

The Other Half of a Republic of Letters

Locating, Reuniting, and Publishing the Scattered Letters of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921): A Programmatic Statement

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1. An old idea, revived

When Ignaz Goldziher died in Budapest on 13 November 1921, he left behind, besides a body of published work that had reshaped the study of Islam, a corpus of scholarly correspondence unparalleled in the field: more than 13,500 letters and cards from some 1,650 correspondents, written in eleven languages (Becker et al. 2024). This material, together with his manuscripts and working notes, passed to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where it has since been cataloged in its entirety and digitized, and where it is today freely accessible to scholars anywhere in the world. Yet this remarkable collection represents, by its very nature, only one half of a conversation. What it preserves are the letters Goldziher received. What he himself wrote—by all accounts several thousand letters and

postcards over half a century—lies dispersed across the personal papers of his correspondents in libraries and archives on at least four continents, or has perished with them. No inventory exists of what survives, let alone a digital corpus; in most cases, these letters are unaccounted for altogether.

The idea that the two halves belong together is not new. Within a few years of Goldziher's death, Hellmut Ritter (1892–1971) proposed to Carl Heinrich Becker that Goldziher's most significant letters be gathered and made accessible (Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin, VI. HA, N1 Becker, C. H., Nr. 3521), a suggestion that found no echo at the time and was not pursued further. The Hungarian Academy nonetheless made a first, remarkable attempt in the early 1930s, when the bequest was being arranged for public presentation. On the initiative of Sir

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Aurel Stein, Goldziher's letters to Theodor Nöldeke—217 items according to the Academy's report, today counted as 144 letters and 74 postcards written between 1891 and 1921 (i.e., 218 items)—were borrowed from Tübingen University Library and transcribed in Budapest, in exchange for copies of Nöldeke's 287 letters to Goldziher; the transcriptions were checked by Bernát Heller and Béla Pukánszky, the Arabic words were supplied by Zsigmond Telegdi, and the typescripts are today accessible online in the LHAS repository, grouped by year (Simon 1986; Berzeviczy 1933). Duncan Black Macdonald complied with the Academy's request and sent the 79 letters he had received from Goldziher to Budapest after the inauguration of the Goldziher room in 1933 (Dévényi 2024a). An account of the

collection was published for an international readership (de Somogyi 1935), and Pukánszky's notice on the new "Goldziher-Sammlung" was dispatched to forty leading scholars in the field, who welcomed the initiative with enthusiasm (Pukánszky 1933; Dévényi 2024a). The appeal had results: "after the appearance of my paper," de Somogyi recalled, "several foreign scholars sent in to the Hungarian Academy of Science Goldziher's letters to them" (de Somogyi 1951). Then the effort stalled. The dedicated room was dissolved after the Second World War and its holdings incorporated into the newly founded Oriental Collection in 1951; the wider project of reuniting Goldziher's outgoing letters with the incoming ones was never resumed.

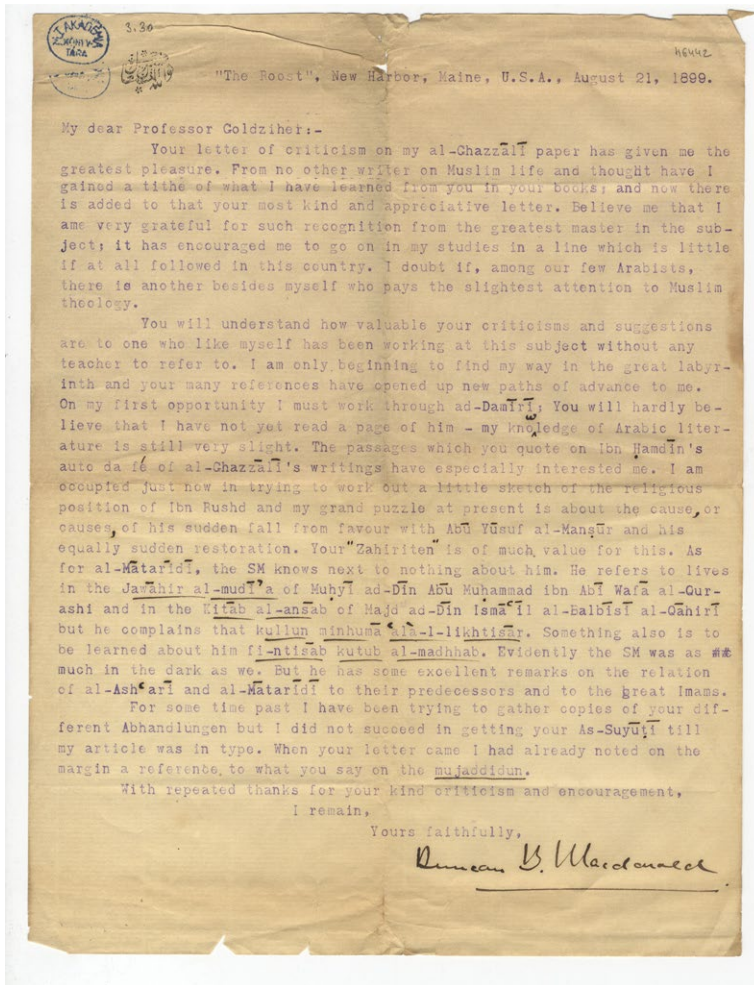


Figure 3: Macdonald to Goldziher, 21 August 1899 (LHAS, Oriental Collection, GIL/27/03/30)

A century after Ritter's proposal, the conditions for realizing it have changed fundamentally. The Budapest collection is cataloged and online; the history of Oriental studies has become a vigorous field of research in its own right; holding institutions increasingly recognize scholarly correspondence as a primary source worthy of inventorying and digitization; and a series of recent studies and editions has begun to

demonstrate, case by case, what the reunited correspondences can yield. The present statement sets out why Goldziher's scattered letters deserve a coordinated international effort, what is already known about their whereabouts, and how scholars and institutions might contribute to locating, making accessible, studying, and publishing them.

