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## PREGNANT WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN POLAND



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**KEYWORDS:** Poland. Public libraries. Pregnant women. Children up to 3 years old. Activity. Mom clubs. Dialogic reading.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/purpose of the article** – The aim of the article is to draw attention to pregnant women and people with small children (up to 3 years old) as potential library users who need to be treated in a special way, as people with special needs. **Research methods** – The analysis of publications, legal acts and websites allowed us to characterize libraries as institutions that can involve pregnant women and people with small children in their activities. This requires adapting the space and activities to the needs of this group of users. **Results/conclusions** – Pregnant women and people with small children have special needs related to using libraries. In addition to adjusting the arrangement of space and collections, libraries also run support groups and mothers' clubs. The animated nature of the activities undertaken has a positive impact on users and on clarifying strategies for meeting their needs. Examples of good practice in this area can be found in Polish libraries, but it requires further intensification.

Public libraries, as the name suggests, are for everyone. Jacek Wojciechowski notes that universal availability is a myth (Wojciechowski, 2010, p. 201), but these institutions try to ensure that as many people as possible can use their services. It is not possible for them to propose what is acceptable to everyone and provide strategies for satisfying their need for self-fulfillment (Koźmiński & Piotrowski, 1999, p. 402), but they try to involve as many residents of a given local community as possible in using their services. Potential users also include people with special needs, among whom special attention is paid to disabled people (deaf, hard of hearing, hearing impaired), but also seniors, as well as pregnant women and people with small children. The Act of July 19, 2019 on ensuring accessibility for persons with special needs (Act of July 19, 2019) specifies such persons as those who “due to their external or internal characteristics, or due to circumstances in which they find themselves, must take additional actions or apply additional measures to overcome a barrier in order to participate in various spheres of life on an equal basis with others” (Act of 19 July 2019). The adjustments will concern “architectural, digital, and information and communication accessibility”. As part of ensuring accessibility for people with special needs, actions are taken to (Act of July 19, 2019):

1. removing barriers and preventing their formation;
2. taking into account their needs in activities planned and conducted

## PREGNANT WOMEN IN THE LIBRARY

Pregnancy is a period when women need to be treated specially. They often get tired more easily, cannot stand for long periods of time, and find it difficult to perform various activities. They must take special care of their health and prepare for the birth of a child.

Libraries can be a space where pregnant women can meet, talk and learn about the issues that concern them most. Sharing your thoughts is an

important support element. Anita Nogal emphasizes that “the last months before the birth of a child and the first months after birth are a previously unknown reality for women. Among many changes, new emotions and responsibilities, loneliness and weariness often appear. Informal mothers’ clubs organized in cities and communes are a good solution and support at this time” (Nogal). The last months of pregnancy are the time to absorb knowledge about the newborn child. Future mothers read guides, blogs, and prepare layettes. I have a club at the library – it’s a good opportunity to meet and talk to other women, exchange experiences, ask questions, and even meet a midwife or lactation consultant.

It is worth using animation activities. Ewa Bobrowska, in the article *Social subjectivity and animation, treats animation as “a method of working with people that is based on certain assumptions of one’s own and refers to a specific set of values”* (Bobrowska, 2021, p. 18). She draws attention to three features of animation: giving up institutional authority, building social capital, and creating relationships between people in the public sphere. With this understanding, animation interacts with dissemination, which, however, is a much narrower process. Łukasz Hajduk emphasizes that “the animator strives to ensure that members of a given community make their own choices and decide whether and how to initiate contacts with culture. The essence here is the meeting itself, not what will result from it. What is more important than the culture that is outside will be what people have inside – their skills, passions, dreams” (Hajduk, 2015, p. 101).

When the emphasis shifts from dissemination to animation, it becomes important to build from the bottom up, based on what is in people. The librarian knows their users, knows what their needs are and what problems they have. Using their knowledge and skills, they allow users to encounter not only the book, but above all themselves. Thanks to this, people start taking action. It is important to select the appropriate methods and content for particular age groups, in this case women who are adapting to the new reality.

