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## **RULES GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF ACCESS TO SPECIAL LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AS A FORM OF PROTECTING THE MOST VALUABLE ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE<sup>1</sup>**



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**KEYWORDS:** Special collections. Terms and conditions. Sharing. Heritage. Protection.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – Special collections stored by libraries are some of the most precious elements of cultural heritage. Due to their specific needs and for the purpose of their protection, departments responsible for their storage, processing and securing introduce special rules governing their use, which contain various provisions restricting their availability to readers. The purpose of the article is to present selected rules governing the use of special collections implemented by libraries as a form of protecting such collections. The research results presented here comprise primarily excerpts from the provisions of various rules employed by Polish libraries compared with national libraries in Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. **Research methods** – In the study, the method of analysis and critique of sources was used, and the analysed documents were compared. **Results and conclusions** – All terms governing the provision of access to special collections presented here reflect existing rules and trends related to the protection of the most valuable elements of cultural heritage. Their provisions require their holders and users to make use of safety measures and exercise due caution, so that such artefacts can remain an element of culture for as long as possible, serving as a testament to human achievement. The collection, processing, storage, securing and providing access to special collections requires additional effort and resources – financial resources, as well as personnel. The greatest hazard to these valuable and unique collections is the human factor – failure to observe security regulations, carelessness in providing access and perusal, and lack of any sense of responsibility for the materials being accessed.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main tasks of libraries is to make their resources available, which is accomplished in several ways, some of which require special rules due to the type of library materials. Providing access to the collections is not only a matter of providing suitable space, workstations, or safe conditions for both users and the collection items themselves, but it also involves various types of access regulations, which are the main focus of this article.

Two main forms of access – external lending (including national and international interlibrary loans) and on-site access – are available in various types of libraries; however, as a rule, special collections are not available for external loan. The only exception, also hedged with a series of regulations and requirements, is loaning resources for exhibitions. Another type of sharing resources is through digital libraries and repositories, as well as ordering scans on demand. Notably, the latter three types have significantly improved the accessibility of resources and reduced barriers, including geographical or economic ones – thanks to digital versions there

is no need to visit a library, so neither distance nor the costs associated with travel are any longer an obstacle to using the collections. Additionally, digitisation serves as one of the means of protecting collections: In cases where a digital version exists, the original collections are usually not shown to the reader, which also contributes to their security. The remote use of libraries and numerous services provided via this route (e.g. online self-registration to the library, online catalogues, online databases, online ordering, online scans, online lending, events streamed online or virtual exhibitions, open access, access to self-digitisation) are a way of reaching out to the user, approaching them through the increasingly widespread online information environment, thereby keeping cultural institutions up to date with informational and technological progress (information and communication technologies). Thanks to the use of advanced technology and the development of digital humanities, the sharing of collections, especially special ones, has undergone a huge transformation over the past few decades – from closed institutions and collections available only to researchers, on-site in reading rooms and after meeting certain requirements, to open access and the provision of scans along with metadata on the Internet.

When writing about the sharing of resources, something that has undergone a true revolution that is still ongoing due to technological developments, it is necessary to mention the principles formulated in 1931 by Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan. His five laws stated that, to begin with, books are for use, there is a right book for every reader, and there is a right reader for every book. Most important, especially from the perspective of technological development, are his last two laws – to save the reader's time, and that the library is a living organism which is always evolving. These resonate remarkably with present times: firstly, quick access to collections and simple, transparent rules for their provision significantly reduce the time once required for accessing resources; secondly, the numerous aforementioned new technologies employed in libraries undoubtedly demonstrate the development of these institutions and their efforts to keep pace not only with technological progress but also with readers' expectations. It is also worth noting the expanded meaning of sharing within the concept of so-called open access – once it simply meant access to bookshelves (whether from a reference collection or a storage area), but nowadays it also refers to unrestricted access to digital copies. Furthermore, the creation of consortia and multi-search engines based on similar standards for bibliographic description or digitised materials (e.g., MARC21 or Dublin Core) enables a substantial increase in the number of recipients, also aided by offering numerous ways to access specific resources. An example of this type of database is the Europeana (Europeana, 2023) portal, which provides users with access to many

millions of digitised objects from libraries, museums, archives, and other European institutions. All the countries whose regulations on providing access to special collections are cited and presented in this article (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine) collaborate in creating this portal, making available over 50,000,000 digital objects.

Sharing various library resources requires developing and adhering to rules that define both the possibilities and obligations of users. This is particularly important with regard to special collections, which constitute the most valuable part not only of the resources gathered by libraries, but also of the cultural heritage which we, as current custodians, have a special duty to protect and preserve for future generations. Beyond standard collections such as monographs and books, it is precisely this type of resource that requires special attention in terms of acquisition, processing, storage, and conservation, and exemplifies resources whose accessibility is usually governed by separate regulations, presenting both providers and users with a set of requirements.

Special collections, which are library materials requiring special care with regard to their acquisition, processing, storage, and conservation, constitute resources whose use is generally governed by separate rules, and are subject to a number of requirements which apply to both readers and libraries. The special nature of such materials typically consists in their uniqueness, irreplaceability, pricelessness, provenance, or the impossibility of purchasing or providing compensation in the case of damage resulting from improper use.

