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THE POLISH LIBRARIANS' ASSOCIATION

THE FACULTY OF JOURNALISM, INFORMATION AND BOOK STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

# przeгляд biblioteczny

THE LIBRARY REVIEW  
Founded in 1927

SPECIAL ISSUE 2

Warsaw 2025

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**Founded in 1927**

**The Oldest Polish Research Journal in Library and Information Science**

**SPECIAL ISSUE 2**

**Warsaw 2025**

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## INTRODUCTION

This second special issue this year is devoted to the continuing importance of libraries as vital institutions supporting knowledge, culture, information, recreation, and the development of human well-being, as well as to emerging problems that can disrupt the efficient fulfillment of user needs.

Although issues related to the role of libraries in the lives of individuals and entire communities have appeared in library science literature for many years, they remain highly relevant. Therefore, it is worth highlighting these wonderful, though sometimes lesser-known, libraries that play a key role in their communities, adapting to the dynamically changing expectations and needs of their users. They present a new perspective on what libraries can do to best fulfill their social and educational mission for their patrons. Often, however, despite their best efforts, many people remain beyond their reach. The same is true with readership. The situation in this area in Poland, despite some positive changes, still requires improvement.

A 2024 report from the National Library<sup>1</sup> shows that nearly 40% of Poles haven't read a single book in a year, although the percentage of people using e-books and audiobooks is growing. Unequal access to books and reading habits remain a problem. Unequal access to books and reading habits formed in childhood remain a problem.

Therefore, libraries undertake various initiatives to identify the problems of library non-use, the causes of low reading rates, and to initiate new ways, means, and methods of attracting those who cannot yet be called library users or readers.

To transform non-readers into readers, libraries foster an organizational culture that is open and focused on serving users and that actively builds the library brand as a friendly, accessible, inspiring place open to diversity, adapted to today's users. They also invest in the development of librarians' interpersonal skills, recognizing their crucial role as the "faces" of libraries

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<sup>1</sup> „Stan czytelnictwa książek w Polsce w 2024 roku” [State of readership in Poland in 2024] (online). Available at: <https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/5611-stan-czytelnictwa-ksiazek-w-polsce-w-2024-roku.html>. Access: 20.11.2025.

and their most important social capital, who strengthen their activities and help users feel visible and understood, which encourages the use of libraries, their collections, and participation in the life of their community.

To meet the complex demands of satisfying diverse user needs, libraries are seeking and implementing the most effective solutions, with new technologies playing a key role. Their use enables the expansion of the scope and quality of services, from resource digitization and process automation to the development of digital platforms, leveraging mass media and AI, thus significantly improving user experience, quality, and universality of services and access to information.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant test and impetus for these trends. The closure of brick-and-mortar libraries triggered a sharp increase in demand for digital resources and online services. Libraries that quickly adapted to the conditions have gained in popularity and importance, confirming that digital forms of access are essential to maintaining continuity of education and access to culture. The pandemic has forced accelerated digitization and the expansion of digital infrastructure, and has also increased public awareness of the possibilities of libraries in the online environment. This has provided a positive impetus for further investment and the development of libraries as hybrid institutions, combining physical and digital activities.

However, the implementation of these innovations also generates new challenges that have not been faced before, and “ordinary” users are unaware of the objective difficulties libraries face in fully meeting their needs.

To effectively respond to customer expectations, libraries require a legislative framework, appropriate regulations, procedures, and standards that adapt regulations to the new realities. This will also allow libraries to fully utilize the potential of technology, enabling development and innovation while ensuring the protection of the rights and intellectual property of owners and authors.

In this way, libraries can continue their mission of creating modern, safe, and legally compliant services that fully meet user expectations even in the most demanding circumstances.

In this issue, you will find the following articles:

\* **Krzysztof Stachura:** Public Libraries as Spaces Supporting the Development of Well-Being.

\* **Dorota Grabowska:** Cultural Animation in Public Libraries in Poland.

\* **Anna Tułacz:** The Role of Libraries in Regional Education.

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\* **Barbara Głębiccka-Giza, Adam Wyżyński:** The Library of the Polish National Film Archive – An Audiovisual Institute as a Collective Social Actor in the Development of Film Studies Based on Primary Sources? Some Reflections in Connection with the Library’s Attainment of Scientific Library Status.

\* **Dorota Bednarczyk, Maria Górska:** Digital Resource Sharing and the Information Needs of Users in the Sejm Library.

\* **Teresa Święckowska:** Controlled Digital Lending: Legal Conditions, Social Contexts, Practices and Challenges for Libraries

\* **Małgorzata Kowalska-Chrzanowska, Paweł Marzec:** Non-Users of the University Library In Toruń – Research on the Reasons for not using Library Resources and Services by Students of Nicolaus Copernicus University in toruń

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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS SPACES SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WELL-BEING



Krzysztof Stachura. Assistant Professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Gdańsk, and a member of the Pomeranian Centre for Cultural Research. His academic interests include models of action within the cultural sector, practices of cultural participation, and the anthropology of new technologies. He is a co-author of the concept of expanding the field of culture. His research focuses on cultural sector personnel and the condition of the cultural sector as a whole. He analyzes the structural transformations of the cultural sector in Poland and the strategies of transformation within Polish cultural institutions. In recent years, he has published works on, among other topics, the (non)presence of various audience groups in cultural institutions (*Lonely, isolated, self-excluded? What is the reason for the absence of male seniors in cultural institutions?*, 2023, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Sociologica*; *Does reading culture have a gender? On the challenges of engaging men in library activities*, 2024, *Zarządzanie w Kulturze*).

**KEYWORDS:** Well-being. Culture. Public libraries. Cooperation. Social change.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – The aim of this article is to present the role of public libraries in supporting the well-being of their users. **Research methods** – The analysis is based on data collected through in-depth individual interviews conducted with library users (n=20) and library staff (n=15) in the

Pomeranian Voivodeship. **Results** – The evolution of public libraries toward the democratization of their institutional relationships with users significantly increases their attractiveness. Library staff play a crucial role in this process, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing visitors' well-being. **Conclusions** – Public libraries serve as key platforms for social change, promoting well-being through non-profit, community- and relationship-based initiatives. Despite their potential, the role of libraries in creating conditions that support the development of well-being remains largely underutilized.

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Public libraries perform a range of social functions, constituting a key element of the institutional cultural order. A significant aspect of library operations today is the creation and development of services that support the well-being of users. This article examines the relationship between libraries and well-being. The analysis highlights the role of public libraries in supporting the development of users' well-being. The article includes findings regarding institutional strategies for supporting well-being in public libraries. The analysis conducted for the purposes of this article allows for the formulation of conclusions regarding the impact of user participation in the life of public libraries on individual levels of well-being. This, in turn, allows for the identification of challenges that public libraries will face in the context of future development strategies and models for building relationships with users.

## WELL-BEING AS AN ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

The category of well-being, due to its breadth, ambiguity, and multidimensionality, poses a challenge for researchers attempting to conceptualize and operationalize it. For the purposes of this analysis, a conceptualization of the term "well-being" has been adopted that assumes a division into two aspects: personal and social. The first dimension includes: emotional well-being, a happy life, vitality, resilience and self-esteem (self-esteem, optimism, resilience), as well as functioning (skills, autonomy, engagement, meaning and purpose in life). Social well-being, on the other hand, consists of social support, trust and a sense of belonging (Panek, 2015). This subjective understanding of well-being, based on the individual's feelings, allows for an assessment of the perceived level of life satisfaction. An important dimension of well-being understood in this way is also building relationships with others and caring for the quality of those relationships (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Components of subjective well-being include positive feelings, such as experiencing pleasure, as well as positive ways of functioning that allow for the realization of individual goals and life values (Oman, 2019).

Some researchers are critical of the existing body of research on well-being, arguing that it lacks an in-depth, qualitative perspective on the phenomenon – for example, by conducting ethnographic and autoethnographic studies or using participatory techniques. Consequently, research findings rarely focus on the meanings embedded within the various dimensions of well-being, leaving our understanding of the concept limited (Baldin, Bille, 2023). This concern stems from the fact that relying on a model of well-being research in which its level is estimated based on the self-reports of specific individuals (most often respondents in questionnaire surveys) may be regarded as methodologically questionable or even outright inadequate. At the same time, the value of well-being research lies in its critical perspective, which highlights the evident limitations of the neoliberal view of well-being understood as the increase in a trait or the volume of a given type of capital (Watson et al., 2023).

This way of thinking is consistent with a vision of well-being built on relationships with others. Such a perspective allows for viewing well-being through the lens of socialization, community, and shared interests (Atkinson, 2013). In this way, well-being can be developed not on the basis of consumerist narratives, but through actions undertaken in cooperation with others, in an open and inclusive community (Szejnwald Brown, Vergragt, 2016). This provides an effective antidote to the development of the “well-being industry,” which instrumentalizes the pursuit of life satisfaction, forces individuals to be entrepreneurial in their self-care, and creates strong pressure to succeed and maintain a fast-paced lifestyle (Davies, 2015).

## CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND WELL-BEING

The understanding of well-being outlined above can be applied to studying the ways in which various forms of cultural activity are undertaken, including those related to participation in the institutional offerings of public libraries. In the context of this article, this concerns primarily participation in activities offered by cultural institutions and, more broadly, the consumption of cultural content and the social integration that takes place through cultural participation. Reflective thinking about the links between well-being and culture opens up the possibility of examining processes of socialization, sharing, and the search for community (Bachórz et al., 2019). It therefore becomes crucial to specify how cultural offerings should be designed to genuinely serve as a lever for well-being, and when and under what conditions this is possible. Analyzing the mutual relations between culture and well-being requires considering, on the one hand, various aspects of cultural activity,

the institutional conditions under which such activities are carried out, and the characteristics of their audiences, and on the other hand, the differences in the effect and durability of the impact of culture on well-being.

In the context of thinking about culture as a tool for supporting the development of well-being, it is worth noting that culture is subject to strong instrumentalizing pressures. The belief that “culture matters” implies – even if not explicitly – an orientation toward profit, preferably one that can be calculated and consumed (Hausner, 2021). In the case of culture, however, it is more justifiable to invest in achieving outcomes that are difficult to measure, such as subjectivity, community, and autonomy, rather than to adopt an economically driven perspective. Creating and maintaining relationships is a real, tangible outcome of cultural activity, one that can support communities in developing networks of support and striving toward what they themselves would define as a “good life” (Scott, Rowe, Pollock, 2018). A democratized culture, one that distances itself from reinforcing hierarchies and remains close to human experience, offers an opportunity to enhance well-being.

Utilizing culture as a tool to support the development of well-being can be a significant element in the functioning of the cultural sector. In rankings of factors influencing personal well-being, access to culture places third, surpassed only by health status and income level. It is, however, a more significant indicator than age, educational level, gender, or professional status (Grossi et al., 2011). The list of empirical evidence showing that culture can serve as an effective tool for building well-being is extensive. Numerous studies highlight the importance of culture for observed levels of well-being. These analyses demonstrate that various formats and modes of cultural participation have a positive impact on both personal and social well-being. In the case of activities offered by libraries, this impact includes, among other things: improving quality of life (Chow, Tian, 2019), enhancing mental health (Zanal Abidin, Shaifuddin, Wan Mohd Saman, 2021), increasing happiness (Hider et al., 2022), strengthening social capital within local communities (Wojciechowska, 2021), raising levels of social trust (Vårheim, 2014), and increasing civic engagement (Coward, McClay, Garrido, 2018).

The long list of examples demonstrating positive relationships between cultural activity and well-being does not mean that culture is a universal tool for changing life circumstances and increasing personal and social well-being. There are conditions that increase the likelihood of successful cultural interventions. However, there is no guarantee that such actions will always yield the desired results. The significance of the role played by a given type of cultural activity or cultural institution in achieving specific well-being outcomes also remains ambiguous. Cultural activity may not

have a substantial impact on well-being, or it may generate only short-term effects (Węziak-Białowolska, 2016). Moreover, designing culture as a tool for well-being relies more on its preventative than on its therapeutic function. In other words, maintaining well-being through participation in culture may prove easier than recovering or rebuilding it at a later stage (Clift, Phillips, Pritchard, 2021). The moderate effects of culture as a tool for strengthening well-being stem from the fact that access to opportunities for cultural participation is not fully inclusive. Limited access to cultural participation is, in turn, a consequence of the level of social capital and the density of social networks (Gotthardt et al., 2023).

## WELL-BEING IN THE OFFERINGS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Cultural institutions serve as important socialization spaces for individuals engaging in cultural activities. Public libraries play a key role in this process, enabling the shared experience of culture and the exchange of cultural encounters. By assuming this role, they become places where programs aimed, among other things, at supporting the development of well-being are implemented. Although library offerings are not always directly designed to promote well-being, they can *de facto* fulfill such a function. Library programs are addressed, among others, to groups at risk of social exclusion or particularly vulnerable to discrimination. While libraries differ in their effectiveness in reaching individuals from vulnerable groups, there is a noticeable increase in reflection on the need to incorporate proposals for such audiences into institutional strategies (Pfeifere, 2023). However, the development of extensive scenarios and action plans specifically aimed at increasing the well-being of users, including those from disadvantaged groups, remains relatively rare (Feld, 2020). In recent years, this situation has changed due to two crises: the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. During this period, many cultural institutions faced the task of protecting those most vulnerable to the negative effects of social upheavals. As a result, public libraries have increasingly become spaces of inclusion, integration, and democratization (Johnston et al., 2024).

Libraries implement various types of activities that contribute to well-being, although their thematic scope, format, and purpose may differ. From the perspective of this analysis, what is crucial is not so much the content of the offerings themselves, but rather their function, and consequently the role that public libraries play as places for cultivating community, acquiring skills, and transferring resources that contribute to an increased level of well-being. Libraries can fulfill this mission by offering space for meetings, dialogue, and the creation of innovative social

initiatives. They thus become not only a remedy for crises, but also a space for expressing creativity and learning through play for various groups of users. If they are to support the development of well-being, they should focus on the development of their users: training in new skills, exploring their emotions, or working through difficult experiences (Grimes, 2024). Such activities promote the reflective building of well-being, as they involve creating favorable conditions for being within the institutional setting, cooperating with others, and fostering attitudes of optimism, compassion, and hope (Latham, Cowan, 2023). The library sector thus acts as a facilitator of cooperation, a kind of incubator for networks based on partnership and collaboration. The result of implementing such a strategy is an increased sense of agency among users engaging in these activities, as well as a growth in their sense of empowerment. A model of library operation that emphasizes the need for collaboration also transforms the way relationships between the institution and its users are understood. These connections are becoming more democratized, built on a decentralized network model rather than on hierarchical relationships of superiority and subordination in which the user cannot negotiate the terms of their participation in the institutional offer (Popławska, 2022).

The focus on developing cooperation, which is essential to this transformation of libraries, may serve as a remedy for the atrophy of community characteristic of the culture of individualism (Jacyno, 2007). It is not the emancipation of individuals but interpersonal communication – through which value is created – that has become the missing resource hindering or even preventing the achievement of various social goals, including maintaining and enhancing well-being (Hausner, 2021). Community processes are rooted in critical reflection, which makes it possible to recognize different points of view, engage in dialogue, and develop unconventional solutions. These are signs of an inclusive culture in which well-being plays an important role as one of the aims of undertaken activities (Pasterak, Studziński, 2023). An inclusive public library fosters well-being through a thoughtfully designed model of cooperation. It is defined by non-hierarchical structures, relational closeness, mutual respect, and acceptance. Under such conditions, those representing libraries become empathetic and responsible “craftspeople of cooperation” taking responsibility for the development of reciprocal relationships (Kaszyński, 2021).

## AIM AND METHOD

This article was inspired by the results of research on the condition of public libraries and readership in the Pomeranian Voivodeship conducted in 2022-2023 in cooperation with The Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski

Voivodeship and City Public Library in Gdańsk. The aim of the research was to gain knowledge about the reading practices of library users and to analyze institutional operating models aimed at supporting the involvement of residents in library activities. The research material was published in two reports summarizing the collected results (Stachura, Zbieranek, 2022; Stachura, Zbieranek, 2023). However, the published results do not include detailed considerations of the relationship between libraries and well-being. This issue has been analyzed for the purposes of this article, whose main objective is to explain the role that public libraries play in supporting the development of well-being.

As part of the study, in the first year (2022), an analysis of existing data concerning the condition of Pomeranian public libraries and the state of readership in the region was carried out. At the same time, a quantitative study was conducted among three groups of respondents: active participants in cultural life (n=569), professional staff of public libraries in the Pomeranian Voivodeship (n=328), and representatives of local government responsible for designing and implementing local cultural policy (n=82). The conclusions from this research formed the basis for developing the concept of the second phase of the project, implemented in 2023. This phase involved qualitative research – ethnographic studies of initiatives related to the operation of public libraries in the Pomeranian Voivodeship (n=5) and individual in-depth interviews (n=48). The aim of the ethnographic research was to examine what actions are being undertaken by public libraries in the Pomeranian region to modernize their services and adapt them to user expectations.

The research results presented below are based on the analysis of material from individual in-depth interviews conducted in the second phase of the project. A total of 35 interviews were included in the analysis, conducted with active participants in cultural life (n=20) and with library staff (n=15). Empirical material from interviews with representatives of local governments (n=13) was not included in the analysis. This was because the interview script for this group did not address issues related to library strategies concerning the well-being of their users. Including empirical material obtained from two groups of participants made it possible to compare different voices, representing distinct perspectives and understandings of the role that public libraries play in supporting the development of well-being. Interviews with active participants in cultural life addressed, among other things, issues related to the evaluation of library services, the way in which public libraries are used, and expectations regarding the format of institutional activities. Interviews with staff, on the other hand, made it possible to explore topics such as how libraries build relationships with users, how they organize their offerings, and how they seek new, interactive forms of activity and cooperation.

During the qualitative research, a purposive sampling method was used for participants in both subgroups. Active participants in cultural life were defined as individuals who regularly use library services. They were reached in two ways – through library staff and using the snowball sampling technique, whereby individual users recommended others for participation. The selection of interviewees proceeded in stages to ensure a high level of diversity in the research sample based on several factors: subregion within the Pomeranian Voivodeship (Chojnice, Gdańsk, Słupsk, Starogard, or the Tricity), size of place of residence, age, gender, and professional status. Among the library users, 12 women and 8 men took part in the study, and the sample was clearly diverse in terms of the age of interviewees. The interviewees included: teachers (6), sales representatives (3), a business consultant, an engineer, an accountant, a security guard, a childcare provider, a researcher, an office worker, a legal advisor, a firefighter, a professional soldier, and a person not currently in employment. It should be emphasized that one of the major difficulties in the research process was the recruitment of younger people and men – as they are noticeably less involved in the life of public libraries in local communities than women and older people. Despite support from individual libraries in recruiting participants, the study included people who described their experiences with many different library facilities. Moreover, the narratives point not only to the strengths but also to the weaknesses of public library functioning, avoiding idealization of the services or operational models of the institutions visited by the study participants.

Among public library employees there were significantly more women (n=12) than men (n=3). This reflects the strong feminization of the library sector, including at the managerial level (the interviews primarily involved individuals holding managerial positions in libraries). The criteria for selecting interviewees included – similarly to the case of active participants in cultural life – the subregion within the province, the size of the place of residence, and diversity in terms of the characteristics of the libraries with which the interviewees were associated (such as the level of infrastructure, the scope of cultural offerings, or involvement in local social initiatives).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The collected empirical material makes it possible to identify four key elements that determine the importance of public libraries as spaces supporting the development of well-being. The following aspects are described: the relational dimension of well-being built on relationships with others; the importance of public libraries as spaces for creating well-

being; socio-demographic differences in the use of library services that shape the potential for enhancing well-being; and the structural limitations of supporting well-being in public libraries.

#### THE RELATIONAL DIMENSION OF WELL-BEING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A factor that encourages users to visit public libraries is the atmosphere that prevails within them. For many respondents, it is as important as the substantive quality of the services offered. When the staff are perceived as communicative and helpful – “reaching out to the user” – a visit to the library becomes an opportunity to talk, improve one’s mood, and feel a sense of connection with someone familiar and friendly. Well-being then emerges organically, in conditions of friendly interaction. These interactions may relate directly to reading experiences, but they may also revolve around the more prosaic elements of everyday life. As a result, being in the library is associated with familiar conversation and the natural exchange of day-to-day experiences. This is well illustrated by the excerpts below from two seniors participating in the study. For older adults, a visit to the library is a particularly valuable experience – a cherished ritual that provides a great deal of satisfaction.

There’s such closeness and warmth here. It makes you want to come. (...) I’m happy that I’m on my way there. (...) Those ladies drive by in their cars and honk at me when they see me on the street. (...) That’s nice, that kind of contact. That you feel liked. And that they make an effort, that they have something for you, that you can... To me, it’s not an institution, (...) that’s how I feel about it. [18\_U\_M\_60+]

Everyone in the library is smiling. I call and say, “good morning,” and they [*the library staff – author’s note*] reply, “good morning.” We exchange these little courtesies. I ask whether they have Olga Tokarczuk’s “Flights.” “Yes, we do. Would you like it?” I say, “Yes, please put it aside for me. I’ll drop by in a few days.” (...) It’s a chance to meet people. If I go to a bookstore, I’ll buy a book without talking to anyone. [19\_U\_F\_60+]

The interviewees emphasize that visiting the library is a pleasant experience for them – something they look forward to. It offers not only the opportunity to borrow a particular book but, above all, to talk with the people who work in the library, to become involved in library life, for example by recommending the purchase of specific titles, participating in events organized at the library, or meeting other readers. Being in the library thus becomes a guarantee of time well spent and provides a sense of belonging to the library community. This type of experience fosters comfortable engagement and creates the feeling of taking part

in “something special,” additionally in comfortable, almost home-like conditions (Eriksson, Reestorff, Stage, 2018). Experiences based on interaction and the richness of personal contact are emotionally engaging (Gorchakova, Hyde, 2022), and ultimately have a positive effect on the experience of well-being.

I think that a library is a place that we share. That it is, by definition, a common good, that the library (...) serves the entire community. And the entire community also builds this common good. The librarian who works there builds this good, and so does the person who comes here. So we share everything we have, but we also share the space. (...) For me, this has much greater value than organizing activities where parents simply bring their children. Then there is no social impact. And for me, that is precisely the idea of nurturing this common good, this community in building the library as a shared place where you can meet and talk about everything, (...) organizing events, showing your passions, and passing those passions on. [6\_L\_F\_40-59]

The inclusive atmosphere prevalent in public libraries fuels the development of well-being – both on a personal and social level. The relationship-oriented climate of interaction makes library users feel comfortable. Interviewees reported a sense of well-being resulting from visits to libraries and a feeling of satisfaction associated with the opportunity to meet other people interested in using library services. For some interviewees, contact with the library and its staff served as an antidote to feelings of loneliness or to difficulties associated with experiencing a life crisis.

Libraries are also meeting places for a wide range of interest groups. The activities they undertake allow not only for the socialization of reading experiences but also for the development of social networks. Importantly, libraries can provide users with meeting spaces on a non-commercial basis and for extended periods, enabling initiatives to grow within a stable institutional environment. This is the case, for example, with board-game clubs whose members regularly meet at the library to pursue their hobby. In reading clubs affiliated with public libraries in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, members support one other while discussing books and create a space for interaction that is not limited to the act of reading itself. The initiatives emerging in public libraries allow users to experience satisfaction from meeting others and positively affect their sense of group belonging. Activities undertaken in library spaces can also serve as a starting point for developing relationships and deepening social contacts outside the institutional environment. This pattern can be observed, for example, in the strongly feminized reading clubs, whose

members, after getting to know one another at the library, continue to maintain contact in other circumstances and locations.

We're not obligated to always meet in the library. Sometimes we just meet somewhere in a café. (...) When we get together, there's always some food, some sweets, or some coffee. (...) Everyone orders something so we can just sit and have a nice chat. We talk for an hour, two hours, even three. (...) About the book we've read, but we also talk about other things. When you're in a group that knows each other quite well, other topics naturally come up. For several years now, it has become a tradition for us to have a summer meeting in the garden of one of the club members. When the weather is nice, warm and pleasant, (...) it's just become customary for us to meet at one of our friends' homes. [17\_U\_F\_40-59]

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS SPACES SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WELL-BEING

Public libraries support the development of well-being in several different ways. Their accessibility and the quality of the library infrastructure are of fundamental importance. In the interviews conducted, study participants frequently emphasized the lack of opportunities for social and cultural activities in their local communities. Against this backdrop, libraries are key institutions that enable residents to connect with culture and meet others. This situation is particularly acute for people living in small towns located on the periphery of larger urban centers. Public libraries, sometimes the only cultural institutions in a given municipality, also become the most attractive places to spend free time outside work and household duties.

It is important that the spaces in which users come into contact with the institution are perceived by them as friendly and inviting. A high quality of library infrastructure translates into a more positive assessment of the facilities and a greater willingness to visit them. Locating libraries in attractive buildings, equipping them well, and developing a variety of activities for users all encourage engagement in library life and ultimately increase the likelihood of a positive impact on individual well-being.

We livened up this space a little, made it warmer. We introduced a wishing tree where children could write down their ideas. It was an actual, physically constructed tree made by an artist. Later, when we grew a bit tired of the tree, we created a relaxation corner between two walls, like a kind of tent. And it is a space with blankets and pillows – a place for relaxation. Very often, children come to the bookshelf, pick something that interests them, and simply lie on the cushions in this tent, reading, looking at pictures, and pleasantly spending their free time. [4\_L\_F\_40-59]

The collected empirical material confirms the thesis that public libraries promote the development of well-being by carrying out activities that are not profit-oriented and that emphasize the importance of community and relationality. They allow their users to experience the pleasure of being in the library, spending time in the institution's space in ways consistent with their expectations and needs. A significant role in this process is played by library staff, perceived by many participants as friendly and supportive. When libraries are viewed positively, they become an important point of reference in users' lives – a space where they can feel safe and to which they willingly and regularly return.

An important function of public libraries in supporting the development of well-being lies in developing new models of operation and new ways for users to engage in library life. Many institutions are reorganizing their work practices, striving to improve the quality of interaction with their users. Libraries are also taking over some of the tasks traditionally performed by community centers. This process is multidimensional and entails various strategic consequences for the institutions. From the perspective of this analysis, what is crucial is that by expanding the range of activities they offer, libraries seek to respond to users' needs, encouraging them to participate and ensuring optimal conditions for interaction.

#### LIBRARY WELL-BEING, BUT FOR WHOM?

According to data from the Central Statistical Office for 2023, the number of registered users of public libraries amounted to 6.3 million, and a total of 58.4 million visits were recorded (GUS, 2024). However, these statistics do not clearly show what forms of activity users engage in beyond borrowing collections, nor do they reveal the actual nature of users' interaction with library institutions. A quantitative survey conducted in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 2022 among active participants in cultural life indicates that women, people declaring poor or average material conditions in their households, individuals over the age of 40, and those living outside the regional center (the Tricity and the Gdańsk subregion) – mostly in rural areas or small towns – use library services more frequently (Stachura, Zbieranek, 2023). With regard to gender, these findings are supported by a clear predominance of women over men in self-reported visits to public libraries in a survey conducted by the National Library (Koryś, 2023).

The data gathered through individual in-depth interviews largely confirm this statistical picture. Although public libraries seek to create offerings for diverse user groups, the narratives of both library staff and library visitors point to greater institutional activity among older adults and women, while simultaneously highlighting the limited presence of younger users and men in the libraries. This lower level of engagement is the main factor restricting the possibility of deriving individual benefit

from library participation. This is primarily due to two reasons: structural barriers that hinder access to institutional services, and personal decisions made by individuals who choose not to visit libraries and spend time there.

