

<https://doi.org/10.36007/4478.2023.157>

DIGITAL CONTENTS OF HUNGARIAN ONLINE DATABASES IN THE SERVICE OF HISTORICAL TEXTBOOK RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on online Hungarian databases and resource groups which – in addition to the source materials available in public collections [5] – allow us to search, view and download related primary and secondary sources for research purposes in the course of historical textbook research [15]. Among the databases reviewed, the Arcanum Digitheca [20] and the Hungaricana public collection portal [29] stand out. Two collections of the latter database are definitely worth highlighting: the Collection of Decrees in Hungary [40] and the School Records [30]. The study will illustrate how online possibilities can expand education-related research through the example of sources from the era of Dualism. The focus, among others, is on the regulations, laws, curricula, documents of (educational) professional bodies, school records, textbook academic literature, and textbooks of the period.

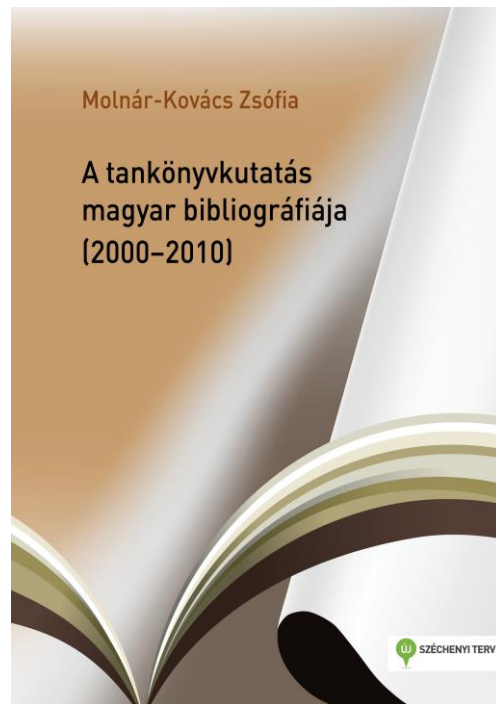
KEYWORDS

textbook research, source research, online database, digitisation, Arcanum Digitheca, Hungaricana

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

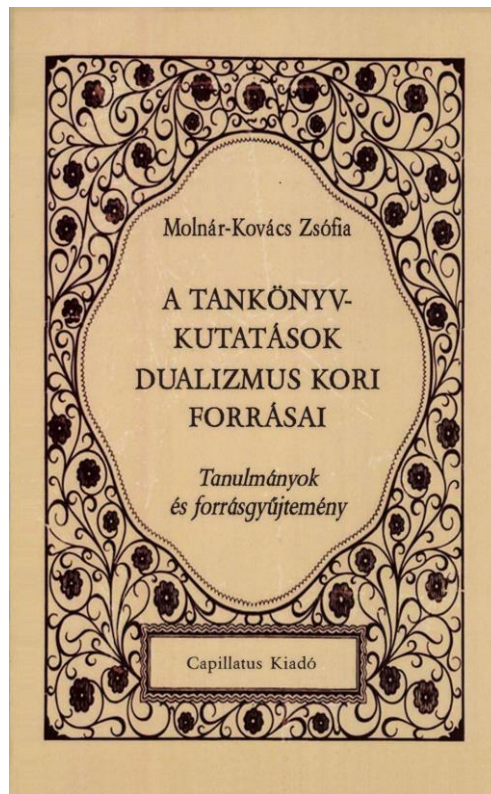
Over the past 10 years, we have systematically tried to build up and enforce the exploration and systematisation of Hungarian-language sources of historical textbook research and the exploitation of their accessibility. Over these years, the emphases that have emerged from the research work have been shaped and deepened both horizontally and vertically. The first major step in this process was the publication of the “*Hungarian Bibliography of Textbook Research (2000-2010)*”, and its creation with 1077 published bibliographic items [12, 10]. The aim of the compilation of the volume was to prepare a bibliography that aims at completeness. This ideal bibliography, on the one hand, takes into account the general perspectives of the textbook issue, the bibliographic items that foreground the positions and trends of textbook research (see first chapter, Textbooks in general – literature basics); on the other hand, it demonstrates the emphases of history textbook research, as well as the approaches and representations of history textbook research (see the second chapter on History textbook research) [11].