It is worth informing future mothers about the role of reading. In each guide you can find a lot of information that shows the “magic of reading aloud”, after all, looking at picture books begins long before the child utters his first word. Reading aloud before bed strengthens the parent-child bond. “Oxytocin is released in such quiet moments with a beloved attachment figure. This prepares the child’s brain for learning – especially things related to emotions, i.e. the activity of the amygdala” (Retz & Bongertz, 2022, p. 161).

Topics worth discussing and guests worth inviting will most likely appear at the first meetings. Everything is initiated by the participants. The most important thing is to provide space to have a good time and get emo-

tional support from each other. Preparing collections with this group of users in mind and displaying them is, of course, necessary.

## PEOPLE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY

### REMOVING BARRIERS – ARCHITECTURAL ACCESSIBILITY – SPACE IS IMPORTANT

The most important thing when organizing meetings for people with small children is appropriate space. The IFLA Guidelines for libraries serving infants and young children (up to 3 years old) (Guidelines, 2009, p. 23) clearly emphasize that children and their caregivers should perceive the library as an accessible, safe, attractive and stable place.

Barriers to accessing the library should be eliminated. A section accepting such small children cannot be located on a floor without an elevator; In addition to people, the elevator should accommodate baby strollers. Doors that are too heavy, stairs or thresholds that are too high may also be an obstacle. Space for strollers is needed in the hall in front of the entrance.

Guardians and children should feel comfortable in the library. A separate room or a cozy corner is best for meetings. Libraries organize so-called “baby corners” – quiet, intimate spaces where there are no other library users hanging around.

For this to happen, the space must be safe. It is best if children who are crawling or starting to walk are provided with a place designated for them, equipped with safe furniture adjusted to their height. The floor should be absolutely clean, with carpets for children to play on. A carpet or rug, poufs, pillows or seat mats will work well. You should also include a place for adults who accompany children. The arrangement of the space must enable the child and caregiver to remain in contact. You should secure sockets and other electrical devices, as well as anything that a child could pull down and harm themselves with. Books and toys must also be safe and clean. It is also important to prepare a place where you can feed the baby, heat milk in a bottle, and, if necessary, change the baby’s diapers or even wash the baby. It’s good for mothers to be able to drink tea or coffee. In the case of the youngest library users, consistency is also important. Children feel safe in an environment they know and which is not constantly changing. It is important that it is warm, without bright light that may disturb sleeping babies. The library becomes attractive thanks to its appearance, space arrangement, but also by providing the right atmosphere.

## COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT

When cooperating with both pregnant women and parents or guardians, substantive knowledge as well as communication skills are important. It should be remembered that caregivers are a diverse group, representing different backgrounds and ethnic and cultural communities (Thomas & Skage, 1998, p. 15). For this reason, it is necessary to maintain a certain sensitivity in contacts resulting from respect for cultural customs and other issues important to the participants. This becomes very important, especially when immigrant families appear. Very often, meetings in the library take on the nature of support groups, where you can talk to people in a similar life situation, exchange experiences and help.

## TAKING INTO ACCOUNT NEEDS IN PLANNING AND CONDUCTING ACTIVITIES

### **Raising awareness of the role of reading – educating parents/guardians**

The specific tasks of libraries include informing parents (guardians) about the essence of reading. It certainly helps to join the Bookstart program (<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/>), which has been implemented in England since 1992 and can be found in various modifications in over 10 countries, including Poland. The starting point is the belief that it is never too early to read books with your child. In England, this is a program run by Booktrust, an independent organization set up to encourage people from all cultures and all ages to read books. The program runs thanks to financial support from the Department of Education and the governments of Northern Ireland and Wales, as well as generous donations from over 25 children's publishers. It is coordinated and supported by local public institutions, employees of health centers and libraries. Bookstart offers:

- free books for children,
- support and help in encouraging children to read with their parents,
- an opportunity to take part in meetings and events organized by Bookstart, together with other families,
- the website <http://www.bookstart.org.uk> contains many materials that can be used when playing with your child – books, stories, rhymes.