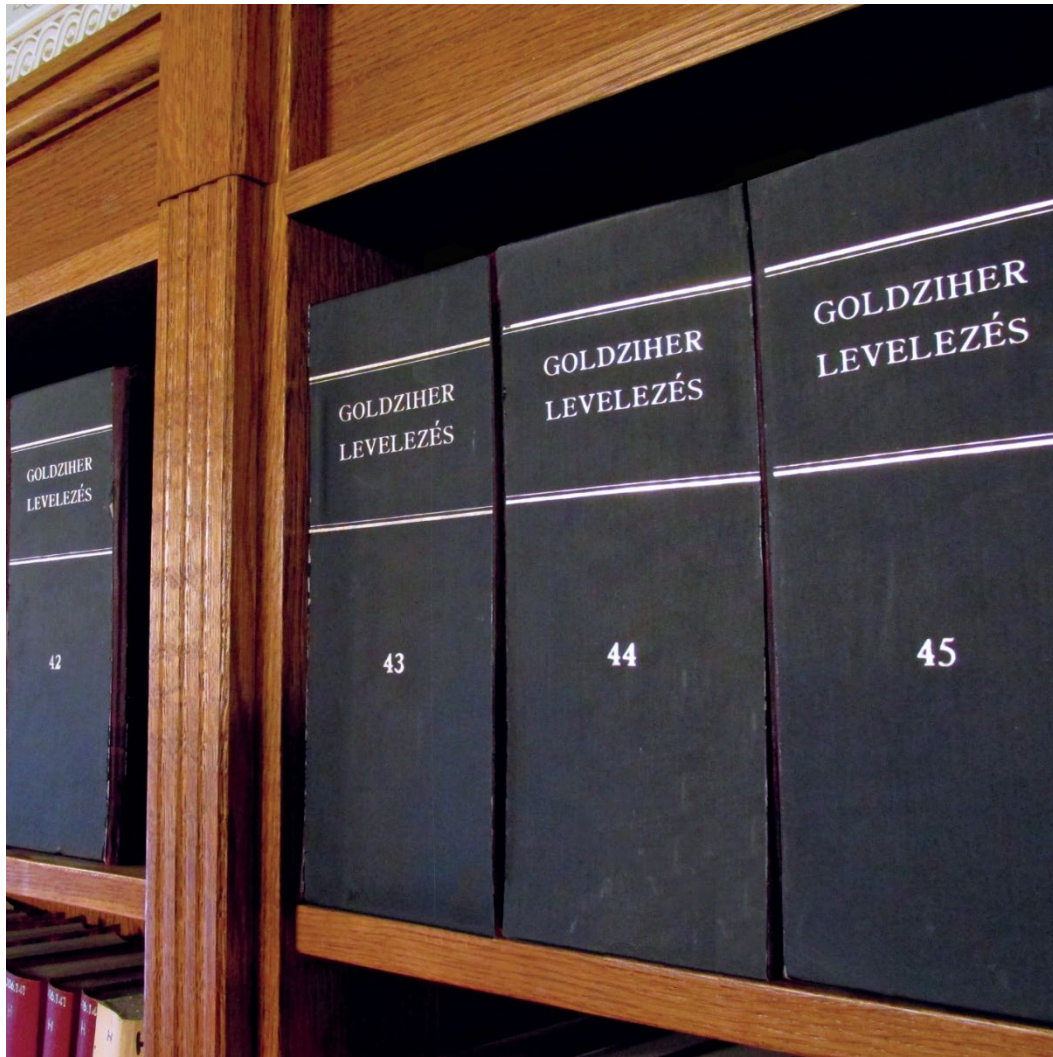


Figure 4: Boxes of the Goldziher's Correspondence in the Oriental Collection of the LHAS (photo by János Boromisza)

2. Goldziher and the making of Islamwissenschaft

The case for such an undertaking rests first of all on the stature of the man. Born in Székesfehérvár in 1850, Goldziher studied in Budapest, Berlin, and Leipzig, where he received his doctorate under Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer, and continued his studies in Leiden and Vienna before undertaking, in 1873–74, the study tour to

Syria, Palestine, and Egypt that shaped his outlook for life. In Cairo, he was the first European to be admitted as a student at al-Azhar, and he formed ties with Muslim intellectuals that he would maintain by letter for decades. Although he became a *Privatdozent* at the University of Budapest in the early 1870s, he was denied a full professorship for more than three decades and earned his living as secretary of the Pest

Jewish community; only in 1905 did he receive an ordinary professorship of Semitic philology. His major works—*Die Zâhiriten* (1884), the two volumes of *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889–90), the *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie* (1896–99), the *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (1910), and *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (1920)—established the critical, historically grounded study of Islamic religion, law, tradition, and thought as a discipline distinct from the philological study of Arabic. Ignaty Kratchkovsky, looking back a generation later, called him the greatest authority of his time on the

critical analysis of Islam (Scheiber 1956). His pioneering insight that the literature of the prophetic tradition documents the gestures and sign language of its transmitters, first formulated in 1886, has only recently been recognized as a foundational moment for a field that did not yet exist (Holtzman and Ovadia 2024). Goldziher was at the same time a scholar of Judaism and Jewish–Arabic culture, trained in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, who taught for two decades at the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest and whose comparative interests informed everything he wrote (Turán 2023; Turán 2024a).



Figure 5: Inside the Courtyard of al-Azhar (LHAS, Oriental Collection, GIL/46/39/11)

Honors followed him everywhere: the gold medal of the Eighth International Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm in 1889, honorary doctorates from Cambridge

and Aberdeen, membership in academies across the world, an offer of the Cambridge chair of Arabic in 1894, an invitation to the nascent Egyptian University in 1908, and

election to the Arab Academy of Damascus (Rauch 2024; Dévényi 2024a; Ormos 2001; Dévényi 2023). His reputation in the Arab world was such that Jirjī Zaydān requested biographical information from him for his chapter on the Orientalists in the *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughā al-ʿarabiyya*, and that ʿAlī Pāshā Mubārak wrote to thank him for his review of the *Khīṭaṭ* (Dévényi 2018b; Abdelgawad 2021; Friedmann 2026). Yet it is perhaps his role as teacher and mentor—to students in Budapest, and by correspondence to scholars from Hartford to St. Petersburg—that best

explains why his letters matter. Macdonald, the founder of Arabic and Islamic studies at Hartford, called him “the greatest master in the subject” and told him in his last letter that “your unconscious personal influence started me on my course” (Dévényi 2024a). Three generations of St. Petersburg Arabists, from Viktor von Rosen to Alexander Schmidt and Kratchkovsky, regarded him as friend, teacher, and *shaykh* (Yosefi 2024), and the same can be said for countless scholars in Germany and other parts of Western and Central Europe.



