

ROMANIAN PUBLISHERS AND PRINTERS' DEVICES IN THE 19TH- 20TH CENTURIES. PERIODS, STYLES, ICONOGRAPHY

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Mărcile editorilor și tipografilor români în secolele XIX-XX. Perioade, stiluri, iconografie ABSTRACT

Cercetarea științifică a mărcilor editorilor și tipografilor a început în sec al XVIII-lea, o dată cu publicarea Culegerii lui Friedrich Roth-Scholz în 1730. Următorul pas important a fost făcut de Louis-Catherine Silvestre cu catalogul ei de mărci în două volume publicat la mijlocul sec al XIX-lea, dar abia în ultimele două decenii ale secolului cercetarea acestei teme a luat avânt cu adevărat. Secolul XX a asistat la o apariție crescută a colecțiilor profesionale complete pe teritoriul Europei, astfel că în prezent beneficiem de o serie de baze de date disponibile online.

În antiteză, doar două-trei articole scurte au fost publicate despre mărcile editorilor și tipografilor români (cel puțin după cunoștința mea). Cu toate acestea, ar merita explorarea și publicarea lor, deoarece sunt o parte importantă a istoriei de 515 a tiparului românesc.

Articolul prezintă principalele perioade, tipuri și elemente iconografice ale mărcilor editorilor și tipografilor români, acompaniate de analogii similare din străinătate.

Cuvinte-cheie: siglă, marca tipografului, marca editorului,

Key words: logo, printer's device, publisher's device

Professional research into publishers and printers' marks began in the 18th century, with the publication of Friedrich Roth-Scholz's sourcebook in 1730.¹ The next big step was taken by Louis-Catherine Silvestre² with her two-volume catalogue published in the mid-19th century, but it was only in the last two decades of the century that research on the subject really took off. The 20th century then saw the emergence of increasingly professional and complete collections across Europe, and nowadays there are several databases available online, too³.

As far as the literature in Romanian is concerned, there are of course excellent works⁴ on the history of graphics in general, but there are very few

¹ Roth-Scholtz 1730.

² Silvestre 1867.

³ For a detailed historical and content analysis of the European and non-European literature, see Simon 2014, p. 9-63.

⁴ Andreescu 2006; Opreșcu 1942-1945; Tatay 2007; Tatay 2011; Tatai-Baltă 2023; Tatay, Tatai-Baltă 2020.

publications dealing specifically and exclusively with publishers and printers' marks. Virgil Olteanu has written a professional and informative article on the subject⁵ in his encyclopaedia of book history, in which he includes an illustration of the Strilbițchi brothers' mark from 18th century Moldavia. Other than that, however, I know of only a few small papers, which treat only old Romanian marks;⁶ a small article, but without any analysis, just a few pictures;⁷ and in a few cases, the issue of printers' marks is mentioned on one or two pages in books on graphic history.⁸ There is a Romanian researcher on the subject, but as far as I know, she is not publishing on Romanian marks.⁹ There have also been works on the art of books in modern times,¹⁰ but it seems that there is no interest at all in the marks of this period. However, it would be worthwhile to explore and publish them, as they are a valuable part of the 515-year-old history of the printed Romanian book, too.

Let's take a look at the main types and iconographic elements of the Romanian publishers and printers' marks of the 19th and 20th centuries. I must say that my work did not aim at a systematic collection of Romanian marks, since my goal was to catalogue all the marks used in Hungary. The Hungarian project is in a fairly good position in international comparison: the three volumes¹¹ covering the period 1488–1920 have already been published, and the volume¹² covering the period 1921–1940 is in press. However, while gathering data, I naturally collected and recorded other marks that came into my hands, too. An extensive project of collecting data in Romanian libraries would obviously yield much more substantial results – and with this study I would encourage young Romanian researchers to do so.

As for the material gathered in this way, almost randomly: at the moment I have about 140 Romanian publishers and printers' marks (including the subtypes), which are divided by period:

19th century: 1 mark
 between 1901-1920: 7 marks
 between 1921-1944: 77 marks
 between 1945-1990: 57 marks

It can be seen that the big quantitative leap occurred in 1920 (due to the large number of presses and publishers in Transylvania, which was annexed then

⁵ Olteanu 1992, p. 238-240.

