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The Relevance of Illustration in Book Marketing in the 18th and 19th Centuries in Slovakia

Abstract

In each era, there are distinctive features that have influenced the possibilities of promoting intangible art products in the broader context of marketing. The possibilities, methods and forms of promotion have changed and evolved over the centuries and have depended on the development of mass means of communication, as well as on new methods and forms of promotion that reflected the requirements of the target groups during a particular period of time. In the present article, we focus on brand building of the printer (i.e. the printer's signet), on the relevance of illustration in book marketing that takes the form of an artistic reference to the content of the work (the content frontispiece) and we also focus on building the PR of the author (the frontispiece portrait). The present study deals with the period from the 18th to the 19th century and in terms of geography, it is concerned with the territory of Slovakia.

Key words

Book Culture. Cultural Heritage. Frontispiece. Illustration. Marketing. The Printer's Signet.

Introduction

It is generally agreed that each co-author of a media product (for the purposes of this paper, the author of an illustration in a book) has been always interested in gaining public attention for their work and in its subsequent propagation. The same issue has concerned the producer/publisher who benefits from the success of the author in economic terms. In the past, successful sales were also conditioned by excellent marketing; however, in the 18th - 19th centuries, the possibilities of presentation were markedly different from those possibilities that were created by the emergence of new means of mass communication in the 20th century. In the present study, we emphasize the role of illustration as an artistic reference for the content of the work (the content frontispiece) in the context of building the publisher's brand (the printer's signet) and building the public relations (PR) of the author of the book (the

frontispiece author portrait).

Contemporary technologies bring a variety of attractive possibilities for presentation; however, also in the past (at the time when media and technologies were not advanced) business representatives worked extensively with public relations. However, this type of communication cannot be considered less elaborate even if it utilized "only" the possibilities of presentation typical for the given period of time. The marketing of books in the 18th and 19th centuries was influenced by the development of mass printing and by the growth of the book publishing industry. The expansion of the book publishing industry coincided with new methods and techniques that were used to promote and sell books. Illustrations are an inherent contentual and functional part of book production. As part of the book cover or of illustrations facing the title page, they are often the first (visual) information that a buyer notices. Illustrations are a visual accompaniment to the story and for many buyers, they present the impetus or the reason for buying a book. The moral and economic value of a book is also enhanced by the reputation of its illustrator.

1 Objectives and Methods

The study aims to emphasize the relevance of illustration in the sale and in the promotion of a media product i.e. of books in the territory of Slovakia in the 18th - 19th centuries. It is a historical type of research that is based on the analysis, interpretation and presentation of monographic and periodical press production in which this topic was presented. At the same time, the research presents selected illustrations and their authors in the context of the problem under study. The research is based on the direct method of historical research - within this method, the explanation of facts directly from the sources and the combination of a diachronic and synchronic approach lead to the synthesis of information on the above-mentioned types of illustrations (i.e. of the printer's signet and frontispiece). It also leads to an emphasis of the relevance of illustration to the sale and it leads to the promotion of a media product i.e. of books in the territory of Slovakia in the 18th and 19th centuries. We consider our research to be basic/primary, and based on the primary heuristics in which we examined monographic book production in the 18th and 19th centuries (bibliographic records of more than twenty thousand of prints), we have focused on and we have addressed semantic links between textual and visual parts of documents published in the territory of Slovakia, with an emphasis on identifying selected elements of notable nature in the context of the problem under consideration. It was essential to incorporate these methods into the research - the historical statistical method, typological and model analysis/probe and to a certain degree,

the procedures that are used in so-called business history. In the research, we have focused on a distinctive identifier of the printer/publisher/editor - the printer's signet and the frontispiece.