The set prepared for children from the age group up to twelve months includes an eco-bag with the project logo, two books (with hard cardboard covers and colorful illustrations) and an illustrated leaflet on how to encourage a child to read, how to read with a child, etc. (the leaflet can be edited in different languages). The sets are modified depending on age, but the idea remains the same – instilling a love of reading in children,

so that they can then have an easier start in life. Packages have also been developed for children with disabilities, e.g. deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired. Kits are also offered for children whose first language is not English. They include, for example, books in the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Croatian, Czech, Persian (Farsi), French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Nepali, Punjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. Brochures for parents are also translated. You can choose different books, depending on age and interests (e.g. about animals, family, everyday activities, tolerance and different cultures). On the project website you can read their reviews and the opinions of parents. Kits can be picked up in hospitals, clinics, nurseries, kindergartens, community centers, but also at the local library.

Moreover, hundreds of meetings and events for families with children are organized every year as part of this program. In fact, everyone will find something for themselves. Interesting ideas implemented as part of Bookstart include:

#### THE RHYME CHALLENGE

This program is intended for children from 0 to 5 years old and their parents. Children and their parents or guardians learn poems and nursery rhymes together. At the end, they receive a special diploma. Poems and nursery rhymes teach children how to play with words, which helps them later when they start learning. "Rhyming" together is also a good way to build bonds between children and parents. They help develop children's love of rhymes, stories, and books.

Thanks to competition, children learn through play, develop early language skills and have the opportunity to communicate with peers and adults. Additionally, participation in it improves the child's phonological awareness and communication between the young child and the parent. Another advantage of such rhymes is that they can be sung anywhere. You don't need any instruments or special musical skills.

Storytimes (Reading fairy tales aloud)

Reading sessions are organized in local nurseries, libraries and children's centers. Meetings are organized for various age groups. Families listen to classic fairy tales, new stories and, together with others, discover the fascinating world of books.

## "A SMALL BOOK – A GREAT MAN" – BOOKSTART IN POLISH

In Poland, in December 2017, the Book Institute launched the social campaign "A small book – a great man" ([https:// wieki-czlowiek.pl/](https://wieki-czlowiek.pl/)), co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as part of the National Reading Development Program. The idea of the project is based on the assumption that reading begins in the cradle, long before the day a child learns to compose letters on its own. Well-selected books develop their mind and emotions, shape their linguistic competencies, awaken their imagination and root them in culture. Reading together can become not only a great pleasure, but above all an opportunity to build closeness and strong and lasting family bonds. The program emphasizes that every parent/guardian, through reading, influences the child's future and helps him or her achieve success.

During the nationwide campaign, parents in maternity wards receive unique Reading Kits: a book intended for children aged 0-3 in terms of form and content and an information brochure for caregivers, showing the invaluable role of books in their child's development.

The layette for the youngest consists of the book *Pierwsze wiersze dla ...* (First Poems for...), which includes songs by, among others: Jan Brzechwa, Julian Tuwim, Wanda Chotomska, and Joanna Papuzińska, with illustrations by Ewa Kozyra-Pawlak and Paweł Pawlak, as well as a brochure for parents *Książką połączeni, czyli o roli czytania w życiu dziecka* (Joined together by a book, or about the role of reading in a child's life). The book for caregivers contains a lot of information about reading to the youngest children. Grzegorz Leszczyński in the text *Radość czytania* (Joy of reading) emphasizes that books for children cannot be boring. Michalina Gajewska briefly discusses the role of reading in individual stages of child development – Contact with books and the needs and competencies of young children (0-3 years), preschool children (3-6 years) and school-age children (6-10 years). Lyrics of nursery rhymes, lists, and short songs are also included. The text "10 reasons why it is worth going to the library" is intriguing. Monika Kiczorowska draws attention to: accessibility for everyone; free library cards, thanks to which you can not only borrow books, films, magazines, games and other library materials, but also use them to benefit from discounts at cultural institutions; comfortable conditions; librarians who know (almost) everything about books; the fact that libraries are cultural centers; that there are not only books there; they enable access to the Internet; you can find information about your town there; using the library will develop your child's sense of responsibility and that going to the library is simply worth it. The next text in the booklet *Tropem dobrych książek* (On the Trail of Good Books) draws attention to six tracks that can be followed to find a good book for a child (a publishing house; experts who write about books; experts who don't write but talk about them; par-

ents who have tried new publications on their own children; awards; recommendations). As befits a guide, it also includes a list of recommended books (Grabowska, 2019, p. 15).

