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## HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS AND CONTEMPORARY LEGACY COLLECTIONS AS PART OF THE RESOURCES OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN POLAND – AN OVERVIEW



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**KEYWORDS:** Special collections. Academic libraries in Poland. Legacy collections in libraries. Historical collections. Preparation and dissemination of special collections.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – The aim of this article is to outline the presence of historical collections and contemporary legacies in academic libraries in Poland. The author highlights their significance as resources documenting scientific, cultural, and social activity, presenting selected examples of practices related to their acquisition, processing, and promotion. A key element of the text is a review of positions and opinions present in the literature on the subject – the article does not seek to formulate entirely new theories but rather to synthesize existing approaches and reflect upon them. The review section, showcasing selected collections from academic libraries, serves an illustrative function – its goal is to demonstrate the diversity of resources and their role in institutional practice, rather than to provide a detailed comparative analysis. **Research methods** – The article is based on a review-based approach. It draws on an analysis of secondary sources (specialist literature, reports, library websites, and institutional documentation) and a simplified form of case studies illustrating the practices of selected academic libraries. The analysis is complemented by reflections stemming from the author's professional experience in working with archival legacies. **Results/Conclusions** – The collected examples show that legacy collections – ranging from personal archives to institutional documentation – play an increasingly important role in shaping the cultural and scholarly identity of universities. While some libraries focus solely on preservation, others actively engage in initiatives such as digitization, exhibitions, and public outreach. The examples of the University of Warsaw Library, the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library, and the University of Szczecin Library illustrate different but valuable approaches to integrating special collections into academic and public life. At the same time, the article points to certain challenges – including the lack of processing standards, insufficient funding, and uneven accessibility. The conclusion emphasizes that properly curated and managed historical collections and legacies can serve both as sources for research and as tools for strengthening academic memory and cultural continuity. As a reconnaissance, the text serves as an introduction to further research on special collections in Polish academic libraries and cultural institutions. The article underlines that librarians should act not only as archivists but also as active participants in the process of knowledge creation and scholarship.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main objectives of this article is to draw attention to historical collections and contemporary legacy collections as an important part of the resources of Polish academic libraries. Collections held in academic libraries are a resource attractive to researchers, discussed primarily by bibliologists, literary scholars and historians but also by representatives of other scientific disciplines (Borysowska, 2015, p. 6).

The diversity of collections held in academic libraries is presented every few years during academic conferences. Of particular note is a regular conference organised by the Pomeranian Library in Szczecin in

cooperation with the Library of the University of Szczecin. The organisers invite the community of librarians and researchers in special collections to join the debate. Speakers share the results of their bibliological research – typographical, bibliographic and provenance studies. They devote considerable attention to the collections of old printed matter, manuscripts, cartography, music-related resources, graphics, etc. in the individual libraries. At one of these conferences, a few years ago, Mirosław Supruniuk put forward the thesis that the role and importance of academic libraries in the near future will be determined precisely by special collections, historical collections and contemporary legacy collections held in libraries “for the benefit of national culture”, and that their growing importance should be talked about. Supruniuk also formulated another thesis, in his speech he noted that “once almost all books important to readers have been made available on the Internet, there will be only one reason for coming to libraries – and it will be special collections. It is therefore in the well-understood interest of university libraries to “have special collections” (Supruniuk, 2010, p. 12).

## METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach adopted in this study is based on an analysis of the methods of collecting, preparing, keeping and popularising historical collections and legacy collections in Polish academic libraries. The article adopts a review-based approach, grounded in the analysis of subject literature, conference materials, and institutional sources such as library guides, reports, and content published on the websites of selected academic libraries. In the descriptive part, a simplified case study method is used to present selected practices related to the acquisition, processing, and promotion of special collections. On the theoretical level, the article synthesizes views found in bibliological, archival, and museological literature, taking into account the perspectives of researchers such as M. Supruniuk, A. Kulecka, K. Walczak, and H. Dymnicka-Wołoszyńska. An additional element of the analysis is the author’s reflection based on her professional experience in working with legacies within the library environment. In this article, the focus is on special collections documenting the activities of individuals, organisations and institutions, manuscript legacy collections, often also having a museological character. At this point, the author would like to point out the principles of preparing collections. This article attempts to explore the idea of gathering and storing collections using several selected university libraries as examples. The use of these models by other academic libraries, but also public ones, could bring them several major benefits, such as scientific development, opening to external cooperation or taking the lead in promoting culture and science.