The empirical material indicates that library engagement has a particularly positive effect on the well-being of older adults. They appreciate the opportunity to use library services, which are relatively easy to access and free of charge. They also value the sense of inclusiveness associated with being in the library and the friendly atmosphere of interaction. Most seniors are not constrained by work-related obligations. Those who visit libraries meet their needs for social contact and meaningful use of time, which translates into higher perceived well-being. Seniors tend to treat their presence in the library in a non-instrumental way – as an important element of everyday life that supports their well-being.

The library is attractive because its services are free. The average Polish pensioner doesn't have much money, and if they want to participate in something, they have to travel to Bydgoszcz, for example, to the opera or the theatre. (...) It's quite a trip by bus, and returning after such a performance is around 1 a.m. Some people, even for health reasons, simply can't manage these outings. (...) What remains locally are the library and the community center, which seniors like very much. [29\_U\_F\_40-59]

Individuals from groups other than seniors also benefit from participating in library offerings, including young mothers who attend events organized for children, hobby groups who can pursue their interests at the library, and – in the case of media libraries – enthusiasts of new digital technologies. A new group making use of library services consists of people with migration and refugee experience. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the scale of needs in this group increased substantially (Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, Kruszewski, 2023). This development is noted by library staff, users, and co-creators of library programming alike.

They opened up to the Ukrainian community in the city. Especially in those first days of the war crisis, when these women were truly very lost, there was a place where a woman who knew Ukrainian would come. There was an information point and things like that – things I don't personally use, but I see them. [24\_U\_F\_18-39]

Ukrainians make extensive use of our resources. We also run language courses for them. Now there are perhaps fewer refugees, but more people who are leaving Ukraine and coming here. [13\_L\_F\_40-59]

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we focused on language-independent games. It doesn't matter whether someone speaks English,

Ukrainian, or Polish – we can set up the game and play together. These games don't have any lengthy text, or any text at all. There are only pictures that don't require translation. Additionally, I printed the instructions in English, Ukrainian, and Russian, because there was a demand for it. Everyone can have the instructions in a different language and we can play the game together. [28\_U\_M\_18-39]

Libraries also strive, as far as their resources allow, to respond to the needs of people with specific support requirements, such as individuals with mobility impairments, people with visual impairments, those living with chronic illness, people experiencing mental health difficulties, or individuals in homelessness. It is worth noting, however, that providing professional service and support to members of these groups can constitute a significant challenge for library staff.

We have more and more readers who struggle with various mental health difficulties. And it's not that we see one in a million – we see these people every day. They come to us, and we try to serve them and find common ground with them, although sometimes we have trouble doing so. [13\_L\_F\_40-59]

Interviews with public library employees indicate that the group most difficult to encourage to participate actively in library life are young adults (under 30). Their patterns of cultural participation are largely based on consuming cultural content without institutional mediation. Challenges also arise in engaging people who are very professionally active. Another difficulty is developing program formats that would be more appealing to men.

## STRUCTURAL LIMITATIONS IN SUPPORTING WELL-BEING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Despite the transformations that cultural institutions – including public libraries – are currently undergoing, many of them are still not designed in ways that adequately respond to the needs of diverse user groups (Sokka, Ruokolainen, Tohmo, 2023). This significantly limits their ability to support the well-being of certain users. One way libraries can begin to address this challenge is by working to better understand the needs of their audiences and, as a result, increasing the level of institutional self-reflection. Under such conditions, it becomes easier to invite users into forms of collaboration that may positively influence their well-being. However, the everyday realities of library functioning – marked by underfunding, staffing shortages, and the logistical challenges of organizing work – make undertaking such efforts considerably more difficult. Many libraries have limited capacity to develop their organizational cultures, as they operate

under constant pressure to prove their usefulness (Derfert-Wolf, 2015) and to fight for survival (Głowacka, 2015). Their core activity is therefore focused primarily on retaining existing users, rather than on developing innovative formats and models of operation.

There are moments when we simply lack the strength. (...) It's difficult because we lack resources. That's our everyday reality. We really do not have the capacity to create tailor-made solutions that would precisely meet the needs of our readers. [8\_L\_M\_18-39]

In smaller, less developed institutions, additional events are organized relatively infrequently, and users are less likely to actively participate in library life. As a result, opportunities for the library's presence to have a positive effect on well-being occur much less often. A major problem for many libraries is their limited autonomy. These institutions are dependent on funding from local governments. More than 90% of all public library expenditures come from the organizer's budget (Jeziarska, 2018). This makes it difficult for libraries to develop long-term strategies and institutional development programs. The need to focus on ensuring the institution's basic functioning limits the capacity to create plans aimed, among other things, at developing spaces that support users' well-being.

This independence [of cultural institutions – author's note] is, in reality, a fictional concept. (...) I have been working in cultural institutions for 20 years, and I see what happens in the relationship between local government and cultural institutions – how often the organizer exceeds its competencies. (...) It really reflects a way of thinking about a cultural institution as if it were their own organizational unit. (...) They simply treat the institution as an agency for implementing their policies. (...) Cultural institutions today are so confused in terms of levels of influence, relationships, and dependencies that we no longer know when and what is permissible, and when and what we need to ask about. [10\_L\_F\_40-59]

Limited resources for conducting activities (financial, human, and infrastructural), as well as the fragile structural foundations underlying their operation, hinder the development of offerings aimed at strengthening users' well-being. The insufficient operational capacity of public libraries may impede the process of changes intended to support users in actively participating in institutional culture. Without stable support from the organizing body responsible for public library operations, the ability of these institutions to develop ambitious strategic projects becomes uncertain. Narrowing the scope of activities to the fulfillment of basic, routine functions negatively impacts the role they can play as institutions supporting the development of users' well-being.

## CONCLUSIONS

The empirical data collected indicates that public libraries can play a significant role in the ecosystem supporting the development of their users' well-being in both personal and social dimensions. Their offerings have the potential to support emotional well-being, increase users' engagement in group activities, and improve their sense of social support. Participation in activities organized by public libraries can have a positive impact on the life satisfaction of those involved in cultural life and contribute to strengthening social capital resources.

Public libraries undertake a range of activities aimed at fostering users' well-being by "reaching out" to them, maintaining friendly interactions, and showing a genuine willingness to meet and connect. While collective activities and support for grassroots initiatives do not guarantee a positive effect on well-being, they constitute an important factor in enabling such outcomes. Libraries develop pathways toward well-being that are relational and community-oriented, rather than focused on delivering quick benefits or merely satisfying consumer needs. This is achieved by enabling users to experience meaningful encounters with others, thereby fostering a sense of enrichment and emotional engagement.

The shift observed in library institutions toward participation and collaboration with users can reshape the model of relations between institutions and their audiences. Networked interactions democratize institutional structures of dependency, opening new perspectives for creating spaces of social support and belonging. Above all, many of the libraries studied demonstrate a clear commitment to developing a more inclusive offer for diverse groups of users. The purpose of including users is to enable them to engage in activities perceived as valuable and meaningful, while also experiencing pleasure and joy from participating in culture within a safe and welcoming environment. Public libraries thus play the role of both facilitators of cooperation and enablers of the conditions necessary for the development of well-being.

Many public libraries perform important functions within their local communities – above all integrative, educational, cultural, and recreational roles. Due to the deficit of institutional alternatives, libraries play a key role in building social ties. This is particularly true for smaller towns located on the periphery of larger urban centers. The widespread availability of public libraries and the possibility of using their resources free of charge make them important agents of social change. At the same time, many of these institutions struggle with structural problems, which limits their ability to carry out activities that support the development of well-being. As a result, such activities are not systemic in nature. Their character and scale depend on the resources available to libraries and on their capacity

to address the challenges of strategic development. Different groups of users also engage with library-based activities to varying degrees, which results both from the offer provided by libraries and from the individual preferences of users.

The examples presented in the text show that public libraries can become important spaces for supporting the development of well-being. Their fundamental value lies in undertaking activities that are not programmed with the aim of generating economic profit and that exceed the logic of privatized consumption and individual gain. The task facing libraries is connected to their ability to navigate constantly changing conditions. This concerns, above all, the need to cooperate with the entities that finance their activities, to understand the expectations of various groups of users of the institutional offer, and to skillfully develop strategic solutions aimed at professionalizing institutional operations. The potential of libraries as agencies for strengthening well-being, although partially recognized, remains largely untapped.

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## CULTURAL ANIMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN POLAND



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KEYWORDS: Cultural animation. Socio-cultural animation. Reading animation. Public libraries.

**ABSTRACT: Purpose** – The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the activities of cultural institutions, including libraries, are focused on cultural animation. **Methods** – The method of literature analysis was used combined with the form of statistical summaries and library websites. **Results/conclusions** – The concepts of cultural animation, socio-cultural animation, and reading animation are explained, highlighting their connections with education and anthropology, trying to emphasize the specificity of animation. Cultural animation, especially of reading, is becoming increasingly prevalent in the activities of public libraries in Poland, although there are challenges in classifying these activities as promotional or animated.

Public libraries operate with a specific local community in mind and strive to meet the needs of its residents. This is achieved through, among other things, cultural animation activities, and cultural animation has become a permanent fixture in Polish public libraries, although the concept is still not entirely clear. The term comes from the Latin words *anima* – soul, and *animo/animare* – to revive, to endow with life, to transform into something, to invigorate, to fill with courage (*Słownik*, 1990, p. 38). Therefore, it can be said that it is not only “revitalizing culture” but “revitalizing people” so that they will participate in it.

## ANIMATION

These two perspectives can also be discerned when taking into account the definitions found in general dictionaries. According to the *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish Language], the term “animate” has four meanings. The first refers to: “stimulating, inciting to action, to activity in something, encouraging, inciting to something, bringing to life” (*Słownik języka polskiego*). This meaning emphasizes that animating means bringing people to life, encouraging them to action. The second meaning – “to move, to move puppets in a puppet theater” (*Słownik języka polskiego*) – refers to animating objects. The third meaning, “to draw, to sketch or perform, to take pictures for an animated film” (*Słownik języka polskiego*), as well as the fourth meaning, “to create, to create moving images using a computer” (*Słownik języka polskiego*) refer to animated films, in which images and characters are “set in motion” and “brought to life.” This definition clearly emphasizes bringing something or someone to life. The association with animated films is entirely appropriate, as they “set” images in motion. But you can also animate someone, meaning you can make them act or perform specific actions due to encouragement or a positive stimulus.

Similar definitions can be found in the *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* [PWN Dictionary of Foreign Words], where animation is defined as: “1. a method of making cartoons, puppet films, etc., consisting in

photographing drawings or three-dimensional objects in such a way as to obtain the illusion of movement when displayed; also a film made using this method; 2. creating moving computer images using appropriate programs; also these images; 3. activating puppets in a puppet theater; 4. initiating and stimulating some actions, 126). This also refers to bringing things and people to life.

Similar definitions can also be found in French dictionaries and lexicons (Jedlewska, 2009, p. 26), and Italian lexicons (*Pedagogika i kultura*, 2009, p. 26).

Wincenty Okoń, in his *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny* [New Pedagogical Dictionary] defines the concept of animation from an educational perspective, emphasizing that it is an encouragement to action, supporting an individual or group in self-improvement. He believes that "an animator is an educator who does not direct a group, but skillfully stimulates their own activity" (Okoń, 1998, p. 22). He differentiates among animation as being educational, communicative (assistance in establishing contacts), integrative (developing the ability to participate in team activities), and cultural (facilitating participation in cultural life and the development of cultural creativity) (Okoń, 1998, p. 22). Animation is therefore related to education. The animator in action often becomes a teacher. He shows how to take photos, teaches songs, games, dances, etc. It is often an educational situation that can be the starting point for stimulating creative enthusiasm and the will to act. Education from the animation perspective is not hierarchical, it is not based on imposed authority, or a model of education. The relationship is much more bilateral and the influences are mutual. The teacher is also an animator who, in addition to knowledge, can convey an active attitude towards culture. Animation is therefore education in action, in relationships with people, in contact. It is education in which specific and verifiable skills are only a tool to go further, to meet with oneself, with others. As Dorota Reksnis states, animation allows us to see culture "as an element in which everyone can have their own creative participation" (*Teraz! Animacja kultury*, p. 14). Animation activities are therefore closest to team forms, in which each participant is a sender and a recipient, with strong relationships between them (Wojciechowski, 2000, p. 142). If we look at methods, those dominating in animation activities are activating ones in which ready-made knowledge is not provided, but rather a space for acquiring it is created (Grabowska, 2013, pp. 4-6).

## CULTURE IN ANIMATION

So what does "animating" or "reviving" culture entail? In the context of developing animation, culture is understood anthropologically (Chymkowski & Dudzik & Rodak, 2011, pp. 205-221) as the totality of

what is created by people communicating with each other (Chymkowski, 2015, p. 9). This approach, as Dorota Piwowska states, “allows us to understand culture as a whole – dynamic and complex, as a nexus of all patterns, attitudes, behaviors, cultural practices, interpersonal relationships, institutions, cognitive paradigms, traditions, social models, knowledge and experiences, family and social group patterns, forms of expression and communication” (*Teraz! Animacja Kultury*, p. 8). In this approach, culture is everything created by humans: there is no division into “high” and “low” culture, they are simply human products. It is worth noting that the subject of animation is not culture itself, but human activity in culture, and that the aim of animation is not to revive the world of values, but to support the process of reaching them (*Social and Cultural Animation*, 2000, p. 10).

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND ANIMATION

In cultural animation, the anthropological perspective plays a significant role. It not only reflects a perspective on culture, but also opens the mind to the other and recognizes this otherness within oneself. As Andrzej Mancwel stated in *Wyobraźnia antropologiczna* (Mancwel, 2006), to recognize the “native” in a foreigner, one must question the “native” within oneself. Animation borrows from anthropology the principle of transcending one’s own perspective, one’s own system of classifying reality. Recognizing locality, acknowledging its value, drawing on it, and stimulating it leads to identifying needs, which is the impetus for cultural animation. Animation is therefore an activity intended to encourage the performance of certain activities, but one that stirs feelings and leads to the development of a given community. Animation is intended to enliven a group where this does not happen spontaneously, to provide impetus for new initiatives. The first step in any cultural animation activity is, therefore, recognizing local needs.

## SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION

In cultural institutions, socio-cultural animation is increasingly being discussed. As the name suggests, it involves the social activation of various groups. Its primary goal is the internal integration of a given community. In this context, the animator, or a group of animators, plays a crucial role. They strive to:

- influence individuals and groups to participate in life with greater activity and commitment. They encourage creative action.

- encourage group members to communicate with others and improve their communication skills.
- participate in the life of the community.

Barbara Jedlewska views socio-cultural animation as a way of influencing individuals, groups, and communities, with the goal of educating and training them through culture and for culture. It involves implementing a series of activities that unleash creative potential, stimulate and motivate creative action, integrate people with each other and with the surrounding world, support spiritual development and self-creation, stimulate curiosity about learning and the need to create culture, and support and promote cultural and social activity (Jedlewska, 1999, p. 34). In this context, animation is an expression of growing civil liberties, as an expression of the formation of a civil society. A library in such a society is based on the activity of self-organizing groups that “want to take fate into their own hands,” social associations, and local communities. The essence of animation is, after all, to revive the aspirations of individuals, groups, and communities. Libraries are oriented toward the needs of these communities, and animation as a method leads to the active participation of individuals, groups, and communities in local socio-cultural life.

## READING ANIMATION

Another term related to animation appears in the literature, originating from cultural animation. Although much narrower in meaning, it clearly pertains to libraries: reading animation. In her article *Animacja lektury* [Reading Animation] Weronika Parfianowicz-Vertun states that this concept is still imprecise and treats it as a specific and specialized approach aimed at revitalizing reading (Parfianowicz-Vertun, 2013, p. 198). She goes even further, claiming that it is related to library animation, or “bringing to life” the documents collected in these institutions. According to the author, this involves: “creating new connections between the public and the collections. Facilitating access to the latest publications. Discovering works, literary genres, and topics less known to the general public. Creating events in the life of the library. Incorporating books into activities with other forms of artistic expression. Creating a dynamic image of the library, one that not only lends books but is also a place open to the outside, lively, enabling exchange and meetings” (Parfianowicz-Vertun, 2013, p. 6). Among the activities that can serve this purpose, she lists: “exhibitions, readings, storytelling, meetings with authors, illustrators, publishers, writing workshops, concerts, conferences, debates, film screenings, and activities outside the library walls” (Parfianowicz-Vertun, 2013, p. 6). The line between activities related to dissemination, education, and animation is becoming blurred. Can every activity undertaken in a library aimed

at promoting the collections gathered there be classified as reading animation?

Roman Chymkowski, in his article *Od animacji lektury do animacji kultury* [From Reading Animation to Cultural Animation], notes that “reading animation is a tool, a pretext, or a means for creative action in the local community...” (Chymkowski, 2015, p. 12). Reading animation encompasses a range of activities that help unite the local community, such as integrating national minorities or learning about regional traditions. Reading research reveals a certain pattern: reading culture is shaped in the family environment – this is one of the factors influencing whether someone will need reading in their lives. Readers most often come from families with a strong reading culture. Non-readers are surrounded by family and friends among whom reading culture is minimal or nonexistent. In such situations, it can be assumed that reading animation will be an activity that bridges social divides. Chymkowski states that “reading animation is a practice that prevents the strengthening of class or social distinctions” (Chymkowski, 2015, p. 12). He added that “promoting reading is an encounter with cultural otherness, and moreover, an encounter whose purpose is to encourage the assimilation of certain aspects of the animator’s culture” (Chymkowski, 2015, p. 12). Assuming that the animator is usually well-read and represents a certain level of culture, they may encounter non-readers whom they will encourage to read. Even if the encounter does not bring lasting changes in the attitudes of the “non-readers,” occasional exposure to a text can lead to it being perceived as something interesting. Such positive emotions stay with people for a long time, sometimes they are remembered, and this can trigger a desire to return to moments that evoke positive associations. As Chymkowski states: “Inclusion in the reading culture should not be based on a system of commands and penalties for non-compliance, such as stigmatization or emphasizing the distance between readers and non-readers, but on opening new, satisfying forms of participation in the world or in social worlds” (Chymkowski, 2015, p. 12).

In her publication *Książki, dzieci, biblioteka* [Books, Children, Library], Joanna Papuzińska writes about library and reading animation. She includes various activities aimed at fostering a love of books and reading (Papuzińska, 1992, p. 41). She states that “the path to reading leads through a series of activities, forms of activity, and creative play that gradually lead to the discovery of language codes, a simpler entry into the world of signs, graphic symbols, information, and intellectual knowledge. Reading – understood not as learned under duress, mechanical, a deciphering of letters that is useless outside of school, a skill that will be discarded and forgotten like unnecessary baggage as soon as the compulsory schooling ends – must involve introducing the book into the world of the child’s

experiences and needs and connecting them with this world” (Papuzińska, 1992, p. 41). Papuzińska emphasizes the importance of connecting reading with other activities, which allows the child, and later the older reader, to experience the benefits of reading. A crucial task for librarians is to recognize that a publication can be a cool, engaging solution that meets their needs. If users can stimulate interesting activities in the library, there’s a chance they won’t dismiss libraries as uninteresting and local. When interesting events happen around reading, sometimes even if there are no other ideas on how to spend time, the reader will be interested in what the library has to offer. It is crucial to create a variety of engaging activities centered around reading to familiarize and encourage readers. Therefore, animation can be linked to establishing a rapport with readers, evoking a response, and developing the habit of coming to the library.

Reading is extremely important because, as Weronika Parfianowicz-Vertun has stated, “it is one of the fundamental competencies that enable the elimination of social inequalities or coping with their consequences, possessing emancipatory potential and constituting a condition for the fullest possible participation in culture” (Parfianowicz-Vertun, 2015, p. 32). It is one of the main skills that allows us to move freely in the world, it also enables us to use other media and messages other than text more fully, and it is the basis of verbal communication.

## LIBRARY ANIMATION

Cultural activity, as defined in the Act on Organizing and Conducting Cultural Activity (*Ustawa o organizowaniu i prowadzeniu działalności kulturalnej*. Act of 25 October 1991; Act of 7 July 2023), consists of creating, promoting, and protecting culture. Libraries are also listed among the institutions responsible for this. Currently, the Act does not mention cultural animation, only dissemination.

In Poland, public libraries form a network,<sup>1</sup> serving not only to collect, process, share and provide information about collections, but also to respond to the needs of the local community because they are created with this community in mind, which means they should also animate local culture. International guidelines clearly state that “an important role of a public library is to focus on the cultural and social development of its community and to help shape and support the cultural identity of a given community” (*Działalność bibliotek publicznych*, 2002, p. 24). It is also

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of 2024, there were 7,541 public libraries in Poland, including 4,925 branch libraries. During the year, 5.4 million readers borrowed 98.8 million volumes from the collection. “Biblioteki Publiczne w 2024 r.” [online], GUS [accessed on 05.11.2025]. Available at [www: https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/kultura-turystyka-sport/kultura/biblioteki-publiczne-w-2024-r,-14,9.html](https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/kultura-turystyka-sport/kultura/biblioteki-publiczne-w-2024-r,-14,9.html).

emphasized that they should reflect the diversity of cultures present in the community and be a meeting place. Given that “a public library is an organization established, maintained, and financed by the community through local, regional, or national governments, or other forms of social organization; it provides access to knowledge, information, and the products of human thought through a wide range of resources and services, and is simultaneously accessible to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, health condition (e.g., disability), economic status, or education” (*Działalność bibliotek publicznych*, 2002, p. 19), it becomes an ideal place to do something with others and to carry out joint projects. At the same time, numerous animation activities are implemented as part of recovery programs formulated at the national or international level. They are intended to provoke actions that will respond to the needs of various groups and communities, and libraries are also expected to serve this purpose. Like animators, librarians are expected to open people up to otherness and to the other, facilitating a view of the world through the eyes of others.

In her article *Podmiotowość społeczna a animacja* [Social Subjectivity and Animation] Ewa Bobrowska views animation as “a method of working with people that is based on certain assumptions and refers to a specific set of values” (Bobrowska, 2012, p. 18). She highlights three characteristics of animation: abandoning institutional authority, building social capital, and creating relationships between people in the public sphere. This understanding of animation aligns with dissemination, which is, however, a much narrower process. Łukasz Hajduk emphasizes that “the animator strives to ensure that members of a given community make their own choices, deciding whether and how to initiate contact with culture. The essence here is the encounter itself, not what results from it. What people possess within themselves—their skills, passions, dreams—is more important than the culture that exists outside” (Hajduk, 2015, p. 101).

By promoting culture, the library enables contact with culture, including that present in a given local community. As an expert in a given culture, the librarian learns about readers’ interests and utilizes them, suggesting what might interest the user, introducing them to the “unknown.” When the emphasis shifts from dissemination to animation, the situation changes. Above all, a broader understanding of culture becomes crucial, built from the bottom up, based on what is within people. The librarian knows their users, their needs, and their problems. Using their knowledge and skills, they enable users to encounter not only books but, above all, each other. This leads to people taking action.

It is clear that the scope for action is extremely broad, and there are many ways to spark readers’ interest through a range of animation activities. Choosing appropriate methods and content for specific age

groups is crucial. Playful pedagogy is also very helpful. Elżbieta Kaźnior-Niczyporuk sees it as a supportive method of group work, aimed at providing instructors with ideas that will enable creative and imaginative work with group participants, methods that influence the emotional sphere and foster the expression of positive feelings. She notes that “play pedagogy has a very wide audience, from young preschool children, through school-age children, adolescents, students, disabled children and their caregivers, to seniors. It’s crucial for play pedagogy to select only those from the repertoire of traditional games that don’t create tension caused by excessive competition and don’t ridicule the participants. The games she proposes foster the activity of all group members. She uses various means, such as the written and spoken word, gesture, movement, dance, painting, touch, sound, role-playing, and pantomime.” A library is an ideal place to successfully implement play pedagogy as a form of animated reading. All activities that engage the reader’s individual senses are highly desirable in entertainment activities. The more engaged participants are, the more they will gain. A key assumption of this pedagogy is to avoid negative interactions between participants, to avoid competition, and to avoid evoking any negative feelings. Everyone has the freedom to express themselves, their ideas, and their feelings about a given book. A wide variety of emotions, sometimes incredibly strong and profound, arise from a reader’s encounter with literature. Playing with literary emotions significantly multiplies the text’s impact and its range of issues, allowing us to better understand the world, ourselves, our emotions, motivations, and what’s happening around us. Everyone has different psychological needs and finds different things relaxing. It’s important not to impose our tastes on the reader—letting them choose for themselves. Literature has therapeutic properties, helps alleviate various tensions, cheers us up, and lifts our spirits.

## SUMMARY

Animation activities can thus be undertaken in the library, in both the areas of cultural and social activities. This is one of many opportunities available to librarians to influence readers and promote culture in its broadest sense. The optimal situation is when multiple strands of animation activities (reading, culture, socio-cultural) are developing simultaneously. Animation can be compared to mediating between the library, which aims to disseminate culture through access to literature, and the community. Animation activities create a meeting place between the librarian- animator and the individuals – the local community. Animation can be understood as a kind of attitude or activity, implemented incidentally in various situations of everyday life (Hajduk, 2015, p. 10). After all, it

is an expression of emphasizing the multiplicity of ways of participating in culture, highlighting the diversity of lifestyles and the existence of distinct cultural traditions. By using animation librarians can support the development of groups and communities that integrate around a shared system of values, interests, hobbies, or problems waiting to be solved.

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## THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN REGIONAL EDUCATION



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**KEYWORDS:** Libraries. Regional education. Regionalism. Regional culture. Regional education.

**ABSTRACT:** **Thesis/Purpose of the Article** – The purpose of this article is to examine the diverse roles played by libraries, primarily public ones, in implementing the concept of regionalism. **Method** – The text is dominated by a descriptive approach. The theoretical aspects are considered through conceptual analysis, analysis and critique of library science literature and literature on regionalism, a pragmatic-normative approach, and a compilation of practices employed by contemporary libraries within their regional offerings. **Results/Conclusions** – The scale and diversity of strategies for participating in regional culture demonstrate the significant role of libraries in regional education. These institutions not only provide and disseminate culture but also function as culture-forming centers, thus serving the region. Libraries create conditions for supporting regional development and thus act as collective social actors in preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

## INTRODUCTION

With socio-technological development, the number of tasks and challenges that libraries must address increases and diversifies. At the same time, in a world of globalization, they often become a bastion of regional cultural values, a center for mobilizing and stabilizing local communities. Given the above distinctions, Stanisław Kowalik proposes initiating a discussion about “glocalization, or the process of mutual support between globalization processes and regional development” (Kowalik, 2006, p. 22). This approach is realized in the principles of regional education.

The revival of the regional movement in Poland took place in the 1990s. Regional themes, the discovery of one’s own roots, and territorial activity increased in popularity. Recognizing, protecting, and celebrating regional heritage increased interest in national heritage, which in turn facilitated openness to other communities and cultures. At this point, it is important to note the comprehensive work of libraries on behalf of the region, since “public libraries, as cultural institutions, play a particularly important role in preserving territorial identity” (Furmanek, Heidinger, 2014, p. 8). A key aspect of this work will be an examination of the numerous roles libraries play in implementing the idea of regionalism. Solutions implemented primarily by public libraries will be discussed. Because certain activities are replicated in libraries with different profiles, the article will also mention other types of libraries. Protecting values and distinctive cultural features, instilling respect for them, stimulating cooperation, and engaging in regional affairs of a material and symbolic nature are just some of the activities that libraries undertake institutionally, thus aligning with the principles of regional education. The scale and diversity of strategies for participating in the region’s culture are testament to the significant role of libraries in regional education. These institutions not only provide and disseminate culture, but also function as culture-creating centers, and therefore work for the benefit of the region.