Figure 6: Group portrait on board a ship. Goldziher, the fourth from the left, at the time of the International Congress of Arts and Sciences in St. Louis, Missouri (September 19 to 25, 1904), in the company of Hugo Münsterberg, Adolf von Harnack, Karl Budde, and others (LHAS, Oriental Collection, GIL/142/53)

3. The Nachlass in Budapest: scope, history, and state of research

The core of the Goldziher *Nachlass*—the incoming letters, his manuscripts, drafts,

excerpt collections, lecture notes, and a small collection of photographs sent by his correspondents—was transferred to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1926 by

his son Károly, fulfilling the wishes of Goldziher's widow, Laura Mittler (1854–1925), who had died the previous year; the formal bestowal and the cataloging under Károly's direction followed in 1931–33, culminating in the presentation of the collection by the Academy's president Albert Berzeviczy on 18 October 1933 (Simon 1986; Dévényi 2018b; Dévényi 2025). Joseph de Somogyi, Goldziher's last student, compiled the first typewritten list of the correspondents (Turán 2024a; see below, fig. 9). Not everything survived the century: Goldziher's own interleaved hand-copies of the *Muhammedanische Studien*, of the *Vorlesungen*, and of the *Kitāb maʿānī al-naḥs*, enlarged over decades with his notes and additions, perished during the siege of Budapest early in 1945, while his interleaved copy of Freytag's *Lexicon*, annotated almost daily for half a century, was then in de Somogyi's private library (now in the LHAS and fully available online (<https://real.mtak.hu/126574/>)—a reminder that Goldziher materials may still be found in private hands (de Somogyi 1951).

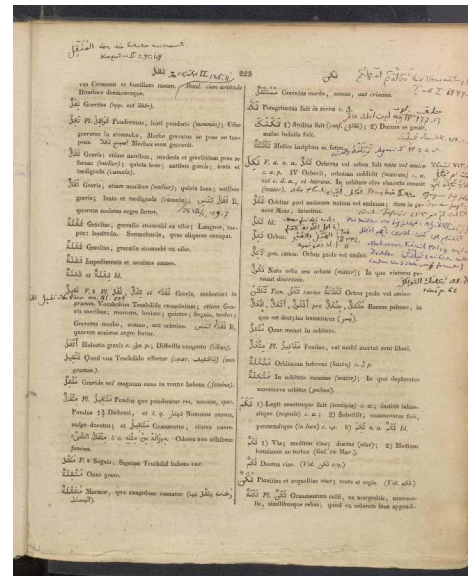


Figure 7: Page from Goldziher's interleaved copy of Freytag's *Lexicon Arabicum-Latinum* (accessible at <https://real.mtak.hu/126574/>)

Since 1951, the collection has formed part of the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (LHAS). Between 2012 and 2013, with funding from the Hungarian National Cultural Fund, the entire correspondence—13,430 cataloged items and more than 28,000 digital images—was described item by item in MARC records with authority-controlled names, and made available through the Library's catalog and its digital repository (Dévényi 2018b). In 2021, for the centenary of Goldziher's death, the LHAS launched a dedicated memorial website that brings together his more than 900 publications, digitized in open access, with links to the correspondence (LHAS 2021).

The statistics of the collection convey the reach of Goldziher's network. German is the language of some 7,660 letters, Hungarian of about 3,380, French of nearly 1,000, English of some 760, Hebrew of 475, Arabic of 223, Italian of 79, with smaller numbers in Spanish, Russian, and Yiddish. Letters arrived from Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, the United States, Britain, France, Egypt, Sweden, Algeria, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and Italy in the hundreds or thousands; and from Denmark, India, Palestine, Spain, Finland, Bosnia, Tunisia, the Ottoman capital, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Arabia, Yemen, Iran, China,

and Canada in smaller numbers (Dévényi 2018b). Twenty-one persons wrote more than a hundred letters each—among them Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, Theodor Nöldeke, Martin Hartmann, Immanuel Löw, Samuel Poznański, Georg Jacob, Macdonald, Carlo Landberg, Martin Schreiner, Siegmund Fraenkel, René Basset, Max van Berchem, Michael Jan de Goeje, Carl Bezold, Rudolf Geyer, Karl Vollers, and Viktor von Rosen. Between 1900 and 1913, Goldziher received on average 455 letters a year, with a peak of 730 in 1910, the year of his sixtieth birthday (Dévényi 2024a).



Figure 8: Envelope of letter from Salomon Neumann to Goldziher, Berlin, 26 May 1902 (LHAS, Oriental Collection, GIL/31/03/07a)