## ABOUT DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Various terms are used to refer to the type of library resources that will be discussed, such as “collection”, “legacy collection” or “personal archive”. The term “archival legacy collection” is often used to describe material documenting the activities of private individuals; in libraries, the term “manuscript legacy collection” is more commonly used. However, the above terms do not appear in any encyclopaedia or dictionary of library science known to the author. *Encyklopedia współczesnego bibliotekarstwa polskiego* (Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Polish Library Science) defines “manuscript collections”. In the latest *Encyklopedia Książki* (Encyclopaedia of the Book), the broad presentation of content in the entries required the use of two-part headings, which is what happened with the entry “Manuscripts” to which two headings “Collections. Legacy collections” were added. The entry reads that: “the category of library manuscripts consists essentially of manuscripts of private origin, produced as a result of the personal, unregulated creativity and activity of individuals. (...) They include (...) also personal legacy collections” (Żbikowska et. al, 2017, p. 666). “Archival legacy collection” is defined in *Polski słownik archiwalny* (Polish Dictionary of Archival Science).

## REVIEW OF THE POLISH LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Studies concerning individual collections or legacy collections in a variety of institutions are repeatedly undertaken by researchers to be published in professional archival, library or museum science journals. Some steps in the study of collections have been made thanks to the aforementioned Mirosław Supruniuk who noted that there is a new understanding of what is meant by the term “special collections” – far removed from relying solely on formal criteria. In addition to groups, departments or sections of early printed books, manuscripts, photographs, cartographies etc. which have been in existence for many years, collections-departments are also being established in libraries (Supruniuk, 2010, p. 14). At this point, it is worth noting that historical book collections also function in libraries, but this is a subject for a separate paper.

Alicja Kulecka’s article (Kulecka, 1999) is entirely devoted to the subject of legacy collections documenting the activities of private individuals in an attempt to provide a systematic approach to this issue; however, the author focuses on presenting it mainly from the perspective of archival science.

Also worth mentioning is the text by Prof. K. Walczak entitled “Idea kolekcji w dziejach i współczesnej działalności polskich bibliotek pedagogicznych” (“The Idea of Collections in the History and

Contemporary Activity of Polish Pedagogical Libraries”). The author refers to the concept of “historical collections”, which is well-known and used in the activities of academic libraries, explaining that it is based on not separating the elements of a large donation and accepting it in its entirety. A distinction can be made between individual donations involving the donation to the library of the entire oeuvre of a particular author (writer, artist, distinguished professor) and donations by institutions including archival documents, chronicles, photographs, etc.). As emphasised by Prof. K. Walczak, “the advantage of keeping a donation undivided is that it retains its original shape, which is particularly important in the case of individuals, as often in addition to their personal collection of books, the donation may include manuscripts, (letters), graphic collections (...), photographs, awards, diplomas, and last but not least, tools for creative work (desk, typewriter, graphic studio, etc.). The prerequisite for the proper storage and use of such collections (...) is adequate premises, often bearing the name of the donor” (Walczak, 2015, p. 11-12).

Historical collections are diverse in terms of size, organisation, as well as their value in terms of their content and their historical and often artistic value.

In recent years, the issue of personal archives and manuscript collections held in libraries, museums, and archives has been gaining increasing interest among academic and archival communities. This is evidenced by numerous events and scholarly publications dedicated to this subject. Of particular note is the activity of the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU) and the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) in Kraków, which has been organizing international conferences on special collections since 2020. One of the outcomes of these initiatives is the multi-author monograph “*Littera scripta manet. Manuscript Collections in the Holdings of Libraries, Archives, and Museums*”, published in 2022 by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (Danowska, Fluda-Krokos, 2022). The publication comprises 28 articles written by authors from 22 institutions, presenting research on manuscripts from various academic and cultural centers.

In the context of other initiatives, it is worth noting that the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk organized a conference in December 2023 entitled *Legacies in Archival, Museum, and Library Collections*, focusing on the processing, digitization, and promotion of personal archives. Similarly, the Kalisz Society of Friends of Learning, as part of the project *Biographical Research in a Regional Perspective*, held a conference in 2022 that concentrated on legacies as sources for biographical studies.

Additionally, the Archive of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków organized a scholarly conference in October 2019 titled *Legacy in the 21st Century*

– Problems of Acquisition, Processing, and Accessibility. The event was dedicated to the topic of personal archives across various academic and cultural institutions. Its main goal was to gather voices of archivists and scholars from across Poland in order to discuss the issue and prepare a draft of new methodological guidelines for processing such legacies.

## PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTING AND PREPARING HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

The effort undertaken by contemporary academic libraries to build historical collections requires appropriate work organisation and clear priority setting for the work of the division, sections or departments under whose care the collections in question are kept. The following issues are of relevance:

- preparing librarians to take professional care of unusual collections,
- appropriate distribution of activities within the team,
- solving the issue of expanding historical collections with a limited budget,
  - ensuring proper storage conditions for the collections,
  - selecting preparation methods in line with current standards,
  - regulating the availability of materials for research, through the organisation of exhibitions, the publication of catalogues and the rental of items (Wielgut-Walczak, 2009, p. 157).

Collections are often assigned to library resources in manuscript sections. It is worth noting at this point that, for some of the material, it can be debatable whether it is library manuscripts or archive materials (e.g.: correspondence, diaries, journals, subsequent manuscript and typescript editions of articles and books, etc.) (Kulecka, 1999; Mycio, 2024). The question that arises is whether libraries should be collecting these types of documents; do they not, possibly, belong in archives? The answer, of course, is not definitive. Manuscript materials are stored in libraries, archives or museums, depending on their nature (Gaziński, 2007, p. 311-312). In Polish libraries, it is generally assumed that it is the owner of a legacy collection who decides which institution they wish to donate their materials to and that this institution should respect this choice.

The act of donating a legacy collection to a library is most often formally expressed as a contract in which the donor relinquishes the rights to the donated material; the copyright continues to belong to the legal heirs. On more than one occasion, collections were handed over without any written documentation of this fact. The methods of acquiring collections for library resources vary. Gifts (including through legacies) are most common, while purchases are less common. There have also been transfers by institutions

and exchanges of these materials between libraries, museums and archives. Collections are also held in Polish libraries on deposit<sup>1</sup>. Unusual formats and the diversity of materials pose a major challenge in preparing, storing and making such documents available in libraries.

Collection preparation methods vary, with each library adapting and modifying generally accepted principles to suit its needs. "Just as human life cannot be put into a rigid framework because of its uniqueness and richness, similarly, man-made and collected materials require an individual approach." (Majkowska, 2018) However, a constant reference point is *Wytyczne opracowania rękopisów w bibliotekach polskich* (Guidelines for the Preparation of Manuscripts in Polish Libraries) issued in 1955 (Horodyski, 1955)<sup>2</sup> and *Wytyczne opracowania spuścizn archiwalnych po uczonych* (Guidelines for the Preparation of Archive Legacy Collections Left by Scholars) issued in 1990 (Dymnicka-Wołoszyńska et al., 1990).

The guidelines provided by both foreign and Polish literature on organising legacy collections require that in the case of collections with a layout defined by the author, this layout should be preserved or recreated as faithfully as possible (Mamczak-Gadkowska et al., 2001, p. 160).

The first stage of preparing a group is organising the materials, which is generally the most time-consuming task. Metal elements – paper clips and staples – are removed from the materials. Documents are placed in acid-free covers and folders.

The processing of personal legacies in academic libraries is usually based on dividing the materials into several main thematic groups, corresponding to the creator's body of work, biography, and areas of activity. This structure typically includes biographical materials, documentation of professional and academic activity, creative works, correspondence, family materials, and working documents. In accordance with current guidelines for processing legacies, librarians aim to preserve the original order established by the creator, if it can be reconstructed. In other cases, a subject-based arrangement is applied, following an established archival schema.

Each collection is treated individually, taking into account the specific nature of the materials and their physical form. The processors adapt the descriptive structure to the character of the collection, guided by best practices for handling legacies in libraries and archives, as well as by their

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<sup>1</sup> One of such collections was the archive of Karol Libelt at the Jagiellonian Library, collected by Józef Łepkowski and donated by him to the Library in 1900; a small number of manuscripts held in the resources of the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń (BUMK) are also on deposit – the archives of the Sczaniecki family of Nawra are an example of this. See Andrzej Mycio, *Metody...*

<sup>2</sup> *Wytyczne opracowywania rękopisów w bibliotekach polskich*, elaborated by B. Horodyski, Wrocław 1955. Methodological guidelines for the preparation of manuscripts are also provided in the introductory notes to the editions of the manuscript catalogues of the National Library. See *Archiwum Zbigniewa Herberta. Inwentarz*, elaborated by H. Citko, Warsaw 2008.

professional experience. This type of flexibility allows for the preservation of the collection's integrity and research value while enabling effective access for interested users.