⁶ Morărescu 1983; Morărescu 1984.

⁷ *Steme editoriale* 1923.

⁸ Tatay, Tatai-Baltă 2015, p. 32-33.

⁹ Breazu 2010.

¹⁰ Kántor 2011.

¹¹ V. Ecsedy, Simon 2009; Simon 2012; Simon 2019.

¹² Simon 2023.

to Romania), and that under socialism the regulated system of specialised publishing did not allow a further large growth of marks.

The first Romanian mark from the 19th century is that of the Gutenberg press, owned by Josef Göbl. His father, Franz Göbl, came to the Romanian capital from Vienna. Here he bought the press of Constantin Alexandru Rosetti and Erik Winterhalder in 1876 and developed it into one of the largest printing and publishing businesses in Bucharest.



Fig. 1 – Gutenberg Press (Bucharest, 1892)

As we can see, the depiction shows the characteristics of classical iconography, with the crowdedness typical of the late 19th century. In the centre is the well-known portrait of the company's namesake, Johannes Gutenberg. Although this depiction is known to be discredited¹³ in many respects, its earliest source¹⁴ has made it an iconographic prototype. The portrait medallion is held by lions and surmounted by a closed crown. The mark bears the symbols of the company's various activities: books wrapped in bales (bookselling), bookbinding presses (bookbinding), griffins holding inking balls (printing). At the bottom centre is the slightly modified coat of arms of printers, with a one-headed eagle holding a composing stick and an inking roller. The mark has several ribbons with mottoes in Romanian: *Artă și lumină* [Art and light]; *Devisă mea este*

¹³ Painter 1965; Painter 1967.

¹⁴ Thevet 1584, vol. VI, p. 514.

onestitatea [My motto is honesty]; *N-am timp d'a fi obosit* [I have no time to be tired]. The whole image is enclosed by laurel branches, symbols of eternity and glory. The engraving was signed by the artist, A. X. Hochriem. His wood engraving institute was located at 29 Victoriei Avenue in Bucharest at the end of the 19th century and recruited young woodcarvers from Budapest, with offers of permanent employment.¹⁵

The company's second mark already reflects the Art Nouveau taste of the turn of the century: wavy lines, black and white surfaces separated by sharp contours, letters with individual lines. Notable is the carving off of the telephone number from the cliché in the second image. This was the custom: when there was a change in the company's data, they did not always make a new cliché, but mutilated the old one.

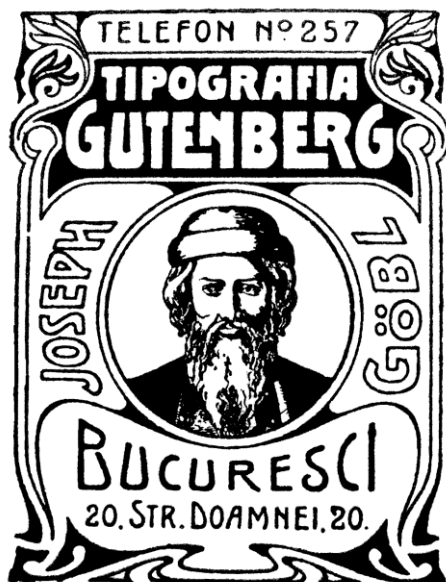


Fig. 2 – Gutenberg press
(Bucharest, 1903)

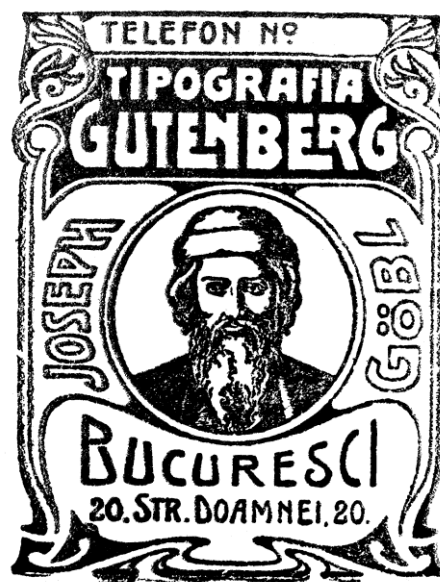


Fig. 3 – Gutenberg press
(Bucharest, 1906)