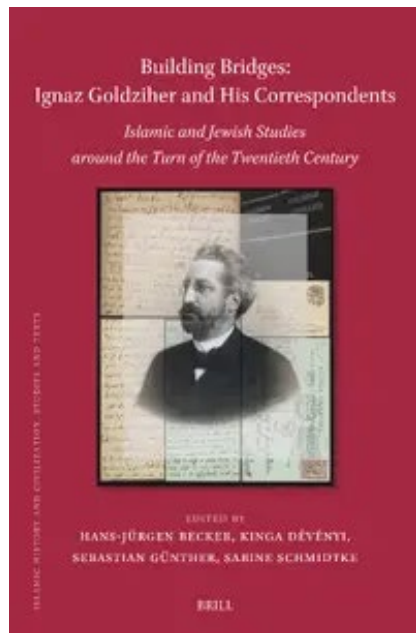
LEVELEZÉS		Goldziher	
l. t o k		141	
<u>Abafi Aigner Lajos</u> , Budapest	1 db.	<u>Ameer Ali</u> , London	 1 db.
<u>Abádi Imre</u> , Budapest	 1 "	<u>Amelang</u> , G.F., Leipzig	4 "
<u>Abel Jenő</u> , Budapest	 2 "	<u>Amélineau</u> , G., Paris	.. 1 "
<u>Abel</u> , Ludwig, München	 1 "	<u>Andrae</u> , Tor, Delsbo	..13 "
<u>Aberdeen University</u>	 2 "	<u>Andreas</u> , F.C., Göttingen	2 "
<u>Abrahams</u> , G., Cambridge	 4 "	<u>Andree</u> , R., Braunschweig	35 "
<u>Achelis</u> , Th., Bremen	18 "	<u>Angyal Dávid</u> , Budapest	62 "
<u>Acsády Ignác</u> , Budapest	 1 "	<u>Antonian</u> , S.N., Érsek-	
<u>Acsay Antal</u> , Budapest	 2 "	ujvár	 2 "
<u>Adler</u> , Cyrus, Philadelphia	. 3 "	<u>Apponyi Sándor gr.</u> ,	
<u>Adler</u> , Elkan, London	 1 "	Budapest	 1 "
<u>Adler</u> , H., London	 4 "	<u>Aptowitzer</u> , W., Wien	.. 3 "
<u>Adler Illés</u> , Budapest	 1 "	<u>Arendonk</u> , C. van, Leiden	6 "
<u>Ágai Adolf</u> , Budapest	 5 "	<u>Arin</u> , Félix, Tunis	 15 "
<u>Ahlwardt</u> , W., Greifswald	... 4 "	<u>Arménjon</u> , P., Cairp	... 1 "
<u>Akadémia</u> , Magyar Tudományos		<u>Arnold</u> , Th.W., Lahore-	
könyvbeszerzés	 36 "	London	 23 "
úgyiratok	 26 "	<u>As ad Scheich</u> , Jerusalem	1 "
<u>Alami</u> , Faigy El-, Jerusalem	2 "	<u>Asbóth János</u> , Budapest	.1 "
<u>Albek</u> , S., Varsó	 1 "	<u>Asbóth Oszkár</u> , Budapest	8 "
<u>Alexander Bernát</u> , Budapest	4 "	<u>Aschkenazi</u> , I.N., Tiberias	2 "
<u>Algérie</u> , Gouv-Gén. de l',		<u>Asztalos Lajos</u> , Wien	.. 2 "
Alger	 1 "	<u>Athenaeum</u> , Budapest	... 1 "
<u>Almkvist</u> , H., Uppsala	14 "	<u>Atlantic Photo</u> , Berlin	4 "
<u>Alphandéry</u> , P., Paris	 6 "	<u>Auerbach</u> , H., Breslau	.. 1 "
<u>Altenburger Gyula</u> , Budapest	1 "		
<u>Altschüler</u> , M., Wien	 2 "		
<u>Aly Mubarak</u> , Kairó	 1 "		
<u>Amar</u> , Émile, Paris	 3 "		
<u>Amari</u> , M., Palermo	 1 "		
<u>Amedroz</u> , H.Z., London	27 "		

Figure 9: First page of a typewritten inventory of correspondents whose letters to Goldziher are preserved at the LHAS (LHAS Oriental Collection, Goldziher/141)

A rich but uneven body of scholarship has grown up around this material. Book-length editions exist for the letters of Snouck Hurgronje (van Koningsveld 1985), for a selection of the Nöldeke-Goldziher exchange

(Simon 1986), and for the Hartmann-Goldziher correspondence (Hanisch 2000); Goldziher's letters to Poznański were partly published by Goitein as early as 1948, and Scheiber edited the letters of Nordau and

Schechter (Goitein 1948; Scheiber 1956; Scheiber 1962). A conference held in Budapest in 2000 and another, convened online in November 2021 by the Institute for Advanced Study, the University of Göttingen, Corvinus University, and the LHAS, have generated further studies on correspondents as diverse as Max Herz, Aurel Stein, Louis Massignon, Ármin (Hermann) Vámbéry, Mohamed Ben Cheneb, Israel Friedlaender, Macdonald,



Gottschalk, Luciani and his French colleagues, Löw and Guttmann, the St. Petersburg school, and Martin Schreiner (Apor and Ormos 2005; Becker et al. 2024). A bibliographical guide to the published correspondence, maintained as a continuously updated open-access document, currently lists more than eighty

correspondents for whom letters or studies have appeared (Dévényi and Schmidtke 2024). This is a substantial achievement. It is also a snapshot that exposes the gaps: for the overwhelming majority of the 1,650 correspondents, nothing has been published, and, more fundamentally, for most of them, the incoming letters in Budapest can be read only as one side of a dialogue whose other side has yet to be found.

4. Why the outgoing letters matter

Goldziher used the letter as a scholarly instrument to an unusual degree, even in an age when the Republic of Letters still ran on paper. To one of his students, he gave the advice to “answer every letter or card you receive, even if your answer be negative,” and to attend the Orientalist congresses—“this is as important as literary work” (de Somogyi 1961, cited in Simon 1986). He wrote in German, Hungarian, French, English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Italian as the occasion demanded; to Macdonald alone, he wrote in four languages (Dévényi 2024a). In the 1870s and 1880s, portions of his letters to Fleischer and to Otto Loth were printed in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* under the rubric “Aus einem Briefe,” an early indication that his correspondents regarded what he wrote to

Landberg,
Nallino,
Walter

them as publishable scholarship (ZDMG 1874, 1876, 1877, 1882).