What can be said from the perspective of a librarian who handles these types of documents on a daily basis is that it is very moving to look through legacy collections, biographical material, personal documents, diaries, notebooks, letters, postcards from people who are often known only from the literature and with whom one has not dealt personally. A scientist's legacy is first and foremost their contribution to science, their field and their discipline. However, what also remains of a scholar, as well as a writer or artist, is a legacy in the most physical sense: his or her rough drafts, notes, lecture outlines, book notes, press cuttings and flashcards. They are the "workshop" that a person has kept for themselves in paper format, and therefore in a manner and arrangement that was convenient for them, to which they had become accustomed over the years.

With regard to the storage of this type of material, it is worth emphasising that both the storage room for special collections and the reading room for such collections should be climate-controlled rooms so that they are stored in near-perfect conditions. This, of course, guarantees their long life but it does not make them eternal. For this reason, for several years Polish libraries have been engaged in the process of either scanning selected material from their collections or scanning entire collections<sup>3</sup>.

## PUBLIC PRESENTATION – ARTICLES, THEORETICAL LECTURES, EXHIBITIONS

Owing to the storage of diverse resources, the library becomes a treasury of book culture in the broadest sense, but also a treasury of national culture with its indigenous collections. It is these values that inspire the decisions of donors to give their collections to institutions that should cater for the needs of science and education through scientific research and other activities.

The prestige of a library is raised by the ownership of this type of resources. Particularly as far as academic libraries are concerned, it seems that the resources they hold play an important role, becoming a showcase but also a way of promoting the entire university (Biłozór, 2010, p. 82).

<sup>3</sup> „Patrimonium” (full name in Polish „Patrimonium – digitalizacja i udostępnienie polskiego dziedzictwa narodowego ze zbiorów Biblioteki Narodowej oraz Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej”; En. “Patrimonium – digitisation and access to the Polish national heritage from the collections of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library”) – a 3-year digitisation project, scheduled for 2017-2020 whose main objective is to provide broad and free access to the most valuable and oldest historical Polish writings of the two most extensive libraries in Poland (the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library).



Libraries are willing to harness not only the scholarly potential but also the exhibition potential of their collections. Theoretical lectures on individual collections are held, combined with exhibitions of original documents. Exhibitions are an important option for making the collection accessible to the public. Of particular value are large-scale exhibitions accompanied by extensive topical commentaries, exhibition catalogues and multimedia presentations. These exhibitions often assume the shape of a joint library and university project, consolidating the academic milieu. It is now common to organise professionally prepared display board exhibitions which subsequently take the form of virtual exhibitions available online.

It is also important to organise an exhibition room or a small space within the library or university to display selected items. There are also substantial benefits from taking initiatives that integrate the library with other institutions. Ready-made exhibition boards or original items from individual collections are frequently rented to various institutions for both national and international exhibitions. An issue of great importance is the cyclical nature of the exhibitions and their visual attractiveness.

The ideal place to popularise special collections, already in widespread use, is the websites of individual libraries. They offer a vast range of possibilities. Individual valuable historical items can be displayed by designating them as "This Month's Highlight", for example. The Jagiellonian Library promotes its collections on a blog, which also has a profile on Facebook. It features regular posts about special collections entitled "Did you know that the Jagiellonian Library holds...?". The blog of the University of Warsaw Library is also worth recommending.

It is also worth mentioning the very simple ways in which valuable items included in special collections can be presented. Such an opportunity is offered by the publicity materials available from the individual libraries, i.e. a variety of calendars, notepads, postcards or bookmarks using motifs taken from the collection.

## OVERVIEW OF COLLECTIONS IN SELECTED ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The examples of historical collections and contemporary legacies in academic libraries presented in the following part of the article are selective and illustrative in nature. The selection of institutions is not based on uniform criteria and does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the issue. The author's intention is to present a cross-sectional view of the presence of legacies in various types of libraries – both in well-established institutions with long-standing traditions and in newer ones that are active on a regional or specialized level. This perspective makes it

possible to observe diverse institutional approaches and practices related to the acquisition, processing, and dissemination of special collections.

In making a very general review of the forms of institutional management of historical collections and contemporary legacy collections in selected Polish academic libraries, it should be noted that the oldest collection of materials resulting from the activities of various individuals is held at the Jagiellonian Library (JUL). Władysław Wisłocki, publishing a catalogue of the library's manuscripts in the second half of the 19th century, wrote that "the resources (...) date back to the early years of the 15th century, as they mainly originated through donations and legacies from professors, masters, bachelors and students of the university". JUL also served as an archive collecting official documents, and it stored the diplomas and privileges issued by the University (Kulecka, 1999, p. 76). The donation to libraries of manuscript materials resulting from the activities of private individuals was a common practice in the 19th century. The materials from most scholars, cultural figures and politicians were placed in library collections or museums. It was rather rare for this type of material to be handed over in the 19th and early 20th centuries to archives associated with the administration of the partitioning powers. It was libraries that were at the time establishments that were more open and well-known in different social groups than archives.

