



**Application for the  
IFLA – ENSULIB Green Library Award  
2020**

**Library in the Garden, Garden in the Library –  
Green Complexity in the Life of a Public  
Library**

**Ezüsthegy Library  
Branch Library of Óbuda Platán Library**



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## Contents

Contents	1
I. Green Library Endeavors and Realizations of the Óbuda Platán Library and its Branch Library	2
II. Green Complexity in the Life of a Public Library - An Introduction to Ezüsthegy Library	3
III. Library in the Garden, Garden in the Library - Special Services of the Ezüsthegy Library	11
IV. Summary	17

## I. Green Library Endeavors and Realizations of the Óbuda Platán Library and Its Branch Library

### Preface

#### General Description of the Institution

The Óbuda Platán Library (in collaboration with its branch library), maintained by the Óbuda-Békásmegyer Local Government, operate as a city library. It provides public library services for the population of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Budapest, Hungary's capital and largest city of almost 2 million inhabitants. The library awaits visitors with nearly 70,000 documents, a children's library section and a wide range of events. As a cultural community space, it offers programmes for the roughly 120,000 people living in the area. The library regularly participates in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district's cultural projects, maintains close relationships with local cultural and educational institutions and civil societies. Its services are also used by the inhabitants of settlements in the vicinity of Óbuda and Békásmegyer.

The institution operates on two sites:

- The Central Library is called Óbuda Platán Library (address: 1031 Budapest, Arató Emil square 1). Since October 2000 it has been welcoming its patrons at its current location, the Aquincum English-Hungarian Bilingual Primary School.
- Its branch library opened in a single room at the local community centre in June 2004. From 2018 it operates in a new building under the name Ezüsthegy Library (address: 1038 Budapest, Ezüsthegy str. 16), with extended services.

#### Óbuda Platán Library's Commitment to the Green Library Approach

In 2016, a commitment to the green approach was formulated at the Óbuda Platán Library. The mission of the institution is to promote sustainable development, environmental protection and environmentally conscious behaviour. In addition to introducing selective waste collection and minimizing paper-based administration, the library pays a great deal of attention to developing a collection that promotes the green approach and eco-awareness. Expanding the "Eco Corner" with books on human ecology, sustainable development, green thinking and environmental protection is a priority. In addition, it is also important that it offers the readers programmes that emphasize the green approach and values, thus strengthening the community spirit. The so-called "Óbuda BookStops" are a special service of free, always-open bookcases set up at busy public spaces. They provide an opportunity to recycle people's own books that are no longer needed, as well as promoting volunteering, donation, and environmental awareness.

**A turning point in the institution's green library commitment was the relocation of the branch library to a new building. The new location had the potential to demonstrate the green approach in a complex way. Eco-awareness and green library features are present in certain elements of the technical building systems (TBS), in the library's day-to-day operation, in the makeup of its collections, in the special library services, in its concept of events, in library user training and thematic courses, in collaborations with partners and in supporting processes, such as information technology or transportation.**

*Óbuda Platán Library*



## II. Green Complexity in the Life of a Public Library - An Introduction to Ezüsthegy Library

The Ezüsthegy Library, the Branch Library of the Óbuda Platán Library serves both as a public library and a cultural community space. In addition to its traditional roles, it is also involved in extra-curricular education and the promotion of reading culture. A wide range of events contribute to its becoming a popular meeting place and community space. With its special services, it helps to promote environmentally conscious behaviour. It currently has 1,800 registered users. All age groups are represented among its readers from toddlers to active workers and retirees. The library has a collection of 24,000 units, consisting of books, audiobooks, magazines and DVDs. In 2019, the number of documents borrowed was 52,000.

### The City District and Its Catchment Area

“Békásmegyer”, the northern part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Budapest was an independent settlement before 1950. Today, it is divided into two parts: “Ófalu”, a part of the old Békásmegyer, lies on the western side of the slopes of József-mountain and Ezüst-mountain, and has, to this day, retained its suburban nature. The greater part of the eastern side, the present-day Békásmegyer, is a housing estate with blocks of flats. On the bank of the River Danube there is also a resort area dotted with holiday homes. The terrain is very diverse, with mountains as well as flat and floodplain areas. Due to its easy accessibility, good infrastructure and a location that attracts tourists, Békásmegyer’s catchment area also includes the surrounding settlements.

### History

The Óbuda Platán Library opened its branch library in June 2004 at Békásmegyer Community Centre. The member library, serving mainly families with children, only had a 60 m<sup>2</sup> room to welcome its readers. Its popularity was due in part to its regularly refreshed stock and to its central location. During the 14 years of its existence, as both the expectation of users to extend services (such as computer stations, study areas, journal section, teenagers’ zone, events) and the number of readers grew, the expansion of the library became more and more urgent. Finally, in 2016, a decision was made to move the branch library to a separate building. The renovation of the library building lasted from January to May 2018. The branch library was closed at its old location on May 19, 2018 and reopened in the new building on July 2, adopting the name “Ezüsthegy Library”.

The new library is located at Ezüsthegy street 16, only a few minutes’ walk from the district centre. The building is under local monument protection. It is very conveniently located in the street between the Békásmegyer housing estate and Békásmegyer-Ófalu, within easy reach for all inhabitants, so it can provide library and other special services for both neighbourhoods. The state-of-the-art library is located in a 231 m<sup>2</sup> energy-efficient building, with almost 600 m<sup>2</sup> of courtyard and garden space, which is rather exceptional for a library building in Hungary.

*The branch library at Békásmegyer Community Centre (June 2004 to May 2018)*



*Visualization of the new library*

EZÜSTHEGY UTCAI HOMLOKZAT



RÓZSADOMB UTCA FELŐLI NÉZET - BEJÁRAT ÉS UDVAR

RÓZSADOMB UTCAI HOMLOKZAT



KERT FELŐLI NÉZET - BEJÁRAT ÉS UDVAR



MADÁRTÁVLA TI NÉZET A RÓZSADOMB UTCA FELŐL - BEJÁRAT ÉS UDVAR



FEDETT-NYITOTT BEJÁRAT



*Building renovation works*



## Preparations

Just as a new family is born with the birth of a child, so is a new community formed with the establishment of a new library. Moving to a new building, we felt the great responsibility of meeting the expectations of our (re)-forming audience as much as possible. In 2017, we conducted a survey of the library's future services, events and opening hours. Our ideas on green library services were also included, which met with the approval of the reading public. For example, when they were asked to finish the sentence: "An ideal library for me is...", the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular option out of 25 turned out to be: "... where I can use the garden as an outdoor reading room."

The building was adapted to the needs of the public through consultation with the contractors. The development of special services, taking into account the characteristics of the property, was made possible as a result of negotiations within the library community and discussions with cooperating partners.

### *Ezüsthegy Library*



## The Road to a Green Library

Numerous circumstances have contributed to the realization of the green library, such as:

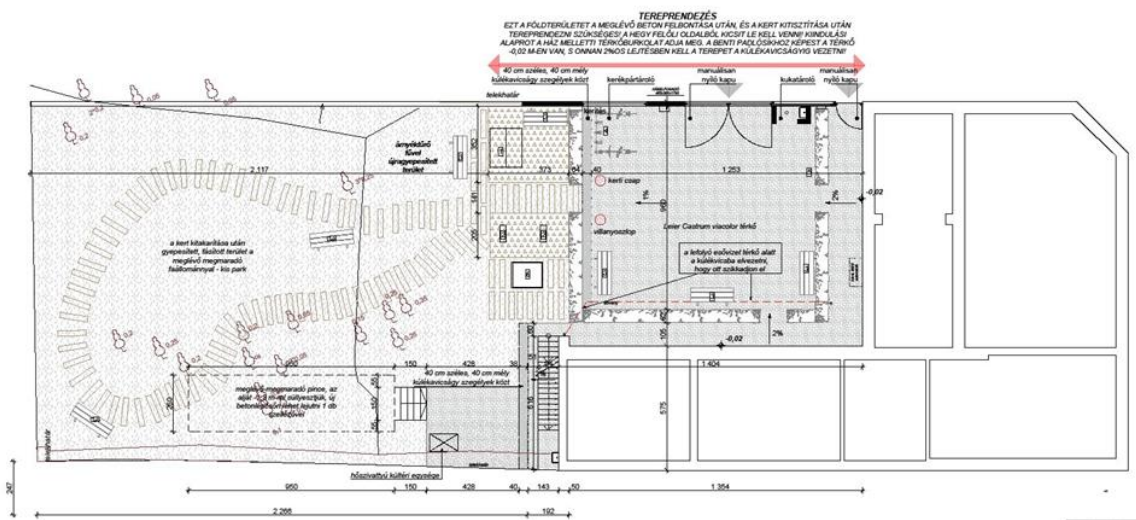
- The Óbuda-Békásmegyer Municipality supports several green projects, they are environmentally sensitive and take good care of their institutions. They give priority to the issue of environmental protection and sustainability, and support a number of initiatives, including the 'Óbuda Platán Library Going Green' programme which started in 2016 as an independent project.
- The site of the library is rather unique, as it is located at the meeting point of a housing estate of 40,000 people and a suburban area with approx. 15,000 inhabitants, typically living in detached family homes. Although the two neighbourhoods are completely different in nature, both have a need for outdoor garden activities and programmes, and residents of both areas are receptive to green opportunities and green alternatives. While those who live in houses are mainly interested in kitchen gardens, ornamental flower beds, keeping pets, Slow Food and reviving the traditional lifestyle, flat-dwellers are enthusiastic about cultivating community gardens, balcony gardening ("kitchen gardens on the balcony") and they, too, show a growing commitment to the Slow Food movement.

View of Ófalu and Békásmegyér

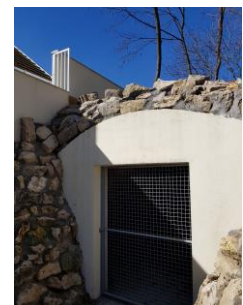


- The property has many beneficial features. One of the most important of these is the well-appointed plot. The 869 m<sup>2</sup> property has a 231 + 23 m<sup>2</sup> building with a 40 m<sup>2</sup> basement and almost 600 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor space, so the property features both indoor and outdoor components, such as barrier-free access to the courtyard, a community playground, a garden with trees, lawns and paved tracks, spice and teaching gardens, and bicycle storage. In Hungary, not many libraries have a courtyard or a garden, and therefore they can seldom offer outdoor functions. This makes Ezüsthegy Library special among its partner institutions.

Plot layout



The main parts of the property: building, courtyard with a community playground, garden, basement



- We have a building that is equipped with energy efficient heating and lighting systems and several of its technical building systems are built according to the requirements of environmentally responsible building certification systems. There is no gas supply in the building. Power consumption is minimal thanks to energy efficient systems. The rooms are flooded with natural light due to the numerous windows, glass walls and the Sunlite Tube System. All artificial light sources are LED lighting devices; the average life expectancy of such a lamp is said to be 25-30 years. The doors and windows are made of natural wood with double glazing filled with argon gas. Combined with ceiling and floor heating, the Daikin low-temperature air-to-water heat pump is powered by renewable energy. Heat pumps gain 80% of their energy for cooling and heating from the outside air, a free and renewable source, and 20% from low-tariff (H) electricity. The system's energy efficiency rating meets all "green" building requirements, providing the library with heating, cooling and hot water in a sustainable manner.

*Energy efficient heating and cooling system (low-temperature air-to-water heat pump)*



*Energy efficient lighting system with Sunlite Tube System*



*Lots of windows, glass walls and natural light*



- IT Support Network-Attached Storage (NAS) = Network Storage System.
- It should be noted that the new team of librarians was also strongly committed to the ecological approach, with the mutual desire and intention to support the green library specialization.



**Eco-Awareness in the Library's Everyday Life**

From the very beginning we have set our hearts on advocating sustainable development, environmental protection, and environmentally responsible behaviour. Certain elements of the architecture and the TBS of the building were designed to meet the requirements of environmentally responsible building certification systems. It is part of our mission to ensure that eco-awareness is constantly present in the life of the library: we put particular emphasis on raising awareness, sensitizing readers and the importance of individual responsibility, paying special attention to children.

To this end, we have introduced selective waste collection both indoors and outdoors, and use a composting system in the garden, which occasionally also functions as a residential collection point. For library services that require shipment, we purchased a Nissan E-NV200 40kWh Acenta Electric Van and built an EV charging station in the library yard. As part of our day-to-day office activities, we focus on minimizing paper-based administration, and use eco-equipment and tools where ever possible. For example: we store the archive issues of journals in wooden boxes, rental umbrellas and reading glasses in wicker containers, and we use paper wicker baskets made from old newspapers to store other small items.

*Selective waste collection (both indoors and outdoors) and composting system in the garden*



*Electric Van and EV charging station*



*Eco-tools*



We purchased toys made of natural or recycled materials for the children's library. Public spaces are decorated with houseplants, which are known to have a calming effect and enhance well-being. Some of the plants were donated by patrons to the library. We pay special attention to expanding our "Eco Corner", a collection of books on green thinking and eco-awareness. We help our readers find a new home for books, magazines or audio documents they no longer need. Documents withdrawn from the library's collection are sold at occasional book fairs for a nominal price. When planning our events - for both children and adults - we place great emphasis on organizing programmes which promote an ecological point of view, sustainable development, eco-thinking and environmental protection. Emphasizing our commitment to eco-awareness, we launched a "Family Green Hut - Eco Club." The aim of the family programme series is to help develop and foster environmentally conscious education and healthy lifestyle habits in the family. We aim to revive the traditions of our ancestors and the environmentally friendly ways of preparing their food and making their utensils. We share ideas on how to recycle various materials and how to reduce waste production in a household.

#### *Houseplants in the public spaces*



#### *Family Green Hut - Eco Club*



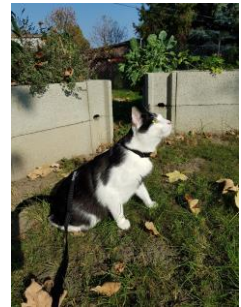
During the summer and autumn months, our spice and teaching gardens are maintained on a community basis, with the help of readers and volunteers, but without the use of chemicals. Librarians and volunteers cultivate the flower beds in the courtyard, in the garden and in the public area surrounding the building. The cheerful, colourful, attractive environment is an important addition to our outdoor reading room and leisure activities, with undisputed physiological effects as well as a positive influence on people's moods.

Our library is a pet-friendly workplace. Patron's dogs are also welcome to visit our facility (provided they abide by the rules of "peaceful coexistence"). In the garden there is a bird feeder and a beetle nest we built with the children. During the summer, we also provide water to drink for dogs, birds, and lizards hiding among rocks surrounding the basement. Convenient bicycle storages are meant to encourage our readers to leave their car at home and to popularize the beneficial effects of exercise on physical and mental health. Half of our staff comes to work on foot and the other half by public transport. This is yet another way to contribute to the reduction of pollution in our capital.

*Flower beds*



*Pet-friendly workplace*



*Bicycle storages*



We have signed cooperation agreements with several local non-governmental organizations and communities who, just like us, attach great importance to environmental protection. Among our partners there is a civil society which runs a community garden, an association that endeavours to preserve our cultural heritage and traditions, and also a primary school with a special educational programme. We support a wide range of green initiatives, e.g. those of the Municipality, local societies, etc. We have joined the following eco-campaigns:

- “Let’s Clean up Óbuda!”- The purpose of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District’s Municipal cleaning campaign is to collect fallen leaves during the autumn and to clean up discarded or illegal trash.
- “Let’s Compost!” - the 3<sup>rd</sup> District’s Municipal composting programme that facilitates the collection and processing of compostable waste from institutions and households, thereby reducing waste production.
- Supporting the “Békási Climate Circle” created within the framework of the project “Facing Climate Change” for the implementation of public awareness programmes.
- “Pass it back, bro” - a joint campaign of the Jane Goodall Institute, the Foundation for Africa and the “Védegylet” Society to collect cell phones no longer used in Hungarian households.

„Let’s Clean up Óbuda”, “Let’s Compost!”, „Facing Climate Change” - green initiatives of the Municipality



### III. Library in the Garden, Garden in the Library - Special Services of the Ezüsthegy Library

Our aim is to combine library, garden and outdoor services in a unique way. Where we can, we take library services to the garden and bring garden services indoors. We are joining the list of institutions in Hungary that have pioneered the provision of library and specialized services.

*„ ... a library is a magic chamber in which there are many enchanted spirits. They wake when we call them. When the book lies unopened, it is literally, geometrically, a volume, a thing among things. When we open it, when the book surrenders itself to its reader, the aesthetic event occurs.”*

Jorge Luis Borges: *Seven Nights*. New York: New Directions, 1984. p. 61.

Originally published in Spanish as *Siete Noches*

#### “Eco Corner” and “Green Hut”

First, books on different aspects of ecology were selected from the collection and, later on, we acquired more and more documents on environmental awareness and eco- and horticulture to form the base of a special collection. The section for adults is called “Eco Corner” and the one for the children “Green Hut”. For the time being, the core of the collection is made up mainly of books and magazines, but we also plan to purchase audio, visual and multimedia materials.

“Eco Corner” for adults and “Green Hut” for kids

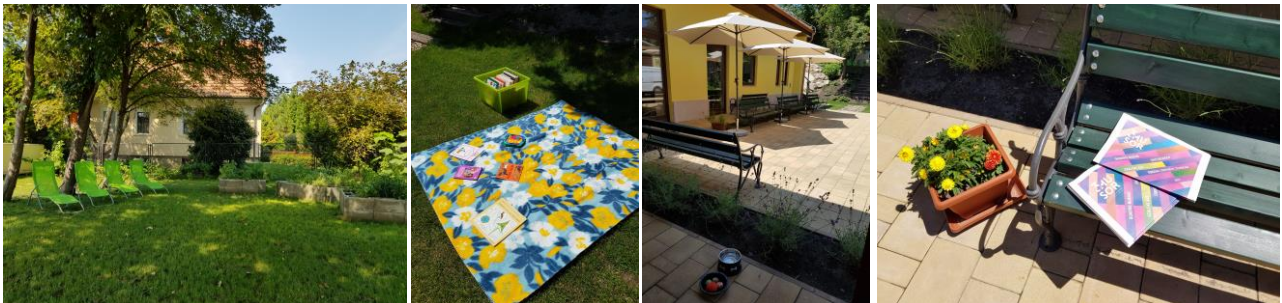


### Outdoor Reading Room

Our library, with great inside and outside spaces, is an “agora” where visitors can meet as well as get access to information, documents and take part in events. The available space serves our purposes very well, such as the community (play)ground, courtyard and garden. There is a strong demand for outdoor leisure activities in a green environment, especially on the part of those living in housing estates. It is well-known that fresh air, gardens and green plants have a recreational, mental, physical and psychological benefit. Our outdoor reading room contributes to reducing stress and promoting relaxation. We have created a comfortable environment for those who want peace and quiet (by purchasing garden loungers), while also providing opportunity for social contact (by supplying benches, picnic blankets and sunshades). The main purpose of the community playground set up in the yard is to facilitate and maintain relationships among families with children.

For the outdoor reading room service, we created a collection from books that were donated to the library but still in fairly good condition, which is constantly being updated and replaced. The documents were placed next to the garden playground along with the outdoor toys. No separate collection was created for the adults: they may choose any document from the main collection to read in the open air.

Outdoor Reading Room



*„The seed cannot know what is going to happen, the seed has never known the flower. And the seed cannot even believe that he has the potentiality to become a beautiful flower.”*

Osho [Chandra Mohan Jain], Dang Dang Doko Dang, chapter 4

### Seed Library

Libraries, as collectors, processors, custodians and providers of intellectual property, have been performing their mission for centuries. Seed banks are also entrusted by the collection of the “treasures” of their own specialty, saving rare finds and preserving species of flora. Seed libraries are alloys of seed banks and libraries, which, by lending seeds of plants that tolerate local conditions well, ensure the expansion of the field of cultivation, and the exchange and distribution of rare domesticated specimens. They also establish and reinforce the responsibility for natural and cultivated flora, environmental and climate awareness, and are an excellent tool for community building by garnering patron participation.

Following the example of the local repositories of intellectual knowledge, we established a local repository of plant seeds with a lending service: a seed library. We were rather taken by the idea of providing “food” for both the mind and the body at the same time, same place and along the same principles, combining the traditional role of the library with a unique one. From a practical point of view, we fulfil an existing demand on the part of our patrons living in houses with gardens in the suburban areas as well as housing estate residents tending communal gardens, which are ever growing in popularity in recent years.

Our partner in the seed library service is the “Óbor” Circle. The civil society provides the crop production expertise needed for seed production and collection, and our library provides the library expertise for seed processing and exchange, as well as the venue for meetings and exchanges of experience. Forming the core “collection” of the seed library was the library’s responsibility and made possible by the generous help of sponsors. However, the stock is maintained on a community basis. We encourage our readers and visitors to supply their self-harvested seeds and offer them for lending and exchange. Any good cause can serve as the foundation of a community. Seed library service is free of charge.

### Seed Library



„Si hortum in bibliotheca habes, deerit nihil.” - „If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.”  
Cicero: Epistulae ad familiares; IX, 4 (Letters to friends; 62–43 BC)

### Herb Garden

From the outset, we have believed it is essential to create a seamless connection between “indoors” and “outdoors.” One such connecting point is the herb & spice garden, jointly tended by librarians and patrons. Appropriate for the growing season, we provide (specialist) lectures, advice and literature to the members of the local community to help them get started on their own. The library herb garden is maintained according to the principles of community gardens: common cultivation is followed by common harvesting and drying, and the produce can be taken home for free.

*Spice and herb garden*

### Tisane & Lemonade

The spice & herb garden gave us the idea to launch a supplementary service promoting the importance of a healthy diet: we provide herbal tea free of charge for visitors during the cold season. Next to the tea cupboard there are books on herbs and spices, so that people can broaden the scope of their knowledge on the subject. Our winter herbal tea house is turned into a lemonade stall in the summer. The tea cupboard is moved to the porch where lemonade is served for our patrons and visitors to events. To spice the beverage up, lemongrass and mint from our own herb garden may be used to taste. The idea was an immediate hit and became one of our most popular services during the warm season. The community spirit also manifested itself here, as visitors repeatedly donated lemons and mint plants to the library.

*Tisane & Lemonade*

*“For the artist - what a richness of material for pen or paintbrush or camera. And for a child there is the magic of a beautiful flower springing from a bulb planted in the soil.”*

Goodall, Jane: *Seeds of hope : wisdom and wonder from the world of plants*. New York : Grand Central Publishing, 2014., p. 51-52.

### Teaching Garden

Although creating school gardens has become a priority in the life of educational institutions in recent years, those with school yards covered with concrete - typical of schools in housing estates - often do not have the opportunity to do so. Our library has formed partnerships with local schools and made available a part of its garden for this purpose. Teaching gardens are also cultivated on a community basis. They play an important role in the education of schoolchildren, in forming their ideas on eco-awareness and individual responsibility. They are a part of both our library user training and thematic (eco) courses, but they also play a role during our outdoor programmes. The teaching gardens are open to visitors from planting season to harvest (March - October).

### Teaching Garden



### Harvest



*„The soul of the child in his play should be guided to the love of that sort of excellence in which when he grows up to manhood he will have to be perfected.”*

Plato: The Laws

### Eco-Events for Adults

When we moved to the new building, in addition to the traditional library services, we also expanded the scope of our services with the organization of events. We organize cultural and leisure programs for all age groups. These include literary evenings, book presentations, lectures, group sessions, and courses for the elderly. A part of our programmes are aimed to promote environmental awareness, such as regular events like "Herbs and Physical and Mental Health" or the "Family Green Hut - Eco Club" and other occasional educational presentations, such as "Climate Rescue" and "Long Live the Pantry!".



### Eco-Events for Kids, Outdoor Library Classes and Thematic Activities

A large number of families with children live in the library's catchment area, therefore we put a great emphasis on children's programmes in our range of services. Children can attend fairy tale readings, various crafts, puppet shows, play sessions and educational activities. The main focus of our events, besides the library's literacy and literary programs, is eco-awareness and outdoor activities. For groups from educational institutions we also arrange library user trainings, theatre pedagogy and thematic (eco) classes. Some of the events and programmes take place outdoors (e.g. eco-workshops, garden playground).

Our mobile library service, the "Ezüsthegy Explorer", is an interactive library eco-playground which aims to promote environmentally conscious lifestyle involving all members of the family. On the playground, the little explorers looking for adventure can test their knowledge and agility and try the green fairy tale corner, literary treasure chest, various crafts using natural materials and other exciting challenges.

#### Eco-Events



#### IV. Summary

During its fifteen years of existence, the Ezüsthegy Library has come a long way. Its maintainer, the 3<sup>rd</sup> District Municipality, founded it as the branch library of the Óbuda Platán Library in 2004 in response to the growing demand of the population. Its host institution, the Békásmegyer Community Centre, provided 60 m<sup>2</sup> of space for a library with a starting collection of 10,000 documents, which served as its home for the next 14 years. In addition to performing its traditional tasks, the library also participated in providing extra-curricular education. With the increase of both the library stock and the number of patrons, the available room became more and more inadequate and the limited floor space made the expansion of the scope of services impossible: the library was unable to meet changing user needs. The lack of space became permanent and hindered the development of the library and the increase of the reading public.

Moving to a separate building in 2018 was a real turning point in the life of the library. Adopting the name “Ezüsthegy Library,” the new location could now offer countless opportunities to expand the range of services and programmes. The service structure and the event concept were renewed in accordance with the needs of a diverse reading public (based on a survey conducted in 2017), and the capabilities of the new location, which had the potential to demonstrate the green approach in a complex way. Eco-awareness and green library features are present in certain elements of the technical building systems (TBS), in the library’s day-to-day operation, in the makeup of its collections, in the special library services, in its concept of events, in library user training and thematic courses, in collaborations with partners and in supporting processes, such as information technology or transportation.

Eco-awareness is a constant presence in the life of the library. We promote environmentally conscious behaviour by setting a good example, supporting awareness programs and joining (promotion) campaigns. We help sensitize and educate children visiting the library in a playful way.

In addition to its traditional services, the library has created special green services such as: “Eco Corner” for adults; “Green Hut” for kids; herb garden; teaching garden; herbal tea room; lemonade stall; seed library; outdoor reading room; eco-club; eco-events for adults and children; outdoor library classes; thematic activities; eco-playground. Without a shadow of a doubt, all of our green services have met the approval of our patrons. Behind the success story there is a newly formed community who have voluntarily offered their time and support for the common cause. For example, the spice and teaching gardens, the seed library, the herbal tea room and lemonade stall are all maintained on a community basis.

In the future, we plan to develop further green services that are community-building and community-based. Our goal is to serve as a reference library for our partner institutions in service development and implementation of specialized library services. We are planning to welcome students of library studies for practical classes and demonstrations. We also intend to give a series of lectures for the next generation of librarians at the Eötvös Loránd University on developing and maintaining specialized services.

With all of our activities we strive to produce high quality, high impact tools that demonstrate to audiences the contribution of libraries to development in all its dimensions (IFLA Strategy 1.1).

We have successfully struck a balance between our traditional and specialized services with our needs, capabilities, indoor and outdoor spaces, and have been seeking to maintain this harmony ever since. Our main principle of taking everything inside the library out into the garden, and bringing everything in the garden inside the library also inspired our motto:

*“Library in the garden - garden in the library”*