The author analyzed the components of the concept of regional education and reviewed key related terms. Situating the functioning of libraries within the context of regionalism, she utilized a theoretical approach, addressing the social role of libraries, a pragmatic-normative approach, including the applicable legal status, library organization, and methods of implementing library processes, as well as the impact of these institutions on their surroundings. The work proposes a division of library activities subordinated to regional education and a summary of practices employed by contemporary libraries within their regional offerings. This systematization is accompanied by a comparison of two innovative approaches to disseminating regional knowledge, using the example of public pedagogical libraries in Greater Poland as an example.

These issues are particularly important given that the issue of regional education in the context of the role of libraries, primarily public ones, is no longer as actively addressed in bibliological discourse as it was during the revival of regionalism in the 1990s and early 2000s. The question of the place and importance of libraries in regional education processes remains relevant. Symptomatically, concern for the region ranks high in both current guidelines for educational interventions and collaboration with the local community. These are often priority areas for public libraries today.

The discussion is dominated by a descriptive method, referencing literature, and analyzing key concepts. During the preparation for this work, collective works on regionalism in relation to education reform, exploring the problems and numerous aspects of regional education, as well as its practice, proved extremely helpful. The anthologies *Edukacja regionalna* [Regional Education], edited by Anna Weronika Brzezińska, Aleksandra Hulewska, and Justyna Słomska, and *Regionalizm, kultura i oświata regionalna* [Regionalism, Culture, and Regional Education] by Bogdan Cimała and Jolanta Kwiatek, are key. The collection proposed by the Polish Libraries Association, titled *Regionalizm w bibliotece* [Regionalism in the Library], was also undoubtedly significant. It contains a wealth of practical solutions adopted by Polish libraries, which contribute to the toolkit of the regional librarian. Due to the space constraints of this text, Piotr Petrykowski's comprehensive reflections, included in his book *Edukacja regionalna. Problemy podstawowe i otwarte* [Regional Education: Basic and Open Problems], will be instrumental in clarifying any inconsistencies. It discusses the conceptual variations surrounding the subject of regional education, the problem of situating this area of knowledge in the history of research (i.e., within the humanities), and more broadly, in the history of social practices. Electronic materials, references to the law, and regulations regulating library activities are also included. These items allowed for the creation of a cross-sectional overview, a theoretical and cultural foundation, which was then used to identify a typology of activities supporting regional education in library practice. The compilation would serve not only an educational purpose, illustrating the multifaceted nature of libraries' work for the region, but also inspire and raise awareness of the active participation of these institutions in cultural processes.

## REGIONAL EDUCATION

Knowledge of and identification with the culture of a given regional community, nation, international group, or of humanity in general on a global scale is essential for full functioning in society. Jerzy Nikitorowicz emphasizes that "shaping cultural competencies, learning culture, aims to

'inscribe' a person into the heritage of their ancestors," and this is achieved through "recognizing the signs, distinguishing features, and identifiers" that constitute cultural identity in both an individual and a collective sense (Nikitorowicz, 2006, p. 103). The researcher also concludes that this education "should treat the microcosm as primary and superior to the idea of global awareness, as the first and most significant stage in the pursuit of universal, timeless values" (Nikitorowicz, 2006, p. 102). Meanwhile, the starting point for "cultivating typical properties of the region" (Nikitorowicz, 2006, p. 104) is regionalism.

The term "regionalism" derives from the Latin word *regio*—meaning, among other things, "geographical location, border," "area, region, territory" (Korpanty, 2001, p. 531). Ludwik Kozołub defines the term as follows: "Regionalism, generally understood, is an ideological concept and, at the same time, a social movement aimed at understanding and creatively utilizing the values and forces inherent in small socio-spatial complexes" (Kozołub, 2010, p. 13). The French are considered the forerunners of regionalism, with Jean Charles-Bruno considered the movement's pioneer. French regionalism developed dynamically at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Żołądź-Strzelczyk, Jamrozek, 2006, p. 115). In Poland, due to the country's political situation, the development of the idea of regionalism was an element of the aspirations for independence. Referring to Aleksander Kazimierz Patkowski's interwar concept of "education through and for the region," Dorota Żołądź-Strzelczyk and Wiesław Jamrozek maintain that such educational influences aimed to "shape a sense of belonging to a specific area – a region – and a sense of obligation to this 'small' homeland, yet perceived at the same time as part of this 'great' homeland – located within the borders of the Polish state at that time" (Żołądź-Strzelczyk, Jamrozek, 2006, p. 127). The community spirit that characterizes regional initiatives is meant to distinguish, to protect against the "danger of uniformity and unification," support a "sense of rootedness," and strengthen the values that "identify and integrate this community" (Kozołub, 2010, pp. 14–15). Moreover, being situated in this type of system leads to "understanding one's own social position and the corresponding scope of self-awareness regarding the immediate environment – the group and the region" (Kozołub, 2010, p. 15). A regional community shares certain thought and axiological processes, and implements specific views and goals, therefore one can speak of the influence of the correlated regional imagination and practices on social awareness. As Kozołub states: "Regional awareness is the diverse self-knowledge of people inhabiting a given region, knowledge of their culture [and] historical tradition regarding their distinctive customs and rituals, the forms and content of beliefs, their speech – dialect, way of life (games, songs, dances)" (Kozołub, 2010, p. 15). Regionalism, however, as already

mentioned, does not stop at the so-called “small homeland.” Emotional ties to the region as a microcosm open individuals to the macrocosm of the “greater” homeland, of which the region is a part, constituting the patriotic message of this movement. The assumptions of regionalism favor considering it as a “source of activity and civic engagement” (Majewski, 2010, p. 147). It thus becomes “an effective instrument for unleashing social initiative, a school of civic thinking, a manifestation of expanding citizen participation in co-governing the country” (Majewski, 2010, p. 147). Developing a regional identity can motivate action on behalf of one’s own region and nation, and in the longer term it introduces the cultural values of the regions into the realm of universal values on a European and global scale.

Regional culture is considered to be “a specific set of behavioral patterns and symbolic cultural products that are identified with a given region by the people who inhabit it and for whom they have significant value” (Kowalik, 2006, p. 22). The content of this culture is therefore composed of: spiritual and material products that exist in the region, that describe it, or that are created by people connected with the area and perhaps no longer living there (written and oral traditions, art, traditions, customs, beliefs, norms and rules of behavior, legends, myths, folklore), as well as architecture, landscape, language (dialect, local jargon), history, genealogy, people, and events. These include all distinctive features that emphasize attachment to the territory, a set of emotionally charged practices that unite the community practicing them. Kowalik emphasizes that “regional culture is recognized by its members as the basis for identification with the community” (Kowalik, 2006, p. 38).

The idea of regional education meets the guidelines outlined above. This concept encompasses “a pedagogical concept emphasizing the educational significance of local cultural heritage as an essential element of individual and social identity; it constitutes an important component of the European integration process; it promotes rootedness in the so-called ‘small homeland’” (PWN Online Encyclopedia). Tomasz Michalewski lists among its goals “shaping the basic cultural core of an individual’s personality” (Michalewski, 2010, p. 195). Zofia Pluta, Joanna Schmidt, and Alicja Nazarewska, authors of the text entitled *Moje korzenie, moja tożsamość* [My Roots, My Identity], describe this issue similarly. They point to the process of self-definition, recognizing one’s “local identity, i.e., social self,” as components of regional education. They point out that: “By awakening interest in the region and identifying with one’s place of origin and the people living there, an individual’s sense of security increases, and thus their readiness to explore the world without fear – opening up to others, accepting differences, and adopting an attitude of tolerance” (Pluta, Schmidt, Nazarewska, 2006, p. 378). The process of identification

on an individual level is achieved through exposure to cultural values characteristic of the local environment, instilling pride in one's origins, and thus engaging in the dissemination of immanent manifestations of this cultural canon. This involves not only recognizing the richness of the region but also teaching about the need to protect it, both physically and mentally – saving it from oblivion. In light of the above findings, Piotr Petrykowski focuses the factors of regional education on sustainability and ensuring the continuation of culture. He emphasizes that: "Regional education, being a component of the entire educational process, or more broadly, the upbringing process, has the same important function to fulfill as the entire process of upbringing – ensuring the cultural continuity of the group, community, society, and ultimately, humanity" (Petrykowski, 2003, p. 52).

The importance of the subject of regionalism is demonstrated by Michalewski's call in his work entitled *Kultura regionalna w edukacji szkolnej (w świetle ostatniej reformy szkolnictwa)* [Regional culture in school education (in the light of the recent school reform)], namely: "It is becoming necessary to create appropriate conditions for learning about and respecting cultural heritage, shaping an attitude open to pluralism and the distinctiveness of cultures, preparing students for creative participation in cultural and social life and creating cultural goods" (Michalewski, 2010, p. 196). In order to ensure comprehensive development of young people and facilitate their conscious functioning in culture, regional education was introduced into the curriculum pursuant to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of February 15, 1999,<sup>1</sup> on the core curriculum of general education. The presence of regional content in the educational strategy of schools focuses not only on developing students' cognitive interests but also on discovering and celebrating the local, native environment and the socio-cultural structures present within it. The cross-curricular educational path provided for in the core curriculum pursuant to the 1999 regulation aimed to "strengthen the sense of identity, cultural, historical, ethnic, and national belonging" (Majewski, 2010, p. 151). It assumed that "the methodological basis of regional education is the unity of concepts and socio-spatial ties within the broader national community" (Majewski, 2010, p. 152). These postulates are still relevant, albeit in a slightly modified form. The "Basic Directions for the Implementation of State Education Policy in the 2025/2026 School Year" includes the following path: "School as a Place of Civic Education – Shaping Patriotic, Social, and Civic Attitudes, Responsibility for the Region and Homeland,

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<sup>1</sup> „Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 15 lutego 1999 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego,” *Dz.U. RP* 1999 nr 14 poz. 129. [“Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 15 February 1999 on the core curriculum of general education,” *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* 1999 No. 14 item 129.].

and Caring for One's Own Safety and the Safety of Others" (Ministry of National Education, 2025). This enables the development of informed citizens sensitive to regional issues. It encourages the cultivation of pluralism, the integration of people from different cultural backgrounds, and the promotion of multiculturalism.

The regional education module, encompassing, for example, regional research, animation, and the development of pro-social attitudes, serves to meet cultural and informational needs. In this context, its assumptions overlap with the statutory tasks performed by public, school, or pedagogical libraries. In her work *W poszukiwaniu korzeni kulturowych* [In Search of Cultural Roots], Anna Weronika Brzezińska categorizes libraries as institutions promoting culture. She states that "their statutory activities involve organizing and revitalizing culture," and their task is to oversee "the promotion of culture and the design of cultural activities" (Brzezińska, 2006, p. 205).

#### LEGAL BASIS AND MAIN AREAS OF LIBRARY ACTIVITY (REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE)

The most important document regulating library activity in Poland is the Act of 27 June 1997 on Libraries [Ustawa z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 r. o bibliotekach]. Section 1 of Article 3 states: "Libraries and their collections constitute a national asset and serve to preserve the national heritage. Libraries organize and provide access to resources of Polish and world science and culture" (Act on Libraries, 1997). According to this provision, libraries are responsible for collections important to the country's cultural heritage. They store and make available materials with a regional character, including the work of local authors, which is important both for respecting the region's heritage and for preserving the history of "small homelands" that contribute to the "greater" homeland.

In turn, according to point 1, section 1 of Article 4, the basic tasks of libraries include: "collecting, processing, storing, and preserving library materials" (Library Act, 1997). Section 2 of the aforementioned article expands the competences of libraries, providing that: "Libraries' tasks may also include conducting bibliographic, documentation, scientific research, publishing, educational, popularization, and instructional-methodological activities" (Library Act, 1997). With respect to activities related to the region, libraries make regional literature available, develop regionalist skills, and create a database for conducting regional research. They collect materials that are historical sources and, in a library setting, constitute the subject of educational processes and the object of exhibitions.

As part of their statutory responsibilities, these institutions undertake multifaceted bibliographic and informational activities, understood as

activities that significantly go beyond compiling book collections and creating bibliographic lists. Libraries function as cultural institutions serving as regional information centers, methodological centers (advisory function, database, support for education), research centers (regional publications, scholarly monographs, popular science publications, periodicals), and points of socio-cultural animation. It is worth mentioning that Brzezińska distinguishes among the activities of cultural institutions, including libraries, “permanent structures (e.g., permanent museum exhibitions, thematic sections in community centers, providing access to book collections), but also [...] one-off activities (organizing thematic exhibitions, staging performances, organizing regional poetry evenings)” (Brzezińska, 2006, p. 205).

Libraries, both regionally and nationally, are implementing the so-called “third place” concept (see National Reading Development Program, 2024), i.e., a welcoming space for spending free time and engaging with culture. They often resemble cultural centers, for example, through modernized premises that no longer house only shelves filled with books but also offer quiet reading corners and access to electronic equipment. Most importantly, from the perspective of meeting the needs of modern users, they create spaces for participation in various cultural and educational events, academic conferences, meetings, lectures, and for experiencing art in dedicated galleries, museum/regional rooms, or other spaces for exhibiting artistic works. These physical amenities facilitate educational and cultural activities, popularizing the region, disseminating its history, and promoting its values.

It is important to remember that the tasks of libraries vary depending on their type (school, pedagogical, public, research). This influences their scope of operations, territorial reach, organizational structure, and the nature of their collections. It also influences the form, accessibility, and methodology of handling regional assets. The 1997 Act does not entrust most libraries with strictly regional tasks, focusing on cultural and educational issues. In this regard, it distinguishes only public provincial libraries. Among their tasks, it lists: “collecting, developing, and making available library materials to serve informational, educational, and self-education needs, especially those related to knowledge of one’s own region and documenting its cultural, scientific, and economic achievements” (Library Act, 1997, art. 20, section 1, point 1) and “performing the function of a library and bibliographic information center, organizing the circulation of interlibrary loans, developing and publishing regional bibliographies, as well as other information materials of a regional nature” (Library Act, 1997, art. 20, section 1, point 2). Libraries collect materials that constitute the legacy of local institutions and significant individuals – activists and people of culture, science, and education. Annex No. 2 to the Regulation

of the Minister of Culture and Art of 6 March 1997 on the list of libraries entitled to receive mandatory copies of particular types of publications and the principles and procedure for their transfer<sup>2</sup> specifies the list of libraries entitled to receive publications on regional topics.

In turn, public pedagogical libraries, as educational institutions, in accordance with points 1 and 2 of Article 5 of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 February 2013 on Detailed Principles of Operation of Public Pedagogical Libraries<sup>3</sup> may undertake educational, cultural, and publishing activities. In doing so, they fulfill the role of educators, animators, and promoters of regional values. Importantly, librarians themselves are often regionalists, animators, and even local artists. Regional offerings include open educational activities, library lessons, and author meetings. They also include workshops, exhibitions, competitions, conferences, and publications focused on the concept of regionalism. These activities aim to support regional communities, activate communities, and raise awareness of the richness of local culture.

## TYPOLOGY OF ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES USED IN CONTEMPORARY LIBRARIES

The iterative nature of activities undertaken by various types of libraries to support regional education has allowed the identification of model solutions (Table 1). The systematization covers the following areas: book collections, school support, research and publishing activities, and local activation. In turn, an innovative approach to disseminating knowledge about the region is illustrated by the methods used in two public pedagogical libraries in Greater Poland.

### BOOK COLLECTION

Libraries are legally obligated to compile collections that constitute cultural heritage. Library holdings also include materials with regional specificity. Regional materials comprise writings about the region and/or written by individuals associated with it, as well as various exhibits. Public libraries create databases of local publications or those dealing with

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<sup>2</sup> "Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 6 marca 1997 r. w sprawie wykazu bibliotek uprawnionych do otrzymywania egzemplarzy obowiązkowych poszczególnych rodzajów publikacji oraz zasad i trybu ich przekazywania," *Dz.U. RP* 1997 nr 29 poz. 161. ["Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Art of 6 March 1997 on the list of libraries entitled to receive mandatory copies of particular types of publications and the principles and procedure for their transfer," *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* 1997 No. 29 item 161]

<sup>3</sup> "Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 lutego 2013 r. w sprawie szczegółowych zasad działania publicznych bibliotek pedagogicznych," *Dz.U. RP* 2013 poz. 369. ["Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 February 2013 on detailed principles of operation of public pedagogical libraries," *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* 2013, item 369.]

a given territory, tracking and acquiring new publications in this area. Library materials related to the region are part of the open-access and reference collections, and are available for loan and in the reading room (for presentation purposes). They often come from donations, purchases, deposits, subscriptions, or are part of publishing series co-created or sponsored by the library.

Regional collections include: monographs and periodicals (including low-circulation local, district, and parish press), iconographic and cartographic collections (paintings, maps, bookplates), documents of social life (ephemera, posters, brochures, exhibition catalogs, theater programs, statutes, and other documents related to the institution's activities, occasional prints such as invitations, press clippings, and postcards), photographs, slides, microfilm, audio and video recordings, compact discs and vinyl records, family artifacts and memorabilia, and elements of collections (usually materials donated to the library by the family of a significant figure in the region) or permanent exhibitions (e.g., faithful reproductions of art studios or classrooms, including furniture and electronic equipment).

Special collections departments also digitize documents, preserving them in digital form. Users can also view these early materials, sometimes using a microfilm reader. It is worth noting that libraries collect periodicals focused on the region and published by local bodies, both current and old, including those with low circulation and those that have been discontinued. These are often donated to the library. Reading room storage rooms contain, among other things, annuals and regional bibliographies. The most valuable materials, such as manuscripts, old prints, and other rare items, are stored in the special collections department. These are available to users on-site and can also be viewed through thematic exhibitions. Furthermore, libraries often have entire private book collections donated by prominent residents of the region. These institutions also provide access to databases and online catalogs covering book collections, periodicals, bibliographies, compilations, and subject files. It is common to post regional materials on the library website.

The library space houses museum departments (see Celer, 2019) with library museum rooms (as well as memorial rooms, rooms of remembrance, rooms of tradition, and even a regional library archive) accessible to visitors during library opening hours. Users can access regional materials, for example, for research purposes on-site in a room provided by the special collections department or in dedicated regional workshops. Exposure to regional culture is also facilitated through the libraries' exhibition activities: permanent and temporary exhibitions presenting library materials as well as the work of local artists (current or legacy from private collections). Importantly, contact with regional literature can also take place directly

in the library through the new releases shelf with a dedicated regional section.

All these activities confirm the library's role as a regional information center, meeting informational, educational, and documentation needs regarding the region's heritage. They demonstrate concern for the region's historical heritage and confidence in citizens' interest in their place of origin. By providing access to knowledge about a specific area, libraries participate in regional education.

### SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

Libraries support local educational institutions by providing them with research resources and materials needed for regional education classes. Their collections contain both substantive and pedagogical items that are useful for implementing regional content in schools. These include scholarly publications, problem-solving articles, curricula, textbooks, anthologies, authored programs, lesson plans, teacher guides, tourist guides, and guides to collections related to the region. By collecting these resources, the cultural heritage of the region to which the institution is associated is especially cultivated.

Public libraries collaborate with schools and preschools by organizing library lessons on regional themes, hosting field trips, and presenting resources related to the region, including permanent and temporary exhibitions and organizing competitions (literary, recitation, regional knowledge, and artistic). University libraries also provide similar support to schools by offering talks, author readings, lectures, observation of conferences with the library's participation (e.g., on "small homelands" in literature), and workshops with librarians presenting regional collections. However, school and pedagogical libraries play a special role in supporting education.

School libraries are tasked with supporting the educational process and school activities. They do this by providing teaching staff and students with access to a wide range of services. They implement the principles of regional education through independent activities, participation in school-wide activities, and accompanying events. These practices include: regional educational projects related to the "small homeland" or individuals who have made contributions to the region, editing school magazines, collecting and providing teaching aids, creating school newspapers that decorate classrooms and hallways, engaging students in the protection of regional assets and values by organizing exhibitions or genealogical research and presenting their results in post-competition displays, organizing competitions to test knowledge of the region and dialect, supporting students in preparing for the Kashubian language final exam (substantive database), encouraging and conducting

presentations of students' independent artistic creations, e.g., photographs of the local landscape, meetings with librarians, conducting classes at museums, regional trips, interviews, and supporting local patriotism (see Biernacka-Bryk, 2009). Librarians also engage in other activities that align with the idea of regionalism, such as visiting memorials, the resting places of individuals who have made contributions to the region, and commemorating anniversaries. Regional education then appears as an element of patriotic education.

Pedagogical libraries, in turn, will serve as methodological, advisory, and educational centers. Their responsibilities, as defined by the Act and relevant regulations, include, in addition to meeting the need for regional knowledge, promoting teacher education and development, creating regional information workshops or workshops for regionalists, and conducting training sessions, lectures, and meetings with specialists. Pedagogical libraries, like other public institutions, organize a variety of activities addressing regional issues for students of local schools. Content posted on the websites of these libraries includes materials supporting teaching in the area of regional education, digital resources, information, and articles about the library's regional collections, which constitute an excellent source of knowledge about the region, as well as current library lesson offerings. Libraries also announce library competitions on their websites, encouraging young people to engage in genealogical and historical research related to the region, which results in post-competition exhibitions.

#### SCIENTIFIC AND PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING BIBLIOGRAPHY)

The cultivation of the idea of regionalism is reflected in library research and publishing activities. Library institutions (most often pedagogical and scientific ones) participate in or organize projects, training courses, conferences, and symposia about the region. These aim to stimulate interest in their area and promote regional values on both a macro and micro scale. They may also directly reference regional education or the work of regionalists. These activities result in scholarly publications, namely the previously mentioned scholarly monographs, popular science journals, publishing series about the region or highlighting figures associated with it, as well as materials, reports, conference reports, or information about these provided to the press by librarians, which are then printed in local journals or published online in their electronic versions.

Academic institutions specializing in regional activities, local universities, socio-cultural societies, associations, and groups of enthusiasts of the region (of a given territorial unit) eagerly establish relationships with libraries, and librarians are often members of such organizations or

collaborate with them in an integral way. Teacher-librarians function as creators of scholarly achievements in the field of regionalism. They edit articles in specialized journals, bibliographies, and entries on the library website or library blog. Libraries promote or independently conduct publishing activities focused on regional issues, both for their own staff and for group efforts related to a specific institution. Among the works published by these institutions are: scholarly materials, a library journal, often representing a specific region, bibliographies, chronicles, annuals, exhibition catalogs, art albums and books, lexicons focused on local issues or those related to a significant figure in the region, and reference books.

Libraries also conduct informational and bibliographic activities. Bibliographic work includes, among other things, creating records for individual articles in the subject directory, preparing lists of regional journals, assembling compilations of library materials on regional topics or bibliographies of selected individuals who have contributed to the region, and responding to library queries. These aids are prepared for research and record-keeping purposes. They are created for publication in the online library catalog or on the website. The registers are also used internally for collection and storage purposes.

These activities foster the integration of the regional library community, contributing to the creation and ongoing development of a knowledge base about the region and the methodology for teaching regional content. Library journals and scholarly works initiated or supported by these institutions facilitate the exchange of experiences, the documentation of regional achievements, and the popularization of the concept of regionalism.

#### ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT

Another area of activity for libraries, especially public ones, is the dynamization of local communities. Activities undertaken to create and cultivate community spirit are a key element of regional education. These activities will take individual, group, and mass forms. Their goal is to unite residents of a given area and promote empowerment regardless of age or socioeconomic status. Libraries, as meeting spaces, enable contact between people with diverse interests, abilities, and experiences, thus celebrating the diversity of the local community, supporting the exchange of information and the vitality of traditions, and acting as a mediator in showcasing regional activities. They become a tool for integration and for the promotion of regional products and values.

The activities of libraries as a source of civic activity and regional initiatives include: meetings (with authors, with local artists, with specialists, e.g. regionalists, guides, organizers or representatives of organizations conducting social campaigns promoting the region, but also of residents

of a given region or administrative unit), discussions, debates, culture corners, exhibitions of works of art, costumes, exhibits (including everyday objects), games (including field games, city games, following the footsteps of people distinguished for the region, enabling direct contact with local architecture, monuments and landscape), amusements, celebrations and festivals promoting traditions, customs and local rituals as well as celebrations of anniversaries, historical events important for the country (taking into account the participation of representatives of the local community), competitions (knowledge, literary, recitation, artistic, documentary), trips, film screenings, festivals (folklore and others), events (night in the library), library walks and picnics, evenings (poetry, memories), theatre forms (performances, salons), regional interest groups, or Friends of the Library circles, lovers of the region, fairs, and bookcrossing. It's worth mentioning that one way to stimulate local activity is to organize community archives at libraries, whose operation is based on the grassroots efforts of the region's residents. Public libraries also encourage participation in the Citizens' Budget, which these institutions use. In this way, they promote civic initiative and support the development of social awareness.

A necessary condition for these initiatives is engaging residents in cooperation. Social media currently plays a significant role in publicizing library campaigns. They facilitate promotional activities, including the popularization of regional content. Traditional media can also provide support. Field games organized by libraries often have a multimedia component, utilizing applications for testing knowledge, tracking subsequent points along the route, or for navigation. A library's visibility on social media not only creates and strengthens its image but also educates the local community about the library's rich offerings and encourages them to engage in collaborative activities with librarians. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and now TikTok are popular destinations, especially among young people, and their potential is not unknown to libraries. Short forms posted online can be a great way to popularize a region. Libraries post photo reports of events important for regional education, create posts highlighting local activists, and include calendar pages commemorating significant episodes from the region's past. Various challenges and competitions using social media, in which librarians and users participate, are also popular. Photos and videos with regional themes are published online. Video materials include recordings such as "a day at work for a librarian," as well as entertaining scenes and virtual tours during which librarians present their collections. Residents are encouraged to post photos featuring their own regional costume ideas or portraying community activists, artists, or writers associated with the region. These materials are published directly by the library or shared on its official channels with the consent of those participating in the

initiative. This is an example of a modern way of developing knowledge about the region, which, through combined fun and opportunities for self-expression, addresses the needs especially of younger members of local communities. Knowledge acquired in this way is more easily digestible. These forms make the region and its activities popular, evoking positive associations and a desire to identify with the community.

## INNOVATIVE METHODS

The Public Pedagogical Library in Poznań and the Public Pedagogical Library of Alfons Parczewski in Kalisz are two institutions that, while operating in the same voivodeship and constituting the same type of library, approach the concept of working for the region differently. For the purposes of this article, we will discuss the two directions of these institutions' efforts: through creativity toward tradition and through cooperation toward expansiveness.

