
AHEA Newsletter: May 2022

1 message

American Hungarian Educators Association <aheanews@gmail.com>

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May 2022 Newsletter

President's Corner

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This year's American Hungarian Educators Association (AHEA) conference was deemed very successful by our Board. Scholars from many countries participated; they had opportunity to present their work and connect with others within and outside their geographical region. Conference attendance was free and without charge while those who gave paper presentations joined AHEA for the modest cost of membership. Saving attendees the cost of travel, lodging, and registration, our annual conference sponsored high quality papers that were valued and appreciated by those who heard them. Registration counts broke preceding year's records. In both 2021 and 2022, conference attendance more than doubled when compared to AHEA's in-person conference attendance registrations.

The true test of this success remains to be seen. The cost of organizing the conferences in the past two years was substantial in terms of time and effort. Our sincere hope is that those who attended our Conferences in the past two years came to appreciate AHEA's mission and are willing to [support our work](#) either through a donation to our organization or by joining us as members. There are numerous opportunities to contribute. There are volunteer opportunities on working groups, committees, AHEA Board, and our e-Journal, *Hungarian Cultural Studies*. We invite those who are not active members already and have the interest to contribute in more substantial ways to the work of AHEA, let us hear from you!

AHEA's 2023 Conference is planned for in-person in Hamden, CT, USA in April 27-29. The call for abstracts will be posted in early August. Our search for Editor-in-Chief of Hungarian Cultural Studies is in progress; the position description is [available](#).

On behalf of the Board of AHEA, best wishes for your continued success. Reach out if you wish to contribute more directly to AHEA's activities.

Klára Papp, AHEA President
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Members Helping Members in Transcarpathia

Budapest-based Executive Board member **Nóra Deák** reports that she has reached out to AHEA members and fellow Hungarian scholars in the Transcarpathia region of Ukraine (Zakarpattia Oblast), letting them know their colleagues are eager to help them in this time of war and turmoil.

Furthermore, at its most recent meeting, the Executive Board voted to repurpose the funds originally intended for travel bursaries to the 2022 conference to be dedicated instead to support scholarly organizations in Transcarpathia.

Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Éva Petrás**

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, especially how you came to specialize in the history of Hungary after 1945.

I was an undergraduate student in the years of the system changes, which was a time with full of hopes and new perspectives, but also it was a transition period with all its difficulties. At that time church history was not a part of the university curriculum. In fact, apart from some scarce “official” works, younger generations could not get information on this matter. Families and church communities had their own experiences and narratives of the history of the previous decades, but apparently there was a gap between these two sides. So, when our professor, Dr. László Katus at Pécs University invited me, together with a couple of fellow students, to his informal evening class on church history, I was glad to accept the invitation. This is how I got involved with church history. Later, I chose research topics in 20th century Hungarian Catholic church history, which became my main scholarly interest. After a year spent in the lively, multi-cultural and decisive atmosphere of the Central European University, I successfully applied for a scholarship in the PhD program of the European University Institute in Florence, where I spent three formative and extensive research years at the Department of History and Civilization. Finally, I defended my doctoral thesis at EUI in 2003 and after a couple of years, which I happily spent with my young children, I formed my thesis into a monograph (*Splendid Return: The Intellectual Reception of the Catholic Social Doctrine in Hungary, 1931-1944*).

Dr. György Gyarmati, who was the Director-General of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (ÁBTL) and previously also my professor at Pécs University, offered me position in the archives in 2009, which gave me, again, an impetus to further development. The history of the churches and different believer communities after 1945 still has a lot of blank spots to discover, and it also requires a special attention to the methodology of historiography. As my research has proceeded into the direction of Cold War history and the history of the Communist state security organs, I bumped into such biographies as for example the life of Töhötöm Nagy, whom I dedicated a monograph (*Álarcok mögött. Nagy Töhötöm életei – Behind the Masks. The lives of Töhötöm Nagy*), or the sociologist Béla Kovrig, whose academic and life arc is still to be reconstructed. So, it has been a real challenge and a life-long passion to me to make research and contributions in many fascinating topics of Hungarian history after 1945, and I do hope to continue in the future.