A report by Jackie M. Dooley and Katherine Luce of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) defines special collections as: “library and archival materials in any format (e.g., rare books, manuscripts, photographs, institutional archives) that are generally characterized by their artifactual or monetary value, physical format, uniqueness or rarity, and/or an institutional commitment to long-term preservation and access. They generally are housed in a separate unit with specialized security and user services. Circulation of materials usually is restricted” (Dooley, Luce, 2010, p. 16).

The term ‘special collections’ [*zbiory specjalne*] is also defined in the Encyclopaedia of Book Knowledge [*Encyklopedia wiedzy o książce*] as “library documents which, for various reasons, require different treatment than regular documents” (Special, 1971, 2607) and include manuscripts, early printed books, map collections, sheet music, and graphic materials, as well as coins, bookplates, rare prints, ephemera, reprographs, norms, patents, and photographs (Special, 1971, 2607–2609); the Encyclopaedia of Books [*Encyklopedia książki*] of 2016 also adds that special collections are “sets of library documents stored separately from the rest of the holdings

due to their different storage, conservation, processing, information and access requirements”, and comprise manuscripts, early printed books, iconographic materials, maps, music-related materials, and coins (Special, 2017, pp. 666–668).

The unique and special nature of such collections of cultural heritage elements is also manifested in the form of the special care that is taken with regard to their protection. The rules that govern this are specified in a number of legislative acts. One of the fundamental acts of this nature is the European Cultural Convention of 19 December 1954, which stipulates as follows: Article 1. “Each Contracting Party shall take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe” (Council, 1954). The founding document of the European Union also states that: “It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced” (European, 2016, p. 15). In addition to this, heritage-related provisions are also included in the *Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation* (European, 2011), *Regulation (EU) 2019/880 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the introduction and the import of cultural goods* (European, 2019) and *Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1970 of 10 November 2021 on a common European data space for cultural heritage* (European, 2021). Cultural heritage is a major element of EU policy. As stipulated in one of the latest EU documents, “Culture, including cultural heritage, has an intrinsic value and contributes to strengthening European identity” (European, 2022).

In Poland, the most valuable library collections are part of such initiatives as the National Library Resource programme (Ministry of Culture, 2012), managed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the National Library (Fluda-Krokos, 2020). Section 2 contains the following definition: “The national resource comprises library collections which are of special importance and significance to the national heritage, which are unique and meet at least one of the following criteria: 1) have historical value; 2) have scholarly value; 3) have cultural value; 4) have artistic value” (Ministry of Culture, 2012). The rules governing proper storage are specified in numerous guidelines for various types of library materials (Adcock, 1999; Ministry of Culture, 2008; PN ISO, 2000; Potrzebnicka, 2018).

According to library report data collected by Statistics Poland (form K-03), in 2021, Polish libraries and library and information centres stored 27.2 million special collection items (Statistics, 2022, p. 102), with 2.7 million such items being borrowed from public libraries alone (ibidem, p. 101).

Departments established to house these materials<sup>2</sup> contribute to the fulfilment of the responsibilities specified in the *Act on libraries [Ustawa o bibliotekach]* of 1997 (Chancellery, 1997), although they do not always offer separate reading rooms for particular types of special collections. For example, the Jagiellonian Library offers reading rooms for early printed books, manuscripts, maps, and graphic materials, as well as ephemera, similar to the National Library and the Ossoliński National Institute. On the other hand, the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS offers access to its special collections via a specialised reading room (with the exception of the graphic materials collections), in addition to a separate area for processing reader requests. However, it is likely that all libraries which are in possession of sizeable and valuable special collections have developed rules for accessing such collections that are either separate or part of their general rules. Due to their nature, such regulations contain provisions that specify the rules that must be adhered to when using such resources.

According to the provisions of Article 3 of the *Act on libraries* of 1997: “1. Libraries and their collections constitute a national asset and serve the purpose of preserving the Polish national heritage. Libraries organise and ensure access to Polish and global scholarly and cultural achievements” (Chancellery, 1997, p. 1), and Article 4: “The fundamental responsibilities of libraries are: [...] 2) to serve users, primarily by way of providing access to collections” (Ibidem). Access in this case should be governed by provisions that render it possible to make the most valuable items available under optimal conditions and according to rules which are publicly available as part of the rules. According to the *Dictionary of the Polish Language [Słownik języka polskiego]*, rules are “Provisions and regulations that govern conduct in a certain field, apply to the employees of an institution, members of an organisation, etc.; also: a document containing such provisions and regulations” (PWN, 2023). If we assume ‘members of an organisation’ to refer to readers who would like to peruse a collection, they, too, should be subject to rules. The *Dictionary of Legal Terms [Słownik pojęć prawnych]* also makes mention of obligations and responsibilities, defining rules as: “Principles and provisions adopted by an organisation or company that specify accurately and in detail the duties

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of the National Library, for example – the Department of Ephemera, Department of Manuscripts, Department of Early Printed Books, Departments of Audio and Audiovisual Collections, Department of Iconographic Collections, Department of Cartographic Collections, Department of Music Collections; the Jagiellonian Library – the Special Collection Department, which comprises the Manuscript Section, Early Printed Books Section, Prints and Maps Collection Section, Music Collection Section and the Rare Publications and Ephemera Section; the Ossoliński National Institute – the Ephemera Department, Cartography Department, Early Imprints Department and the Manuscript Department; the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS – the Special Collection Department and the Print Room.

and responsibilities of that institution's members or employees" (Polski, 2023). According to the *Encyclopaedia of Book Knowledge [Encyklopedia wiedzy o książce]*, "The legal basis governing the relationship between a library and a reader is the library's rules" (Accessing, 1971, 2398) and in relation to special collections: "Access to special collections is provided, depending on the size of the holdings, in separate special collection reading rooms or in general reading rooms under the special supervision of a trained librarian. The use of such collections is governed by separate provisions" (Special, 1971, 2609).

