

# Celebrating a Decade of Collaboration and Friendship with Professor István Monok

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I first met Professor István Monok in 2014, when our professional paths crossed through our shared dedication to libraries, scholarship, and the future of scientific communication. From the very beginning, I was struck by his remarkable combination of intellectual depth, historical knowledge, and genuine openness to new ideas. It was clear to me that Professor Monok was not only an outstanding scholar and leader of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library and Information Centre, but also a colleague whose vision extended far beyond the boundaries of his institution and country.

Our collaboration soon crystallised around what would become one of the most significant initiatives of my professional life: the Focus on Open Science series, and in particular the Budapest edition of this international event. Together, we worked to bring to Hungary a platform where researchers, librarians, policymakers, and publishers could gather to discuss how science should evolve in a world increasingly shaped by openness, digital technologies, and societal expectations. Since its first edition, the Focus on Open Science Budapest conference has become a landmark in Central and Eastern Europe, inspiring dialogues that reached far beyond the Danube. In 2026, we will proudly celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an achievement made possible by Professor Monok's unwavering commitment and enthusiasm.

But our collaboration has always been more than just organising events. Over the years, a deep friendship grew between us, nurtured by long conversations on European history, the evolution of cultures, and the role of research in society. We discovered a shared fascination with the resilience of European tra-

ditions and with the ways in which communities (whether research networks, universities, or library networks) transmit knowledge across generations. These conversations often took place in between professional commitments, sometimes while walking through book fair halls, sometimes over conferences' social events, always infused with a sense of curiosity and mutual respect.

The Frankfurt Book Fair became a regular meeting ground for us. We found together in its immense halls, engaging with European, American, and Asian publishers, probing into the challenges and opportunities of scientific publishing. These encounters allowed us to reflect and learn about the shifting landscape of academic communication but also to forge connections that benefited our respective communities. I recall vividly the countless hours spent in meetings with international publishers and other peer librarians, gathering diverse perspectives and building a common understanding on the sustainability of publishing models, the rise of open access, and the delicate balance between commercial interests and the public good. Professor Monok's insights, grounded in both historical understanding and present realities, consistently brought clarity and perspective to these discussions.

Another highlight of our shared journey was the organisation of the first conference on Public Engagement in Research and Citizen Science at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University in Eger. This initiative reflected our common conviction that research must not remain confined within academic walls but should involve and inspire the wider public. Visiting Sárospatak and learning how this ambitious community was building up its university, was a memorable experience. The passion of this intimate community of students and faculty to advance knowledge and education left a lasting impression on me, and it was in large part thanks to Professor Monok's network and vision that we were able to witness and contribute to this effort.

Our partnership also flourished within the framework of LIBER, the European Association of Research Libraries. Year after year, at LIBER's Annual Conferences, we expanded our joint network of international colleagues. Professor Monok played an essential role in supporting the Citizen Science Working Group, where we collaborated to promote the idea that research should be open and participatory, engaging citizens as active contributors to knowledge creation. His presence lent credibility and weight to the movement across Europe.

Looking back over more than a decade of collaboration, I can say without hesitation that working with Professor István Monok has been both a professional privilege and a personal joy. He embodies a rare combination of qualities: a distinguished scholar of European cultural history, a leader capable of

guiding one of the continent's great research libraries, and a friend with whom one can share both intellectual debates and personal reflections.

As we mark his distinguished career and his many contributions to the advancement of scholarship, I am grateful for the opportunities we have shared and look forward to continuing our collaboration. The 10th anniversary of Focus on Open Science Budapest in 2026 will be a celebration not only of the event series but also of Professor Monok himself, his vision, dedication, and enduring belief in the power of knowledge to connect people across borders.



*Photo: István Monok and Tiberius Ignat in 2018*