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THE POLISH LIBRARIANS' ASSOCIATION

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

przegląd biblioteczny

THE LIBRARY REVIEW
Founded in 1927

SPECIAL ISSUE

Warsaw 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries are institutions that are particularly important for social development, for the promotion of knowledge and science, and for cultural education. The local community can not only borrow books from them, but also increasingly benefit from a wide range of events such as workshops, exhibitions, and readings by authors.

At the same time, given this important social role of libraries, it is important to remember that, like all contemporary cultural institutions, they are subject to dynamic changes and face challenges related not only to ensuring physical safety but also psychophysical well-being and information security. In the context of ensuring safety in libraries, issues related to the theft of books and periodicals or their destruction are typically cited. However, the problem is much broader. A library is not only a place for storing and providing access to society's cultural heritage, but also a workspace for librarians and a space for readers.

The experience of safety in a library is a very subjective experience. It is generally accepted that it refers to the creation of conditions and policies that ensure a sense of well-being for employees and users, encompassing aspects of physical, mental, and social health. The aim is to ensure that no one suffers physical or mental harm while staying in the library, but also to prevent and counteract crimes against users, employees, the institution, and its resources while using library services.

Achieving this is facilitated by a positive organizational culture in libraries, with fundamental assumptions (at the deepest level), norms and values (at the middle level), and artifacts (behavioral, linguistic, and physical at the surface level). This culture, on the one hand, inspires creativity, commitment, and motivation among staff, creates a climate of trust, enables transparency in relationships, active communication, and team support, and, on the other, positively influences an atmosphere of kindness and friendliness for readers.

Libraries, as public institutions, also function administratively, fulfilling legal obligations arising from a wide range of normative acts (*GDPR Guide*, 2020, p. 7). Because they process a large amount of personal data and classified information, it is important for both employees and users

to have the confidence and peace of mind that the library is safe and their data is protected. This is achieved through computer system protection, monitoring, password policies, system access restrictions, and compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which governs the processing and protection of personal data, thus confirming the privacy and rights of individuals whose data is processed. It is worth mentioning that, specifically for Polish libraries, the Polish Librarians' Association published the "GDPR Guide" in 2020, which aims to provide them, as administrators, with substantive and practical support in the correct and effective application of personal data protection regulations, with particular emphasis on the specifics of library processes.

There is also increasing attention being paid to the need for psychological support and for building a culture of openness for both employees and users, one that fosters communication, prevents pathologies and stress, and counteracts mobbing and interpersonal conflicts as well as the occurrence of these phenomena in cyberspace (cyberpathologies, cyberthreats, and cybermobbing) which are, unfortunately, increasingly common. This is a very serious problem, as according to research by the Central Institute for Labor Protection published in April 2025 over 48% of employees have experienced at least one form of cyberbullying in the last year, and 12.8% were exposed to digital violence regularly—once a month (akar/mark. 2025).

A safe work environment in a library is the result of integrated efforts in work organization, psychological support, information protection, and counteraction against physical, digital, and social threats.

All of this requires a multifaceted approach to safety broadly understood, the quality of professional life, user comfort, and the protection of collections and access to information. Thanks to this holistic strategy of fostering a sense of confidence, stability, and security, the library becomes not only a safe and functional place but also an environment conducive to professional development and the comfortable use of its resources by staff and readers.

This latest special issue of "Przegląd Biblioteczny" is dedicated to the broadly understood issue of library safety. It contains nine problem-solving articles and a current review of Polish literature on the subject.

The presented articles are the texts of:

Hanna Batorowska: *Information Security Awareness - Between Ignorance and Consciousness of Threats.* The author explores the impact of information security culture on shaping an entity's awareness of information security. She highlights the factors that influence this awareness. She points out that society's ability to respond to threats in the information environment

requires intellectual and mental preparation, as well as institutional education in the field of security culture.

Maciej Saskowski: *Cybersecurity in Library Practice: Between Data Protection and Digital Education*, which explores cybersecurity threats in the library environment, with particular emphasis on user privacy and data protection. It also presents, through comparative case studies, examples of specific actions undertaken by libraries around the world.

Grzegorz Gmiterek: *Digital Security in Libraries. Challenges, Threats, and Data Protection in the Digital Age* presents selected challenges and threats related to cybersecurity in libraries and proposes comprehensive solutions to enhance data and user protection.

Agnieszka Fluda-Krokos: *Rules Governing the Provision of Access to Special Library Collections as a Form of Protecting the Most Valuable Elements of Cultural Heritage.* The author presents selected rules for the use of special collections in libraries as a form of protecting these resources, which are among the most valuable elements of cultural heritage.

Dorota Pietrzkiewicz: *From Historical Treasures to the Idea of Protecting Polish Written Heritage*, which presents the process of developing the idea of securing and protecting the most valuable objects in Polish libraries, i.e., the National Library Resource, and its importance in ensuring the continuity of Polish cultural heritage and building national and European identity.

Magdalena Cyrklaff-Gorczyca: *The Impact of Difficult Interpersonal Situations at Work on the Psychological Safety, Stress, and Well-Being of Librarians* – a research report indicating the types of difficult interpersonal situations experienced by public library librarians in Poland and their impact on their sense of psychological safety, stress, and well-being.

Dorota Grabowska: *Safety And Protection Of Minor Library Users in the Light of the so-called "Kamilek's Act"*. The author discusses the role of school and public libraries in meeting user safety needs in light of the "Kamilek's Act", which aims to ensure the protection of children and young people and develop appropriate standards in this area. She illustrates this with an analysis of guidelines prepared by public provincial libraries in Poland, ensuring safe relationships between minors and staff, policies and procedures for intervention in situations of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor, and protecting children from harmful content and threats appearing online and otherwise stored.

Andrzej Mycio: *Securing the Collection of Manuscripts and Early Printed Books at the University of Toruń Library*. In this case study, the author outlines the current rules for storing and accessing the most valuable collections held at the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń.

Dariusz Grygrowski: *Preventing Theft in Libraries*, which discusses methods for protecting library collections from theft and the problems that arise in this area. Practical methods for securing library collections from theft are illustrated using the example of solutions used at the University of Warsaw Library.

And,

Barbara Koryś: *National Literature Review.*

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INFORMATION SECURITY AWARENESS – BETWEEN IGNORANCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF THREATS

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Her research interests include: issues of information security, analysis and information processes, security culture, information and knowledge management, as well as information culture and scientific information. She is the author or co-author of several monographs such as*: Kultura bezpieczeństwa informacyjnego w środowisku walki o przewagę informacyjną* (*The Culture of Information Security in the Environment of the Struggle for Information Advantage*) (Kraków 2021), *Media jako instrument wpływu informacyjnego i manipulacji społeczeństwem* (*Media as an Instrument of Informational Influence and Manipulation of Society*) (Kraków 2019*), Od alfabetyzacji informacyjnej do kultury informacyjnej. Rozważania o dojrzałości informacyjnej* (*From Information Literacy to Information Culture. Reflections on Information Maturity*) (Warsaw 2013), *Kultura informacyjna w perspektywie zmian w edukacji* (*Information Culture in the Perspective of Educational Changes*) (Warsaw 2009), among others, and the editor of monographs dedicated to security from the series Man in the World of Information, such as*: Bezpieczeństwo informacyjne i medialne w czasach nadprodukcji informacji* (*Information and Media Security in Times of Information*

Overproduction) (Warsaw 2022), *Bezpieczeństwo informacyjne w dyskursie naukowym* (*Information Security in Scientific Discourse*) (Kraków 2017), *Walka informacyjna. Uwarunkowania – Incydenty – Wyzwania* (*Information warfare. Conditions - Incidents – Challenges*) (Kraków 2017), *Kultura informacyjna w ujeciu interdyscyplinarnym. Teoria i praktyka.* Tom II (*Information culture in an interdisciplinary perspective. Theory and practice,* Volume II) (Kraków 2016), Volume I (Kraków 2015), as well as numerous scientific articles dedicated to media and information education, information architecture, information technology, and publishing issues. She is the author of over 260 scientific publications and has actively participated in over 200 international and national scientific conferences.

KEYWORDS: Information security awareness. Information security culture. Resilience to threats. Information awareness. Education for security.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose** – The article reflects on the impact of the information security culture on the development of a subject's information security awareness. It highlights the factors influencing this awareness. It attempts to justify the thesis that neglecting the task of cultivating a security culture among youth in security education may lead them to experience information security in an irrational manner. It is also assumed that society's ability to respond to threats in the information environment requires it to be intellectually and mentally prepared, as well as to undergo institutional education in the field of security culture. **Method** – The method of critical analysis of the literature on the subject was used, based on materials also derived from scientific debates conducted by experts in information security and cybersecurity during the current year's national scientific conferences. **Results/conclusions** – education for information security positively influences the shaping of the information security awareness of a subject by developing mature information attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, if we do not consider the need to shape a culture of information security in education for security, this strengthens a sense of information security in society built by omitting the sphere of mental culture including values, principles, norms, knowledge, ways of thinking, and wisdom, and is therefore mainly limited to the sphere of material culture.

INTRODUCTION

"Awareness" is a psychological category indicating a person's consciousness of the facts that have occurred, phenomena happening in the surrounding world, and internal states, allowing them to express a subjective evaluation of the current situation and recognize it as meeting expectations or not. It is a type of subjective experience, e.g., of self-worth, the meaning of life, belonging, and a sense of security (Marciniak, 2009, pp. 56-65). In the case of actions that are inconsistent with one's own value system, the individual may feel guilt, and when they conform to it, they usually feel satisfaction. Security awareness as an emotional state related

to fear for the individual's safety pertains to the sphere of his individual and collective consciousness and the way of perceiving and assessing phenomena that may pose a threat to them. It is felt individually by each person, depending on their psychological predispositions or differing perceptions of risk (Polończyk, 2018, p.284).

Awareness can also refer to the comfort of an individual's functioning in an information environment, and it is influenced by legal, economic, political, social, and cultural conditions related to information management in that environment. The sense of informational security largely depends on the knowledge possessed about the mechanisms governing the flow of information, the possibilities of accessing information and its quality, the quality of information services, the reliability of telecommunication systems and guarantees of safe use of them, one's own effectiveness in navigating the infosphere thanks to possessed technological and intellectual skills, as well as the possibility of receiving support in case of various types of threats arising in that environment. In scientific publications, awareness of security is often the subject of discussions among researchers representing various disciplines (psychology, pedagogy, sociology, security sciences), but it rarely refers specifically to information security. Although it is generating increasing interest among students and doctoral candidates in fields related to security, this does not translate into their undertaking interdisciplinary research in this area. The technological perspective is often preferred, which leads to the treatment of information security awareness as a concept reflecting sufficient technological competencies that ensure a person the desired level of security for their information resources as well as the technology and equipment processing the data contained therein.

Meanwhile, information security awareness related to the subjective assessment of the level of this security by a subject depends not only on their knowledge and technological skills but also on many other factors, such as age, level of education, activities undertaken in cyberspace and the real world, professional work performed, acceptance of uncertainty and adaptation to change, and willingness to take risks. It also depends on the intellectual and mental preparation of the individual and the level of their security culture, including information security culture.

The last, as a component of security culture, creates an environment of human security and determines the sensitivity and 'heightened awareness' to threats stemming from the infection of the information environment. It reflects the society's preparedness to identify such situations in its surroundings and the development of the need for appropriate responses to them, the resilience of society to informational attacks, and its level of awareness regarding contemporary information warfare.

Information security culture can be defined as the sphere of human activity shaped by information awareness and the way of thinking about information security; values, norms, and rules indicating the legitimacy of a security culture that allows one to perceive challenges, opportunities, and threats in the local and global information space; attitudes that influence the sensitization of society to the importance of information security and the shaping of behaviors characteristic of mature information users who are co-responsible for this security (H. Batorowska, 2021, pp. 15-16). This culture requires training in awareness of threats, which is dependent on the level of informational maturity achieved by the individual. One cannot be aware of threats without developing situational awareness that allows for perceiving elements of the environment and understanding their significance for the development of upcoming events, without developing the ability to forecast threats, without showing the need to act with reason, without maintaining professionalism, wisdom, and directed intelligence, and without being able to manage information and risk as well as to act and communicate effectively.

Unfortunately, the sense of information security is often based on incomplete knowledge and stems from declarative rather than actual readiness for individual information management; it characterizes individuals who do not understand the mechanisms threatening information security or who ignore them (H. Batorowska, 2016, pp. 61-89; H. Batorowska, 2017, pp. 177-191). Information security awareness formed on the basis of objective premises should be the result of education and upbringing for security that takes into account the education of information security culture for the entire society in its programs (Fehler, 2023, pp. 212-213).

SUBJECT AND AIM

The aim of the undertaken research is to show the factors on which the awareness of information security of a society depend, which is why the analysis focuses on this very awareness. The main research problem is formulated as a question: does the information security culture of a subject have an objective influence on shaping its sense of information security?

This requires clarification through detailed problems expressed in these subsequent questions:

- Are concepts such as information security culture, information awareness, information security awareness, and information security differentiated or treated synonymously?
- Does the quality of life of modern man depend on his awareness of information security?

- Does security culture influence the strengthening of the individual's and group's awareness of information security?
- Does awareness of the risks associated with immature information behaviors influence their elimination?
- What competencies must a subject possess to objectively perceive information security?
- How does information security education impact the shaping of information security awareness based on rational and objective premises?

In reference to the above, a research hypothesis was formulated, which relates to the assumption of neglecting the need to shape a culture of safety in security education, which contributes to experiencing information security in an irrational way, not taking into account objective criteria for its assessment. It was also assumed that such an awareness is an effect of subjects functioning in their closed information worlds; that information-immature societies characterized by a sense of security not based on critical analysis of facts become an easy target for info-aggressors; that effective communication is the most important element in shaping information security awareness and building resilience to threats in the infosphere; that the ability of a society to respond to threats in the information environment requires intellectual and mental preparation; and that the evaluation of information security awareness among members of various organizations should also be subject to information security audits.

IRRATIONAL AND CRITICAL APPROACHES TO INFORMATION SECURITY AWARENESS

Information security awareness is most often understood in a way similar to the common definition of security: as a state of consciousness in which a person feels free from threats generated by the information society and by digital civilization; as a sense of comfort from functioning in harmony with the information environment and in a state without fear for the infosphere and for the safety and quality of the information resources they use; as the absence of threats to health, property, and life resulting from information attacks; as mental comfort enabling the realization of life goals; and above all, confidence that in sudden and unforeseen circumstances they can count on the help and support of other entities and institutions established for this purpose, e.g. those arising from equipment failures, network issues, cyberattacks, and cybercrimes (Pieczywok, 2012, pp. 22-23). Identifying these threats can occur as a result of an objective, fact-based approach to the problem of security and its scientific analysis, or an emotional, stereotypical interpretation of incomplete and selectively

chosen information. The effect of these actions may be an illusory sense of security arising, for example, from ignoring objective facts, or a sense based on the awareness of the existence of a threat that results from critically perceiving elements of the environment, understanding their significance, and predicting the development of the situation, meaning having a well-developed situational awareness.

Indicating the differences between these two approaches to the concept of information security awareness requires, first and foremost, answering the question: are concepts such as information security culture, information/informatic awareness, information security feeling, and information security distinct or treated interchangeably? Treating these concepts synonymously would mean that the scale of arbitrariness in experiencing information security could oscillate between a purely technical way of identifying threats and a humanistic interpretation of difficult situations occurring in reality. Moreover, treating components of a whole (e.g., information awareness) on par with the whole (in this case with safety culture) introduces chaos in understanding the relationships between them. Such imprecision in terminology would further hinder the subject's assessment of threats and result in an extreme perception of them as either a complete lack of threat or a state of real danger.

In the subject literature these concepts often appear as substitutes, e.g., information security culture, despite its precise definition (Cieślarczyk, 2022, pp. 136-137), is still being replaced by the concept of informatics security culture, information awareness or informatics, and informatics competencies (skills), less frequently information-related skills. According to this nomenclature, it should be acknowledged that proficiency in using information and communication technologies reflects a person's culture in this area. They achieve a satisfactory level of their own information security awareness due to the belief that they possess sufficient technical knowledge and an understanding of their own role in data protection, equipment, and technologies they use, as well as the effectiveness of the security measures they employ (K. Batorowska, 2023). From this perspective, they also assess the professional and private informational environment in which they operate as being information-secure.

Information security audits conducted systematically in various companies by both internal and external auditors raise the awareness among members of the organization and their management that the declarative knowledge and skills of employees, as well as their attitudes towards securing information systems and protecting information, do not always align with actual competencies and responsible behaviors aimed at protecting information and are not always necessarily related to real, objectively existing threats (Feliński, 2024). As studies indicate, people tend to exaggerate threats or to marginalize them, thereby explaining

their fears of them or justifying their incompetence in identifying them or their disengagement in combating them, thus avoiding responsibility for their consequences (Łabędź, 2018, pp. 46-47). Ignoring this observation contributes to the management team's establishment of an illusory sense of information security (K. Batorowska, 2024, pp. 287, 290, 304-306), especially since the recorded problems related to information security are not analyzed within the organization along with a diagnosis of the information security awareness of employees.

A simplified definition of the concept of information security awareness has been formulated as "a state in which the information user does not feel threats resulting from: a) contact with low-quality information and b) loss of all or part of the accumulated information resources. Instead, they are accompanied by a sense of calm, security, and satisfaction with the experienced level of information security, as well as a belief in having the resources (e.g., knowledge and skills related to assessing the quality of information) necessary to take appropriate actions in the face of a crisis situation" (Motylińska & Pieczka, 2022, p. 128).

This feeling can be considered from the perspective of the intentional, active functioning of the subject in the informational space, and thus its responsible, mature informational behaviors, which are identified as pro-information ecological (an objective perspective). They directly or indirectly influence the informational security of the subject and the environment in which the subject operates. They are a concern for those who raise and educate the young generation, who strive to shape a culture of security, including elements such as informational awareness and a system of values, attitudes, and behaviors on which societal resilience to security threats can be built.

The question posed at the outset about how the sense of security can affect the building of a person's resilience to threats requires clarifying the concept of resilience and linking it to the subject who properly perceives the state of threat, thus objectively analyzing the crisis situation they find themselves in. Such a subject utilizes the knowledge gained to overcome obstacles, and the awareness of the availability of resources that support them in this endeavor increases their motivation to strive for regaining balance and returning to the state enjoyed prior to the crisis. In a monograph dedicated to the resilience of cities to threats, the main concept is defined as a process of "reducing vulnerability, that is, weaknesses arising from the occurrence of events related to a wide range of threats [including informational], in such a way that one can quickly and efficiently return to normal functioning. (...) resilience should not only encompass recovery and restoration to the original state but also an entry into a new, higher level characterized by stronger resilience to new, often unpredictable crises or changes" (Kowalkowski et al., 2025, p. 8).

This means that the critically built (objective) information security awareness is associated with the individual experiencing a sense of security as a result of their activities and the actions taken by their social and cultural environment for safety. This awareness comes from the subject's belonging to socially, professionally, and digitally included groups, from the state's guarantee of a social information order, from a satisfactory level of information services, from accessible support in situations of cyber threats, and from an overall sense of stability in functioning within the information society. Therefore, the presence and activity of organizations supporting local governments in diagnosing social needs, including informational ones, creating solutions, and implementing public policies such as a transparent information policy, are crucial for the desired quality of life of residents in the infosphere. The correct relationship between the real state of security and the sense of security felt by people depends on their access to information, specifically the actions taken by authorities to build social information security based on a system of social norms, processes, systems, and information resources that are capable of meeting the informational needs of society. The implemented model of social information order must take into account:

- the actual hierarchy of social functions of information implemented by state bodies;
- the scope of mutual rights and obligations regarding information for citizens and other state entities and the manner of their implementation;
- the scope and manner of implementing the economic functions of information;
- the information asymmetry between citizens and organizational units, its magnitude, structure, and the consequences arising from the information gap as well as the state's policy concerning the information gap;
- policy in the field of information quality control;
- policy in the field of creating and developing the information infrastructure of society and the economy, including the scope of information available as a public good (Oleński, 2015, p. 37).

Understanding the importance of social information governance by society is the starting point for shaping information security awareness in a rational manner.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FORMATION OF INFORMATION SECURITY AWARENESS

Information security awareness is a variable category. A subject may experience an awareness of security at different levels on a scale that they adjusts according to their needs and understanding of security. The factors influencing this awareness are particularly important, as they depend on the assessment of the quality of one's own life and the fulfillment of material and spiritual needs. Justifying the relationship between the quality of life of contemporary individuals and their security awareness is not straightforward, as security is not only a comfort but a basic human need, and thus lacking a sense of security makes it difficult for a person to engage in various activities that enable them to achieve life goals. A subject who can meet their needs feels safe and fulfilled, and is satisfied with the situation they find themselves in. If these needs are related to ensuring existence for themselves and their family, access to healthcare, stability and professional fulfillment, opportunities for social and intellectual development, self-education, and hobbies, they identify achieving these assets with quality of life and simultaneously a high level of security.

The type of threat influencing this sense is also important, as not all threats evoke the same level of anxiety and fear in the subject. In terms of the subjective feeling of safety, four states of security are possible: when there are no threats or when a real threat exists, and these states are accurately perceived by the subject; when there is a real threat, but it is not noticed or is ignored by the person; or when there are objectively no threats, but they are subjectively perceived by people and classified as actually existing (Frei, 1997, p. 133). The author, analyzing objective and subjective states of threat, distinguishes states of: security, lack of security, false security, and a state of obsession.

Examples of threats affecting the sense of information security include threats related to random hazards (equipment failure, lack of internet access), traditional information threats (information overload, manipulated content on the internet and in traditional media), technological threats (account hacking, receiving unwanted messages – phishing, internet fraud), and threats related to the civil rights of individuals or social groups (personalized content on the internet, including advertisements based on the user's previous actions) (Motylińska & Pieczka, 2022, p. 138).

Increasingly, when analyzing information security threats, the area of threats arising from the information revolution related to information manipulation, surveillance of individuals, loss of privacy and identity is being included. According to Daniel Solove's taxonomy of the right to privacy, violations can be analyzed in relation to processes associated with information gathering (surveillance, interrogation), information

processing (collection, attribution, uncertainty, reuse, denial of access), information dissemination (breach of confidentiality, disclosure, exposure, facilitating access to others, blackmail, appropriation, distortion), and the process of invasion (physical intrusion, decision-making influence) (Solove 2006, p. 490). Diagnosing these threats requires the subject to possess competencies that have only been minimally developed so far and are related to building a culture of threat awareness. They enable efficient and prudent navigation in the information environment, thanks to:

- educated situational awareness,
- ability to forecast threats,
- informational maturity,
- skills in reasoning (understanding the need for reason),
- professionalism and effectiveness of actions,
- wisdom and directed intelligence,
- high morale of individuals, institutions, organizations,
- knowledge and proficiency in information and knowledge management,
- skills in effective communication.

New threats are closely related to the consequences of the information revolution, which on one hand contributed to the dynamic development of humanity and the increased awareness of the importance of knowledge and science, but on the other hand led to the emergence of threats resulting from a crisis in the intellectual sphere. The discourse undertaken in this area (Auleytner & Kleer, 2015) has revealed problems related to a superficial understanding of the threats associated with surveillance, privacy, information warfare, and the pursuit of informational advantage, as well as the paradox arising from mass education and the simultaneous superficiality of the knowledge of educated individuals, the coexistence of knowledge and ignorance on equal terms, and the abdication of wisdom in favor of mediocrity and pragmatism. The revaluation of the most desired life goals has led to intelligence no longer being a cardinal value for the majority of subjects, and the information revolution drives information users to a state of internal dispersion, diminishes their need for deeper reflection on the information they acquire, and leads to intellectual limitations. At the same time, a new class of people known as the precariat is emerging, well-educated but with an unstable professional situation, threatened by exclusion, and with a very low sense of security. The social layer that should face these problems is the intelligentsia, which guarantees survival in a fluid, changing, unpredictable environment, and should be a safeguard for people's survival in times of turmoil and post-truth (Auleytner & Kleer, 2015, pp. 9, 13-23), but it belongs to a layer that is being gradually eliminated from the landscape of the modern world and replaced by its caricatured formation.