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Picture 1: Hungarian bibliography of textbook research (2000-2010) [12]

In 2017, the volume “*The Sources of Textbook Research in the Dualist Era*” was published, which – along with an introductory essay on the source knowledge aspects of textbook research between 1867 and 1918 and a paper focusing on the main Hungarian and international sources and locations of the sources [42, 34] – focuses on the publication of sources. The most extensive and definitive part of the book is the “*Collection of Sources*” which contains 78 sources and source excerpts and has been prepared with several aspects in mind. The collection includes primary and secondary written sources. In selecting the sources, we have sought to create a diverse and richly selective source base that provides a varied picture of the possible sources of written research on textbooks of the period. [13] The third and last major unit of the book is “*Annotated Hungarian literature on the research of textbooks of the Dualist era after 1918*”. The catalogue contains a total of 81 items, including textbook volume catalogues of the National Educational Library and Museum published in the 1980s, case studies, PhD theses and numerous journal articles. [13]



Picture 2: *The Sources of Textbook Research in the Dualist Era* [13]

Two years later, in 2019, the work “*Source Dimensions in Hungarian Textbook Research (1867-1918)*” was published. This text focuses on the typification of the sources available and discusses the possibilities of source analysis inherent in the source dimensions (sub-dimensions) created. Thus, this book continues the efforts begun in the volume entitled “*The Sources of Textbook Research in the Dualist Era*”, and deals with the written sources, the groups of sources and the background knowledge of sources that this previous work dealt with in more detail. As the title of this book suggests, we have sought to structure the sources along which research on textbooks of the Dualism period can be effectively carried out by setting up so-called source dimensions and assigning them to the sources. These source dimensions, which also form the main structural nodes of the book, are the following: education policy, pedagogy-school, and academic literature. [14]



Picture 3: *Source Dimensions in Hungarian Textbook Research (1867-1918)* [14]

Barnabás Vajda, in his work published in 2020, discusses all three volumes [12, 13, 14] in a separate subchapter, and draws the attention of his readers to their merits in terms of source research and stimulating further textbook research [17]. Also, the introductory thoughts of Barnabás Vajda in the preface of his book “*History Didactics and Research of History Schoolbooks*” emphasize the role and relevance of the literature sources in textbook research. As he explains: it is very important that textbook research should always be based on, draw on and start from the latest knowledge in the field. The textbook researcher should be familiar with the most relevant literature on the subject under study, preferably international literature. [17]

SOURCE DIMENSIONS IN HUNGARIAN TEXTBOOK RESEARCH

In the main part of the study, and in the following, we will take a look at the three dimensions of Hungarian textbook research (education policy, pedagogy-school, and academic literature) to see which sources and groups of sources are available in digital form, as well as which Hungarian databases provide access to them and how. The order of the sub-dimensions of the three dimensions is illustrated in Figure 1, which also gives a clear picture of the system of dimensions/sub-dimensions.

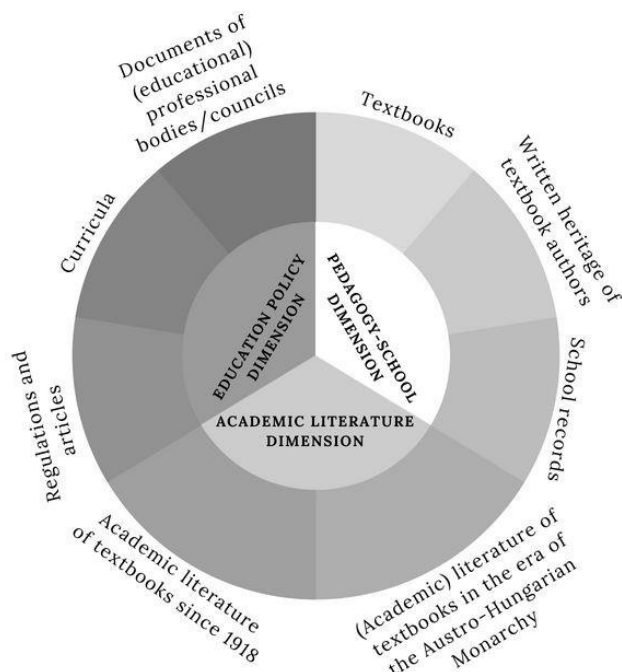


Figure 1: Source Dimensions in Hungarian Textbook Research (1867-1918) [14]

