Latvian Book – 500

2025/11/19

Festive exhibition and diplomatic reception at the National Széchényi Library.

On 18th November 2025, the 107th anniversary of Latvia’s independence, a temporary exhibition opened on the seventh floor of the National Széchényi Library to mark the 500th anniversary of the publication of the first book in Latvian. The exhibition was realised through the cooperation of the Latvian Embassy in Budapest and the National Széchényi Library, at the initiative of Ambassador Jurijs Pogrebņaks.

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The exhibition, compiled by the National Library of Latvia specifically for an international audience, presents the history of Latvian book printing and librarianship through 24 English-language posters, with the aim of bringing the exhibition to as many European countries as possible. Around one hundred guests attended the ceremonial opening, including representatives of roughly fifty diplomatic corps.

The exhibition will be on view at the National Széchényi Library until mid-December.

“On the eighteenth day of the year” – as the programme put it – Ambassador Jurijs Pogrebņaks, together with Colonel Erik Naglis, Latvia’s non-resident military attaché to Hungary, welcomed the guests on the occasion of the anniversary and the opening of the exhibition Latvian Book – 500. In his opening address, Ambassador Pogrebņaks emphasised: “November is the month of Latvia’s national holiday, when we pay tribute to the freedom of Latvia and its people. This year we are celebrating a special anniversary: it has been 500 years since the first book in Latvian was published. It is not only a cornerstone of our culture, but also of our national identity.”

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In her welcome speech, Judit Gerencsér, Deputy Director General of the National Széchényi Library, highlighted that the exhibition sheds light on half a millennium of Latvian book history. She noted that just as the Chronica Hungarorum (the Buda Chronicle) has become part of Hungarian cultural identity. The earliest Latvian books are considered literary heritage that have shaped the Latvian nation. As she explained, the birth of book printing is not merely a technological achievement but a civilizational milestone that strengthens society, preserves memory, and elevates the human spirit.

At the event, the ambassador honoured the national library with a symbolic gift: he presented Judit Gerencsér with the newest coin in the collection of the Bank of Latvia, a novelty connected to the “500” theme. Participants of the ceremony celebrated together this significant anniversary of Latvia’s cultural heritage.

From 1 Book to the Castle of Light
Brothers Grimm and Brothers Kaudzīte
Superheroes Lāčplēsis and Crocodile Dundee

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