The Public Pedagogical Library in Poznań, based in the historic capital of Greater Poland, focuses its regional activities on municipal initiatives. The library participates in the Municipal Harvest Festival and the Bread Festival, exhibiting a booth as part of the celebrations. During the events, children can participate in games and create art projects. Library lessons for local schools include, among other things, "Wandering around Poznań – following the trail of rich history and captivating monuments," "The World of Polish Folk Papercuts," "Calligraphy in the Regional Chamber of Educational Memorabilia," "The Town of Malki – a Visit to a Jewish Town" (an educational package of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw), and "Slavic Mythology." Educational activities are dominated by solutions aimed at preserving the continuity of tradition, sharing history, and engaging the artistic sensibility. Kamishibai theater (e.g. "Leszy – Guardian of the Forest: A Slavic Fairy Tale" and Poznań legends) is also used. The institution also houses the Regional Chamber of Educational Memorabilia in Poznań, which stores materials related to education in Greater Poland, including artifacts belonging to individuals who contributed to the region.<sup>4</sup>

The Public Pedagogical Library in Kalisz takes a completely different approach to regional education. Like its predecessor, the Pedagogical Library houses museum collections. These include the art studio of Władysław Kościelniak (a Kalisz resident, artist, and regionalist) and the Czar School Bench (similar in profile to the Poznań Chamber). Its innovative approach to cultural development is demonstrated by the

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<sup>4</sup> You can follow the activities of the Public Pedagogical Library in Poznań on the official website: <https://pbb.poznan.pl/> and on the Facebook social networking site: <https://www.facebook.com/pbb.poznan>.

MODEL SOLUTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN LIBRARIES FOR REGIONAL EDUCATION		
Library	Support for schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collecting and sharing regional collections</li> <li>organizing access to databases and online catalogs</li> <li>providing a shelf (with new items) with a highlighted regional section</li> <li>posting regional materials on the library website</li> <li>creating lists of local publications or those dealing with a given territory</li> <li>digitizing documents</li> <li>organizing permanent and temporary exhibitions</li> <li>running museum departments (library museum rooms)</li> </ul>	<p>Different types of libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing materials needed for regional education classes</li> <li>Organizing library lessons and competitions on regional topics, hosting field trips, and presenting resources (including exhibitions)</li> <li>Lectures, author meetings, conferences, and training</li> <li>Regionalist workshops</li> </ul>	<p>School libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional educational projects</li> <li>Editing school magazines</li> <li>Providing a knowledge base and access to teaching aids</li> <li>Creating school newsletters and exhibitions of student work</li> <li>Organizing competitions</li> <li>Regional field trips</li> <li>Supporting local patriotism (celebrating anniversaries, visiting memorial sites)</li> </ul>
<p>Scientific and publishing activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects, training, conferences, and symposia about the region</li> <li>librarians as creators of (scholarly) achievements on regional topics: scientific publications, conference materials, library journals</li> <li>cooperation with local universities, socio-cultural societies, associations, and groups of lovers of the region</li> <li>information and bibliographic activities (including blogs, newsletters, and activity on the library website)</li> </ul>	<p>Activation activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The library as a so-called third place</li> <li>Discussions, debates, cultural corners, exhibitions of artwork, costumes, and exhibits related to the region, games, activities, celebrations and festivals, anniversary celebrations, competitions, trips, film screenings, festivals, events (e.g., a night at the library), library walks and picnics, evenings (poetry, reminiscences), theater, regional interest groups or groups of friends of the library, lovers of the region, fairs, bookcrossing</li> <li>Visibility on social media (e.g., challenges, competitions, short forms)</li> <li>Community archives in the library</li> <li>Participatory Budget voting</li> </ul>	

Table 1. Model solutions undertaken in libraries for regional education

institution's involvement in regional activities on both a micro and macro scale, often through collaboration with multiple institutions. At the beginning of the 2025/2026 school year, the library premiered a publication of student stories entitled *Kalisz in Fairy Tales and Legends – Rediscovered*. An example of its online activities is the newsletter "Something for Every Regionalist," which includes a Padlet titled "Cultural Heritage of the Kalisz Region," featuring an urban coloring book for children and a herbarium. To meet the needs of a slightly broader audience, the library publishes the professional journal "Closer to the Library. The Journal of Librarians of Southeastern Wielkopolska." Together with the Kalisz Society of Friends of Science, it coordinates author meetings related to the *Kaliszanie* publishing series. The Pedagogical Library also organizes larger events. For several years, the Wielkopolska Librarians' Forum has been held here, providing an opportunity for librarians from the region to share best practices. In 2025, the event was held under the slogan "We Act Locally – We Read Together!" The conference focused on the needs of the local community. The library also participated in the 33rd European Heritage Days, hosting an event titled "Lost City. Young Heritage Through Lenses and Research." The meeting was accompanied by an exhibition prepared by librarians, "Kalisz, the (Un)known. The City Through the Lens of Władysław Kościelniak – on the 10th Anniversary of His Death." It is worth adding that the popularization activities are supported by the use of new technologies, for example an integral part of the exhibition was an interactive map.<sup>5</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the situation of libraries is evolving in tandem with the development of other areas of social life. Responding to these changes, libraries are continually improving their work to best meet the needs of their users. One manifestation of this activity is the involvement of the institutions discussed in fulfilling educational tasks for and about the region.

This work aimed to explore the multitude of roles that libraries play from an institutional and personal perspective (teacher-librarians and others who co-create a space for dialogue) within the framework of regionalism. The text explored the role of libraries in regional culture broadly understood, which was achieved by examining the concept of regional education and its related concepts, taking into account the applicable legal framework,

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<sup>5</sup> More information about the activities of the A. Parczewski Public Pedagogical Library in Kalisz can be found on the official website: <https://kp.kalisz.pl/> and on the Facebook social networking site: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064594066412>.

analyzing the typology of library activities conducted in the service of regionalism and their implementation strategies, and presenting practical solutions available to contemporary libraries. Activities undertaken for the region have been organized around four areas: book collections, support for schools, research and publishing activities, and local activation.

This article demonstrates model solutions currently being implemented in libraries for regional education. This serves as a starting point for further consideration, a set of current practices supporting regionalism in the library landscape. It also highlights the potential for using innovative methods. A significant conclusion drawn from these issues is the functioning of libraries as culture-forming institutions – they not only preserve heritage but, above all, actively participate in the processes of its creation and dissemination. Celebrating the region's history, protecting the cultural heritage of "small homelands," providing multifaceted support for the local community, and, finally, influencing social awareness – these are the types of activities that underpin the significant role of libraries in regional education.

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## **THE LIBRARY OF THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE – AN AUDIOVISUAL INSTITUTE AS A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM STUDIES BASED ON PRIMARY SOURCES? SOME REFLECTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE LIBRARY'S ATTAINMENT OF SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY STATUS**



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**KEYWORDS:** Film archive. Research library. Film. Scholarly communication. Source studies.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – In August 2023, the Library of the National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA) in Warsaw was granted the status of a scientific library under statutory law. This article explores the potential of the FINA Library as a research center focused on source-based studies in the field of film and media. The archival breakthrough in film studies has led to an increased focus on various historical documentary sources, creating an opportunity for the FINA Library to become a full-fledged participant in scholarly communication and a leader in source-oriented film research. The library holds largest Polish collection of film-related library materials and references. FINA itself is the only film archive in Poland. This dual role as both a library and an archive offers optimal conditions for in-depth film studies that bring benefits both to external researchers and the staff of the institution. In response to these developments, the FINA Library is undergoing a paradigm shift, engaging in independent research activities, which became possible in part with the inclusion of film studies scholars in its team. **Method** – The authors primarily use a descriptive method. They outline the development and evolution of the FINA Library, which has transitioned from a center focused solely on professional access to collections and scholarly information to an institution actively initiating research on its unique and extensive film archive. **Conclusions** – The FINA Library has an opportunity to emerge as a collective social actor in the field of film studies, paving the way for a new research trajectory and marking yet another paradigm shift as regards the role of research libraries.

## INTRODUCTION

The library of the National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA) in Warsaw is today a unique example in terms of the mechanisms of communication between academic libraries and their users. Several circumstances contribute to this: firstly, the nature of its collections, unique in terms of size and focus, which consist of books and periodicals thematically profiled for film studies, and above all, rich resources of archival documents in this field.

A second reason can be found in the fact that the library is part of the largest specialized institution in Poland, organized by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which has broad competences in the field of film, film culture, and cinematography, as well as carrying out various statutory tasks in the area of collecting, archiving, and disseminating resources of cinematic art.<sup>1</sup> The fact that, as the founder of the library, the Institute itself is highly specialized is reflected in the narrow profile of the unit's interests. This fosters a high degree of specialization in the process of acquiring and collecting publications and in scientific information activities – to a degree incomparably higher than, for example, in academic libraries located at universities that offer film study programs.

The two reasons mentioned above for the unique communicative situation of the FINA library contribute to a third: the profile of the library's users is largely defined, meaning that the library is used by people who are engaged in various ways in in-depth studies of film (students, journalists, but above all researchers) and form a broadly defined community. Communication mechanisms therefore occur almost exclusively in a specialized area, and their participants form a separate group determined by an interest in a specific subject matter, which is a consolidating factor but also means that communication is community-based. Defining the user group does not, however, mean that it is a closed group. On the contrary: the library remains open also to users who show a broad, though non-professional, interest in film, although this community is highly diverse and small within the general user population. It should be emphasized that the activities of the FINA library are intentionally focused on the first group, comprising researchers and professionals.<sup>2</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup> See *Ustawa z dnia 30 czerwca 2005 r. o kinematografii* [Act of June 30, 2005, on cinematography].

<sup>2</sup> However we are also fully aware of the widespread social changes taking place in the development of civil society and the resulting obligations of the library, which we fulfill as part of FINA's statutory tasks. See, for example, Sabina Cisek, „Funkcje i role bibliotek naukowych i publicznych w społeczeństwie wiedzy,” [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259570218\\_Funkcje\\_i\\_role\\_bibliotek\\_naukowych\\_i\\_publicznych\\_w\\_spoleczenstwie\\_wiedzy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259570218_Funkcje_i_role_bibliotek_naukowych_i_publicznych_w_spoleczenstwie_wiedzy) [accessed: 2.04.2024].

this reason, this paper will describe the place and role of this unit in the world of scientific research<sup>3</sup> within the world of film studies research.

The issue of the function of the FINA library will be addressed; FINA was listed in 34th place on the list of scientific libraries by the Ministerial Regulation of July 28, 2023<sup>4</sup> and has undergone a transformation process from a specialized film library, whose main task was to collect, process, and make available its collections, as well as to serve as a professional scientific information center with databases specialized in film, including bibliographic databases – to a research library setting itself the ambitious, but also difficult task of actively playing the role of a collective social actor.<sup>5</sup> In modern film studies research, this institution holds a unique position as a center for scholarly information in film and media studies. As a non-academic research library, yet possessing the largest library and archival collections in Poland related to film studies, it serves as a crucial resource for researchers from various universities, who have recently also been collaborating on FINA library's research projects.

## TOWARDS A SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY

The change in the library's function resulted from three circumstances: firstly, the archival turn in scholarship (which occurred in film studies after 2000), secondly, the continuation of existing scientific activity thanks to its own specialized staff (scholars – film studies experts, archivists, and librarians), and thirdly, obtaining the status of a scientific library within the meaning of the Act of June 27, 1997 on libraries, pursuant to the aforementioned Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

The FINA scientific library makes its own collections and the institution's archive collections available to readers in the form of databases and bibliographies created in-house, and also conducts scientific work, with science understood here as a set of "activities aimed at increasing the body of knowledge using scientific methods" (Ciechanowski, 2020,

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<sup>3</sup> We are also referring here to participation in the scientific communication process. See Małgorzata Gwadera, „Kompetencje kluczowe w komunikacji naukowej,” *Nowa Biblioteka. Usługi, Technologie Informacyjne i Media* 2017, No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> „Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z dnia 28 lipca 2023 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie sposobu i trybu zaliczania bibliotek do niektórych bibliotek naukowych oraz ustalenia ich wykazu,” *Dziennik Ustaw RP* z dnia 16 sierpnia 2023, poz. 1620 [Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of July 28, 2023, amending the regulation on the method and procedure for classifying libraries as certain types of research libraries and establishing their list, *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* of August 16, 2023, item 1620]

<sup>5</sup> The concept of a collective social actor refers to organizations and institutions, while the concept of a social actor refers to individuals. Cf. Barbara Szacka, *Wprowadzenie do socjologii*, Warszawa 2003, p. 122.

p. 470). Therefore, not only have the basic tasks defined in the Libraries Act been implemented, but also bibliographic, documentary, popularization, and educational activities have been carried out for many years. The scientific and research function is also being developed and strengthened, which is enabled by the specific nature of the institution that gathers the collections. From the perspective of the archive, of which the library is a part, the principles applied are consistent with the criteria of scholarly rigor adopted not only in librarianship but also in archival science, where “scholarly work, in the strictest sense of the word, included the publication of texts in the field of archival science and archival studies, the publication of historical sources, the activity of the archive and archivists in organizing local scientific life, and the individual scholarly work of individual archivists” (Radtke, 1970, p. 116; Ciechanowski, 2020, p. 472). For the FINA research library – which is well aware of the needs of the academic community and maintains constant communication with it – the priority becomes the critical editions of historical sources related to film and the individual scholarly works of its employees, some of whom also have experience in organizing and actively participating in national scientific conferences.

## THE FINA SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY IN THE WORLD OF FILM STUDIES RESEARCH

To understand the needs of the academic community mentioned above, it is worth outlining a brief history of national film research. For years, film studies research in Poland was conducted using film text analysis, often combined with modern (at the time) theories, the application of which generally served to prove that film studies is a scientific discipline. However, these efforts often led to intellectual dead ends and it can be said today that they did not stand the test of time. Archives usually remained outside the sphere of interest of film researchers as an uninteresting, unattractive area, evoking associations that did not fit the modern image of this field of creative work. The constantly developing possibilities of the film language by filmmakers, accompanied by active participation in discussions on current topics, pushed archives out of the attention of researchers, who did not have any particular respect for them.

The situation changed when the importance and potential of archives were recognized in the broadly understood humanities, which proved to be an indispensable resource for conducting in-depth research of significant and lasting importance for science. This change was defined as the archival turn, the foundations of which were laid by Jacques Derrida’s lecture given in 1994 (Derrida, 1995). Within the framework of the archival

turn, the research process takes into account both the materiality of the archive itself and the artifacts collected in it, as well as the source-based methodology of working with documents and other resources. In film studies, this trend has been termed the New Film History (*nouvelle histoire*), focused “on revising the traditional methodology of film history, searching for more effective research procedures, and on source-based research into the history of cinematography and film art leading to a new reading and reinterpretation of the existing image of film history” (Hendrykowski, 1994, p. 196; Zwierzchowski, Kornacki, 2014). For the Film Archive, as a repository of film archives, this shift was of colossal importance in general, and the library, where the collections are made available, naturally began to aspire to occupy the position of a collective social actor with a key role in film studies research.

Moreover, who knows whether the archival turn wasn't particularly significant precisely for film? After all, because it does so visually, film best reflects our history, our identity, tradition, but also modernity, and so the FINA library, which provides access to film-related archives, has become the focus of attention as a particularly interesting case of the consequences of the archival turn. Its basis is the combination of work on archival resources and library collections, while simultaneously understanding deeply the existing differences between them in terms of processing and access. While in the case of archives, for various reasons, access cannot be completely open, openness remains the guiding principle of the library's activity. These contradictions are reconciled with an understanding of the distinctiveness of these systems, but also the social need for their symbiosis, necessary for a comprehensive understanding of historical film processes: the scientific function builds a possible field of understanding here (Chorażyczewski, 2019).

At the same time, the widespread processes associated with building a democratic information society are prompting archives to change their way of thinking, which is also happening in the FINA archive, which has dynamized the processes of evolving a resource that has grown exponentially after the liquidation of film institutions during the political transformation of 1989. Currently, the institution is digitizing and making available online part of its resources, which reflects an understanding of current social and scientific needs. The FINA scientific library has also actively participated in the implementation of this postulate by engaging in scientific projects based on the institution's archival resources. It should be noted that undertaking these tasks is not revolutionary in nature and is carried out while maintaining a balance between the library's previous activities and the innovations it is currently developing in response to social needs.

Before defining the exact trajectory of the transformation of the library's functions, which in essence also means the advancement of this institution through the utilization of its professional expertise, but also (and perhaps above all) its archival resources and unique catalogs, enabling it to actively participate in the scientific community, while being aware of its unique position due to the factors described above, it is worth presenting its resources. No other research unit in Poland dealing with film studies has accumulated such a rich collection of publications, not to mention the richness of the archive itself.

## KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES AT THE FINA LIBRARY

According to the definition contained in the Act of June 27, 1997, on Libraries, a research library is a type of library that serves the needs of science and education by providing access to library collections and information resources necessary for conducting scientific research, but which also conducts independent scientific research in the field of library science, related fields, or other fields of science that it serves.

In addition to the typical activities of research libraries such as subject cataloging of collections, creating bibliographies and library catalogs, what distinguishes the FINA library – due to the specificity of the archival collections that the institution gathers – are source studies on documents and historical studies. Attention is focused particularly on documents most important to the history of Polish cinematography, which are subjected to professional, critical analysis and published in their entirety.

The library was established in 1955 as an important part of the Central Film Archive (later the National Film Archive, and currently the National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute) in response to the repeatedly expressed need by the film community for a professional film library. During almost 70 years of the library's activity library materials have been collected, carefully searched for and processed, which on the one hand has created a unique resource – the only one in the field of film knowledge on a national scale – and at the same time has built a very significant research potential.

The library's collections concern film and audiovisual media. The library's book collection has been growing since 1955 and currently comprises over 30,000 items, including almost all publications of this profile published in Poland. The collection of Polish and foreign periodicals numbers over 800 titles (some of which are short runs). A significant and unique part of the collection consists of press clippings concerning Polish and foreign cinema, collected from 1955 to 2007. This collection covers people, film titles, issues, topics, and institutions related to film. The en-

tire collection of clippings occupies approximately 217 linear meters. The library also holds a rare collection of Polish and foreign festival publications, numbering over 2,500 catalogs.

For years the library has also been collecting special collections institutionally referred to as archival materials. This includes separate sets of materials that are purchased or donated, most often by private individuals. These include documents, photographs, private notes, correspondence, awards, publications, periodicals, and clippings containing references to the owner of a given collection. The archival collection also includes selected materials documenting events from the history of Polish cinematography, such as film reviews and minutes of meetings of the Script Evaluation Commission. The archival collection comprises approximately 560 archival units.

The library also provides access to documentation related to Polish cinematography, referred to as ancillary film materials. These include broadly defined literary materials, among which are various types of texts, such as screenplays (including numerous unrealized ones), shooting scripts, film novellas, film outlines, editing lists, and dialogue lists. This collection comprises approximately 33,000 items.

Another type of ancillary film material is the paper documentation of set design and costume projects, which numbers approximately 4,500 inventory items. A significant part of this collection consists of documentary materials that go beyond practical design and, due to their artistic form, have the characteristics of a work of art. These include, for example, set designs in the form of original drawings and sketches by outstanding artists.

Yet another collection of ancillary film materials available in the FINA library reading room is musical documentation, i.e., scores and orchestral parts prepared for a specific film title. A large collection also consists of film programs and folders published in connection with the promotion of a given title. A significant part of the archival collections consists of production files transferred as a result of the liquidation after 1989 of film production entities: film studios and production companies.

Ancillary film materials are distinguished from other documents by their authorial character – they constitute records of the component parts of a film work in paper form. Many of these materials function as manuscripts (this applies to literary materials, scores, and set and costume designs). In particular, these materials from the Polish People's Republic era, which were often created in only one copy and are now unique materials, constitute an unparalleled archival document (Wyżyński, 2022).

The collection of film-related documentation at the Film Archive has been accumulated over the years based on successive laws. Currently, this issue is regulated by the Act on Cinematography of June 30, 2005 [*Ustawa o kinematografii*], which in Chapter 4, Article 28, designates the National

Film Archive (transformed into FINA in 2017) to collect documentation related to film production.

These collections, unique and unparalleled on a national scale, are the result of a well-thought-out collection policy, and therefore are the subject of specialized archival studies within the institution, but are also of interest to external researchers representing various fields of science.

An important element of the library's information activities and services are various types of databases, both internal and external, to which we have licensed access. The most important database remains the FINA Central Catalog (CK), containing both filmographic data and data concerning film-related collections. The database contains hundreds of thousands of records corresponding to the institution's archival resources, relating to films, film-related collections, and documents. The database also allows viewing attached scans of digitized materials from our resources. It can be used in the Library.

A separate catalog consists of library collections with specialized subject headings in the field of film. A project to combine the CK with the library catalog is currently in the conceptual stage. In the future, there is a plan to combine these two knowledge bases through common links concerning subject headings, titles, and names.

Due to the strict thematic profiling of the library's collections, as mentioned above, the library catalog is available online and constitutes a comprehensive database of the library's holdings since 1955, and at the same time of all book publications on film topics published in Poland.

The specificity of this catalog lies in the detailed development of subject headings in the field of cinematography. These include personal names, film titles, institutions, geographical locations, and subject headings. The catalog also includes analytical records for collected works. All this gives those seeking in-depth scientific information the opportunity to access information and texts best suited to a specific research question.

Regarding external databases, it is worth mentioning the unique bibliographic database of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) called the FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals, in the creation of which the FINA library also actively participates by indexing Polish film periodicals. This database allows for the study of the international circulation of film, i.e., the foreign reception of specific titles, interviews with film professionals, based on specialized film press from around the world. The database consists of bibliographic records referring to over 100 titles of specialized film periodicals.

In 2021, cooperation was established with the central NUKAT catalog, and the library also holds numerous foreign filmographic and bibliographic databases on film on CD-ROMs. All these external databases are available on-site in the reading room.

Over the years a unique bibliography of the contents of pre-war periodicals concerning cinematography broadly understood has also been prepared. It covers both film titles and individuals.

## THE LIBRARY AS A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTOR IN THE FIELD OF FILM STUDIES?

The title of this text refers to the concept of a collective social actor in the context of the functions of the FINA library. According to the definition adopted here, a collective social actor is an institution that interacts with other entities, plays a specific role in a given social situation, and influences others (Szacka, 2003). Can the FINA research library effectively undertake to fulfil of such a mission?

Undoubtedly, one can observe a process of gradually increasing activity of the library in the area of educational and scientific functions over the years of its operation. Initially (until the 1980s), it was primarily a specialized library, largely an in-house library, which was reflected in its then-official name "filmographic library." The aim was both to develop the competencies of the institution's own employees in cataloging film collections and to build a center of filmographic knowledge for other people, such as journalists and film critics, who thereby improved their skills in the field of film knowledge.

Since film studies began to develop intensively in Poland (in the 1990s), the role of the library has expanded to include providing substantive knowledge (advice and consultations for authors of film and media studies works regarding archival resources and bibliography), and often also inspiring research based on knowledge of the resources held.

After 2000, the archival turn also became a reality for film studies. It brought about an increased interest in archives, their scientific appreciation, and an expansion of their understanding from a material collection that is gathered and made available, to a metaphor for the category of memory. The latter concerns who has access to archival resources and in what way, and also (consequently) power over collective memory (Kurz, 2011).

Due to its unique resources there has also been a need to further expand the library's role in the areas of source research, inspiration, consulting, and recently even directly influencing research directions. This is a result of transformations in science itself. Film studies, no longer solely focused on filmography or interpretation – in accordance with the guidelines of the New History of Cinema – is becoming more professionalized in the archival field, with a dominant role for source research and historical knowledge.

Referring to the definition of the scientific function, the tasks performed by archives for the benefit of science include: "informing scientific communities about the content and value of archival materials, publishing

and generally reproducing and disseminating source texts, conducting scientific research based on their own resources and disseminating their results in the form of publications or conferences" (Rosa, 2012, p. 37). The library, both as a unit and as part of an institution, has undertaken these tasks, implementing and developing them. Library staff possess expert knowledge not only about the collections but also substantive knowledge in film studies. On the one hand, they have an overview of all publications in this field, and on the other hand, they are familiar with the collection of documentation, which allows them to identify the most scientifically interesting areas for research. This situation – knowledge of what has been published as well as trends and tendencies in science, and at the same time a good understanding of the archival resources – allows them to recognize the developmental perspectives of film studies as a scientific discipline. A significant number of works by researchers from many scientific centers have been created based on the library's collections of archival documents, journals, press clippings, books, and bibliographic information broadly understood. The quality and quantity of professional assistance provided is reflected in the acknowledgments to the library and its staff included in the publications of numerous researchers, not only Polish ones.

It is perhaps worthwhile to offer a more general reflection here: among the many consequences of the archival turn, one can certainly mention the change in the attitudes of scholars themselves who deal with film, and also the change in the activities of institutions holding library and archival collections. In striving to directly access valuable sources, out of curiosity in research and the need to seek new teaching methods that would enrich the theory taught in academia, scholars are also professionally connected with libraries and archives, and these institutions are increasingly open to such cooperation. This creates a valuable situation in which cooperation between the librarian, archivist, and researcher is established, which consequently raises the level of collections processing and access, and the synergy of competencies creates high quality. This, in turn, gives the library itself a particularly advantageous position in the world of science shaped by the archival turn.

The archival turn also provokes a renewed delving into the past and the examination of materials that were either not at all within the area of interest of film scholars, or for various reasons were only superficially examined. Aware of all the above premises, the FINA scientific library has taken another step and begun independent archival research, becoming a collective social actor participating in the academic scientific circuit and proposing new approaches to the history of Polish film by initiating the publishing series "Film Congresses and Conferences in the People's Republic of Poland." The concept of a collective social actor is understood here as both an inspiration for research and its active conduct.

## THE LIBRARY'S SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES – RESULTS

An initiative has been launched to publish a critical edition of sources concerning the history of Polish cinematography, and in particular, national meetings and conferences that brought together the film community and were crucial for its development. Viewed from this perspective, the history of Polish cinematography primarily provides previously unknown knowledge, as well as a methodology for working with documents from recent history. It also develops an awareness of their significance for every aspect of the development of Polish cinema: from political and social issues to even private matters relating to the fates of individual filmmakers.

In the history of post-war Polish cinema, one of the most important events was the Film Congress in Wisła in 1949, which proclaimed socialist realism and had enormous consequences for the film community. This Congress has been repeatedly referenced in film studies, but its exact proceedings have remained unknown until now. The FINA Library has taken the initiative to publish the complete text of the transcript of this congress with a critical commentary, as it possesses this document in its archives.

The result of this initiative is a book published in 2024 by FINA, entitled *Film Congress in Wisła 1949: Sources, Commentaries, Studies* [Zjazd Filmowy w Wiśle 1949r. Źródła, komentarze, opracowania], which is intended to be the first volume of the aforementioned series.

Working on the transcript of the Film Congress in Wisła allowed us to develop a methodology for handling source texts in the field of film history, where the dominant language is spoken language recorded in a transcript, which by definition should be a faithful chronological representation on paper of everything that was heard during the proceedings. Reading the document confirms this assumption: it is a direct record of the course of the Congress, but it also contains elements of live, unpolished speech, with all the imperfections of spoken language. It also reveals the socialist realist jargon shaped by the Polish United Workers' Party. This presented a challenge in processing the text, but also provided an impetus for creating principles for conducting research with this type of material. This should also be considered a contribution to expanding the scientific function of the Library.

The academic community has thus been presented with one of the most important documents in the history of film, which has the potential for further research, not only in film studies, but also in history, sociology, linguistics, cultural studies, and political science. This publication will undoubtedly trigger other research, demonstrating its potential to play an initiating role in academia and to influence the research community.

A second volume of the series is currently being prepared, covering the meetings from 1950-1955.

## SUMMARY

While every academic library is a research library,<sup>6</sup> recognizing a non-university library as a research center is an interesting subject for consideration in the context of its role as a collective social actor. After all, there are very few other so-called research libraries (besides those organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences, higher education institutions, and research and development units) included in the ministerial list in Poland (there are just over 30). On the one hand, the richness and uniqueness of the collections, as well as the activities undertaken, open up promising prospects for acquiring and developing a new function; on the other hand, ensuring and maintaining appropriately high substantive standards in conducting scientific activity, as well as expanding the possibilities of scientific information through the digitization of resources, certainly remains an ambitious challenge (Januszko-Szakiel, 2012).