On the project's website – <http://zdrowie-czlowiek.pl/> you will find much more information and materials about the action itself and the role of reading. There is, for example, a "Knowledge Base" (<https://Wielo-czlowiek.pl/baza-wiedzy/>), where you can find a lot of interesting information about books and reading for children.

Libraries' involvement in international and nationwide campaigns makes it easier to reach potential library users and at the same time increases the attractiveness of the institutions themselves.

#### WHY IS IT WORTH READING FROM AN EARLY AGE? – WHERE TO FIND ARGUMENTS FOR READING

Librarians should reach out to parents (guardians) of young children and make them aware of the importance of reading. When carrying out this task, they can refer to the words of pediatrician Dr. Miriam Stoppard. In her book *Examine Your Child. How to discover and develop a child's hidden capabilities*, she stated: "If I had to indicate only one way to enrich a child's experience and stimulate his proper development, I would advise keeping books at home" (Stoppard, 1992, p. 135).

The author gives a lot of advice to parents. Librarians can also successfully use these to convince guardians of the important role of books and reading in a child's development. Here are some of them (Stoppard, 1992, pp. 135-137):

- If you like reading, make it clear to your child and talk to them about it, and then they will like books too.
- Books are one of the great joys of life and are irreplaceable if a child is to learn words to express feelings, thoughts and ideas. Books explain the world around a child – they describe relationships between people, various situations and characters. Books stimulate imaginative play, provide new ideas and provide great pleasure.
- If you read books, your child will read them too.
- It will be easier for your child to develop a desire to read if reading is an experience adapted to his or her abilities and is pleasant.
- Try to read to your child every day or at least several times a week and at the same time develop the habit of reading to them.
- Choose books tailored to the child's interests, nice and with good illustrations. Children like illustrations depicting their favorite characters, places, and events. They also like images of animals. They are fascinated by fairy tales. Fairy tales help the child to understand the

surrounding world in a painless way and distinguish the real world from fantasy. Fairy tales stimulate abstract and creative thinking.

- A child's first books should be short and contain only a few pages. A child has a narrow attention span. Illustrations should be large and simple. Many children like books with only pictures and no words.
- Make sure your child can understand the words in the book.
- A child is more willing to listen to a book being read when the atmosphere is nice and cozy.
- While reading, trace your finger under each word, but do not force your child to look at the words or follow your finger.
- Encourage your child to pay attention to the details in the pictures or to guess what will happen next. Praise them if they guess right.
- At your child's request, read the same books repeatedly. You can read your favorite book many, many times. The best test of whether a child is interested in a given topic is how often they talk about it and whether they willingly return to their favorite book.
- When they are ready to read on their own, give them familiar, favorite books that they can "read" even if they know all the words by heart. Later, the child will recognize these words in other books and start reading them.
- Give your child new books and then tell them a fairy tale in which a thread is often repeated and the same words appear over and over again.
- Even when your child learns to read on their own, don't stop reading. The child will continue to enjoy the luxury of time spent together in an intimate atmosphere.
- Teach your child to respect books, keep them clean and in good condition, without scribbling.
- Keep books on low shelves in the children's room. The child will then look through them by themselves.

Thanks to the ABC XXI Foundation All of Poland Reads to Children, librarians have an easier task. Fewer and fewer parents need to be convinced about the importance of reading in a child's emotional development, because 90% of Polish society has heard about the foundation's campaign and knows the slogan: "Read to your child for 20 minutes a day, every day". I. Kuźmińska and E. Olszewska in their publications *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości* (With a child into the world of values) (Kuźmińska & Olszewska, 2007) and *Wychowanie przez czytanie* (Upbringing through reading) (Kuźmińska & Olszewska, 2010) point out that reading to a child every day for pleasure is a truly magical activity, as it satisfies all the child's emotional needs, perfectly supports his or her mental, intellectual and social development, is one of the most effective parenting strategies, and at the