2 The Promotion of Book Production in the 18th-19th centuries

In the 18th century, books were mostly sold through printers, publishers and bookshops that also played a key role in promoting books through notifications, posters and catalogues (especially in the 18th century, publishing, printing, the book trade, and bookbinding were not separate professions/ positions. All these activities were usually centralized at printers). The aim was to attract the attention of potential readers and to increase the interest of readers in books. However, most of the marketing activities were primarily focused on the local level and therefore, most of the books were distributed only within a limited circle. The book publishing industry of the time was rather complex. "The accomplishment of publishing venture was inextricably linked to the securing of an adequate capital, while the success of sales of the final product and the fulfilment of the amount of profit expected from its sale tended to be uncertain. Publishers looked for a way to satisfy their economic interests, to guarantee a return on their investments and at the same time, to make a

reasonable profit."¹ (Bulková, 2010, p. 93) Moreover, in the past, publishers faced the risk of the reader's disinterest - "...our ideas suggest that already in this period there existed and spread an element that we can label the other pole - trash, pornography and occult literature"² (Kollárová, 2010, p. 67). In the 18th century, the predominant interest was in prayer books and hymnals, calendars, prayer books, craft fair prints - religious songs and prayers. "In the 80's of the 18th century, the principles of a shift or a change in reading interests, denoted by the term secularization appeared on a regular basis, which suggested a tendency towards leisure reading (novels) as well as a tendency towards scholarly or scientific literature and the authors based their arguments mainly on analyses of booksellers' catalogues."³ (Kollárová, 2010, p. 67)

The development of railways and the extension of the railway network in the 19th century enabled distributing and

1 Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language "Uskutočnenie vydavateľského zámeru bolo neoddeliteľne späté so zabezpečením primeraného kapitálu, pričom úspech odbytu finálneho produktu a naplnenie výšky očakávaného zisku z jeho predaja, bývali neisté. Vydavatelia hľadali spôsob ako uspokojiť svoje ekonomické záujmy, zaručiť návratnosť investovaných prostriedkov a súčasne dosiahnuť primeraný zisk." (Bulková, 2010, p. 93)

2 Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language "...naše tušenia naznačujú, že už v tomto období existovalo a šírilo sa niečo, čo môžeme nazvať druhým pólom - brakom, pornografiou a okultnou literatúrou" (Kollárová, 2010, p. 67).

3 Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language "V 80. rokoch 18. storočia sa pravidelne objavujú tézy o posune či zmene čitateľských záujmov označené termínom sekularizácia, čo naznačuje tendenciu smerom k odychovej (romány), ale aj smerom k odbornej či vedeckej literatúre, pričom autori vychádzajú najmä z analýz kníhkupeckých katalógov." (Kollárová, 2010, p. 67)

selling books over greater distances. The development of postal services allowed the order and delivery of books directly to readers' homes. The improvements in the conditions for the distribution and the increased literacy of the population led to the development of the book publishing industry and to the increase in competition – naturally, the importance of promotion increased as well. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines of the given period of time became a common form of book marketing (see Figures 1-5). Book reviews and literary criticism were important tools for the support and promotion of new works. Critics and reviewers influenced the type of books that were popular and successful.

The 18th and 19th centuries also saw the emergence of certain elements of branding. Certain publishers and booksellers gradually built up their own publishing brands in an attempt to gain regular and loyal customers. The publisher's logo, an attractive book cover, subscriber activities (Fig. 6) as well as a renowned author or an illustrator became a part of the marketing of books. Within all the above-mentioned activities, there was a considerable function of book illustration as it had a long tradition. Book illustration has always played an important role as part of marketing and branding. Over the centuries, there have been various influences on book illustration – these have included the influence of the illustrator, the printer and technology as well as social, economic and political conditions. Books that preserve the cultural heritage of a nation are a source of information about the period of their production, and it is only from a historical perspective that we

can fully and correctly understand their role. By analogy, we can also understand the role of book illustration from the perspective of marketing. In their research, experts and scholars in the field of book culture have analyzed various contexts of a word and of illustration, such as the functions of illustrations in books, the functions of illustrated books, the methods of illustrators, and the types of illustrations; however, in our opinion, an important research question concerns the investigation of the relationship between words/text and the illustration (Repucho, 2013). According to Knapčoková, “the link between illustration and text may take various forms of the interconnection that depend on the choice of genre (both illustration and literary form), the period of origin of both the work and the illustration or the assumed reader preference [...] The advantage of illustration is a specific relationship to the textual part of the book. This connection between text and image represented (the authors' note – at present, this connection still exists) an important connotative link that guided the recipient in the interpretation of the work – of the image.”⁴ (Knapčoková, 2019, p. 63)

In the marketing of book culture, it is this communicative level that is of considerable importance. The expression