All these issues are significant in building an individual's sense of security in the new information space. Facing threats that undermine a sense of informational security requires informational maturity, which means responsible behavior. However, merely being aware of the harmfulness of immature informational behaviors is insufficient for an individual to avoid them or engage in preventing them. The relationship between engaging in activities that do not sufficiently protect personal data, one's identity, or privacy, and that manifest in other risky behaviors, and knowledge about the consequences of such behaviors is very complex. It is difficult to explain the mechanism of this complexity without referring to the so-called "privacy dilemma or paradox" (the simultaneous rationality and irrationality of attitudes), the security dilemma (the choice between protection and consent to surveillance and the restriction of freedom), or the discrepancy between the declarative approach to knowing and adhering to security procedures and irrational behaviors that result in real threats to security. The analysis conducted by C. Hoffmann, C. Lutz, G. Ranzini of the phenomenon of behaviors threatening individual privacy resulting from the discrepancy between the declared attitude of a rational approach to privacy issues and "carefree" behaviors that indulge in the widespread practice of self-disclosure in cyberspace can also be related to behaviors associated with information protection and the informational environment, e.g., in the context of consumer surveillance or the culture of digital narcissism (Hoffmann, Lutz & Ranzini, 2016; Bauman & Lyon, 2013; Szpunar, 2016). In this environment, we also deal with the phenomenon of so-called "cynicism about privacy", where the individual sees no necessity in scrupulously adhering to procedures, since they are unable to protect their privacy anyway. "Privacy cynicism" reflects "an attitude of uncertainty, helplessness, and distrust towards data processing by online services, which makes privacy-related behaviors subjective and futile" (Hoffmann, Lutz & Ranzini, 2016, pp. 1-4). And this threatens the information security of people accepting such an attitude. According to A. Westin, a subject's attitude towards privacy protection can take the form of a carefree attitude characterized by a low level of concern for their own privacy (information security). It can also have a fundamentalist dimension when the subject decides to defend privacy at all costs, even at the expense of forgoing potential gain. The most desirable attitude is a pragmatic one, where the subject realistically assesses their own actions and their surroundings related to privacy protection (Westin, 1996, pp. 272-275) and ensures the information security of the environment in which they operate.

The discussion on the irrational attitudes of contemporary consumers towards the phenomenon of consent to the loss of privacy and information security was undertaken by Z. Bauman and D. Lyon (Bauman & Lyon,

2013, pp. 53-54). Noticing the trend of treating privacy as a commodity that needs to be well sold in order to ensure self-promotion and approval from the digital audience, they concluded that surveillance is not currently seen in terms of a security threat. Being watched and monitored does not bother most young people; rather, it becomes a goal of their activities online, as they consider exclusion to be the true danger, while surveillance is seen as an antidote to that exclusion. The voluntary consent leading to a loss of informational security arises from such a creation and management of reality, where consumers of new information and communication technologies perceive their state of subordination as an expansion of their freedom, self-determination, autonomy, and empowerment (Bauman & Lyon, 2013). The widespread ignorance of this problem can lead to a situation where individual control and privacy protection become impossible. This is especially so as the two previously opposing spheres – private and public – have started to overlap, generating new threats in the area of information security (Młynarska-Sobaczewska, 2013, p. 50).

The above issue seems particularly interesting in the context of having a specialized education which individuals engaging in risky behaviors in both private and professional information environments possess. It seems that the knowledge they have should exert a significant influence on their lifestyle, serving as a warning system against the consequences of cyber threats and various information diseases. Engaging in behaviors that threaten the loss of data, identity, or system infection, despite having a sufficient amount of knowledge about possible threats, boils down to the necessity of choosing between convenience, ease, profit, desirable immediacy, and security, especially in the long term.

That is why it is so important to build a culture of risk awareness in society. It requires strengthening desirable attitudes and behaviors towards safety and understanding one's own psychology to identify personal weak points. However, one can lack the traits mentioned above and yet have a high sense of security, evaluating one's quality of life based on the ability to access information, technology, and information services in an unlimited and immediate manner, the quality of those services and their low costs, flexible regulations and rules, a diverse range of offerings, etc. The overwhelming need for information consumption breaks the barriers that protect the community in virtual worlds from surveillance and the loss of privacy, identity, personal data, and sensitive information. The obsessive demand for immediate access to informational goods and being in the media spotlight causes a person to consciously give up security in this world in favor of technological conveniences and the ability to arouse interest from a strictly undefined audience. They sell their intimacy and privacy in exchange for illusory popularity. The culture of digital narcissism destroys this community's sensitivity to threats in

cyberspace, but in return, it offers an illusion of happiness, popularity, and a sense of community with other anonymous internet users yearning for fame and publicity. At that point the boundary shifts between what has hitherto been meant by the private sphere and the public sphere, and between what is safe and what is dangerous. The sense of security shifts its place on this scale, meaning that the subject has more freedom and less certainty whether that freedom will ultimately be beneficial for them. Contemporary media, in providing the desired freedom, do not warn about the dangers. It is important to maintain people's security awareness at a high level, regardless of the real situation of the individual, and for the individual to subjectively evaluate that sense positively.

If access to reliable information is hindered and the subject is unaware of the threats arising in their environment, they may still feel safe and fulfilled, even though this sense of security is illusory. Moreover, information (in) security can sometimes be imperceptible, and the initiated information attacks can go unnoticed by the victim for a longer period, in which case they will not be aware that their information security awareness is false, as in reality only their information assets have been attacked.

The culture of threat awareness is therefore an important component of the security culture. It focuses on sensitizing and strengthening people's resilience to danger and their ability to counter threats, constituting in this context a capital of national security.

BUILDING A SOCIETY OF INFORMATION SECURITY CULTURE

Information security culture can be seen as the "characteristic relationship of a given physical or legal subject to data, information, knowledge, and wisdom, among other values, as well as the ability to use them for worthy purposes with the safety of oneself and other subjects with the more immediate (in terms of time and space) or more remote environment in mind" (Cieślarczyk, 2022, p. 230). It consists of elements such as the awareness of the security subject, values and attitudes that enable the building of a security environment, and behaviors that guarantee the maintenance of security, all of which influence information management security and relate to the way information is perceived, created, and used (H. Batorowska, 2021, pp. 15-16).

Information security culture – supporting the construction of a social order of information, preparing management staff to practice transparent information policy, directing the organizational culture towards respecting information security procedures and policies – strengthens social information security, becoming one of the guarantors of national security. It can be considered the foundation for building a society with a culture

of information security that is knowledgeable about disinformation techniques and methods, understands the nature of social engineering attacks, and recognizes manifestations of manipulation by individuals and groups spreading destruction. This is a society composed of users of the infosphere who are aware, experts in identifying discreditation, degradation, and deprecation of post-truth, capable of limiting surveillance activities and participating in building a national culture of security and power. It is a society that monitors and holds decision-makers accountable, represented by citizen journalism, online journalism, support groups exposing hidden goals of technological development, think tanks, etc. (H. Batorowska, 2021, p. 98).

The society of information security culture consists of security subjects that serve as a model of civic attitudes and social responsibility, particularly through taking care of cultural security and understanding its importance for achieving victory in the ongoing information war. In this sense, this culture is a value that should be associated with the informational maturity of the security subject. An informationally mature individual acts in accordance with a value system that requires responsibility for actions taken in the informational environment.

Information security culture thus characterizes individuals who are able to think and act in a transcendental dimension, to ask questions, to create forecasts of the development of phenomena, situations, events, and to build visions, scenarios of a future in which there will still be room for humanity despite the unimaginable advancement of information technology and the tendency to trust systems based on artificial intelligence and algorithms (H. Batorowska, 2021, p. 98).

Preparing society to build a sense of information security based on rational premises is a task mainly placed before education for security, taking into account the information security culture for both youths and adults in its programs, as well as the way they are raised in information. The functions of this culture correlate with the tasks facing education for security, such as:

- shaping desired informational behaviors characterizing maturely informed citizens,
- supporting activities aimed at building social order and social informational security,
- adapting entities for sustainable functioning in a hybrid informational environment and overcoming threats generated by the informational society,
- raising societal awareness of threats generated by the informational environment and maintaining the desired level of resilience in conditions of informational warfare directed against the nation,

- building a strong culture of national security, including a culture of awareness of informational threats,
- preventing informational diseases, promoting cyber hygiene,
- respecting the principles and procedures of information security and codes of information ethics by the entity,
- inclusion in activities related to information verification and monitoring threats arising from disinformation transmissions.

The society of information security culture should operate based on a model of an action system, in which elements such as information security culture, morale, wisdom, and legal culture are its main components. Such models were developed by Marian Cieślarczyk, but in the context of considerations regarding information security awareness one deserves special attention. This is an ideal model of an action system that reflects the characteristic attitudes, behaviors, values, and actions of security subjects in a given situation.

The model shown here illustrates the significance of wisdom, courage, responsibility, freedom, knowledge, and friendship as elements that influence safety awareness among group members, their way of thinking about safety, and the behaviors that allow for the construction of a shared security environment. In the case of a high level of information security culture, the situational assessment of the environment by the subject is accurate, based on rational behaviors and focused on action or collaboration, with attitudes being appropriate to the situation because there are no perceptual or reception disturbances, all of which fosters forecasting and predicting situations. This model correlates with the reflective-action model of functioning proposed by M. Cieślarczyk, characterized by a high level of security culture, and indicates that an appropriate level of information security culture affects all spheres of life and society's safety, and is a prerequisite for ensuring information security. The subject positioned within it maintains a relative balance between the emotional sphere of attitudes and the rational sphere, thanks to the knowledge and wisdom possessed, as well as the ability to reflect and anticipate, and by adhering to principles (norms and values) that serve as regulators in difficult situations. Functioning rationally in the environment, based on accepted norms, values, and attitudes, they can effectively utilize data, information, knowledge, and wisdom, which fosters the development of prospective thinking, anticipating changes in situations and the consequences (or lack thereof) of their activity, making appropriate decisions, and taking preventive and preparatory actions. However, before situational information prompts the subject to take action, it passes through a "filter" of wisdom, and within it through a system of norms and values (principles, rules) which guide the subject in various situations by skillfully combining individual and collective

good. Such actions, according to Cieślarczyk, promote the adequacy of situational assessments and lead to making accurate, long-term decisions as well as efficient, effective actions and fostering collaborations of individuals and organizational structures in accordance with established procedures (Cieślarczyk, 2022, p. 233). The negative effects of a low level of information security culture lead to:

- difficulties in handling data, information, and knowledge, resulting in disruptions in perception and thinking, as well as difficulties in assessing situations,
- emotional behaviors that hinder collaboration and generate unpredictability,
- a deficit of reflection, foresight, and preparation for current or future situations,
- a deficit of empathy, a prevalence of selfish attitudes, and cunning behaviors aimed at short-term gains (Cieślarczyk, 2022, p. 234).

Comparing all the models of information security culture presented by the researcher, it is important to note the central positioning of wisdom as an element, highlighting its critical role in all spheres of security (spiritual, organizational, and material) and the important functions that wisdom fulfills in relation to these spheres: stimulating, regulatory, and integrative.

CONCLUSIONS

As shown, achieving a satisfactory level of information security awareness by an individual depends not only on having appropriate material, organizational, legislative, political, and cultural assets but also on their intellectual competencies that allow for monitoring the information space and identifying emerging threats through developed situational awareness, as well as on their perception of the world and response to threats, and on the cultivated culture of information security. Building this sense of security is a process that requires effective communication between society and decision-makers, based on verified information from credible sources, its critical interpretation free from persuasion, and awareness of any manifestations of manipulation of public opinion in conditions of ongoing informational warfare and the rising influence of post-truth.

Research on the analysis of the sense of information security within society should also be extended to analyze this state among company employees and incorporated into audit programs related to information security within the organization. This would highlight that not only technology and IT can ensure information security within a company, and that achieving compliance with security standards and regulations should

not be treated as a goal in itself, as it leads to a false assessment of the level of security.

The assessment of the level of security awareness is closely related to the process of education and upbringing for information security. Increasing the information awareness of students, developing their risk awareness and skills to manage that risk, as well as situational awareness that enables coping with risk, is carried out through education for security and information in the process of shaping a security culture. As A. Pieczywok emphasizes, it is not possible to counteract threats without citizens' awareness of security regarding the adherence to the culture of being, culture of security, and essential universal and social values, because inculcating values allows for the assessment of the overall life situation in which the subject currently operates (Pieczywok, 2012, pp. 319, 320).

It can therefore be stated that education for information security positively influences the shaping of the information security awareness of a subject by developing mature information attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, if we do not consider the need to shape a culture of information security in education for security, this strengthens a sense of information security in society built by omitting the sphere of mental culture including values, principles, norms, knowledge, ways of thinking, and wisdom, and is therefore mainly limited to the sphere of material culture (infrastructure, technology, technologies, workplaces) (Cieślarczyk, 2022, p. 285). Moreover, a lack of knowledge and information skills makes societies information-immature and leads to their ignorance regarding the perception, assessment, and need to counter threats, resulting in an irrational sense of security, which makes them an easy target for info-aggressors.

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CYBERSECURITY IN LIBRARY PRACTICE: BETWEEN DATA PROTECTION AND DIGITAL EDUCATION

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KEYWORDS: Cybersecurity. Digital libraries. Personal data protection. Digital education. Information ethics. Open technologies.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/purpose** – The article addresses the issue of cybersecurity in the librarianship, focusing on the protection of personal data and user privacy. The aim of the analysis is to identify the risks associated with collecting and processing information in digital libraries and to present possible models of responsible practice. **Research methods** – A case study was used, comparing approaches from the United States (Library Freedom Project), Europe (OBA Amsterdam), and Poland (FRSI). **Conclusions** – The results indicate the need to combine technology, education, and institutional ethics. The author advocates

for the development of libraries as local digital competence centers and active participants in the debate on information rights.

INTRODUCTION

Modern libraries operate in a digital environment which – while opening new possibilities for access to knowledge and services – also carries a number of threats related to data security and user privacy. The transformation of the library from a physical space to an information-technology space necessitates a redefinition of the role of the librarian, who ceases to be merely an intermediary between the book and the reader and becomes also a custodian of data, a guardian of privacy, and a participant in the digital information battlefield.

Cybersecurity in library practice is no longer just the domain of IT specialists and system administrators. It is a real challenge for every institution that collects, processes, and provides access to data – and libraries do this every day, recording loans, browsed catalogs, personal data of readers, and increasingly their online activity. For this reason, the library can no longer be treated as a technologically neutral institution – on the contrary, it is becoming an actor immersed in a complex information environment, exposed to risks related to surveillance, data commercialization, and cyberattacks.

The aim of this article is to present the threats associated with cybersecurity in the library environment, with particular emphasis on issues of privacy and user data protection. The author points out that the protection of personal data should not be regarded solely as a formal legal obligation arising from the GDPR, but also as an ethical foundation of the mission of libraries in the information society.

The article also presents examples of specific actions taken by libraries in various parts of the world in the form of a comparative case study. Three models of privacy protection approaches are compared: the American (Library Freedom Project), the European (Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam), and the Polish (local educational activities under FRSI). This comparison allows for showcasing the diversity of possible strategies, from activist and technological approaches, through normative-institutional, to educational and local, and for drawing conclusions about effective and scalable practices.

The later sections of the article also discuss the most important tools for privacy protection, the role of digital education, and the potential for collaboration between libraries and independent experts and hacker communities. This analysis leads to the formulation of recommendations aimed at building libraries as safe, transparent, and responsible entities in the information age.

THE LIBRARY AS A (NON)PRIVATE SPACE

The library has always been a social space – a place for meetings, education, the exchange of ideas, and access to information. In Western culture it has been seen as a public trust institution whose operation is based on the values of openness, neutrality, and respect for user autonomy. However, with the digitization of resources and the widespread use of information and communication technologies, this classic image of the library is undergoing fundamental changes.

The modern library is no longer just a physical building – it is also becoming a digital environment in which significant amounts of data are gathered and processed. This includes data about the collections themselves, as well as personal and behavioral information about users: login data, search histories, reading preferences, borrowed titles, frequency of use of digital resources, as well as location information. In the case of browser systems, the user's location can be estimated based on the IP address or data provided during registration (e.g., home address). In contrast, mobile applications – after the user grants the appropriate permissions – can access precise geolocation data in real time (e.g., via GPS), significantly increasing the scope of potential profiling. Although these actions most often serve to improve the quality of service, tailor the offer to local needs, or automate communication with the user, they simultaneously create an infrastructure susceptible to abuses, both external and internal.

In this context, the library ceases to be a safe enclave of anonymity: it becomes a structure in which user privacy can be restricted not only by unauthorized external access (e.g. hacking attacks) but also by internal practices of data collection and analysis. Moreover, tools such as library management systems (LMS) can further complicate this issue[1]. The use of software for tracking activity or integration with external databases may inadvertently lead to sharing information with third parties such as commercial suppliers or government institutions (American Library Association, 2021).

This raises the question: to what extent can a user of a digital library feel safe and their data be protected? Does the model of social trust, on which the role of libraries has relied for decades, stand a chance of surviving in an environment dominated by the logic of data collection, profiling, and commercialization? And can librarians, often technologically unprepared to manage the realm of cybersecurity, take on this challenge?

These questions serve as a starting point for further reflection on the risk factors associated with data processing in library institutions, as well as on the possibility of building a model of the library as an entity responsible not only for access to knowledge but also for the digital security of citizens.

[1] In the context of libraries, also known as ILS (Integrated Library System).

THREATS TO USER DATA: TECHNOLOGICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RISKS

In library practice, the collecting and processing of user data is unavoidable. Borrows, reservations, logins to catalogs, use of digital databases, Wi-Fi hotspots, or mobile applications – all of these generate streams of information that may be of a personal nature, and are sometimes even sensitive. Although librarians are not always aware of it, libraries are increasingly participating in the digital surveillance ecosystem.

The technological dimension of these threats is twofold. On the one hand, it concerns the possibility of data interception by third parties – hackers, criminal groups, but also analytics or advertising companies. On the other hand, it relates to the infrastructural weaknesses of library systems themselves: lack of updates, use of default passwords, unencrypted connections, lack of security audits, or failure to adhere to basic principles of digital hygiene by staff and users (Wydawnictwo SBP, 2019).

However, institutional threats are no less significant in terms of how libraries handle the data they collect themselves. In some cases data is stored longer than necessary, processed without clear purpose, or shared with external entities – for example, providers of analytical tools or cataloging services. Furthermore, many library systems are integrated with commercial services (e.g., Google Books, Amazon Web Services, external search engines), which means that information about users' reading behaviors may end up outside the library (Amazon Web Services, 2019).

From the perspective of privacy protection, particularly concerning are situations where data regarding reading preferences can lead to user profiling, especially if the chosen topics concern worldviews or political, religious, or medical issues. Although GDPR classifies such data as sensitive, in practice not all LMS systems are appropriately adapted to this (European Data Protection Supervisor, 2021).

To complete the picture we must include human factors: insufficient training of employees, lack of awareness of threats, an organizational culture that downplays privacy issues, as well as a lack of information security specialists within the structures of many libraries. As a result, the library, instead of being a guardian of privacy, may unintentionally become a link in the chain of personal data breaches.

In the literature, it is emphasized that the protection of privacy should be one of the pillars of contemporary library ethics, alongside the freedom of access to information and ideological neutrality (American Library Association, 2021). Meanwhile, as studies show, many users are unaware that by using library resources their activities may be monitored and data analyzed in a manner similar to corporate practices known from digital platforms (Deloitte, n.d.).

LIBRARIES IN THE AGE OF ALGORITHMIC SURVEILLANCE

The contemporary digital infrastructure in which libraries operate increasingly relies on algorithmic logic. From book recommendations in online catalogs, through intelligent management systems for loans, to integrations with cloud and analytical tools – almost every element of the operation of a modern library is indirectly or directly shaped by algorithms. Although they are often perceived as neutral tools that support the efficiency of services, in reality they become elements of structural surveillance over information and the user.

Algorithms can not only catalog and organize information – they can also filter it, prioritize it, and in extreme cases exclude it. If a recommendation system suggests certain items while omitting others, it can influence the intellectual horizons of the user. If the system automatically hides titles deemed 'controversial,' it restricts access to content that should be available under the freedom of information. Libraries that use ready-made digital platforms rarely have full control over these processes (Noble, 2018).

In media and information literature it is pointed out that algorithms are not only tools but also "forms of power" – decision-making structures that shape access to knowledge and information (Beer, 2018). In this context, the library ceases to be solely a place for archiving and sharing – it also becomes an algorithmically mediated space where neutrality is illusory and priorities are hidden in code. This threat becomes even more apparent in situations where library systems are linked to commercial services or managed by third-party companies. Information about user behaviors can then become part of a broader analytical ecosystem used for advertising, behavioral, or political purposes (Zuboff, 2019). It is difficult to speak of full privacy protection under such conditions, even if the intentions of the library itself remain consistent with its ethos.

At the same time, it is worth noting that not all libraries are aware of how the algorithms they use function – much less what data is collected by them, how long it is stored, and to whom it is shared. There is a lack of appropriate algorithmic audits, training for staff, and documentation provided by technology vendors. Meanwhile, the responsibility for data protection – including that processed automatically – still rests on the library as the information administrator.

The phenomenon of algorithmization of library practice thus requires critical reflection. It is essential not only to ensure technical security but also to guarantee transparency in technological processes and the ability to control these processes – by both staff and users. Otherwise, libraries, willingly or unwillingly, may become part of a digital surveillance system rather than serving as a counterbalance to its abuses.

ALLIES OR ENEMIES? ON THE POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN LIBRARIES AND HACKERS

In public debate, the word "hacker" still often has negative connotations: it is associated with cybercrime, data theft, or sabotage activities. Meanwhile, in the modern world of technology, hackers are a heterogeneous group – alongside those who actually exploit their skills for illegal activities, there exists a large community of so-called ethical hackers (white hats), who test systems to detect security vulnerabilities, educate society, and support open technologies (Himanen, 2002).

It is this second group that may prove to be a valuable – albeit unconventional – partner for libraries. These institutions, due to their limited resources and lack of specialized IT support, often cannot independently monitor and secure all aspects of their digital infrastructure. Meanwhile, ethical hackers possess the knowledge, experience, and tools that can significantly enhance the level of cybersecurity in library practice.

Examples of potential collaboration are numerous: from organizing open workshops on privacy protection and data encryption, to conducting informal penetration tests (so-called pentests) at the request of libraries, to creating joint educational initiatives in the spirit of open source and hacker culture. In many countries, communities such as CryptoParty or Hackerspace operate, eager to engage in social and educational activities (Sauter, 2014).

It is also worth noting that libraries and hacker communities have surprisingly similar values: promoting access to knowledge, openness, independence of thought, protection of privacy, and counteracting information monopoly. Although they differ in language and form of operation, their goals often overlap, especially in the context of defending information freedom against commercial and state influences.

Instead of treating hackers as a potential threat, libraries can consider them as educational and technology partners. Such a partnership, although it requires courage and openness, can bring mutual benefits: for libraries, competences and support; for hackers, social trust and scope for constructive activities.

This does not, of course, imply a resignation from caution. The library, as a public trust institution, must maintain control over data security and cannot allow for unauthorized activities. However, if the approach to cybersecurity is to be not only reactive but also preventive and educational, collaboration with hackers could represent a new, creative form of achieving this mission.

PRIVACY PROTECTION TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR LIBRARIES

In the face of threats related to digital data processing, libraries are not helpless. There are many tools and technological solutions that, when properly implemented, can significantly increase the level of user privacy protection. The key challenge today is not the lack of available technologies, but rather the lack of awareness of their existence, limited technical resources, and shortages of staff and competencies for handling them.

The first step is to ensure an appropriate level of encryption for communication, both internal and with users. Using secure protocols (e.g., HTTPS, TLS), employing VPNs for access to library networks, and promoting tools such as Tor or Tails among more aware users are the basics of digital hygiene. Some libraries even choose to run Tor nodes as a form of engagement in protecting privacy in the public space[2].

The second area of action is system security: regular software updates, implementing two-factor authentication for employees, strong passwords and a policy of regular changes, monitoring logs and unauthorized access. Although these are basic practices, their absence is often the cause of the most common data breaches in the public institutions sector (IBM Security, 2024).

Libraries can also use open-source software for cataloging and managing collections (e.g., Koha, Evergreen), which allows for greater control over what data is collected and how it is processed. An important criterion for choosing a library management system today should not only be its functional scope but also its compliance with privacy principles and the possibility of audit (American Library Association, n.d.).

At the operational level, it is worth considering the use of tools such as:

- Privacy Badger, uBlock Origin – for eliminating trackers in the browsers used in the library,
- CryptPad, Etherpad, Jitsi Meet – alternatives to commercial group work and communication tools,

[2] The most well-known case was the Kilton Library in New Hampshire (USA), which in 2015 launched an exit node of the Tor network in collaboration with the Library Freedom Project – an initiative promoting information freedom and digital rights in public institutions. This project sparked a wide social and media debate – both praise for its brave support of privacy and criticism due to the associations of Tor with criminal activities. Ultimately, despite a temporary suspension, the project was resumed, and the Kilton Library remains the only known library facility in the USA operating such a node. Although other libraries did not follow this path, the very idea – providing users with a space for safe and anonymous access to internet resources – remains a significant demand from communities advocating for digital human rights. Although the practical implementation of projects like Tor in libraries is currently limited, the need to provide users with a neutral, secure technological infrastructure remains relevant – especially in the context of increasing surveillance and data commercialization (Koebler, 2015).

