

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities Doctoral School of Literary Studies
Library Science Subprogram

THESES OF THE PhD DISSERTATION

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The activity of Máté Kovács in cultural and library policy as reflected by the
National Library Council and the National Library and Documentation Council

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1. Introduction and significance of the subject matter

I have chosen the introduction of Máté Kovács's career as cultural and library politician to be the topic of my dissertation. My aim is to write a comprehensive, scientific work based on extensive research, on one of the most outstanding figures of the Hungarian librarianship, public culture and education of the 20th century, emphasizing his activity in leading and close connection with the National Library Council (NLC) and the (National Library and Documentational Council (NLDC).

Describing the career of Máté Kovács (1906-1972), the scholarly professor, and his figure of great influence is very important and inevitably necessary in the 21st century, since in the still continuing changes concerning the library affairs started in the 1990s the influence of his personality, and his thoughts living on can be revealed, we can draw a parallel between the situation of librarianship of his time and our present.

In the past years and decades the regulation of library affairs has undergone significant change. The aims and curriculum of librarians' training have been set both theoretically and in practice, so has it become based on credits, the value of the profession of the librarians has been raised, and the role of the scholarly librarian has been strengthened. Besides the challenges of the informatics, the claim to the endurance of books and reading, users' training, creating effective information flow are all such aims that assign actual tasks even today both to the leaders of library affairs, libraries, librarians' training institutions and librarians. During realizing the role of libraries Máté Kovács has set up and met similar claims, thus knowledge of his devotional work done for libraries can be instructive and useful also for library professionals of the present and the future.

2. The research task, the objectives of the research

The research covers numerous, previously not processed sources: manuscripts, works by Máté Kovács, analysis of his thoughts, knowledge of papers written on him, the effect the predecessors (e. g. Ervin Szabó) had on him, presentation of the effective professional connections with his contemporaries and colleagues (e. g. Géza Sebestyén, Géza Fülöp). I also examine how the respect for this excellent figure, and his intellectuality lives on in the

successors and in the deeds of his disciples (Kovács Máté City Library, Hajdúszoboszló; Kovács Máté Circle; Kovács Máté Foundation).

In the course of studying the different sources I'm looking for the answer – as an important element of the influence having on the present – to the question how Máté Kovács was able to realize his ideas considering the political, economic, technical and cultural situation of the given period of time, and how the steps connected with his professional activity, concerning the library affairs detailed above continued, what effects these had later on the professional field, emphasizing the period between 1957 and 1972. The papers and publications pertaining to the theme listed below were of great help in achieving my aim.

Short summary and historical overview of the antecedents of the research topic

Several volumes of essays and studies, chapters, articles and diploma works have been written on Máté Kovács. The Kovács Máté emlékkönyv (Máté Kovács memorial volume) (1983)¹, the University Library of Debrecen's 18. Könyv és könyvtár (Book and library) volume (1997)² and the 2007-ben megjelent Emlékkötet Kovács Máté tiszteletére (Memorial volume published in honour of Máté Kovács)³ should be particularly mentioned. Writings of colleagues, disciples, Máté Kovács-researchers' can be read in these volumes.

The volume on Máté Kovács written by Miklós Bényei, published in the Tudós tanárok – tanár tudósok (Scholarly teachers – teaching scholars) series gives an overview of the main stages of the professor's life, and presents a selection of his writings.⁴

¹ Kovács Máté emlékkönyv (Máté Kovács Memorial volume). Ed. by Béla Szelle. Budapest : Magyar Könyvtárosok Egyesülete (Association of Hungarian Librarians), 1983. 261 p.

² Könyv és könyvtár. XVIII. Kovács Máté emlékének (Book and library. XVIII. To the memory of Máté Kovács). Ed. by. Györgyi Supp Tarnay. Debrecen : Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem Könyvtára (Library of the Kossuth Lajos University), 1997. 309 p.