The provision of access to special collections – with the exception of borrowing library materials for the purpose of exhibitions, which is governed by separate rules and procedures – takes place on-site, and provisions that govern accessing such collections can be divided into two main types – access criteria and use criteria. The source material used for the analysis comprises the rules governing access provision implemented by five different libraries possessing special collections in their holdings: the National Library of Poland, the Jagiellonian Library, the Ossoliński National Institute, the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS in Cracow and the Hieronim Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Lublin. Additionally, comparative references were made to examples of regulations in effect at the national libraries of Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. In the study, the method of analysis and critique of sources was used, and the analysed documents were compared. All regulations can be found on the websites of the specified libraries.

## RESULTS

Presented first are the provisions applying to the National Library of Poland – an institution whose history dates back to the times of the Załuski brothers. By donating their collections to the people, Józef Andrzej and Andrzej Stanisław opened the first public library in Poland on 8 August 1747. At the end of 2022, the library was in possession of 2,842,047 ephemera items, 674,207 electronic publication files, 33,880 vols. / 23,558 manuscript items, 183,870 vols. of early printed books, 137,810 sheet music items, 305,700 audio and audiovisual recording items, 399,544 iconographic items (prints, drawings and photographs), 147,405 map items, 274,794 microform items and 423,447 negative items (National Library of Poland, 2023b, p. 28).

The library's website contains the *Conditions of Use of the National Library of Poland* (National Library of Poland, 2023a), which include provisions governing special collections. In line with the purpose and mission of

the National Library, all collections, including special collections, can be used by “natural persons possessing the capacity to perform acts in law”, while “minors above 13 years of age and other individuals with a limited capacity to perform acts in law may use the collections of the Library upon obtaining written consent from their legal guardian” (Ibidem, p. 1). However, a subsequent provision stipulates that collections which are part of the national library resource can be used primarily for research purposes. Access to special collections is provided via several reading rooms: the Heritage Collections Reading Room (manuscripts, archival copies of books and magazines from the 19th–21st centuries marked as A or Kras., as well as bearing reference numbers containing Cim., Cym., Chr., Cim. konsp., Konsp., Min. and Wyst., ephemera and early printed books), Cartography Reading Room (maps, prints, drawings, photographs), Music Reading Room (sheet music) and the Sound and Audio-visual Records Reading Room (audio and audiovisual recordings) (Ibidem), which are available to holders of a reader’s card or, in the case of the Music Reading Room and collections subject to special protection, upon presenting a photo ID, and if the user is not a senior researcher a document issued by a university or patron institution that specifies the research subject (National Library of Poland, 2023c). Article 4 of the *Conditions* specifies the rules governing the provision of access to collections and informs readers that electronic requests cannot be made in relation to items with a special designation (A, Kras., and marked as Cim., Cym., Chr., Cim. konsp., Konsp., Min. or Wyst., as well as all early printed books) – these should be requested by phone, email, or directly from a librarian on duty. In addition, perusal on-site does not apply to early printed books, although it is possible to request their scans and use them via the Polona digital library service. Only in justified cases can original materials be made available for research purposes, and only upon submitting a request to the head of the Department of Early Printed Books. In order to access the original versions of other special collection items (archival copies of books and magazines from the 19th to 21st centuries marked as A or Kras., as well as containing the designations Cim., Cym., Chr., Cim. konsp., Konsp., Min., Wyst., ephemera, graphic materials, drawings, photographs, maps, sheet music, audio and audiovisual recordings, electronic publications stored on electronic data storage devices, manuscripts, including sheet music manuscripts and hand-drawn maps, as well as other collections requiring special protection for conservation-related reasons), it is necessary to obtain permission from the head of the department in question. In addition, individuals who would like to use more than 10 special collection items at a time should obtain the approval of the person responsible for a given collection (Ibidem, pp. 3–5).

The library also offers a paid and free copy service in the form of traditional requests or 'digitisation on demand'. In addition, readers may make their own copies for personal use (Ibidem, p. 6), although this does not apply to collections subject to special conservation protection.

Every reading room mentioned above that offers access to special collections also has its own web page. Their descriptions invariably begin with general information – the location of the reading room, its opening hours and contact information – and the reading rooms' rules make references to the *Conditions of Use of the National Library of Poland* as well as, in the case of the aforementioned Music Reading Room, containing more detailed stipulations.

Another Polish library with the status of a national library is the Jagiellonian Library, with its origins dating back to the establishment of the Jagiellonian University in 1364. At the end of 2022 its holdings consisted of 36,831 manuscript items, 111,324 early printed books, 64,845 cartographic items, 66,244 graphic items, and 59,723 music items (Jagiellonian Library, 2023a).