- GNU/Linux and FOSS software – safer alternatives to commercial operating systems and applications,
- Matomo – an alternative to Google Analytics for tracking traffic on the library's website.

It is also worth applying the principle of data minimization – collecting only the information that is necessary, storing it for the shortest time possible, and clearly informing users about their rights and the scope of processing. According to the GDPR, users should not only have access to their data but also the ability to delete or correct it (Parlament Europejski i Rada UE, 2016).

The cultural aspect is also significant: technologies alone are not enough if they are not accompanied by a culture of privacy protection, supported by institutional policies and managerial decisions. Libraries that implement privacy codes, promote transparency, and educate users in this area not only create a safe environment but also an informed information community.

THREE MODELS OF PRIVACY PROTECTION IN PRACTICE: A COMPARISON OF LIBRARIES FROM THE USA, EUROPE, AND POLAND

In the context of cyber threats and challenges related to the protection of personal data, libraries around the world are taking actions aimed at increasing the level of digital security. However, these practices vary depending on the cultural, legal, and technological context. This chapter presents three distinctly different operating models – American, European, and Polish – which illustrate possible directions for the development of cybersecurity in library practice.

1. The American Model: The Library as a Privacy Activist (Library Freedom Project, USA) One of the most well-known and radical privacy projects is the Library Freedom Project (LFP), initiated in Massachusetts by activist Alison Macrina. This project combines librarianship ethics with the movement for digital freedom and user privacy. The LFP aims to train librarians, implement privacy protection tools, and create a network of libraries operating under the principle of "privacy by default"[3].

As part of the project, some libraries have deployed Tor nodes (anonymizing internet traffic), installed encrypted search engines,

[3] The principle of "privacy by default" means that the controller – both when determining the means of processing and during the processing itself – implements appropriate technical and organizational measures, such as pseudonymization, designed to effectively implement data protection principles, such as data minimization, and to incorporate the necessary safeguards into the processing to meet the requirements of the GDPR and protect the rights of data subjects (Library Freedom, n.d.).

stopped tracking loan histories, and begun organizing workshops on encrypted communication, digital identity management, and combating online surveillance. Importantly, the project is grassroots and educational in nature – its strength lies not in technical infrastructure, but in awareness and engagement. The LFP model demonstrates that libraries can be not only passive recipients of technologies but also active co-creators and commentators. The Library Freedom Project's activities clearly demonstrate that libraries can become spaces where users not only gain knowledge but also learn how to protect their digital identities, recognize privacy threats, and use tools that enable secure and independent online communication.

Therefore, in the LFP model, the library becomes a participant in the debate on digital rights – not as an observer, but as an engaged social actor who takes responsibility for shaping citizens' digital competencies. Collaboration with ethical hackers and technology activists becomes not only a means to improve the security of IT infrastructure but also a manifestation of librarian values such as accessibility, freedom of information, independence, and equality. LFP demonstrates that it is possible to run a library that, instead of adapting to corporate solutions and closed systems, prioritizes open source software, source code transparency, encryption, and local autonomy. Workshops organized as part of the project, dedicated to topics such as Tor, PGP, Signal, and metadata encryption, represent a practical form of resistance to dominant models of surveillance and commercial data analysis. In this approach, the library becomes an ally of civil society, not just a neutral point of access to information.

This model inspires thinking about the library as a digital literacy laboratory – a place that not only provides access to technologies but also equips users with the tools to understand, modify, and use them consciously. In an era of growing digital capitalism, where data is becoming currency, a library operating according to the principles of digital literacy can serve as a counterweight to the mechanisms of knowledge commercialization and information surveillance.

2. The European Model: GDPR Compliance and Institutional Transparency (Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam, Netherlands).

Another approach to protecting user privacy and data is the European model, which, unlike the activist and decentralized approach of the Library Freedom Project, relies on a strong legal and institutional framework. This model is based on full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which applies in all European Union member states and defines standards for personal data processing, process transparency, and the rights of data subjects (Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam, 2025).

The Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA), the largest public library in the Netherlands, is a model example for implementing this approach. The library has developed a detailed, publicly available privacy policy that governs every step of data collection, from collection, through storage and processing, to the ability to delete data at the user's request. OBA has also implemented a range of technical and procedural tools: pseudonymization of loan data, automatic deletion of catalog search history, and the option to manage consent in a simple, intuitive way – all within the user account.

Communication is a key element of this strategy. Users don't have to guess what data is being collected – the library actively informs them about the processing purposes, retention period, legal basis, and their rights. This model assumes that transparency builds trust, but also meets the requirements of the GDPR, which emphasizes privacy by design and privacy by default. OBA has also invested in staff training to ensure that only authorized and properly trained employees have access to sensitive data. The library management system is designed with data minimization in mind: by default, it collects no more information than is necessary to provide the service. This approach helps reduce the risk of data breaches while strengthening the institutional sense of responsibility for data protection.

Unlike the American model, which embraces grassroots initiatives and often operates in opposition to state or corporate institutions, the European model is highly institutionalized and compliant with regulations. It operates based on legal standards, audit procedures, and accountability mechanisms that are part of a broader administrative culture. Its goal is not only to protect data but also to build public trust through standardization and a systematic approach to privacy.

Thus, the OBA model demonstrates that libraries can effectively protect user data without necessarily utilizing the most advanced technologies, but rather through consistent, lawful action, institutional accountability, and transparency.

3. The Polish Model: Digital Education as a Protection Tool (FRSI, Local Programs).

The Polish model is distinguished by an approach that—given limited technological resources and a lack of uniform institutional procedures—focuses primarily on digital education and improving users' information literacy. At the heart of this model are local libraries, operating as open knowledge centers, supporting the community not only in accessing books and the internet, but also in understanding digital threats, protecting privacy, and safely using new technologies (Fundacja Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego, 2018).

An example of this approach is the work of the Information Society Development Foundation, which, in collaboration with libraries, has been implementing numerous educational initiatives for years, such as the "Click. Check. Understand" campaign, which provides support to librarians in organizing workshops on topics such as personal data protection, password management, recognizing fake content, and using online services in an informed and safe manner.

Unlike the Dutch or American models, Polish libraries rarely have advanced IT infrastructure, and user privacy protection is not yet widely integrated into their internal policies. However, their strength lies in their proximity to local communities and the high availability of educational services, including for the digitally excluded such as seniors, residents of small towns, and young people lacking media literacy.

In many cases, librarians become users' first guides to the world of safe online presence. Libraries organize meetings, lectures, courses, and individual consultations, and also provide access to educational materials created by NGO partners[4] and formal education.

This model is based on the premise that awareness is the best form of protection. In a situation where advanced technical tools or institutional privacy protection procedures are lacking, the digital competencies of users and librarians become the first line of defense against information abuse and cyberthreats.

While the Polish model is still in its developmental stages and faces financial and organizational barriers, its potential lies in its flexibility, adaptability, and strong social roots. As public policies and digital library strategies develop, it can serve as a foundation for a more integrated approach to cybersecurity in the cultural and educational sectors.

Table 1. A Comparison of Three Models of Privacy Protection in Libraries

Model	Main Features	Strength	Constraints
American (LFP)	activism, open source, cooperation with hackers	innovation, independence	lack of systemic support
European (OBA)	legality, institutionalization	transparency, stability	limited flexibility
Polish (FRSI)	educational activities, local community	availability, coverage	lack of infrastructure, internal policies

Source: prepared by the author

[4] NGO (non-governmental organization) – the third sector (also spelled "III Sektor" or "3 Sektor") is the term used to refer to all non-governmental organizations. This term, transferred from the English language (third sector), refers to the concept of dividing the socio-economic activity of modern democratic states into three sectors.

All three models demonstrate that privacy protection in libraries can take various forms, from technical, through legal and institutional, to educational. However, the best results are achieved by combining these approaches: a library that combines technological awareness with a legal framework and active user education has the greatest chance of becoming a space of true information security.

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION LITERACY AS A FORM OF CYBERSECURITY

While technology plays a key role in ensuring data security, educational initiatives are equally crucial, both among library staff and users. Modern cyberthreats often stem not from advanced attacks but from human unawareness: clicking on a fake link, using a weak password, or sharing too much information online. In this context, digital education is becoming one of the most important and affordable tools for protecting privacy and personal data.

Libraries, as institutions of public trust and places of informal education, are particularly well-suited to serve as local digital literacy centers. They can conduct workshops on safe internet use, online identity management, recognizing phishing, and using encryption tools. Even simple actions such as learning how to use password managers, educating people about privacy settings on social media, or promoting secure browsers can significantly increase the level of information awareness in the local community.

Initiatives supporting libraries in implementing such initiatives are emerging in many countries. One example is the American Library Freedom Project, which connects libraries with privacy experts, offering training, technical consultations, and educational resources on topics such as Tor, PGP, and privacy policies. In Poland similar functions can be performed by library programs supported by the Information Society Development Foundation or initiatives of non-governmental organizations operating at the intersection of education and technology.

At the same time, the need to improve the competencies of library staff should not be overlooked. Librarians should be prepared to recognize threats, apply data minimization principles, respond to privacy incidents, and provide basic information to users about digital security. In practice, however, the topic of cybersecurity still rarely appears in library science curricula, which raises the need for systemic support and professional development in this area.

In the age of ubiquitous digitalization, education is becoming a form of cybersecurity that is just as important as firewalls, protocols, and certificates. A library that invests in developing information literacy skills

not only better protects its users' data but also strengthens their position as citizens in a digital society. Ultimately, it is knowledge, awareness, and the ability to critically use technological tools that provide the most effective protection against manipulation, data leaks, and digital exclusion.

SUMMARY

Cybersecurity in libraries is no longer optional or a technological add-on – it is becoming one of the fundamental pillars of their responsible functioning in the information society. With the increasing digitization of services, libraries are increasingly collecting, processing, and sharing data, which – if not properly protected – can become a source of serious violations of privacy and public trust.

The analysis conducted in this article shows that threats to user data are not only technological but also institutional, organizational, and cultural. Lack of privacy policies, shortages of skills, dependence on commercial technology providers, and lack of awareness of algorithmic surveillance – all of this means that libraries may unwittingly participate in processes that limit users' freedom and information security.

In this context, adopting a holistic approach to cybersecurity seems crucial, encompassing not only technology but people, procedures, organizational culture, and relationships with the environment. Based on this several practical recommendations for library institutions can be formulated:

1. Strengthening staff competencies. Libraries should invest in training in information security, risk management, incident response, and data ethics. These topics should also be included in librarian education programs.

2. Transparency and Privacy Policies. Every library should have a clear privacy policy that is accessible, understandable, and enforceable. Users must know what data is being collected, for what purpose, who has access to it, and how long it is retained.

3. Collaboration with Independent Experts. Institutions should consider collaborating with ethical hackers, digital activists, or non-governmental organizations working to protect privacy. Such partnerships can be a source of knowledge, technical support, and innovative solutions.

4. Using the right tools. Libraries should choose information management systems based on the "privacy by design" principle, use open source tools, encrypt communications, and limit reliance on commercial platforms.

5. User education. Libraries should serve as local digital education centers, offering training and support in privacy, safe internet use, and digital identity management.

Ultimately, cybersecurity isn't just a technical task—it's a matter of trust, responsibility, and ethical commitment to the community. Libraries, as public and educational institutions, have a special role to play in shaping citizens' digital literacy. To continue fulfilling this role, they must become aware and resilient entities themselves, including in the digital dimension.

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DIGITAL SECURITY IN LIBRARIES. CHALLENGES, THREATS, AND DATA PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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KEYWORDS: Cybersecurity. Libraries.

ABSTRACT: **Purpose of the article** – Analysis of selected challenges and threats related to cybersecurity in Polish and international libraries and proposals for solutions to enhance data and user protection. **Research methods** – The research utilized the analysis and critique of scientific literature and source materials available online, including recent publications, reports, press articles, and industry sources. Artificial intelligence tools such as Scopus AI, SciSpace, Scite, Primo AI Search Assistant and the Perplexity search engine were also used to obtain current data on cyberattack incidents. **Key findings** – Due to digitization and access to a variety of IT tools, libraries are becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks. These attacks can lead to data loss, violations of user privacy, service disruptions, and financial and reputational damage. **Conclusions** – Cybersecurity in libraries requires a comprehensive approach encompassing technologies, procedures, and education. Only such comprehensive measures will minimize threats, protect user data, and ensure the continued operation of libraries in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, libraries play a key role, providing access to information and knowledge increasingly through modern and interactive technologies. Undoubtedly, however, with the development of digital services, new threats related to data security and user privacy are emerging. Furthermore, for a long time, these institutions were perceived as safe places, virtually immune to digital threats, to which the business sector, public administration, and financial institutions were more vulnerable. Yet recent years have seen changes that are clearly related to the rapid digitization of library services, which consequently makes libraries also targets for cyberattacks. Regardless of the type of library, these institutions use integrated library systems or library service platforms, provide e-documents and databases, increasingly conduct user registration and services online, provide computers and other digital devices and Wi-Fi connections in their buildings, and, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the institution), engage with social media. The above-mentioned aspects of library operations are just a few examples related to the potential emergence or increase of digital threats in libraries.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

In this article, I analyze selected cybersecurity challenges in Polish and international libraries and propose solutions to enhance the protection of information and users, with particular emphasis on data processed in library systems. The aim of my analysis is to identify and characterize

cyberthreats and cyberattacks that have occurred in libraries both in Poland and internationally. Based on the experiences of these institutions, I also present measures enabling the effective protection of digital collections and user data. Furthermore, I highlight the challenges libraries face in implementing effective cybersecurity solutions.

During my research, I utilized the method of literature analysis and critique. The topic of cybersecurity in libraries is already present in the literature. However, it is worth noting that the most numerous attacks on these institutions have occurred in recent years, and not all of them have been described in scholarly publications to date. This is particularly true of attacks on Polish libraries. I will only mention here that the last case I analyzed occurred in July 2025, during the writing of this text. Therefore, important sources of information for me included library websites, their fan pages on social media, and articles in news outlets and in local and national press. I conducted my primary literature searches using the Primo Library Discovery Service available at the University of Warsaw Library. I was particularly interested in publications from the last few years, which are current enough to describe the threats we are constantly facing. While searching for information about publications, I also used tools with artificial intelligence components: Scopus AI, Primo AI Search Assistant, SciSpace, and Scite. I also conducted a supplementary search using Google Scholar. To identify information about cybercriminal attacks on Polish libraries, I used the Google search engine and the news aggregator Google News. The Perplexity search engine, based on generative artificial intelligence, also proved useful in searching for such information. I should emphasize that each piece of information about a hacker attack obtained this way[1] was then verified in other online sources (e.g. on the website of a given library).

CYBERSECURITY – CHALLENGES AND THREATS FOR LIBRARIES

Advances in the application of information technologies in libraries, and with them the use of these technologies in almost every area of library operations, are leading to the emergence of a number of new challenges and threats in cyberspace. In the literature, the term "cyberspace" is defined in various contexts, often depending on needs. Robert Janczewski

[1] In this article, the term "hacker" is associated with negative connotations, particularly in relation to the examples of criminal activities cited in the text, such as cyberattacks, aimed at gaining unauthorized access to computer systems, networks, or data in order to cause harm. However, it is important to emphasize that hacker culture encompasses a diverse set of values, practices, and beliefs that have evolved over time, reflecting both positive and negative aspects. In a positive context, a central element of this culture is the hacker ethic, which promotes ideals such as openness, collaboration, and the free exchange of information (Castellanos-Rivadeneira & Valerio-Ureña, 2020, pp. 134).

rightly points out that "different areas of human activity use this concept in various meanings" (Janczewski, 2022, p. 141). For the purposes of this article, I adopt the definition of "cyberspace" provided by Janusz Wasilewski, citing the US Department of Defense. According to this definition, cyberspace is "a global domain of the information environment consisting of interdependent networks created by information technology (IT) infrastructure and the data contained within them, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and the processors and controllers embedded within them" (Wasilewski, 2013, p. 227).

Cyberspace undoubtedly creates opportunities for criminal activities and attacks targeting public institutions such as museums, archives, and libraries. According to the definition provided in 2024 by Małgorzata Michałowska and Ewa Hassa, the term "cybersecurity" means "the resilience of information systems to activities that violate the confidentiality, integrity, availability, and authenticity of processed data or related services offered by these systems" (Michałowska, & Hassa, 2024, p. 101). It is worth noting that the "GDPR Guide for Libraries", published by the Association of Polish Librarians, also refers to cybersecurity as a concept encompassing "solutions for IT security, including the security of personal data in cyberspace". And further: "it also encompasses infrastructure security, from individual computer or telephone equipment to the overall ICT infrastructure, including critical infrastructure" (GDPR Guide for Libraries, 2020, p. 126). It is probably no wonder that cybersecurity in libraries is a crucial issue today. This is, of course, primarily related to these institutions' management of sensitive user data, but also to the integrity of library resources and services.

What threats do libraries face in the context of their cyberspace operations? The answer to this question is not at all simple. Different threats can have different consequences for the operations of these institutions. Understanding them is crucial for implementing effective security measures. Furthermore, these threats are evolving with the increasing integration of advanced technologies and the digital transformation of library services. Among the typical examples of security vulnerabilities cited in the literature are distributed denial-of-service (DDoS)[2], malware[3],

[2] DDoS (distributed denial of service) – "an attack on a computer system or network service in order to prevent it from functioning by occupying all available resources, carried out simultaneously from multiple computers". [In:] Pohoska, K. (2025, March 3). Cyberprzestępczość – prognozy na 2025 rok. *Stołeczny Magazyn Policyjny*, Retrieved August 12, 2025, from https://magazyn-ksp.policja.gov.pl/mag/technologie/137761,Cyberprzestepczosc-prognozy-na-2025-rok.html.

[3] Malware – "Installation of malicious software that can disrupt library operations or compromise data security" (Saha, 2024).

ransomware[4], phishing[5], SQL injection attack[6], session hijacking and Man-in-the-Middle attacks,[7] and cross-site scripting (XSS)[8] (See Humayun, et al., 2020, pp. 3173 ; Oladokun, et al., 2024).

Among the most common hacker attacks on libraries are malware infections (including viruses, worms, and Trojans), which can corrupt data, disrupt library services, systems, and networks, and violate user privacy. Malware infections can result from accidental or inadvertent downloads of infected files, library staff visiting infected websites, or opening malicious email attachments (Akor et al., 2024). Ransomware appears to be the most dangerous type of attack, which encrypts files and locks the system, often resulting in inaccessibility of data and services, often until a ransom is paid. This type of attack can also result in data loss for the library and a violation of user privacy. The proliferation of ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) platforms has made ransomware attacks more accessible to cybercriminals, increasing the risk to libraries (Akor et al., 2024).

A significant aspect of hacker attacks is, of course, the compromise of data, often sensitive, concerning both users and library employees and collaborators. For example, unauthorized access to institutional databases can result in the disclosure of ID numbers, passport data, information about users' place of residence, their telephone numbers, etc. (Rahim, et al., 2024). Internal library documents (e.g., contracts, invoices) are also at risk of disclosure. Such actions can damage the library's reputation and entail legal and financial consequences.

It's also worth at least mentioning "brute force" attacks, which involve repeated attempts to gain unauthorized access to library systems by guessing passwords. Such attacks can also lead to unauthorized access to sensitive data and disruption of library services (Putri, et al., 2024,

[4] Ransomware – "a type of malware which prevents you from accessing your device and the data stored on it, usually by encrypting your files" (Corrado, 2024).

[5] Phishing – "a method of fraud in which a criminal impersonates another person or institution in order to obtain confidential information (e.g. login details, credit card details), infect a computer with malware, or persuade the victim to take specific actions". (Akademia NASK, n.d.).

[6] SQL Injection attack – "In this attack, an input string is injected through the application to change or manipulate the SQL statement to the attacker's advantage. This attack harms the database in several ways, including unauthorized access and manipulation of the database, and disclosure of sensitive data". (Humayun, et al., 2020, pp. 3173).

[7] "Man-In-The-Middle (MITM, also abbreviated in the literature as MIM, MitM, MiM or MITMA) is an attack where an unauthorized third party secretly gains control of the communication channel between multiple endpoints. The MITM attacker can interrupt, manipulate or even replace the target victims' communication traffic. Further, victims are not aware of the intruder, thus believing that the communication channel is safe and protected". (Humayun, et al., 2020, pp. 3173).

[8] "Cross-Site Scripting (XSS): In this type of attack, a malicious attacker tries to run a JavaScript code in the client's browser in order to steal the client's sensitive data. It is a commonly used vulnerability found in recent websites". (Humayun, et al., 2020, pp. 3173).

pp. 266). They involve access to databases and administrator accounts, as well as the ability to manage social media fan pages.

It is worth emphasizing that information about hacker attacks doesn't always have to be publicly disclosed by libraries. In Poland, for example, there's no clear legal provision obliging these institutions to report all cybersecurity incidents. However, attacks that may result in a breach of access to library users' personal data should be reported to the President of the Personal Data Protection Office (UODO) within 72 hours, and information about such an incident should be provided to data subjects if there is a risk of their rights or freedoms being violated (GDPR Guide for Libraries, 2020, p. 138). In short, reporting incidents that threaten users' personal data should occur if there is a risk of a breach, while other cyberattacks don't always have to be publicly disclosed. The decision in such cases rests with the institution.

As a side note to these considerations, it is also worth addressing the use of data processing tools by libraries, particularly those based on generative artificial intelligence. This refers to data on reading preferences, which, during a user's search and selection process, could theoretically constitute sensitive data. The situation is similar, albeit in a much more advanced way, to that of readership statistics. Regarding the latter, Zofia Lipińska's words are interesting: "However, libraries should proceed with extreme caution in this area – maintaining statistics based on the Public Statistics Act of 29 June 1995 is one thing, but creating, for example, reader profiles for users of a specific library may be considered an abuse of statutory authority. Therefore, if a library engages in such practices or uses computer programs that recommend books based on reading history, it is worth obtaining appropriate consent, as these activities may be considered reader profiling". (Lipińska, n.d.). The aspect of library user profiling (including forecasting their needs and interests, and utilizing recommendation systems that suggest books, articles, and other resources tailored to individual users), especially with the active use of generative artificial intelligence, is clearly related to the issue of library user safety. I have no doubt that in an era of increasingly widespread use of these tools, which often operate on large data sets, a responsible and transparent approach to collecting and processing user information is essential. Lack of appropriate security measures, especially user consent, can lead to privacy violations and, consequently, a loss of trust on their part. Therefore, libraries should not only ensure the technical security of their systems but also scrupulously adhere to the privacy policies regarding their employees and users, particularly those related to profiling and the processing of sensitive data. The characteristics concerning privacy protection can be found, among others, in the "GDPR Guide for Libraries" published by the Publishing House of the Polish Librarians Association. Such protection

consists in "protecting the ability of an individual or group of people to maintain the privacy of their data, personal habits and behaviors that are not publicly disclosed" (GDPR Guide for Libraries, p. 126).

THE LIBRARY AS A TARGET FOR CYBERCRIMINALS

Returning to the main topic of this article, recent years have seen a number of cyberattacks on libraries, affecting institutions both in Poland and around the world. An example is the attack on the website of the University of Warmia and Mazury Library in Olsztyn. In January 2016, a hacker blocked access to the homepage and posted an image of the "Quran" ("Haker zablokował stronę biblioteki UWM", 2016). After entering the library's address in a search engine, a message appeared stating that the website had been hacked: "HaCked By Fr13nds Team [#OP_WorlD]" ("Atak hakerów na serwery UWM…", 2016). The library website was unavailable for approximately 10 hours. In this case, no user personal data was leaked. An employee from the library's computerization department admitted in an interview with Radio Olsztyn that hackers managed to find a bug on the website and ruthlessly exploited it. The primary problem, it seems, was the use of publicly available ready-made solutions. The employee admitted to a journalist: "Sometimes I use ready-made solutions that are made available. Unfortunately, they simply hacked through one of the plugins" ("Atak hakerów na serwery UWM…", 2016). The simplest solution to avoid this problem would be to avoid using unverified, publicly available solutions and to regularly update and audit the library's software.

In January 2019, the Central Military Library (CBW) reported that the Ministry of National Defense's Computer Incident Response System Support Center had observed phishing attacks targeting library users. The senders of the messages impersonated CBW employees and informed them of the need to return books from a list, which included a link. Clicking the link downloaded malware. The library stated on its website that such messages should be deleted without clicking the link. It also presented detailed characteristics of phishing emails in an exemplary manner. This message was supplemented by a screenshot of a sample fake email, allegedly sent by the Central Military Library. In reporting the attack, the library assured users that their data was secure and had not been disclosed. Users were also instructed to exercise extreme caution when using email (Central Military Library, 2019).