same time brings the child great joy and leaves wonderful memories. The advantages of reading aloud include the fact that it is an easy activity, does not require preparation, is pleasant and inspiring also for the reader, and does not cost anything when using the library or exchanging books with other parents. Attention was also paid to the fact that a child who is read to every day feels important and loved. This builds his strong self-esteem, inner strength, and self-confidence, which influence the quality of their life at least as significantly as a healthy spine or healthy eyes. Daily reading aloud builds a strong bond between parent and child. The bond with the closest person is one of the most important developmental needs of a child, a condition for it to grow into an emotionally healthy and mature person. The authors state that if parents do not find time for their child, putting their career, earning money or their own pleasures ahead of his or her needs, they unknowingly jeopardize their entire future. Other advantages of reading aloud include linguistic and mental benefits. Children who read learn to use rich and beautiful language, will have the ability to conduct interesting conversations, and will be able to express themselves in public in a clear, logical, and vivid way – values that are very important in social life.

Employees of the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Warsaw (Danutą Świerczyńska-Jelonek and Małgorzata Kopczyńska) prepared “Listy o literackim wychowaniu dzieci” (“Letters on the literary upbringing of children”) (Walczewska-Klimczak, 2004, p. 3). The letters were addressed to parents of children in three age groups: up to two years old, three to six years old, and also to parents of children of preschool age. Two versions (shortened and extended) of rules of conduct have been developed, the application of which may help to develop children’s positive attitude towards books and reading. It is worth mentioning here those addressed to parents of children aged up to two years:

“Dear Parents!

Did you know that children who read well:

– learn faster and better,

– have a greater chance of graduating from a good school and obtaining an education.

Even though your child is still small, it is worth taking care of them now to ensure that they speak well and read willingly and well in the future.

Tell your little baby that you love them. When you change them or bathe them, talk about what you are doing. Your voice will make the child feel safe and happy with your presence.

Sing to your child. When they get a little older, remember the “finger games” from their childhood (e.g. “O sroczka, co kaszkę warzyła” – the magpie was brewing porridge; “O raku nieboraku” – a crayfish comes,

poor fellow) and poems (e.g. "W pokoiku na stoliku stało mleczko i jajeczko..". – In the room there was milk and an egg on the table...) together with your child. Encourage them to sing and talk. Praise them when they do it "their way".

A child can receive their first picture book – colorful and safe for the child, e.g. washable, with rounded corners – when they can sit alone. The pictures should be clear and in nice colors, so that they encourage viewing. You can look at and read such a book with your child. (...)

If you would like to talk about books in raising your child, it is worth going to the nearest library. The librarian will be happy to provide advice and assistance.

1. Conversation is mutual communication between partners: you and your child.
2. Talk to your baby from the moment he or she is born.
3. Don't use the formal "we" when talking about your child's activities.
4. Your statements to your child are not a conversation.
5. Always try to find time to talk to your child.
6. Don't dismiss or ignore your child's questions and answers.
7. Talk to your child the way you would like to be talked to.
8. Conversations with you cannot be replaced by media, computers or things.
9. Talk to your child about everything – serious, difficult, seemingly unimportant matters.
10. Tell each other fairy tales – those you know and those you create yourself.
11. Remember that your child hears statements that are not intended for them.
12. "Speak to your child seriously, correctly, warmly and cheerfully. If, what and how you speak determines if, what and how your child will speak" (Walczevska-Klimczak, 2004).

The letters contain a number of arguments that will certainly appeal to parents and guardians of children.

The ABECADŁO multimedia library for children in Olsztyn has published a brochure in an attractive form (it has the shape of a teddy bear's head), which includes an appeal from librarians to parents ("In your town, look for a LIBRARY, a magical place where your child will find lots of wonderful books. The librarian will tell you what to read to a toddler and how to interest him in a book. You will certainly also find an interesting offer of educational activities there. We invite you"), arguments in favor of reading to a child, tips on when to start reading and what to read, information on how to read to children, books recommended for children (aged up to one year, from one to two and from two to three years old). Everything in an accessible, funny form with Wisława Szymborska's mot-

to: "Reading books is the most beautiful fun that humanity has invented". Here we also find a number of arguments that will surely convince parents and guardians (if they are not yet convinced) why reading to a child is worth it. There is also interesting short information for parents and guardians about when to start reading to a child and what to read. The following convention was adopted for a young child addressing his or her parent or guardian:

"Mom, I'm in your tummy. I like it when you sing me songs and say little rhymes. I'm getting used to your voice.