Last but not least, it is also worth noting the environmental position of the FINA library, which, of course, has developed over many years, but in the current circumstances is particularly significant: the adoption of a scientific status, with frequent and intensive communication between the library's professional staff and users (researchers), which – it must be emphasized – has long been a kind of custom and tradition as, among other things, an element of the process of identifying their needs (Głowacka, 2015), creates conditions for the exchange of ideas, information, and inspiration that is beneficial to both sides.

The library's actions stem from an awareness of the benefits also derived from the knowledge of researchers, which originates in their environmental (film studies and film) contacts. This circumstance favors the fact that, in building its collections, the library ensures their uniformity and continuity, topicality and high substantive quality, and their importance for modern scientific research. This can also be seen as the added value (Wojciechowski, 2006) of the FINA library, which has a very good chance of functioning as a collective social actor in film studies

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<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasized that academic libraries are also undergoing a paradigm shift in their operations: their activities are intrinsically linked to the core activities of the university they serve and focus on meeting diverse needs and continuously expanding the range of services for their parent institution. Cf. M. Kuczkowska, „Zmiana paradygmatu działania współczesnej biblioteki naukowej w wybranych obszarach informacji i komunikacji naukowej w świetle badania ankietowego,” *Przegląd Biblioteczny* 2024, v. 1.

research. The library sees its role primarily in mutual, reciprocal, and equal interactions with the film studies community in conducting scientific work, but also in actively constructing the concept of a new history of Polish cinema, which has the potential to provide a solid foundation for further research based on archival sources. This concept is rooted in the archival turn, also in a broader sense, referring to issues of memory in general (Wichrowska, 2021) and raising questions about possible forms of understanding the past, the rules of its reconstruction, and the opportunities and threats in explaining the mechanisms governing the history of Polish cinematography.

The process described, however fascinating, also presents challenges, difficulties, and risks inherent in any ambitious pioneering endeavor. It is nevertheless worth reflecting upon as an interesting case study of the shaping of a new library function, one that has taken on the challenge of adapting to a new format and a new, very demanding role. A motivating factor can be found in the attitude of researchers towards archives, vividly described by Carolyn Steedman as a "fever": "the researcher is aware of the infinite number of archived items, and what causes the feeling of fever is the conviction that they will never finish their work, that there will always be something left" (Steedman, 2002, p. 195).

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## **DIGITAL RESOURCE SHARING AND THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF USERS IN THE SEJM LIBRARY**



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**KEYWORDS:** Digital collections. Digitization. Information retrieval languages. Circulation. Information needs.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – The aim of this article is to present the digital resources and databases (bibliographic and authority files) that by means of their online availability compensate for a limited direct access to the Sejm Library's collections. The Sejm Library is a hybrid institution that combines a library, archive, and museum department within a single organizational structure. The authors also discuss selected features of subject cataloging, including the tools used for the description and retrieval of documents, in the context of user services and meeting continuously evolving information needs. **Methods** – The authors used a case study method, based on the content analysis and the authors' own professional experience. **Conclusions** – In reference to the analysis of the information concerning the content of the Sejm Library collections, as well as the information retrieval languages used in its databases, the authors highlight the benefits of combining and integrating three units – archive, library, and museum department—within one institution. The hybrid structure of the Sejm Library appears to enhance the scope of its offer in terms of access to various types of information and sources, thereby responding more comprehensively to users' information needs. Additionally, it facilitates cooperation and collaboration as regards the implementation of joint projects involving the staff and resources of the organizational units that constitute the Sejm Library.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to present solutions that facilitate access to and searching of the collections of the library of the Polish Sejm (including the Sejm Archive and the Museum Department) through digital resources and databases. The main theme is the use of IT and database tools to improve the cataloging, processing, and accessibility of the collections. Starting from the rules governing the use of the Sejm Library and the Sejm Archive by external (and internal) users, the authors will provide a brief description of the online collections and databases, as well as the specifics of subject cataloging and the information retrieval languages used in the context of serving readers and meeting their changing information needs. The topic concludes with the issue of internal access and the related cooperation between the departments that make up the Sejm Library.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SEJM LIBRARY

The Sejm Library (hereinafter: SL) is one of the offices of the Chancellery of the Sejm, and since 1989 it has also served the re-established Senate. It also includes the Sejm Archives (hereinafter: SA) – as one of its departments – and the Museum Department (hereinafter: MD). This organizational structure of the library is based on the traditions from the period of the Second Polish Republic and constitutes a pragmatic solution, eliminating the need for multiple collections of certain documents and facilitating archivists' access to source materials stored in the library. The structure of the SL also includes the Collection and Processing Department; the User Services Department, which includes the Media Library; the Collection Storage and Preservation Department; the Social History Collections Department; the Scientific Journals Editorial Office; the Automated Systems Team of the SL; and the Secretariat, along with several independent positions.

The current structure of the Sejm Library was formed in the 1990s. In 1990, the idea of creating a Museum of the Sejm, which had been under development for several years, was abandoned, and the team that had been working on its organization for several years moved to the Sejm Library, forming the Museum Collections Department. Two years later, in 1992, the Sejm Archive was incorporated into the library. Its tasks include, among others, collecting, processing, storing, and making available materials produced by the Sejm, by its organs, by deputies and their offices, and by the Chancellery of the Sejm; acquiring archival materials (or copies thereof) documenting the history of Polish parliamentarism; and preparing editions of sources on this subject. Furthermore, archive staff supervise document management in the organizational units of the Chancellery of the Sejm and provide consultations and training in this area. On the one hand, the Sejm Archive is a department of the Sejm Library, but on the other hand, its tasks, functions, and resources make it a separate unit managed by a head reporting to the SL management. The Sejm Archive belongs to a special group of so-called separate archives, i.e., those that are not part of the network of state archives and are not subject to their supervision. The *Act of July 14, 1983, on the national archival resource and archives* [Ustawa z 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwum] (Act, 1998) excluded the archives of certain central state bodies, including the Sejm, from the supervision of the General Director of the State Archives and subjected them to the control of the heads of the aforementioned bodies. In the case of the Sejm Archive, these powers are held by the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm.

Within the structure of the Sejm Library, in addition to the Archives and the Museum Department, there is also the Department of Social History Collections, which was established on the basis of the former Archive of

the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party acquired in 1991, and the Media Library (Mediateka), established in the same year. The latter was created in response to the demand from parliamentarians for media information. The task of the Media Library is to record, process, and make available video recordings of parliamentary sessions and important television programs of an informational and journalistic nature.

The Sejm Library serves as both an academic library and a unique national center for parliamentary information. The main collections of the Sejm Library consist of Polish and foreign parliamentary and official publications, as well as publications from selected international organizations. The thematic basis of the book collection is legal issues, in particular constitutional, parliamentary, and administrative law. The library also collects literature on political systems, philosophy and sociology of law, local government, international relations, historical and economic sciences, as well as memoirs and biographies of politicians and social activists. In addition, the Museum, the Archives, and the Department of Social History Collections gather collections related to the functions and tasks of these departments.

The main resource of the Archives consists of documentation of the work of the Sejm and its bodies in paper, electronic, and audiovisual form (audio and video recordings, photographs). Personnel and payroll documentation produced by the Chancellery of the Sejm, parliamentary clubs and groups, as well as regional parliamentary offices is also transferred to the archives.

The Museum's collection consists of exhibits collected since the 1980s related to the history of Polish parliamentarism, including paintings, graphics, maps, old prints, posters, leaflets, drawings, numismatics and phaleristic objects, archival materials, photographs, and military artifacts.

A separate collection is the book collection of the Department of Social History Collections, the foundation of which was the acquisition of books and periodicals from the former Central Archive of the Polish Left, which took place on October 23, 1991 under an agreement between the Director of the Central Archives of Modern Records (Bogdan Kroll) and the Acting Director of the Sejm Library (Andrzej Mężyński). In this way, 150,000 volumes were incorporated into the Sejm Library's resources. The collection is supplemented primarily with publications devoted to the history of social life in Poland, the history of the USSR and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, and documents of political life in Poland after 1989, reflecting the activities of political parties, trade unions, and other organizations involved in the country's political life.

## RULES FOR ACCESSING THE COLLECTIONS

Access to the Sejm Library's collections is governed by the "Regulations for User Services," updated in 2022. According to these regulations, almost any adult individual or institution whose scientific, professional, or informational needs "can be met by using the unique collections and information resources available exclusively in the Parliamentary Library" may become a user of the SL (Regulations, 2022). Priority access to SL services is given to parliamentarians, members of the Sejm and Senate bodies, parliamentary clubs and groups, parliamentary offices, the Constitutional Tribunal and the State Tribunal, and employees of the Chancellery of the Sejm and Senate. In practice, access to the SL may be temporarily restricted due to security requirements on days when parliament is in session. On these days, the Library and Archive are inaccessible to external users, except in exceptional circumstances.

The catalog for users of the Sejm Library – as well as the accessibility of its collections – are significantly enhanced by digitization and the internet. The same applies to the Sejm Archives, although there are also differences. The regulations governing user access to the Sejm Library do not specify the rules for accessing the archive's resources. These are governed by national archival regulations, such as: the *Act of July 14, 1983, on the national archival resource and archives*, and the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2011, on the manner and procedure for making archival materials available in separate archives* [Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwach i Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 22 czerwca 2011 r. w sprawie sposobu i trybu udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych znajdujących się w archiwach wyodrębnionych] as well as internal regulations, in particular the "Instruction on document management in the Sejm Archives." The regulation governs access to archival materials, while the instruction refers to non-archival materials. Access to the archive's resources is granted upon written request from interested parties, specifying the purpose of access and the method of using the documentation. In the case of the Sejm Archives, the consent of the director of the Sejm Library is required. Additional restrictions apply to classified documentation, in which case the consent is granted by the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm. Fewer formalities are required for employees of a given office of the Chancellery of the Sejm to use the documentation of that office – a simple request from the employee is sufficient. The use of documentation for official purposes requires the consent of the director of the organizational unit from which the documentation originates, while observing the regulations concerning the protection of information constituting legally protected secrets. Access to materials collected in the archive is subject to additional restrictions

resulting from separate regulations, such as access to classified information or the protection of personal data. This also affects the scope of digitization and online availability of archival materials.

In the case of museum exhibits, the provisions of the *Act of November 21, 1996, on Museums* [Ustawy z dnia 21 listopada 1996 r. o muzeach] apply, as well as internal regulations and rules including the *Regulations for the organization of exhibitions in the Chancellery of the Sejm adopted on the basis of Order No. 36 of the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm of October 7, 2016* [Regulamin organizacji wystaw w Kancelarii Sejmu przyjęty na podstawie Zarządzenia nr 36 Szefa Kancelarii Sejmu z dnia 7 października 2016 r.]. One of the main tasks of the Museum Department of the Sejm Chancellery, in addition to creating a collection of historical sources related to the history of Polish parliamentarism, is the preparation of exhibitions commemorating historical anniversaries. Temporary exhibitions, presented mainly in the space of the Sejm buildings, constitute the basic form of presentation and public access to the museum collection, as it does not have a permanent exhibition. Exhibitions organized by external entities with the consent of the Speaker of the Sejm are also shown in the Sejm building. The Museum Department of the Sejm very often participates in their preparation.

Access to the SL and SA collections, and the ability to search them, have been enhanced thanks to computer technologies, digitization, and the internet.

## AUTOMATION AND COMPUTERIZATION

The use of computer tools has significantly contributed to improving many processes related to the cataloging, processing, and sharing of collections. Automation in the Sejm Library has a long history, dating back to the 1970s. At that time, a project was launched to build and implement the parliamentary information system "Forum" (later renamed "Legislation"), in which the library played a key role (Sadoch, 2019, p. 111). The concept of the system was developed by a working group established under an agreement between the Minister of Science, Higher Education and Technology and the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm on September 22, 1972. The team was headed by Professor Roman Kulikowski, Deputy Scientific Secretary of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Director of the Computing Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The system was intended to support the work of the Sejm, among other things, through comprehensive information services for members of parliament, parliamentary committees, and the Presidium of the Sejm, as well as the automation of library activities. An important stage was the inclusion of the Sejm Library in 1974 in the nationwide project to create the System of

Scientific, Technical and Organizational Information (SINTO), coordinated by the Center for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information and the Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information. As part of this project, the Sejm Library undertook to develop and implement the concept of an automated information system "Sejm Library – Central Center for Legislative Information" (from 1980 "Legislative Information System of the Sejm Library"). In connection with this task, the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm established the Informatics Laboratory in 1974, placing it within the structure of the Library. The work on SINTO involved the creation of several subsystems, including the Central Catalogue of Legal Literature, for which the Sejm Library was responsible. At that time, work also began on automating library processes. In 1974, at the request of the director of the Sejm Library, specialists from the Main Library and the Scientific and Technical Information Center of the Wrocław University of Technology, then the most important center for library automation, analyzed the functional and organizational structure of the Sejm Library, its book collection, catalogs, and card indexes, as well as its participation in the "Forum" system. Based on this analysis, a *Concept for an IT system for the needs of the Sejm Library* [Koncepcja systemu informatycznego dla potrzeb Biblioteki Sejmowej] was formulated (Sadoch, 2019, p. 115). However, the outlined plan was not implemented, and another attempt in this area was made in 1977. This time, the system analysis of the Sejm Library was carried out by a team composed of employees from the Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information, the Institute of Computer Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and representatives of the Sejm Library. The crisis of the late 1970s and subsequent changes in computer technology contributed to the postponement of the automation process of the Sejm Library. However, it should be noted that participation in these projects resulted in experience that was used to intensify work on computerization at the beginning of the 1990s. This period coincided with systemic changes in the country and a revolution in the field of computer hardware and software. The assistance provided to the Chancellery of the Sejm and Senate by the United States Congress also played a significant role. This assistance included, among other things, numerous library materials, computer equipment and software, printers, photocopiers and scanners, as well as specialized training and study visits for employees of parliamentary services, including information and library services. In 1992, the Chancellery of the Sejm decided to computerize and automate the Sejm Library, which resulted in the purchase of appropriate computer equipment and a library system. Due to its wide range of functions encompassing all basic library operations, the Aleph system was chosen. After appropriate methodological and organizational preparations, in 1993 the first module of the integrated Aleph library system, the

cataloging module, was installed and implemented at the Sejm Library. In subsequent years further modules were added, and in 1995 work began on making resources available online and adding graphic files and full texts of documents. These were the first steps towards digitization. However, before the actual digital projects began, the Sejm Library already had a whole series of databases in the Aleph system. By 2022, this number had increased to 16 (including 15 available to all users in the OPAC WWW). (Report, 2023, p. 8).

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC, INFORMATIONAL, AND FULL-TEXT DATABASES

The main database in the Aleph system is the main catalog. It consists of bibliographic records created in the SAFO-SL format<sup>1</sup> and contains a bibliographic description of the documents and their content characteristics, expressed in two information retrieval languages – the subject heading language of the National Library and the SL's own descriptor language (STEBIS thesaurus system). The older part of the collection is registered in *The card catalog of books from the main SL collections* and *The card catalog of books from the ZHS Department*, as well as *The catalog of old prints* [Katalog klamrowy książek ze zbiorów głównych BS i Katalog klamrowy książek ze zbiorów Wydziału ZHS oraz Katalog starych druków] The first contains scanned images of catalog cards for items published before 1979 from the traditional (card) catalog. Indexes containing information provided on the card, such as author(s), title, and call number(s), have been added to the catalog cards. The second catalog includes scanned images of catalog cards for books from the ZHS Department collections published before 1994 from the card catalog, with similar indexes.

In addition to catalog databases, the Aleph system also supports information and digital resource databases. These include two databases of audiovisual recordings maintained by the Media Library (Mediateka). One is a database containing audiovisual recordings of Sejm sessions, which have been recorded by Media Library staff since the 1st term of the Sejm (1991-1993), and the other is a database of recordings of television programs on political, social, and economic topics from the last six months. Recordings of broadcasts are systematically deleted, and the freed tapes are reused for subsequent recordings.

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<sup>1</sup> The SAFO format is based on the UNIMARC standard, and the predecessor of SAFO SL was a version of the format prepared for the National Library. The adaptation of the format for the needs of the SL was carried out in 1995 by Zofia Moszczyńska (see J. Franke, SAFO SL Format, "Przegląd Biblioteczny" 1996, no. 4, p. 368).

A similar function is performed by a database containing information about articles concerning socio-political and legal issues chosen from 15 selected Polish periodicals, including national daily and weekly newspapers. The database contains links to the full texts.

One of the older databases, which is no longer updated, is a full-text database presenting the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation during the 4th-8th terms of the Sejm (*Laws implementing EU law – UST database* [Ustawy wykonujące prawo UE – baza UST]). It will be discussed further in the text below. At this point it is worth noting that it consists of metadata of documents reflecting the implementation of European Union law in Polish legislation and the adaptation of Polish legislation to the EU legal order. It contains bibliographic descriptions of Polish and EU legal acts, which are interconnected to allow navigation between related acts. The descriptive metadata includes links to the full texts of legal acts located on other parliamentary websites and on the websites of EU institutions. Originally, the database was updated and modified by the team of the European Information and Documentation Centre (OIDE), which from 2002 to 2018 was one of the departments of the Sejm Library. Currently, due to organizational changes in the Chancellery of the Sejm, the OIDE team has been incorporated into the Office of Parliamentary Analysis, but still oversees this database (Bednarczyk, 2023, p. 12).

Full-text databases include a service consisting of Polish translations of the fundamental laws of many countries, registered in the Aleph system. The Sejm Library prepares the texts of constitutions for publication in the “Constitutions of the World” series published by the Sejm Publishing House. The database also presents Polish constitutions – including digital copies of the oldest ones from 1791, 1807, and 1815, the originals of which are in the collections of the Sejm Library. In addition, the database contains official translations of some documents of international organizations: the UN, the Council of Europe, NATO, and the International Labour Organization. In the library system, descriptive metadata (bibliographic and subject) are combined with digital copies of documents. Many records with bibliographic descriptions have links to documents in hypertext format, in a structural and hierarchical arrangement, which significantly facilitates navigation through the document. Access to the database is possible both through the OPAC and from the Library’s website, more precisely from a service in the form of an alphabetical list of countries presented as hyperlinks leading to the texts of constitutions along with selected translations. This makes navigation through the service simple and intuitive.

The Sejm Library offers users free access to electronic versions of subscribed journals, also accessible from the level of the relevant records in the computer catalog. Similarly, the electronic information service on

new acquisitions of the Sejm Library, available in interactive form on the Aleph system database selection page, provides a direct link to catalog records and functions.

## DATABASES WITH DIGITAL OBJECTS

Conceptual work on digitization, understood as the introduction of analog materials (scans) into computer memory along with their descriptive metadata, began at the Sejm Library in the late 1990s. Over the following decades several databases containing metadata and scans of digitized objects were created. The Sejm Library's digital collections do not constitute a separate service that would function as a digital library or repository. The Aleph system performs a similar function, enabling the management of digital collections and their presentation on a local network or the internet. Only a part of the museum collections in the form of digital copies constitutes a separate service – the "Virtual Museum."

One of the first digital projects undertaken by the Polish Parliament Library was the digitization of parliamentary interpellations from the period of the Second Polish Republic. Work began in 2002, using the library's own materials and resources from other institutions obtained through research. The project was gradually supplemented with other documents, such as printed materials and stenographic reports. The entire collection forms the "Parliamentary Documents 1919-2001" database. Interpellation records contain information about the number, title, authors, and recipients of the interpellation, as well as a content description in the form of descriptors from the STEBIS thesaurus system, and links to corresponding stenographic report records. Each record includes a digital file (PDF) containing the digitized text of the interpellation. Records for other parliamentary materials available in full-text format in the database are similarly structured, including: printed materials, reprints, regulations, and stenographic records with indexes from sessions of the Sejm, Senate, The National Assembly (1919-1939, 1989-2021) and the State National Council (1943-1947). Work is still underway on the digitization of bulletins from the meetings of parliamentary committees of the 1st term of the Sejm (1991-1993), which will eventually enrich the database. These are not yet available to external users.

The Sejm Library also provides digital versions of the documentation of the Codification Commission of the Republic of Poland and its subcommittees from 1919-1939, as well as bulletins of the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly from 1992-1997. These do not form a separate database, but scans of the documents in PDF files are linked to the bibliographic descriptions in the computer catalog. A similar situation

exists with the transcripts of the Round Table meetings in 1989, prepared by the National Council of the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth. It is worth adding that these transcripts, along with audiovisual recordings of the Sejm sessions of the 10th term (1989), are presented on the "Time of Transition" pages located on the Sejm's website.

A separate database consists of documents relating to political and social life, comprising various types of leaflets, brochures, and posters reflecting the activities of political parties, trade unions, and other organizations active in the country's political life after 1989. Similarly to the parliamentary documentation, the descriptive metadata contained in the catalog descriptions in the Aleph system are accompanied by digital reproductions in the form of PDF text files or JPG/PNG image files.

A similar presentation method, but with a slightly different metadata standard, was used for the database of photographs from the Sejm Archive. The photographs provide visual documentation of the work of the Sejm and its bodies, mainly from 1993 onwards. They depict events and meetings in which the Speakers of the Sejm and parliamentarians participated. Photo descriptions are entered into the database using the MARC21 standard with modifications dictated by the need to adapt the bibliographic data cataloging format to the needs of archival description. Digital reproductions of photographs or born-digital photographs in JPG format are attached to the description record. Due to copyright protection and regulations concerning the availability of archival documentation, access to digital copies of the photographs is limited to thumbnails supplemented with the annotation: "Access to, including copying of, archival material requires the written consent of the Director of the Sejm Library. (Order No. 8 of the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm of March 8, 2013, on the introduction in the Chancellery of the Sejm of instructions on the organization and method of carrying out tasks in the Sejm Archive)." (Bednarczyk, 2018, p. 54).

The digitization process aims to both protect the analog originals and facilitate access to them. This also applies to materials that are not intended for open access on the internet. These include, for example, inventory records in the form of handover and receipt lists of materials transferred to the Archives. These are both registered in the Aleph system and digitally preserved in the form of a scan attached to the descriptive record. Only Archives staff have access to them. Similarly, audio and audiovisual archival materials in the form of recordings of parliamentary sessions are subject to gradual digitization. Analog audio cassettes and tapes are systematically copied to digital media and secured on appropriate servers. Access to them is governed by the general rules established for archival materials. A user who has obtained the Director of the Archives'

permission to access archival recordings receives a digital copy of the requested recordings.

A special form of database is the aforementioned *Virtual Museum*. It is managed by the Museum Department. The portal presents a selection of the most valuable objects from the SL museum collections along with their descriptions. Access to it is possible directly from the SL website (Digital Collections tab) or at a separate internet address. The digital resources of the SL also include digital documentation of some exhibitions prepared by the Museum Department as part of its own or co-organized exhibitions, presented in the Parliament building. Visual documentation (sometimes also audiovisual) related to the exhibitions is available on the Library's website.

## REFERENCE DATABASES

Another group of computer databases in the Aleph system consists of reference databases: "Polish Deputies and Senators," "Thesauri of the Sejm Library," and "Subject Heading Language – General Names." The first of these serves as a reference file for the database of Polish parliamentarians and the database of recordings of Sejm sessions. This means that the data is incorporated during ongoing work on the aforementioned databases. The service was created and is being supplemented using materials collected since 1993 in the Sejm Library (Sejm Archive) for subsequent volumes of the biographical dictionary *Members of Parliament and Senators of the Republic of Poland 1919-1939* [Posłowie i Senatorowie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1919-1939], published by the Sejm Publishing House. It was created in response to the needs of users seeking information about parliamentarians from the Second Polish Republic. Such information is often sought by descendants or relatives of parliamentarians conducting genealogical research, as well as individuals applying for Polish citizenship. This most often concerns people from the East in pre-war Poland, descendants of former exiles or displaced persons. The database contains rich factual material structured in the form of biographies of parliamentarians of the Second Polish Republic (deputies and senators) and basic information in the case of deputies of the Third Polish Republic. Work is underway on biographies of members of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic (and the State National Council, the Legislative Sejm of 1947-1952 and the 10th Sejm 1989-1991).

The biographies are formulated in an encyclopedic style, concisely and in a keyword-based format. Additionally, they are enriched with images and biographies of selected Speakers of the Polish Sejm from various historical periods, including: the Sejms of the First Polish Republic (1493-1795), the Sejms in the Polish territories during the post-partition era (1795-

1918), the Sejms of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1945), the Legislative Sejm (1947-52), the Sejms of the Polish People's Republic (1952-1989), and the Sejms of the Republic of Poland (after 1991). Usage statistics show that this is one of the most popular databases among users of the Sejm Library's services. Work is underway to standardize the format of the records in its individual sections, which requires solving many IT-related problems, but ultimately aims to increase the accessibility of the database for users.

Databases related to information retrieval languages are of exceptional importance for effective cataloging and, consequently, for searching for information. Their function is linked to the specific nature of subject-based cataloging of library collections.

### SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SUBJECT CATALOGING IN THE SEJM LIBRARY'S COLLECTIONS

Subject cataloging of monographs in the Sejm Library is conducted in two information and retrieval languages: the National Library's subject heading language and the Sejm Library's Thesaurus System, which provides greater search capabilities for both librarians and external users, and also facilitates catalog maintenance after the introduction of new terms. In addition to the Sejm Library's Thesaurus System (STEBIS), created since 1993 under the direction of Dr. Ewa Chmielewska-Gorczyca (since 2012, her work has been continued by Maria Górska), monographs are also described using terms from the National Library's subject heading language, which has not been further developed by the National Library (BN) after 2017. The Sejm Library has retained this solution primarily to avoid losing the benefits associated with the differences between the two languages used in the Library. The process of creating the so-called National Library descriptors indicated that replacing the National Library's subject heading language (SHL) with National Library descriptors in the Sejm Library's catalog would, at best, be a duplication of the already used STEBIS descriptor language. More importantly, the new language had shortcomings and weaknesses related to its creation phase, stemming, among other things, from the automatic division of long National Library subject headings into short units. Meanwhile, STEBIS is already a mature system, currently being developed where updates are required. The continued use of a language that has lost its main development center requires more attention, but still allows for the advantages of subject cataloging in two different languages. It is worth remembering the enormous number of monographs previously compiled in both languages – when converting the SHL BN classification system to BN descriptors, in addition to the obvious drawbacks mentioned above, many technical problems would certainly have been unavoidable.

Ultimately, the decision was made to continue using the SHL BN system, which is still being developed as needed for the Sejm Library collection by individuals with appropriate education and experience.

There are no perfect information retrieval languages. It is important to be aware of the strengths and obvious advantages, but also the shortcomings of individual languages. Therefore, it is obvious that when using two information retrieval languages for subject description in one library, it is advisable to choose languages that are as different as possible, having as few common features as possible. Of course, it is not possible to avoid almost identical search characteristics in some descriptions, but there is a chance that for the majority of the collection, complementarity will be achieved, where one of the languages proves more useful for accurate description and provides a detailed characterization (Górska, Horodyska, Pawłowska, 2015). The subject heading language of the National Library of Poland is used exclusively in the main catalog. STEBIS, on the other hand, is used in the main catalog and (to varying degrees) in the following databases: - Articles from selected Polish journals,

- Recordings of television programs,
- Laws implementing EU law – UST database,
- Polish parliamentary documents 1919-1991,
- Texts of constitutions and other documents.

It is also sometimes used as an auxiliary tool in internal databases, e.g., in the Museum Department.