The Jagiellonian Library also makes use of hybrid provisions governing access to special collections. In addition to a number of rules that apply to all users, listed in the *Rules of Using the Jagiellonian Library* [*Regulamin Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej*], valid from 27 September 2017 (Jagiellonian Library, 2023b), special collections are governed by four separate addenda (Addendum no. 11: *Rules for Users of the Manuscripts Reading Room* [*Przepisy porządkowe dla korzystających z Czytelni Rękopisów*] (Ibidem, pp. 43–46), Addendum no. 12: *Rules for Users of the Early Printed Books Reading Room* [*Przepisy porządkowe dla korzystających z Czytelni Starych Druków*] (Ibidem, pp. 47–49), Addendum no. 13: *Rules for Users of the Graphic and Cartographic Collections Room* [*Przepisy porządkowe dla korzystających z Gabinetu Zbiorów Graficznych i Kartograficznych*] (Ibidem, pp. 50–52), and Addendum no. 14: *Rules for Users of the Rare Publications, Ephemera and Music Collections Room* [*Przepisy porządkowe dla korzystających z Gabinetu Wydawnictw Rzadkich, Dokumentów Życia Społecznego i Zbiorów Muzycznych*] (Ibidem, pp. 53–56)).

The first reference to using special collections is made in section 10 of the general provisions: "Special collections, i.e., manuscripts, prints dating back to before 1800, graphic, music, and cartographic collections, ephemera, and micrographic, electronic and other audiovisual collections are only made available for perusal in designated reading rooms. Their use is subject to separate rules implemented by the individual reading rooms" (Ibidem, p. 12). These provisions, which apply to four reading rooms for various special collections, are virtually identical, differing only in tiny details, and will thus be presented together while making note of the differences. The fundamental requirement for using the collections of the Jagiellonian Library is being a holder of a library card, although in

order to access the special collections – collections made available only for research purposes – it is also necessary to fill out a user declaration and be a member of one of four groups: “senior research staff and individuals with the title of doctor; doctoral students and assistants – upon presenting a recommendation from an advisor or supervisor; students working on their master’s theses – upon presenting a recommendation from their supervisor; employees of research or cultural institutions or publishing houses – upon presenting a recommendation or document specifying the subject and purpose of their research” (Ibidem, pp. 43–44, 47–48, 50, 53–54). Other users require the approval of the unit (section or department) head, and should their request be rejected they can submit an appeal to the head of the library. In every reading room, pens and fountain pens are forbidden, and users are advised to use pencils and personal computers. Users are also provided guidelines on how to handle collections (using special mats, blocks, and foil, refraining from changing the order of loose leaves, etc.). In the case of all collections available in electronic form the original versions are not accessible unless for research purposes.

Collection items are ordered using traditional cards available in the reading rooms or electronically, and the maximum number of items available for simultaneous perusal varies: a single hard cover manuscript or 10 leaves of an unbound manuscript (Ibidem, p. 45), 5 volumes of early printed books (Ibidem, p. 49), up to 5 prints/drawings and an album (in justified cases up to two albums), 5 maps and an atlas (in justified cases up to 2 atlases) (Ibidem, p. 52), a manuscript volume or two early printed books or 5 sheet music prints from the modern music collection storage, 5 volumes and one file from the ephemera storage, 5 rare print volumes from the rare publications storage, or 5 underground printed material volumes (Ibidem, p. 56). In addition, all special materials that have been requested are stored in a local storage facility for two weeks from the moment of being delivered from their original storage or the date of last perusal.

Users also have the option to create copies of special collection items. The *Terms* permit users to use a digital camera to make copies of their own, provided they do so without flash, or they can also request copies to be made by the library’s Reprography Section. Making photocopies is forbidden (Ibidem, p. 21).

The third example chosen is the Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław, which is also in possession of a priceless and extensive special collection. At the end of 2021 its inventory was as follows (Ossolinski, 2022, p. 124): 23,514 manuscript items, 68,429 early printed book items, 26,375 map items, 356,646 ephemera items, 68,608 microform items, and 196,780 items from the Art Department collection<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Art Department is a department of the Lubomirski Princes’ Museum [Muzeum Książąt

Since September 2022 the institute has employed the *Rules of Using the Collections of the Ossolineum National Library* [*Regulamin korzystania ze zbiorów Narodowej Biblioteki Ossolineum*], which set forth the general terms of using the institute's collections (Ossolinski, 2023c). In addition, individual special collection departments employ their own separate rules. The main rules specify the types of special collections in the institute's possession (manuscripts, early prints, ephemera, maps), as well as the places where they are stored (Manuscripts Department Reading Room, Early Prints Department Reading Room, Microforms and Digital Resources Department Reading Room, and the Cartography Department Reading Room). Also specified is who may access these resources: "employees of universities and other research and cultural institutions, as well as doctoral students and other students upon presenting a written recommendation issued by their university. Special collections may also be made available to donors, their heirs, or former owners who sold their collections to the Library, although their right to perusal applies only to the materials they donated or sold to the Library" (Ibidem, p. 1).

Point III focuses entirely on the special collection reading rooms. It contains a stipulation which refers to users of such collections, and lists situations where accessing them requires the approval of the head of the department, and should their request be rejected, the right of the requesting party to seek permission from the deputy head or head of the institute. The maximum number of items which may be requested at a time is also specified: Manuscripts Reading Room – 10 (stored for 5 business days), Early Prints Reading Room – 5 works (max. 5 volumes), Social Life Documents Reading Room – 20 items bearing newer reference numbers or 5 with older reference numbers (stored for 3 business days), Cartography Reading Room – 5 items. It is possible to access more items upon receiving approval from the department head. In the case of digitised versions of items, their original versions are not accessible, and if an item is in poor condition, a request for access may also be denied.