Another prominent Bucharest company of the first half of the 20th century, the bookshop Socec & Co., also used publishers' marks, two of which are presented here. The 1914 version still shows signs of 19th-century taste: a torch surrounded by two classical printers' ornaments and the initials of the founder Ioan V. Socec. The second version, from 1938, already shows the

¹⁵ Pester Lloyd 1894/195, p. 4; 1894/196, p. 8.

transformation of the firm into a joint-stock company in its inscription (SOCEC & Co. S.A.). The graphic design is also more modern, with a large, bold letter *S* framing a closed book.



Fig. 4 – Socec publisher (Bucharest, 1914)



Fig. 5 – Socec publisher (Bucharest 1938)

Apart from Göbl and Socec, the third major Bucharest firm to use modern techniques was the Minerva Institute of Graphic Arts, founded in 1898, whose 1903 mark also reflects Art Nouveau taste. The image shows the helmeted head of Athena Pallas in a medallion with a floral decoration in a rectangular frame.

It probably comes as no surprise to anyone that Minerva, the goddess of knowledge, is the *mythological figure* that appears most often on the marks of publishers and printers. It was also used very often by Romanian companies during the 20th century. The Minerva Literary and Printing Institute in Cluj, for example, used no less than five types of marks between the two world wars. The 1921 version shows a beautifully elaborated left-facing bust, while the 1925 version depicts a full-figured goddess in toga with her right hand raised in salutation. Between 1926 and 1939, the left-facing helmeted goddess head returns, now in a much sketchier form, and between 1942 and 1947, with a completely simplified silhouette casting a shadow. By 1944, the mark had already been substantially reduced in size.

Also a full-figure representation of Athena Pallas can be seen on the mark of the Minerva press of Oradea from 1923. The finely detailed and delicately delineated image shows the goddess with her spear and shield, with her attribute, the Gorgon-head. But the use of this iconographic archetype is not limited to the first half of the 20th century, as the mark of the Minerva publishing house in Bucharest, founded in 1970, also features the goddess of wisdom. The circular frame of the schematic logo, which is still in use today, is 'pierced' at one point by the helmet of the goddess. This is one of the longest continuously used publishers' marks in Romania, rivalled probably only by the publisher Kriterion, which has also been in operation since 1970.



Fig. 6 – Minerva press (Bucharest, 1902)



Fig. 7 – Minerva press (Cluj, 1921)



Fig. 8 – Minerva press (Cluj, 1925)



Fig. 9 – Minerva press (Cluj, 1926-1939)



Fig. 10 – Minerva press (Cluj, 1942-1947)



Fig. 11 – Minerva press (Cluj, 1944)



Fig. 12 – Minerva press (Oradea, 1923)

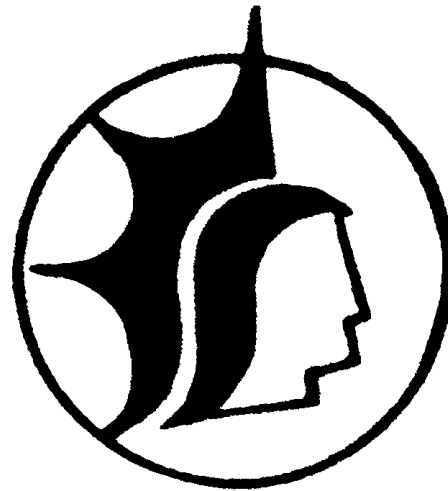


Fig. 13 – Minerva publisher (Bucharest, 1972–2023)

From ancient Greek mythology, the figure of Pan can also be seen, for example, on the mark of the publisher from Timișoara of the same name in 1926. In the well-done drawing, the goat-footed god sits on three giant books

and smiles at the reader. The mark of the Bucharest publisher Ion Creangă, created in 1970, also contains a mythical element – only this time not an ancient one, but taken from a fairy tale. The figure of the protagonist of the fairy tale *Punguța cu doi bani* [The two pence money bag] is a highly accomplished graphic achievement. The sweeping lines and perfectly rounded, closed composition of the little rooster would stand up to any professional critique.

