

THE PROFESSION OF A LIBRARIAN IN POLAND: PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

Although the education of librarians in Poland can boast of a long tradition and experience, which has resulted in the preparation of a huge number of educated librarians finding employment in various libraries – school, public, scientific or professional – the current state in terms of preparing new staff for the profession does not look too optimistic. Of course, this does not mean that there is something wrong with the libraries themselves, but it indicates that the current formula and model of preparation for the profession has become unattractive: library studies are not as popular as they were a few or so years ago. Certainly, contributing importantly to this state of affairs are changes in the regulations defining the conditions of employment in libraries and their employees' qualifications. The amendment to the *Law on Higher Education* carried out in 2011, extending the autonomy of universities in the scope of, among others, creating their own curricula while not complying with the uniformity of mandatory contents or names of majors, has meant that employment as a librarian is not subject to the condition of completing library studies. This situation, commonly referred to as the so-called deregulation of the librarian's profession, has as a consequence led to the pronounced decline of education in the field of scientific information and library science.

The current state of affairs raises concern among library managers, as well as among practitioners and theoreticians of librarianship. This is because, on the one hand, we observe the need to transform libraries, following new trends in this area, adapting them to the changing needs of users and the environment in which they operate. On the other hand, the lack of comprehensive librarian competencies and often rudimentary professional knowledge among newly employed adepts to the profession imposes a limitation on the organizational efficiency of these institutions, which are so special and important for the development of education, information efficiency and the general level of knowledge in society.

That is why we have decided to devote the current special issue of *The Library Review* (*Przegląd Biblioteczny*) to considerations of the past, the present and the future of preparation of the academic staff for libraries. We have included six articles in this issue discussing:

- the crisis of academic education of librarians in Poland, showing its causes and the current state but also developmental prospects (Renata Malesa);

- library studies at the University of Warsaw, one of the first and largest courses of study of this type in Poland (Dariusz Grygrowski);

- educating teacher librarians in Poland (Dorota Grabowska);

- educating librarians working with children aged 0 to 5 and their families at Polish universities (Agata Walczak-Niewiadomska);

And two texts showing actions already taken to modernize and adapt the existing educational offer to the new challenges facing Polish librarianship, introducing new specializations:

- Data Stewardship – discussing the origins of its creation and implementation, its program, and the acquired competencies, professional profiles and career paths of its graduates (Anna Wałek);

- UX / user experience librarian – with a focus on designing user experience, along with an indication of the competencies necessary to work as a UX specialist in the library and the situation of this specialization within the Polish education system in library studies (Bożena Jaskowska).

Similarly to the regular quarterly issues of *Przegląd Biblioteczny*, in this special issue we also publish a selective analysis of the latest Polish literature in the field of library science (Barbara Koryś).

We also present an interesting project, “Information and communication – popularization of scientific research and technological solutions”, implemented by the Polish Librarians’ Association, the aim of which is to inform the public about scientific works in the field of social communication and media sciences, to promote the achievements of researchers and to disseminate innovative technological solutions that can be used in library practice (Aldona Zawalkiewicz).

Transformations in the process of academic education in the field of library science and scientific information, and the problems that are emerging in this area, do not concern only Poland and our universities, but have a global character. In presenting this issue to you, we want to share our observations and experiences as well as initiate a broader discussion leading to the development of solutions that will enable the improvement and modification of educational programs, making them more attractive, so that graduates who go to work in libraries fully meet the expectations of employers, and, with their knowledge and acquired competencies, meet the dynamically developing needs of users.

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