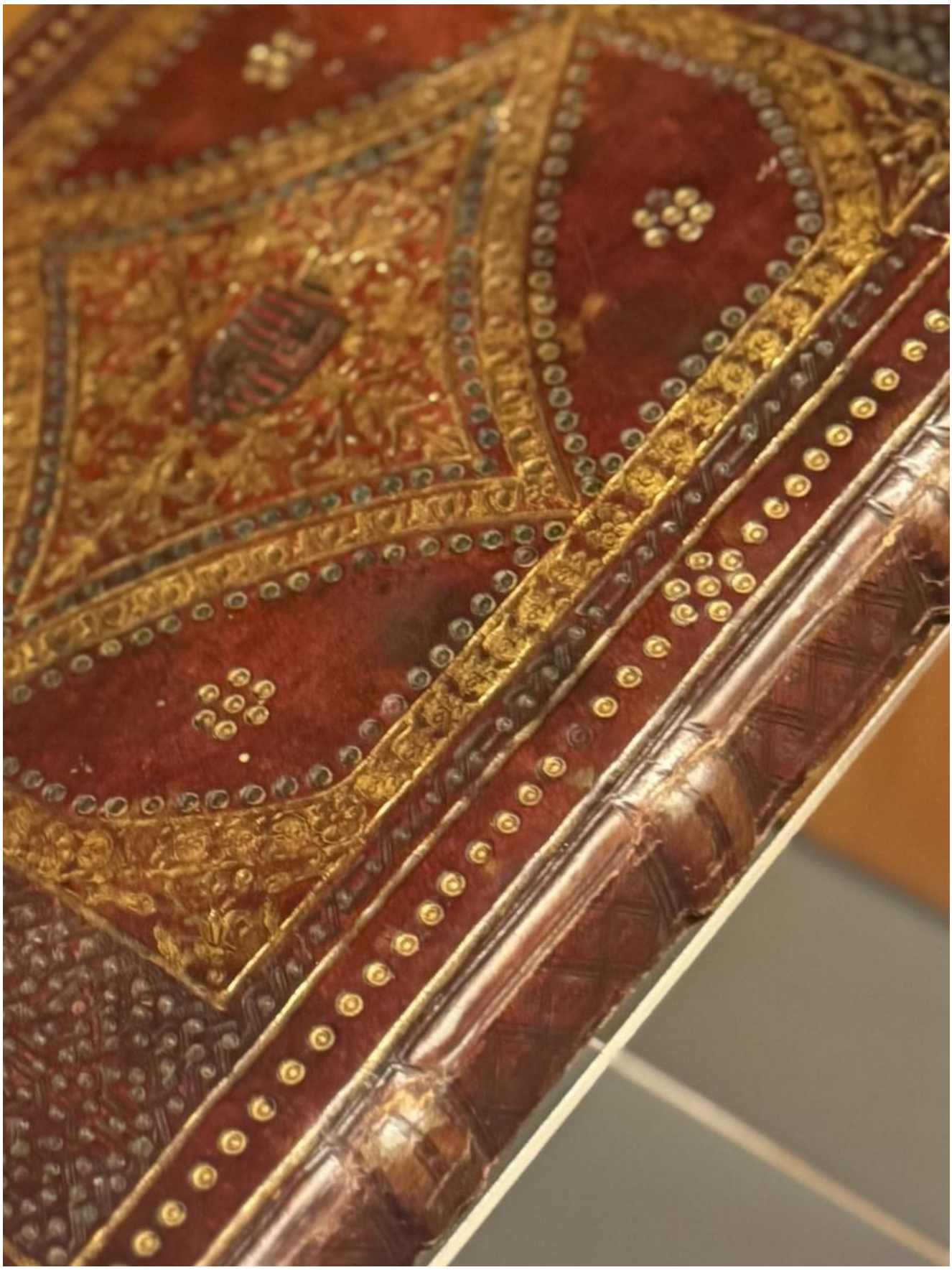
Books and Stones: A lecture on the Corvina Library at the Researchers' Night

2025/10/07

As part of the Researchers' Night programme series, on 26th September 2025 Edina Zsupán, head of the HUN-REN–OSZK Fragmenta et Codices Research Group, gave a lecture on the 5th floor of the National Széchényi Library.