DIGITAL CONTENTS IN THE SERVICE OF HISTORICAL TEXTBOOK RESEARCH

Regulations and Articles

The main source publications that dealt with or discussed Hungarian decrees from the period 1867-1918 were the Collection of Decrees in Hungary (*Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára*), the Journal of Elementary Teachers (*Néptanítók Lapja*), and the Official Gazette (*Hivatalos Közlöny*), as well as the volumes entitled “*The Organization and Administration of the Hungarian Elementary Public Education, Commercial and Industrial Vocational Education*” [9, 16].

The main online sources of these publications are the following: the *Hungaricana public collection portal* [29] and the *Arcanum Digitheca* [20]. We can also take a look at the *Digitised Legislative Knowledge Repository* [22], which also redirects us to Hungaricana for the regulations in focus. Legal sources form the backbone of the documents in the Digitised Legislative Knowledge Repository. This portal provides users with comprehensive information about the history of the Hungarian legal source system and the system of written sources of law. [22]

The *Digitised Legislative Knowledge Repository* emphasises in relation to the *Collection of Decrees in Hungary* [40] that the database contains digitised versions of the printed volumes of the publication published between 1867 and 1945. The Collection of Decrees contains a selection of royal (governor) decrees, prime ministerial decrees, governmental decrees, ministerial decrees and other provisions not belonging to the scope of legislation issued in the given period [23]. And the *Arcanum Digitheca* is the largest continuously expanding digital periodical database of Hungary that publishes the full catalogues of hundreds of Hungarian scientific and professional journals, weekly and daily newspapers [19].

Curricula

Although we are not aware of online access to the curricula of the Dualist era, the *Digitália* platform of the digitised document collection of the University of Pécs Library and Knowledge Centre [21] is worth our special attention from this point of view. The *Digitália* primarily focuses on a collection of curricula and instructions [44] approved between the two world wars, but the range of digital resources is constantly being expanded in parallel with the assessment of reader needs. Thus, along the lines of these efforts, a broader review of curricular resources may be possible in the future.

Documents of (educational) professional bodies/councils

Regarding the dualism period, we paid special attention to the written documentation of the (educational) professional bodies of the time, including the minutes of the meeting of the Textbook Committee (3-11 August 1868) [14, 13].

The minutes of the committee meeting are known from several sources and have appeared in several contemporary documents. It can be found in the Journal of Elementary Teachers (*Néptanítók Lapja*), the Budapest Gazette (*Budapest Közlöny*), and in Ödön Dölle's work "*The History of Education*", published in 1871 [1, 2, 3, 4, 6]. It can also be found in Zsófia Molnár-Kovács's 2017 sourcebook [13]. The main online repository of the indicated source publications (except Dölle's work) is the *Arcanum Digitheca* [20], where the full text of the minutes can be found in the columns of the indicated journals.

Textbooks

It is safe to say that a multi-perspective study of the textbooks of a given period is possible primarily through the examination, thorough review and detailed analysis of the textbooks themselves. Today, the most outstanding institution with a collection of Hungarian textbooks, the National Educational Library and Museum [42] and its library, the National Textbook Library offer copies of Hungarian textbooks from the period 1867-1918 for research purposes. [14] Online access is not (yet) possible for the comprehensive mapping and exploration of textbook volumes, but one of the keys to promoting historical textbook research – and the long-term preservation of sources – is to encourage the digitisation of textbooks, to effectively enforce efforts to this end, and to ensure widespread online access to digitised source documents.

The *Leibniz Institute for Educational Media – Georg Eckert Institute* (GEI) [34] is an excellent international example of digitisation efforts and work, as its research library started digitising its own stock of German textbooks in 2009. Their aim is to collect as many of the hard-to-access textbooks published in German libraries from the period between the 17th century and the end of the National Socialist era as possible and make them available online. The results of the digitisation work, the digitised collections, can be consulted and researched on the institution's *GEI-Digital* online platform [27].