I'm already a baby. I don't fully understand what you are reading, but it is very pleasant. I love how you hold me in your arms and hug me. I feel safe when we try to turn the pages of a book together. You show me colorful pictures and explain their meaning.

I like how we read dialogues, how you modulate your voice and pretend to be someone other than you are, and how we imitate animal voices together. You ask me questions about the illustration, and I point to the answer with my finger.

I'm already 3 years old and I'm very big. I like it when you read short stories to me, but I get bored with long ones. Recently you read to me 'Mr. Kitten was sick.' Tomorrow I will ask you to read it to me again. And when I grow up, I will become a doctor and treat my cat".

The adopted convention, straight from the film "Look Who's Talking", may not suit everyone, but this short text contains the most important tips that parents and guardians can and even should use (Grabowska, 2013, pp. 252-255).

## HOW TO READ?

It is important to provide information about the role of reading and also to give instruction on how to read to children from the earliest days. There are many ideas for increasing the effectiveness of reading to children. Małgorzata Cackowska writes about one of the methods promoted by Gover J. Whitehurst and his colleagues (Whitehurst, 2000, pp. 9-13) in the article *O czytaniu dialogowym z wykorzystaniem książek obrazkowych* (On dialogic reading using picture books) (Cackowska, 2023, pp. 16-19). This theory emphasizes the importance of the child's reading environment, which is assigned the greatest role for his or her development, language learning, understanding concepts, text, and images, and early reading competencies, which translates into school success. The method is a kind of practical instruction in interactive reading with a child, called dialogic reading. It was found that traditional reading to children, which involves making children listeners looking at pictures, does not bring the same results in the development of children's language resources (vocabulary,

sentence structure) as does inclusive reading, during which the roles are reversed and adults are made listeners of children's stories provoked through questions, which increases the stimulation of children's language through interactive reading (Whitehurst, 2000, pp. 9-13).

This translates into the PEER technique, i.e. sequences of short interactions (language games) between adult intermediaries and the child while reading a book together. It consists of the following steps:

– P [prompt], encouraging (inclining, prompting, stimulating) a child to say something about a book he or she has read and viewed;

– E [evaluate], assessing (more properly appreciating) the child's answer, praising them for their presented idea and willingness to express themselves;

– E [expand], extension – encouraging the child to expand their answers by reformulating them and adding new information;

– R [repeat], repetition of prompts to make sure that the child has acquired new competencies (vocabulary, thinking, concepts, etc.) (Cackowska, 2023, pp. 16-17).

Various encouragement techniques are also presented:

– C (completion prompts) – encouraging them to finish a sentence, most often coming from a phrase in the text of the book you are using;

– R (recall prompts) – encouragement achieved through questions recalling events from the plot of the book, both text and visual;

– O (open-ended prompts) – asking open questions that encourage the child to talk about the books he or she has read, especially about the details presented in the illustrations, allowing the child to develop the fluency of thinking and expressing;

– W (“wh”-prompts) – prompts initiated by the question whether? and its complements – what? which? to whom? why? whom? how?, which trigger children's imagination and open up the field of creativity.

It is worth directing parents' attention to how they read, because it affects the child's skills.

## CONSULTATIONS WITH ADVISORS

Young mothers may find it valuable to talk to a sling consultant, dietician, physiotherapist, learn Shantala massage, or even talk to an expert in strollers or car seats. Such guests may be invited by the library or by mothers themselves on their own initiative. It's not just about the experts. Just being among a group of women with similar problems is a great support. A momentary break from everyday duties, leaving the house, talking to other adults is important and necessary at this time. “Eco-shopping”, i.e. an exchange of used items – clothes, toys, books – will also work. In the case of children who are several months or one year old, their first peer

contacts also become interesting. Having fun, reading together, making music.