The resources of the JUL collection increased considerably during Karol Estreicher's directorship (1868-1904), at which time the library acquired, among others, the legacies of Joachim Lelewel (1882), Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1888) and Żegota Pauli (1896), and a collection of autographs by Władysław Górski (1902). Between the wars, the manuscript resources grew slowly but steadily. After the war, library resources were expanded through donations and purchases to include family archives such as the Ledóchowski Archive (1969), the Puśłowski Archive (1999) and the Pawlikowski House Archive (2000), as well as numerous legacies left by writers and scholars (Kowalczyk, 2003). In 2014, the manuscript legacy of Zofia Stryjeńska was accepted at the JUL as a gift from her heirs living in Switzerland. Zofia Stryjeńska's legacy, after being sorted and entered into the accessions of the Manuscript Section of the JUL, was presented at the exhibition "Stryjeńska. Portret ze słów" ("Stryjeńska. A Portrait from Words"), held at the Jagiellonian Library from 19 November to 18 December 2015 (Jaglarz, 2016, p. 17).

Another example to be mentioned is the collections held at the University of Warsaw Library (UWL). Among them are archive materials of monastic congregations of the Capuchins, Augustin monks, Canons Regular, Carmelites, nobility miscellanea, autographs of Enlightenment writers (Ignacy Krasicki, Stanisław Trembecki, Franciszek Zabłocki and fragments of Józef Wybicki's archive). Of the more than 150 loose

documents and diplomas (12th-19th centuries), manuscripts relating to Mogielnica, including medieval charters of the Mazovian dukes, form a coherent entirety.

Of interest is the collection of the Warsaw Scientific Society, founded in 1907 and originating from the Warsaw circle of members of the Krakow Academy of Arts and Sciences.

A separate group consists of materials of the Evangelical-Reformed Church with archives from the 16th to the 20th century, containing sources for the history of the Reformation and the dissident movement in Poland and excerpts from the legacies of clergymen and followers including Aleksander Woyde and Józef Spleszyński.

A very important part of UWL resources are the legacies and archives of eminent personages of the 19th and 20th centuries, writers, scholars, political and social activists, autographs and letters of, among others, Stefan Żeromski, Julian Tuwim, Maria Konopnicka, Eliza Orzeszkowa, the legacy of Maria Dąbrowska and her husband Marian Dąbrowski, and many others (Gabinet rękopisów, 2025).

More attention should be devoted to the Archive of Polish Composers (UWL APC) (previous name: Archive of Polish Composers of the 20th Century). It is the only institution in Poland that strives to collect as exhaustive documentation as possible of the sources of Polish contemporary music making. The archive was established in 1958 as a separate part of the Branch (later Department) of the Music Collection of the UWL. The resources comprise more than 40,000 items. In addition to music manuscripts, there are letters from and to composers, several thousand photographs, posters and concert programmes. The rest of the resources include various types of biographical material (personal documents, family documents, literary and journalistic texts, as well as museum artefacts) (Gabinet zbiorów muzycznych, 2025).

The most valuable part of the APC collection is undoubtedly the compositional and literary legacy of Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937). As a symbol of the importance of this collection to the Library, Szymanowski's Etude in B flat minor is inscribed on one of the plaques on the façade of the UWL building.

The library is also the depository of the valuable archives of the composer Roman Palester. Over the years, the library has undertaken many activities to disseminate knowledge about this fascinating individual and his outstanding musical and journalistic output. By virtue of his will (thanks to the efforts of Prof. Z. Helman), the entire legacy of Palestra was entrusted to the Archive of Polish Composers at the University Library in Warsaw, which thus became the main center for preserving the memory of the great artist. The University Library in Warsaw holds a vast collection of extremely valuable composer autographs, sketches, various documents,

photographs, as well as a fascinating collection of over 600 typescript scripts of his radio broadcasts. (Biblioteka, 2025; Fundacja, 2025).

In addition to the fundamental function of collecting and developing resources, the activities of the Archive are also aimed at safeguarding and popularising them. The microfilming of the most valuable collections has been underway for a long time, and more recently selected items have also been digitised. Whenever funds are available, maintenance of cimelia is conducted.

The archive has published some significant works.