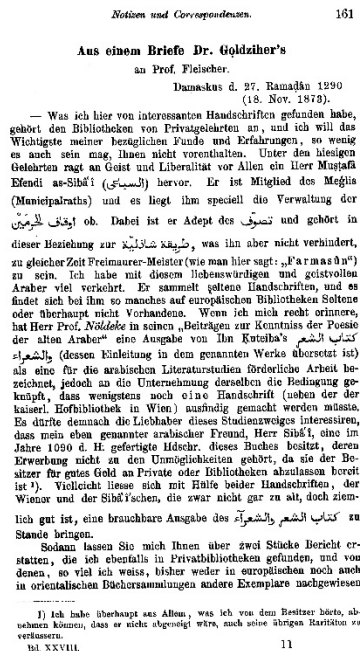


Figure 10: “Aus einem Briefe Dr. Goldziher’s,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 28 (1874), 161–168, here 161

His very first surviving letter to Macdonald, three closely written pages of May 1899 (see above, figs. 1 and 2), is a case in point: it corrects the young Hartford scholar on the relation of Ḥanafism to Māturīdite theology, supplies references from Ibn al-Abbār and al-Damīrī, points him to a Meccan anti-Wahhābī polemic, and in passing sets the agenda for Macdonald’s subsequent work on al-Ghazālī (Dévényi 2024a). His letters to Poznański, 118 in number and running from October 1901 to ten days before his death, move between

Hebrew, Polish, and German and document his views on the relationship between Jewish and Islamic studies, on the Hebrew language, and on his contemporaries with a frankness absent from his publications (Goitein 1948). His letters to Landberg preserved in Uppsala show him confronting a lifelong friend over the anti-Jewish remarks scattered through the latter’s South Arabian studies—“What has South Arabian philology to do with it?”—a reaction that the Budapest holdings alone, containing only Landberg’s side, could never have revealed (Rauch 2024).

Wherever both sides survive, the gain is not additive but qualitative. The Macdonald correspondence, the Nöldeke exchange, and the Nallino letters at the Istituto per l’Oriente in Rome have allowed their editors to reconstruct the genesis of publications, the circulation of manuscripts and copies, and the negotiation of intellectual positions in a way impossible from one side alone (Dévényi 2024a; Simon 1986; Sagaria Rossi 2024). Where Goldziher’s side is lost, the loss is felt concretely. Goldziher’s reply to Walter Gottschalk’s first letter of 1911, which set in motion a dissertation on al-Najīramī’s *Kitāb al-Aymān* and the loan of Goldziher’s own transcription of the Cairo manuscript, is not preserved, and its content

must be inferred from Gottschalk's next letter (Schmidtke 2024a). Of the 218 letters Immanuel Löw wrote to Goldziher, the counterparts are reduced to a handful of letters and postcards in Jerusalem and a few excerpts printed in a Budapest weekly in 1946; of Goldziher's letters to his disciple Michael Guttmann, and to Martin Schreiner, nothing has come to light (Schmidtke 2024b; Turán 2024a; Zsom 2024). Israel Friedlaender's 34 letters from New York can be answered only by "some" of Goldziher's, the remainder reconstructed from Friedlaender's comments (Adang 2024). In these and many similar cases, the possibility remains that the missing letters lie unrecognized in an uncatalogued *Nachlass*, in a family's possession, or in an institutional archive whose finding aid does not descend to the level of individual correspondents.

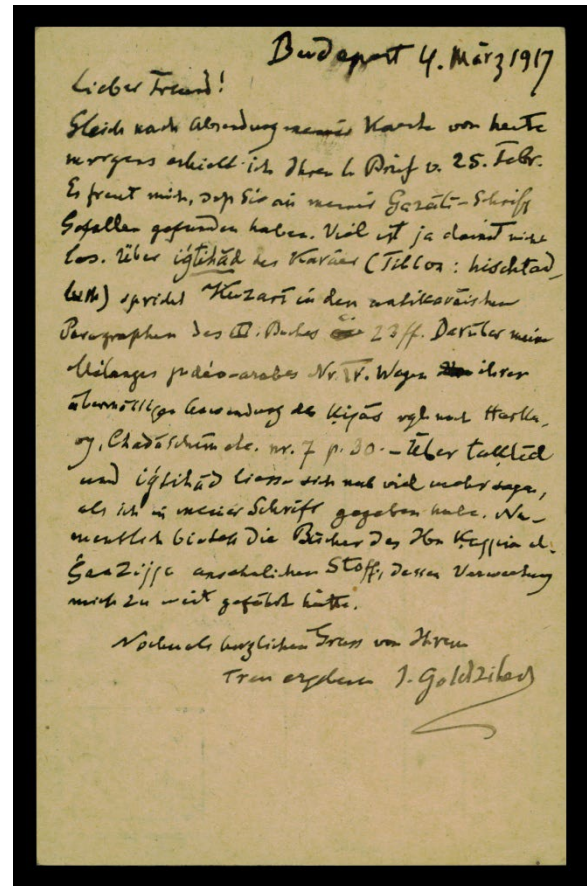


Figure 11: Goldziher to Samuel Abraham Poznański, Budapest, 4 March 1917 (NLI, Samuel Poznański Archive, ARC. 4* 1180 3 28.9)

5. What is known to survive, and where

The picture that emerges from the studies of the past decades, from the LHAS's own inquiries, and from the preparatory work for the present initiative is fragmentary but encouraging. In Hungary itself, apart from the Budapest collection with its 79 letters to Macdonald and the 1933 transcripts of the letters to Nöldeke, Goldziher's letters to Hungarian colleagues and public figures surface intermittently in other collections

and in publications, from his exchange with Sámuel Brassai to his letters to Lajos Lóczy in 1919 and his letters on education (Simon 1979; Turán 2024b; Sándor 1981). The papers of Count Géza Kuun have only recently been found at the Cluj Branch of the Romanian National Archives, while those of Bonifác Platz, also among his most frequent correspondents, have not been located.

Germany holds what are probably the largest bodies of Goldziher's letters outside Budapest. The letters to Nöldeke remain in Tübingen University Library (Md 782 A 2); the *Nachlass* of Carl Heinrich Becker at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin contains Goldziher's letters from 1 November 1899 to 10 September 1920 (VI. HA, Nl Becker, Nr. 449); Leipzig University Library preserves Friedrich Schwally's letters to Goldziher between 1902 and 1912 (NL 143 as part of the *Nachlass* Heinrich Zimmern); the papers of Enno Littmann at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (NL 245), of Carl Bezold at Heidelberg University Archive (Heid. Hs. 1500 III A-63; Blatt 1–143), and of Georg Jacob at Kiel University Library contain further letters. The two-sided Hartmann–Goldziher correspondence has been edited (Hanisch 2000), and the correspondence with Rudolf Strothmann and Becker has recently been