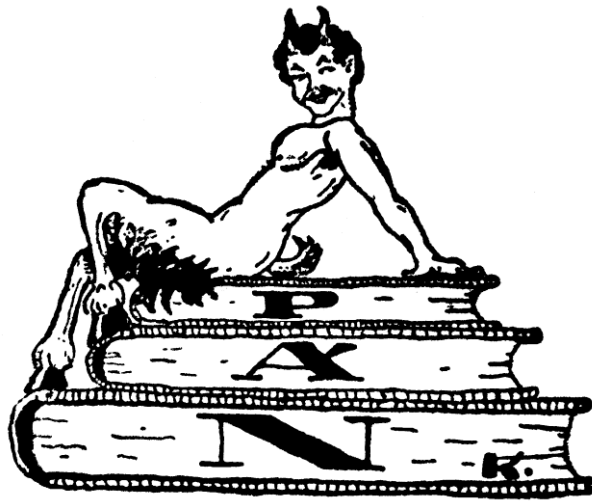


Fig. 14 – Pán publisher (Timișoara, 1926)



Fig. 15 – Ion Creangă publisher (Bucharest, 1977)

Of the other symbolic elements, the most common is of course the *griffin* of the traditional coat of arms of printers. The mythical creature with the head of an eagle and the body of a lion has been used as a traditional symbol of the profession by several Romanian presses, including Grafic-Record in Cluj, Marvan in Bucharest, Uhrmann in Timișoara and, in a stylised form, the publisher Krafft und Drotleff in Sibiu. It is noteworthy that while the first two hold traditional paintballs in their paws, the griffin on the Uhrmann mark is holding a paint roller in a modernised concept. Finally, the last, stylised to the extreme, no longer holds any attributes.



Fig. 16 – Grafic-Record press
(Cluj, 1933–1935)



Fig. 17 – Marvan press (Bucharest, 1932)



Fig. 18 – Uhrmann press (Timișoara, 1937)



Fig. 19 – Krafft & Drotleff publisher (Sibiu, 1928)

The Helicon press in Timișoara combined the griffin with one of the most common heraldic elements, the traditional triple shield of the artists on three types of its marks:



Fig. 20 – Helicon press (Timișoara, 1925)



Fig. 21 – Helicon press (Timișoara, 1926)



Fig. 22 – Helicon press (Timișoara, 1928)

The mark of the Corvin publisher in Deva is a good example of the characteristics of the classic *heraldic mark*. These are usually based on elements of an existing coat of arms (typically of a city) – in this case, however, the central element is a part of a royal coat of arms: the raven holding the ring. (The famous raven of the Corvin family is also used by the Budapest publisher Corvina on various types of marks, similarly for reasons of identity of name).

A new type of heraldic mark¹⁶ is represented by designs that no longer use the coat of arms of a particular city to designate a company, but its clearly recognisable silhouette or a famous building. One such example is the Fiedrich J. Horeth press in Sighișoara, which used raster autotype on the first type and sharp contour phototype on the second. Likewise, perhaps the most iconic building in Sighișoara, the clock tower, can be seen on Miron Neagu's publisher's mark from 1939.



