



Ages of Time — exhibition commemorating the 200 years history of the National and University Library

On April 18, 2018, a large exhibition commemorating the 200 years history of the Library was opened. It is entitled *Tímanna safn* (Ages of Time). The exhibition features the main stages of the history of the Library, ranging from the idea to the development of the Library in various places such as the Reykjavík Cathedral, the Alþingi Parliament House, the house of Lærði Skólinn (Reykjavík Junior College) and the Culture House to the integration with the University Library in the actual building of the National Library. The beginning of the Library is attributable to the fact that, on March 30, 1818, the board of the Copenhagen Division of the Icelandic Literary Society, founded two years earlier, was introduced by the Danish antiquity specialist and officer, Carl Christian Rafn, who proposed to establish a committee to "consider how a comprehensive public library should be established in Iceland" along with an offer of a gift of books. The president of the division, Bjarni Thorsteinsson thanked Rafn for the initiative, wrote to the Reykjavik Division and asked them to speak with the Danish Crown representatives. A reply was received on 28 August in a letter from Bishop Geir Vídalín to the Cathedral priest Árni Helgason and to the president of the Reykjavik Division, claiming that he will ask the Chancery for the funding of housing the books in the Cathedral. This day, August 28, 1818, is believed to be the foundation of the Stifðisbókasafn, as the National Library was called during the first decades. Rafn never came to Iceland, and never visited the Library he fostered for decades. Jón Árnason, best known for his collection of folklore, was appointed as the first librarian at the National Library in 1848, and worked until he retired in 1887. The Library was in the cathedral until 1881 when it was transferred to the newly built Alþingi Parliament House, and then it was renamed the National Library of Iceland. The National Library moved to a newly built Culture House at Hverfisgata in 1909 and there it was in conjunction with other museums by far until 1994 when it was transferred to the actual building of the National Library and the University Library of Iceland.