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The Digital Literary Academy

Hungary
Iván Rónai

Introduction

The idea of this remarkable virtual institution was conceived by the then President of the National Cultural Fund Mr András Török. The successful model linking lawful digital use with support to creators is unique in Europe, and after its establishment it has often been referred to.

About the Academy in brief

The Digital Literary Academy (DLA[1]) is one of Hungary's largest digital libraries. It was established in early 1998.

Its main objectives are
- to preserve the prominent works of contemporary and modern Hungarian literature in the digital age;
- to make them publicly available;
- to safeguard the values of Hungarian literature.

With the set-up of the Academy the cultural government has established a kind of patronage mechanism for continuous financial support for leading Hungarian literary actors to sustain their creative and theoretical activities. As a result, the Hungarian language online digital library can be built on the entire life's work of contemporary writers and poets. The Internet content service provided to the public thus consists of certified, high-quality text. The ever-expanding range of contemporary Hungarian literature can be accessed free of charge all over the world in a single database. At the start the DLA was hosted by the House of Hungarian Literature (today called the Petőfi Literary Museum); then in 2000 the John Neumann Digital Library and Multimedia Centre took it over. The fact that the project was endorsed by all the cultural governments has enabled the Digital Literary Academy to enjoy continuous construction and operation. For the first eight years the National Cultural Fund provided annual grants for the functioning of the DLA. This meant that the funding was guaranteed only on a yearly basis and every year they had to apply for the grants.

In January 2007 with the decision made by the Ministry of Education and Culture the Digital Literary Academy was returned to the organisation of the Petőfi Literary Museum, and more stable conditions were established for longer-term operation.

DLA members:

On the 2nd of June 1998 the Digital Literary Academy was formed with 39 members; today its membership is 71.

At the time of the formation of the Academy, living writers, poets awarded with the most prestigious Hungarian state prize (the Kossuth Prize) or with the title of the laurel wreath writer - poet of the Hungarian Republic were offered to participate in it. At the inaugural meeting the participants - with a large majority - changed the name from the originally proposed Digital Immortals to Digital Literary Academy.
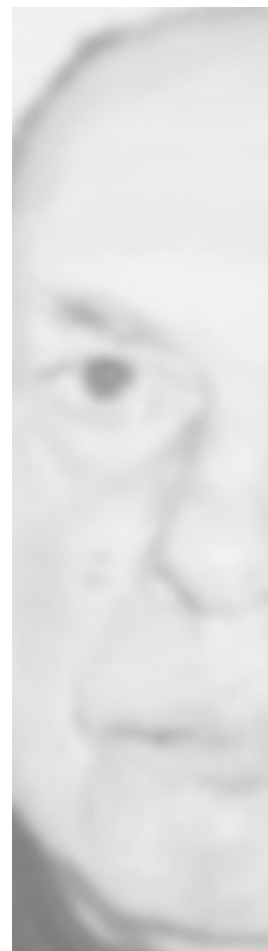
Since 1999 the Academy has convened annually. At the meeting the members themselves select by ballot a new member and one or more posthumous members. To become a member of the DLA the candidate (or his or her heir) must grant the non-exclusive right of use for making available the digital copy of his or her entire life's work.

The order of members' election

Every year at the convention of DLA a new living and (possibly) one or more posthumous members are elected.

a) Living member

The scope of candidates: writers and poets nominated by the DLA members who - with their professional work - contributed significantly to the development of contemporary Hun-

garian literature and fiction, and actively participate in public literary life.

b) Posthumous member(s)

Each year the DLA may nominate posthumously one or more writers or poets as candidates. The nominee can be the person whose works made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary Hungarian literature, having a lasting effect on it.

Founding members include:

Ágh István,
Bertók László,
Bodor Ádám,
Csoóri Sándor,
Dobos László,
Esterházy Péter,
Faludy György,
Fejes Endre,
Gyurkó László,
Gyurkovics Tibor,
Határ Győző,
Hubay Miklós,
Jókai Anna,
Juhász Ferenc,
Kányádi Sándor,
Kertész Imre,
Konrád György,
Kuczka Péter,
Lakatos István,
Lászlóffy Aladár,

Lator László,
Lázár Ervin,
Méray Tibor,
Mészöly Miklós,
Moldova György,
Nádas Péter,
Orbán Ottó,
Parti Nagy Lajos,
Petri György,
Rákos Sándor,
Rakovszky Zsuzsa,
Sánta Ferenc,
Somlyó György,
Spiró György,
Sütő András,
Szabó Magda,
Szakonyi Károly,
Takáts Gyulaés
Tandori Dezső.

Digitisation principles

The basic element of text processing is the life's work of the Digital Literary Academy members, i.e. their complete works including fiction and literary theoretical works published in print or manuscript form. The focus is not set on reproducing the original edition, but the digitisation of the literary text itself. In the database the DLA editors use standardized formats.