The rules of using the special collections of the Ossolineum Library are also available on the pages of its reading rooms (Ossolinski, 2023d, 2023e, 2023a, 2023f). These rules specific to the reading rooms specify the processing time of requests and the opening hours of the reading rooms, their general rules (library card, entry pass, cloakroom rules), and contain information about available catalogues and copying services – users may not take photographs on their own, and all copy requests are processed by the institute's Copy and Photo Workroom, provided that the items in question are in a condition that does not prevent copying.

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*Lubomirskich*], which together with the Ossolineum Library [*Biblioteka Ossolineum*] comprises the Ossoliński National Institute.

Separate provisions govern the use of graphic collections stored in the Lubomirski Princes' Museum, which is part of the institute, and which are accessible via the Art Department Reading Room. Those eligible to use the institute's collections include "senior academic staff members, researchers employed by research and scientific institutes upon presenting a recommendation from their parent institution, students who present a recommendation from their university, as well as other individuals upon obtaining the approval of the Director of the Ossoliński National Institute" (Ossolinski, 2023b). The remaining regulations are similar to the provisions that apply to the various departments of the Ossolineum Library, with the stipulation that access is granted by a professional staff member of the department, users are required to report any and all irregularities identified in the items they are accessing, and in the case of unique items only their photocopies may be accessed. In addition, if a user makes use of a museum item in their publication they are required to provide a copy of that publication to the institution for accession to its collection.

Another example is the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Science in Cracow, which comprises two units responsible for handling special collections: The Special Collections Department, which collects manuscripts, early printed books, maps, and ephemera, and the Print Room, which collects prints, drawings, and bookplates. At the end of 2021 its inventory was as follows: 16,262 early printed items, 17,796 manuscript items and accessioned items, 646 parchment diploma items, 11,145 volumes of ephemera, 12,226 volumes of map items, 3,363 microfilms, 116,511 iconographic items, and 139 museum items (Fluda-Krokos, 2022). The *Rules of Accessing the Collections of the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS in Cracow* [*Regulamin Udostępniania Zbiorów Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie* (Scientific, 2023b)] contain general provisions pertaining to accessing all collections, while special collections are handled by two external links – 3. *Special Collections* [3. *Zbiory Specjalne*] and 4. *Print Room* [4. *Gabinet Rycin* (Ibidem, p. 4)] – which redirect the reader to more detailed stipulations: the *Rules of Accessing the Special Collections of the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS in Cracow* [*Regulamin Udostępniania Zbiorów Specjalnych Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie* (Scientific, 2023c)] and the *Rules of Accessing the Collections of the Print Room of the Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS in Cracow* [*Regulamin Udostępniania Zbiorów Gabinetu Rycin Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie* (Scientific, 2023a)]. According to the provisions of the above documents, special collections may be accessed by "senior research staff members and other individuals who conduct research and present a recommendation from a supervisor or an affiliated institution, and in other cases, collections may be made available with the approval of the head of the Special Collections Department or the head

of the Library” (Scientific, 2023b, p. 1; Scientific, 2023a, p. 1). In addition, readers using the Special Collection Reading Room are required to leave their reader card at the front desk and fill out an appropriate questionnaire (separately for every type of collection – manuscripts, early printed books, and maps), and in the case of the Print Room they must make an entry in the *Research Book* [*Księga Kwerend*]. An electronic catalogue can be used to request early printed books which have been entered into the KRAK7 and NUKAT databases. Other types of special collections can be requested traditionally, or users can send an email to the library containing their request – the Special Collections Reading Room has a limit of 5 items, and the Print Room 20 prints or 5 volumes. Items are predominantly accessed one at a time, and in the case of loose manuscripts, maps, and photographs, up to 10 leaves at a time. Readers are required to handle the items they are accessing with utmost care, and are responsible for their condition. The library provides special mats, and requires that users use pencils or laptops to make notes. In addition, users may be requested to wear gloves.

For conservation purposes and in the case of particularly valuable items, access may require the approval of the director. Digitised materials are provided instead of original versions, with the exception of cases where the originals are required for research purposes.

Readers may take their own photographs of collections for private use, provided that they obtain the approval of the staff members on duty and fill out a *Declaration of Taking Photographs of Resources*. However, the number of photos taken must not exceed 50% of the item. Copies for publishing and commercial purposes are made by the library’s Copy and Photo Workroom. Whenever scans or photos of items are to be used in publishing, director approval is required, the provenance of the item must be accurately stated, and a copy of the publication must be provided to the library for accession to its collection. Digitised items may not be photographed (Ibidem, pp. 2–3; Ibidem, pp. 2–3).

An example of a public library that maintains and provides access to special collections is the Hieronim Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Lublin (Hieronim, 2023c), which has existed since 1907. At the end of 202 the library was in possession of 3,164 manuscript items, 11,910 early printed book items, 109,311 ephemera, 33,012 graphic items, 4,626 map items, 4,687 microfilms, 9,510 postcards, and 14,484 photographs<sup>4</sup>. Items from special collections are made available in accordance with the *Rules of Accessing Special Collections* [*Regulamin udostępniania zbiorów specjalnych*] of 17 May 2022 (Hieronim, 2023a). An excerpt from the rules can be found on the web page of the Special Collections Reading

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication with Mrs. Anna Oleszek – head of the Special Collections Department of the Hieronim Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Lublin, July 14, 2023.