An interesting example of legacy and its dissemination and popularization is the material donated by Joanna and Jan Kulma from Strumiany to the Main Library of the University of Szczecin. In 2002, the Strumiany Room (now the "Joanna and Jan Kulma Room"), which houses the collection, was officially opened in the Main Library building. Mr and Mrs Kulma donated part of their book collection and literary archive to the library.

The library organises "Strumiany Meetings" in the room – a series of meetings on historical topics addressed to academics, students and residents of Szczecin. The "Meetings" have become a regular element of the scientific and cultural life of the Main Library of the University of Szczecin (Ganakowska, 2014).

The newest part of the resources of the Nicolaus Copernicus University (NCU) Library consists primarily of the legacies of scholars, social activists and people of culture, among which most material originates from NCU professors. The library also has a large collection of 19th- and 20th-century documents, comprising several hundred units of material produced by Baltic Germans. The legacies of other eminent figures, not working at Nicolaus Copernicus University, but connected with the Pomeranian region, Vilnius region (in connection with the legacy of Stefan Batory University) and the person of the University's patron, Nicolaus Copernicus, are also collected occasionally. Among the most important of these is the manuscript legacy of the renowned Copernicologist, New York University professor Edward Rosen.

The unique archival and artistic materials collected at the University Library in Toruń have made it possible to create two units whose establishment, resources and activities are aimed specifically at strengthening the library's scientific offer. These two independent units within the structure of the University Library are Emigration Archives and the University Museum. In 1995, a department called the Archives of Emigration was established in the University Library, whose task is to collect, prepare and make available for research purposes the legacy of emigration writers, journalists, publishers, people of culture, science and artists, their books and memorabilia, as well as the archives of periodicals,

publishing houses and bookshops, art galleries and cultural, social, veteran and political institutions active in exile in the 20th century. Based on the Archive's resources, master's theses and doctoral dissertations are being written, articles prepared, books published and exhibitions organized (Supruniuk, 2010, pp. 12-13).

The KUL Library's collection of cimelia was established mainly through donations made to the University. An important place is also occupied by archival legacies of Jan Stecki, Fr. Bronisław Ussas (Mańkowska, 1979), dr Zygmunt Klukowski and Tadeusz Turkowski (Zezula, 2007, 2011). Extremely important in adding to the collection, especially of manuscripts are the legacies of university professors: Stanisław Smółka, Taszycki and Białkowski. The Library also holds the Archives of the Philomaths (Philomathic Society in Vilnius).

Several valuable special collections are held in the Main Library of the Pedagogical University of Krakow (hereafter ML PU), among which the legacy collections left by academics stand out. These include:

- the legacy of the astronomer Professor Tadeusz Banachiewicz,
- the legacy of the literary historian and educator Professor Wincenty Danek,
- the legacy of the literary historian Professor Mieczysława Roman-kówna,
- the legacy of the astronomer dr Lucjan Orkisz,
- the legacy of the mathematician Professor Zofia Krygowska (Błach, 2019).

It is also worth mentioning at this point that the library of the Faculty of Humanities at the PU houses the rich legacy of the historian Marian Tyrowicz. It consists of 76 thematic portfolios containing documents on social life relating mainly to 19th-century Galicia, Lviv and Kraków.

Referring to the professorial legacies, it is also worth mentioning the scientific legacy collection of prof. Józef Litwin held at the University of Lodz Library. The materials included in the legacy collection constitute a panorama of administrative law in Poland between 1945 and 1966 (Tynecki, 1991). The groups of manuscripts of the ULL also include the legacy collections left by Paweł Hulka-Laskowski, Jan Koprowski, Jan Muszkowski, Stanisław Mazurkiewicz and Helena Radlińska. This Section's collection also includes, among other things, directorial and theatrical copies of Polish dramas and librettos from the 19th and 20th centuries, family archives (including 17th–18th-century family correspondence, economic and estate documents), archives of institutions, societies, publishing houses and press editors.

Also worth mentioning are the collections of correspondence held in the Library of the University of Opole. Acquired mostly by donation, the letters of deceased professors, secured and prepared, become a valuable

source of information and material for both regional and biographical scientific research. Private correspondence often links personal matters with information about what is close to the scientist – the environment from which they grow up, in which they develop, in which they obtain particular degrees and titles, of which they become a pride or a distinctive figure. People of science, not only through their scientific achievements but also through their personalities, contribute to this environment and give it distinctive characteristics.

On the basis of the correspondence held by the library: letters from Prof. Władysław Studencki to Prof. Jan Trzynałowski and letters from Prof. Jan Trzynałowski to Prof. Zdzisław Piasecki, it is possible to demonstrate the extent to which collections of letters – as a specific type of special collection – make it possible to broaden knowledge of the local scientific milieu of Opole and Wrocław (Kmieciak, 2010, p. 28).