Another example from Poland: On the night of January 5-6, 2024, an attack was carried out on the Data Processing Center of the University of Zielona Góra. As a result, the library system and the Zielona Góra Digital

Library, among others, were blocked. A spokeswoman for the University of Zielona Góra reported that as a result of the hacking attack, the ability to read virtual machine files containing personal data of employees and students was temporarily blocked (Łukasiewicz, 2024). The Akira group was behind the attack, and the ransom demanded was $750,000. The university did not pay it (May, 2024). According to Katarzyna Doszczak from the University of Zielona Góra press office, the university fell victim to a ransomware attack (May, 2024). To be more precise, according to the European Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA), ransomware has been the most devastating type of cyberattack in the last decade (Knowledge Base. Service of the Republic of Poland, 2022). Małgorzata Poniatowska-Jaksch noted that in 2024, cybercriminals using this type of solution increasingly used services available on the dark web instead of their own programs (Poniatowska-Jaksch, 2024, p. 7). It is worth noting that in the case of the University of Zielona Góra, administrators managed to recover the university's IT systems, which have an IT resource monitoring system in place (May, 2024). However, it took ten days for all digital services to be restored (University of Zielona Góra. Computer Center, 2024).

It is not just large institutions that are vulnerable to attacks. Smaller libraries, and even their branches, can also be targeted by cybercriminals. Take, for example, the case of a library in the Lublin Voivodeship. On February 9, 2019, the server of the Municipal Public Library in Kraśnik was attacked by hackers. According to media reports, an employee noticed a message in English on the server informing someone that the branch's database had been deleted. According to the Library's director, "There was also information that if we wanted to recover the database, we had to pay in Bitcoins" (Antoń-Jucha, 2019). Due to the risk of unauthorized access to users' personal data, the matter was reported to the Office for Personal Data Protection and to the police (Antoń-Jucha, 2019). In this institution's case, on March 28, 2019, a notice about the incident appeared on its main website, giving information about the risk of disclosing users' personal data (Krasnik Municipal Public Library, 2019). The library provided detailed information about the possible consequences of unauthorized use by criminals. It also assured users that the latest version of the library system, which uses encryption of stored personal data, had been installed, which is intended to prevent or significantly impede unauthorized access to sensitive resources in the future (Krasnik Municipal Public Library, 2019).

The latest example from Poland concerns a situation that occurred in July 2025. The Rudy Library is a branch of the Kuźnia Raciborska Municipal Public Library. Its Facebook fan page was attacked and its employees lost access. "Our previous account was hacked, and despite numerous attempts, we are unable to recover it. Over five years of work,

memories, events, photos, comments, and hearts... went up in smoke", we read on the Library's new fan page (Rudy Library, 2025). This example demonstrates that social media account takeovers can be caused by a hacker attack, which essentially results in the blocking of the fan page and the inability to access the institution's published content. In the case of the Rudy Library, despite numerous attempts the previous account could not be recovered. The institution launched a new fan page and appealed to the online community for help in rebuilding trust and reach, asking for likes and shares about the new page.

It is worth remembering that account takeovers by unauthorized individuals can not only lead to data loss but can also expose libraries to other problems (e.g., impersonation of the institution, sending spam and other content, accessing sensitive data). Therefore, it is essential to implement appropriate security measures, including strong and unique passwords and two-factor authentication. Librarians' awareness of online account security and mandatory cybersecurity training are crucial. Implementing at least a few basic rules significantly increases the security of library social media accounts and helps avoid many serious consequences for both the institution and its users.

To summarize the above, it is worth mentioning that the number of cyberattacks on various public institutions and companies is growing in Poland. In 2024, there was a 60% increase in security incidents (over 111,000 cases). This increase was particularly noticeable in the public sector (Jaśkowiak, 2025). It is also hard to disagree with the words of the creators of the website SecurityBsides that "more and more criminals will start using artificial intelligence, which will make attacks more complex and harder to detect. Therefore, organizations should invest in modern protection systems and intensify employee education in cybersecurity" (SecurityBsides, 2025). It is worth noting that the issue of cybercriminals' use of artificial intelligence was also recently addressed in an article in "Stołeczny Magazyn Policyjny" (Pohoska, 2025).

Of course, hacker attacks aren't limited to Polish libraries. Examples of such situations from abroad can be found in Edward M. Corrado's article (Corrado, 2024, p. 84). It is worth noting that recent years have seen a series of events that have significantly disrupted the functioning of these institutions in various countries. To further illustrate the scale of the threat, below are two of the most well-known incidents that have significantly impacted the perception of the world of libraries in the digital age. These examples also provide important lessons in the need to implement effective security measures and to be aware of the risks associated with cybersecurity, which is constantly evolving and requires constant monitoring and adaptation to new threats.

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) is one of the largest public libraries

in the world, with over four million visitors annually and 1.2 million cardholders (Wyganowski, 2024). The library has 100 branches. On October 28, 2023, a ransomware attack was launched against the institution (Enis, 2024). The attack was orchestrated by the cybercriminals Black Basta group. In 2023, this group was considered one of the most dangerous (Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, 2024, p. 22). "The group uses a double extortion tactic, encrypting the victim's data and servers, as well as ransoming their sensitive data on their public leak site" (Mafera, 2024, 115). Cybercriminals gained unauthorized access to the library network, encrypted network resources, and stole the personal data of users, staff, and volunteers (Wyganowski, 2024). Up to 900 GB of data, containing 780,000 files, is estimated to have been stolen (Bains, 2024). This data had been collected by the library since 1998 (Wyganowski, 2024). It is worth noting that there is no evidence that the stolen data was published online. Nor is there any basis to claim it was disseminated in any way.

The attack resulted in the shutdown of most of the library's and its branches' IT systems, including the main website, electronic catalogues, public computers, printers, and access to digital collections. "Although TPL managed to keep all of its 100 branches open and host programs throughout the ordeal, patrons were unable to access their library accounts online or use the library's computers for more than two months. And while TPL has also continued to manually check out print books and other physical materials, the library has been unable to process holds or check the materials back in when they are returned" (Enis, 2024). Following the recommendations of cybersecurity experts, the institution did not pay the ransom (reported by the Toronto Star to be as much as $10 million), notified the City of Toronto and its cybersecurity team, the Toronto Police, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Enis, 2024). Corrective measures were also implemented, including modernizing technical security measures and restoring services (Bains, 2024). The attack became a symbol of the growing threat to public institutions from cybercrime, emphasizing both the importance of protecting IT infrastructure and the importance of transparently informing victims and the public about the impact of such incidents. It was also one of the most serious cyberattacks on a public institution in Canada and worldwide.

It is worth noting that an attacked institution doesn't always refuse to pay the ransom. Cybersecurity experts have recommend against doing so, even if the costs of recovering data exceed the ransom. Individual countries are also implementing regulations addressing such situations. For example, according to the UK's national policy, formulated by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), no payments should be made in the event of a ransomware attack (Mayard, 2024). It is also clear that paying a ransom encourages cybercriminals to launch further attacks (Breeding, 2024).

However, looking at the reality of educational institutions, it is apparent that there is no clear-cut approach to this problem. Natalie Schwartz, for example, writes that over half of universities (56% of 200 universities in 14 countries) that fell victim to ransomware attacks paid the ransom to recover lost data (Schwartz, 2023). The matter is not as straightforward as it might seem at first glance.

The second ransomware cyberattack I describe occurred at the British Library, interestingly also on October 28, 2023. This library is considered the largest in the world. This makes it even more difficult to imagine a situation where this institution loses its capacity to function and is unable to offer even its basic services. Cybercriminals working with the Rhysida group, previously known for attacks on government institutions and hospitals, among other things, hacked into the library's IT systems. The group stole (and destroyed) data, encrypted a significant portion of the servers, and blocked all users from accessing the library network. As part of their illegal activities, files from the finance, technology, and human resources departments were copied (Mayard, 2024). The cybercriminals demanded a ransom of 20 bitcoins—nearly £600,000 (Houghton, Winterburn & Ken Oakley, 2025). Following the British Library's refusal to pay, hackers published approximately 600 GB of stolen resources on the dark web, including user personal data and employee documents (Mayard, 2024).

As a result of the attack on the British Library, its services were unavailable. Marshall Breeding writes that "practically all parts of the BL's technology infrastructure were impacted, including the ILS, the catalog, the many systems supporting the library's massive digital collections, request and retrieval services, and even the Wi-Fi network" (Breeding, 2024). Moreover, library users did not have access to its physical collections. (Breeding, 2024). The library's website and staff email were also blocked (Fiscus, 2024). Restoring the library system to full functionality following such an attack was a difficult and lengthy process. Although backups of digital collections and metadata existed, the lack of a functioning infrastructure to restore this data posed a significant obstacle to recovery (Öykü, 2024). For example, access to the online catalog was restored only on January 15, 2024, but without the ability to order documents (Fiscus, 2024).

Following the attack, the British Library took steps to promote transparency, publishing a detailed incident report in 2024 (British Library, 2024) and collaborating with the UK National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and law enforcement agencies. A website was also created (www.bl.uk/about/cyber-attack), where users can find answers to frequently asked questions about the cyberattack. This includes information on the consequences of the leak of library users' personal data. In an official statement from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), published

on April 30, 2025, the British Library was described as an institution that was transparent about the attack and its effects. The library's willingness to share information about the system's weaknesses, remedial actions taken, and cooperation with the NCSC and law enforcement agencies to improve data security were also praised (Information Commissioner's Office, 2025).

POSSIBILITIES FOR COUNTERING CYBER THREATS

What cybersecurity strategies should libraries implement? There are at least several answers to this question. Without a doubt, digital transformation has improved the accessibility and comfort of library services. At the same time, it has increased the risk of various cyberattacks, including those aimed at exploiting security vulnerabilities in library systems and insufficient staff and user awareness. It is also important to remember that cyber threats in libraries are constantly evolving, requiring continuous adaptation and technological innovation in this area as well. As a result, libraries must face challenges related to data protection, IT infrastructure, and educating staff and users about digital security. Among other things, systematically updating security systems is essential. Libraries must also be ready to utilize advanced IT tools to detect and analyze threats in library systems. This also applies to the application of AI in libraries (e.g., as part of service automation and efficiency; personalized user service; more effective information search and resource discovery). Particularly in large libraries, additional tools for effective control and continuous monitoring of the increasingly complex digital library environment may also be necessary. This is especially important in the context of real-time threat detection and response. Importantly, tools are already available today that provide insight into data at all levels of the IT infrastructure. These solutions also utilize machine learning mechanisms, continuously monitoring and analyzing telemetry data from the network infrastructure. Examples of such tools can be found in the literature, including DarckTrace, Cisco Network Analytics, and IBM QRader (Ghazal, et al., 2022).

Importantly, artificial intelligence can pose additional challenges for libraries. One example is AI tools that process user data to further personalize services. Remember that to operate efficiently, AI tools often require access to vast amounts of data, which may contain sensitive information. Therefore, libraries should obtain users' (informed!) consent before automatically analyzing their activity in the library system and allow them to opt out or limit data processing and further sharing (Kavak, 2024, p. 46). The solution in this case may be adopting appropriate privacy

policies, implementing proven data management solutions, and regularly auditing AI systems (Kavak, 2024, p. 46).

To improve cybersecurity, libraries can also use blockchain technology and biometric authentication for access control. Blockchain can, among other things, help secure digital resource management and data transfer (Akor, et al., 2024). However, the potential uses of this technology are much broader. In his doctoral thesis, Piotr Dariusz Chmielewski aptly identifies potential areas for implementing this technology in academic libraries. These include: data storage; managing licensing agreements and digital rights; supporting scholarly communication and open science; metadata management; managing data, holdings, and collections; managing the loan process; user services; and organizing and certifying training (Chmielewski, 2023, pp. 137-149). It is clear, therefore, that all of these application areas are, to a greater or lesser extent, related to cybersecurity.

AI and blockchain are technologies that can significantly help prevent or mitigate cyberthreats. However, despite their enormous potential (including streamlining administrative processes and strengthening the resilience of library IT infrastructure), they also pose challenges related to their implementation. Importantly, integrating these technologies with library security systems requires meticulous planning, investment in staff training, and rigorous adherence to best practices in cybersecurity management (Akor et al., 2024). The role of educating library staff and users about cybersecurity threats is particularly important here. Training, lectures, tutorials, etc., are crucial for identifying potential threats in the future and for responding to them (Panda & Kaur, 2024).

Library directors and staff must make every effort to effectively secure the data they collect and manage. Conscious actions and technical measures are essential to increase security in the digital environment. Edward M. Corrado points to helpful documents in this regard created by government agencies in several countries, as well as commercial and non-profit organizations working in the field of cybersecurity. Based on these documents, Corrado formulated recommendations for libraries, which are presented in a concise form below:

1. Develop a comprehensive cybersecurity plan that includes risk mitigation strategies and cyber incident response procedures. This plan should define responsibilities for monitoring data security and address privacy, legal, and ethical aspects of security policies.

2. Provide periodic training for employees on protecting user data and confidential information, with a particular emphasis on recognizing threats and implementing cybersecurity best practices.

3. Prepare user briefings on protecting privacy and data confidentiality, including information about vendors collecting search histories. Highlight

the risks associated with using illegal sources, such as "shadow libraries", and the risk of credential theft.

4. Require employees to use strong passwords and multi-factor authentication.

5. Create an inventory of all digital resources and components of the library's technological infrastructure. This inventory should include information about the data stored in various systems and the potential consequences of data loss or security breaches.

6. Limit access to non-public data, especially user data. Only employees whose duties involve using such resources should have access. These employees should have received appropriate training in managing confidential data. Encryption is possible. The library should only collect data that is necessary.

7. Regularly backup data according to the 3-2-1 strategy, i.e., maintaining three copies on two different media, with one copy stored off-site, e.g., in the cloud.

8. Systematically update library system software to eliminate security gaps.

9. Assess technology and software used in libraries through the lens of cybersecurity, taking into account provisions in contracts with vendors, as well as audits and security certifications (e.g., ISO/IEC 27001). Employees should be familiar with the terms and conditions of use of systems, individual services, and resources, particularly regarding the storage by vendors of data and information about user activity (e.g., search history).

10. Consider the financial and staffing needs associated with maintaining cybersecurity. In the event of a cyberattack, the costs of restoring infrastructure operations may significantly exceed the costs of counteracting such an attack in advance (Corrado, 2024, pp. 87-92).

What other recommendations should be considered to protect libraries from cyberattacks? A British Library report published in March 2024 provides guidance. The report aims, among other things, to help other institutions implement appropriate procedures. It contains 16 key conclusions worth considering when planning digital security solutions for libraries. These include: increasing network monitoring capabilities; retaining on-call external security expertise; fully implementing multi-factor authentication; introducing policies to limit personal use of library IT; collaborating with other institutions in the industry and sharing information on cyber threats and cybersecurity best practices; implementing government standards; implementing network segmentation; and managing systems lifecycles to eliminate legacy technology (British Library, 2024).

The authors of the "GDPR Guide for Libraries", point out, among other things, the possibility of restricting external access to library equipment.

They also consider it good practice to separate the internal (library) network from external resources (GDPR Guide for Libraries, 2020, p. 127).

The authors also recommend restricting the connection of private media to library computers and disabling the autorun function for all media, as well as limiting the freedom to connect USB drives to computers (allowing only devices authenticated by an IT specialist). It is also important to scan external data media with antivirus software before each use and to destroy old devices, drives, etc., so as to prevent data recovery. Furthermore, they recommend regularly deleting unnecessary files/messages and protecting mobile devices used in the library (GDPR Guide for Libraries, 2020, p. 127).

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the increasing use of digital technologies and networked environments, libraries are highly vulnerable to various threats, including hacking. The threat of aggressive and destructive cyberattacks is greater than ever before. Cybercriminal groups can significantly disrupt the functioning of these institutions, endangering confidential data and undermining trust. Various forms of attacks can impact library operations in numerous ways, leading not only to service disruptions but also to privacy and data security breaches and damage to the institution's reputation. In a digital world where more and more resources and services are being made available online, libraries are becoming an attractive target for cybercriminals, requiring continuous improvement in data protection standards and IT systems. Only a comprehensive approach, combining modern technologies, appropriate procedures, and staff and user education, will effectively minimize risk and ensure secure access to information.

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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[1]

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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[2] 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

[2] 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[3].

[3] 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.

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[4]. 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

[4] 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[5], 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

[5] 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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FROM HISTORICAL TREASURES TO THE IDEA OF PROTECTING POLISH WRITTEN HERITAGE

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KEYWORDS: National Library Resource. National Library. Poland.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose of the Article** – The aim of this article is to present the process of developing the concept of securing and protecting the most valuable objects in Polish libraries. Its origins date back to historical times, but it was not until the second half of the 1970s that it took on a specific systemic and organizational form. The 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century brought legal solutions aimed at protecting library collections in Poland. Bibliological research, in the context of political and social phenomena, creates the opportunity for comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the various mechanisms related to the cultural significance and impact of book collections, especially historical collections, which constitute the core of the national library resources. **Methods** – The text was prepared using the bibliographic method, supported by the analysis of source materials in the form of minutes and resolutions of the National Library Resource Council held at the National Library. **Results** – The article presents the

importance of creating the National Library Resource for protecting and ensuring the continuity of the Polish cultural heritage and building a national and European identity.

INTRODUCTION

The awareness of threats and the concept of protecting cultural property date back to ancient times, as the plundering of treasure troves of various documents (e.g., libraries, archives, museums, temples) has accompanied these institutions from the very beginning. One need only consider the reign of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who, according to inscriptions, was one of the first rulers who was literate. He spent much of his reign on military expeditions, bringing back loot that bolstered not only his treasury and palace but also the famous library/archive in Nineveh (Russell, 1999). The Library of Alexandria was also subjected to plunder and destruction. Responsibility for the destruction of this largest ancient papyri collection rested with Julius Caesar, pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The Greek jurist and church historian Socrates Scholasticus left an account of violent events during which the work of the Ptolemaic dynasty suffered significantly (El-Abbadi & Fathallah 2008). According to tradition, the first Roman libraries were also spoils of war. Such actions are known from the Macedonian Wars and after the defeat of Carthage, when Scipio Africanus the Younger brought back 28 scrolls of King Mago's treaty to translate into Latin. Other examples of libraries captured as spoils of war include the book collection of the kings of Macedonia (Perseus's royal library), taken in 168 BCE; the collection of Apellicon of Teos, brought from Athens and captured by Sulla in 80 BCE; and in 67 CE, the library of Mithridates the Great, king of Pontus, brought by Lucullus after a victorious battle (Sochocka, 2011). In the Middle Ages, the Crusaders plundered the Middle East, fought against Muslims, and destroyed and looted cultural heritage. The most significant in this regard was the Fourth Crusade, which significantly enriched the papal treasury and that of Venice (Harris, 2014). For example, the famous bronze horses by the Greek sculptor Lysippos of Sicyon which adorned the façade of St. Mark's Basilica had been looted on the orders of the Venetian Doge. History has come full circle, as during Napoleon Bonaparte's conquest of Venice in 1797, the sculpture was transported to Paris and placed on the triumphal arch in 1808. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the horses were returned to Venice, where they can now be admired in the Museo Marciano (a copy of the sculpture is on the façade of the basilica). During the Age of Discovery, at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, conquistadors brought the cross to the New World and took away galleons of antiquities and valuables. In the 17th century, the Swedes plundered everything of value in Germany, Bohemia, and Poland. From

the territories of the First Polish Republic they took, among others, the book collections of Nicolaus Copernicus, of the Jesuit College in Braniewo, and of the Cistercians from Pelplin. Libraries and archives in Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Piotrków Trybunalski, and Vilnius also suffered significant losses. Some examples are the Wasa collections from the Royal Castle and Ujazdowski Palace, the Kraków Academy, the book collections of monasteries, congregations, and townspeople, as well as priceless archival records such as the Crown Registers and the Lithuanian Registers (Matelski, 2003; Wagner & Kowalski, 2022). In the second half of the 18th century (as a result of the three partitions) and throughout the following century, Polish collections were decimated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria (Matelski & Witek, 2006). The events of World War II also brought severe losses to Polish cultural heritage. (*Straty bibliotek w czasie II wojny światowej*, 1994; Bieńkowska, 2000).

Is it worth revisiting the losses of Polish written heritage that occurred during historical periods, especially during the Second World War? This year marks 80 years since the war ended, and the topic has a rich literature. In my opinion, it is definitely worthwhile, because decision-makers, institutional managers, and their employees do not always possess sufficient knowledge and awareness of the historical value of stored collections, the need to ensure their well-being, or the diligence to prepare and follow procedures for their evacuation. Unfortunately, we do not learn from past mistakes, for example, regarding the preparation of safe evacuation sites or the limited trust of users who engage in brazen theft. Acts (e.g. On Libraries of 1997 with subsequent amendments, On the Protection and Care of Monuments of 2003), regulations (e.g. On the National Library Resource of 1998 and 2012) and other documents and guidelines will not in themselves ensure the protection of the written heritage. Events of the past determine contemporary library policy (I refer here to the dispersion and relocation of collections, collection losses, the destruction of entire institutional or private collections, and inventory gaps). The past conditions the present, because due to unfavorable historical and political conditions, no Polish library possesses a complete, historical collection of books of exceptional value (historical, scientific, cultural, artistic) and significance for the national heritage, that is, the objects that constitute the national library resource.

THREATS TO AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The first reflection on protecting cultural objects can be considered the decree of the Western Roman Emperor Majorian (Iulius Valerius Maiorianus) from 458, in which he forbade the demolition of Roman

monuments for building material (Pruszyński, 1989). The modern idea of legal protection for the products of the human spirit and mind was born in the Renaissance. Jakub Przyłuski, a Polish humanist, lawyer, political writer, poet, translator, and owner of a printing house in Szczuczyn, is considered a European pioneer in this field (Kowalczyk, 1993). He was the author of a nearly 1,000-page legal work *Leges Sev Statvta Ac Privilegia Regni Poloniæ: Omnia Hactenus magna ex parte uaga, consula, & sibi pugnantia: iam aute[m] in gratiam D. Sigismvndi Avgvsti Regis Poloniæ & in usum Reipubliae...*, self-published in 1553[1], partly in Szczuczyn, and partly "near the Kraków Castle". Przyłuski dedicated the work to King Sigismund Augustus and the Grand Marshal of the Crown, Piotr Kmita. On the reverse of the title page is a privilege from Sigismund Augustus explaining the reasons that led the monarch to issue permission for printing, with the stipulation that the courts could not use the work until it was approved by the Sejm. In the book *De re militarii seu de bello,* the author emphasized the need to strive for peace, even if it entailed certain concessions, because every war brings suffering and destruction to people. He put forward the idea of protecting works of art, scholars, and artists during wartime. In his view, the conqueror was supposed to preserve intact religious objects and literary monuments, and to spare artists and scholars (Kuran & Wichowa, 2022).

Critical remarks on the destruction of cultural property can also be found in the works of another Polish Renaissance intellectual, Stanisław Reszka SJ, a trained humanist, diplomat, royal secretary, and abbot of Jędrzejów. He criticized the plundering activities of the ancients, as well as of his contemporaries, listing many Roman monuments that suffered as a result. He also criticized the hierarchs, even popes, who destroyed ancient temples, statues, and artifacts to eradicate pagan superstitions. Stanisław Reszka claimed to have witnessed the demolition in 1588 of the Septizonium (the so-called Temple of Seven Suns, built in 203 AD in honor of Saturn, Sol, Venus, Jupiter, Luna, Mars, and Mercury), under the direction of the renowned Tuscan architect Domenico Fontana. The resulting building materials were used, among others, to renovate the Column of Marcus Aurelius, in the papal tombstones in the Basilica Papale di Santa Maria Maggiore, and in other buildings (Wrześniak, 2003).

It is worth noting that in Poland, the first legal norms regarding conduct during military campaigns were created in the 14th century and recorded in a special statute issued by King Casimir the Great. The original text has not survived, but we know its content from later confirmations by Władysław Jagiełło and subsequent rulers. The document specified the conditions

[1] The text was first published in 1548 as a draft. At that time, it was titled *Statuta Regni Poloniae methodica dispositione […] conscripta.*. and was printed by Hieronim Wietor.

for the march of troops during military expeditions. It prohibited, among other things, stopping on clerical or secular estates, and plundering and raping residents. Subsequent rulers also issued appropriate ordinances. For example, in 1557, King Sigismund Augustus promulgated the Order of Knightly Martial Laws (*Porządek praw rycerskich wojennych*), which, in addition to rules of conduct during a military expedition, camp organization, and the performance of duties, penalized a number of acts (raping women, murdering, etc.), as well as crimes against cultural property. Article 14 stipulated that anyone looting a church/temple, even in conquered territory, would be subject to the death penalty (Kutrzeba, 1937).