Both languages used in the Sejm Library's cataloging system can be accessed in the databases on the library's website (in the section on standard databases). STEBIS is available there in its entirety as the *Thesauri of the Sejm Library* [Tezaurusy Biblioteki Sejmowej], and the subject and formal headings of the JHP BN system used in the Sejm Library are listed there under the heading *Subject Headings – General Terms* [Język hasel przedmiotowych – nazwy ogólne].

The concept of the Polish Sejm Library's Thesaurus System is very user-friendly. A consistent system of search terms linked by hierarchical and associative relationships facilitates access to the most relevant entries. The rules applied to the creation of this system (e.g., limiting the number of micro-thesauri within each thesaurus to ten, or limiting the number of levels to four, which for obvious reasons does not apply to geographical terms) increase clarity. Polyhierarchies (the possibility of assigning one descriptor to two or three broader terms) and the use of AND and OR cross-references intuitively support search precision.

Work on STEBIS began at SL in 1993 with the translation of the European Parliament's multilingual thesaurus, EUROVOC, into Polish. To this day, EUROVOC remains part of the SL's descriptor language dictionary (at the end of 2023, terms from EUROVOC constituted approximately 58%

of the total number of STEBIS descriptors). Updates to the European Parliament's thesaurus are incorporated into the STEBIS update process, although not always 100%, as exemplified by the terms "remote work" (still listed as "teleworking" in EUROVOC) and "remote learning" (still listed as "distance learning" in EUROVOC). After more than 30 years, the database is being developed at a steady pace, serving librarians and readers (100-200 new entries annually, constantly increasing cross-references, new scope notes, and associative relationships). New entries are primarily dictated by the need to address increasingly popular topics and also serve to alleviate the burden on the most popular entries (e.g., by dividing a topic into time periods). The needs of other STEBIS users who utilize the SL's thesauri in their databases are also taken into account

#### THE UST DATABASE AS AN EXAMPLE OF CHANGES KEEPING PACE WITH THE TIMES

Reference databases are an extremely important element in the work of the Sejm Library. They develop in a predictable way to best serve as a source of information. At the other end of the scale are databases that develop much more dynamically, responding to important current needs and undergoing significant changes along with them. An example of this second option is the history of the UST database, which presents the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation during the 4th-8th terms of the Sejm (2001-2019). The UST database initially illustrated the adaptation of Polish law to EU law at the legislative level (in the work of the Sejm), and after Poland's accession to the EU in the implementation of EU law in the work of the Sejm. This database was initially created as a diploma thesis by one of the Sejm Library employees (the system administrator of Aleph also helped in the implementation of the idea). When the need for an official version arose, the initial database was improved and expanded. Shortly before Poland's accession to the EU, the European Information and Documentation Center took over the management of the UST database and continued to manage it until the Center was dissolved in 2018. The database did not document the government stage of legislation, but its content reflected the fate of projects implementing EU law in the work of the Sejm. It complemented well the e-step database (created thanks to Norwegian Funds, currently managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs),<sup>2</sup> illustrating implementations at the government level. The UST database had significant added value. Related EU legal acts were added based on information from the explanatory memoranda to the laws, and the factual

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<sup>2</sup> *Electronic System for the Transposition of European Law* [online]. [Accessed: September 23, 2024]. Available at: <https://estep.kprm.gov.pl/mz-citizen-web/home.seam>.

description using thesaurus terms from the SL thesauri improved search capabilities. When interest in issues concerning Poland in the European Union was very high and relatively widespread, the UST database supported searches related to legislation at the parliamentary stage. Over time, interest in these issues decreased. The quality of data concerning national implementation measures in the EU's EUR-Lex database improved, and the main focus of those interested in the implementation of EU law in the work of the Sejm shifted to examining subsidiarity. Currently, the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation can be tracked in the EUR-Lex database and directly on the website of the Polish Sejm (draft laws implementing EU law are marked "EU" in the overview of draft laws that have been submitted). In addition, at the end of each parliamentary term, a list of draft laws implementing EU law covering the completed term is created, also available on the Sejm websites. The examination of subsidiarity, in turn, is supported by the IPEX database, the parliamentary part of which is supplemented by employees of other offices of the Chancellery of the Sejm.

## INTERNAL SHARING AND COLLABORATION

Bringing together employees from three specialized units (archivists, librarians, and museum professionals) in one office offers many advantages, but also imposes limitations – primarily technical ones, related to using a single system for cataloging and processing diverse collections. Aleph is a comprehensive system, and additional modules can be purchased (in the case of the Sejm Library, Primo, which facilitates searching in databases), but it is not necessarily user-friendly, especially for archivists and museum professionals. The main disadvantage of Aleph from a professional perspective is its obvious specialization, favoring the library catalog as well as other databases to varying degrees.

The main advantage of bringing these three units together in one office is the possibility of easy, direct collaboration. This is facilitated by working in the same building and by tasks that often complement and overlap. An excellent example of this is the "Polish Deputies and Senators" database. As a rule, the Archive Department is responsible for the older part (parliamentarians of the Second Polish Republic, Speakers of the Sejm of the First and Second Polish Republics), while the Subject Cataloging Department of the Library is responsible for the part from the State National Council to 1991 and for updating the biographies of contemporary Speakers of the Sejm. Contemporary data (i.e., subsequent terms of the Sejm of the Third Polish Republic) are supplemented by employees of the Automated Systems Team of the Library. This third part

is to be developed during the reorganization of the database, along with the standardization of the record format across all eras up to the present day.

For several years, a group of about fifteen employees from various departments of the Sejm Library has been working on updating the dates of birth and death of members of parliament from various terms, from 1989 to the present day, which is useful for numerous internal parliamentary inquiries.

Good knowledge of the tasks and specializations of individual employees helps in efficiently redirecting questions and better preparing answers to inquiries. Thanks to this cooperation, larger projects can be implemented more efficiently, such as the digitization of the files of members of the State National Council, the Legislative Sejm of 1947-1952, and the first term of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), stored in the Central Archives of Modern Records. The inquiry was prepared jointly by the Archive and Subject Cataloging Departments, and then the digital copies were made by employees of the Automated Systems Team of the Parliamentary Library. Based on the collected materials, many additions were made to the records in the database of Deputies and Senators, and these were subsequently used repeatedly when conducting further inquiries.

## SUMMARY

Based on the information presented, it can be argued that the Sejm Library is an example of a well-functioning institutional hybrid. Although the word itself may have negative connotations, in this case it accurately describes the multifaceted nature of the Sejm Library's activities, which combines a library, archive, and museum into one organism. This structure significantly expands the range of services offered and more comprehensively meets the information needs of users. It is also important to note that the Sejm Library's profile primarily attracts users associated with parliamentarianism, politics, law, and history, who seek reliable, properly documented, and well-organized sources. Due to the Sejm Library's location within the Parliament building, access to the collections is sometimes restricted, which is compensated to some extent by digital resources presented online or transmitted electronically to specific users.

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## CONTROLLED DIGITAL LENDING: LEGAL CONDITIONS, SOCIAL CONTEXTS, PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARIES



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**KEYWORDS:** Controlled Digital Lending. Libraries. USA. EU. Poland.

**ABSTRACT:** **Thesis/Purpose of the article** – The article examines the concept of Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) which applies the principles of traditional physical book lending to the online lending of digitized works. It also discusses the practices of Polish libraries engaging with this model. **Method** – The study is based on a critical review of international literature on CDL and an examination of digital lending practices in Poland. Digital lending is discussed in the broader context of mass digitization and the challenges of providing access to the heritage of twentieth-century publishing. **Conclusions** – The article outlines the legal frameworks relevant to digital lending in the United States where the concept of CDL originated as well as in the European Union. Regarding the latter, particular attention is given to the 2016 CJEU ruling in the VOB case and its interpretation. The study demonstrates that in both the US and the EU—including Poland—the absence of clear legal regulations concerning digital lending poses a barrier for libraries striving to ensure digital access to the publishing output of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## INTRODUCTION

In the process of digitization that has been ongoing for over three decades, works in the public domain are already or can be made available online. In the case of European collections, these are mainly 19th-century collections, while in the USA the public domain includes works published before 1923. However, the vast majority of 20th-century publishing output is not digitally available, and in the case of works not available commercially, traditional forms of access through libraries are also limited. Libraries also encounter many difficulties in providing access to current publishing output in the form of e-books. To date, the dominant form of providing access to 21st-century books in digital form in libraries is the licensing model, which, where it already functions, is criticized for its limited offer and high prices. In some countries, including Poland, there is still a lack of both adequate infrastructure and offerings for this form of access, which means that libraries cannot provide their readers with remote access to books, while they are already digitally available through commercial channels. The main difficulty associated with the problem described above is the lack or ambiguity of copyright regulations regarding digital access by libraries in a model other than licensing. This problem has been highlighted by libraries for many years, who, with the progress of digitization and the development of the e-book market, are seeking ways to adapt their offerings to the new technical possibilities of providing access to knowledge and cultural resources on the one hand, while meeting the expectations of their users on the other. The concept of controlled digital lending is one of the results of these searches. However, it faces many challenges, both legal, technical, and organizational.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTROLLED DIGITAL LENDING CONCEPT IN THE USA

The concept of Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) was introduced by Michelle Wu in 2011 in an article dedicated to a collaborative project of law libraries in creating a shared digital collection (Wu, 2011). Wu's premise was that it is possible to create a digital library that, on the one hand, respects the rights of copyright holders and, on the other, meets the growing need for online access to collections of printed materials. According to Wu, the assumptions adopted in the USA regarding limitations on copyright allow for the distribution of the exact number of copies of purchased items, regardless of the format, as long as the number of copies in circulation does not exceed the number of purchased copies. Justifying this statement, Wu referred to the First Sale Doctrine, according to which, under Section 109 of the U.S. Copyright Act, the owner of a legally acquired copy of a work

has the right to sell or otherwise dispose of it (Wu, 2011). Further premises of CDL, according to Wu, are the principle of fair use and exceptions to copyright for libraries and archives (Section 108 of the U.S. Copyright Act), which allow libraries to reproduce and distribute works in specific situations, e.g., for archiving or replacing damaged copies (Wu, 2011). At the time Wu presented her concept, controlled digital lending was already being tested in practice. Since 2010, a pilot program of such lending has been conducted by the Open Library (OL) operating under the Internet Archive (IA).

The concept of Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) gained wider dispersion in the USA at the turn of the second and third decades of the 21st century. Two factors significantly contributed to this. On the one hand, there was the introduction in 2017 by the Internet Archive of the Open Libraries program, inviting libraries to cooperate in developing controlled digital lending, and on the other hand, the publication in 2018 of two documents concerning CDL (Pang, 2022, 157). The first of these documents was the *Position Statement on Controlled Digital Lending*, prepared by Wu and five other specialists.<sup>1</sup> This document aimed to help librarians understand the general concept of Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) and support the creation of a space for the collaborative development of digital lending practices. The document concisely described how to correctly apply the principles of CDL. These principles, summarized in six points, are as follows: libraries should: (1) ensure that original works are acquired legally; (2) apply CDL only to works owned by the library; (3) limit the total number of copies in circulation to the number of copies the library legally owns, maintaining a one-to-one ratio of owned copies to borrowed copies; (4) lend each digital version to only one user at a time, just as a physical copy would be lent; (5) limit the loan period to a period analogous to physical loans; (6) use secure digital rights management (DRM) tools to prevent copying and redistribution (Position Statement, 2018). The statement was signed by a number of leading libraries and copyright experts. A second document, *A White Paper on Controlled Digital Lending of Library Books*, is related to and expands upon the position statement described above (Hansen & Courtney, 2018).<sup>2</sup> It presents in detail the legal framework and arguments supporting the possibility of libraries using Controlled Digital Lending (CDL). This text sparked a lively discussion in US library circles and became a key point of reference for subsequent work

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<sup>1</sup> These were: Lila Bailey, policy advisor at the Internet Archive; Kyle K. Courtney, copyright counsel at Harvard University Library; David Hansen, librarian and copyright advisor at Duke University; Mary Minow, affiliated with the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society and Harvard University; and Jason Schultz, professor at NYU School of Law.

<sup>2</sup> Its authors were also co-authors of the *Position Statement On Controlled Digital Lending By Libraries*, see footnote above.

on controlled digital lending (Pang, 2022, 157). It was cited, among others, in the *IFLA Statement on Controlled Digital Lending* from 2021. Discussions concerning CDL intensified during the pandemic, and these discussions were accompanied by the emergence of various projects for implementing CDL.

## MASS DIGITALIZATION AS THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CDL

When Wu (2011) presented her concept of CDL, an intense discussion was underway in the USA and beyond regarding digitalization and its compatibility with copyright law, triggered by the ongoing lawsuit between publishers and Google concerning the Google Books project (Marcum & Schonfeld, 2021). The Google Books project, officially announced at the end of 2004, was based on cooperation with the largest academic libraries in the USA, to which Google offered the digitalization of their collections. The libraries of the universities of Michigan, Stanford, Harvard, Oxford, and the New York Public Library were among the first to join the collaboration with Google.

The libraries of the universities of Michigan and Stanford decided to submit for digitalization both collections in the public domain and books still protected by copyright. When Google made the Books Search service available online, publishers and authors who owned the rights to the digitized books accused the company of infringement. They argued that creating digital copies and making excerpts of the text available without their consent constituted a violation of copyright law. Google defended itself by claiming that it had introduced an opt-out option, allowing copyright holders to exclude their books from the project upon request, and that copying for search purposes was permitted under fair use (Manuel, 2010). In 2005, authors and publishers filed a lawsuit. The lawsuit was a class action, meaning it was filed on behalf of a broad group of authors and publishers. Such a process involves negotiating a settlement between the parties. The draft settlement agreement, negotiated between Google's lawyers and representatives of publishers and authors, was presented at the end of 2008. The settlement applied exclusively to books published before January 5, 2009, and protected by copyright in the USA. Under the agreement, Google was to obtain a non-exclusive license to use the books covered by the settlement in the following areas of exploitation: creating and storing digital copies of books; selling subscriptions to institutions for access to an electronic database of books; providing online access to books for a fee; displaying excerpts of books; displaying bibliographic information from books. Full use, in the form of display or distribution, could only apply to books unavailable commercially to customers in the

USA. If a book was available, Google would have to obtain the explicit consent of the rights holder for the uses described above. The company guaranteed rights holders 63% of the profits from the use of the books, including from advertising. The rights holders themselves were to decide whether and to what extent Google could use their works.

The proposed settlement sparked a wave of criticism and protests from publishers, authors, and lawyers alike. In 2011, when the settlement was rejected by the court, Google continued digitizing public domain books while simultaneously introducing the Google Partners program, which involved agreements with individual publishers and authors. The rejection of the agreement meant that the issue of digital access to copyrighted books remained unresolved in the USA. On the other hand, the draft settlement demonstrated the enormous potential for making valuable resources available online. The discussion surrounding the settlement also revealed important issues related to the digitization and dissemination of library collections. It highlighted, among other things, the problem of access to out-of-print and orphan works. Supporters of the settlement emphasized the benefits of introducing the possibility of digital access to the resources of the largest academic libraries. They pointed to the democratization of access and the fact that the most important scientific collections would be available to all libraries, even those on small campuses, as well as to individual users. Other arguments included new search capabilities; a new life for out-of-print books and those forgotten on dusty library shelves; and financial benefits for partners (Marcum & Schonfeld, 2021, 143-156). Opponents of the settlement primarily pointed to the dangers of a Google monopoly, arguing that a commercial entity would gain broad rights to digitize and utilize publishing output.

In response to the Google Books project, alternative projects emerged both in the USA and worldwide, including the Open Content Alliance (OCA), the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), and EUROPEANA. Discussions surrounding Google's settlement with publishers, as well as the issue of fair use in relation to copying for full-text searching purposes, consolidated the library community in the USA, which became involved in various initiatives to enable libraries to provide online access to their collections. An important outcome of the Google lawsuit with publishers was the 2012 ruling, which rejected the Authors Guild's complaint and recognized the creation of digital copies for full-text searching purposes as fair use, a decision confirmed by the US Supreme Court in 2016.

## THE INTERNET ARCHIVE AND CDL IN PRACTICE

The Internet Archive (IA) was founded in 1996 by Brewster Kahle as a non-profit organization with the primary goal of archiving online digital resources. Although preserving humanity's digital heritage and providing access to historical versions of websites through the Wayback Machine remains one of IA's most important services, the organization has implemented many other projects related to its overarching mission defined as providing universal and open access to knowledge (Kahle & Parejo Vadillo, 2015). Many of IA's projects are related to the digitization of 20th-century cultural heritage, books, music, and television broadcasts. Among the most important projects, besides the Wayback Machine, is the Open Library, established in 2006. One of the main goals of this project was to create a catalog of all published books by creating a website for each book. This cataloging and information function was then combined with the function of providing full texts for books in the public domain, and for those protected by copyright, the practice of controlled digital lending was introduced over time. According to information on the IA website as of March 2025, OL contains over 20 million pages with information about books and 2 million books whose full texts are available in the IA browser or for download (Internet Archive, n.d.-a).

Even before the announcement of Open Library, in 2005 the Internet Archive initiated the Open Content Alliance, a digitization project alternative to Google Books. Several large companies and dozens of libraries joined the OCA.<sup>3</sup> This project, like Google Books, aimed to digitize and make books available, but was intended to be more open and transparent. Book scanning in the Open Content Alliance (OCA) was managed by the Internet Archive (IA), which also provided permanent storage and access to digital copies through the Open Library (OL) website. Although the OCA was disbanded after a few years, around 2010, the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) initiative, independent of IA, grew out of it (Jones, 2014, 274). From the beginning, DPLA has shown greater caution in its approach to copyright than IA and assumes the online availability of books in the public domain or on the basis of obtaining permissions. On the other hand, DPLA is actively involved in lobbying for the introduction of solutions that would allow for the digital availability of copyrighted books as well, especially those that are commercially unavailable. Robert Darnton, director of the Harvard University Library and one of the main

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<sup>3</sup> Initially, the project collaborated with Yahoo!, Adobe Systems, European Archive, HP Labs, UK National Archives, O'Reilly Media, Prelinger Archives, the University of California, and the University of Toronto, and over the next two years the Open Content Alliance gained dozens of partners, including large companies such as Microsoft, and libraries such as the Smithsonian Institution Libraries and numerous university libraries (Jones, 2014, 268).

founders of DPLA, wrote in an article published in 2011 that “DPLA must respect copyright,” but also signaled the need for legal solutions for the digital availability of commercially unavailable books and orphan works (Darnton, 2011). OL, on the other hand, starting in 2010, developed a project in cooperation with libraries to make 20th-century books not yet in the public domain available while maintaining the same principles that apply to lending printed books. Brewster Kahle described this process as follows: “Our digital ebook lending program mirrors traditional library practices: only one reader at a time can borrow a book, and others must wait for its manual return. Alternatively, after two weeks the book is automatically returned and made available to other waiting users. The technical protection mechanisms that ensure access to only one reader at a time use the same technologies that publishers use to protect ebooks available for sale. In this way, the Open Library website respects copyright issues” (Kahle, 2016). In 2016, the IA held 500,000 post-1923 digital volumes, as Kahle described them (Kahle, 2016).<sup>4</sup>

In 2017, the Internet Archive (IA) launched the Open Libraries initiative, aimed at expanding cooperation with libraries and developing both digitization and controlled digital lending. As stated on the IA website, by joining Open Libraries, libraries can identify overlaps between their physical collections and IA’s digital resources and provide readers with free access to these digital books in cases of overlapping titles. Additionally, libraries can add titles from their collections to Open Libraries to increase the number of available loans. IA reports that some public, academic, and specialized libraries have already joined the project (Open Libraries, n.d.). Project leader Chris Freeland emphasized in 2020 that while most public domain works in the USA are already digitized and available online, 20th-century publications still remain in print and are not digitally available. Open Libraries aimed to digitize these 20th-century collections that are not available in digital form but are on library shelves, and to make them available in cooperation with libraries through controlled digital lending. According to Freeland’s statement from 2020, the Open Libraries project demonstrated that libraries can successfully implement controlled digital lending in practice (Vieira, 2020).

## CDL DURING THE PANDEMIC

When libraries were closed and unable to lend their collections due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interest in controlled digital lending (CDL) increased. As Xuan Pang writes, CDL became a hot topic among librarians

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<sup>4</sup> In the USA, due to a different copyright system, books published before 1923 are in the public domain.

in 2020, as they understood that this new initiative was the only way to continue providing access to books when libraries remained physically inaccessible (Pang, 2020). Webinars on CDL were organized by, among others, the Internet Archive (IA), which, as shown above, already had experience in this area. According to Pang, a webinar on CDL and the future of libraries, *The Right to Reserves: CDL and the Future of Libraries*, organized by the copyright librarian at Harvard University, proved exceptionally helpful for academic librarians. It presented the legal framework of CDL and argued that libraries could digitize their printed textbooks and make digital copies available to students (Pang, 2022, 158).

For libraries that decided to implement Controlled Digital Lending (CDL), a major challenge proved to be the lack of technological infrastructure, i.e., suitable platforms that would allow them to provide access to digital copies of books while maintaining the necessary conditions for controlled lending. Faced with the urgent need to solve this problem, libraries sought temporary solutions. One such solution, which also became a model for others, was developed by the library of the Shanghai branch of New York University. This model utilized Google Drive and Google Apps scripts (Xu, Lin & Wu, 2021; Pang, 2022, 159). Digitized materials were made available via Google Drive or Team Drive. Before sharing the file, download, printing, and copying options were disabled in the settings for viewers, ensuring that the user could not permanently save or distribute the digital copy. Google Sheets was used to manage the lending process. Google Apps Script was used to design functions for automatically revoking access, setting a time limit for access, and removing access after a specified period. The script automatically removed the user's access rights to the shared file. After access expired, the script sent an email notification to the library staff. The main advantage of this model was the possibility of quick implementation and low costs, as it utilized existing infrastructure. However, this temporary solution had serious drawbacks. From the user's perspective, these were primarily related to the inconvenience of reading via a PDF viewer, and from the staff's perspective, the labor-intensive manual handling of setting restrictions (Xu, Lin & Wu, 2021).

#### THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY LIBRARY AND THE HACHETTE V. INTERNET ARCHIVE LAWSUIT

In 2020, during the lockdown, the Internet Archive (IA) decided to deviate from the strict rules of controlled digital lending and established a temporary emergency library, the National Emergency Library (NEL), which lifted the one-copy-one-user restriction previously applied in Open Library, allowing an unlimited number of users to borrow the same

book simultaneously. IA argued that in the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, lending books in this way constituted fair use. NEL was intended as a temporary solution, and at the time of its announcement on March 24, it was stated that the project would last until June 30. The main goal of NEL was to support distance learning at a time when libraries and educational institutions were inaccessible (Rimmer, 2022). Supporters of NEL emphasized the public benefits of the program, arguing that copyright holders would gain nothing if the public were deprived of access to IA resources, especially since the organization's digitization policy included 20th-century books unavailable commercially, and these were precisely the books that were lacking in commercial offerings for libraries (Mercanti, 2023). However, alongside positive and even enthusiastic opinions, the NEL project also met with criticism, especially from publishers' and authors' associations, such as the Association of American Publishers and the Authors Guild (Vieira, 2020).

In early June 2020, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, John Wiley & Sons, and Penguin Random House sued the Internet Archive (IA) for copyright infringement. The lawsuit concerned both the National Emergency Library (NEL) and the Open Library (OL). Following the filing of the lawsuit, on June 10, 2020, IA announced the early closure of the NEL, which occurred on June 16, 2020. The OL then reverted to a one-copy, one-user lending model and waiting lists for loans, but the publishers did not withdraw the lawsuit. In 2022, both sides filed motions for summary judgment, i.e., a ruling without a full trial. In the US, a judge may agree to such a procedure if there is no significant dispute as to the essential facts. The case concerned 127 books to which the aforementioned four publishers held the rights, and copies of which IA had acquired through purchase or donation. All these books were also available as e-books through licensing agreements for libraries. After digitizing the acquired titles, IA stored the physical copies in a warehouse and allowed users to borrow digital copies through the OL. Anyone could register as an OL user and borrow up to 10 titles simultaneously. After borrowing a book, it could be read online, downloaded, or listened to using an automated text-to-speech reader. After borrowing a book, a link to the book on Better World Books (a commercial used bookstore run by Brewster Kahle) appeared on the title page. If a user clicked on the link and bought the title, IA received some form of referral fee (Wu, 2024).

The publishers sued, alleging copyright infringement by IA. They argued that IA was committing mass copyright infringement for commercial purposes by digitizing and distributing full versions of copyrighted books without licenses. They emphasized that IA's actions did not constitute fair use, violated their rights, and undermined the book market (Rimmer, 2022). IA requested a ruling that its activities under

CDL and NEL were non-commercial and transformative in nature and constituted fair use (Rimmer, 2022).<sup>5</sup> In March 2023, Judge John Koeltl of the New York District Court sided with the publishers and ruled that the Internet Archive's activities did not fall under fair use. The court found that IA's activities were commercial, non-transformative, and caused market harm (Wu, 2024). The judge determined the commercial nature of the activity based on the collection of donations on the IA website and commissions from book sales through Better World Books. Regarding the transformative nature, the court found that IA provided digital copies of books in a manner identical to commercial entities, which did not add new value, purpose, or character to the distribution. The court also found that IA's activities caused market harm because the free access to digital copies of books offered by IA competes with the market for digital licenses offered by publishers to libraries and consumers. In its September 2024 ruling, the Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's judgment finding copyright infringement by IA, but disagreed with the lower court on the commercial nature of IA's activities. Based on arguments about the non-transformative nature of the use of the works and the potential market harm, it confirmed that IA's actions did not constitute fair use and infringed the publishers' copyrights. As a result of the *Hachette v. Internet Archive* ruling, IA removed over half a million copyrighted books from its Open Library lending service (Internet Archive, n.d.-b).

## THE LEGAL SITUATION OF DIGITAL LENDING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The legal framework for digital lending under European Union (EU) legislation is very complex and in some aspects unclear, or even internally contradictory. These conditions were extensively presented by Matteo Frigeri, Martin Kretschmer, and Péter Mezei in their 2024 article "Copyright and eLending in public libraries: an incomplete revolution" (Frigeri, Kretschmer & Mezei, 2024). These authors demonstrate that current EU copyright law creates significant barriers to the implementation of controlled digital lending in EU member states. According to their findings, none of the member states has yet introduced legal solutions concerning this issue in their national legislation. As the authors cited above explain, the legal situation of digital lending is influenced by several EU directives and rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). Among the most important legal acts harmonizing copyright law

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<sup>5</sup> Non-commercial and transformative use are among the most important criteria in determining whether the use of a work falls within the scope of fair use. More on fair use and transformative use can be found in Świąćkowska, 2019.

in the EU is *Directive 2001/29/EC on the harmonization of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society* (InfoSoc), also known as the Internet Directive, as its aim was to adapt copyright law to the challenges associated with digital technologies. This directive harmonizes, among other things, the right to publicly share works. According to its principles and provisions, making e-books available online, including through downloading, is considered an act of public sharing protected by copyright.