³ A jövő a múlt és a jelen egységére épül : emlékkötet a száz esztendeje született Kovács Máté tiszteletére (The future is being built upon the unity of the past and the present : memorial volume published in honour of Máté Kovács on the occasion of his centenary). Ed. by. Ágnes Hangodi. Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár (University and National Library of Debrecen), 2007. 274 p.

⁴ Miklós Bényei: Kovács Máté. Budapest : Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum (National Educational Library and Museum), 2005. 199 p. (Tudós tanárok - tanár tudósok) (Scholarly teachers – teaching scholars)

In his book published on the training of librarians at the university György Sebestyén draws a picture closely connected also to this topic, rich in detail on the activity of Máté Kovács as the head of department, the training possibilities of the students of that time.⁵

The operation of the Kovács Máté Foundation – inviting applications annually, organizing memorial sessions and by the help of its informative homepage – goes a long way to getting and making acquainted with the life-work of Máté Kovács.⁶

Methods and sources of collecting the material

Contrary to earlier researches, I endeavoured to look over also periods not yet examined, and to bring the results into connection with the emphasized professional field.

Because of the extent of the topic, the volume of the manuscript legacy and trying to make it easier to survey and interpret, I used the articles noted in bibliographies on Máté Kovács as primary sources to get to know the different parts of the topic. After that I reviewed the materials pertaining to the theme that could be found in the National Széchényi Library (NSzL) and the National Archives of Hungary (NAH). In order to collect further information I processed books, scholarly journals, studies, chronologies, yearbooks and different sources available on the Internet. Besides that I managed to establish effective contacts with many libraries and archives in relation to the provincial, affiliated sessions of the NLC and the NLDC.

Having become acquainted with the volume of the materials that could be treated, I had to mark out a narrower field within the topic in order to write the dissertation. Thus I started the deeper analysis of the period between 1957 and 1972 with description of the professor's work in the NLC and the NLDC, then I proceeded – considering the size of the dissertation – in close relationship, with the introduction of his activity and work in the field of public education, librarianship and local history.

⁵ György Sebestyén: Az egyetemi könyvtárosképzés ötven éve : az ELTE Könyvtártudományi Tanszékének rövid története (Fifty years of the training of librarians at the university : the short history of the ELTE LIS Department). [Budapest] : ELTE Eötvös Kiadó (ELTE Eötvös Publishing House), cop., 2001. 198 p.

⁶ The homepage of the Kovács Máté Foundation < <http://kovacsmatealapitvany.hu/> > [2013. 04. 18.]

3. Summary of research results

In order to become acquainted with, understand and interpret Máté Kovács's activity in library policy it is necessary to introduce the shaping of the library affairs. In the period between 1949 and 1951 the outlining of reforms in library policy has started, publishing has strengthened and the number of libraries has grown, so has the degree of their social efficiency. The libraries were able to serve only half of the social demands made. Five million annual patrons and one hundred million library books used has boosted the significance of library affairs in cultural policy.

Having recognized this, Máté Kovács – based on his previously attained theoretical and practical professional knowledge and activity –, urged the forming of a precise conception as a result of the changes occurred in social demands. The first concrete document of this change was the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 1952, then the decree-law of 1956⁷ and the resolution of the Council of Ministers on its implementation⁸.

The library affairs in Hungary have undergone significant change and development during the first decade after the war. The central regulatory arrangements, laws necessary to the uniform operations have been made, organizations and institutions required for setting into action have been created and established, the infrastructure started to develop. Besides practical tasks more and more emphasis was laid on proper professional training. Máté Kovács has played an important role in the organization and arrangement of these activities and tasks as the president of the NLC and later of the NLDC, just as the head of the department.

⁷ 1956. évi 5. számú törvényerejű rendelet a könyvtárügy szabályozásáról (Decree-law No. 5. of 1956 on the regulation of library affairs). 33-34. p. In: Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye (Official collection of laws and decrees) : 1956. Budapest : Közgazd. és Jogi K. (Economic and Legal Publ.), 1957. 485 p.