published (Schmidtke 2023a). Some losses are certain or probable: the Brockhaus archive in Leipzig, whose letters to Goldziher number in the hundreds, was destroyed in the Second World War, and no *Nachlass* of Karl Vollers is known; the whereabouts of the papers of Siegmund Fraenkel and Rudolf Geyer (whose library is kept at the St. Florian Monastery), both among Goldziher's most frequent correspondents, have yet to be established. In the Netherlands, Leiden University Library preserves letters of Ignaz, Laura, and Karl Goldziher to Snouck Hurgronje (Or. 7105, Or. 8952), complementing the edition of Snouck Hurgronje's letters to Goldziher (van Koningsveld 1985; de Somogyi 1951), as well as Goldziher's letters to de Goeje. Cambridge University Library holds some forty letters from Goldziher to Edward Granville Browne, the counterpart of Browne's letters in Budapest, including the three of 1894 in which Browne urged him to accept the Cambridge chair (Dévényi 2024a; Bourouba 2026). In Sweden, the Landberg papers at Uppsala University Library contain five letters and three postcards from 1886 to 1919 (Rauch 2024), and Uppsala also holds Goldziher's letters to other addressees, among them Nathan Söderblom; in Denmark, the David Simonsen archive at the

Royal Library in Copenhagen has digitized seven items of the correspondence of Ignaz and Laura Goldziher with David Simonsen, though the volume of Simonsen's letters in Budapest suggests that considerably more survives; the Royal Library also holds Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer's correspondence, including Goldziher's letters (120 items between 1870 and 1888); in Switzerland, the Bibliothèque de Genève holds Goldziher's letters to Max van Berchem. In France, roughly a hundred letters to René Basset are preserved at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, and the papers of Hartwig Derenbourg remain to be searched (Messaoudi 2011). The case of Louis Massignon illustrates the precariousness of the record: François Angelier, who described the unpublished Massignon-Goldziher exchange of 1909–1921, brought photocopies of Goldziher's letters to the LHAS in 2009, where they are cataloged as ORI Misc 163 (73 pages), but the copies are unsuitable for digitization, and the location of the originals is not recorded (Angelier 2011). McGill University's Islamic Studies Library has recently identified bound volumes of Goldziher's offprints bearing his autograph dedications to Basset, a reminder that dedications and inscribed offprints

belong to the same documentary universe (McGill 2023).

Italy and Spain have proved unexpectedly rich. The Nallino archive at the Istituto per l'Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino in Rome, now inventoried online within the Lazio '900 project, preserves Goldziher's letters, postcards, and a visiting card in a folder dedicated to him, and Nallino's *epistolario* of 568 identified correspondents—about a third of Goldziher's—is a network that overlaps substantially with his (Sagaria Rossi 2024). The entire *Nachlass* of Eugenio Griffini, rediscovered in 2021 within the Angela Codazzi Archive in the Biblioteca Comunale Sormani in Milan, almost a century after his death, contains further correspondence bearing on Goldziher and on the beginnings of Zaydi studies (Sagaria Rossi and Schmidtke 2022; Sagaria Rossi 2021). The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome was recently given Giorgio Levi Della Vida's correspondence, including the letters he had received from Goldziher. In Madrid, the epistolaries of Julián Ribera and Miguel Asín Palacios, published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, document Goldziher's exchange with the Spanish Arabists (Marín et al. 2009).

Israel is, after Budapest and Germany, the single most important site. Goldziher's library of nearly 6,000 volumes, purchased by the Zionist Organization in 1924, formed the basis of the Islamic collection of what is now the National Library of Israel (NLI) (Yahuda 1924; Kramer 2024; Thrope 2024).

A. S. YAHUDA: Die Bedeutung der Goldziher'schen Bibliothek usw. 575

A. S. YAHUDA / DIE BEDEUTUNG DER
GOLDZIHRSCHEN BIBLIOTHEK FÜR
DIE ZUKÜNFTIGE HEBRÄISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT¹⁾

I. Die Bücher.

Vor einigen Monaten ist die Kunde durch die Zeitungen gegangen, daß die Bibliothek des berühmten Orientalisten Professor Ignaz Goldziher aus Budapest für die Jüdische National- und Universitäts-Bibliothek in Jerusalem erworben worden sei. Der Besitz dieser Bibliothek bedeutet einen großen und wichtigen Schritt auf dem Wege zum Ausbau der projektierten hebräischen Universität auf dem Scopusberge, und es verlohnt sich, den Inhalt, den Wert und den Nutzen dieses Besitzes von verschiedenen Seiten zu beleuchten.

Professor Goldziher galt während der letzten 50 Jahre als einer der bedeutendsten Orientalisten der Welt. Er wurde nach Alfred von Kremer, der den ersten ersten Versuch gemacht hat, eine Kulturgeschichte des Islams zu schreiben, als der hervorragendste Kenner der islamischen Kulturwelt betrachtet. Neben Fleischer, dessen Schüler er war, und Wilhelm Ahlwardt galt er als der beste Kenner der altarabischen Literatur, und neben Theodor Nöldeke, der sicherlich der größte, gelehrteste und genialste Orientalist aller Zeiten ist, wurde Goldziher's Name als der einzige ihm ebenbürtige genannt. Auf manchen Gebieten, besonders auf dem Gebiete der mohammedanischen Theologie und Dogmatik, war er der unbestrittene Meister, der schöpferisch gewirkt und neue, vorher unbekannte oder unbenutzte Wissensgebiete der modernen Gelehrtenwelt erschlossen hat. So war er z. B. der erste, der den ganzen Wert der mohammedanischen Traditionsliteratur für die Entwicklung der islamischen Kulturgeschichte erkannte und der die bedeutendsten, gelehrtesten und lehrreichsten Werke auf diesem Gebiete verfaßte. Aber Goldziher's wissenschaftliche Neigungen beschränkten sich nicht nur auf die islamische Welt und semitische Philo-

¹⁾ Über denselben Gegenstand hat der Verfasser des obigen Artikels unlängst im Literary Supplement des Jewish Chronicle einen Aufsatz veröffentlicht. Auf unseren Wunsch hat er sich bereit finden lassen, diesen für unsere Zeitschrift in erweiterter Form umzuarbeiten und auch eine biographische Skizze über Professor Goldziher hinzuzufügen, in der viele Angaben enthalten sind, die noch nicht in der Öffentlichkeit bekannt geworden sind. Professor Yahuda, der seine Edition des arabischen Originals von Bachyā's „Herzenspflichten“ (Choboth-Hall'baboth, Leiden 1912) Goldziher gewidmet hat, betrachtet sich als einen geistigen Schüler Goldziher's und gehörte zu seinen engsten Freundeskreis. Während seiner häufigen Besuche bei Goldziher hat er, wie kaum ein anderer, Gelegenheit gehabt, die Bibliothek des berühmten Gelehrten sowie seine Persönlichkeit und Wirksamkeit aus der Nähe kennen zu lernen.