The resources of the University of Silesia Library are also partly comprised of collections. The Franciszka and Stefan Themerson Collection could be mentioned as an example. The collection includes, among other things, books owned by the Themersons, publications of Gaberbocchus, a publishing house run by the Themersons in London, original drawings by Stefan and Franciszka, book cover designs, photographs, an extensive collection of foreign-language avant-garde magazines once owned by Stefan, manuscripts and typescripts, posters and memorabilia.

While browsing the websites of the libraries of state higher vocational schools in Poland, the author did not come across any traces of the presence of legacies of authors, writers or professors associated with the schools. Perhaps a thorough search or distributing a survey would provide accurate information. The author's attention was drawn to the collection of the Library of the State Vocational School in Głogów. The library has established a Department of Regional Studies, the so-called "Bibliotheca Glogoviensis". The Department was established mainly on the basis of the library deposit of the Głogów Area Society. "Bibliotheca Glogoviensis" contains monographs and periodical collections relating to the past and present of the Głogów area and its surroundings, as well as collections of ephemeral prints, materials with a manuscript status, collections of photographs and material on the history of some of the region's factories and enterprises that no longer exist.

The above examples are a good illustration of the skilful management of materials left behind by artists, writers and scholars. They are initiatives that focus on the development and use of legacies whose value has often been verified by the passage of time. It is impossible to cite all academic libraries, which is why the author has focused only on selected university libraries. At this point, it should be emphasised that academic libraries such as the National Library, Scientific Library of the PAAS and the PAS

in Cracow (Fluda-Krokos 2023; Klemenski, 2023), the Raczyński Library (Przybyszewska, 2015), the Kórnik Library, the Ossoliński Library or the Library of the Poznań Society of Friends of Science (Boksa, 2011) also have rich historical collections. The walls of public libraries also hold a wealth of historical collections (Biliński, 1994).

## CONCLUSIONS

Historical collections are an important testimony to the creative work of their owners. They are of great interest and are a diverse resource of documents and archival material that can serve as source material for various studies. In the case of the legacies of writers, artists and professors, they are testimony to their scientific or artistic development. Remarkably, the collections provide some, one might say unique, documentation of the work and formation of the workshop of the author, the scientist of the pre-computer and pre-internet era (Wierzchosławski, 2011, p. 123). Professorial collections provide not only biographical information about the scientists in question, but also indirectly tell the stories of the universities with which they were associated. Regardless of their value in terms of content, those available in libraries also provide interesting historical testimony and can be used for teaching purposes to present the transformations in the development and functioning of the scientific workshop at the end of the “age of the pencil, fountain pen and typewriter”.

Collections also undoubtedly have a certain subjective significance for the community associated with a particular library or university, or for academics and authors for whom it is important to take proper care of the legacy of a faculty member who has influenced their thinking. It is often that the handling of a particular professor’s legacy becomes a bottom-up initiative arising from the heartfelt need of his or her students. It should be emphasised that these initiatives are made possible thanks to the support of university authorities and administrative bodies.

Libraries or university archives that gather and preserve historical collections often also become organisers of conferences dedicated to profiles of the individuals whose collections they have cared for. These result in the publication of books, including, for example, editions of manuscripts, collections of correspondence and collection catalogues. Libraries also document collections in the virtual space, allowing access to electronic versions of the materials that belong to the collections.

This article aims not only to present examples of special collections that are part of academic libraries but also to draw attention to the problem of managing, preserving and preparing potential legacy collections. There will always be those who feel that something should be done with the

paperwork left behind by a deceased artist, author, activist or professor. However, their suggestions will always be a bottom-up, subjective process, while libraries will either seek to take over these legacies or aim to develop objective criteria for their selection. Can such criteria be defined, however, and when such a legacy emerges, are we in a position to judge which are worth preserving and which are not? It is worth taking care – in spite of limited resources and lack of “processing capacity” – to preserve the collection without prejudging the future value of the materials being acquired.

Historical collections and personal legacies preserved in academic libraries represent a valuable source of knowledge about the scholarly, cultural, and social achievements of university communities. Although these collections are often heterogeneous and acquired on an ad hoc basis, they form an important component of institutional memory and identity.

The review conducted indicates that libraries adopt various approaches to managing legacies – some limit themselves to preservation, while others actively integrate them into academic and promotional activities. Examples of initiatives undertaken by the University of Warsaw Library (e.g., the digitization of Roman Palester’s legacy), the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library (establishment of the Archive of Emigration), and the Main Library of the University of Szczecin (the public event series “Strumiany”) demonstrate that such collections can serve as active tools for integrating academic communities and promoting a university’s heritage.