⁸ 1.018/1956. (III. 9.) számú minisztertanácsi határozat a könyvtárügyről szóló 1956. évi 5. számú törvényerejű rendelet végrehajtásáról (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 1.018/1956. (III. 9.) on the implementation of the decree-law No. 5. of 1956 on the regulation of library affairs). 138-141. p. In: Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye (Official collection of laws and decrees) : 1956. Budapest : Közgazd. és Jogi K. (Economic and Legal Publ.), 1957. 485 p.

I. hypothesis

Máté Kovács is one of the outstanding figures of the history of the Hungarian library affairs.

„Library policy is a process, in which well-defined expectations and coordinated means meet the efforts of those responsible for the accomplishment. The scope of national – macro-level – library policy is as wide as the world of libraries itself.”⁹

The factors determining the library system are: the system of collections, infrastructure (technical means, standards), appropriate professional attitude, within this uniform and innovative way of thinking in library policy, and modern professional education of librarians.

In the period of time examined (1957-1972) within the political frames of the Kádár-era planned economy, applied in the fields of economy was determinant in the development of the Hungarian librarianship, and – through the aims set according to the different planned periods –, effected planning in the library affairs, so was the system of economic motivators, which made, among others, the scientific organization of the information flow and library mechanization necessary by creating a new economic environment. The shaping of foreign policy also had a strong effect on the library system: the results of the changes in the foreign affairs, connections and cooperation with the international organizations, tendency of traveling possibilities are well reflected among others in the volumes of the Study-tours abroad series, published by the NLC, and travel reports published in the scholarly journals.

The widening of the cultural possibilities of the society was continuous during this period, which was made possible by the popularization of reading, movies, television etc. The influence the cultural and scientific political guiding principles of the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, HSWP), and the educational reform had on the library affairs appeared in the writings of Máté Kovács and many other professionals, but at the same time several elements of the guidelines and professional development plans set by them were built into the central conception of the cultural policy.

⁹ Péter Sonnevend: A könyvtári rendszer (The library system). 280. p. In: Könyvtárosok kézikönyve. 3. köt. A könyvtárak rendszere (The handbook of librarians. 3. vol. The library system). Ed. by Tibor Horváth, István Papp. Budapest: Osiris, 2001. 356 p.

Máté Kovács was born on 11 November 1906 in Hajdúszoboszló and died on 29 August 1972 in Budapest, at the age of 66. He was raised in a family of poor peasant origin, what was determinant in the path of his whole life. He finished his secondary school (Fazekas Mihály Secondary School for Sciences and Modern Languages) and university (Tisza István University, Faculty of Humanities) studies in Debrecen. He was a student of Hungarian and French studies. Here, with the help of János Hankiss, a professor in Debrecen, he had the possibility to study at the Sorbonne in Paris on a scholarship during the 1927/28 and 1929/30 academic years, and to get to know the culture of the Western-European country, the achievements of which definitely served as examples to him throughout his life. Having finished the university he taught at secondary schools in Nyíregyháza and Debrecen, also carried out librarian's work, then he became lector and assistant lecturer at the Department of French Studies of the university. He also worked at the Debrecen District School Inspectorate and in the National Council of Public Education.

His attention and activity turned to cultural policy after 1945. As a member of the National Peasant Party he became the member of the parliament, the head of the pedagogical department, then the president's department in the Ministry of Public Education, later he became state secretary. He professed that the most outstanding results of his work done in this field were his participation in organizing primary school education, establishing workers' schools and launching the organization of people's libraries.¹⁰

From his activities as the Director of the University Library of Debrecen between 1949 and 1956 we should emphasize that under his leadership the library became the second collector of deposit copies, the research work was renewed and significant cooperation was established with other libraries.

Máté Kovács was the director of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences between 1952 and 1954, then he became the head of the Department of Library Science at the Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities.

¹⁰ Béla Babiczky: Kovács Máté : 1906-1972. 90. p. In: Magyar Könyvszemle (Hungarian Book Review), Vol. 89. No. 1. (1973) 89-90. p.

II. hypothesis

As the head of the National Library Council and the National Library and Documentation Council Máté Kovács performed activities determining also national library policy.