4 Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language “Väzba medzi ilustráciou a textom môže mať rôzne formy prepojenia, ktoré závisia od voľby žánru (ako ilustrácie, tak aj literárnej formy), obdobia vzniku diela aj ilustrácie či predpokladanej čitateľskej preferencie ... Výhodou ilustrácie je osobitý vzťah k textovej časti knihy. Toto spojenie textu a obrazu predstavovalo (a aj dnes predstavuje – pozn. autoriek) významnú konotačnú spojitosť, ktorá usmernila recipienta v interpretácii diela – obrazu.” (Knapčoková, 2019, p. 63)

of an idea in the form of an image is not only an aesthetic enhancement of a book but it is also a space to engage the reader and to provide a visual stimulus, which may have significantly influenced their decision to buy/own the book. This was also the role of the frontispiece – a full-page illustration that is placed opposite the title page. According to Špániová, illustrations of this type have a “special rhetorical power” in order to create a strong content context and in order to establish a certain atmosphere (Fórišová, 2022). Petr Voit, a prominent Czech historian of book culture presents the following definition of frontispiece in his work *Encyklopedie knihy*: “[a] frontispiece is an allegorical or documentary illustration that was placed in front of the title page from the 17th century onwards, presenting the contents of a book in an artistic condensation or in the form of a portrait. It also gained publicity for the author or for another person associated with the production of the work.”⁵ (Voit, 2008, p. 283)

The author's portrait image is one of several types of portraits that could be found on the pages of old printed matters (round portraits of nobles, celebrities; stylized portraits of e.g., rulers, while using landscape painting, allegory or mythology). A portrait presenting the artist is a clear form of an authentic and realistic representation of the person/personality/author.

5 Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language “Frontispiece je alegoricky alebo dokumentárne poňatá ilustrácia, ktorá bola zaraďovaná od 17. storočia pred titulný list, prezentujúca výtvarnou skratkou obsah knihy, alebo formou portrétu zviditeľňuje autora alebo inú osobu spätú so vznikom diela” (Voit, 2008, p. 283).

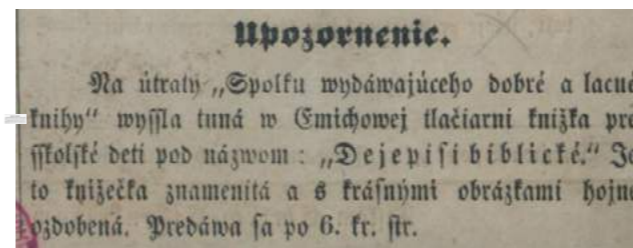


Figure 1: An advertisement in the form of a notice about a new book
Source: Digitalna.kniznica.info (2017)



Figure 3: A bookseller's advertisement in Narodni noviny
Source: Dikda.snk.sk (2015)



Figure 5: Calendar advertisement in the magazine Hlas
Source: Digitalna.kniznica.info (2017)

Literárny oznamovateľ.
Obrana augšpurského vyznání. Z pôvodného spisu Filip Melancton-a preložil Jan Leška, evanj. aug. v. consenior nitrans v Bzincech. V Uh. Skalici. Tiskem dědičů Joz. Škarnicla. Náklad vydav. „Korouhve na Sionu“. Velká 8-ka, str. 221. Cena 80 kr.
Výborné toto dielo, za jehož úvodom slúži predmluva a samé Filippa Melancton-a, cteným rodákom našim evanj. aug. vyznání čo najdôraznejšie odporúčame, keď toho prekladu dosiaľ nebolo.

Figure 2: Literary announcer in the magazine Obzor
Source: Digitalna.kniznica.info (2017)