Fig. 23 – Corvin publisher (Deva, 1995)

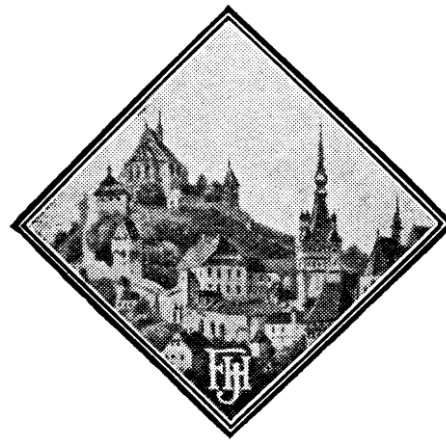


Fig. 24 – Friedrich Horeth press (Sighișoara, 1925)



Fig. 25 – Friedrich Horeth press (Sighișoara, 1928)



Fig. 26 – Miron Neagu publisher (Sighișoara, 1939)

¹⁶ For more details on this type, see Simon 2009.

But businesses do not just identify themselves with famous buildings – they very often use *famous sculptures or works of art* that they consider to be in some way characteristic of themselves as a symbolic element. Editura Fizică și Sport, for example, used Myron's famous Discus thrower as a publisher's mark during the years of socialism, while Humanitas in Bucharest has Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man on its mark. The 14th-century work of the brothers Georg and Martin from Cluj, the dragon-slaying statue of St George, was used by the Erdélyi Szemle [Transylvanian Review] as its publisher's mark between the two world wars. The publisher Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică in Bucharest used Constantin Brâncuși's infinite column rising from an open book as its mark:

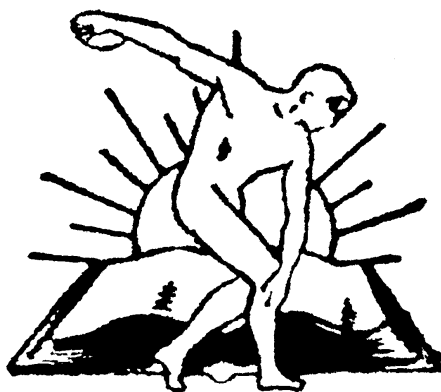


Fig. 27 – Cultura Fizică și Sport publisher (Bucharest, 1950-1954)

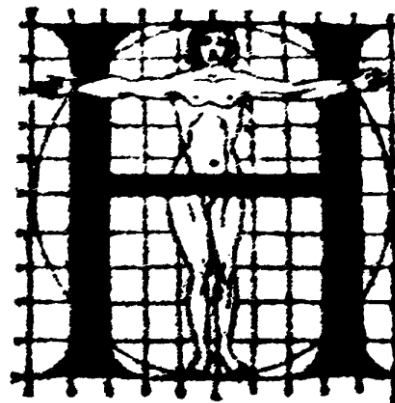


Fig. 28 – Humanitas publisher (Bucharest, 1990)

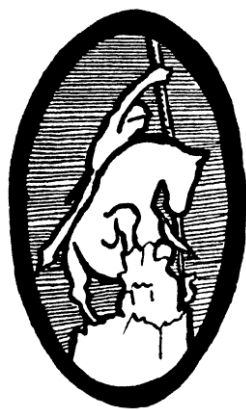


Fig. 29 – Erdélyi Szemle publisher (Cluj, 1931-1936)



Fig. 30 – Științifică și Enciclopedică publisher (Bucharest, 1978-1982)

Another classical symbol that appears frequently is the representation of an abstract, generic building, the temple of knowledge, so to speak. For example, a domed building rising out of a dark background can be seen on the publisher's mark of the Astra in Braşov, while the same columned temple with the rising Sun appears on the mark of the Minerva press in Cluj. The lighthouse of the publisher Pharos, pointing the way through a stormy sea, is a common cultural symbol, as are the owls used by the Viaţa press in Cluj or the Heinrich Zeidner publisher in Braşov. (Viaţa uses a ready-made cliché with an inscription, while Zeidner uses a custom engraved design.)



Fig. 31 – Astra publisher
(Braşov, 1939)



Fig. 32 – Minerva press
(Cluj, 1946)



Fig. 33 – Pharos publisher
(Cluj, 1935)



Fig. 34 – Viaţa press (Cluj, 1926-1927)



Fig. 35 – Heinrich Zeidner publisher
(Braşov, 1924-1937)

Among the more *modern symbols*, the cogwheel is perhaps worth mentioning, which first began to appear in publishers' marks at the end of the 19th century as a new symbol of the industrial revolution and is no longer a rarity in the 20th century. The marks used by the publisher Lapkiadó in Cluj in the 1920s bear a marked resemblance to the mark of Lehmann in Berlin a few years earlier. It cannot necessarily be said to be a case of copying, but the German mark may have served as a direct source of inspiration.