#### MOMS' CLUBS IN THE LIBRARY

The beginnings are always difficult, but most often after inviting the first people word of mouth begins to work. It is worth hanging posters in clinics, posting information on Facebook or other social media, or in local press and in stores selling children's products. These are places where the offer should appear.

Agata Walczak-Niewiadomska conducted research in branches of Polish public libraries for children and youths (Walczak-Niewiadomska, 2019), the aim of which was, among other things, to examine the services provided to carers and children aged (0-5). It shows that almost all libraries provide services for the youngest (0-2 years old), and most provide services for children 3-5 years old. They provide collections (picture books, cardboard books, toy books), while their most common activity is cooperation with kindergartens. Librarians use reading aloud and artistic activities. Half of the libraries surveyed have a "toddler's corner", which is equipped with tables and chairs adapted to children of this age, a selection of books and toys, and drawing and painting supplies. Few libraries declared that they had an offer for parents, as well as access to amenities (changing tables, comfortable sofas, couches, armchairs, etc.). The smallest offer applies to the youngest children and their guardians (Walczak-Niewiadomska, 2019, p. 154). Parental education is a somewhat neglected form of work in Polish libraries: one fifth of the surveyed libraries declared preparing materials for guardians on the subject of introducing children to reading, with one quarter organizing workshops (Walczak-Niewiadomska, 2019, p. 155). The research results have shown that involving this group of users in library activities is an important task, not always appreciated by librarians.

You can also find good practices. The Poznań Regional Public Library and Animation Center in Jeżyce runs a Moms' Club, which advertises itself as a place of development and recreation for mothers and their children. Meetings are held every Thursday. The club was established thanks to the project "Library for everyone. Different. Equal. Important", which is implemented by the Information Society Development Foundation in partnership with Save the Children International. (<https://wbp.poznan.pl/biblioteka/aktualnosci/klub-mam-w-naszej-bibliotece/>).

The Władysław Stanisław Reymont Municipal Public Library in Wierchosławice implemented the project "We – moms from the library" co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Culture Promotion Fund as part of the "Partnership for a book" ("Partnerstwo dla

książki”) program (<https://www.biblioteka.wierzchoslawice.pl/zajecia-Gordonian-at-the-end-of-the-project/>). It was carried out from June to December 2023. Meetings were held with specialists in pediatrics, psychology, and child pedagogy. Care was also taken to deepen relationships with children thanks to a play group run in the library. The meetings were held twice a month. During fourteen two-hour meetings there were lectures by experts with the possibility of individual advice for participants and an integrative exchange of experiences. One of the meetings was centered on the Gordon method and was led by Ewa Judasz-Jakubiak. This method involves shaping a child’s innate musical predispositions. The aim of Gordon classes is to create conditions for a child that will enable him or her to develop further musically. Another one, led by Monika Brożek and Patrycja Gąsiorek, presented the Montessori educational method, created by the Italian doctor Maria Montessori, which is intended to help in the comprehensive development of a child. A holistic approach to the child is intended to help the child achieve their full potential in all areas of life.

The Zygmunt Łazarski Public Library of in the Mokotów District of Warsaw founded the Moms’ Club in the Multimedia Library together with the Family Alliance Association (Stowarzyszenie Przymierza Rodzin), to which moms from Mokotów and the surrounding area were invited with their children. The library encouraged people to come by stating: “let’s create a place together where each of us can find a moment of respite from the everyday routine. A space for inspiration, exchange of experiences, coffee and gossip, as well as for interesting workshops and lectures” ([https://www.bpmokotow.waw.pl/bpmok/index.php/2474-klub-mam-w-lutym\)-in-the-multimedia](https://www.bpmokotow.waw.pl/bpmok/index.php/2474-klub-mam-w-lutym)-in-the-multimedia-next-library)“next-library”). The topics of the meetings were diverse, e.g.:

- Recruitment for kindergarten and nursery devoted to the emotions accompanying these situations. The talks concerned dilemmas that bother parents and guardians.
- “Different love languages”. At this meeting, an attempt was made to answer the question: what helps relationships in the family. During the meeting, one could also make a scented Valentine’s Day heart.
- A meeting inspired by Gary Chapman’s book: *The Five Love Languages. The concepts presented in the book were discussed.*
- A meeting about carnival costumes accompanied by a photo session.
- “Cupping therapy. Truth and myths about cupping” – a lecture with practical workshops. The meeting was led by Ewa Ambroziak, an herbal medicine specialist who promotes natural ways of supporting health, who presented the history of cupping. She presented their types and mechanism of action.
- Simple ideas for handmade toys and creative ways to spend time with your child.