Room (Hieronim, 2023b). The second section contains a stipulation that particularly valuable collections are only made available in special cases, and librarians may deny requests due to an item's poor condition, for example. In addition, digitised items are provided in electronic form, and their original versions are only accessible for research purposes. In addition to standard information such as opening hours, registration, requesting items, the number of items available for perusal at the same time (1 manuscript and up to 10 other types), and making copies (on one's own or by requesting a copy service), a separate paragraph contains the rights and obligations of readers. These include the obligatory use of the cloakroom, no food or drinks in the reading room, keeping quiet, the right to request assistance from a librarian on duty, and 2022/C the right to use one's own computer and to request copies. Readers are also required to "handle the materials and library equipment they are accessing with care; follow the instructions of the librarian on duty with regard to handling the materials being accessed (and in justified cases – to use protective gloves); while using items from collections other than the reference collection and microfilms, notes should be made in pencil; before leaving the Reading Room, all items should be returned to the librarian on duty" (Ibidem, p. 3). Making notes in library materials is also forbidden, as is their copying using tracing paper and taking them outside library premises.

In order to compare the rules governing the protection of special collections during their use by visitors, the rules of six European national libraries are presented (in alphabetical order by countries' names): the National Library of Austria (National Library of Austria, 2023a), the National Library of the Czech Republic (National Library of the Czech Republic, 2023b), the National Széchényi Library – the Hungarian national library (National Széchényi Library of Hungary, 2023a), the National Library of Latvia (National Library of Latvia, 2023b), the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius (Martynas, 2023b) and the V.I Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine (National Library of Ukraine, 2023a).

The first example is the National Library of Austria. At the end of 2022 the library was in possession of more than 11.6 million items, including 8,030 incunabula, 674,671 manuscript items, 141,065 Egyptian manuscript items, 303,763 map items, 2,197,311 photographs, 265,373 graphic items, 53,225 bookplates, and 17,793 microfilms (National Library of Austria, 2023c, p. 53).

Every department offering special collections has a web page containing the rules of accessing such resources, which also contain links to the general rules (National Library of Austria, 2023d), which in turn contain a single provision pertaining to special collections: "For conservation reasons, special provisions apply to the reading rooms of the special collections"

(Ibidem, p. 7). Rules employed by several departments have been analysed in this paper. Every department lists its contact information and states that readers are required to possess a library card in order to access its special collections. The Picture Archives and Graphics Department provides users with several options regarding searching: they may submit an order (with a stipulation that requests may be subject to restrictions for conservation reasons) – such items are available the following day; online catalogues and databases may be used, and library research may be ordered – free of charge for research lasting up to 30 minutes, and EUR 40 for every hour and EUR 20 for every new half-hour. Also provided are links to the library regulations and the price list for copy services and for borrowing items for exhibition purposes (National Library of Austria, 2023h).

In the case of the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, the first point specifies certain restrictions on accessing various materials depending on their physical condition. All publications can be ordered via an online catalogue, but should a user require access to manuscripts, autograph texts, or legacy or archival materials, it is necessary to contact the department beforehand, and specialised literature can be found and ordered via the e-catalogue, as well as being accessible via the main reading room (National Library of Austria, 2023d).

Users of the Map Department receive their books within 20 minutes, and maps and postcards are available the following day. For conservation-related reasons, access to certain materials is restricted, although in special cases it is possible to submit a request for access to such materials to the department director. The copying and borrowing of materials is governed by separate provisions (National Library of Austria, 2023g).

To access the Department of Music, a user is required to present a library card and a photo ID, and should also be aware of various access restrictions stemming from the condition of certain items. Order processing time (maximum 5 items per day) is up to two hours, and the rules governing the copying and borrowing of items for exhibition purposes are specified in a separate document (National Library of Austria, 2023e).

The Department of Papyri employs additional special requirements – its collections are accessible for research purposes, and their use should be preceded by a written request for access submitted at least a week beforehand. Readers will find thematic literature in the e-catalogue, and publications going back to 1929 can be read in the main reading room, while older publications and magazines from the reference collection can only be read in the department's reading room (National Library of Austria, 2023f).

The National Library of the Czech Republic, whose origins date back to the 14th century, stores more than 300,000 special library items, including approximately 14,800 manuscript items, 174,200 early printed book items,