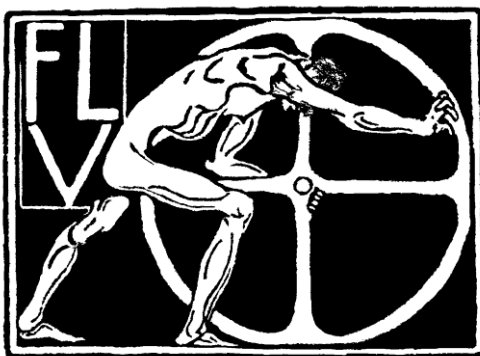


Fig. 36 – Felix Lehmann publisher (Berlin, 1918)

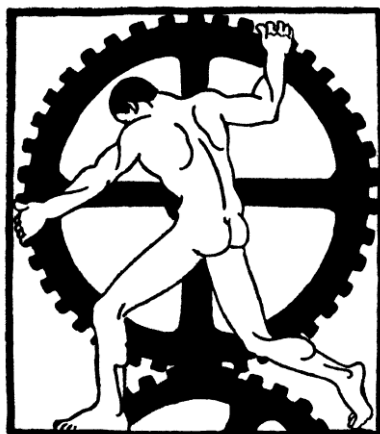


Fig. 37 – Lapkiadó publisher (Cluj, 1921-1927) Fig. 38 – Lapkiadó publisher (Cluj, 1928)

Among the symbolic elements, we cannot leave out the *symbols of socialism and communism*. In Romania, the five-pointed star can be first seen on the 1945 publisher's mark of the Béla Józsa Athenaeum. The same element is also prominent on the two marks of the publisher Cartea Rusă (a schematic male

figure holds up a luminous five-pointed star). As a publisher for the ARLUS (Asociația Română pentru strângerea Legăturilor cu Uniunea Sovietică) [Romanian Association for Closer Ties with the Soviet Union], which operated from 1944 to 1964, the Cartea Rusă also had several other types of marks: a map of the Soviet Union, a microscope as a symbol of technological and engineering progress, and smouldering chimneys – always combined with an open book.



Fig. 39 – Józsa Béla Athenaeum publisher (Cluj, 1945)



Fig. 40 – Cartea Rusă publisher (Bucharest, 1945-1951)



Fig. 41 – Cartea Rusă publisher (Bucharest, 1954)



Fig. 42 – Cartea Rusă publisher (Bucharest, 1945-1946)



Fig. 43 – Cartea Rusă publisher (Bucharest, 1949)



Fig. 44 – Cartea Rusă publisher (Bucharest, 1957)

These chimneys are a recurring element of socialist-era publishers' marks in general, and are also used by the Editura Tehnică in Bucharest, in increasingly precise and schematically drawn versions:



Fig. 45 – Tehnică publisher (Bucharest, 1965)



Fig. 46 – Tehnică publisher (Bucharest, 1966 a)

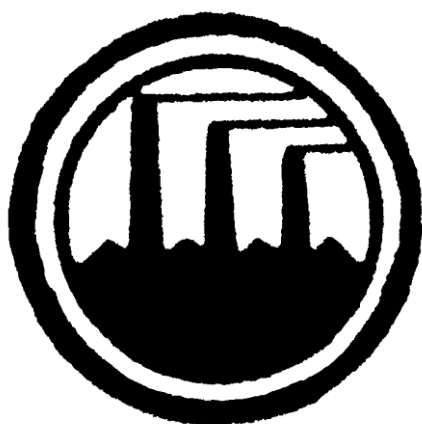


Fig. 47 – Tehnică publisher (Bucharest, 1966 b)

