Current trends in library and information science in the light of PhD research and studies – 5.
Interview with Andor Nagy

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The editorial team of CELISR conducted a short interview with recent graduates of the Library and Information Science doctoral program at the ELTE Doctoral School of Literary Studies, in order to provide the journal's readers with an insight into the current and future scientific activities of researchers, and to give an idea of the current research trends in the field. The following article contains a brief overview of the PhD research conducted by Andor Nagy, head of department at the Béla Hamvas Pest County Library, and university assistant professor at the University of Pécs, with background and future prospects.

cultural heritage, libraries, sustainable preservation, research, Hungary, PhD program

Please say a few words about your professional life, your inspirations.

Photo: Marianna Tóth-Soltész

In the first seven years of my career, I have worked as a researcher at the Research and Analysis Department of the National Széchényi Library's Hungarian Library Institute. I am about to begin my eighth academic year as a lecturer at the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities. At the university, I primarily teach library reference services and information technology-related subjects. In addition, I work full-time at the Béla Hamvas Pest County Library, as the head of the Methodology and Network De-

partment. My department is responsible for coordinating library services in the county, as well as local history projects and digitization activities.

Please give a comprehensive summary of the research on which your PhD studies are based.

Individual and communal identity is shaped by the collective influence of culture, language, traditions, the arts, and scientific achievements. The knowledge and experience of previous generations form the cultural heritage of subsequent ones, without which it would be difficult to understand past events, learn from mistakes, and draw lessons that serve as driving forces for ongoing intellectual and cultural development. The protection of cultural heritage is not a common topic of everyday conversation, although we practice our traditions and customs in our daily lives.

Humanity's cultural heritage is extraordinarily rich and diverse, and it is precisely this diversity that makes it valuable but also highly vulnerable. While I was working on my dissertation, a war was raging in Ukraine, right next door, during which – in addition to the loss of human lives – a portion of cultural heritage was also permanently destroyed. Although armed conflicts that threaten cultural heritage may seem like isolated, rare occurrences at first glance, in reality, both warfare and other types of disasters regularly occur worldwide, year after year.

When examining history from the perspective of centuries or millennia, we see that we are left with fewer and fewer sources that can testify to the past. In the event of a fire, a natural disaster, or a war, cultural artefacts that were previously carefully preserved can vanish in an instant, as events threatening cultural heritage have regularly occurred since ancient times. One of the great achievements of our society is digitalization, which has resulted in the creation of digital data sets and documents that future generations will regard as historical records and as a part of humanity's cultural heritage; just as we view an 18th-century pamphlet. However today, born-digital documents, which are created digitally, can only become part of cultural heritage if they remain accessible in the long term, yet there is currently no comprehensive and reliable technology or methodology to ensure this. While the lack or shortcomings of archival methods and procedures will primarily disadvantage future generations, it is our generation's responsibility to develop reliable solutions for the long-term preservation of digitally created documents.

My dissertation was primarily motivated by the above realizations, but my choice of topic was not without precedent. At the very beginning of my career, as an undergraduate student of information science and librarianship, I was already concerned with the fate of digitally created documents. In my bachelor's thesis, which focused on the reliability of digital rights management technologies for e-books, I highlighted one of the main factors that make digital documents extremely vulnerable: too much digital data and too many digital documents, as well as the copyrights associated with their use, have come under the control of technological giants.

Who are the primary "beneficiaries" of your research – librarians, users, policy makers?

The primary beneficiaries of my research are professionals in the field, as I address a problem that can only be effectively solved if it receives adequate attention

within the professional community. In addition to broad professional engage-ment, it is also essential to raise awareness among decision-makers. Meaningful progress and tangible results can only be achieved through cooperation, a shared understanding of the problem, and the development of solutions grounded in professional expertise.

Please summarize the main conclusion(s) of your thesis.

The slow erosion of cultural heritage is often triggered by natural disasters, human negligence, wartime events, and ideologically motivated destruction, which catch the professionals responsible for protection off guard. Since such events are often perceived as isolated incidents, their impact is frequently under-estimated. However, from a historical perspective, it is clear that cultural heritage is continuously at risk. Two fundamental prerequisites for ensuring the survival of memories tied to different eras are the preparedness of professionals, and an effective institutional framework.

My research highlights that many institutions are not adequately prepared to handle emergencies, which could lead to the partial loss of cultural heritage. Al-though the other fundamental condition for the sustainability of cultural heritage – an effective institutional and organizational framework – is of satisfactory qual-ity in Hungary, preparedness for emergency management remains insufficient.

In my dissertation, the analysis of organizations related to heritage preserva-tion plays a prominent role, with particular attention to the activities of IFLA and UNESCO. These organizations not only support the preservation of cultural her-itage, but also offer opportunities for professional collaboration. I examine the two fundamental conditions for the sustainability of cultural heritage – emergen-cy management capabilities and an effective institutional framework – in close connection, as deficiencies in one can impact the effectiveness of the other.

The identification of heritage elements, which is essential for the preservation of cultural heritage, can vary across different periods and societies. Therefore, it is particularly important to understand how value judgments of certain objects change or may change over time. For example, the Stalin's Boots monument in Budapest's Memento Park not only serves as a reminder of a bygone era but also symbolizes the desire for freedom. Libraries' adaptability, manifested in their in-novative responses to changing circumstances and their connection to global professional networks, ensures that these institutions can maintain their societal relevance in the long term. However, the digital transition and the preservation of personal digital legacies present new challenges, for which libraries have yet to develop comprehensive solutions.

Despite the fact that in Hungary, the two fundamental conditions for the sus-tainability of cultural heritage – an effective institutional framework and adapt-ability – are of satisfactory quality, the capability to manage emergencies and the comprehensive identification and preservation of cultural heritage remain unresolved issues.

Please explain why and how you chose Institute of Library and Information Science at Eötvös Loránd University.

The institute is one of the most important strongholds of library and information science in Hungary, as it educates the majority of the country's librarians and also offers doctoral training in the field. Since many leading experts are affiliated with

the institution, it provides an opportunity to learn from them, build professional relationships, and collaboratively advance the discipline in Hungary.

What has Eötvös Loránd University given you – professionally, personally, communally?

ELTE provided a solid academic foundation for my PhD studies and enabled me to explore complex issues related to the sustainability of cultural heritage. Through seminars, consultations, and academic events, I had the opportunity to work with renowned scholars and build meaningful professional relationships. The university's intellectual and collegial atmosphere fostered dialogue, critical thinking, and long-term collaboration. These experiences greatly contributed to my professional growth, personal development, and sense of belonging to the academic community.

Please say a few words about your future research plans.

In the future, I intend to focus on current issues in library and information science, especially those that have practical relevance for institutions and professionals. My goal is to produce research that supports the everyday work of libraries and contributes to improving services, workflows, and preservation strategies. I am particularly interested in challenges related to digital transformation and the sustainable management of information. I aim to generate results that can be directly applied in professional practice and policy-making.