Figure 12: A.S. Yahuda, "Die Bedeutung der Goldziher'schen Bibliothek für die zukünftige Hebräische Universität," *Der Jude: Eine Monatsschrift* 8 (1924), 575–592, here 575.

The family had sold only the books, but two large boxes of papers traveled with the crates: the notes, drafts, excerpts, unsent letters, and offprints found interleaved in the volumes, together with the marginalia that the Jerusalem librarians cut from the books and kept in envelopes, now form the Ignaz

Goldziher Collection at the NLI (V 2555 01 08 Ignác Goldziher Collection).

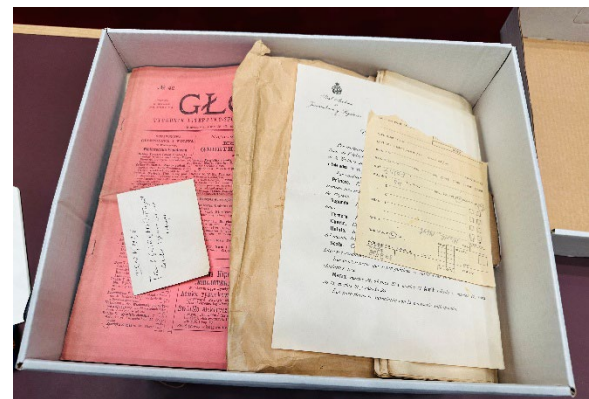


Figure 13: One of the boxes of Goldziher's papers and offprints, now kept at the NLI in Jerusalem (photo by Sabine Schmidtke)

Sorted and provisionally cataloged in August 2024 by Kinga Dévényi with the support of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the archive comprises handwritten materials—among them Goldziher's excerpts from Arabic manuscripts made in Leiden in 1871, his Hungarian abstract of the *Sīrat Sayf b. Dhī Yazan* written on the back of his own wedding invitation, his youthful Hebrew excerpts from the *Guide for the Perplexed*, an unpublished review, and corrected proofs for the *Enzyklopaedie des Islām*—a small group of correspondence, including three unsent letters in Goldziher's hand and a letter from Massignon, and a substantial set of reviews of his major works that he preserved throughout his life; the material has been digitized but still awaits virtual unification

with its counterpart at the LHAS (Thrope 2024; Dévényi 2025; NLI 2024). In addition, the NLI holds 86 postcards from Goldziher to Abraham Shalom Yahuda, spanning 1902 to 1921, which Karl Goldziher was persuaded to hand over in 1924 (ARC. Ms. Var. Yah 38 01 3112.3); Goldziher's letters and postcards to Immanuel Löw in the Löw archive; and the 118 letters to Poznański that Goitein used in 1948 (Thrope 2024; Turán 2024a; Goitein 1948; see also above, fig. 11).

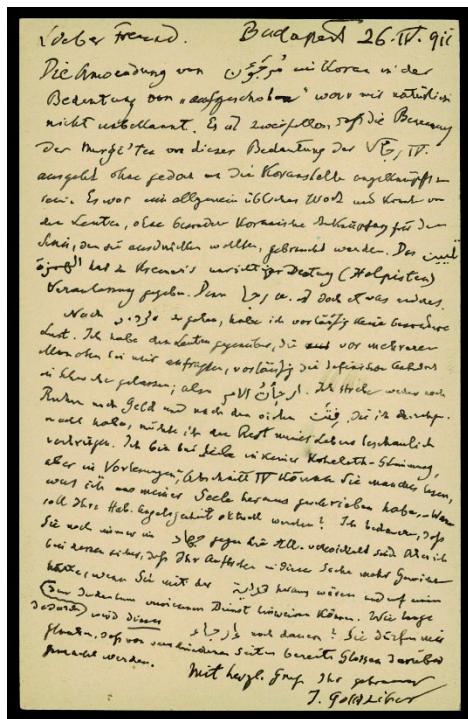


Figure 14: Goldziher to Abraham Shalom Yahuda, Budapest, 26 April 1911 (NLI, Abraham Shalom Yahuda Archive, ARC. Ms. Var. Yah 38 02 3112)

The Schreiner *Nachlass* in Jerusalem, by contrast, contains no letters from Goldziher (Schmidtke 2024b). In North America, the Moritz Steinschneider Papers at the Jewish

Theological Seminary in New York (ARC. 108) contain Goldziher's letters to Steinschneider, which Alexander Marx once began to transcribe with a view to publication that never materialized; Steinschneider's habit of noting on each incoming letter the date of his reply, and his three notebooks recording his correspondence day by day from 1855 to 1907, make it possible to establish when Goldziher wrote to him even where the letters themselves are lost (Schmidtke 2024c).