[1]



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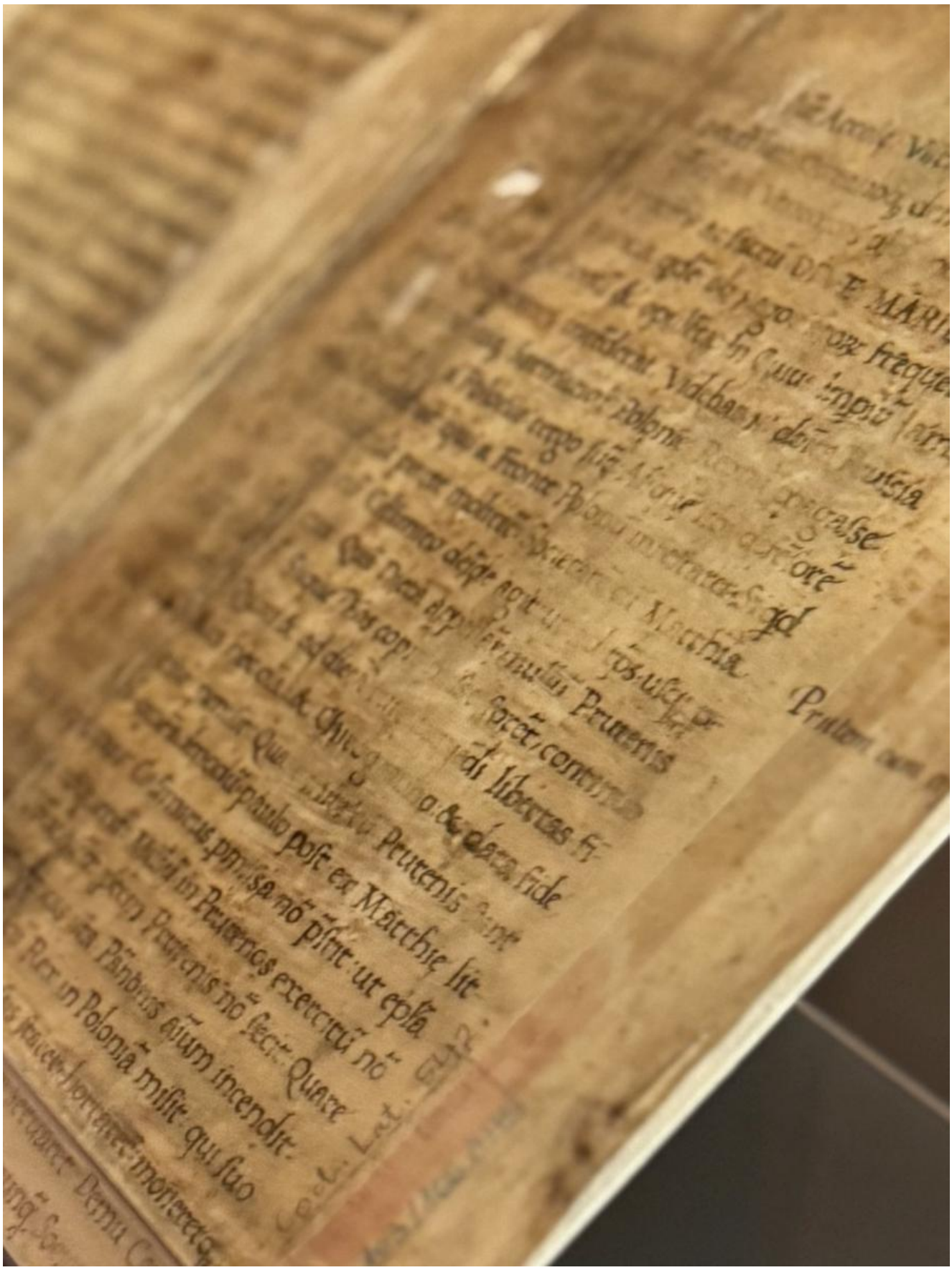

[3]