and 3,140 map items, as well as 526 graphic items (National Library of the Czech Republic, 2023c) and 100,000 music items (National Library of the Czech Republic, 2023a). These are accessible via dedicated reading rooms – the Manuscripts and Early Printed Books Reading Room and the Music Department Reading Room. The rules of the former (National Library of the Czech Republic, 2023e) contain standard provisions mirroring those employed by Polish libraries. Users are required to possess a library card, use the cloakroom, must not bring food or drinks into the reading room, are required to submit requests for items, and will be provided with digitised copies instead of original versions. Requests are fulfilled twice a day (at 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM), up to 5 items may be requested and only one used at a time, with more available for ordering after returning previously checked-out items. Items with the reference number CIM Vall Nr. are an exception – these are only made available once a day. The reading room is of modest size and strict space restrictions are in place – 2 for manuscripts, 4 for early printed books. The provision on reading room staff warrants a separate mention, as *assisting in reading and translating* is not one of their responsibilities. Users are required to use 2H or 2B pencils, as well as special mats for prints and acid-free paper, and they also have to work in silence. Any alterations to items are prohibited, and readers making improper use of collections are required to cover the repair costs. Several mentions are made of possible exceptions which require the approval of the head of the department. The rules for using the Music Department Reading Room (National Library of the Czech Republic, 2023d), in addition to generic provisions, contain a mention of a research questionnaire required to access parts of the collection, as well as a one-day admission ticket which entitles users to access the reference collection. A reader may order 6 music items at a time, and may also use a computer with access to the library catalogues and databases. The department also offers a digital piano – due to its popularity, users may only play it for 30 minutes at a time. Readers may also order copies, or make them themselves. Similar to the previous document, any exceptions to the rules require the approval of the department head.

The third of the analysed examples are the rules for accessing special collections at the National Széchényi Library – the Hungarian national library (National *Széchényi*, 2023b). The library, which is over 200 years old, was founded on 25 November 1802 by Ferenc Széchényi, who donated his collection of Hungarica to the nation. A year later the library was opened to the public, and currently its main collection consists of approximately 3 million monographs and about a million periodicals. Special collections include approximately 1.4 million manuscripts, 8,500 old prints, 1,800 incunabula, about 78,000 items in the photographic collection, over 300,000 items in the cartographic collection, about 4 million

posters and small prints, and about 100,000 musical and theatrical items (National Széchényi, 2023a).

Access to special collections (Manuscript, Early Printed Book, Map, Poster and Small Print, and the Theatre History and Music Collections), from 18 October 2022, takes place in a shared reading room (National Széchényi, 2023c). To use these resources users must reserve a place by sending an email at least 24 hours before the planned visit. The library also requests notification of cancelled visits to allow resources to be made available to another reader (it has 15 spaces). Orders for selected archival reference numbers must be submitted by 4:30 PM the day before arrival or by 1:00 PM on Friday if the resource is to be made available on Saturday. Access to special resources requires a reader's card valid for at least 6 months, whereas using catalogues and open access publications only requires a one-day pass. Due to the type of collections, the number of items that can be ordered at the same time is limited to 2 volumes of manuscripts and 5 loose manuscripts, the reference collection and catalogues can be accessed under the supervision of the library staff. Information about the limits for other types of collections can be obtained from an employee on duty. Readers are not allowed to take photos by themselves, all copies can be ordered from the digitisation department for a fee, and the use of copies in publications requires separate permission. Currently, only the collections of historical photographs as well as audiovisual and sound documents have a separate reading room where requests for the same day are accepted until 2:00 PM. Up to 8 readers can work in the room.

Rich collections of special materials are also housed in the National Library of Latvia<sup>5</sup>, which has been in existence since 1919. The terms of use are outlined in section 4: Regulations for the use of the institution's resources (National Library of Latvia, 2023). They are made available in a similar manner as in the libraries already described, in specially designated reading rooms or spaces – the Rare Books and Manuscripts Reading Room, the Lettonica Reading Room, the Map Reading Room, the Small Prints Reading Room, the Music Reading Room, the Art Reading Room, the Audiovisual Reading Room, and the Periodicals Reading Room. Rare prints and manuscripts from the Lettonica and Balkan section are made available upon electronic ordering, but no more than 10 items are made available simultaneously. Conversely, graphic collections (e.g., postcards, posters, ex libris, graphics) are made available by appointment. Ordered materials are stored for 5 to 10 days, and processing time may

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<sup>5</sup> The latest statistical data on the collections come from an archived library webpage, dated 13 April 2015 – <https://web.archive.org/web/20150415021743/http://www.lnb.lv/en/library/collections>. At that time, the library held over 254,000 units of graphic collections, over 227,000 units of music collections, over 67,000 Lettonica collections, over 52,000 units of rare books and manuscripts, and about 34,000 units of cartographic collections. The latest information was not found on the new website.

extend until the following day. Readers can take a few non-commercial photos of special resources themselves, free of charge, after obtaining permission from the person on duty. It is possible to place orders for paid digital copies.

In the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius (Martynas, 2023b), which operated in Kaunas from 1919 to 1963 before moving to Vilnius, numerous and rich special collections have also been amassed (Martynas, 2023a), including 858 paleotypes (Vaitkevičiūtė, 2014). The rules for their use are provided in the Library Use Regulations (Martynas, 2023a). Resources classified as rare along with manuscripts are exclusively available to readers who possess the appropriate permission and declaration. Additionally, students must have a letter of recommendation. Access is provided to five items on a one-time basis, with the proviso that if the library has a digital copy the original is not made available. The National Archive of Published Documents collection, on the other hand, can only be used once it has been established that a particular title is not available in other departments of the library and upon obtaining the appropriate permission, and materials are made available in the reading room for the library's own books and manuscripts. Users may make copies by themselves for their personal use and for research purposes, provided that they comply with the copyright and related rights act in force in the country. Copies of documents from the Centre for Judaic Studies, rare books, and manuscripts that will be made available to the public are produced by a staff member, just as in the case of items that have already been digitised, are in poor condition, are unique, or are of special value. In the case of music and audiovisual resources, these can be accessed exclusively in the Musical and Visual Arts Reading Room and played using the equipment available there.