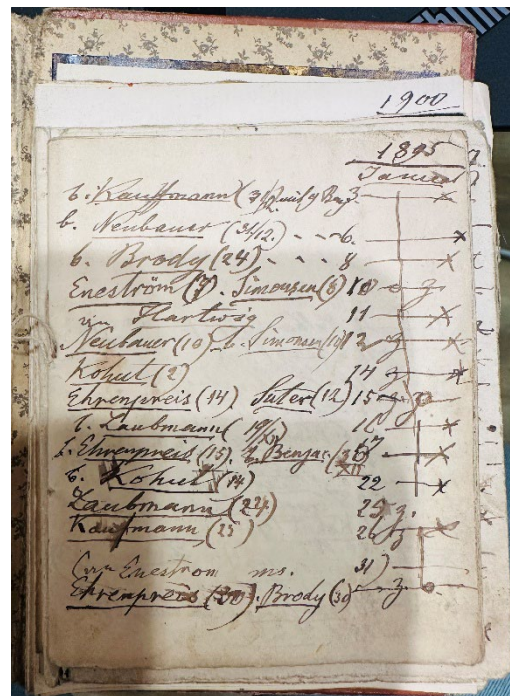


Figure 15: Sample page from Steinschneider's notebook recording his incoming and outgoing correspondence (New York, JTSA, Arch. 108, Steinschneider correspondence)

The Friedlaender Papers at the same institution are the place to look for Goldziher's letters to Israel Friedlaender

(Adang 2024), and the Landberg manuscripts at Yale's Beinecke Library, including the copy of al-Najīramī's *Aymān al-ʿArab* made for Landberg in 1892, show how closely the paper trails of manuscript copying and of correspondence intertwine (Schmidtke 2024a). Materials on the acquisition of Goldziher's library are dispersed among the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem and the Israel Cohen papers at YIVO in New York (Thrope 2024).

Russia and Central Asia remain the largest unknown. Goldziher's correspondence with Rosen, Schmidt, and Kratchkovsky, spanning 1871 to 1921, is documented from the St. Petersburg side in Budapest and from recollections and diaries; Schmidt's scholarly correspondence has been published from his papers (Bekkin 2018; Yosefi 2024). Goldziher's letters to Rosen lie in the archives in St. Petersburg, and the LHAS is examining whether a microfilm copy existing in Budapest could be digitized in the interim; his letters to Kratchkovsky have not yet been systematically identified. The Balkans yield surprises, such as the letters of the Bosnian scholar Šaćir Sikirić, recently published from the Budapest side (Maslo et al. 2024). And the Arab world, where Goldziher corresponded with al-Azhar scholars such as

Ibrāhīm al-Laḳānī and Muḥammad al-Biblāwī, with ʿAlī Pāshā Mubārak, Prince Aḥmad Fuʿād, and Max Herz in Cairo, with Ṭāhir al-Jazāʿirī and the Arab Academy in Damascus, and with Mohamed Ben Cheneb and Si Amar ou Saïd Boulifa in Algiers, has barely been searched (Dévényi 2005; Ormos 2005; Dévényi 2018a; Dévényi 2023; Bourouba 2025; Friedmann 2026). Bourouba's recent identification of Ṭāhir al-Jazāʿirī's correspondence with Goldziher, and his book on the letters of Algerian scholars to Goldziher, indicate that family papers and institutional archives in Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Algiers, Tunis, and Baghdad may well preserve Goldziher's replies.

6. A program

What is proposed is not a monument but an infrastructure. The Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has resolved to embark on an international project devoted to Goldziher's correspondence, with Kinga Dévényi and Sabine Schmidtke as its scientific leads. In February 2026, a first group of holding institutions—among them the university libraries of Tübingen, Leiden, Cambridge, and Kiel, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and the Geheimes Staatsarchiv, the university

archive in Heidelberg, the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Fondation Max van Berchem and the Bibliothèque de Genève, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the National Library of Israel—was approached with an invitation to participate. The aim is to integrate Goldziher's letters preserved in collections worldwide into the existing Budapest platform, where each outgoing letter can be linked to the incoming letters it answers or provokes, and where the whole becomes searchable as a single corpus. The terms are deliberately modest: rights remain with the holding institutions; the LHAS receives PDF surrogates, not high-resolution masters; digitization costs are to be covered by external funding for which the project will apply, based on letters of intent and cost estimates from the participating institutions. The bibliographical guide to the published correspondence will continue to serve as the living register of what has been edited and studied, and will be expanded into a census of what survives (Dévényi and Schmidtke 2024).

Such a census requires several kinds of work, and several kinds of contributors. The first is identification: a systematic survey of the *Nachlässe* of Goldziher's 1,650 correspondents, beginning with the twenty-

one who wrote him more than a hundred letters each and proceeding to those whose letters number in the dozens. Much can be done from finding aids and from the printed literature; much cannot, since many personal papers are described only at the level of the fonds. Here, archivists and curators are the indispensable partners: a query against the name "Goldziher" in an unpublished register, or a glance into a box labeled "correspondence G," may retrieve what no scholar working from outside could find. The second is documentation: for each item, a minimal record of holding institution, shelfmark, date, place, language, and extent, entered into the shared database, is more valuable than a hundred unrecorded discoveries. The third is reproduction: PDF surrogates supplied to the platform under the conditions described above. The fourth is study and publication, in the tradition of the editions and articles cited here—of individual correspondences in full, of thematic dossiers across correspondences, and of the letters that Goldziher himself treated as scholarship. The fifth, finally, is the pursuit of the same aim for the Goldziher materials that are not letters: his marginalia and interleaved notes in Jerusalem, his manuscripts and drafts in Budapest, the copies of Arabic manuscripts he

commissioned or lent, his annotated hand-copies of his own works and of reference tools such as Freytag's *Lexicon* previously kept in private hands, and the inscribed offprints in libraries from Montreal to Cairo. Reading Goldziher's letters together with these materials, rather than in isolation, is what will finally make his working practice visible.

7. An invitation

The history of Islamic and Jewish studies around the turn of the twentieth century is, to an unusual degree, the history of a network with Goldziher at its center. The Budapest collection has made the inward-facing half of that network visible; the task now is to recover the outward-facing half. Scholars who encounter a letter by Goldziher—in a *Nachlass* they are cataloging, in a footnote, in a dealer's catalog, in a family's possession—are asked to report it. Libraries, archives, and research institutions that hold such letters, or suspect they might, are invited to join the project as partners, to search their holdings, and to permit the inclusion of surrogates in the shared platform. Editors and historians of the field are encouraged to take up the many unedited correspondences and to publish them together with the pertinent materials

on both sides. What Hellmut Ritter envisaged a century ago, and what the Hungarian Academy began in 1933 with the loan of a bundle of letters from Tübingen, can now be carried out on a scale and with a permanence that neither could have imagined. The letters are out there. It remains to find them, to reunite them, and to read them.

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