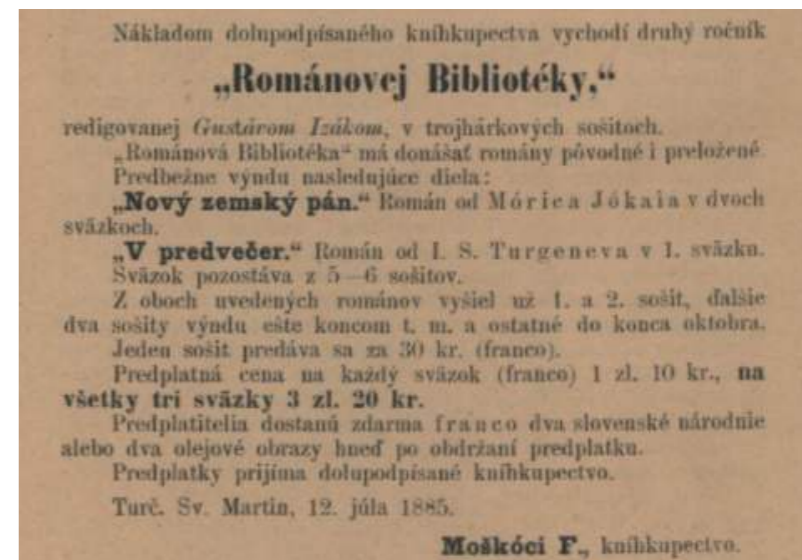


Figure 2: Bookshop advertising in Slovenské pohľady
Source: Dikda.snk.sk (2015)

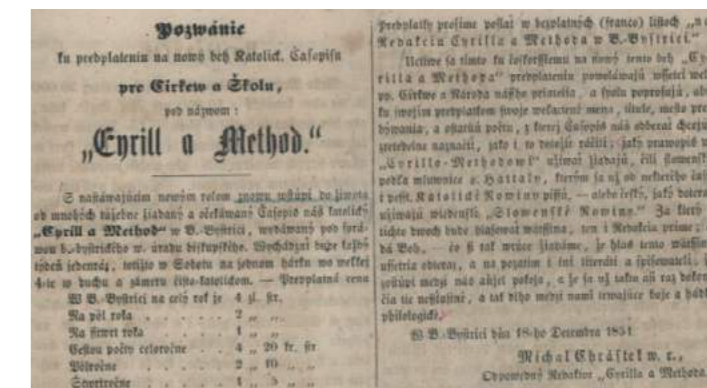


Figure 6: An invitation to subscribe to Cyril and Methodius
Source: Digitalna.kniznica.info (2017)

The woodcut presented in *Vita et fabulae* (the work was published in Ulm in 1476 or in 1477), a work on the life and fables of Aesop can be considered the first frontispiece portrait. The portrait was produced by Boccaccio, who was an engraver based in Ulm. As a part of the research that we carried out in the field of the 18th and 19th century Slovakia-related prints in the territory of Slovakia, we focused on engraved frontispieces. We have identified more than 400 full-page illustrations of this type, of which more than 50 are portrait illustrations. The earliest of these is a frontispiece portrait in the work *Záhradka Ragská* [*The Garden of Eden*] that was published by Matej Bel in Ján Pavel Royer's printing house in Bratislava in 1720 (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: The frontispiece portrait - the portrait of Johann Arndt

The author of the work - the German Lutheran theologian Johann Arndt (Arndt was the author of a book of prayers and spiritual hymns as well) is depicted in an emblematic frontispiece portrait with an open book in his hand, which contains the calligraphic text *Krystus má mnoho*

služebnjků ale máta nasledownjků [*Christ has many servants, but few followers*]. In order to express the importance of the book and the author, Arndt is depicted with the aforementioned book as a symbol of high culture and religion, with a bookcase, an ink bottle, a quill and with a crucifix as a symbol of Christian virtue and the hope of redemption. In a decorative frame, the portrait includes the dates of his birth and death and his role within the Church. Below the portrait, there is the text: "Teď vhljdas Obraz Arndowj Twáři. Chcessli Obraz Dusse spatriti Čtenáři! W geho drahých Pisnjch můžeš geg nagjti. Aby wssickni mohli Duchu geho mýtyi!" (Figures 8, 9 (the 18th century) and Figures 10, 11 (the 19th century)).

The inclusion of content frontispieces in printed works that directly communicated the content to the reader presented an engaging marketing move, and it also made these works more appealing/interesting to the reader. Therefore, as examples, we could use the content frontispiece for Georg Christian Ralf's work on natural history that was published by Karol Werfer in Košice (Fig. 12) or a German anonymous prose work with stories of hunting, travel and battles (Fig. 13). In addition, similar examples could be mentioned - e.g., Anna Hofbauerová's cookbook that was popular in the 19th century (Fig. 14) or the frontispiece in Molière's comedy *The Miser* (Fig. 15).