Later, a greater number of regulations on the principles of warfare were issued by hetmans, reflecting their growing importance in the military and public life of the state. The norms contained therein were incorporated into the so-called Military Articles, and later, the Hetman's Articles (*artykuły hetmańskie*). Hetman Florian Zebrzydowski's Military Articles of 1561 repeated the rules of King Sigismund Augustus. A document issued several years later by Grand Crown Hetman Jan Zamoyski, promulgated during the 1580 war between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy, stated that those who destroyed and plundered Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, and other places of worship in conquered territories would be subject to severe punishment (even death) (Kutrzeba, 1937). The end of the development of this form of regulation – which also regulated, to some extent, the protection of cultural property – is linked to decisions made by the Sejm in 1609. From that moment until the end of the First Polish Republic, military regulations were enacted solely by the parliament, and hetman's articles were only ad hoc in nature and promulgated for the needs of a specific military campaign, after which such regulations expired (Kutrzeba, 1937; Kowalczyk, 1993).

The codification of international rules for the protection of cultural property – including written heritage – occurred only in the 20th century and is a response to the destruction inflicted during the Second World War, although it can be traced back to the late 19th century. I am referring here to the Brussels Declaration, adopted in 1874 by 15 states (based, among other things, on the experience of the Franco-Prussian War). Article 8 of the Declaration stipulated that the property of municipalities and institutions devoted to religious ceremonies, charities, or education, as well as to the arts and sciences – even state-owned – would be treated as private property, and any seizure, destruction, or deliberate desecration of such institutions, historical monuments, works of art and science, would be prosecuted by civil authorities. To protect these objects, according to Article 17, the besieged state should mark such buildings and institutions with a clear and unmistakable symbol. The initiator of the conference was

Tsar Alexander II of Russia. In 1899, the next Russian Tsar also initiated the convening of another conference and the establishment of regulations that would govern the conduct of conflicts. This time, the meeting was initiated by Nicholas II. It was organized in The Hague to – at least initially, as it was believed – establish regulations regarding disarmament. However, during the deliberations, representatives of dozens of states focused on codifying and reforming the laws of war, as well as the law concerning the peaceful settlement of international disputes. As a result, on July 29, 1899, three documents regulating the aforementioned issues were signed. The Second Hague Convention – modeled on the Brussels Declaration – addressed several points regarding the protection of cultural property. Nine years later, in 1907, also at Russia's initiative, further international peace conferences were convened to introduce regulations regarding the laws of war, although their primary goal was to prepare regulations limiting armaments. Thirteen conventions were adopted, twelve of which entered into force. Paragraphs of two conventions regulated the protection of cultural property (the Fourth Hague Convention and its Regulations, and the Ninth Hague Convention). Both expanded on the provisions concerning the protection of cultural property contained in previously adopted documents. Of particular note are articles 23 (item G), 27, 47, and 56 of the Hague Regulations, which prohibited the destruction or seizure of enemy property and plunder. Article 5 IX of the Hague Convention had a similar meaning. It is worth noting that at that time, plunder, interpreted as an arbitrary act of violence committed by an individual on his own account, was distinguished from the law concerning spoils of war, which were not prohibited. According to Krzysztof Sałaciński, "[...] both the authors of the Brussels Declaration and the participants in the Hague conferences assumed that the subject of their work would not be the creation of new norms, which had little chance of being widely adopted and applied. Instead, it was agreed that the subject would be the existing legal awareness and practice of states. Therefore, the provisions of these acts were quickly recognized as written customary law" (Sałaciński, 2015, p. 21). It should be emphasized that the concept of cultural property was introduced into international public law quite late, only in 1954 by the Hague Convention (for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict). Chapter 1, point 1 of this international agreement stipulates that works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological importance, as well as scientific collections, book collections, archives, and buildings whose primary and practical purpose is to store or exhibit movable cultural property, such as museums, libraries and archives, are subject to legal protection (Karcz-Kaczmarek & Kaczmarek, 2014).

After regaining independence in 1918, Poland had to redress the differences between the individual lands previously incorporated into the three partitioning powers, repolonizing public institutions and creating favorable conditions for the reconstruction and development of economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural structures. Cultural institutions, including libraries, required processes that would standardize the principles of their operation, collection, processing, preservation, and access to collections. A crucial task was the establishment of a central library—the National Library—whose primary responsibility would be to collect, preserve, protect, and record Polish written heritage, including Polonica. The idea of establishing such an institution is clearly visible in the culture of the Polish Enlightenment. The Enlightenment cult of reason and a modern understanding of the role of books and libraries in the service of science and education were revealed in the initiative of brothers Andrzej Stanisław and Józef Andrzej Załuski, who in 1747 opened private collections accumulated over years in Poland and abroad to the public. The Załuski Library quickly became a symbol of national culture, an intellectual center, and a repository of Polish written heritage. It is worth mentioning the unrealized idea of Michał Jerzy Wandalin Mniszech, who in 1775 published "Thoughts on the Founding of a Musaeum Polonicum" in *Zabawne Przyjemne i Pożyteczne* (Pleasant and Useful Entertainments) (the first Polish literary journal). Mniszech's project was closely linked to Józef Andrzej Załuski's concept of establishing a scientific workshop (library and museum) and, in the future, an academy of sciences. In his opinion, library and museum collections should support educational and scientific processes, as well as protect and popularize national cultural heritage (Hapanowicz, 2021). In the interwar period, discussion on this topic was initiated by Stefan Demby (initiator and first director of the National Library), Ludwik Bernacki (director of the Ossolineum in Lviv from 1918 to 1939), and continued by Stefan Rygiel (director of university libraries in Warsaw and later in Vilnius), Edward Kuntze (director of the university library in Poznań and later in Kraków), and Aleksander Birkenmajer (expert on manuscripts and early printed books at the Jagiellonian Library, later director of the University Library in Poznań) (Bernacki, 1921; Birkenmajer, 1927; Demby, 1928). It is worth noting that the aforementioned librarians, apart from Stefan Demby, had extensive experience in restitution work carried out under the terms of the 1921 Treaty of Riga (Pietrzkiewicz, 2019).

In the changed geopolitical circumstances following the First World War, Polish libraries, archives, and museums began preparing repossession applications and registering collections in the Second Polish Republic. The Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education sponsored the inventorying of cultural institutions. A census was conducted based on

distributed surveys. From mid-1925 to early 1927, the editorial staff of the journal *Nauka Polska: Jej Potrzeby, Organizacja i Rozwoju* (Polish Science: Its Needs, Organization, and Development) also collected data on the collections of various institutions and scholarly societies, devoting entire volumes—7 and 12 (with supplements)—to this topic. Stefan Demby wrote that this period was a breakthrough in the development of Polish librarianship, because the Department of State Libraries, established on August 15, 1919, centralized libraries under its management, providing appropriate care and security for their collections. This was the first such initiative since the 18th-century Commission of National Education which supervised and supported the functioning of libraries (Demby, 1927).

In the first years of independence, the most important Polish libraries included the Jagiellonian Library, the University of Lviv Library, the University of Warsaw Library, the Vilnius University Library, the University Library in Poznań, the newly established Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, as well as specialized libraries at universities, such as the polytechnics in Warsaw and Lviv, and the Library of the Warsaw School of Economics. Their staffs then developed key ideas for modern management, shaping Polish librarianship, and preserving collections. Equally important were family and foundation libraries, including the Library of the National Ossoliński Institute in Lviv, the Kórnik Library, three Warsaw libraries—the Zamoyski Family Library, the Krasiński Family Library, and the Przezdziecki Family Library—the Czartoryski Family Library, the Raczyński Family Library, libraries of scholarly societies (e.g., in Poznań and Płock), and the Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. Andrzej Mężyński calculated that in August 1939, libraries in Warsaw alone held nearly 6,000,000 inventory units, distributed across over 800 locations (Mężyński, 2010). Among these, the Józef Piłsudski National Library, established in 1928 and opened to the public two years later, held a crucial place. Although it had no headquarters and its individual branches were located in three locations (at the Warsaw School of Economics Library, the Central Military Library, and the Tyszkiewicz-Potocki Palace), it had a modern organizational structure, employed specialists, and carried out key tasks. Among other things, it ran the Office for International Publication Exchange, and within its framework operated the Bibliographic Institute, which published a list of all printed works published in the Republic of Poland as well as Polonica. The Piłsudski National Library initiated the registration of foreign-language literature in Polish libraries, including incunabula, in the form of a central catalog. It also prepared scholarly studies of its own collections. The library's holdings steadily expanded, reaching 804,890 volumes by the outbreak of the Second World War. This number included an impressive collection of manuscripts and early printed works – mostly

recovered through reclamation efforts – various deposits, gifts, acquisitions (e.g., from Wilanów and Horyniec), and Polish collections brought from abroad (e.g., the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, the school in Batignolles, the Polish Democratic Society). The manuscripts and early printed works recovered under the Treaty of Riga constituted the core of the National Library. The repossessions comprised over 14,000 manuscripts, including over 11,000 from the Załuski Library and approximately 1,000 items formerly belonging to the University of Warsaw. Of the nearly 75,500 early printed works (as of December 31, 1939), repossessions accounted for approximately 60%. Processing them was a task requiring thorough technical training and knowledge of the history and provenance of the dispersed and relocated book collections. A significant challenge was the uncertainty posed by the National Library management's concerns as to whether these items would be returned to their original owners or their heirs. The National Library overcame these difficulties thanks to the excellent staff of its special collections and subsequent decisions by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, which left most of the repossessed items within its structure (Pietrzkiewicz, 2019).

THE IDEA OF PROTECTING THE WRITTEN HERITAGE COLLECTED IN POLISH LIBRARIES

Referencing several historical facts in the first part of this article demonstrates that libraries (especially the National Library and research libraries) preserve tradition and ensure the continuity necessary for the existence of the nation and state, its identity, and its culture. Over the years, their activities have changed, their offerings and technological capabilities have expanded, but they have consistently maintained their patrimony.[2] After the unimaginable losses suffered during the Second World War, libraries, primarily those in Warsaw, once again began the process of consolidating and registering the surviving national book collection.

The idea of securing and protecting the most valuable objects in Polish libraries arose – as I have already mentioned – during the Age of Enlightenment. But it was not until the second half of the 1970s that it took concrete programmatic and organizational form. In January 1977, the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library reached an agreement on the implementation of a plan for specializing library materials in the field of

[2] A continuation of the major joint project of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library, initiated in 2017. Its third phase has been underway since May 2025. Its goal is to provide access to digital versions of library collections constituting valuable and unique Polish cultural heritage. All items selected for the project are in the public domain and have been made available on the Polona portal and the Jagiellonian Digital Library portal. This provides unlimited access to the national library resource.

Polish national culture (principles of specialization for library collections were introduced in 1973 by a relevant regulation). At that time, the term "National Library Resource" was also coined to describe the tasks carried out as part of the joint project. The Ossoliński National Institute was invited to collaborate. A working group – composed of representatives from these three libraries – developed the document "National Library Resource. General program and organizational assumptions". In September, this initiative received a positive judgement from the Ministry of Culture and Art (Department of Libraries, Cultural Centers, and Socio-Cultural Activities) and the Center for Scientific, Technical, and Economic Information, and in October it was approved and implemented. In May 1978, a national meeting of library directors interested in participating in the project was held in Warsaw; 50 libraries signed up. Members of the National Library Resource Council were elected. These were the directors of the following libraries: the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, the Ossoliński National Institute, the University of Warsaw, the Catholic University of Lublin, the Stanisław Staszic Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, the Silesian Library in Katowice, the Central Military Library, and a representative of the Center for Scientific, Technical, and Economic Information. To coordinate the work, the National Library established a secretariat for the National Library Resource (Marszałek, 1978).

The concept of creating a National Library Resource was an original Polish idea, shaped by the historical experiences I mentioned in the first part of this article. Some solutions – for example, identifying rare and valuable collections, processing and cataloging them, and preparing copies – were implemented in national libraries around the world, such as those in Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, and the United States. It should be emphasized, however, that the creation of a National Library Resource had historical roots, based on experiences of plundering, dispersal, and destruction of Poland's national written heritage over the centuries. The primary goals of identifying items within the National Library Resource were: 1) creating optimal conditions for collecting, storing, and preserving a complete set of printed and handwritten documents created in Poland throughout its history, as well as those created outside Poland but related to it in content or form (i.e., Polonica); 2) developing scientific documentation of these collections; 3) developing an optimal information model for these collections; 4) preparing their reproductions; 5) streamlining their accessibility processes; 6) popularization. It is worth noting that the National Library Resource comprised objects stored in libraries, including written documents (manuscripts and prints), iconography, cartography, musical materials, audio documents, secondary documents (e.g., copies and reproductions), and derivative documents (e.g., catalogs and files). The National Library Resource was a comprehensive collection consisting

of entire or selected collections belonging to various libraries. An integral part of this collection was the cataloging and information system for the individual libraries' collections, as well as shared derivative information sources, successively developed as it developed. The project was to continue work on developing a current national bibliography, a central inventory of manuscript collections, a central catalog of incunabula and early printed books, a central catalog of cartographic collections, and the preparation of copies of the most valuable and rare items. It was assumed that financing work within the National Library Resource would burden the budgets of the libraries participating in this project (Marszałek, 1978).

Legal regulations governing the National Library Resource emerged in the 1990s. This was driven by, among other things, the political transformation and the functioning of libraries in the new economic environment, the establishment of the Memory of the World International Register program under the patronage of UNESCO and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and the dissemination of research findings on the biodegradability of acidic paper used in 19th- and 20th-century printed materials (this included the publication of works by Professor Bronisław Zyska, a distinguished specialist in mycology, microbiology, and the preservation of library collections). International library and archival organizations addressed the issue of saving acidified documents, and in Poland the Association for the Preservation of Archival and Library Resources was established in 1995. Based on surveys distributed in 1994, 1998, and 1999, the National Library also developed an assessment of the state of preservation of collections in Polish libraries, their storage conditions, and conservation, bookbinding, and reprographic capabilities (Memoriał, 1998; Stachowska-Musiał, 2007).

In 1996, the Legal Deposit Act was promulgated (15 libraries gained the right to perpetual storage of certain publications). The following year, the text of the Act on Libraries, still in force today (with subsequent amendments), was promulgated. Articles 6 and 6a of this Act defined the National Library Resource for the first time as collections of exceptional value and significance to the national heritage (in their entirety, in their individual parts, or even individual copies). The Act imposes on libraries the obligation to protect the items constituting the National Library Resource. It defines the competencies of the National Library Resource Council and establishes its composition, which includes representatives of key institutions related to cultural heritage. A later amendment also clarifies the conditions for exporting library materials abroad (in accordance with the 2003 Act on the Protection of Monuments). In November 1998, the Ministry of Culture and Art issued a regulation establishing a list of libraries whose collections constitute the National Library Resource, defining its organization and establishing principles of protection. The

list included 55 libraries (primarily academic) whose collections, in part or in full, constituted the national patrimony. Unfortunately, this list did not include church libraries of various denominations, libraries of non-governmental institutions, or private institutions. The above-described normative acts – unlike the 1977 draft – did not specify principles of cooperation between individual libraries or standards for the protection of collections (Act, 1997; Regulation, 1998; Stachowska-Musiał, 2008; Gomułka, 2017).

In the second half of 2000 (from August to December), on the initiative of the Supreme Audit Office, an audit was carried out in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and in 29 libraries[3] engaged in the National Library Resource (according to the 1998 list). Its findings indicated that the National Library Resource had technically not been established and did not function as a specific collection of materials of exceptional significance to the national heritage. Of the institutions audited, only two – the Central Military Library and the Central Agricultural Library – were found to be in advanced stages of selecting collections eligible for the National Library Resource, while six had taken preliminary steps in this direction. In the remaining libraries, no steps had been taken to identify and then protect the most valuable collections. Unfortunately, as many as 18 libraries demonstrated serious negligence in securing and protecting their collections, particularly against theft. Valuable collections were stored in unsuitable rooms (e.g., not secured with bars or certified locks, often in poor housing conditions that fostered biological threats). While electronic anti-theft systems were installed in 22 institutions, they were defective in as many as 15. For example, the anti-theft system at the Warsaw Public Library was completely inoperable. Only three libraries had security plans in place, coordinated with authorities (e.g., the police and fire department). Only three libraries, housing the most valuable collections that were intended to form the foundation of the National Library Resource – the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, and the

3 The following institutions were inspected: the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, the Ossoliński National Institute Library, the Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, the University Library in Łódź, the University Library in Poznań, the University Library in Warsaw, the University Library in Wrocław, the Library of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the University Library of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, the Main Library of the AGH University of Science and Technology. Stanisław Staszic Library in Krakow, Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology, Main Library of the Warsaw School of Economics, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Library of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow, Library of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Central Agricultural Library in Warsaw, Central Military Library in Warsaw, the Czartoryski Library at the National Museum in Krakow, Departments of Manuscripts, Old Prints and Cartography of the National Museum in Krakow, the Raczyński Library in Poznań, Warsaw Public Library, Voivodeship and Municipal Public Library in Bydgoszcz, H. Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Białystok.

Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław – had adequate technical security measures with the required certifications. Furthermore, the audit revealed that in many libraries the storage conditions for collections significantly deviated from accepted standards, and in 13 of them climatic conditions (temperature and humidity) were not monitored at all. Collections were sometimes stored in moldy rooms, or in basements with worn-out electrical or plumbing systems. The Supreme Audit Office also noted that the vast majority of libraries lacked sufficient financial resources to implement changes in the storage and protection of collections, and above all, in their conservation (Report on the Activities of the Supreme Audit Office, 2002). In my opinion, the audit conducted by the Supreme Audit Office was significantly influenced by, among other things, the catastrophic great flood in July-August 1997, as well as the thefts, revealed later, of old printed materials (including incunabula) in Kraków from the collections of the Jagiellonian Library and the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The regulation on establishing a list of libraries whose collections constitute the National Library Resource was repealed on July 2, 2012, pursuant to the Act of August 31, 2011, amending the Act on Organizing and Conducting Cultural Activities. This amendment addressed the issue of defining the criteria for including the collections of individual libraries in the national resource. The text of the Act on Libraries was also amended, granting the minister responsible for culture and national heritage the authority to define these criteria, taking into account the history of the collections and the educational character of the libraries included in the list. On July 4, 2012, a new regulation on the National Library Resource was published, which is still in force today, with subsequent amendments (including in 2016, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025). According to the regulation, national resources[4] may include library materials of exceptional value and significance to the national heritage, which are unique and meet at least one of the enumerated criteria, i.e., they possess: 1) historical value; 2) scientific value; 3) cultural value; 4) artistic value. If only a portion of a given library's collection has been designated a national resource, it

[4] Such as:

1) drawings made using any technique and on any material, the value of which is: a) PLN 12,000 or more, b) less than PLN 12,000;

2) graphics and matrices for them, and posters, the value of which is: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000;

3) photographs, films, and their negatives, the value of which is: a) PLN 6,000 or more, b) less than PLN 6,000;

4) manuscripts, the value of which is: a) PLN 4,000 or more, b) less than PLN 4,000;

5) publications, the value of which is: a) PLN 6,000 or more, b) less than PLN 6,000;

6) library collections valued at: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000;

7) other library materials not listed above valued at: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000.

should be separated from the library's overall collection (Regulation, 2012).

An institution whose book collection has been designated – in whole or in part – as a national resource is obligated to record it in an electronic register. This register must be maintained in accordance with the regulations concerning detailed and summary records of receipts and detailed and summary records of losses (Regulation, 2008). The creation of an electronic register aims to identify individual items, quantitatively and qualitatively record their condition, and monitor changes occurring within the structure of the National Resource. The register serves as an informational tool to monitor its condition. Polish patrimonial collections are collections of unquestionable importance and value, and therefore must be subject to special protection. The regulation specifies in detail the requirements for their protection plan. First, such a plan should identify potential threats and assess the risk of their occurrence, as well as the responsibilities of the individuals responsible for protecting the collections within the given institution. Secondly, the plan should standardize the organization of protection against threats specific to a given Polish region (e.g., floods, landslides) and hazards specific to the buildings/rooms where collections are stored (e.g., fire, flooding). The plan should include actions to be taken in the event of these threats or other emergencies (e.g., evacuation in the event of war). Thirdly, the plan should describe procedures for cooperation and communication between entities performing tasks related to the protection of the resource, in particular the organization of the threat monitoring system, warning and alarm systems, and the evacuation of people and collections. To ensure the plan's effectiveness, the institution must attach a list of agreements and arrangements related to the implementation of tasks and activities specified in the plan for the protection of collections included in the National Resource; this list is to be updated annually (Regulation, 2012). The document in question (compared to the 1998 regulation) radically reduced the number of institutions holding national library resources to two – the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library. I believe that the assessment of the state of national resources conducted by the Supreme Audit Office in 2000 was not without significance in this regard. On June 2, 2012, during the inaugural meeting of the National Library Resource Council – in the new term of office 2012–2015[5] – Zina Jarmoszuk

[5] Members: Dr. Mariusz Dworsatschek – Ossoliński National Institute, Dr. Zina Jarmoszuk – Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Dr. Jan Kozłowski – Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Dr. Tomasz Makowski – National Library – Chairman, Prof. Dr. hab. Jan Malicki – National Library Council, Silesian Library, Beata Pawłowska – Ministry of National Education, Dr. Ewa Perłakowska – Head Office of the State Archives, Prof. Dr. hab. Zdzisław Pietrzyk – Jagiellonian Library, Ewa Potrzebnicka – National Library, Dr. Zofia Tylewska-Ostrowska – Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

announced that work on the regulation was nearing completion, but had been complex and lengthy. She noted that the greatest challenges lay in establishing the criteria for including collections in the National Library Resource, as well as the principles for their accessibility and protection. She announced that all libraries would be able to apply for inclusion in the list at any time, provided they met all the requirements set forth in the document. The discussion raised the issue of including private and church collections in the national collection. Zdzisław Pietrzyk emphasized that private owners had no interest in submitting their collections if the process was not linked to financial resources (Protokół, 2012). On October 18th – more than three months after the new regulation came into effect – at the second meeting of the National Library Resource Council, Zina Jarmoszuk announced new concepts for financing the national patrimony, which could positively impact the budgets of institutions participating in the program. She asked the audience, and especially the National Library staff, to disseminate information about the changes in regulations and their consequences within the librarian community. Ewa Perłakowska proposed that the Council develop a standard application form to facilitate the application process. A team was appointed for this purpose, chaired by Mariusz Dworsatschek (Protokół, 2012a).

The Council met twice in 2013. Its primary focus was on potential grants for the conservation of objects included in the National Library Resource, participation in the church library program, and procedural issues related to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's support for libraries subordinate to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. A form and description of application procedures were also developed. Recommendations covered the individual stages of applying for participation in the project. These included: 1) preparation of an application to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; 2) development of an application for review by the National Library Resource Council; 3) preparation by the Council's Chairperson of the draft composition of the working group to prepare the draft opinion, in accordance with Article 6, Section 2a of the Library Act, composed of Council members and experts relevant to the specifics of the applying library; 4) consultation during a Council meeting of the team's composition; 5) appointment a working group (referred to in points 3 and 4) by the Council's Chairperson; 6) review by the working group of the application, potentially asking the applicant additional questions and requesting clarification, and, if necessary, a visit by the entire team or selected members to the applicant's library. If this is not specified in the application, the team should at this stage request the reference numbers for the collections selected for inclusion in the National Resource; 7) presentation of the working group's opinion at the Council meeting indicating the reference numbers of the items; 8) adoption of

a resolution regarding the working group's opinion; 9) submission of the Council's resolution to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Protocol, 2013; Protocol 2013a).

The following year, the Council considered applications from the Ossoliński National Institute, as well as the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. The Ossolineum selected its entire collection of 16th-century manuscripts, incunabula, and printed materials, as well as the cartographic collection of Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski and Tomasz Niewodniczański. Additionally, it selected prints in royal and imperial bindings, prints particularly valuable due to the individual characteristics of the item (e.g., provenance marks), and the so-called "Lviv collection". The working group suggested that in the future the application be supplemented with prints from the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as selected iconographic collections. Zdzisław Pietrzyk emphasized that such an expansion was crucial, as, by already being partially part of the program, the Ossolineum would be able to apply for additional grants to catalog additional objects. Mariusz Dworsatschek explained that there were formal barriers to incorporating the iconographic collection into the National Library Resource. The Ossoliński National Institute had been transforming its structure for several years, so the collections that were once (from a formal perspective) library collections and belonged to the Ossolineum Library had been divided. Within the Institute's structure, the Princes Lubomirski Museum had been established, reminiscent of the Lubomirski Museum, which operated within the institution before World War II. Therefore, the iconographic collections, then owned by the Graphics Cabinet, and the collections of the Numismatics and Sphragistics Cabinet formally belonged to the Princes Lubomirski Museum. Ultimately, they were intended to become museum collections, and therefore were not included in the application. Council Chairman Tomasz Makowski explained that library collections held in museums could be incorporated into the National Library Resource. In the 1998 regulations, museums were represented by the National Museum in Warsaw and in Kraków. The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences was unable to fully specify which collections it would have liked to submit. Therefore, the working group proposed accepting its three most valuable collections in their entirety: 1) drawings, engravings, and bookplates (one of the most valuable collections of its kind in Poland); 2) manuscripts; and 3) incunabula and early printed books. The remaining collections were to be deferred for further processing. It is worth emphasizing that during the application process, the institution's building underwent a thorough renovation and a conservation plan was prepared, ensuring that the collections had appropriate storage conditions and security. The

Council granted both institutions five years to implement the program's requirements. Moreover, Zdzisław Pietrzyk submitted a request to prepare a recommendation for the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to release funds for securing the National Resource, in particular in the field of mass deacidification (Protokół, 2014; Protokół 2014a).