From the perspective of library operations, another important regulation is *Directive 2006/115/EC on rental and lending rights and certain related rights to copyright in the field of intellectual property*. This directive harmonizes the right to public lending in the EU. It defines lending as “a temporary transfer for use not serving directly or indirectly economic or commercial purposes, when this is done by institutions accessible to the public.” The Rental and Lending Rights Directive grants authors the exclusive right to authorize the lending of their works, but also introduces the possibility for Member States to derogate from this exclusive right, provided that authors receive remuneration for such lending. This principle is also known as the Public Lending Right exception. Frigeri, Kretschmer, and Mezei believe that the Rental and Lending Rights Directive, at the time of its introduction, did not contain explicit provisions regarding digital lending, and its definition of lending was interpreted as referring to physical copies. Only the 2016 CJEU ruling in the case *C-174/15 Vereniging Openbare Bibliotheken - VOB* (Association of Public Libraries in the Netherlands) opened up the possibility of applying this directive to e-lending. This ruling specifically addressed the question of whether the definition of “lending” contained in the Rental and Lending Rights Directive also includes digital lending. The CJEU ruled that the concept of lending included in this directive also covers the lending of a digital copy of a book, under certain conditions (Szczepańska, 2016; Gliściński, 2024). The conditions for digital lending specified by the CJEU correspond to the concept of controlled digital lending described above and are as follows: Only one digital copy may be downloaded by the user during the lending period. The downloaded digital copy becomes inaccessible and cannot be further used by the user after the agreed lending period has expired. The digital copy of the book must be obtained by the library from a legal source. According to Frigeri, Kretschmer, and Mezei, this last condition may pose a serious problem for libraries, among other things, due to the lack of an effective secondary market for e-books. According to them, the condition of a legal source in the current legal system automatically translates into the need to license access to digital copies from publishers. In this context, they refer to the CJEU ruling in the *Tom Kabinet* case (*C-263/18*) from 2019, which excluded the possibility of exhaustion of the right to further resale with regard to

e-books, as is the case with physical books. In the case of physical copies of books, after the first sale within the EU, the right to dispose of them expires. However, in the case of e-books, making them available electronically is treated as a service. The CJEU ruling in the *Tom Kabinet* case indicates that in the case of e-book distribution, we are not dealing with their sale, but only with public access, consisting of downloading for permanent use. According to Frigeri, Kretschmer, and Mezei, the ruling in the *Tom Kabinet* case significantly impacts the possibility of owning an e-book, practically excluding the concept of permanent “ownership” of a digital copy in the same way that we understand ownership of a physical book after purchase. This means that the buyer of an e-book does not become its owner in the same sense as the owner of a printed book, who can freely resell it. The buyer of an e-book purchases the right to use the e-book under specific conditions (permanently or for a specified period), but does not become its full owner with the ability to freely dispose of the copy, which consequently reduces the e-book market to a service market. This legal situation is crucial for the functioning of e-lending in libraries, which depends on the publishing offer.

The question also arises whether libraries can lend digital copies of their printed collections, maintaining the principle that instead of a printed book, a digital copy is provided under the conditions specified by the CJEU ruling in the *VOB* case. According to Frigeri, Kretschmer, and Mezei, the legality of digital copies of printed books created by scanning library collections is complex and ambiguous, and the possibility of using them for e-lending is limited. These authors, citing recital 40 of the *InfoSoc* Directive, point out that the exception for libraries regarding reproduction was not introduced with digitization in mind, carried out for the purpose of providing digital access. They therefore conclude that, under the current European legal framework, the legality of creating digital copies from printed books held by libraries for e-lending is questionable, and achieving an effective e-lending system requires further legal decisions at the EU level, for example, by expanding the exceptions for libraries.

A different opinion on this matter is held by a team of Polish researchers from the Future Law Lab, who have recently developed the concept of Secure Digital Lending within the context of EU legal frameworks (Gliściński, 2025). It refers to the lending of digital copies of printed books and is similar to the American CDL in that it assumes a one-copy, one-user model, corresponding to the conditions for lending printed books.<sup>6</sup> This concept is based on the aforementioned CJEU ruling in the *VOB* case and

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<sup>6</sup> An accessible description of the Secure Digital Lending model and its legal conditions can be found on the website of the Digital Center at <https://centrumcyfrowe.pl/projekty/raport-e-books-and-secure-digital-lending-in-european-libraries-comperative-analysis-under-national-and-international-law/> [accessed: August 8, 2025]

the exceptions for libraries provided for in EU legislation. It also assumes a dynamic approach to copyright law, which allows for a departure from the literal wording of the provisions and interpreting them in a way that makes it possible to achieve the objectives foreseen by the exceptions and limitations. Researchers from the Future Law Lab team argue that although there is no direct legal basis in EU law allowing for the digitization of books solely for the purpose of e-lending, libraries can invoke an ancillary right to digitize paper books for the purpose of e-lending.<sup>7</sup> They argue that in some European countries, including Poland, there is already a legal basis for lending digital versions of printed books, i.e., the possibility of applying the concept of Secure Digital Lending they have proposed. According to them, this basis, in addition to the CJEU rulings in the VOB case and the *Technische Universität Darmstadt v. Eugen Ulmer KG* case, is provided by the fulfillment of three conditions. They believe that national laws are needed that grant libraries the right to digitize books, and additionally, that national law provides for an exception/permitted use for lending books and the right to remuneration for such lending (Gliściński, 2025, 13).

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITAL LENDING IN POLAND

As a member state, Poland had to implement the provisions of EU directives into national legislation. The legal framework for digital lending, as defined in the European directives described above, has been implemented in the Polish *Act on Copyright and Related Rights of 1994* (Act on Copyright). The Polish law grants creators a very broad monopoly on the use of their works. As a rule, authors and copyright holders have the exclusive right to use their works in all fields of exploitation, i.e., in all currently known ways of using works (Article 17 of Act on Copyright). On the other hand, the law defines a closed list of exceptions that define situations in which authorized entities may use works without the consent of the copyright holders (Articles 23-35 of Act on Copyright). The most important exceptions include the so-called permitted personal use, which defines the legal framework for private use of works, and permitted public use, which includes, among others, exceptions for libraries. In Polish law, exceptions for libraries are primarily defined in Article 28 of the Act on Copyright. It states that libraries may “lend, within the scope of their statutory tasks, copies of disseminated works.” Libraries and other authorized institutions listed in Article 28 of the Act on Copyright may lend

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<sup>7</sup> This case referred to the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the case of *Technische Universität Darmstadt v. Eugen Ulmer KG* (Gliściński, 2025, 13). However, it should be noted that although this ruling granted the academic library the right to digitize a paper book for the purpose of making it available electronically, it referred to making it available on terminals within the library premises.

copies of works, i.e., printed books and periodicals, as well as films and audiobooks on CDs. Libraries and other authorized institutions may also “reproduce works permanently held in their own collections, regardless of format or medium, in order to supplement, preserve or protect these collections.” The wording of this last exception was changed in the latest amendment to the law, which came into force in September 2024. The previous version did not include the condition that the works must be “permanently” in the library’s collections. The new form of this exception therefore excludes the possibility of libraries copying works that they do not permanently hold in their collections, i.e., works borrowed from other libraries through interlibrary loan. Article 28 of the Act on Copyright also allows for the provision of works in digital form, but this is only permitted on terminals located on the library premises. Additionally, Article 28 of the Act on Copyright includes a limitation on the use of copies of works, stating that reproduction cannot lead to an increase in the number of copies of works and an expansion of the collections, respectively lent and made available. Thus, a library possessing one copy of a given title can only lend or make available on a terminal on the library premises one copy of that work.

The European legal framework for library lending described above assumes the possibility of an exception for lending, provided that the creators of the borrowed works receive remuneration. This principle is reflected in Article 28, paragraph 4 of the Polish Act on Copyright, which states that remuneration is due for the lending of copies of works expressed in words, created or published in Polish in printed form by public libraries. In the context of controlled digital lending, it should be noted that the legislators only included works “in printed form.” On the one hand, it can be argued that they interpreted the provisions of the European directives in a similar spirit to how Frigeri, Kretschmer, and Mezei (2024) understand them, i.e., excluding digital copies or e-books from the lending exception. On the other hand, these provisions were introduced before 2016, i.e., before the CJEU ruling in the VOB case, which also allows for a different interpretation adopted by researchers from the Future Law Lab in their concept of Secure Digital Lending, based on a dynamic approach to legal regulations. It is also worth noting that the payment of remuneration for library loans in Poland applies only to public libraries and is based on a sample of loans in a selected group of libraries, so the question arises whether the sample will be representative of all digital loans.

In conclusion, it should be stated that in Poland, as in other EU countries, there are no unambiguous legal provisions that allow for the practice of digital lending in an unquestionable manner. There is also a lack of a clear position regarding the interpretation of the CJEU ruling in the VOB case. For example, Ryszard Markewicz, while considering this

ruling to be a correct solution, also acknowledges that its application, given the current provisions in Polish copyright law, raises doubts (Markewicz, 2018, 419). Unfortunately, these doubts were not dispelled in the latest amendment to the law in 2024. The new concept of Secure Digital Lending presented above is an important theoretical position from the point of view of libraries, but its application, due to interpretive discrepancies among lawyers, is not without legal risk and requires confirmation in unambiguous, unequivocal provisions in national law.

## DIGITAL LENDING IN POLAND

In Poland, there are two approaches to digital lending due to the interpretation of copyright law. The first strictly adheres to the provisions of the Polish *Copyright and Related Rights Act* and cautiously interprets the CJEU ruling in the VOB case. The second approach treats the ruling as authorizing the lending of digital copies. The first approach includes the online provision by libraries of books and materials that have already entered the public domain. Examples include primarily regional digital libraries and Polona (the National Library). Another example is *Academica*, a project of the National Library, which enables the provision of digital copies of protected works from the National Library's collections in libraries throughout Poland on terminals located on the premises of these libraries, applying the one copy, one user principle. The solution used in *Academica* is based on the exception described above, specified in Article 28 of the Copyright Act, allowing the provision of digital copies on-site in the library and on the principle of interlibrary lending. Other forms of digital access in this approach are commercial licenses, the offer of which in Poland is very limited and primarily concerns academic books, and is practically absent in the case of fiction broadly defined (Święćkowska, 2022). Launched in 2014, *Academica* is based on the enormous digital resources of the National Library, also including digital copies of protected works. According to the National Library's 2023 Report, *Academica* provided access to 1,781,607 copyright-protected publications (books or articles). In 2023, the *Academica* network had 3882 libraries and 4823 terminals registered. In the same year, 164,365 users utilized the *Academica* project's services, reading 224,059 publications (National Library, 2024). These statistics mean that, on average, each user read approximately 1.4 publications per year, and each library averaged approximately 58 publications read annually, resulting in an average monthly figure of about five publications per library. This can hardly be considered a high figure, given the number of collections available in *Academica*. The reason for this result is most likely the inconvenience for

the user, who only has access to the desired title on a terminal screen in their local library.<sup>8</sup>

Academica fulfills its function in cases where readers do not have access to specific titles in libraries in their own region and/or they are not available commercially. In such situations, instead of traveling to Warsaw to the National Library, or waiting for copies to be sent by mail through interlibrary loan (at the cost of shipping), users have access on-site at the library, provided that the item is not being used by another reader. In the latter case, a queue applies. On the other hand, it must be stated that the potential of the National Library's digital collections remains underutilized. It can be assumed that users would use it more often if they had online access from their homes. This applies in particular to collections that are not available commercially, and access to which is limited or even impossible by other means.<sup>9</sup>

Following the CJEU ruling in the VOB case, some public libraries in Poland offer e-book lending. These libraries acquire e-books available for sale and lend them using a one-copy-one-user model. E-book lending services are provided by the Mateusz Library System (SBM). E-book lending in this system is integrated with the catalog, which displays information on the availability of each book. If an e-book is borrowed, the user can reserve it. The catalog also shows the number of reservations. The e-book lending system works in such a way that books in e-pub or mobi formats are available for download, and users agree, by accepting the terms and conditions, to delete the files from their device after the lending period. The terms and conditions for e-book lending in libraries using SBM include the following provisions to ensure compliance with the conditions of the 2016 CJEU ruling in the VOB case: The user has the right to use borrowed e-books exclusively for their own use, in accordance with applicable law, in particular the Act of February 4, 1994, on copyright and related rights, excluding personal use. The following are prohibited: distributing and marketing borrowed e-books; modifying or duplicating the content of e-books; using e-books for commercial purposes, in particular distributing their content or uploading them to the internet. Transferring the downloaded file between devices is permitted, but this cannot be done by duplicating it. This means that after copying the file, it must be deleted from the device where it was previously stored. A library user can borrow up to three e-books at a time, and the loan period is 30 days, with no possibility of shortening it. The user is obligated to delete the borrowed

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<sup>8</sup> I have heard this interpretation many times from librarians, part-time students, and postgraduate students of library science, whom I have been teaching for years.

<sup>9</sup> The rules and exceptions for making books unavailable commercially accessible, which have been in place since 2015 and amended in 2024, require implementation in the form of establishing appropriate institutions, which has not yet been done.

file before the 30-day period expires. Additionally, the regulations state that the e-books available for loan are marked in a way that allows for the identification of the source of the files and the borrower.<sup>10</sup>

For several years the National Library Deposit Foundation (FDB) in Poland has been implementing the concept of controlled digital lending. This initiative, similar to Open Library, focuses on digitizing printed collections and lending controlled digital copies of them. According to information available in the National Court Register, the Library Deposit Foundation was established in 2021. The Foundation's statutes state that it operates for the benefit of the general public, and its goal is educational and cultural activity, consisting of the development, promotion, and dissemination of reading. The Foundation was established by Booklikes sp. z o.o., in which Legimi holds 100% of the shares.<sup>11</sup> Legimi is the largest provider of subscription-based digital services in Poland and has been developing technology for remotely accessing e-books for over a decade. It also offers its services to public libraries, selling monthly access codes that are then distributed among readers (Swięćkowska, 2022). According to a 2024 report, nearly 1000 libraries throughout Poland have so far used Legimi's services (Legimi, 2024).

FDB is the organizer of a library that provides free, publicly accessible lending of digital copies of its own collections, while adhering to the conditions specified in the CJEU ruling in the VOB case. In addition, FDB collaborates with other libraries, providing them with free digitization services, hosting of digital copies, and intermediation in digital lending. To provide lending services for its own collections and those from partner libraries, it uses the technical infrastructure of Legimi, which ensures secure and controlled digital lending. The goal of FDB is to digitize and digitally lend primarily books that are unavailable commercially. This definition of the goal is dictated, as FDB representatives state, by a concern for maintaining a balance between the interests of readers and publishers.<sup>12</sup> How does this work in practice? The selection of works that are digitized and made available through FDB is based on the criterion of the availability of a given title in commercial circulation. The second criterion is the interests and needs of users. The initial selection is made by FDB employees, who review the catalogs of partner libraries and compare lists of titles unavailable commercially with lists of user reservations for specific titles. They send information about user interests and needs to

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<sup>10</sup> Such provisions can be found in the Regulations of the Public Library in the Bemowo District of the City of Warsaw, the Public Library in the Białołęka District of the City of Warsaw, and the Public Library in the Żoliborz District of the City of Warsaw.

<sup>11</sup> *Individual and Consolidated Annual Report for the year 2024*, Legimi, March 21, 2025, <https://www.legimi.pl/relacje-inwestorskie/raporty-legimi/> [accessed April 2, 2025]

<sup>12</sup> Interview with representatives of FDB.

the libraries, which can then take this into account when deciding which books to digitize and make available for digital lending. How does the lending of digital copies through FDB work? FDB displays titles available for digital lending from partner libraries in its catalog, and thanks to the connection with their OPAC catalogs, it can see whether a physical copy is currently on loan. If the title is available, it lends a digital copy, recording this loan in the partner library's OPAC and also informing the library by email to block the lending of the physical copy. Ultimately, FDB is working on automating this process. The book is automatically unlocked after the loan period expires, i.e., after 30 days.

Users who want to borrow a book digitally must register with FDB and obtain a digital library card, which is permanently linked to the reader's account and serves as a token authorizing the reader to access the resources of the FDB library and partner libraries. The reader must also log in to the Legimi application, where they enter their library card number. As FDB representatives emphasize, the Legimi account is something like a key to the infrastructure that Legimi leases to the Foundation, and the latter is responsible for processing user data.<sup>13</sup>

FDB states on its website (April 2025) that it collaborates with 150 public libraries at all levels (Library Deposit, n.d.). The number of registered FDB readers as of March 31, 2025, is 30,762, and the number of titles available for borrowing is 15,166.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of digital lending concepts and practices presented above demonstrates the need for clear regulations regarding libraries' rights to digital lending. The concept of controlled digital lending developed in the USA has been challenged by the ruling in the *Hachette v. Internet Archive* case. Although this ruling refers to the CDL practices used by IA, it may still have a chilling effect on the activities of libraries in the USA and beyond. This ruling has been criticized, especially by lawyers who advocate the CDL concept. They point out errors in the court's reasoning and its misunderstanding of the essence of fair use in the context of libraries (Hansen, Taylor, & Lewis, 2024; Wu, 2024). Critics of the ruling also fear its negative consequences for the further development of CDL practices and, in general, its negative impact on access to knowledge, indicating that the court's decision favors the interests of copyright holders at the expense of the public interest (Hansen, Taylor, & Lewis, 2024; Wu, 2024).

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with representatives of FDB.

<sup>14</sup> Correspondence with an FDB representative.

The legal situation regarding digital lending in the EU remains unclear despite the CJEU ruling in the VOB case, which is reflected in the uncertainty among librarians themselves regarding this issue (De Angelis, 2025). As mentioned above, lawyers addressing this topic do not entirely agree on the conditions for the legality of digital lending, although they concur that solutions are needed to dispel existing doubts (Frigeri, Kretschmer & Mezei, 2024; Gliściński, 2025). A number of arguments for introducing clearly defined exceptions for libraries are provided by the researchers from the Future Law Lab cited above, who also recommended specific legal solutions relating to the concept of Secure Digital Lending (Gliściński, 2025, 88). Global and European library associations, such as IFLA and EBLIDA, have been advocating for years for the introduction of clear legal frameworks enabling libraries to lend digital content. The need to introduce exceptions regarding digital lending for libraries in the EU is convincingly justified by Séverine Dusollier in her still relevant article from 2014 (Dusollier, 2014). She emphasizes that an e-lending exception is essential for libraries to continue their public mission in the digital age. The mission of providing access to knowledge and culture to a wide audience is too important for its fulfillment in relation to digital distribution to rely solely on commercial transactions with publishers. Many other authors draw attention to this issue, arguing that the licensing offers from publishers to libraries are limited, and some books are not available at all through these offers. Limited availability or lack of certain items in publishers' offerings, such as bestsellers; high prices; limited or difficult options for libraries to select titles; and the inability to ensure continuous access to books due to constant changes in offerings and access models are among the most frequently mentioned problems in the literature (Świątkowska, 2022; Giblin & Weatherall, 2022).

In Poland, public libraries have limited opportunities to provide online access to digital books under a licensing model due to the restricted offerings from publishers. The most common form of providing access to e-books and audiobooks for a wide range of users is the purchase of packages of individual codes for monthly access to commercial subscription services such as Legimi or EmpikGo, which involves using the technical infrastructure of these companies (Świątkowska, 2022). Similarly, in the case of lending digital versions of print books based on the CJEU ruling in the VOB case, those libraries that have adopted these practices, as shown above, utilize the infrastructure of the Legimi company. Therefore, when considering the problem of digital lending in Poland, it is necessary to take into account, in addition to legal constraints, the real capabilities of Polish public libraries in meeting the technical requirements of controlled digital lending (see De Angelis, 2025). Creating a system that technically meets all the requirements of controlled or secure digital lending is technically

complex and expensive (Kalb, 2023). In other countries, such systems are provided to libraries by external vendors, e.g., Onleihe in Germany for e-book licensing services. They are also created under the patronage and with the support of large public institutions, such as national libraries or library consortia (Święćkowska, 2022; EBLIDA, 2023). In Poland, so far, there is a lack of this kind of institutional support for libraries in the area of digital lending. In this situation, some libraries resort to solutions that may not be optimal, but are those that are currently available to them.

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## NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN TORUŃ – RESEARCH ON THE REASONS FOR NOT USE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY STUDENTS OF NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ



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2025, vol. 20, issue 2, pp. 190-213 (co-author); *Biblioteki dla (nie)obecnych: badania, strategie i praktyki włączania* (Libraries for the (un)present: research, strategies and practices of inclusion), Warsaw 2025 (editor); "Trendy publikacyjne w badaniach nad nauką obywatelską – perspektywa nauk społecznych," (Publication trends

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in LAM-related publications," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 2023, vol. 55, iss. 4, pp. 935-947 (co-author); *Serwisy internetowe instytucji kultury w Polsce* (Websites of cultural institutions in Poland), Toruń 2020 (co-author); *Oceny eksperckie w badaniu użyteczności bibliotecznych serwisów internetowych* (Expert evaluations in usability testing of library websites), Toruń 2019.

**KEYWORDS:** Non-users of libraries. Library users. Academic libraries. Student surveys. University Library in Toruń. Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Purpose of the article** – This article presents the results of research concerning the reasons why students of Nicolaus Copernicus University (*Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika*, UMK) do not use the resources and services of the University Library in Toruń (BU), conducted in the academic year 2022/2023.

**Method** – The research was conducted using a diagnostic survey method. The questionnaire contained 13 questions relating to the use and non-use of BU resources and services, as well as of other types of libraries, the adequacy of services provided by the BU, methods of obtaining materials in the learning process and for completing the study program, reading preferences, and the general attitude of the respondents towards library institutions. **Conclusions** – Due to the small sample size, the research results are not representative. Nevertheless, they can serve as an important signal for academic library managers or as a starting point for further (especially applied) research. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from them correspond to the findings of other researchers in the literature. They demonstrate that the main reasons for not using the library are a lack of need, the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (including the Internet), and a lack of knowledge about the services offered by the library. While non-use

of the BU correlates with non-use of libraries in general, it is not a consequence of a negative attitude of students towards library institutions. Students' reading habits show that not using libraries does not translate into a low level of reading. Moreover, the analysis of the research results shows that, according to UMK students who are active users of the BU, the current offer is sufficient and adequate to their needs.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing environment of libraries significantly impacts the decrease in the number of users, and even the complete departure from libraries of users who independently and intuitively use free and easily accessible digital sources and resources (cf. Center for Public Opinion Research, 2021; National Library, 2024; Central Statistical Office, 2024; *Lubimyczytać.pl* et al., 2024). This situation means that the challenge for libraries is not only to meet the current needs of users but also to attract those who have not previously used libraries (Kuczkowska, 2024).

Studies of library users have been conducted for many years. The literature on the subject contains numerous examples of studies including the results of self-assessment of library activity by various user groups (e.g., Borowski, 2011; Kędzierska, 2015; Orzół & Wojciechowska, 2021; Aleksandrowicz & Bernacki, 2022; Babicz, 2024), as well as studies demonstrating a positive correlation between library use and better academic performance or success in many areas of life (Brown & Malenfant, 2017; Scoulas & De Groote, 2019; Anderson & Vega García, 2020; Mayer et al., 2020). These studies, although providing interesting insights, do not include non-users and do not diagnose the reasons for not using libraries. This type of analysis is conducted much less frequently. This is due to several reasons: firstly, discrepancies in defining the nature and level of non-use of libraries (cf. Budrowska et al., 2020); secondly, difficulties in reaching this part of the target population of libraries (cf. Martin, 1976; Schlichter & Pemberton, 1992; McCarthy, 1994); and thirdly, the lack of a consistent methodology for studying non-users (cf. McNicol, 2004; Booth, 2008; Dempsey, 2018). Consequently, non-users are studied to a very limited extent, almost incidentally or as an afterthought in studies of library users.

Research on non-users of academic libraries has been conducted since at least the 1970s. The greatest intensification of this work has been observed since 2000, especially in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and France. An analysis of 69 publications containing the results of studies on students who do not use academic libraries, conducted by Amelie Brunskill and Rosie Hanneke (2021), shows that the most frequently used method in studies of non-users is the diagnostic survey – printed and online questionnaires and interviews; focus groups and existing data

are used less frequently. These types of studies include both academic staff and students (of a specific discipline/field/university/faculty/mode of study/year), and the number of participants varies widely: from 11 (Ouellette, 2011) to 50,000 (Thompson et al., 2007) participants. In their analyses, researchers focus either on diagnosing the reasons for general non-use of libraries (e.g., Whittaker et al., 1990; Tipton, 2001; Vondracek, 2007), or on selected aspects of non-use – e.g., physical space (Hall & Kapa, 2015), print collections (Rose-Wiles et al., 2020), electronic resources (Umukoro & Tihamiyu, 2017; Oh & Colón-Aguirre, 2019), or specific services (Jameson et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Interestingly, the matter of non-use of libraries is interpreted in many different ways (as not using the library at all; not using its specific services and resources; not using it for a specific period: two weeks, a month, a semester, or a year; using the library building but not using the collections and services; using the library irregularly or sporadically; ceasing to use it at all) (cf. Vondracek, 2007; Toner, 2008; Kisby, 2011; Luo & Buer, 2015; Umukoro & Tihamiyu, 2017). Previous studies of students reveal similar reasons for not using academic libraries. Most often, these are a lack of need, a lack of awareness of specific library services, and unfamiliarity with the rules for using a given resource. Less frequently mentioned are insufficient or outdated collections, architectural, technological, and administrative barriers to accessing resources, unfriendly or unhelpful staff, fear of the library, or resorting to alternative sources. A review of existing research results shows that most non-users have a positive attitude towards library institutions, although the need to intensify efforts to promote the services and resources offered by them and to provide training to prepare users to utilize them is also recognized (Kiilu & Otiike, 2016; Brunskill & Hanneke, 2021).

This article analyzes the results of a study of students at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (*Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, UMK*) who belonged to the population served by the University Library (*Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, BU*) in the 2022/2023 academic year. The main objective of the research was to identify the main reasons for not using the library. Indirectly, the research aimed to reveal students' preferences regarding the most frequently used library services and resources, as well as methods of obtaining materials and using various sources of information. It also aimed to verify whether the non-use of the BU's services is a consequence of a negative attitude of students towards libraries. When designing the research, the authors assumed – in accordance with the standard PN-ISO 16439:2019-11 "Information and documentation. Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries" (Polish Committee for Standardization, 2019) – that a non-user of the BU is a person who, for at least 12 months preceding the study, did not perform any activity recorded by the library

system, did not use its physical and virtual resources, and did not visit the library building to use its premises or infrastructure or participate in events organized by it.

The initiated research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What percentage of UMK students do not use the resources and services of the University Library?
2. What are the reasons why students do not use the University Library's resources and services?
3. Does not using the University Library's resources correlate with not using other types of libraries?
4. From what sources do students obtain study materials if they do not use the University Library or other libraries?
5. What are the expectations of those who do not use the University Library and libraries in general regarding the services they offer?
6. What types of information sources do students prefer?
7. What is the attitude of students towards library institutions as such?

The authors assumed that the responses collected during the research would provide detailed information on the level and reasons for not using the University Library's services, which would allow not only for a better understanding of students' needs, expectations, and barriers to using library resources, but also for developing strategies to improve the functioning of the institution, adapt the service offerings, increase the accessibility and attractiveness of resources, and promote the use of the library among students and potential users.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data was collected using the CAWI technique. After its content was agreed upon with the University Library Management, the survey questionnaire was made available in the LimeSurvey Survey System on the server of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.<sup>1</sup> The survey consisted of 13 questions, four of which required a single choice, seven allowed multiple choices and the option to provide a personal opinion ("other"), one was based on a 5-point Likert scale, and one allowed for a free-form response. In addition to the main questions, the questionnaire included a demographic section containing questions aimed at obtaining data about the respondents, such as: gender, faculty, field of study, year of study, mode of study, and place of residence.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part included questions concerning the use and non-use of the University Library's

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<sup>1</sup> The archived survey questionnaire is available in the Nicolaus Copernicus University Repository at the following address: <https://repozytorium.umk.pl/handle/item/7255>.

resources and services, as well as other types of libraries, and services provided by the University Library that respondents could potentially use in the following 12 months. The second part contained questions relating to the methods of obtaining materials in the learning process and the implementation of the study program, reading preferences, and the general attitude of the respondents towards library institutions.