The presence of the frontispiece in a document was also influenced by the pricing policy of the manufacturer, i.e. of the printer. Full-page illustrations in a printed book were also a symbol of the printer's wealth (or of a lack of resources, respectively) as it was an expensive

component of their production. The wear and tear of the printing blocks on which the engravings were prepared, and the need to prepare or to purchase new ones also highlighted the issue of the solvency of the producer on the one hand, and of the customer on the other. For this reason, in the 18th century, frontispieces were mainly from large printing workhouses, such as the Academic Printing House in Trnava and in the families of printers, such as the Royer, the Landerer, the Packo and the Weber families in Bratislava; in the 19th century, due to an improvement in printmaking techniques and lower printing costs, almost every printing house used this type of graphic illustration. However, even these printing houses needed to compromise due to pricing affordability, as in some copies, the frontispiece was bound in; however, in other copies it was not bounded in.

In our research, we have identified several marketing roles of the frontispiece portrait. In addition to representing the solvency and importance of the printing house, these portraits also presented readers with an illustration or a graphic view of the writer. The readers were able to meet the writer in person and they could also get to know the writer's face in order to make the reader feel closer to the writer. Another aspect of marketing was the spectacular staging and the quality of illustrations. The reader was also introduced to the trends and directions of art for a particular period that was presented through these small graphic forms.

In the 18th century, there were important illustrators/engravers/copperplate engravers, such as Sebastian Zeller - he

was Samuel Mikovíni's pupil who also illustrated Bel's works; Jean Langraf, who belonged to the circle of the Academic Printing House in Trnava where he engraved a number of allegorical themes and religious compositions for this printing house. Another important figure was Ján Filip Binder who was a productive author - of his works, about 110 graphics have been preserved and they were mainly illustrations for books. Several of these works were published in Bratislava by the Landerers, by Packo and by the Academic Printing House in Trnava. The group of important figures also includes the Assner brothers from Austria, who were the court engravers of the Landerer Printing House in Bratislava. In Slovakia, the members of the group also included Gottfried Prixner, who prepared illustrations for an occasional print dedicated to Ján Jesenák and for the prose work of Joannikij Bazilovič on Teodor Koriathovits. In addition, Gottfried Prixner prepared illustrations for the works of the prose writer Gvadáni who was an important and popular writer.

Several of the above-mentioned figures were active in the 19th century - at the time, they were joined by, e.g., Viennese copperplate engraver Anton Tischler and by František Bartel - the Czech wood engraver, printer, and publisher. František Bartel presented his works in Slovakia-related prints of the 19th century with four full-page illustrations in the book of stories for Slovak children and frontispieces in the volumes of Dobšinský's *Prostonárodné slovakové povestí* [*Slovak Folk Tales*]. Another figure that should be mentioned is Josef Axmann who is considered the most important Austrian copperplate engraver of the 19th century in the field



Figure 8: The frontispiece portrait - the portrait of Peter Pázmán in his work Hodegus



Figure 10: The frontispiece portrait - the portrait of Hermina Ries in her work Vig beszélyek



Figure 9: The frontispiece portrait - the portrait of Eduard Yung from 1795



Fig. 11: The frontispiece portrait - the portrait of Andrej Sládkovič in the edition of his work Básnické spisy

of reproductive graphics. This field played a key role in the illustration and dissemination of works of art before photography was invented.

The printer/publisher/bookseller's signet, i.e. brand building through a well-defined illustration was unquestionably the identifying brand element. A distinctive illustration was associated with the brand and it identified its products. In this way, printers, publishers and booksellers sought to build a network of regular customers who would prefer books from their publisher. Again, we present a definition by Peter Voit who considers the signet as "a graphic mark with an identifying and a strong decorative drive"⁶ (Voit, 2008, p. 807). According to Ecsedy, a signet is an emblematic engraving of a printer or a publisher that is frequently used and the illustration as such overlooks the content of the document. These small graphic forms (or their choice) were mainly based on the style of the printer/ publisher (Ecsedy & Simon, 2009a).