The last example, the Vladimir Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv, established in 1918, also employs separate rules governing the use of its special collections, which include more than 8,000 Cyrillic prints, 524 incunabula, 2,500 early printed books, and over 400 manuscript items, 220,000 sheets of music, 250,000 graphic items, and 42,000 map items (National Library of Ukraine, 2023d). The *General Rules of Use* stipulate as follows: "1.5. For rare and valuable books, historical collections, unique archival monuments, which are stored in the NBUV, a special regime of protection, storage and use is established in accordance with the current legislation" (National Library of Ukraine, 2023e). In addition, point 1.6 stipulates that the restrictions placed on the use of particularly valuable and rare publications serve protective purposes (Ibidem). The web pages of two out of six special collection reading rooms contain detailed guidelines on the use of resources. No such guidelines are specified for the Department of Early Printed Books and Rare Publications (National

Library of Ukraine, 2023f), Department of Musical Fonds (National Library of Ukraine, 2023c), Department of Fine Arts (National Library of Ukraine, 2023b) or the Section of Cartographic Publications (National Library of Ukraine, 2023i). Additional guidelines are employed by the Manuscript Institute: in addition to a reader card, a user is also required to fill out a form and present a recommendation from their employer or university (containing the following data: first and last name of the researcher, including maiden name, position, research topic and timeframe, research goal, and date of issue of the recommendation; the recommendation should also be printed on the parent institution's official letterhead and be signed by its director or deputy director and contain the institution's seal). In certain cases presentation of a photo ID (passport) is also required, which together with a three-month reader card renders a user eligible to use the library's resources. The responsibility for the proper use of accessed documents rests on the reader and their parent institution. Manuscripts are delivered the next day after submitting an order (up to five items, no orders are fulfilled on Saturdays, previously returned items may be used again, documents ordered in the past can be made available again after six months), and books are delivered within 30 minutes. The last manuscripts are delivered an hour before closing time. Access to documents is contingent upon their condition and processing status – copies are made available instead of original versions, if possible. Items in poor condition, original versions, or particularly valuable items may be made available at the discretion of the department director or deputy director. The use of white gloves (a reader's own gloves or gloves provided by a member of the staff) is recommended. The number of items available for access is also specified – two manuscripts or three archival document items (up to 100 leaves), or 10 leaves and 5 books. Should a reader fail to collect their order, it is stored and kept available for two weeks. Also listed are a number of paid services – their prices are specified in a price list. These include ordering copies or making copies on one's own (only with the approval of the director). Fees apply to the making of copies and to the granting of permission to copy documents (in the case of making copies on one's own, the fee applies to being granted permission to do so) (National Library of Ukraine, 2023h).

Another department with defined rules for accessing its collections is the Department of Library Collections and Historical Collections. This department requires that readers present a recommendation/referral identical as in the case of the previously described department, and specifies the rules for making copies (National Library of Ukraine, 2023g).

## SUMMARY

All terms governing the provision of access to special collections presented here reflect existing rules and trends related to the protection of the most valuable elements of cultural heritage. Their provisions require their holders and users to make use of safety measures and exercise due caution, so that such artefacts can remain an element of culture for as long as possible, serving as a testament to human achievement.

The collection, processing, storage, securing, and providing access to special collections requires additional effort and resources – financial resources, as well as personnel. The greatest hazard to these valuable and unique collections is the human factor – failure to observe security regulations, carelessness in providing access and perusal, having no sense of responsibility for the materials being accessed – these are only some of the main concerns. Thus, the development, implementation, and enforcement of various rules appears to be, alongside proper storage and security regulations, one of the most important factors that guarantee the security of special collection items. In principle, provisions regarding accessing (including reader card, photo ID, recommendation and user questionnaire requirements), handling (including using a pencil to make notes, special mats for placing materials, restrictions on the number of leaves or volumes available simultaneously, access only to digital versions), making copies (on one's own free of charge, on one's own for a fee, or in the form paid orders at library copy departments) and using materials (including providing information about the source, and providing a copy of a publication to the library where the source is stored) serve to guarantee that collection items are stored safely.

The rules cited from various regulations are in many respects identical or similar, and users are obligated to abide by them upon registration with the library. Due to the individual or unique, rare nature of special collections, they are among the most valuable manifestations of a given country's culture and its intellectual heritage, requiring special protection. This is also evidenced by the records in the above-mentioned regulations. However, despite the multitude of regulations, the possibility of accessing and using them is also important. They serve not only as research material but also as exhibition, promotional, educational, and nation-building material, showcasing the achievements of the inhabitants of a given territory while also including examples of the accomplishments of other nations. Regardless of the number of special resources, it is essential to make them available in an appropriate and responsible manner, respecting not only existing laws but also their historical value. Both the special provisions for access as such and the rules for using them are intended to protect special resources.

A separate research problem is the accessibility of special collections in digitised form – upon user request and as part of planned library and digital repository projects. The making of digital copies is a form of resource protection, and numerous rule sets include provisions which stipulate that, if an alternative version of an item exists (a microfilm, scan, or photograph, for example), users may not access the original version unless it is required due to the nature of their research (such as paper, watermark, or handwriting research). However, this issue will be the subject of a separate article.

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