

Current trends in library and information science in the light of PhD research and studies – 8.

Interview with Judit Vántsa

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The editorial team of CELISR sent a questionnaire to 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 Judit Vántsa, librarian at Báró Wesselényi Miklós Public Library, Kézdivásárhely, Romania, with background and future prospects.

Hungarian minority, Romania, public libraries

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Supervisor: János Fodor

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



Photo by the author

Between 1990 and 1993, I completed the library assistant training at the National Széchényi Library in Budapest. In parallel, I started working at the Town Library in Kézdivásárhely (Romania) in December 1990, where I still work to this day. I was the head of the institution from May 2001 to December 2023. Between 1996 and 1999, I completed my librarian specialty studies at the Juhász Gyula Teacher Training College in Szeged. Between 2000 and 2002, I finished my librarian and information technology studies at

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the József Attila University, which is also in Szeged. This was followed by the ELTE BTK Doctoral School of Literary Studies, where I graduated in 2024.

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

Until now, there has been no comprehensive description or summary of the development, progress, scientific communication, results and activity of Hungarian minority librarians in Romania. I undertook the work of collecting information from specialized library publications, because it was the only source that gave news about the affairs of Hungarian librarianship in Romania capturing continuous historical changes and the development of the profession. The aim of the research was to collect, process, and publish the important moments in the operation of the Hungarian minority public library in Romania.

In 2006, my supervisor, Dr. Krisztina Voit and I thought that I should review all sources and all types of documents related to the topic. However, when we were faced with the huge amount of material, we decided that going forward, I would base the analysis solely on the articles published in the trade press. The truth is that, at the time I had already reviewed and had referenced some Hungarian library articles, and collected material from many study volumes, non-library periodicals, the State Archives in Sepsiszentgyörgy, and news materials found on library websites. Later on, the Hungarian librarians in Romania had a mailing list, an electronic newsletter, and a Facebook group (in fact, several of them), from which they received much more information about the operation and activities of the libraries. We also managed to get to know each other better, there were more opportunities and occasions for communicating and discussing of professional issues. When I was not able to find answers to my questions in the periodicals, I contacted the competent people in private correspondence, so that the topic could be properly concluded. It is obvious that I used all these materials, since they expanded, gave color and made the thesis more accurate and understandable.

Since the use of material from the trade press had already the basis of my thesis, I thought that I should process the periodicals from the perspective of press history as well. Not all of them were specialized library periodicals, as in the case of *Művelődés* (*Culture*). However, they published many articles related to public libraries over the years, and they even had two library supplements: *Könyvtár* (*Library*) and *Könyvesház* (*Bookhouse*), so I included the journal in my research.

The thesis begins with the chapter titled the History of Press. This is followed by the three main chapters: *The affairs of Public Library 1945–1967*; *The affairs of Public Library 1968–1989*; *The affairs of Public Library 1990–2023*. In these chapters, I discuss: the evolution and characteristics of the public library of the given period; the establishment and role of public library networks; book and library promotion methods; the civil organizations of the profession; vocational training; and other library aspects.

In the Chapter 6, titled *Comparison with the Hungarian institutional system*, I highlighted the contrast between the Hungarian and Romanian library trade press and institutional systems.

In Chapter 7, *Summary*, I reviewed the thesis as a whole, defining the main conclusions of the dissertation. This is followed by Chapter 8, Appendices, in which I collected the important aspects about the activities of individual libraries that support, highlight, or supplement the main points of my thesis. In this chapter

I included the reports of the travel-meetings, conferences, and other events of the Association of Hungarian Librarians in Romania (RMKE). Furthermore, this chapter contains the photos and charts.

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

The main beneficiaries are librarians and library science students.

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

The aims that I have accomplished in my thesis were to assemble a thorough description about the development, progress, scientific communication, achievements and work of the librarians of Hungarian minority in Romania.

I do not consider research on the subject to be closed. The processing of a considerable number of articles on the public libraries of various settlements was left out of the thesis due to limitations of scope.

To provide a more complete and comprehensive history about the affairs of the Hungarian minority's public library in Romania, it is necessary to analyse of further sources, such as: archival materials, books and other documents. The disadvantage of processing of press materials published before 1989 is that they reflect only the aspects of everyday reality that were allowed to be shown at that time. Therefore, the presentation of topics such as censorship, the the activities of the Ministry of Home Affairs, requires the identification of other sources.

The history and development of other types of libraries (trade unions, school, church collections) of Hungarian interest in Romania is an area still waiting to be researched.

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

Since I had completed my university studies in Hungary, I wanted to continue my doctoral studies here. The quality and accessibility of the university were also important factors in my choice. For three years, I had to travel by train every two weeks, covering nearly 800 kilometers. As fate would have it, the airport, which is an hour's drive away from where I live, opened a month after my doctoral defense.

Please say a few words about your future research plans.

I am currently writing articles in the online encyclopedia of Kézdivásárhely.¹ Further on, I would like to create an online encyclopedia of Hungarian libraries and librarians in Romania, with the cooperation of the Hungarian Library Association in Romania, modeled after this city's encyclopedia.

I would also like to write the history of our library, established in 1842, for which I am currently collecting materials.

I currently lead three bibliotherapy groups and give lectures in the surrounding towns to promote reading and libraries.

¹ <https://www.kezdilexikon.ro/>