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Pécs University Almanac: Goals and Results

Studying in the social history of the citizens – either students or professors – of universities has a significant tradition and has produced serious results both within Hungary and abroad. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this research: university instructors themselves are decisive members of the knowledge elite and through higher education, they have the greatest influence in determining who gains access to this elite group.

The University of Pécs's Almanac has a twofold purpose: on one hand, it presents the academic achievement of higher education in Pécs, and on the other, it provides help for the researchers of the various professions and social history. The first volume, which covers the period from the beginning until the 1950s, was published in 2015, and the second volume, which contains data until 2000, was released in 2017. The third is under preparation, covering the heads of departments, faculties and the university between 2000 and 2020 and it is due to be published in 2023. The database containing these volumes can be accessed online with a multi-criteria query. The database only collects data on scientific work, specifically, on scientific work carried out at today's university and its legal predecessors, so it does not include data regarding religion, the parent's/ guardian's name, or social status, for example.

Who was included in the database? The requirement for inclusion was the existence of an academic title (nowadays, the title of PhD). Only full-time employees of the university were admitted into the database, not only from the faculties, but also from the library, or the offices if the person in question had an academic title.

In summary: the Almanac project can assist in historical research but only in conjunction with the use of data gathered from archival documents and texts of recollections, correspondence, and other sources. In order to gain data about social mobility, for instance, researchers need to carry out additional gathering work, but our database can serve as a solid ground. It also helps non-historians of the university construct their departments' or faculties' past.

Keywords: database, university history, archontology, twentieth century history, Pécs, Hungary



The Almanac Project was created at the University of Pécs in 2014 when the university management expressed the need to build a database containing the most important scientific data of the university's academically qualified full-

time professors. In March of the same year, an editorial committee was set up to work out the details and coordinate the tasks.¹

Work already started in the same year with the development of the project plan, the exact description of what data should be included, as well as the scope and format of the database. The database design was created by Tamás Markó, Róbert Acél, and István Lengvári, while the programming is the work of Ákos Takács, who has been developing the project's IT system ever since.² The database was also expected to be a searchable resource on the Internet, which, if possible, could provide separate search options for all data.

As part of the 2017 and 2023 Jubilee Programme series, the management of the university provided the work of a full-time employee in the University Archives for the project, who exclusively dealt with uploading data and handling administrative matters.

The three published volumes cover the following periods:

- I. The medieval university, the institutions of higher education in Pécs in the nineteenth century, and the Erzsébet University, which operated in Pécs from 1923.³
- II. The fragmented institutions of higher education in Pécs between 1950 and 1999.⁴
- III. The integrated University of Pécs, but only data on the academic leaders were included in the volume.⁵

The database containing these volumes can be accessed online with a multi-criteria query.⁶ It is important to mention that sometimes the activities of a professor could cover both periods; in this case, they were included in the volume that contains the more significant period, or when the professor in question was the leader of an institution or the university.

The database only collects data on scientific work, specifically, on scientific work carried out at today's university and its legal predecessors, so it does not include data regarding religion, the parent's/ guardian's name, or social status, for example. In order to gain data about social mobility, for instance, researchers need to carry out additional gathering work, but the scope of the project could not allow the collection of these data.

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¹ Members of the committee: Attila Borhidi (Faculty of Natural Sciences), Ágnes Fischer-Dárdai (University Library), Márta Font (Faculty of Humanities), István Kajtár † (Faculty of Law), István Lengvári (chair, University Archives), Imre Schneider † (Faculty of Medicine).

² On the technical implementation of the project, see Róbert Acél's article in this volume.

³ LENGVÁRI 2015.

⁴ POLYÁR 2017.

⁵ ACÉL – GUTAI – SOPONYAI-MÉHES 2023.

⁶ <http://almanach.pte.hu>.

academic title. Our work focuses only on the Pécs period of the university, and the following data are included:

Figure 1. Database entries of the Pécs University Almanac project

Birth records (Year/Place/Country)
Death records (Year/Place/Country)
Main faculty / other faculty
Place of work
Diploma (year /university/major)
Studies (university)
Qualifying exams (postgraduate)
Year of habilitation
Year of candidacy
Year of PhD
University positions (year/institute/post)
Study visits
Memberships in academic organisations
Awards (year/award)
Reason for leaving the university
Main works
Literature about the professor
Editor/Editor-in-chief
Research projects
Scholarships
Research group

Since the database with the material of the first volume was already available from the end of 2015 (and then the second volume from 2017), we already received feedback on the use of both the written and the online version of the Almanac during the work on the third volume. In several cases, historians contacted us to search for additional sources in our archive, but references to the database also appeared in several Wikipedia articles. In addition to the joy of seeing our work directly utilised, this is also important because users were able to use authentic data based on real historical research. On the other hand, of course, this imposed a huge responsibility and work on us, since each piece of information had to be based on appropriate archival or library research.

Work on the third volume required a fundamentally new work organisation. On the one hand, due to the large number of people included in the database, the research had to be reduced, so that only academic leaders from the period between 2000 and 2019 – heads of universities, faculties, institutes, or departments – were included. The other challenge, for which we had to find a solution, had two reasons: our work started after GDPR came into effect, so the data collection for a specific purpose (inclusion in the database) could only be realised by asking for the consent of the individuals. The other challenge was that data collection could only be partially based on public collection research, so it seemed the most authentic way was to request the

data from people in the database. It seemed likely from the start that some of them would not respond or expressly prohibit their inclusion in the volume and the database, so we did not provide a detailed data sheet for these leaders. However, they are included in the summary list at the end of the volume, together with their organisational units.

A fair question arises as to what further possibilities there are for continuing the project. According to the current (August 2024) situation, financing of the project has ended for the time being. Despite this, we continue to maintain and improve the database, upload data on leaving the university or death, for example, and we correct errors, of course. In 2026 we will also try to create an English version of the search interface so that our work can be more widely available and utilized.

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