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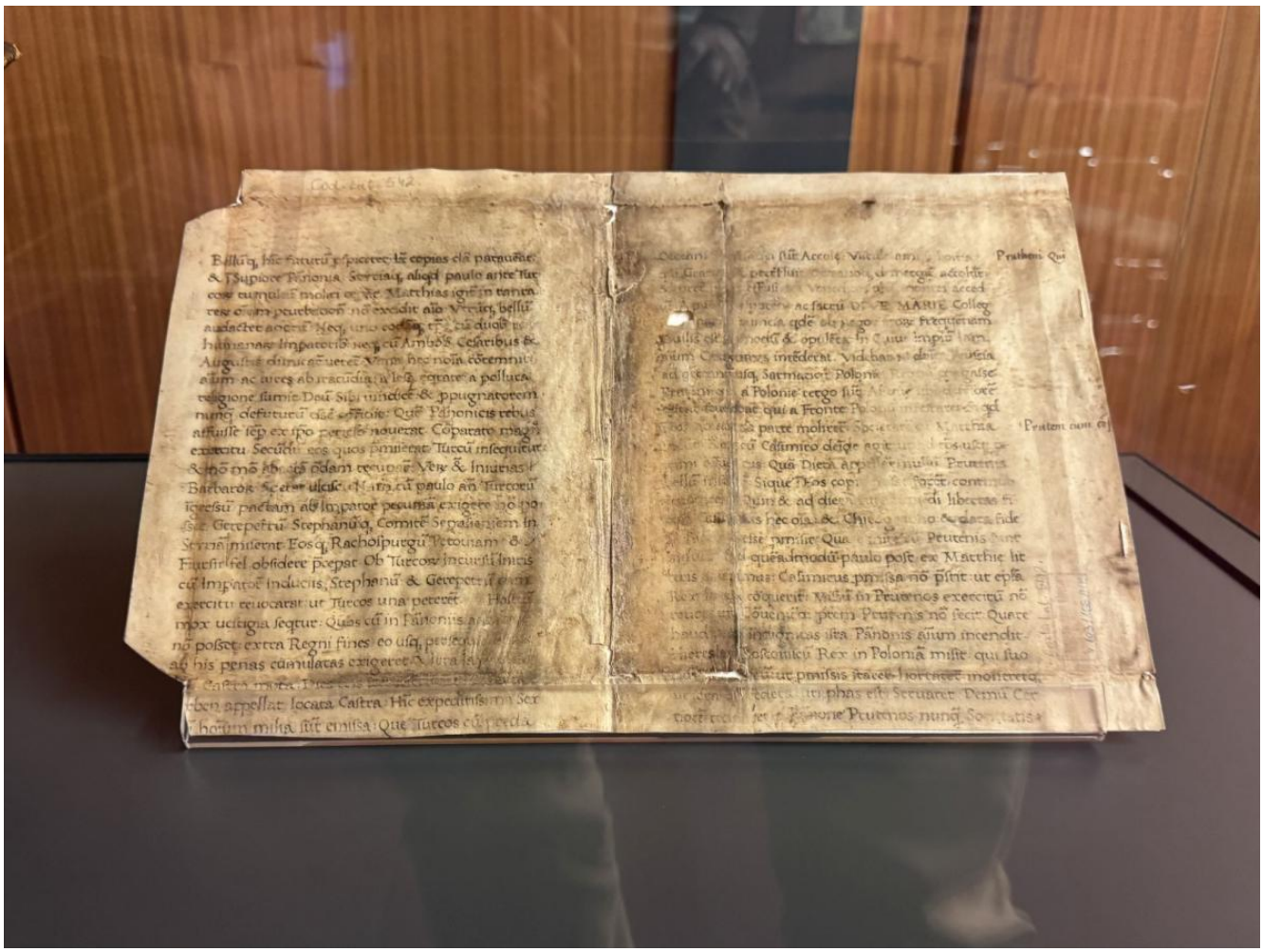
In her lecture Books and Stones – The Corvina Library as a medium for transmitting antiquity and Renaissance art, Edina Zsupán presented items from the collections of János Vitéz of Zredna and King Matthias Corvinus that bear witness to the emergence of Renaissance art – particularly architecture – in Hungary.

[4]

Flavius Blondus:
Roma Instaurata
1446
A győri corvina
MD
87.706
Flavius Blondus
AZ
ÚJRAÁLMODOTT
RÓMA
Győri Corvina

[5]



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During the evening visitors had a chance to view two exceptional codices. One of them was a fragment of Antonio Bonfini's Rerum Hungaricarum decades (shelfmark: Cod. Lat. 542). [8] The complete text of the work has not been published in print until 1568. Today, only three fragments of the former Bonfini Corvina are known, which entered the national library in 1872, 1923, and 1975, respectively. According to researchers, the royal copy of the complete work originally consisted of four volumes and contained over two thousand pages.

The other codex presented was a complete Corvina: Commentarium in Ciceronis librum de inventione by C. M. Victorinus (shelfmark: Cod. Lat. 370). [9] The comments by the 4th-century Roman grammarian was copied in Hungary before 1462. According to a handwritten note at the end of the codex, János Vitéz of Zredna — Bishop of Várad at the time — read and corrected the text in 1462. Although the bishop's coat of arms does not appear in the volume, the annotations clearly link the manuscript to his library. It was later incorporated into the Corvina Library, where it received the characteristic gilded decorative binding typical of Corvina manuscripts.

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