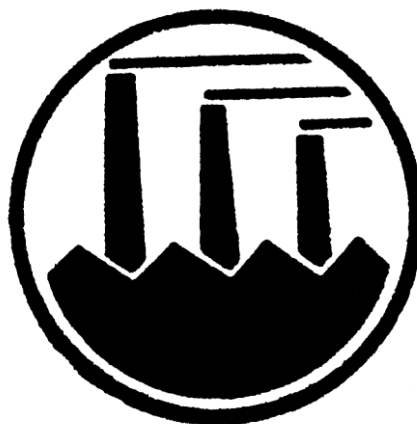


Fig. 48 – Tehnică publisher (Bucharest, 1971)

A basic – and never extinct – type is the *canting mark*, which is also found in Romanian printing. The Adolf Sonnenfeld joint-stock company in Oradea has the sun on two of its marks (the second one combining it with the triple shield of the artists), obviously referring to the family name.



Fig. 49 - Adolf Sonnenfeld publisher
(Oradea, 1920)



Fig. 50 – Adolf Sonnenfeld publisher
(Oradea, 1938)

Historicism was a widespread phenomenon in the 19th century, but the use of antique forms is typical of the 20th century. For example the Markus press in Sighișoara and the Honterus publisher in Sibiu are both trying to achieve the effect of a simple woodcut mark.

Another eternal type of publisher and printer's mark is the *monogram*. These follow different fashions in each era – for example, among the 20th century Romanian marks of interest to us, we can detect the influence of art deco in some examples from between the two world wars.

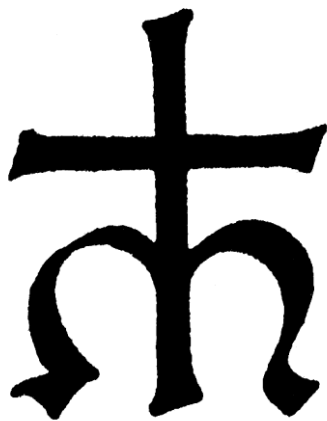


Fig. 51 – Markus press (Sighișoara, 1926)



Fig. 52 – Honterus publisher and press
(Sibiu, 1929-1931)



Fig. 53 - Editura Literară a Casei Școalelor publisher (Bucharest, 1922)



Fig. 54 – Alcalay publisher (Bucharest, 1938)

There are, of course, countless – more or less successful – realisations of one specific symbolic element. In this case we can follow the torch motif from the beginning to the end of the 20th century:



Fig. 55 – Flacăra publisher (Bucharest, 1914)



Fig. 56 – Singer Nándor publisher (Oradea, 1933)



Fig. 57 – Facla publisher (Timișoara, 1973)



Fig. 58 – Facla publisher (Timișoara, 1980)

Much more spectacular – but quite rare in Romania – is when we see an evolution in the design and use of a mark within the same company. If the process can run undisturbed and the graphic designers are good, the result can be a well-done *logo*, as in the case of the publisher Cartea Românească:



Fig. 59 – Cartea Românească publisher (Bucharest, 1928)



Fig. 60 – Cartea Românească publisher (Bucharest, 1937-1939)

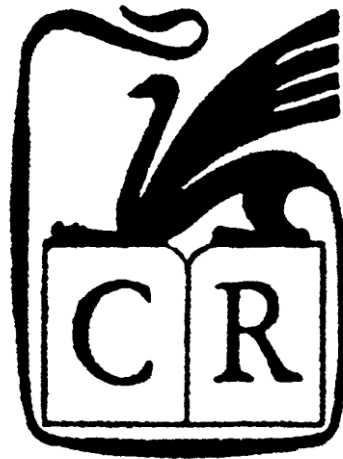


Fig. 61 – Cartea Românească publisher (Bucharest, after 1990)

But even without such a development process (or without us knowing about it), there are some extremely well-designed Romanian logos. To illustrate this, I present a pair of opposites: a symmetrical yet unstable publisher's logo – and an asymmetric, and still perfectly balanced, simple publisher's mark (both positive and negative versions):



Fig. 62 – Adolf Auspitz
(Lugoj, 1930)