How did you find out about AHEA, and what led you to join?

I can recall three spontaneous, personal meetings, which were so impressive and reassuring for me that I decided to overcome my general shyness and come closer to AHEA. As a researcher of ÁBTL I was delegated to a conference organized by HSAC in Canada, where Enikő Basa, Judit Némethy, and Susan Glanz were also present. Probably, they won't remember the exact case when we met and chatted, but I do remember, because their open-mindedness and friendliness were appealing. In 2016 I was selected as a Fulbright visiting researcher and could do research in Milwaukee at Marquette University, where Béla Kovrig was a professor of sociology in the 1950s, after his emigration from Hungary. The Raynor Memorial Library preserves his documentary heritage, so at last I managed to bind Hungarian primary sources with American ones. This gave me the idea that perhaps an AHEA conference would be a proper platform to show what I found. Therefore, I sent my abstract to the annual conference in 2018 and had an opportunity to present to and get acquainted with AHEA members in Cleveland. I found this a very friendly and supportive community, and I also benefited much from the great plethora of the interesting conference presentations, which is one of the major characteristics of AHEA conferences to be praised for. I regard myself lucky to meet and to keep good contacts with lots of people from AHEA since then. The Steven Béla Várdy Legacy Scholarship, which I've just received, confirms to me what Klára Papp once wrote in one of her messages that AHEA wants to be a spiritual home for its members. And yes, I think, I feel home here.

What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?

My research has increasingly touched upon topics of emigrant and diaspora Hungarian communities, and in a couple of cases I had the opportunity to consult American primary sources in different libraries and archives. Networking is essential not only because of the dissemination of the research results, but friendly interactions might also reveal missing information, which can happen even in the time of the internet. And AHEA many times provided me with these hints, where to go, what to see, whom to ask... It seems to me to be a hub of American Hungarian academic and cultural encounters, which is a great mission of the association. I also try to give back to friends in AHEA by providing my assistance when they come and do research in Hungary. And beyond professional dimension I'm also grateful for the supportive personal interactions, which are also essential when someone arrives in US and instinctively still presumes that strawberries are seasonal fruits...

Tell us, please, about your current project.

Researching and writing monographs means a massive workload. Meanwhile I manage the improved version of Töhötöm Nagy's biography for English readers, I'm also involved with new work. As I presented at the AHEA conference last month, I deal with the historical legacy of Margit Slachta, the founder of the Society of Social Sisters. Having a certain Catholic social and political attitude, her activity was followed by constant public attention from the 1910s until her emigration in 1949, and beyond. With our team we prepare a volume, which gives a selection of Slachta's press appearances. Her speeches and reports reached not only the Catholic public, that's why we also try to show the feedback, reactions, and media interpretation she had received from any ideological or political sides. Her reception changed through time, and in our volume, we also investigate what these historical changes meant for her cause and how her public character was created, maintained, and finally challenged.

I also work as a member of a research group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA Lendület "10 Generations" Research Group), where we research extensively on how political and church elites reflected the Hungarian countryside and its problems during the ten generations from the times of Queen Maria Theresa until the present day. A great undertaking, indeed, which is worth following.

Have a New or Upcoming Publication?

We would love to help share news of the impressive and diverse work that AHEA members are doing! If you have a recent book, article, or other scholarly/artistic work you would like your fellow members to know about, send a brief description/promotional blurb and a link to further information to ahenews@gmail.com. Requests will appear in the order in which they were received and may be edited for space.

Don't Let Your Membership Benefits Stop!

Renew your 2022 membership to ensure uninterrupted membership today to ensure access to an expanded network of scholars and academics working in multidisciplinary fields of Hungarian Studies.

AHEA's membership dues enable you to access "Members Only" section of the website, participate in the governance of AHEA through your vote on our newly revised Bylaws as well as officers and board members.

We are pleased to announce membership discounts as well as the option of a new **lifetime membership**. Visit <https://ahea.net/members/membership-information>.

Only members in good standing can vote in leadership elections. Please remember to renew yours! **Click here** to access our PayPal link, or to get information on paying by check or bank transfer.



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