Texts processed (or waiting to be processed) include:

- volumes;
- journal communications unpublished in individual volumes;
- manuscripts (if appropriate);
- translations of importance from the perspective of the oeuvre.

The text processing - if critical editing is needed - takes place in continuous cooperation with the DLA members and / or with literary experts appointed by him. As a result, texts published on the website represent a re-

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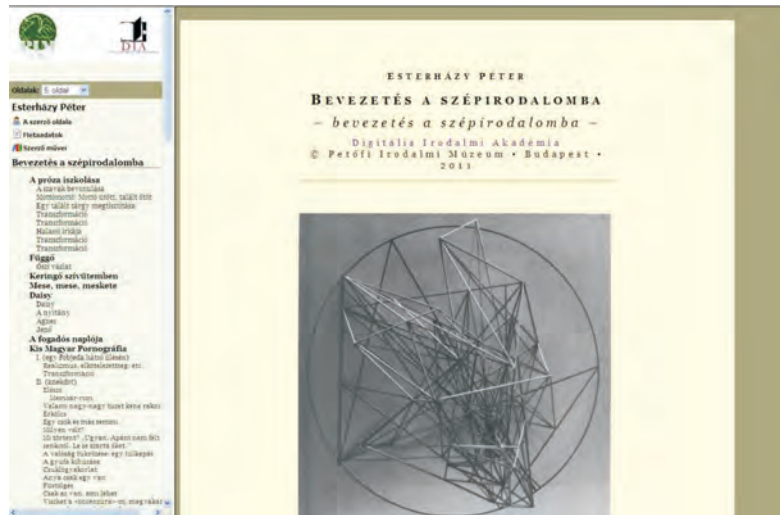
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liable and more precise publication than the original printed version.

The digitized texts of member biographies, bibliographies, and secondary bibliographies on them are published in consultation with the authors or literary experts and updated regularly.

The DLA website is synchronized with the databases and portals of the Petőfi Literary Museum providing similar services. The publishing of the full text databases constitutes a harmonized system with the services presenting additional information about the authors.

The published content, IT solutions

The current number of published works is 1400 volumes. The supplementary contents to the main texts (e.g. pictures, photos, illustrations, manuscripts, book covers and interviews) are also available on the DLA website www.pim.hu/dia.

Since the launch of the renewed services in 2009 an annual increase of 30% in the number of visits has been achieved. In 2010 this meant 400000 individual visits.

The multiplication of the number of visitors was in great extent due to the application of advanced digital library technologies such as full text and metadata-based search, dynamic content formation, and database portal integration.

DLA Authors:

Imre Kertész, Nobel Prize winner

Péter Esterházy

Ágh István,
Bella István,
Bertha Bulcsu,
Bertók László,
Bodor Ádám,
Csoóri Sándor,
Csorba Győző,
Csukás István,
Dobos László,
Esterházy Péter,
Faludy György,
Fejes Endre,
Fekete Sándor,
Füst Milán,
Gergely Ágnes,
Gyurkó László,
Gyurkovics Tibor,
Határ Győző,
Hubay Miklós,
Illyés Gyula,
Jékely Zoltán,
Jókai Anna,
Juhász Ferenc,
Kálnoky László,
Kányádi Sándor,
Kardos G. György,
Kertész Imre,
Konrád György,
Kormos István,
Kovács András Ferenc,
Krasznahorkai László
Kuczka Péter,
Lakatos István,
Lászlóóffy Aladár,
Lator László,
Lázár Ervin,

Lengyel Balázs,
Mándy Iváán,
Marsall László,
Méray Tibor,
Mészöly Miklós,
Moldova György,
Nádas Péter,
Nagy László,
Nemes Nagy Ágnes,
Németh László,
Oravecz Imre,
Orbán Ottó,
Ottlik Géza,
Parti Nagy Lajos,
Petri György,
Pilinszky János,
Rába György,
Ráákos Sándor,
Rakovszky Zsuzsa,
Sánta Ferenc,
Somlyó György,
Spiró György,
Sütő András,
Szabó Lőrinc,
Szabó Magda,
Szakonyi Károly,
Szilágyi István,
Takács Zsuzsa,
Takáts Gyula,
Tamási Áron,
Tandori Dezső,
Tersánszky Józsi Jenő,
Tolnai Ottó,
Utassy József,
Zavada Pál.

The DLA as Hungaricum

The DLA is a unique and very successful endeavour in the field of e-culture. It was born in the right time and place. It plays an outstanding role in making Hungarian culture accessible, in safeguarding the Hungarian language and in augmenting the weight of literature in contemporary Hungarian arts.

[1] In Hungarian: DIA – Digitális Irodalmi Akadémia