In 2015, the Council met three times, primarily to consider applications from the Płock Scientific Society, the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library, and the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, as well as reviewing the draft regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage regarding the detailed procedure for maintaining a national register of lost cultural property. The Płock Scientific Society's book collection is extremely valuable. It consists of incunabula, a large collection of 16th-century prints, the manuscript collection of Władysław Smoleński (a historian, representative of the so-called Warsaw School, and member of the Historical Society in Lviv), and unique iconographic materials (e.g., a series of 80 copperplate engravings by Francisco Goya entitled *Caprices*). In the case of the Elbląg Library, the Council approved the acceptance of its entire collection, as the holdings and history of the Elbląg Gymnasium (a Protestant humanist school for boys operating from 1535 to 1772) are of exceptional value to Polish cultural heritage. The collection is a closed, historical one, and is a testament to the multinationality, multiculturalism, and multilingualism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth throughout its historical development. The application from the Adam Mickiewicz University Library was reviewed and deemed indifferent and modest, as it concerned 45 manuscripts from the 13th to 16th centuries, representing 0.0015% of the library's total holdings. The Council expressed the view that the library should expand its contribution to the National Resource and select more unique items in the future (Protocol, 2015; Protocol, 2015a; Protocol, 2015b).

During the review of the Płock Scientific Society's application, a discussion arose as to whether the National Library Resource should include entire collections of early printed works or only those with unique characteristics. Director Tomasz Makowski noted that many prints – primarily from the 17th century – are repetitive. He posed the question of whether inclusion in the National Library Resource should be limited to Polonica and entire collections of 16th-century prints, with only selected copies of 17th-century prints included. He further noted that including entire legacies is problematic. Among those who contributed to the discussion was Zdzisław Pietrzyk, who argued that the criteria for selecting whose legacy to include and whose not to are very complex, especially in the case of local writers, historians, artists, etc. He emphasized that not all materials belonging to a given person are of exceptional value. Mariusz Dworsatschek noted certain difficulties in selecting individual

materials from the legacy, such as separating them from a given collection and storing them in separate storage facilities. Jan Malicki, on the other hand, stated that library regulations should clearly define how collections belonging to the National Library Resource will be segregated (Protokół, 2015).

The year 2016 brought the first amendment to the regulation on the National Library Resource from 2012, as well as a new term of office of the Council for the years 2016–2020.[6] The collection of the most valuable items of Polish written heritage – in addition to those of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library – was expanded by the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library, the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, the Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław, and the Witold Gombrowicz Voivodeship Public Library in Kielce. Each of these institutions received a specific date by which they must implement the required procedures (Rozporządzenie [Regulations], 2016). The Council, of course, prepared recommendations for amending the 2012 regulations. The main discussion focused on the issue of standardizing deadlines for libraries to meet the requirements set out in the regulations. The Council reached a position that this deadline should be set individually by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, after consulting with the Council on the matter. The time between the collection's inclusion in the national patrimony and the date when the criteria are met – determined individually for each library – guarantees its immediate special protection. However, introducing a strict deadline may result in some institutions – despite possessing valuable collections – withdrawing from the project. Implementation is time-consuming and costly (Protokół [Protocol], 2016a). This year, the Council reviewed the application from the Silesian Library and prepared recommendations for the implementation of a long-term cataloging program for manuscripts stored in Poland (Protokół, 2016).

The following year, the Council approved the Silesian Library's application to include in the National Resource the unique manuscript collection of the Lviv Theater Library (3,827 manuscripts and typescripts from 1799–1939) and 721 sixteenth-century printed works from the "Polonica et Silesia" collection. The M. Oczapowski Central Agricultural Library also received a positive recommendation for the inclusion of 824 old printed works (from the 16th–18th centuries), Polonica from 1801–

[6] Members: Dr. Mariusz Dworsatschek – National Ossoliński Institute; Dr. Zina Jarmoszuk – Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; Dr. Jan Kozłowski – Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Dr. Tomasz Makowski – National Library – chairman; prof. dr hab. Jan Malicki – National Library Council, Silesian Library; Beata Pawłowska – Ministry of National Education; Dr. Ewa Perłakowska – Head Office of the State Archives; prof. dr hab. Zdzisław Pietrzyk – Jagiellonian Library; Ewa Potrzebnicka – National Library; Dr. Zofia Tylewska-Ostrowska – Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

1900, the so-called Warsaw collection (2,173 volumes of monographs and 681 serials; 96 periodicals), and the so-called Puławy collection (6,291 volumes of monographs and 2,013 volumes of serials; 196 periodicals). Furthermore, a list of objects that should be prioritized for inclusion in the program was discussed. The National Library has prepared a list of 50 institutions whose collections should be included in the National Library Resource due to their importance to Polish culture and science. For historical reasons, institutions associated with Kraków and Warsaw were overrepresented on the list. Tomasz Makowski expressed the view that institutions possessing even a single highly valuable item (e.g., the manuscript Diary of Sister Faustyna, located in Łagiewniki), should be included. Zdzisław Pietrzyk added that it is worth considering, among others, the manuscripts of Adam Mickiewicz and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz located at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, as well as other collections from Wawel and Łańcut. He also emphasized the need to protect collections in private hands (Protokół, 2017; Protokół, 2017a; Protokół, 2017b; Protokół, 2017c).

On October 12, 2017, the National Library hosted a conference entitled "Creating a National Library Resource", attended by representatives of all libraries participating in the project. The meeting allowed for a presentation of achievements and an exchange of experiences, and contributed to clarifying numerous issues, primarily those related to the criteria for selecting collections for inclusion in the resource.

During the anniversary year of Poland's regained independence, the Council met twice. Working groups were established to evaluate the applications of the University Library in Toruń and the Hieronim Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Lublin. Considerable attention was paid to the issue of financial support for the institutions participating in the project (Protokół, 2018; Protokół 2018). The following year, the applications of the aforementioned libraries were approved. Twenty-three medieval manuscripts from the libraries of the Teutonic Order were included in the national patrimony, while a recommendation was prepared for the University Library in Toruń to include the entire Teutonic collection and other unique items in the future. In the case of the Lublin library, its special collections were included in the program (Protokół, 2019). Furthermore, the application of the Provincial Public Library – Copernican Library in Toruń, which selected 6,092 inventory units (representing 0.75% of its holdings), as well as the University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, which selected 1,247 inventory units in 808 volumes (Protokół, 2019b), was approved. Worth noting was Ewa Potrzebnicka's presentation at the January Council meeting on the preliminary results of the report on the state of preservation of 19th and 20th century collections in Polish libraries (Potrzebnicka, 2019).

In 2020, the National Library Resource was expanded with items from the Stanisław Staszic Pomeranian Library in Szczecin (selected manuscripts, early printed books, musical items, and cartographic collections). The institution was granted two years to implement the required standards and procedures. At Council meetings, issues related to additional funding for the conservation and preservation of collections for institutions participating in the project were again discussed. A representative of the Head Office of State Archives encouraged submission of additional cultural treasures for inclusion on the UNESCO National List (Protokół, 2020; Protokół, 2020a). This year, the Council began operating with a new composition (Protokół, 2020b).[7]

The following year, the Council received an application from the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań to expand the collections belonging to the national patrimony with 19 old prints and two incunabula (the so-called dictionary of Bartholomew of Bydgoszcz[8] and the *Almanach Cracoviense ad a. 1500* published in Leipzig[9]). It received a positive recommendation. Furthermore, the Council meeting on March 4th addressed the Hungarian government's proposal to donate the inventory of the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus's collection (*De laudibus Bibliothecae Budensis epistola ad Matthium Corvinum Pannoniae regnum*). Chairman Tomasz Makowski noted that the manuscript is a monument of Hungarian culture, but has been in Polish territory for centuries and forms a part of Polish culture. Council members expressed a negative opinion to this proposal, and the manuscript remained at the Copernican Library in Toruń (Protokół, 2021a).

[7] Members: Mateusz Adamkowski – Director of the Department of State Patronage, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; dr hab. Lucyna Harc – Deputy General Director of the State Archives; dr Tomasz Makowski – Director of the National Library – Chairman of the Council; dr Iwona Nowicka – Counselor to the Minister in the Department of Innovation and Development, Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Jacek Nowiński – representative of the National Library Council, Director of the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library in Elbląg; Ewa Potrzebnicka – Plenipotentiary of the Director of the National Library for National Library Resources; dr hab. Remigiusz Sapa, prof. UJ – Deputy Director for Scientific Affairs, Jagiellonian Library; dr Dorota Sidorowicz-Mulak – Deputy Director for the Ossolineum Library; Roksana Tołwińska – Director of the Department of Textbooks, Curricula and Innovation, Ministry of National Education; Dr. Anna Walczak – Director of the Gdańsk Library, Polish Academy of Sciences.

8 The margins of this Latin dictionary, printed in Strasbourg, feature Polish-language equivalents added in 1544 by Bernardine monk Bartholomew of Bydgoszcz. The dictionary contains over 11,000 Polish entries covering medicine, philosophy, theology, botany, and nautical subjects. It is the most comprehensive dictionary of its kind from the first half of the 16th century.

[9] This is the upper part of a unique wall calendar for the year 1500, composed by an anonymous Kraków astrologer. The print is not listed in Karol Estreicher's *Polish Bibliography*. Instead, it is a testament to the popularity of the community of mathematicians and astrologers gathered around the Kraków Academy, whose works were readily reprinted throughout Europe at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The calendar was discovered in 1998 and is now the only remnant of this print in the world.

In the year of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the Council, in addition to applications and requests for expansion to include new facilities (the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, the Voivodeship Public Library – Copernican Library in Toruń and the Polish Academy of Sciences Library in Gdańsk[10]) also addressed the issue of preparations for a possible evacuation of collections. Chairman Tomasz Makowski announced that the National Library was purchasing boxes available on the market. Some orders had already been fulfilled, while others were waiting. He pointed out that Polish libraries do not have the financial resources to purchase evacuation boxes, as well as the fact that there is a limited number of them on the market. He suggested that, if necessary, they borrow boxes from the National Library. He assured Council members that he had asked libraries in western Poland to prepare storage space in case of the need to evacuate collections from eastern Poland. He reminded them that each library with a National Library Resource is obliged to prepare a collection protection plan, which should be updated annually by March 31. He thanked the Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław for its assistance to libraries in Lviv. He reported that a week before the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, aid had been distributed – the National Library supported the Ukrainian National Library in Kyiv, and the Ossolineum in Lviv (Protokół, 2022).

In 2023, the Council unanimously approved a proposal from the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Gdańsk Library (Protokół, 2023) and the Raczyński Library. The Raczyński Library nominated its collection of incunabula and co-bound prints for the National Resource. The collection includes 251 incunabula and 52 prints from the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as a historic cartographic collection. During the November meeting, the distressing case of the brazen theft of 19th-century prints from the University of Warsaw Library was raised. Due to the ongoing proceedings, I will not discuss this matter in more detail (Protokół, 2023a).

In 2024, the Council expressed a positive opinion regarding the inclusion of selected collections from the Wrocław University Library (Protokół, 2024a). This is a unique collection of 3,156 incunabula, 5,309 volumes from the former library of the Dukes of Legnica-Brzeg, as well as the world's only surviving original map of the entire Russian Empire by Anthony Jenkinson (a traveler, one of the first Englishmen to visit Moscow meeting Ivan the Terrible several times) from 1562. Furthermore, during the meetings, the Ministry of Regional Development discussed the inclusion of libraries with national collections in the European Union funding program. Chairman Tomasz Makowski also stated that,

[10] 431 old prints and 6 manuscripts donated to the Gdańsk City Council by the Italian humanist and bibliophile Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio in 1591.

following the organized thefts at the University Library in Warsaw and other European libraries, and the ongoing war in Ukraine, work should begin on a government program for financing collections belonging to the National Library Resource, particularly regarding the conditions for their storage, protection, preservation, and digitization (Protokół, 2024). It is worth noting that in 2023 a draft law on population protection and natural disasters was advanced, but the legislative process has not been completed. Since December 8, 2024, the Act on population protection and civil defense has been in force, addressing the protection of cultural property during wartime.

The idea of collecting, developing, preserving, and promoting written heritage is absolutely right and necessary in the cultural policy of every country, especially one as historically afflicted as Poland. Unfortunately, the documents of the National Library Resource Council, analyzed since 2012, leave me with a sad conclusion. In accordance with the regulation of April 28, 2025, only 17 Polish libraries have joined the program. Are many libraries lacking in awareness and knowledge about their national written heritage? Are their administrators and management staff afraid of the responsibilities that come with owning a National Library Resource? Yet the idea of a National Library Resource is an implementation of Title XIII, "Culture", of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Pursuant to Article 167 thereof, the European Union shall contribute to the flourishing of the cultures of its Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity, while emphasizing the importance of the common cultural heritage. Furthermore, the European Union's activities are directed, among other things, at: supporting activities aimed at deepening knowledge and disseminating the culture and history of European nations, as well as preserving and protecting cultural heritage of European significance.

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THE IMPACT OF DIFFICULT INTERPERSONAL SITUATIONS AT WORK ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY, STRESS, AND WELL-BEING OF LIBRARIANS – RESEARCH REPORT

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KEYWORDS: Difficult interpersonal relationships at work. Communication. Librarians. Stress at work. Pathologies at work. Psychological safety in the library. Well-being

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose of the article –** The aim of this article is to identify difficult interpersonal situations faced by librarians in public libraries in Poland and their impact on their sense of psychological safety, stress, and well-being. The article first outlines the basic concepts and literature related to difficult interpersonal situations in the workplace and people's sense of psychological safety, stress, and well-being. Next, the results of the author's own research conducted among librarians in public libraries are presented. **Research Methods –** Literature analysis and a diagnostic survey were used. **Key Results/Conclusions –** The majority of surveyed librarians (76.3%) reported experiencing difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues at work. Such situations occurred most frequently once a month (24.6%) and occurred primarily in contacts with management (40.0%) and colleagues from their own department (38.1%). Difficult situations with people at work primarily involve interpersonal conflicts and lack of cooperation (33.9%), as well as poor communication (29.7%). Nearly three-quarters of respondents (65.3%) reported being able to cope with difficult situations, most often through active listening and using techniques known from the literature (31.4%). Those who struggle to cope most often seek help from colleagues (36.8%). Difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues cause significant stress for 20% of respondents, while 9% feel threatened, and 8.4% experience mental health problems as a result. The results show that difficult interpersonal situations are common in the library community and vary in nature, with highly individualized coping strategies.

INTRODUCTION

For at least several decades, significant changes have been evident in the functioning of Polish libraries, particularly public ones. Initially, the role of these institutions as libraries tasked with collecting, processing, storing, preserving, and making library materials available has evolved. Over time, increasing emphasis has been placed on serving diverse users and finding ways to attract their attention, integrate them, engage them in cultural activities, and involve them in library activities for the benefit of local communities (see, for example, *Biblioteka w otoczeniu społecznym*…, 2000; *Biblioteka i informacja w aktywizacji regionalnej*…, 2012). Considerable attention is now being paid to prioritizing the needs of current and potential library users. Hence, the work of a librarian, although stereotypically considered uneventful, uninvolving, or boring, has undergone significant change over recent decades. A contemporary librarian can hold a wide variety of positions, including bibliographer, circulation desk employee, IT specialist, network/database administrator, information broker, user information and training specialist, collection

digitization specialist, coaching and mentoring specialist, bibliotherapist, promotion and marketing specialist, bibliometrics specialist, or fundraiser (cf. Jazdon, 2003; Machcińska, 2013; Karwowski, 2018). It's also important to remember that many librarians often perform a wide variety of tasks in a single position. Library staff multitasking, in addition to work consistent with their personality and education, also includes tasks they may not necessarily enjoy. It also involves daily interpersonal contact with both colleagues and library patrons. The multitude and intensity of tasks and interpersonal contacts can lead to overload, excessive stress, and conflict. In the long term, they may significantly reduce the sense of psychological safety of librarians and, consequently, lead to a decrease in work motivation or to professional burnout.

Healthy relationships with colleagues are particularly important in professional life. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify the difficult interpersonal situations librarians encounter at work and their impact on their sense of psychological safety, stress, and well-being. The discussion begins with a brief review of the literature on difficult interpersonal relationships, psychological safety in the workplace, occupational stress, and well-being. Selected results from our own research conducted among librarians in Polish public libraries will then be presented. The text was prepared using a literature review approach, while the research for library staff was conducted using a diagnostic survey based on an anonymous online questionnaire.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SUBJECT

The importance of interpersonal skills in the workplace and an efficient communication system cannot be overstated. Interacting with people is a key aspect of a librarian's work, something that is particularly evident in public, school, and academic libraries where numerous readers pass through daily and internal communication processes, i.e., between staff, take place. Interpersonal communication, i.e., communication that takes place "face-to-face", encompasses verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as all aspects related to the psychology of individual differences, such as the influence of personality, temperamental traits, and intelligence on how messages are expressed and received. The goal of interpersonal communication is the desire to understand others and be understood by them, which is a complex process (Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2019; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2023). Individual differences, intentions, motivations, stress, and even illnesses can contribute to the generation of errors, distortions, and pathologies in interpersonal relations, especially when people spend many hours, days, or years together in one place and have different

personal and professional experiences, as is the case, for example, with working in a library.

Interpersonal communication in the workplace has a direct impact on relationships between employees and the effectiveness of their tasks. The factors that generate this can be divided into four main groups. The first is the language of communication between the sender and receiver, meaning the way information is transmitted and received. This is influenced by factors such as attitudes, expectations, intentions, the way the message is conveyed such as tone of voice, and aspects related to body language. The second group includes communication channels, meaning knowledge of guidelines related to written and spoken communication, as well as communication mediated by information and communication technologies. The third group of important factors shaping good interpersonal relationships through healthy communication includes providing feedback. Such information allows for a better understanding of the context of the situation and the rapid communication of results, for example, from meetings or projects in which employees are not participating but are required to complete a single task. Feedback is therefore a mechanism that accelerates interaction, supports information exchange and task management, and thus allows time to be saved and allocated to other tasks at work. The final, fourth group of factors influencing communication and interpersonal relationships includes environmental factors, such as noise that distorts the flow of information (Kakirman-Yildiz, 2012). Every act of communication has both a substantive and a relational aspect, which is a reflection of one of the divisions of interpersonal relations into real, i.e. based on facts, and transferential, which is related to the incorrect interpretation of the relationship and the projection of unconscious thoughts or ideas onto the interlocutor or coworker (Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2019). The effects, but also the causes of improper interpersonal relations between co-workers in the library may be the underestimation or failure to observe the four groups of factors described above (Kakirman-Yildiz, 2012; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2019). This is also influenced by behaviors resulting from relational and personal aspects that favor the development of pathological situations in the workplace, such as gossip, conscious circulation of false information, avoidance of contact, personal problems, illnesses, information overload, employee conflicts, or mobbing (cf. Stankiewicz 2006; Ifidon, Ugwuanyi 2013; Kakirman-Yildiz 2012; Cyrklaff, 2016; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2019; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2023).

The aforementioned difficulties in interpersonal relationships lead to decreased psychological safety, increased stress levels, and decreased well-being among library staff. Psychological safety is the employee's belief that the organization in which they work provides a safe place

to take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, Dillon, & Roloff, 2007). A psychologically safe work environment is, therefore, one in which employees freely express their ideas, provide honest feedback, collaborate, take risks, and experiment. They do all this in an atmosphere of trust and honesty, which helps overcome threats to individual and organizational learning (Edmondson, 1999). Bobbi L. Newman, an American librarian and library trainer, argues that "librarians can struggle with psychological safety because we value the appearance of politeness above all else. We often confuse politeness with kindness. It's difficult to ensure psychological safety when team members are afraid to express themselves and be themselves, because any kind of nonconformity is perceived as unpleasant" (Newman, 2025). Each library employee has control only over their own work, so the shared responsibility of all those working in different library teams is to create an environment in which it is safe to try new things, fail, and start over. This requires trust, which is a long-term process. Library team leaders can foster this trust through open communication and transparency (Powers & Fife, 2025). Freely expressing thoughts and ideas without fear of ridicule or other unpleasant consequences is an essential element of supporting employee well-being, which in the long run supports their mental and physical health.

In the 21st century, the greatest enemy to health, well-being, and sustainable development may be stress, or the imbalance between the demands placed on a person and their potential to cope with a given situation. It most often occurs when demands are at the limits of an individual's capabilities or are impossible to meet. These demands can be external, such as professional or internal standards. Both excessive and insufficient demands contribute to this imbalance. The emotions that arise are intense and predominantly negative, stimulating the body to restore balance and equalize its emotional state (Heszen, 2013).

Stress in a library employee can stem from their individual circumstances, life situation, and professional situation. Within the context of individual circumstances, personality and temperamental traits, stress-coping styles, and openness to experience and interpersonal interactions will influence coping with tensions and difficulties (cf. Cyrklaff, 2016; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2019; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2023). The second group includes stressors related to personal life, such as the illness of a loved one, parenting problems, financial problems, or partnerships. When considering stress in the workplace, factors that contribute to it can be divided into internal and external. The first group includes factors generated within the organization, such as systems of employee evaluation, motivation, engagement, and remuneration. External factors, on the other hand, include those stemming from the environment and system in which the library operates. In the case of the library, these will certainly include: a difficult financial situation

that affects working conditions; a decline in readership, which affects the validity of the library's existence; and difficult interpersonal situations with readers and colleagues (Wojciechowska, 2021; see also Cyrklaff, 2016; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2019; Cyrklaff-Gorczyca 2023).

Chronic stress and anxiety exhaust the human body, often leading to immune system disorders and lifestyle diseases. Excessive exposure to these factors in professional life can lead to burnout or mental and physical illnesses, and therefore to a decline in well-being. According to Janusz Czapiński, mental well-being is an attitude toward one's life that promotes active coping with adversity and striving to achieve values important to the individual. It is a subjectively positive experience, consisting of a positive assessment of one's life quality and prospects at the cognitive level and a predominance of pleasant experiences at the emotional level (Czapiński, 2009). According to Martin Seligman's theory, well-being consists of five elements measurable using self-report scales or objective indicators: positive emotions, engagement, relationships with others, a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and achievements (Seligman, 2012). This demonstrates the importance of relationships with others for human health and well-being. Research has shown that over 75% of American academic librarians have a low sense of psychological safety, which manifests itself in, among other things, high stress and fear of making mistakes at work (Reno, 2022), and consequently, exposure to ridicule or unfair evaluation. The opinions and feelings of librarians from public libraries in Poland are similar. During a series of communication workshops conducted by the author, it emerged that a lack of psychological safety at work increased their stress levels and decreased their well-being. More research is needed on this topic among library workers of all types in Poland. The results of some of these studies are presented below.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to determine what difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues librarians in public libraries in Poland encounter at work and how they cope with them. The study was conducted in conjunction with a planned book for librarians, commissioned by the Polish Librarians Association. The survey was planned to provide an excellent opportunity to explore the real-world communication and interpersonal challenges faced by Polish library employees.

This text was prepared using non-reactive research in the form of a content analysis of the relevant literature. This analysis was used as a basis for a literature review, including books, articles, and industry publications. These publications covered broadly defined interpersonal

relationships at work, employee psychological safety, stress, and well-being in the workplace.

The study of librarians was conducted using a diagnostic survey method. It utilized the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique and an anonymous online survey tool. First, a pilot study was conducted in the second quarter of 2021 among eight librarians known to the author. At the suggestion of three respondents, one semi-open-ended question was added to the group of questions about problems in working with colleagues. Ultimately, the questionnaire consisted of a personal profile, a section with questions about interpersonal relationships (with clients and colleagues), a section on burnout, and a section on information overload. This article will only discuss the results regarding interpersonal relationships with colleagues, so the remaining parts of the research tool will not be described here. The personal profile included questions about age, gender, length of service, type of library where respondents worked, number of people employed at that library, and job position. The main section on interpersonal relations contained fourteen questions, of which six were closed, one was semi-open, and the rest were open. Six questions concerned difficult situations at work resulting from interpersonal relationships with clients, seven questions concerned interpersonal problems with co-workers, and one question addressed needs related to interpersonal relationships and psychological aspects of work, which will be worth describing in the planned book. The questions reflected two main groups of issues: the characteristics of difficult interpersonal situations with co-workers and clients, and ways of coping with them. The study revealed that respondents provided many descriptive answers, including references to how these situations affected their sense of psychological safety, stress, and well-being. Therefore, they will also be described in this text. A link to the anonymous questionnaire was posted on the website of the Polish Librarians' Association in August 2021, with a request to all library readers to complete it. It was assumed that librarians would regularly read the news published on this website and participate in the study.