The first printer's signet on the pages of printed books could be found in the middle of the 15th century. With this graphic form, the printers of incunabula probably imitated the seal or a filigree of handmade paper. The printer's signet usually included the initials of the printer's/bookseller's/publisher's name, which stood alone without other significant graphic elements or they were set into the illustration that



Figure 12: Content frontispiece for Georg Christian Ralf's natural history



Figure 14: Content frontispiece in Anna Hofbauerová's cookbook

often consisted of various symbols that identified the person. The authors of signets were usually engravers employed by the printer and the printing blocks of these printing marks were usually handed down from generation to generation (Voit, 2008).

The printer's signet is an effective method of visual marketing for publishing

⁶ Authors' note: This is a translation of the following text from the Slovak language "grafickej značke s identifikačným a silným dekoratívnym nábojom" (Voit, 2008, p. 807).



Figure 13: Content frontispiece in a German anonymous prose work with stories of hunting, travels and battles



Figure 15: Content frontispiece in Moliere's comedy The Miser

houses. It is not based on a continuity of copyright laws; rather, it is based on copying or in certain cases, on reworking. In selecting a book signet, printers/publishers/booksellers rely on the elements that have become imprinted in the visual memory of potential readers to encourage them to buy a book. However, in our opinion, this type of visual subconscious can be expected only

with a fairly narrow group of educated readers. Generally, the examples that we present are to be found with publishers who strived for high quality content and for the visual aspect as well (Ecsedy & Simon, 2009b; Simon, 2009a; Simon 2009b).

In the territory of Slovakia in the 18th century, we first observe the printer's signature in the work on Hungarian history printed in the Academic Printing House in Trnava in 1716 (Spes Inclyta Regni Regnorumque Cupita Dies. Tyrnaviae: Typis Academicis, per Fridericum Gall, Anno M.DCC.XVI. [1716]. [14] p.). Both the Academic Printing House (Fig. 16) and the printing house of František Augustín Packo had several type-related versions with the central motif that was retained. The printer's signet of František Augustín Packo was more technically and illustratively elaborate (rocky headland and an anchor behind it are framed by a tree trunk on the left and by leaves and vines on the right, there are lightning zigzags through the dark clouds on the left, and a small boat can be seen on the horizon on the far right, the opening words of the motto "Spes Confisa Deo" ["Faith in God"] are read in the ray of light that surrounds the anchor. The printer's initials are interlaced letters "FAP" that are placed in the foreground on the land) (Fig. 17). In addition to these two workshops, there were other printing houses that used this brand element: the Weber printing houses, the Royal University of Buda printing house that was also based in Trnava (Fig. 18), the widow of Redlitz and the booksellers Ignác Strohmayr whose printing house had branches in Pest, Buda and in Košice. In addition, this brand element was used by Doll and Schwaiger whose printing

house had branches in Vienna and in Bratislava (Fig. 18). In connection with the growth of printing enterprises in the 19th century, the use of this definite identifier and trademark naturally tripled⁷. In Slovakia, the following printing houses, publishers and bookshops used the signet: Michal Kováč in Rožňava, the Wigand family in Bratislava and Košice, Žigmund Winter in Trnava, Juraj Alojz Belnai in Bratislava, Stampfel in Bratislava, Arpád Kósch in Prešov, Neugebauerová (who was a widow) in Nitra, Saint Adalbert Association in Trnava, etc.

Conclusion

In the 18th and 19th centuries, book illustrations became an important instrument in the competition for readers' attention. Publishers and booksellers were aware that well made and attractive illustrations could attract more customers and that they could increase the sales of a book. Illustrations became a means of creating a unique visual identity and brand that differentiated publishers and booksellers from other competitors and they established a form of trust with readers. They served in the subsequent promotion of books and in their distribution. They were a part of attractive covers, interesting posters and other promotional materials that the sellers used in order to attract public's attention. Thus, high-quality illustrations transferred their value

⁷ Authors' note: In Slovakia, the following printing houses, publishers and bookshops used the signet: Michal Kováč in Rožňava, the Wigand family in Bratislava and Košice, Žigmund Winter in Trnava, Juraj Alojz Belnai in Bratislava, Stampfel in Bratislava, Arpád Kósch in Prešov, Neugebauerová (who was a widow) in Nitra, Saint Adalbert Association in Trnava, etc.

and message to marketing and they increased the value and attractiveness of the book itself. The improvements in printing technology in the 19th century allowed for a greater production of illustrated books. Illustrations became an important element in competition with rival publishing houses and they promoted sales and the overall popularity of the work by building an emotional bond between the book and the reader. In this process, the artistic reference to the content of the work (i.e. content frontispiece) was important; nevertheless, the authors also sought to build their PR through portrait illustrations (the frontispiece portrait).