The I. National Library Conference recommended in its resolution of November 1952 to organize a general Library Council beside the Ministry of Public Education, acting as an adviser in directing the scientific and public libraries. Máté Kovács, the Director of the University Library of Debrecen at that time, became the member of this Council already as it was founded in 1953. The Council provided professional help to the work of the Library Department of the Ministry of Public Education, reconciled the adjoining problems and common affairs of the libraries belonging under different inspectorial authorities through negotiations and debates, and performed national coordinating tasks.

The Council was debating questions dealing with the library affairs as a whole in 1954, then was Máté Kovács commissioned to prepare the bill of the decree-law of the library affairs, which settled the legal role of the Council in 1956, and the details of its professional advisory activity were defined. In order to eliminate the parallelisms of the committees in library affairs – the NLC, the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture, the Methodological Department of the NSzL, the Academic Library Committee –, the special committee system was established within the Council in 1957, and Máté Kovács became the president of the Library Policy and Library Affairs Special Committee, besides that he was offered membership of the Training and Further Training Special Committee on 23 November 1957.

At the session of the NLC held on 19 May 1958, to the position of the president vacant for over a year – with Gyula Haraszthy at the head of the Council as vice president during this period – Máté Kovács, the Head of the Department of Library Science of the ELTE was appointed by Ernő Mihályfi, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Róbert Páldy, the director of the Veszprém County Library became his deputy. Due to their personalities and professional authorities both representatives were trusted to guarantee that the affairs of public libraries will get emphasis within the library affairs. The permanent board of the NLC was also formed, which set the following tasks:

- The board of the Council had to deal with the methods of preparing and compiling abstracts.
- Organizing the tasks connected to the launch of the publication series of the Council.
- The secretariat of the Council and the editing committee of 1-2 persons had to be established.

During their work the actual issues of library affairs, the shaping of necessary organizational frames, regulation of its operations, publishing professional materials, organizing effective research work, participating in organizing conferences have been continuously discussed.

The Council and its special committees held affiliated sessions starting from 1957 in different libraries at various locations of the country, so that the library professionals had the chance to widen their intellectual horizons and enrich their experience during these visits. Not only lectures were given and abstracts were listened to and debated at these sessions, but innovations of library technology were also in the centre of interest.

The National Library Council was formed into National Library and Documentational Council in 1962, what referred to further expansion of its tasks, and the Organizational and Operational Rules of the NLDC were also published. The Special Committee of Library Science and Publications was formed with the reorganization of the NLDC, making research work more emphasized and better organized; Máté Kovács became its president and Géza Fülöp became its secretary.

For the sake of effective connection the tasks and cooperation of NLDC, Center for Library Science and Methodology (CLSM) and the Szabó Ervin Circle of Hungarian Librarians were also defined. The task of the CLSM was to facilitate the realization of the developments approved by the ministry, and the contact point with the Szabó Ervin Circle of Hungarian Librarians was building international relations and organizing further training.

Máté Kovács, the leader of the NLC, then of the NLDC, has always articulated his thoughts as a president about libraries, his opinion and his progressive views in the spirit quoted below:

„...every library can carry out its tasks really effectively only if it works not left alone, but in fruitful dual constraints. On the one hand it is closely tied to the field of the social life-

practice it has to supply, on the other hand it lives and works hard in the national library system as its conscious and active member.”¹¹ During the presidency of Máté Kovács both the NLC and the NLDC have fulfilled their professional advisory functions worthily, what was recognized several times also by the superior authority.

III. hypothesis

Paying particular attention to the matters of talent care has been present throughout the life of Máté Kovács.

During the career and extensive professional activities of Máté Kovács special emphasis was given to talent care. As a student and later as a professional he had the chance to see the advantages of talent and talent care at first hand, e. g. as the scholar of the Collegium Hungaricum, in his relations with Professor János Hankiss, in organizing the Debrecen Summer University, and having experienced these, he soon recognized their importance. Using his domestic and international experience gained in this field had its influence at the results of his activities in this matter, which can be demonstrated in almost every field of his work, like in the position of secondary school teacher at the beginning, and later as library director, head of department and also as president. It is proven by the cultivation of relationships with students and colleagues, which are well reflected in their reminiscences.