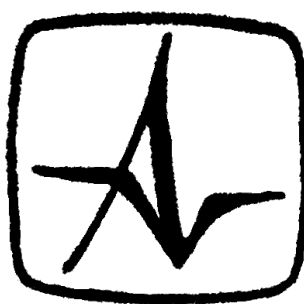


Fig. 63 – Albatros publisher
(Bucharest, 1971-2018)



Fig. 64 – Albatros publisher
(Bucharest, 1972)

In terms of content and design, I consider one of the best publishers' marks in the 20th century Romania to be the one used by the Kriterion company. Its design and drawing process (as a rare exception) was described in detail by its creator, Ferenc Deák. To highlight the excellent graphic quality of the open book and Pegasus merging, I will juxtapose, without any comment, two other publishers' marks, also depicting an open book. (It should be noted, however, that Hasefer now uses a much better designed logo. In the nineties, there was not always time for logo design or for a thoughtful planning of the company's graphic identity.)



Fig. 65 – Eminescu publisher
(Bucharest, 1990)



Fig. 66 – Hasefer publisher (Bucharest, 1993)



Fig. 67 – Kriterion publisher (1970-2024)

The *period of use* of the marks and their precise *dimensions* are extremely important issues, as without accurate recording of these data, professional research is not possible. Even in such a narrow context, it is important to stress that one of the most important phenomena of the decades of socialism was the extreme reduction in size. The printers' marks presented here are all only 9–10 mm in size.



Fig. 68 – Crișana press
(Oradea, 1975)



Fig. 69 – Casa Scântei press
(Bucharest, 1987)



Fig. 70 – Întreprinderea
Poligrafică Cluj press
(Cluj, 1990)

Systematic information about the *designers* of the marks can also only be obtained through a persistent and professional data collection. The relevant data may come from several sources: on the one hand, it may be provided by an external, literary source (we have just seen an example of this in the case of the publisher Kriterion and Ferenc Deák). We also know from a literary source that the mark of the *Forrás* series published by Irodalmi and later Kriterion was

made by Lajos Bardócz (1936–), a renowned advertising graphic artist, illustrator and publishing specialist.¹⁷

In some cases, the mark itself is signed by its maker. For example, the front page of a book published in 1926 by the company Pán in Timișoara features a publisher's mark (previously presented here) signed with the letter *K* by its creator. The inscription on the verso of the title page gives the rest of the information: "The title page was drawn by Nándor Kóra-Korber." The graphic artist Nándor Kóra-Korber (1897–1953) was the most active newspaper and book illustrator in Transylvania and Banat between the two world wars.¹⁸

In other cases, the person who designed the book or the artist who drew the cover may be identified as the creator of the mark. For example, the colophon of a publication by the Timișoara-based publisher Helicon contains the following sentence: "The typographical layout of the book is the work of Albert Kner." This suggests that the publisher's mark on the book (also shown in this paper, depicting a griffin) was drawn by the same artist. There are also cases where the publisher's mark is signed, but it has not (yet) been possible to identify the artist, as in the case of the publisher's mark of the Minerva (Oradea, 1923) seen above.

I trust that even such a very quick overview will show that the Romanian publishers and printers' marks of the last two centuries offer a very rich and varied material for the interested researcher.

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¹⁸ *RMIL* vol. III, p. 107.

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Fig. 32 – Tipografia Minerva (Cluj, 1946)
Fig. 33 – Editura Pharos (Cluj, 1935)
Fig. 34 – Tipografia Viața (Cluj, 1926-1927)
Fig. 35 – Editura Heinrich Zeidner (Brașov, 1924-1937)
Fig. 36 – Editura Felix Lehmann (Berlin, 1918)
Fig. 37 – Editura Lapkiadó publisher (Cluj, 1921-1927)
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Fig. 40 – Editura Cartea Rusă (1945-1951)
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Fig. 68 – Tipografia Crișana (Oradea, 1975)

Fig. 69 – Tipografia Casa Scânteii press (București, 1987)

Fig. 70 – Tipografia Întreprinderea Poligrafică Cluj (Cluj, 1990)

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