Each author and seller made efforts to promote their work in the context of the target groups in the circumstances typical for the period in which it was created. Similarly to the situation at present, both the author and the sellers created a network of contacts, i.e. they created marketing strategies and they built PR. In certain cases, it was also a connection with the patrons (i.e. the supporters) - without this connection, artists, in particular, would not have been able to pursue their work without existential problems.

The emergence of mass media in the territory of Slovakia was also closely linked to literacy (or illiteracy, respectively) of the population, while widespread literacy (in Slovakia) dates back to the period of the 18th - 19th centuries. Within the existing media production of the time, it was already possible to use the invention of the printing press to the maximum. Books and also other printed materials were not the privilege of the elites any longer, and

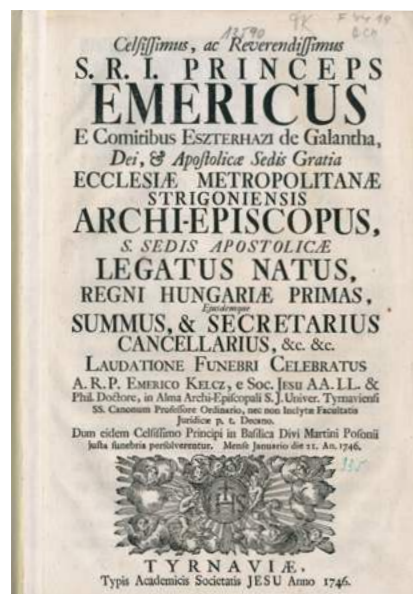


Figure 16: Printer's signet of the Academic Printing House

this impacted the media market (and the book market as well). Marketing was thus linked to the technological possibilities of the time, to the literacy of the recipients whose reading interest (or a lack of interest) in books limited and influenced the position of these works on the market (e.g., book market, media market).

In this respect, there was a great advantage to illustrated books. Illustrations added an aesthetic value to books and they enlivened the text, making the books more visually appealing to potential buyers. Illustrations created an emotional and visual appeal that could attract the readers and encourage their interest in a book. In addition, there was also the practical importance of illustrations. In works of fiction, they



Figure 17: Printer's signet of František Augustín Packo

provided the readers with the idea of the content of the book and they created the atmosphere of the story. In encyclopaedias, textbooks and books with complex content, they provided a visual support for better understanding and explanation of the text. Illustrations have had an essential and important role in publishing, selling and promoting books. Over time, they have helped publishers to attract readers' attention and to support book sales through the aesthetic and visual element. Even at present, publishers are concerned with the brand building of the printer/publisher/publisher (i.e. signet), with the artistic reference to the content of the work (content frontispiece) and also with building the PR of the author (the frontispiece portrait).

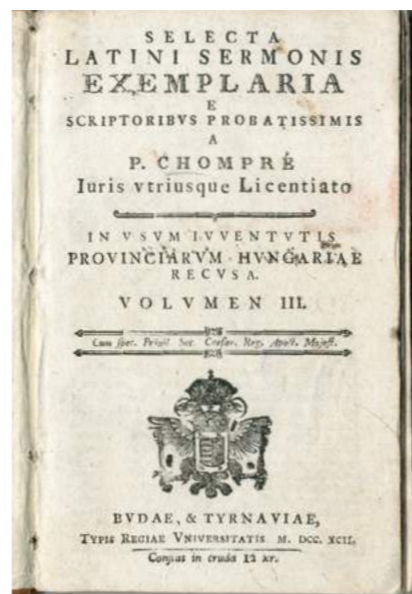


Figure 18: Printer's signet of the Printing House of the Royal University of Buda, also based in Trnava

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Profile of the Authors

Eva Augustínová's research interests deal with researching written cultural heritage in Slovakia. In particular, her research focuses on the history of printing, publishing, editing and bookselling. In addition, she focuses on the intellectual heritage of Slovakia and Slovaks, on the history of libraries in Slovakia and at present, on the graphic design of books. She is the author of several scholarly publications, including a monograph and a textbook on the history of book culture.

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