IV. hypothesis

The work of Máté Kovács in cultural theory and practice had an influence also on public education affairs.

Máté Kovács was thinking in a complex, but uniform cultural conception, in which parallel with library affairs, other, closely related scientific fields were emphasized. He adapted the drafting of culture at a theoretical level to practice realistically and effectively.

¹¹ Máté Kovács: Közművelődés és könyvtári kultúra a szocialista társadalom viszonyai között : gondolatok az Országos Népművelési Konferencia alkalmából (Public education and library culture within the socialist society : thoughts on the occasion of National Conference of Public Education). 384. p. In: Könyvtáros (Librarian), Vol. 20. No. 7. (1970) 379-384. p.

As a cultural politician he played an important role in modernizing public education, development of sciences and arts, in informal culture and the establishment of the library affairs' unity. He has done this all as a member of the parliament, counsellor to the head of the ministerial department, state secretary of public education, library director, head of department and also as member and head of various professional establishments. His attitude and activities served the raising of the cultural standards for the whole society, and creating equal opportunity for the various classes of society.

V. hypothesis

The duality of localization and globalization accompanies Máté Kovács through his career.

The historical events strongly affected Máté Kovács's attitude, formulation of his judgements and shaping of his later activities. He had to live through two world wars, territorial changes and revolutions in the country. All these events raised economic, political and social problems, to the solution of which something had to be found to hold on to, an encouraging possibility to emerge also on individual and collective level. These processes have contributed to the search of national identity, the aspects of which question appear in many of his writings at that time.

Even though the world around us, the organization of society, the range of technical and financial possibilities has changed radically since then, the targets set then are having new meaning in our time. Precise definition of our position and situation in the modern Europe today might be more important than ever. As the members of the European Union we can experience that the idea of strengthening the public spirit is necessary, because there are always people who, for some reasons, do not recognize the advantages of communal collection. Thus we have to have to emphasize that as sustaining of global development can not be guaranteed without considering local values, the results of global development can serve as solutions to handling local problems. Being the members of the European Community it is also our aim and interest to highlight our traditions and cultural values and build them into the life of the community, just as it is to get to know and make good use of the results and values of other nations in realizing our own local objectives.

4. Utilizing dissertation results

Having examined the activity of Máté Kovács in cultural and library policy, through extensive research of the determinant political, economic and cultural environment of the era, a library system, uniform in its complexity can be known by the wider circle of professionals.

The manuscript legacy of Máté Kovács rich in sources (NSzL Manuscript Collection Fond 210), the studies and articles used can contribute to a deeper understanding of this era of the 20th century, and could motivate students, lecturers and librarians further to complete research started earlier, or even making known yet unexplored fields.

I will be using the results of my dissertation mainly in teaching students of librarians' training. In the course of collecting materials for the dissertation I acquired methodological experience, by which I will be able to support the research activities of the students more effectively. I feel the publication of the documents determining the library affairs of the examined period necessary in a collection of sources.

Publications, LECTURES and PRESENTATIONS relevant to the topic

Book chapter

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté kultúraelméletének és - gyakorlatának hatása a közművelődésre. (The influence of Máté Kovács's cultural theory and practice in the field of public education) In: Kultúra – Művészet – Társadalom a globalizálódó világban. A kultúráközvetítés elmélete és gyakorlata c. 2006. március 6-8. között rendezett nemzetközi konferencia előadásai (Culture – Arts – Society in globalizing world. The theory and practice of the transmission of culture. Presentations of an international academic conference. 6–8 March, 2006). Ed. by Tamás T. Kiss. Szeged : SZTE JGYPK Felnőttképzési Intézet (SZTE JGYPK - University of Szeged Gyula Juhász Faculty of Education Institute of Adult Education), 2007. 109-115. p.