The research was conducted anonymously. No data enabling any identification of respondents was collected during the study (including tokens, IP addresses, date and time of completion, etc.). A link to the survey questionnaire was sent via university email to all students of Nicolaus Copernicus University who were active in the University Study Service System in the 2022/2023 academic year. The survey was available online from January 15, 2023, to May 31, 2023.

Because respondents were allowed to provide free-form answers during the study, after the completion of the study this data was aggregated and then subjected to content analysis. Subsequently, statements with similar content were grouped into thematic categories (e.g., lack of time, lack of knowledge about services, disagreement with the offer, fear of using the services). Due to the fact that the free-form responses formulated by the respondents were very similar to the predefined answers, they are presented together in the tables below.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Although the survey questionnaire was sent to over 17,000 students, only 195 responses were received, of which 144 were qualified for further analysis (fully completed questionnaires).<sup>2</sup> The respondents included 103 (71.5%) women and 41 (28.5%) men. The vast majority of respondents were full-time students – 136 (94.4%). The largest group consisted of undergraduate students – 79 (54.8%) people. Thirty-seven (25.6%) people declared they were studying in the first or second year of master's studies. Among the respondents, there were also nine (0.06%) representatives of doctoral programs. The remaining individuals were studying in integrated master's programs or 4-year engineering programs. In total, the respondents declared studies in 53 different fields. The largest groups were students from the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Historical Sciences – 41 (28.5%) and 37 (25.7%) respectively. The remaining students represented 12 other faculties (see Table 1).

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<sup>2</sup> The analysis was unable to link the results to the respondents' place of residence due to insufficient data or incomplete responses in this regard, which prevented reliable conclusions from being drawn. Therefore, the authors decided to refrain from presenting statistical analyses of respondents taking into account the size of the town or city in which they live.

Table 1. Respondents by faculty at Nicolaus Copernicus University.

Department name	Number of people	Percentage of responses received
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences	41	28.5%
Faculty of Historical Sciences	37	25.7%
Faculty of Economics and Management	17	11.8%
Faculty of Humanities	14	9.7%
Faculty of Law and Administration	9	6.3%
Faculty of Biological and Veterinary Sciences	8	5.6%
Faculty of Fine Arts	4	2.8%
Faculty of Chemistry	3	2.1%
Faculty of Earth Sciences and Spatial Management	3	2.1%
Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science	3	2.1%
Faculty of Physics, Astronomy and Applied Computer Science	2	1.4%
Faculty of Political Science and Security Studies	1	0.7%
Faculty of Health Sciences (Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz)	1	0.7%
Faculty of Medicine (Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz)	1	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Authors.

## 2. NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN TORUŃ AND OTHER TYPES OF LIBRARIES.

Only 34 (23.6%) of all respondents (n=144) were non-users. Twenty-five people (73.5%) had never used the library before, seven people (20.6%) had used it more than a year before the study, and two (5.9%) more than three years before the study. The most frequent reasons given for not using the library (multiple-choice question – 63 responses in total) were lack of need (15 people; 25.4%) and the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (from friends and through purchase) (13 people; 22%).<sup>3</sup> Nine

<sup>3</sup> The survey questionnaire included the aggregate category “no need” – commonly used in studies of non-users of libraries (cf. Brunskill & Hanneke, 2021). The authors are aware that this category may have been understood differently by respondents and may also encompass other reasons indicated in

people (15.3%) also indicated that they obtain the necessary information from the internet.<sup>4</sup> Seven respondents (28%) were unaware of the services offered by the University Library. Lack of time and using the services of other types of libraries were cited by 16% of students each. Three people (5.1%) indicated feeling anxious about going to the library. The remaining individuals were dissatisfied with the library's opening hours (3.4%) and the library's offerings (1.7%) (see Table 2). Among the answers other than those suggested in the questionnaire, the following responses formulated independently by the students are noteworthy:

- *I'm afraid that I won't be able to find my way around the library. There are no comfortable places in the reading room, only chairs and tables.*
- *The library website isn't working for me.*
- *I'm not writing my bachelor's thesis yet; I think I'll start using the library when I start writing it.*
- *I feel anxious about how complicated the rules for borrowing materials are, and it's not conveniently located for me.*

Table 2. Reasons for not using the library's resources and services, as indicated by non-users (n=34)

Reasons	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
1	2	3
No need	15	25.4%
I obtain materials from other traditional sources (I borrow from friends, I buy them)	13	22.0%
The materials and information I obtain from the Internet are sufficient for me	9	15.3%
I know little about the services offered by the library	7	11.9%
Lack of time	4	6.8%
I use the services of other libraries	4	6.8%

this study (e.g., no need to use the library due to the availability of materials from other sources, lack of awareness of the possibilities of using library services, as well as other psychological or organizational factors). Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results from the "no need" category (Tables 2 and 3), and the possibility of a wide range of respondent motivations should be taken into account.

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the results relating to the category "obtaining sources from the Internet" (Tables 2, 3, 6) should be treated as indicative only, due to the lack of detailed differentiation within this category regarding platforms, tools, or specific resources. This category – like the "lack of time" category – could therefore have been understood differently by the respondents, which implies a risk of imprecision in the results.

1	2	3
I feel anxious about going to the library	3	5.1%
The library's opening hours are not convenient for me	2	3.4%
I don't like using libraries	1	1.7%
The library offers a much smaller selection than bookstores or e-book platforms	1	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Authors.

Non-users of the University Library could be encouraged to use its services by increasing the library's activity in various areas of library operations. Of the 34 respondents, eight (23.5%) pointed out the need to eliminate unnecessary formalities and to describe the rules for accessing the services offered in a more transparent way. Another six people (17.6%) indicated the need to develop various forms of promoting the library's activities. Five people (14.7%) suggested increasing the number of available resources, both in traditional and online versions. Four people (11.7%) drew attention to the need to create additional spaces – for individual and group work, startup activities, and also to improve conditions in the open access section. Three people (8.8%) suggested introducing additional services (e.g., picking up ordered publications at the library branch in Bydgoszcz or the possibility of viewing excerpts of books online without having to borrow them). Another three (8.8%) declared their willingness to use the library's services to meet their information needs related to their studies (including, for example, writing a diploma thesis). Five people (20%) were unable to indicate what could convince them to use the University Library's resources and services.

UMK students were also asked whether they had used other types of libraries in the last 12 months. This question aimed to reveal whether there was a correlation between not using the University Library and not using other libraries. The answers to this question were fairly evenly distributed – out of 144 respondents, 74 (51.4%) were users of other types of libraries, while 70 (48.6%) were non-users. Among the users of other types of libraries, users of public libraries predominated (81.5%), followed by users of libraries of other universities (47.3%). A small number of people (6.8%) also indicated school libraries. In the group of non-users, the most frequently given reason for not using libraries was the same as in the case of the University Library, i.e., lack of need (31.4% of

responses). The answers indicating the possibility of obtaining materials from friends or through purchase (18.2%) and obtaining sources from the Internet (17%) were also quite frequent. The answers “lack of time,” “inappropriate library operating rules,” and “poor library location” were each given 12 times (17.1%). Other reasons mentioned included a lack of attractive library offerings (4.4%), inconvenient opening hours (3.8%), and dissatisfaction with their services (2.5%) (see Table 3). Two people (2.8%) gave other reasons in the “other” field:

- *I’m not sufficiently familiar with the rules of how libraries operate. It’s uncharted territory for me, and I feel uncomfortable there.*
- *Stress.*

Table 3. Reasons for not using other types of libraries as indicated by non-users (n=70)

Reasons	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
No need	50	31.4%
I obtain materials from other traditional sources (borrowing from friends, buying)	29	18.2%
The materials and information I obtain from the internet are sufficient for me	27	17.0%
Lack of time	12	7.5%
Inconvenient location of libraries	12	7.5%
I don’t like the way libraries operate (e.g., short loan periods, fees)	12	7.5%
Unattractive library offerings	7	4.4%
Inconvenient library opening hours	6	3.8%
I was not satisfied with the library services (I didn’t find what I needed, I didn’t get the information I was looking for)	4	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Authors.

Among all respondents (n=144), there were 23 individuals (16%) who were non-users of both the University Library (BU) and other types of libraries. 11 individuals (7.6%) did not use the University Library but used the services of other libraries. Among the respondents, there was also a group of 47 people (32.6%) who used the University Library but

were not users of other libraries. 63 people (43.8%) identified themselves as users of both the University Library and other libraries (see Table 4). This data allowed for an examination of the relationship between non-use of the University Library and non-use of other libraries. For this purpose, an asymptotic chi-square test of independence was used. The analysis resulted in  $p = 0.011 < 0.05$ , which indicates a significant relationship for respondents in both groups (see Table 5).<sup>5</sup>

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of non-users of the University Library \* non-users of other types of libraries (n=144)

<b>Number of people</b>	<b>Users of other libraries</b>	<b>Non users of other libraries</b>	<b>Total</b>
User of BU (University Library)	63 (43.8%)	47 (32.6%)	<b>110 (76.4%)</b>
Non-user of BU	11 (7.6%)	23 (16%)	<b>34 (23.6%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74 (51.4%)</b>	<b>70 (48.6%)</b>	<b>144 (100%)</b>

Source: Authors.

Table 5. Chi-square tests

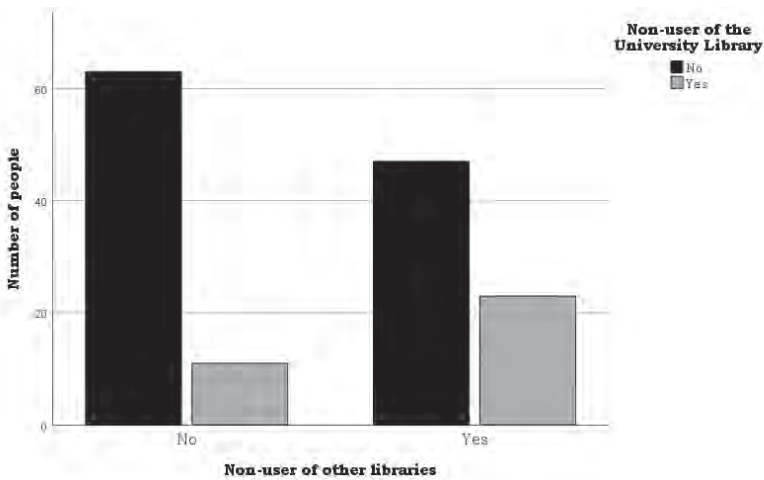
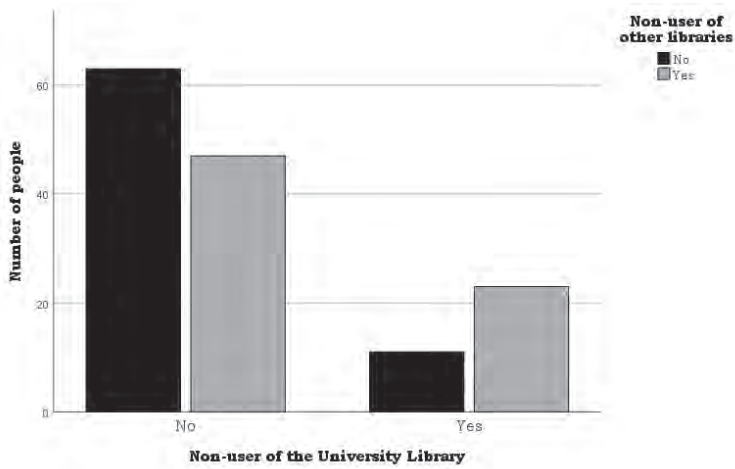
<b>Value</b>		<b>df*</b>	<b>Asymptotic significance (two-sided)</b>
Pearson's chi-squared test	6.456**	1	.011
N valid observations	144		

Source: Authors.

\* Df (*degrees of freedom*) – The number of independent pieces of information used to calculate a test statistic. In the case of the chi-squared test, the degrees of freedom are a crucial parameter that affects the interpretation of the results and the selection of the critical value from the chi-squared distribution table. The number of degrees of freedom can be equated to the number of independent random variables that influence the result.

\*\* 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.53.

<sup>5</sup> The statistical calculations contained in Tables 4 and 5 were performed using PS IMAGO PRO 10 software with the IBM SPSS Statistics 29 analytical engine by Dr. Natalia Soja-Kukielka from the Statistical Analysis Center of Nicolaus Copernicus University.



Charts 1 and 2. The nature of the relationship between the group of non-users of the University Library and non-users of other types of libraries.

Source: Authors.

Students who were non-users of both the University Library and other types of libraries ( $n=23$ ) declared that they intend to use the services and resources of the University Library within the next 12 months. Their primary interest was in access to copying facilities and Wi-Fi (10 people each, 11.9%). Some also indicated interest in using the library's infrastructure: study rooms (9 people, 10.7%), group work rooms (7 people, 8.3%), general relaxation areas (6 people, 7.1%), computers located in the library (4 people, 4.8%), and on-site collections (4 people, 4.8%). Additionally, respondents expressed interest in services such as: on-demand digitization (8 people, 9.5%), borrowing materials (books, audiobooks) for home use (7 people, 8.3%), including through interlibrary loan (2 people, 2.4%). Respondents

also declared interest in participating in cultural events organized by the library (e.g., exhibitions, author meetings – 4 people, 4.8%; library training – 2 people, 2.4%). Five people (6%) indicated that they would visit the University Library to search for information (related to, for example, their study program, daily life, etc.).

### 3. SOURCES FOR OBTAINING MATERIALS BY NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND OTHER TYPES OF LIBRARIES.

Regarding the methods of obtaining information, materials, and books necessary for studying and completing the curriculum by students who do not use either the University Library or other libraries (n=23), the analysis of the research results showed that the main source of obtaining them was the Internet (23 people, 39.6%). Other sources mentioned included friends and fellow students (19 people, 32.7%) and purchases in bookstores, both traditional and online (14 people, 24.1%). Two people (3.4%) also indicated lecturers as a source (see Table 6).

Table 6. Sources of learning materials used by non-users of the University Library and other types of libraries (n=23)

Sources	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
Internet	23	39.6%
Shopping in bookstores (including online bookstores and online auctions)	14	24.1%
Friends, fellow students	19	32.7%
Other	2	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Authors.

### 4. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY USERS

Although the primary goal of the research was to understand the reasons for not using the University Library's services and resources, the study also revealed the preferences of students who actively use the library's resources and services (n=110). It showed that the vast majority of respondents most frequently used the service of borrowing materials for home use (61 people, 23.1%). Online resources were also very popular (50 people, 18.9%), as was using the library space (36 people, 13.6%) and using the collections on-site (34 people, 12.9%). The least popular services were on-demand digitization (4 people, 1.5%) and library training courses (2 people, 0.8%) (see Table 5).

Table 7. Services offered by the University Library, most frequently chosen by UMK students who actively use them (n=110)

<b>Library Services</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses given</b>
Digitization on demand (ordering digital copies of library or deposited materials)	4	1.5%
Computers available in the library	10	3.8%
Librarian assistance in finding necessary information and library materials	21	8.0%
Library space (for work and study)	36	13.6%
Wi-fi network	18	6.8%
Library training	2	0.8%
Copying devices (e.g., photocopier, printers, scanner)	10	3.8%
Cultural events	7	2.7%
Borrowing library materials for home use (books, audiobooks)	61	23.1%
Interlibrary loan	11	4.2%
Library resources available online (books, articles, databases, catalogs, KPBC)	50	18.9%
Library collections available on-site (magazines, newspapers, books)	34	12.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Authors.

## 5. READING HABITS OF STUDENTS

In addition to information about the most frequently used library services and reasons for not using them, the study also provided information on students' reading habits (n=144). Almost half of the respondents (66 people, 45.8%) read between 1 and 10 books in the 12 months preceding the study. A larger number of books were read by 34 people (23.6%). 12 people read between 31 and 50 books (8.3%), and 13 people (9%) declared they had read more than 50 books. 12 people (8.3%) did not read any books during this period. Seven people (4.9%) were unable to specify the exact number of books read. During the same period, 48 (33.3%) respondents read between 11 and 30 book chapters. A slightly smaller number of people (42, 29.2%) declared they had read between 1 and 10 chapters. The answer "31-50 chapters" was chosen by 19 people

(13.2%), and more than 50 chapters were a source of information for 17 (11.8%) of them. Among the respondents, there were also people (7, 4.9%) who did not read any book chapters or chose the answer "difficult to say" (11, 7.6%). In the case of journal articles, most students (44, 30.6%) declared reading between 1 and 10 articles. A larger number (from 11 to 30) were read by 24 (16.7%) respondents. 19 people (13.2%) read between 30 and 50 articles. In contrast, 18 (12.5%) respondents stated that they had used more than 50 articles. Twenty-one (14.6%) respondents did not read any articles, and 18 (12.5%) were unable to specify the number (see chart 3).

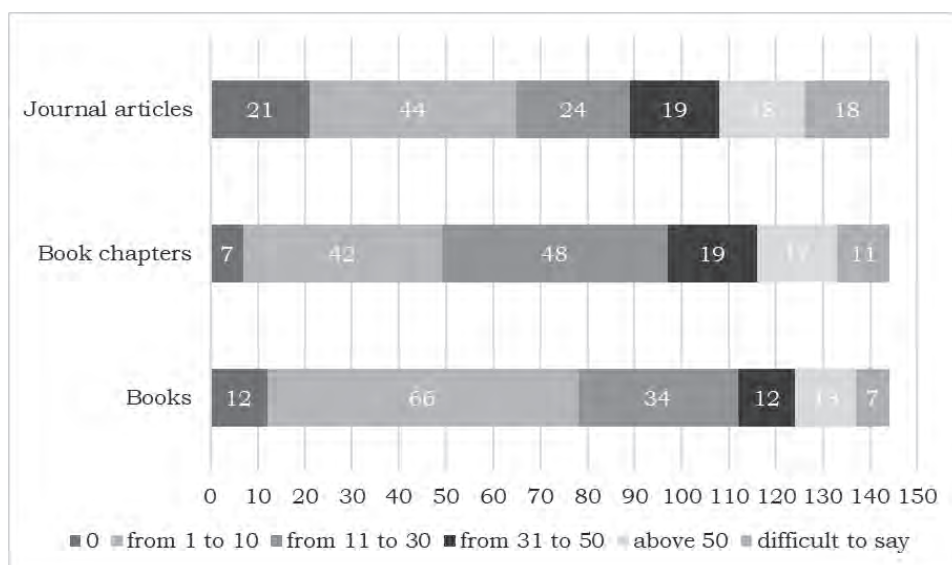


Chart 3. Number of items read by UMK students (n=144) in the 12 months preceding the study.

Source: Authors.

## 6. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LIBRARIES

The authors of the study assumed that students' attitudes towards libraries as institutions, or their stereotypical image established in society, might translate into a reluctance to use library resources and services. However, the analysis of the collected data proved that respondents perceive libraries as necessary and useful institutions. One hundred eight people (75%) strongly agreed with this statement, and another 30 people (20.8%) expressed moderate agreement. Respondents also expressed positive opinions regarding the provision of access to specialized collections and information that would be difficult to find elsewhere than in libraries. Seventy-two people (50%) strongly agreed with this statement, and 49 (34%) agreed with it. The distribution of opinions on

the modernity of libraries and their adaptation to user expectations was more varied. Forty-eight people (33.3%) agreed with this statement, and 30 respondents (20.8%) expressed strong agreement. However, it is worth noting that as many as 43 people (29.9%) had no opinion on this matter, and 20 respondents (13.9%) disagreed with this statement. Most respondents expressed positive opinions about the ease of using libraries due to their convenient opening hours and location. Fifty-three (36.8%) respondents agreed with this statement, and another 32 (22.2%) expressed strong agreement. In contrast, 26 (18.1%) other respondents expressed negative opinions, and an additional six did so strongly. Among the respondents, there were also 27 (18.8%) people who had no opinion on this matter. Only 29 (20.1%) people agreed with the statement that libraries are becoming less and less necessary in the age of the Internet, and nine (4.9%) strongly agreed with it. Fifty-five (38.2%) people disagreed with this statement, and an additional 44 (30.6%) strongly disagreed with it (see chart 4).

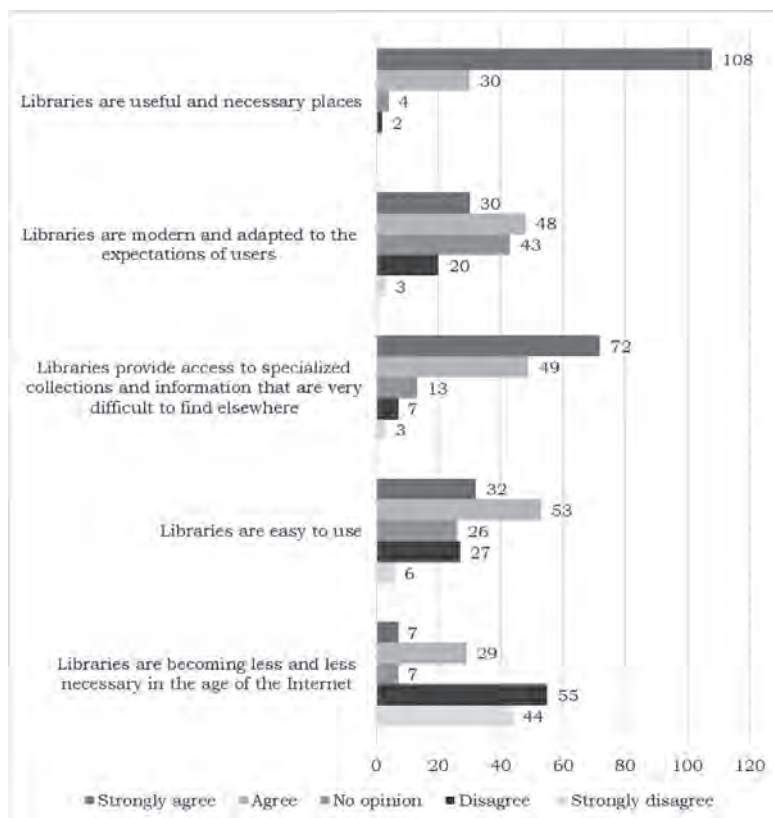


Chart 4. Number of responses received from UMK students (n=144) in response to the question regarding their attitude towards libraries.

Source: Authors.

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Although the University Library and the UMK Promotion Office were involved in distributing the survey questionnaire, the small number of participants in the study does not allow for the extrapolation of the results to the entire population of UMK students. The low response rate may be due to the inconvenient timing of the research (the research period included the time immediately before and after the examination session, the Easter holidays, May Day, and the student festival), a lack of promotion of the research, and a strictly planned monitoring strategy. Perhaps the students found the topic of library activities uninteresting or did not want to disclose information about their own reading habits. Regardless of the reason for the low interest in the survey, the authors confirmed their observation that studying non-users can be difficult to implement, and this is the main reason for the lack of scientific work on this topic.

Although the research results are not representative, the conclusions drawn from them correspond to the findings of other researchers. Firstly, the data analysis confirms that studying non-users requires a precise definition of the nature of *non-use* of libraries, so that there is no doubt as to which activities are considered non-use and which are considered occasional, incidental, or indirect use. Secondly, conducting this type of research implies the need to reach non-users in various ways and to plan research over a longer time horizon (survey research, although simple to implement, does not guarantee a high response rate). Thirdly, in the course of such research, data is also obtained from existing users of the library, because it is impossible to limit the research exclusively to the population of non-users.

Due to the non-representative nature of the research, it is difficult to make judgments regarding the demographic characteristics of UMK students who do not use the University Library. Based on the results obtained, it can only be cautiously assumed that non-users of the University Library are primarily men (22 out of 34 non-users), and are students in their first years of study.

The reasons for not using the University Library correspond to those found in the literature on the subject (see, e.g., Musavi & Harvey, 1984; Whittaker et al., 1990; Tipton, 2001; Frank & Bothmann, 2007; Porat & Fine, 2009; Owens et al., 2023). Students at Nicolaus Copernicus University most often cite a lack of need to use the library, the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (including the Internet), and a lack of knowledge about the services offered by the library. Interestingly, the last reason is mentioned in the context of not using both the University Library and other types of libraries. Relatively frequently in both cases, fear of using libraries and a lack of time for such activity also appear.

When beginning the research, it was assumed that not using the University Library might correlate with not using libraries in general and be a consequence of students' negative attitude towards library institutions. While a relatively large number of non-users of the University Library who also do not use other types of libraries (67% of 34) confirms the validity of the first hypothesis, the research results contradict the second, as all identified non-users showed a positive attitude towards libraries, considering them modern and offering access to specialized collections and information that are difficult to find elsewhere. In this context, the dominant number of responses "I don't need to use libraries" and the declaration of most non-users regarding their willingness to use the resources or services of the University Library in the near future are particularly surprising.

The analysis of the research results showed that the largest group among UMK students consisted of active users of the University Library. Their opinions indicate that the library's offerings are sufficient and adequate to their needs: the most popular services were borrowing materials for home use and access to online resources, while the least popular were library training courses and on-demand digitization services. The view regarding the adequacy of the existing library offerings can also be formulated based on the opinions of non-users, who listed among the services they would like to use in the future those already available. Only three out of 144 people (2%) expected the introduction of new solutions. Similarly to participants in other studies (cf. e.g., Connaway et al., 2007; Frank et al., 2007; Abdullah & Gibb, 2008; Cassidy et al., 2012; Jameson et al., 2019), students who did not use the University Library highlighted the need for greater promotion of library services, elimination of unnecessary formalities, clearer descriptions of access rules to offered services, and improvements to the library building's infrastructure. Interestingly, despite reporting some problems with understanding the rules for using the library's resources and services, fear of the library, or problems with accessing its website, none of the non-users suggested implementing instructional training, guides, or educational programs for users, or modifying the website.

Among all the students surveyed (n=144), the vast majority declared reading activity. Only 13% of respondents had not read any books or even a single excerpt. The same number also did not read any academic articles. The high reading activity of UMK students is consistent with the general trend observed by institutions monitoring the state of readership in Poland. Research conducted by the Institute of Books and Reading of the National Library in 2023 shows that the highest number of readers are among students (schoolchildren and university students), and the fewest among the oldest generations. However, only 7% of people who declare reading books admit to reading at least seven volumes a year (Zasacka et

al., 2024). Among the surveyed students, this figure was 45.8%. The reading habits of the students therefore prove that the initial assumption that not using libraries translates into a low level of reading among students was incorrect.

Almost all of the non-users identified in the study (both of the University Library and other types of libraries) (94.3% of 34) indicated the Internet as the main source of information, materials, and books needed to complete their study program. A significantly smaller group of people (24.1%) indicated making purchases. This result contradicts the findings of researchers from the Institute of Book and Reading of the National Library, according to whom book purchases are the most popular method of obtaining books among all readers regardless of age (Zasacka et al., 2024).

Although the conducted research had a limited scope, there is no doubt that it provided knowledge about the reasons why students do not use the University Library, as well as the adequacy of the existing offer in relation to the needs of its users. These studies should certainly be repeated to obtain a more representative sample, and consequently, to determine the extent to which the diagnosed behaviors are characteristic of the entire population of UMK students. In this context, it is worth considering (in addition to quantitative methods) the use of qualitative methods. This could help in creating a typology or personas of students who do not use the library, which could be used to determine how different definitions of non-use translate into a different picture of the library's impact.

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