At the same time, several key challenges have been identified: the lack of standardized processing procedures, limited staffing and financial resources, and varying levels of collection accessibility. Attention is drawn to the need for the development of best practices and mechanisms for institutional support. Maintaining proper storage conditions – including climate-controlled stacks and reading rooms – remains an aspiration rather than a standard.

This review article does not claim to exhaust the topic but serves as a starting point for further research into the role of special collections in academic libraries and other institutions that preserve intellectual heritage. When properly processed and made accessible, these resources hold not only documentary value but also scholarly, educational, and identity-building potential.

The librarian who prepares a collection and incorporates it into the library resources is often the first researcher. New source inspirations within the collections foster the emergence of a new generation of academics, also among library staff. However, there is a need for passionate librarians and collaboration between librarians and academics within their research. Such work is the work of a specific individual, an educated employee who has and acquires the necessary knowledge, it involves research and



scientific work. The work on scientific legacy carried out by insightful librarians contributes to research papers in the fields of biographical writings, science studies and regional history, while academically active librarians can contribute to the local scientific community and be its part (Kmiecik, 2010, p. 38-39).

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## KOLEKCJE HISTORYCZNE I SPUŚCIZNY WSPÓŁCZESNE JAKO ELEMENT ZASOBÓW BIBLIOTEK AKADEMICKICH W POLSCE – REKONESANS

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** Kolekcje specjalne. Biblioteki akademickie w Polsce. Spuścizny w bibliotekach. Kolekcje historyczne. Opracowanie i udostępnianie kolekcji specjalnych

**ABSTRAKT:** *Teza/Cel artykułu* – Celem artykułu jest zarysowanie problematyki obecności kolekcji historycznych i współczesnych spuścizn w polskich bibliotekach akademickich. Autorka wskazuje na ich znaczenie jako zasobów dokumentujących działalność naukową, kulturową i społeczną, przybliżając wybrane przykłady praktyk ich pozyskiwania, opracowywania oraz popularyzowania. Istotnym elementem tekstu jest także przegląd stanowisk i opinii obecnych w literaturze przedmiotu – artykuł nie dąży do sformułowania całkowicie nowych teorii, lecz raczej do syntezy dotychczasowych ujęć i refleksji nad nimi. Część przeglądowa, prezentująca wybrane kolekcje z bibliotek akademickich, pełni funkcję ilustracyjną – jej celem jest ukazanie różnorodności zasobów i ich obecności w prak-

tyce instytucjonalnej, a nie szczegółowa analiza porównawcza. **Metody badań** – Artykuł opiera się na podejściu przeglądowym. Wykorzystano analizę źródeł wtórnych (literatury fachowej, raportów, stron internetowych bibliotek i dokumentacji instytucjonalnej) oraz uproszczoną formę studium przypadków, ilustrującą praktyki wybranych bibliotek akademickich. Uzupełnieniem analizy jest refleksja wynikająca z doświadczeń zawodowych autorki w pracy ze spuściznami. **Wyniki/Wnioski** – Zgromadzone przykłady pokazują, że kolekcje spuścizn – od archiwów osobistych po dokumentację instytucjonalną – odgrywają coraz większą rolę w budowaniu tożsamości kulturowej i naukowej uczelni. Podczas gdy niektóre biblioteki ograniczają się do ich przechowywania, inne aktywnie angażują się w działania, takie jak digitalizacja, organizowanie wystaw czy popularyzacja zbiorów. Przykłady Biblioteki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Biblioteki Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika czy Biblioteki Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego ilustrują różne, lecz wartościowe podejścia do włączania kolekcji specjalnych w życie naukowe i publiczne. Wskazano jednocześnie na bariery – brak standardów opracowania, niewystarczające finansowanie oraz nierównomierną dostępność. Artykuł konkluduje, że właściwie opracowane i zarządzane zbiory historyczne i spuścizny mogą pełnić rolę zarówno źródła badań, jak i narzędzia wzmocnienia pamięci akademickiej oraz ciągłości kulturowej. Jako rekonesans, tekst stanowi wstęp do dalszych badań nad kolekcjami specjalnymi w polskich bibliotekach akademickich i instytucjach kultury. Artykuł podkreśla, że bibliotekarze powinni pełnić rolę nie tylko archiwistów, ale także aktywnych uczestników w procesie tworzenia wiedzy i nauki.