The classes were free, but registration was required.

The W. J. Grabski Public Library of the Ursus District of Warsaw organized the Moms and Toddlers Club, which is to be a space for conversations and exchange of experiences. Animation activities were prepared for children, and psychologist support for caregivers in difficulties related to motherhood (<https://portal.bpursus.waw.pl/klub-mam-i-maluchow/>).

Moms' clubs in the library also operated, among others, in the Public Library of Michałowice County (<https://wmichalowicach.pl/klub-mam-w-bibliotece/?v=9b7d173b068d>), The Waclaw Werner Public Library of Brwinów (<https://biblioteka.brwinow.pl/dla-doroslych/klub-mam>), The Municipal Public Library in Gdynia (<http://archiwum.bibliotekagdynia.pl/wydarzenia/klub-mam-gdynia-w-library-karwiny/>), The Municipal and County Public Library in Polkowice (<https://www.mgbp.pl/strona/nasze-dzialania-dla-doroslych/2347-klub-mam>), The Zbigniew Herbert Regional and Municipal Public Library in Gorzów Wielkopolski (<https://www.wimbp.gorzow.pl/klub-mam-w-bibliotece-pana-kleksa-103625/>).

On libraries' websites you can find interesting and inspiring ideas that should encourage the establishment of mothers' clubs in libraries.

## SUMMARY

Public libraries, as institutions "for everyone", should ensure that everyone can find their own space and interesting activities in them. Among people with special needs, pregnant women and people with small children constitute an important group. As part of ensuring accessibility, care should be taken to remove barriers, especially architectural and communicational ones, and to take into account the needs of these users in the planned and conducted activities. It is recommended that they run mothers' clubs, toddler clubs, and in the case of pregnant women, support groups. The animating nature of these activities works well as it involves participants who decide what will be discussed and who will be the guests of subsequent meetings. In addition to realizing the impact of reading on children's development, it is worth teaching caregivers how to do it; the dialogic method is one of the ways. In Polish public libraries you can find interesting, inspiring activities for this group of users, but there is still a lot to do. Involving pregnant women and caregivers of small children (up to 3 years old) in activities still requires development. The role of the library should not be limited to providing collections and offering traditional activities.

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## **KOBIETY W CIĄŻY I OSOBY Z MAŁYMI DZIEĆMI W BIBLIOTEKACH PUBLICZNYCH W POLSCE**

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** Polska. Biblioteki publiczne. Kobiety w ciąży. Dzieci do 3 lat. Działalność. Kluby mam. Czytanie dialogowe.

**ABSTRAKT:** Teza / cel artykułu – Celem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na kobiety w ciąży i osoby z małymi dziećmi (do 3 lat), jako potencjalnych użytkowników bibliotek, których trzeba traktować w szczególny sposób, jako osoby o specjalnych potrzebach. Metody badań – Analiza publikacji, aktów prawnych, stron internetowych pozwoliła scharakteryzować biblioteki jako instytucje, które mogą włączyć kobiety w ciąży i osoby z małymi dziećmi w swoje działania. Wymaga to dopasowania przestrzeni i działań, pod kątem potrzeb tej grupy użytkowników. Wyniki/wnioski – Kobiety w ciąży i osoby z małymi dziećmi mają specjalne potrzeby związane z korzystaniem z bibliotek. Poza dopasowaniem aranżacji przestrzeni i zbiorów, sprawdza się w bibliotekach prowadzenie grup wsparcia i klubów mam. Animacyjny charakter podejmowanych działań korzystnie wpływa na użytkowników i na doprecyzowywanie strategii zaspokajania ich potrzeb. W bibliotekach polskich można odnaleźć przykłady dobrych praktyk w tym obszarze, ale wymaga to dalszej intensyfikacji.