Written Heritage of Textbook Authors

Naturally, the main sources for the written heritage of textbook authors are archives and manuscript repositories, for example the written heritage of Imre Schultz (textbook author, teacher, director of the teacher training institute) enrich the holdings of the University of Pécs Archives [18]. At the same time, online databases of Hungarian archival records and sources offer an equally useful research platform. One of these is the *Hungaricana* database, through which *Archival documents* [35] and *Archival publications* [36] are available online in the *Library of Books and Documents*. Among the main online repositories, we therefore emphasise the importance of the *Hungaricana public collection portal* [29], while *the databases of the National Archives of Hungary* [38] are also worth a closer look [14].

School Records

In the field of research on the history of education, the source value of school records is particularly well known from the point of view of school history and local history. However, the role of Hungarian school records in historical textbook research is less well known, the validity of them as authentic primary sources in textbook research can be seen first of all in the study of textbook usage and the life histories of textbook authors. [14]

The school records enrich the special collection of the National Educational Library and Museum (Budapest, Hungary) [42], which collects copies of the records with the aim of completeness [7, 31]. Research based on the school reports is also facilitated by the fact that the digitised collection of the school reports and on the volumes of the “*Bibliography of Hungarian School Records*” are, among other useful sources, available in the *Library of Books and Documents* through the so-called *Hungaricana* database [30].

(Academic) literature of textbooks in the Era of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

Among the pedagogical journals of the dualism period, we should first of all mention Hungarian Pedagogy (*Magyar Paedagogia*) as the first Hungarian scientific journal on education. During the dualism period, the columns entitled *Essays* (later *Studies*), the *Hungarian literature* and the *Miscellanies* also regularly published articles on textbooks. The Journal of Elementary Teachers (*Néptanítók Lapja*), the official organ of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, founded in 1868, also featured writings (articles, article series) on textbooks. However, the Journal of Elementary Teachers (*Néptanítók Lapja*) deserves special attention from another point of view as well, since together with the Official Gazette (*Hivatalos Közlöny*) and the Collection of Decrees in Hungary (*Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára*) they were the main source publications of the textbook regulations of the period, as well as the list of authorised textbooks. We should also mention a journal, entitled the Gazette of the National Council of Secondary School Teachers (*Országos Középiskolai Tanáregyesületi Közlöny*), founded in 1867, which also regularly published writings on textbooks. [14]

The main online repository for these journals is the *Arcanum Digitheca* [20], which has been deservedly emphasised several times in this study.

Academic Literature of Textbooks since 1918

As can rightly be expected in all scientific research, due attention must be paid to the research background, publications and tendencies on which textbook research focusing on the period 1867-1918 can rely today, and on which the study of textbooks of the period can be further structured and developed with complete certainty. In the process of gathering a complete research background, we also have the opportunity – unintentionally but inevitably – to explore the digital availability of secondary sources.

The source publications include a number of journal articles: almost two thirds of the examined literature items can be identified as book chapters or studies published in (professional) journals [14]. The journals include, for example, Hungarian Pedagogy (*Magyar Pedagógia*) [39], *Educatio (Educatio)* [24, 25], *Book and Education (Könyv és Nevelés)* [33], *School Culture (Iskolakultúra)* [32], *History of Education (Neveléstörténet)* [41, 43], and *History Teaching (Történelemtanítás)* [45], with fairly extensive digital access to relevant articles. In the case of journal articles, a basic starting point is therefore to visit the websites of the journals and to search the databases, of which the *Electronic Periodical Archive & Database* [26] is the first one we recommend. Besides this, it is also worth visiting the website of the *Hungarian National Digital Archive* [37] whose database “is a public online collection that publishes the digitized cultural goods of Hungarian museums, libraries, archives, private collections, NGOs, cultural and educational institutes on a common surface.” [28]

CONCLUSION

There is an increasingly urgent need to take advantage of the digital world in the case of educational and cultural history resources, including those that are at the forefront of textbook research, and thus to create the possibility of broad electronic access to both primary and secondary sources [5, 8, 15].

The acceleration of the digitisation process of Hungarian textbooks, which is also in line with international trends, should be particularly emphasised and prioritised, as it is a way to maintain and further strengthen active research activities even if access to public collections is limited, and to increase and deepen the effectiveness of analytical studies based on digitised documents.

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