Virgil Ciomoş, Vasile Frăţeanu, and myself came to the library. These scholars continued, could continue their activity after 1989 in research institutes or as university teachers (too).

Since 1990 the situation has changed and several, until then non-existent possibilities have arisen. Besides new and wider possibilities of publications being created, the older publication methods have become more easily accessible. Thus in 1994 the publication of the *Bibliotheca Bibliologica* series, stopped in 1947, was recommenced by the University Library in collaboration with Cluj University Press. The library's electronic review, the *Bibliorev* was created, and, in 1997, the first issue of the library's scientific journal entitled *Philobiblon* was published in English, which in the meantime has become an

---

<sup>1</sup> See Eugen Barbul, *Biblioteca Universităţii Regele Ferdinand I. din Cluj* (The Ferdinand I Central University Library in Cluj) (Cluj: Tipografia Cartea Românească, 1935), 64–70.

internationally recognized periodical. The editorial life became more open and enlivened at a national and international level too, offering new publication possibilities for the researcher librarians of the University Library.

Naturally, these possibilities are at the same time challenges. For in this period the computerization of the library has taken place and higher level library and information science education has started in Cluj. This means new research, communicational, and professional requirements too, which the personnel of the University Library tries and usually manages to meet. The volume referred to illustrates and documents this with respect to both the “older” librarians – working in the library before 1989 – and the new generations.

The volume entitled *Opera Bibliothecariorum* is unique because it “mirrors” these old-new things, being at the same time something new, but connected to older things. For the publications of librarians have been “recorded” before – in the yearbooks of the university, in the more general works, in the analytical studies focusing on certain personalities, or in the repertories containing the scientific activity in the University of Cluj (as appendices, *Auxiliaria*) –, but they have not been the subject of a separate bibliographical research on the basis of which more general and thorough analyzes, observations, and conclusions could be made possible. The repertory, on the other hand, presents, besides the already mentioned publications, the very important bibliographies and electronic databases which have been being made in the library: the lists containing the scientific activity of the teachers and researchers of the University, the reference books in literary criticism and theory, or the high quality Romanian Hungarian bibliography of social sciences compiled by Róbert Meister, etc. One can also find in it an index of PhD theses, and even of MA and BA dissertations elaborated by the librarians of the University Library. Naturally, the books, studies, articles, or the literary works written by them are also recorded. These writings, thematically speaking, belong to a great many fields, since we can encounter papers in history, literary history and theory, library and information science, and also in biology, mathematics, geology, chemistry, philosophy, etc., as well as literary works (e.g. novels).

Meanwhile several urgent library policy problems may occur to us regarding the future. For example, that present day Romanian library legislation does not make possible for university libraries to employ people who have not graduated in library and information science... We could and should give some consideration to this. The book presented

here offers good starting points to such thoughts. For the fate of the library (of libraries) – namely to promise and grant to “books”, and more generally to scientific, literary-artistic, technical-professional or any kind of cultural creation the fate they deserve – is really interwoven with the fate of librarians whose work seems to be not at all “invisible” – and even less impersonal –, but, on the contrary, public and (at least at its height) dependent on people with a strong personality.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi