

Experiences with the new website of the Hungarian Society for the History of Pharmacy

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The Hungarian Society for the History of Pharmacy started a systematic development of its website (www.gyogyszeresztortenet.hu) in 2013, which opened a new era in the history of pharmacy in Hungary. We currently have full pdf copies of about 100 books, 47 doctoral theses, 1600 articles (an estimated 85-90% of all papers in the last 60 years), a Lexicon of more than 300 outstanding Hungarian pharmacists, a Lexicon of more than 1000 old drugs based on the labellings of pharmacy jars, hundreds of photos of old pharmacy equipment, old industry-made preparations and prescriptions, in addition to useful links (such as links to our fellow Societies) and everyday newsflow. Since these pdf files have been prepared using optical character recognition, by a built-in Google search engine researchers of our website can search for any information simultaneously in more than 80,000 pages of highly diverse literature sources. Our website even provides information to people searching Google or other search engine in general, having heard nothing about our website before. Consequently, we have been contacted by individuals in and outside Hungary who have found genealogy and other data, and the very efficient identification of any keyword or expression stimulated research and publication activity as well. For example, this electronic research tool opened way to co-operating with more than a dozen pharmacy student to puzzle out the meaning of acronyms of materia medica on the labels of old pharmacy jars and glassware. This work on its turn has already made it possible to revolutionise a traditional Hungarian pharmacy museum, now equipped with touch screen computers showing details on each exhibited jars and computer-assisted virtual drug compounding for children from old prescriptions. This presentation intends to share our experiences in developing and using electronic research in history of pharmacy.