Andrea Patkós Hanesz ed.: Kovács Máté kéziratok hagyatékából. Egy emberjelölt meglátásai : 1927 ; Gondolat-szilánkok egy emberjelölt életkönyvének a margójáról : 1927 ; Novellák, novella-vázlatok : 1929-1935 (From the manuscript legacy of Máté Kovács. Observations of a human-to-be, 1927; Thought-fragments from the margin of the book of a human-to-be, 1927; Short stories, short story-sketches, 1929-1935.). In: A jövő a múlt és a jelen egységére épül : emlékkötet : a száz esztendeje született Kovács Máté tiszteletére (The future is being built upon the unity of the past and the future. : Memorial volume published in honour of Máté Kovács on the occasion of his centenary). Ed. Hangodi Ágnes. Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár (University of Debrecen. University and National Library), 2007. 241-268. p.

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté könyvtárpolitikai tevékenysége az Országos Könyvtárügyi Tanács és az Országos Könyvtárügyi és Dokumentációs Tanács tükrében. (The activity of Máté Kovács in library policy as reflected by the National Library Council and the National Library and Documentation Council). In: A jövő a múlt és a jelen egységére épül : emlékkötet : a száz esztendeje született Kovács Máté tiszteletére (The future is being built upon the unity of the past and the future.: Memorial volume published in honour of Máté Kovács on the occasion of his centenary). Ed. Hangodi Ágnes. Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár (University of Debrecen. University and National Library), 2007. 27-37. p.

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Beszámoló a Kovács Mátéval kapcsolatos legújabb kutatásokról (Report on the newest research related to Máté Kovács) In: A jövő a múlt és a jelen egységére épül : emlékkötet : a száz esztendeje született Kovács Máté tiszteletére (The future is being built upon the unity of the past and the future.: Memorial volume published in honour of Máté Kovács on the occasion of his centenary). Ed. Hangodi Ágnes. Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár (University of Debrecen. University and National Library), 2007. 194-206. p.

Article, study

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté a magyar könyvtárügy fejlesztésének egyik meghatározó alakja (Máté Kovács, one of the determining figures of the development of Hungarian library affairs). In: Könyv, Könyvtár, Könyvtáros (Book, Library, Librarian), Vol. 15. No. 8. (2006) 47-57. p.

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté és a tehetséggondozás (Máté Kovács and talent care). In: Könyvtári Figyelő (Library Review), Vol. 56. No. 2. (2010) 269-276. p.

Lecture, presentation

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté kultúraelméletének és gyakorlatának hatása a közművelődésre (The influence of Máté Kovács's cultural theory and practice in the field of public education). A kultúraközvetítés elmélete és gyakorlata. Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia (The theory and practice of the transmission of culture. Presentations of an international academic conference. 6-8 March 2006). SZTE JGYTFK Közművelődési Tanszék, Szeged (SZTE JGYPK - University of Szeged Gyula Juhász Faculty of Education Institute of Adult Education)

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté könyvtárpolitikai tevékenysége az Országos Könyvtárügyi Tanács és az Országos Könyvtárügyi és Dokumentációs Tanács tükrében (The activity of Máté Kovács in library policy as reflected by the National Library Council and the National Library and Documentation Council). Emlékünnepség Kovács Máté tanszékvezető professzor születésének centenáriuma alkalmából (Memorial conference on the occasion of the centenary of Máté Kovács Professor, Head of the Department). 22 March 2006. ELTE Faculty of Humanities, Department of LIS, Budapest

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Beszámoló a Kovács Mátéval kapcsolatos legújabb kutatásokról (Report on the newest research related to Máté Kovács). Konferencia Kovács Máté születésének 100. évfordulója alkalmából (Conference on the occasion of Máté Kovács centenary). 10-11 November 2006. Kovács Máté Cultural Center and Library, Hajdúszoboszló

Andrea Patkós Hanesz: Kovács Máté és a tehetséggondozás (Máté Kovács and talent care). Association of Hungarian librarians 41. Annual Conference, Debrecen, 9-11 July 2009