The following specific research questions were addressed:

1. Do librarians experience difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues?
2. If so, how often do they occur?
3. With whom do these situations most often occur?
4. What problems do difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues raise?
5. Are the respondents able to cope with such situations?
6. How do respondents cope with such situations?
7. Who do respondents turn to when they are unable to cope?

8. How do these difficult interpersonal situations with colleagues affect respondents' experiences of stress, psychological safety, and well-being?

In the calculations, categorical data are presented as numbers and percentages.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

Despite repeated in-person requests and the survey being sent via the SBP newsletter and email by the study author, 124 respondents had responded by the beginning of 2022. Two questionnaires were rejected due to missing data. 118 questionnaires were completed by staff of pedagogical libraries, three by staff of school libraries, and one by a female staff member of a pedagogical library. A homogeneous group of 118 respondents from both male and female librarians from public libraries was ultimately included in the calculations for the studies analyzed in this article.

The vast majority of the study participants were women (92.4%). Men constituted only 5.9% of the respondents. The age of the respondents was distributed as follows: the largest group were people aged 25–35 (37.3%), then 36–45 (28.8%), 46–55 (16.9%), over 55 (15.3%) and below 25 (1.7%).

In terms of length of service, the majority of respondents had between eleven and fifteen years of professional experience (25.4%) and over thirty years of experience (22.0%).

The largest group of respondents worked in institutions employing up to five people (31.4%) and from six to fifteen people (26.3%).

Among the respondents, the majority held positions related to direct customer service (59.3%), followed by managerial positions (28.8%) and those in the collections and processing department (11.9%).

Detailed characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (N = 118)

Variables	No.	%
1. Gender		
Women	109	92.4
Men	7	5.9
Lack of data	2	1.7
2. Age		
Under 25	2	1.7
25-35	44	37.3
36-45	34	28.8
46-55	20	16.9
Above 55	18	15.3

Variables	No.	%
3. Length of service in years		
Under 5	19	16.1
5-10	18	15.3
11-15	30	25.4
16-20	10	8.5
21-25	10	8.5
26-30	5	4.2
Above 30	26	22.0
4, Number of employees		
Under 5	37	31.4
6-15	31	26.3
16-25	9	7.6
26-50	17	14.4
More than 50	24	20.3
5. Position		
Managerial	34	28.8
Direct customer service	70	59.3
Collections and processing	14	11.9

RESEARCH RESULTS

Difficult interpersonal situations with co-workers

In the survey, the majority of librarians (N = 90; 76.3%) reported experiencing difficult situations in collaboration with colleagues. Such situations most often occurred once a month (24.6%), while 22.0% of respondents indicated that they never encountered such a problem. Eleven percent of respondents indicated that such situations occurred once every two weeks, once a week, or even several times a week. 4.3% of respondents reported such situations occurring daily. A detailed breakdown of the frequency of difficult situations with colleagues is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of the frequency of difficult situations with co-workers

How often do such difficult situations happen to you?	No.	%
1. Once a month	29	24.6
2. Several times a week	13	11.0
3. Once a week	13	11.0
4. Once every two weeks	13	11.0
5. Once every three months	7	5.9
6. Less than once a year	7	5.9
7. Every day	5	4.3

How often do such difficult situations happen to you?	No.	%
8. Once a year	3	2.5
9. Once every six months	2	1.7
10. This never happens two me	26	22.0

Next, respondents were asked who they most often encountered in difficult situations (Table 3). These situations most frequently occurred with management (40.0%) and with colleagues from their own department (38.1%). They also frequently occurred with individuals from other departments (33.0%) and with subordinates (13.0%). This question allowed respondents to select multiple answers.

Table 3. Analysis of the frequency of responses regarding with whom difficult situations are most often experienced

With whom do difficult situations most often occur?	No.	%
1. With management	46	40.0
2. With colleagues from the department	45	38.1
3. With people from other departments	38	33.0
4. With subordinates	15	13.0

The problems associated with these situations primarily include interpersonal conflicts and lack of cooperation (33.9%), as well as poor communication such as gossiping, lack of constructive criticism, and lack of praise (29.7%). Aggression, humiliation, lack of respect, lack of civility, and resentment were cited by 25.4% of respondents, and the same percentage cited ineffective management. 12.7% of respondents attributed difficult situations to a lack of competence, commitment, and creativity on the part of colleagues. A detailed analysis of the responses is presented in Table 4. Respondents frequently described several problems in this open-ended question.

Table 4. Analysis of the frequency of responses regarding the reasons for difficult situations in the workplace

What do such situations involve?	No.	%
1. Interpersonal conflicts and lack of cooperation	40	33.9
2. Poor communication (e.g. gossiping, lack of constructive criticism, lack of praise, lack of communication…)	35	29.7
3. Aggression, humiliation, lack of respect, lack of civility, resentment	30	25.4
4. Ineffective management (e.g. delegation of too many responsibilities or of those not related to the scope of duties, lack of solutions related to employee turnover, lack of motivational systems)	30	25.4

What do such situations involve?	No.	%
5. Lack of competence, commitment, creativity	15	12.7
6. Taking advantage of position and power (e.g. nepotism, employing colleagues without education or professional training)	9	7.6
7. Organizational culture based on mobbing, lack of employee safety	4	3.4
8. Workplace pathologies (e.g. employees under the influence of alcohol, leaving early and during working hours without informing their superiors)	3	2.5
9. I don't want to write	5	4.2
10. There are no situations/I don't have any such situations	10	8.5

Coping with Difficult Interpersonal Situations

The majority of respondents (N = 77, 65.3%) reported being able to cope with difficult situations. Those who struggled most often sought help from colleagues (36.8%) or superiors (26.3%), less frequently from trade unions (5.3%) or from people outside of work (5.3%). Nearly one in four respondents did not seek help from anyone (23.7%). The results are summarized in Table 5. This question allowed multiple responses.

Table 5. Analysis of the frequency of responses to the question about who respondents turn to for help in difficult situations

Who do you turn to for help in dealing with a difficult situation?	No.	%
1. Colleagues	14	36.8
2. Managers/supervisors/directors	10	26.3
3. No one	9	23.7
4. Trade unions	2	5.3
5. People outside of work	2	5.3

Table 6 presents an analysis of responses regarding how to cope with difficult situations in the workplace. Respondents typically identified several solutions. The most common responses included active listening and the use of techniques known from the literature, such as negotiation (31.4%), assertive behavior and honest conversation (29.7%), and acceptance and composure (28.8%). 19.5% of respondents indicated helplessness in these situations and succumbing to pressure from coworkers. Approximately 5.9% of respondents referred to legal regulations in problematic situations, and 6.8% sought help from others. Some also responded to difficult situations with harsh language or sarcasm (4.2%), which in the long run could contribute to increasing communication difficulties with coworkers.

These data show that difficult interpersonal situations are common in the library environment and are of a diverse nature, and the ways of dealing with them are very individual.

Table 6. Analysis of the frequency of ways of coping with difficult situations

Ways of coping	No.	%
1. Active listening and using techniques known from literature (e.g. negotiation)	37	31.4
2. Assertive behavior, honest discussion of what happened and attempting to resolve the issue	35	29.7
3. Acceptance and composure	34	28.8
4. Helplessness, succumbing to pressure, being unable to cope with problems with coworkers	23	19.5
5. Seeking help (e.g. from supervisor, colleagues, guides, workshops)	8	6.8
6. Referring to labor law regulations and to the scope of responsibilities for a given position	7	5.9
7. Using harsh language, sarcasm, and searching for a logical solution	5	4.2
8. Venting outside of work (e.g. talking to someone)	3	2.5

Stress, Psychological Safety, and Well-Being of the Surveyed Librarians

In open-ended responses, respondents frequently cited the fact that difficult interpersonal situations caused them significant stress (20.0%), a sense of threat, and a lack of psychological safety (9%). They also mentioned reduced mental and physical resilience (5.9%) and feeling a lack of attention to employee well-being in their workplace (4.2%). Table 7 presents a detailed quantitative summary of the responses. Some librarians addressed at least two themes in their responses, such as stress and the negative impact of difficult interpersonal relationships on their mental and physical health.

Table 7. Stress, psychological safety and well-being of respondents

Statements about stress, feeling of danger, well-being	No.	%
1. Conflict situations in my library cause me significant stress	24	20.0
2. I feel threatened	11	9.0
3. It negatively affects my mental health	10	8.4
4. It negatively affects my mental and physical health	7	5.9
5. No one at work cares about employee well-being	5	4.2

CONCLUSIONS

The study showed that difficult interpersonal situations occur in public libraries in Poland (76.3%) and that corrective action should be taken. Such situations most frequently occur monthly (24.6%), biweekly, weekly,

or even several times a week (11% each). They most frequently occurred in contacts with management (40.0%) and with colleagues from their own (38.1%) or other departments (30.0%). Difficult work situations primarily involve interpersonal conflicts and lack of cooperation (33.9%), as well as poor communication, such as gossiping, unconstructive criticism, lack of praise, and lack of communication (29.7%), as well as aggressive behavior, humiliation, lack of respect, lack of civility, and complaints (25.4%). Respondents also pointed out that the cause of difficult interpersonal situations may be ineffective management, e.g. incorrect delegation of tasks, lack of a motivational system or lack of a policy in the event of high employee turnover (25.4%). Around twelve percent of respondents also cited a lack of competence and commitment to work as the cause of difficult situations (12.7%). There were also voices about improper hiring practices (e.g. from family or friends), an organizational culture based on mobbing, and pathologies such as being under the influence of psychoactive substances at work. Nearly three-quarters of respondents declared that they could cope with difficult situations primarily through active listening (31.4%), assertiveness and honest conversation (29.7%), and acceptance and composure (28.8%). Many cited helplessness and succumbing to pressure from colleagues (19.5%). These individuals most often sought help from colleagues (36.8%) or superiors (26.3%). The study included numerous personal comments that demonstrated the extent to which difficult interpersonal situations at work impacted the psychophysical functioning of librarians. Twenty percent of study participants experienced significant stress as a result. 9% of them felt threatened and 8.4% mentioned mental difficulties. Approximately 6% of respondents reported that such situations worsened their mental and physical health, and 4.2% of survey participants reported that no one at their workplace seemed to care about their employees' well-being. The study findings demonstrate that difficult interpersonal situations are common in the library community, vary in nature, and that coping strategies vary greatly.

The research findings have highlighted the need for at least two-pronged action in libraries. First, there is a significant need to support employees in coping with difficult interpersonal situations. This can be achieved by organizing workshops on healthy communication, assertiveness, and ways to provide constructive feedback, as well as training in self-care, taking care of one's health and well-being, and work-life balance. Second, management and directors should be supported in implementing changes related to the creation of an effective motivational system and mentoring, coaching, and psychological support for all employees, which will deepen reflection on interpersonal relationships and the ability to constructively resolve disagreements. All of these activities should be guided by the idea of mutual concern for healthy relationships and well-being.

Finally, it's important to mention the study's limitations. Its results certainly cannot be generalized to the entire population of librarians employed in public libraries in Poland. The data only covers 118 individuals who took the time to provide comprehensive responses. Systematic research on the attitudes, preferences, and work challenges of this group of employees is crucial, especially since they work in the lowest-paid sector and constantly struggle with underfunding of their institutions. This means they often have to prove to local governments the need and benefits of a library, exposing them to constant stress and helplessness when decisions are made to close it or merge it with other institutions. This makes it even more crucial for managers of these institutions to consolidate, integrate, and support their employees in their daily professional lives and enable their development. The written statements of respondents in the studies analyzed in this text suggest directions for further research into the prospects for library professionals, their well-being, and their professional motivation. Further research should be conducted using a mixed approach, e.g. quantitative and qualitative. It is also necessary to increase the number of study participants and examine the performance of librarians from other types of libraries.

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SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF MINOR LIBRARY USERS IN THE LIGHT OF THE SO-CALLED "KAMILEK'S ACT"[1]

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[1] On February 15, 2024, an amendment to the Family and Guardianship Code came into force in Poland. It was introduced following the tragic death of 8-year-old Kamilek from Częstochowa, who died as a result of brutal abuse by his stepfather, which is why it is often referred to as "Kamilek's Act".

marketing) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe i Edukacyjne Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich, 2023, s. 574-585.

KEYWORDS: user safety, need for safety, Kamilek's Act, Standards for the protection of minors, school libraries, public libraries.

ABSTRACT: **Purpose** – The aim of this article is to present the role of school and public libraries in meeting the need for user safety in light of the so-called "Kamilek's Act". **Methods** – Guidelines and templates for developing standards for the protection of minors on the gov.pl website and the Empowering Children Foundation website, as well as standards developed by provincial libraries in Poland, were analyzed. **Conclusions** – Libraries are established to meet user needs, including the need for safety. The so-called "Kamilek's Act" introduced the requirement to develop standards for the protection of minors, which emphasized the obligation to ensure the safety of children and young people. When implementing these standards, libraries define, among other things: principles for ensuring safe relationships between minors and staff; rules and procedures for intervening in situations of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor; requirements for safe relationships between minors, particularly prohibited behavior; rules for using electronic devices with internet access; and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats online and otherwise. The standards take into account the situation of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. These are important areas of library activity and can serve as safe spaces for users.

NEEDS, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR SECURITY

Libraries, regardless of type, are institutions created to meet the needs of users (Tokarska, 2013, p. 483). E. B. Zybert even emphasizes that "a characteristic feature of libraries in the second decade of the 21st century is the transformation in organizational solutions and forms of activity, driven by the need to best meet the needs and expectations of the environment in which they operate" (Zybert, 2017, p. 15). J. Wojciechowski notes that it is difficult to meet the requirement that everyone who needs easy access to a library has it (Wojciechowski, 2014, p. 21); however, it is worthwhile to meet the needs of library users to the greatest extent possible within each institution. There are many concepts that consider human needs. The most well-known is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Koźmiński & Piotrowski, 1999, p. 402), which distinguishes five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, safety needs, alongside physiological needs, are dominant. According to the principles of humanistic psychology, safety needs play a significant role, especially in the early stages of human development, and proper human development depends on them. They also plays a significant role in adult life.

In Marshall B. Rosenberg's model of Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 2013), needs also play a significant role. Communication based on NVC aims to support dialogue between people and build a society based on empathy and consideration for the needs of all individuals. It is used in conflict mediation worldwide. Instead of focusing on problems or compromises, it focuses on understanding the needs of both parties and then seeking ways to meet them. Each party should be able to fully express these and then propose realistic actions that will meet these needs. A characteristic feature of NVC is that it is based on the concept of human needs, which builds rapport and mutual understanding. It is based on the ability to identify and express needs and on the ability to be attuned to the needs of others (Göthlin & Widstrand, 2012, p. 7). The need for safety is one of many, but in mediation, naming or identifying this is crucial. When describing it, we often use words such as order, structure, predictability, protection from harm, rest, self-esteem, stability, and trust (Göthlin & Widstrand, 2012, p. 8). Nowadays, more and more is being said and written about the feelings and needs of children and young people, especially as the mental well-being of children in Poland is deteriorating (*Młode głowy*, 2023).

When caring for children's psychological well-being from a communication perspective, attention is paid to factors such as: expressing love and acceptance, strengthening self-esteem and self-worth, supporting self-confidence, strengthening resilience, appreciating social relationships, strengthening motivation, developing the ability to cope with stressful situations, emphasizing the importance of mental and physical health, and, of course, ensuring a sense of security (Stradomska, 2024, p. 23).

On February 15, 2024, an amendment to the Family and Guardianship Code, the so-called "Kamilek's Act", entered into force.[2] It was introduced following the tragic death of 8-year-old Kamil from Częstochowa, who died as a result of brutal abuse by his stepfather. It was designed to prevent child abuse and also to alert staff in institutions that come into contact with children to the fact that they can, and even should, strive to ensure their safety. This applies to all educational, care, and developmental facilities, as well as other institutions that come into contact with children. These include libraries, especially school and public ones.

[2] Pursuant to the Act of 28 July 2023 amending the Act – Family and Guardianship Code and certain other acts (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1606), the Act of 13 May 2016 on counteracting threats of sexual crimes (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1304, as amended) was amended, which after the amendment, i.e. from 15 February 2024, is titled the Act of 13 May 2016 on counteracting threats of sexual crimes and the protection of minors and introduced standards for the protection of minors (child protection standards).

STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS

The obligation to implement standards for the protection of minors applies to all institutions providing educational, care, upbringing, rehabilitation, religious, artistic, medical, recreational, sports, or hobby-related services, as well as those providing hotel and tourism services and other collective accommodations attended by children or in which children reside or may reside. These standards define principles of safe relationships with children and procedures for intervention in cases of suspected violence. They outline the principles and procedures intended to protect children from harm. There is no perfect model that can be adopted by all institutions providing services to children, as each facility has its own specific characteristics that must be taken into account when developing them.

The guiding principle in developing standards is that institution employees act for the benefit of children and in their best interests. They treat child users with respect and consider their needs. Institutions must operate in accordance with applicable law and internal regulations. Employees, in turn, use their authority to comply with applicable arrangements. It is worth noting that the regulations define an employee as anyone employed under an employment contract or a civil law contract, whether paid or unpaid, or performing activities for the institution, including interns, volunteers, or parents or legal guardians of children. Institutions are required to:

1) establish principles for responding to risk factors and symptoms of abuse,

2) establish principles for safe employee recruitment,

3) ensure appropriate employee preparation through training,

4) establish employee responsibilities,

5) establish principles for safe relationships between employees and children, and among children themselves (Service of the Republic of Poland).

The standards must therefore include principles defining safe relationships with children and specify prohibited behaviors. They also establish procedures for intervention in cases of suspected child abuse and for reporting suspected crimes against minors. They also require the institution to designate a person to whom such reports can be made.

EMPLOYEES

According to standards, employees must have qualifications and competencies to work with children. Employers are also responsible for ensuring that the employee does not pose a threat to the well-being of children or their safety. Therefore, before engaging in any work, it is

necessary to check whether the individual is listed in the National Criminal Register for Sex Offenders. The prospective employee must provide the employer with information from the National Criminal Register regarding offenses specified in the Penal Code. Therefore, a teaching staff member must submit information about their criminal record from the National Criminal Register, and the principal must verify whether the individual is listed in the Register. Citizens of other countries must provide information from the criminal records of their country of citizenship, obtained for professional or volunteer purposes related to contact with children. If they have resided in different countries, this information must be provided from all countries they have resided in over the last 20 years. If the countries do not maintain such records, a certificate from the Penal Code must be submitted. If this is not possible, the individual is required to provide a declaration under penalty of perjury.

Individuals hired to work with children are also expected to declare that they have become familiar with child protection standards and safe relationship principles and are committed to complying with them. Individuals who do not hold Polish citizenship must submit a declaration of the countries in which they have resided for the past 20 years and a declaration of no criminal record for crimes against children (if, for valid reasons, they cannot provide information on their criminal record from national criminal records).

PRINCIPLES OF SAFE RELATIONSHIPS

Standards should include provisions regarding safe relationships. Every employee must be familiar with and adhere to the principles of safe relationships. They must act for the well-being of children and in their best interests. They must treat them with respect and take into account their dignity, needs, and right to privacy. Any form of violence against children is unacceptable, whether:

– physical,

– psychological (emotional unavailability, emotional neglect, hostile relationship with the child, blaming, slandering, rejection, developmentally inappropriate or inconsistent interactions with the child, failure to recognize or acknowledge the child's individuality, failure to recognize or acknowledge the psychological boundaries between the child and the responsible person, inadequate socialization, demoralization, situations in which the child witnesses violence),

– sexual violence (sexual abuse of the child),

– child neglect,

– allowing peer violence (verbal violence, e.g., name-calling, teasing, ridicule; relational violence, e.g., exclusion from a group, ignoring, turning others against the person, blackmail; physical violence, e.g., beating,

kicking, pushing, pulling; material violence, e.g., theft, destruction of objects; cyberbullying/electronic violence, e.g., malicious messages) in instant messaging, posting on a social networking site, posting embarrassing photos or videos online; sexual abuse - touching intimate parts of the body or forcing someone into sexual intercourse or other sexual activities by a peer; violence conditioned by gender norms and stereotypes, e.g. violence in romantic relationships between peers, origin, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other characteristics.

It is also unacceptable to establish any sexual, romantic, or partnership-related relationship with a child, or to record a child's image (filming, recording voices, or photographing) for the employee's personal use. Individuals interacting with children should do so openly and within the scope of their job duties. Contact with children should not be based on financial or material gratification resulting from the exploitation of physical advantage, a position of authority, or the child's dependence, with the intention of satisfying or fulfilling the employee's needs.

Messages and actions taken with a child should be appropriate to the situation, tailored to their age, development, and individual psychophysical abilities. They should be safe, reasonable, and based on equal treatment of all children, with no one favored over another. Children's involvement in assigned tasks should be valued.

The detailed rules emphasize that communication with children should be patient and respectful. Listening and responding appropriately to the child's age and situation is essential. Children should not be embarrassed, humiliated, disrespected, insulted, or shouted at. Sensitive information about children should not be disclosed to unauthorized persons, including other children. This also applies to the child's image and information about their family, economic, medical, caregiving, and legal circumstances. Children's rights to privacy should be respected; if deviations from this principle are necessary, the child should be informed, and their expectations should be taken into account. Inappropriate behavior in the presence of children should be avoided, and if the child feels uncomfortable, they should be given the opportunity to express their concerns.

SAFE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN

Staff are responsible for monitoring the implementation of safe relationships between children. It is best if the rules are developed with the children themselves, taking into account the specific needs of the facility. They should also be familiar with and adhere to them. It is worth remembering that if children of different age groups participate in library activities, separate rules for each age group should be developed. They have different abilities, so it is worth considering them. Established rules

should be modified depending on the situation, often at the children's request, and they should certainly participate in this process. The rules should be evaluated at least every two years. These should include: communication methods, prohibition of violence in any form, conflict resolution methods, respect for others' property, privacy, and space, equal treatment, and respect for diversity, individual identity, and expression.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING DISABILITIES

Every child should be treated with respect, without discrimination based on any characteristic, including special needs, disability, race, gender, religion, skin color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, health, age, abilities, political beliefs, or social status. Their well-being and development should be ensured, including by providing adaptations that are most appropriate to identified individual developmental needs and ensuring equal access for individuals with special needs, including disabilities. Care should be taken to eliminate information, communication, architectural, and digital barriers that may hinder independent functioning. Children's families and local communities can assist in this endeavor.

RISK OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

If there is a risk of challenging behavior (aggressive, self-harming, or problematic sexual behavior), a risk assessment should be conducted, including identifying the factors that may trigger such reactions. An individual intervention procedure should be developed in collaboration with caregivers. Then, efforts should be made to reduce emotional stress and protect the child and others involved in the challenging behavior. All children, including witnesses, should be protected. An individualized approach to children with diverse educational and developmental needs, including those with disabilities, also requires developing a clear form of communication that is adapted to the child's psychophysical abilities and allows them to express their wishes.

DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Minors should be familiar with their rights and responsibilities and know where they can get help. All information provided should be tailored to the intended audience and understandable. Children should be aware of applicable norms and rules, as well as the consequences for non-compliance. It is important to conduct psychoeducational and preventative activities aimed at countering all forms of discrimination and violence, and to sensitize children to the right of every person to respect for their

dignity. There is an increasing amount of helpful literature available for all ages. It is also important to remember about caregivers.

It is also worth training employees to improve their skills in handling children in their care. The most important areas include: knowledge of applicable child protection policies and procedures, recognizing risk factors and symptoms of child abuse, and crisis management skills.

Children should be informed about how to avoid and respond to threats in interactions with adults and peers. During these sessions, minors should learn the principles of safe peer relationships and appropriate interpersonal behaviors, as well as practicing conflict resolution skills. Information on where to seek help should be made available.

RULES FOR SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET

Safe use of the internet and social media, as well as awareness of image protection laws, are also important. Educational materials on safe internet use should be made available.

Every library is obligated to take steps to protect children from accessing content that may pose a threat to their proper development. This includes illegal, harmful, and age-inappropriate content. Children must also be protected from inappropriate online contact. The most common online threats listed in the Guidelines (Guidelines, Chapter 4) include: peer pressure, cyberbullying, grooming, sexual blackmail, sexual activity as a source of income for minors, online gambling, access to age-inappropriate advertising, and social media.

STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN LIBRARIES

School libraries, as an integral part of schools, have implemented standards for the protection of minors in accordance with the decisions of the directors responsible for these institutions.

Public libraries should also ensure the implementation of standards. *The IFLA Guidelines for Libraries Serving Children 0-18* emphasize that "the purpose of a children's library is to gather diverse collections and provide services tailored to the level of education, information, and personal development of children of all ages and abilities" (*IFLA Guidelines,* 2020, p. 10). It is clearly emphasized that institutions are expected to meet needs, and the need for safety is one of them. The introduction of standards for the protection of minors also applies to public libraries. They must implement them, and not only because the law provides for sanctions (fines). Users under 19 years of age in public libraries in 2024 constituted 34.2% (Central Statistical Office), making this a significant group worth addressing. For the purposes of this article, the websites of sixteen provincial libraries in

Poland were analyzed, recognizing that these institutions should support other institutions within the library network.

LOWER SILESIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE LOWER SILESIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY IN WROCŁAW

The library's website provides abreviated and full versions of the standards for the protection of minors[3]. The "Standards for the Protection of Minors" tab is on the home page (https://www.wbp.wroc.pl/wbp/pl/). It states that "the library's goal is to provide children and young people (using and wanting to use the library's resources) with a safe environment, organized with respect for their rights and dignity". The full text of the standards is attached as Annex 1 to Order No. 3/2024 issued by the director of the Lower Silesian Public Library in Wrocław. They detail: principles of safe relationships between library staff and minors, principles of safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, recognizing and responding to signs of child abuse, and monitoring compliance with the standards. Attached are: a declaration of familiarity with the standards, registry verification procedures, forms of child abuse, an intervention sheet, a survey on the application of the standards, and the "Standards for the Protection of Minors" (shortened version for minors). On the library's website we can read that the library "wants to provide children and young people with free access to educational and cultural offerings in a safe and comfortable manner, free from threats and inappropriate behavior, and in particular free from any forms of violence and discrimination".

KUYAVIAN-POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP AND MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN BYDGOSZCZ

On the library website, under the "For Readers" tab, there are abbreviated and full versions of the standards for the protection of minors.[4] The standards are presented in the form of a poster with graphic elements. They were introduced by Order No. 4/2024 of the Director of the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Bydgoszcz. A declaration states that "the library is implementing these standards to provide children and young people with a safe environment for using the library's offerings". The abbreviated version expands on the following points: safe relationships between library staff and minors, safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, and recognizing and responding to signs of child abuse. There is some confusion in the names of the documents and attachments. The following are available for download: Order No. 4/2024 – Standards for the Protection of Minors, Consent to the Publication of an

[3] https://www.wbp.wroc.pl/wbp/pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich
[4] https://biblioteka.bydgoszcz.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/

Underage Participant's Image, Consent for the Unassisted Participation of Minors in Events, Abbreviated Standards for the Protection of Minors, and Standards for the Protection of Minors. There are duplicate documents.

LUBLIN VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN LUBLIN

No standards for the protection of minors were found on the library's website[5].

LUBUSZ VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ZIELONA GÓRA

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors in a downloadable form.[6] The tab is on the institution's main website (https://biblioteka.zgora.pl/). They are attached as Annex 1 to Order No. 19/2024 issued by the Director of the Cyprian Norwid Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Zielona Góra. The Order states that "the well-being and safety of children are the priority in all actions taken by library staff for the benefit of children". The standards include the following sections: Glossary of terms, Areas of the Standards for the Protection of Minors from Abuse, Risk factors and symptoms of child abuse – principles of recognition and response, Principles of responding to cases of abuse and suspicions that a minor is experiencing abuse, Principles for protecting a child's image and personal data of minors, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Monitoring the application of standards for the protection of minors from abuse, Personal data protection. Eight annexes are included: Principles of safe recruitment in the library, Declaration of no criminal record and commitment to comply with basic principles of the protection of minors from abuse, Principles of safe employee-child and child-child relationships established in the library, Intervention card regarding suspected child abuse, Principles for the protection of minors' and children's personal data, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Survey monitoring the level of implementation of standards for the protection of minors from abuse, Written declaration of familiarization with standards for the protection of minors from abuse.

[5] https://wbp.lublin.pl

[6] https://biblioteka.zgora.pl/index.php/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich

ŁÓDŹ VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ŁÓDŹ

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors in full and abbreviated versions[7]. The tab is on the institution's main website (https://nowa.wbp.lodz.pl/). It states that "the library, as a place where children learn about culture and spend their free time, recognizes its important role in promoting and respecting children's human rights. The library accepts responsibility for promoting appropriate attitudes towards children and promoting education in the scope of a free childhood without violence". The standards include seven chapters: Safe Relationships, Safe Recruitment, Intervention in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse (specifically: Abuse by an Employee/Co-worker, Abuse by Other Third Parties, Abuse by Parents/Guardians, and Peer Abuse), the Internet, the Image of Children, Monitoring Policy Implementation, Final Provisions, and a Glossary. The following appendices are included: Principles for Safe Contact with Children, a Code of Safe Child-Child Relationships, Learn about the candidate's details, which allows for best understanding their qualifications, including their attitude toward values such as protecting children's rights and respecting their dignity, template declarations (declaration of no criminal record, declaration of country of residence, data for verification in the National Register of Sex Offenders with limited access), an intervention card, a template for a notification of a possible crime, a template for an application to a family court for information into the family/child's situation, and a template for an application to a social welfare center. The short version includes telephone numbers where minors can seek help.

LESSER POLAND VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY IN KRAKÓW

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors[8]. The Menu now includes a tab titled "Regulations and Standards", which includes the Standards for the Protection of Minors (https://www.rajska.info/regulaminy). The goal of implementing these standards is to ensure a friendly and safe environment for minors to use the library's resources and services.

MASOVIAN VOIVODESHIP – WARSAW PUBLIC LIBRARY – THE CENTRAL LIBRARY OF THE MASOVIAN VOIVODESHIP

On the main page of the library, in the section for readers, you can find the Standards of Protection of Minors, a leaflet and a statement

[7] https://nowa.wbp.lodz.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich-2/
[8] https://www.rajska.info/regulaminy

for parents[9]. They constitute an Annex to Order No. 24/2024 of the Director of the Warsaw Public Library - Central Library of the Mazovian Voivodeship. They include the following points: Principles for safe employee recruitment; Principles ensuring safe relationships between minors and library staff, including prohibited behavior; Requirements regarding safe relationships between minors; Procedures for protecting minors from harmful content and threats; Rules for using the Internet and protection against online threats; Persons responsible for receiving reports of incidents threatening minors and for providing them with support; Principles and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor; Threat to the life or health of a minor; Suspected violence; Abuse by an employee; Abuse by other third parties; Procedures and persons responsible for submitting notifications of suspected crimes against a minor; Principles for establishing a support plan for a minor following the disclosure of abuse; Scope of responsibility of the Representative for the Protection of Minors; Principles for reviewing and updating standards; Method of documenting and storing disclosed or reported incidents or events threatening the well-being of a minor; Principles and method of making the standards available to parents, legal or actual guardians, and minors so that they can become familiar with them and apply them. Seven appendices are attached: Templates for declarations regarding citizenship/citizenships and residence over the past 20 years; Template for an intervention card; Template for a notification of a suspected crime; Template for an application for information about a family situation; Template for an intervention register; Template for an employee's declaration of familiarization with the Child Protection Standards in force in the library; an abbreviated version of the Child Protection Standards.

OPOLE VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN OPOLE

Standards for the Protection of Minors were not found on this institution's website.

PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN RZESZÓW

On the library website, in the readers' section, in the regulations and price lists, you can find the Child Protection Policy for the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Rzeszów[10]. It was introduced by Order No. 8/2024 of the Director of the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in

[9] https://www.koszykowa.pl/dla-czytelnikow/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich
[10] https://www.wimbp.rzeszow.pl/regulaminy-i-cenniki.html

Rzeszów. The document is an annex to the order and consists of eleven chapters: Preamble, i.e., introduction to the document; Glossary of terms/ explanation of terms used in the document; Policy for the Protection of Children from Abuse; Recognizing and Responding to Risk Factors of Child Abuse; Principles of Employee Recruitment and Procedures for Verifying Staff Before Allowing Them to Engage in Activities Requiring Contact with Children; Principles of Safe Staff-Child Relationships; Principles of Safe Relationships Between Children; Intervention Procedures in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse; Principles for the Protection of Personal Data and Images of Children in the Institution; Principles for the Safe Use of the Internet and Electronic Media; Monitoring; Final Provisions. Four annexes are included: Principles of Safe Staff-Child Relationships, Intervention Card, Principles for Protecting Images of Children, and Policy Monitoring – Survey. The preamble states that "the guiding principle of all actions undertaken by the staff of the Voivodeship and Municipal Public Library in Rzeszów is to act for the good of the child and in his or her best interests. Each staff member treats the child with respect and takes into account his or her needs. It is unacceptable for anyone to use violence against a child in any form. In pursuing these goals, the institution's staff acts within the framework of applicable law, the institution's internal regulations, and their own competencies".

PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE PODLASKIE LIBRARY IN BIAŁYSTOK

On the library's home page, in the About Us section, you can find full and abridged versions of the Standards for the Protection of Minors at the Łukasz Górnicki Podlaskie Library in Białystok. The document is Appendix No. 1 to Order No. 18/2024 of the institution's director. After the general provisions, the subsequent chapters in the standards are: Methods for documenting compliance with the obligation to screen employees before allowing them to work with minors to ensure they meet the requirements regarding no criminal record for crimes against sexual freedom and decency; Rules ensuring safe relationships between minors and employees, in particular prohibited behavior towards minors; Rules and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or having information about abuse of a minor; Procedures and persons responsible for submitting notifications of suspected crimes against a minor, notifying the Guardianship Court, and initiating the "Blue Card" procedure; Requirements regarding safe relationships between minors, in particular prohibited behavior; Rules for the use of electronic devices with internet access; Procedures for protecting minors from harmful content on the internet and content recorded in another form; Invasion of privacy; Cyberbullying; Principles for establishing a support plan for minors

following the disclosure of abuse; Principles and the methods for making the policy available to employees, minors and their parents and guardians for familiarization and application, as well as principles for updating and reviewing standards.

POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP AND CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN GDAŃSK

The standards are posted on the library website under the About Us tab.[11] These regulations are introduced by Order No. 10/2025 of the Director of the Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski Voivodeship and City Public Library in Gdańsk (WiMBP). The stated purpose of these regulations is to "provide children and young people using or wishing to use library resources with a safe environment, organized with respect for their rights and dignity". The document consists of the following sections: Introduction, Glossary of Terms Used in the Document, Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse Risk Factors, Principles for Recruiting Library Employees and Collaborators, Principles for Safe Relationships Between Employees/Collaborators and Minors and Between Minors, Intervention Procedures in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse, Principles for the Protection of Personal Data and Images of Children and Young People in the Library, Principles for Safe Use of the Internet and Electronic Media, Monitoring the Application of Standards, and Final Provisions. The following attachment is attached: Minor Protection Standards – an abbreviated version for minors. The tabs specify: Minor Protection Standards at WiMBP in Gdańsk, Minor Protection Standards - abbreviated version for minors, Forms of child abuse and symptoms by which it can be recognized, Principles of safe relationships for employees working with children, Verification procedures in the Sex Offenders Register and the National Criminal Register, Declaration of familiarization with the Minor Protection Standards, Intervention Card, Minor Protection Monitoring at WiMBP in Gdańsk – questionnaire, Declaration of no criminal record, SPM – leaflet, SPM – poster.

SILESIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE SILESIAN LIBRARY IN KATOWICE

The Standards for the Protection of Minors are available on the library website under the Library tab[12]. It states that "the document is structured as a set of rules and procedures at the Silesian Library in Katowice, which are to be followed and applied in the event of suspected abuse or harm to a minor (child, student)" and that it "defines the organization of protection

[11] https://wbpg.org.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/
[12] https://bs.katowice.pl/biblioteka/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/

of minors from abuse, the method of documentation, the principles of developing a support plan for a person experiencing violence, and other principles of conduct". The standards discuss: Rules for ensuring safe relationships between minors and library staff; Rules and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor, the method of documentation and the principles of storing disclosed or reported incidents threatening the well-being of a child; Rules for ensuring safe relationships between minors and responding to peer abuse; The scope of competencies of the person responsible for preparing staff to apply the standards, the principles for preparing this staff to apply them and the method of documenting this activity, the principles for reviewing and updating the standards and for staff verification; Protection of children's personal data; Protection of children's images; Rules for using electronic devices with Internet access and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats on the Internet or recorded in other forms; Rules and methods for making the standards available to parents or legal or actual guardians and minors. Six annexes are attached: Intervention card template, Intervention register template, Declaration template, Personal verification principles, Consent to personal verification and a version of the standards for children.

ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN KIELCE

The standards are available on the institution's home page under the Library tab, under the Regulations subtab[13], immediately after the library's statute. They were introduced by Order 4/2024 of the library's director and constitute an annex thereto. Attached to them are: a declaration of familiarization with the standards for the protection of minors; an intervention card; a survey on the application of the standards; and an abbreviated version of the standards intended for minors.

WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN OLSZTYN

The standards are available on the library website under the About the Library tab.[14] The Child Protection Policy at the Regional Public Library in Olsztyn is Appendix No. 1 to Order No. 021.I.7.2024 of the facility's director. It consists of the following chapters: Safe Relationships; Safe Recruitment; Intervention in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse; The Internet; Children's Images; Monitoring Policy Application. Attached are: Principles of Safe Contact with Children, the Code of Safe Child-

[13] https://www.wbp.kielce.pl/biblioteka/regulaminy
[14] https://www.wbp.olsztyn.pl/

Child Relationships, sample declarations, an information card, a sample notification of a possible crime, a sample application to the family court for information regarding the family/child's situation, and a sample application to a social welfare center.

GREATER POLAND VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY AND CULTURE ANIMATION CENTER IN POZNAŃ

The standards are available on the library website under the Library tab in the About Us subtab[15]. They were established by the director of the Regional Public Library and Culture Animation Center in Poznań by order no. 7 of 24 June 2024. They consist of six points, including: Basic principles for the protection of minors, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Principles and procedures for recognizing and intervening in situations of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor, and Principles for reviewing and updating standards.

WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE POMERANIAN LIBRARY

No standards were found on the facility's website.

CONCLUSIONS

The websites of three libraries did not contain standards for the protection of minors, while the remaining thirteen libraries have implemented standards. They are most often posted on the institution's home page or in the Library section, sometimes also in the For Readers section. The level of detail also varies. Indeed, when developing standards, institutions attempt to adapt them to their own specific needs. Regional libraries most often specify: rules for safe relationships with children, specifying prohibited behaviors; procedures for intervention in the event of suspected child abuse; and policies regarding internet use. While developing standards is important, implementing them is paramount in order to ensure that minors feel safe in the library.

SUMMARY

Libraries are established to meet the needs of their users, of course to the best of their abilities. The so-called "Kamilek's Act" introduced the requirement to develop standards for the protection of minors, which emphasized the obligation to ensure the safety of children and young people. By implementing these standards, libraries define, among other

[15] https://wbp.poznan.pl/biblioteka/o-nas/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/

things: principles for ensuring safe relationships between minors and staff; principles and procedures for intervening in situations of suspected abuse or of information about the abuse of a minor; requirements for safe relationships between minors, particularly prohibited behavior; rules for the use of electronic devices with internet access; and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats on the internet and from other sources. The standards take into account the situation of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. These elements should be considered important areas of library activity, as they concern communication and the creation of safe spaces. This is related to meeting the need for safety, which is important at every stage of life. It is crucial that libraries not only develop and implement standards for the protection of minors but also recognize their importance. For those unconvinced, here is a quote from the book *Sweden Reads, Poland Reads*, illustrating the role of libraries: "When I was nine, a library saved my life. […] What they offer cannot be measured or quantified. Thanks to a library, a person can take control of their life, discover a new world, find hope, language, strength. This is precisely what has always fascinated me about libraries" (Tubylewicz & Diduszko-Zyglewska, 2015, pp. 53-54). The entire story is not recounted here (referring to the source), but these words demonstrate what a safe space a library can be for its users.

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SECURING THE COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPTS AND OLD PRINTS AT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN TORUŃ

Andrzej Mycio studied history, specializing in archival studies, at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń between 1990 and 1995. In 2002, at the same institution, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation entitled *Zadłużenie hipoteczne i obrót nieruchomościami w Starym Mieście Toruniu w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* (*Mortgage Debt and Real Estate Transactions in the Old Town of Toruń in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century*). His professional career began at the State Archives in Toruń, followed by subsequent positions at the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) in Bydgoszcz and in the archival collections of the Office for State Protection (Urząd Ochrony Państwa) and its successor institution, the Internal Security Agency (Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego), also in Bydgoszcz. Since 2004, he has been affiliated with the University Library in Toruń, working within the Manuscripts Section of the Special Collections Department, where, since 2006, he has held the position of Head of the Department".

KEYWORDS: Manuscripts, old prints. Cimelia. Academic libraries. Secured collections. Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń. Library storage. Securing library collections.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose** – The author attempts to familiarize the reader with the current principles of storing and making available the most valuable collections housed in the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń.

Method – The article serves as a form of case study. **Results/conclusions** – In the introduction, a brief historical outline of the Library is presented, with particular emphasis on the origins of the Toruń cimelia. The main part of the article describes the storage facility where the most valuable collections are kept. It then mentions the regulations governing the storage and accessibility of cimelia, describes the rules for lending, and briefly discusses the conservation efforts applied to the collections. Finally, it answers the question of whether the collections stored in Toruń are safe and presents the possibilities for development in this area.

The Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń (NCU Library) was officially established on September 1, 1945, with the founding of Nicolaus Copernicus University (NCU), but it actually began operating on June 11 of that year (Burhardt, 1987, p. 8; Burhardt, 1995, p. 13-24). In a short period from 1945 to 1949 it managed to gather a massive collection of over 600,000 volumes. The majority of the collected books came from the so-called safeguarded collections, which consisted primarily of collections from former German libraries located in the northern and western territories that were incorporated into the Polish state after the end of the Second World War (Baranowski, 1990, pp. 23-27). Among the books acquired were also substantial collections of old prints totaling 40,000 volumes, as well as over a thousand manuscripts. Among these collections found in Toruń were cimelia, priceless objects mainly originating from the State and University Library in Königsberg which had arrived here in 1946 through the palaces of the aristocratic von Dohna family in Karwiny and Słobity (now part of Braniewo County), where they were deposited by the German administration towards the end of the war, and then via the collection repository in Pasłęk, where they were transported by the local Polish authorities (NCU Library Archive in Toruń, file. 1/240, pp. 7-8). The gathered manuscripts and old prints, along with the Königsberg cimelia, have from the beginning constituted the true value of the Toruń university library resources. Initially there was cautious boasting about the post-German collections, especially those from Königsberg; however, over time, they were increasingly revealed, even to researchers from behind the Iron Curtain. Since the early 1990s people have openly admitted to possessing collections originating from German libraries, including those from Königsberg (Archives of NCU Library in Toruń, ref. 1/181-239).

However, having a valuable collection poses a problem for its safe storage. The collections, initially brought to Toruń, were stored in the building on Wysoka Street (the first headquarters of the NCU Library in Toruń, now the headquarters of the Toruń Society of Arts and Sciences), and later in three other buildings located in Toruń, namely in the building at Plac Teatralny 2 (the current Marshal's Office), the building at Fosa Staromiejska 3 (the current Collegium Maius of NCU), and the property

at Mickiewicza 2 (the current Student Dormitory No. 1 of NCU). Since 1946, when the Library was assigned a new building – officially opened on May 10, 1947 – the secured collections were transported to Chopin Street (Burhardt, 1987, p. 20; Burhardt, 1995, pp. 13-24). The building on Chopin Street had separate storage facilities for old prints, where manuscripts were also kept. Over time the last items, due to lack of space in the library stacks, had to be partially relocated to cabinets located in one of the corridors of the Library. The security of the collections during this period left much to be desired, as evidenced by the thefts that occurred, including some of the most valuable collections. In the 1950s three medieval manuscripts were stolen, and in 1972 one binding from the collection of the Silver Library of Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern and his second wife Anna Maria. An investigation was conducted only in the case of the theft of the silver binding, but it yielded no results, and the perpetrators were not identified (Archive of the NCU Library in Toruń, signature 1/263). In the case of medieval manuscripts as well as the silver binding, we are most likely dealing with internal theft, meaning that the act was presumably carried out by an employee of the Library. Today we know that one of the stolen medieval manuscripts is held in the collections of the National Library in Warsaw, two are in the collections of the National Ossolineum Library, while the upper cover of the stolen silver binding is stored in the collections of the Royal Castle in Wawel (Mycio, Czyżak, 2024, pp. 31-32; Możdżeń, Strutyńska, 2024, pp. 59, 65-66; Manuscripta.pl).

In 1973, a modern building was opened at Gagarin Street 13, which became the new headquarters of the NCU Library. In the new building, both manuscripts and old prints were immediately placed in a spacious archive that allowed them to be gathered in one room. The location of this archive provides the highest possible security: it is located on the middle floor and inside the building, without any external walls or windows, which naturally makes unauthorized entry difficult. This archive was designated during the design stage for storing the most valuable collections from the resources of the NCU Library. Currently, the archive holds about 50,000 volumes of old prints (including old prints from cartographic, musical, and graphic collections) and 5,000 inventory units of manuscripts. Today, in addition to the repository of manuscripts and old prints, there are some titles of antiquarian magazines as well as small collections stored in the department libraries of the Nicolaus Copernicus University. However, we are gradually trying to gather all volumes published before 1800 in the repository of manuscripts and old prints, which will ensure high standards of storage and security for this collection. The most valuable items are placed in safes and metal cabinets, providing additional protection. Other items are stored on metal shelves, some of which are compact shelving. Metal shelves ensure compliance

with fire protection standards. Unfortunately, the lowest shelves in some racks are only 3 cm from the floor, which poses a risk to the safety of the prints placed on them in the event of potential flooding. Humidity also has an adverse effect here, which shows in the storage during floor cleaning. These shelves were installed at the beginning of the 1970s when less demanding regulations were in place.

The described storage has had an air conditioning system since its inception (1973). In the 1980s, it was replaced with a new one. However, already at the beginning of the current century, this device did not fulfill its task, and the climatic conditions in the storage were far from ideal. Fortunately, during the renovation work carried out in the Library between 2010 and 2011, it was possible to install modern air conditioning, which has kept the conditions in the storage optimal for most of the year to this day, meaning that the temperature is maintained at 18°C and the humidity at 50%. Only in summer, with high temperatures and humidity levels outside, is it not possible to maintain the set parameters: the temperature and humidity levels then rise slightly. To mitigate these unfavorable conditions for the materials in the library storage, first an attempt is made to achieve the required parameters through adjustment of the air conditioning (the operator is the Energy Department of NCU), and if that does not succeed, dehumidifiers are used, their use slightly reducing the humidity level. It has been adopted as a principle that dehumidifiers are activated if the humidity in the room exceeds 60% (Możdżeń, Strutyńska, 2024, pp. 70-73).

The library storage, like the entire building of the Library, is equipped with a fire detection signaling system with a POLON 4000 control panel. The existing fire partitions in the building significantly reduce the risk of fire spreading within the Library. The fire alarm is automatically transmitted to the fire brigade. The storage space is also under constant rodent control; the poisons placed in its area are regularly replaced.

The room described here has an integrated security management system that offers advanced access control features, an alarm system, and monitoring. Only employees of the Manuscripts Department and the Old Prints Department are authorized to enter the storage independently. The alarm signal is automatically sent to the security agency. In justified situations, entry into the storage by other Library and University employees, as well as guests and employees from various companies providing services, is allowed, but only accompanied by one of the employees authorized to enter the storage independently. Visits by such persons, apart from being recorded on the monitoring system, are also noted in the visitor logbook. The keys to the safes and metal cabinets located in the storage are treated even more restrictively. They can only be used by two designated employees, and under the condition that there

is always another librarian from the Manuscripts Department or the Old Prints Department present.

In 2021, several dozen medieval manuscripts from the previously mentioned storage facility were incorporated into the National Library Resource (NCU Library in Toruń, *Rękopisy średniowieczne*...). This qualification led to the imposition of restrictive rules for the storage and accessibility of this collection (Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, 2012). A protection plan for this collection was developed, which details the rules for its storage and also regulates the handling of the collection in the event of various threats (Protection plan for the collections of NCU Library in Toruń...). The plan describes in its first part the storage location of the collection and the security systems that protect this collection. It then discusses the procedures for handling the collections of the National Library Resource (NZB) and the individuals responsible for their safety. The main part of the Plan focuses on the various types of threats to which the collections of the NZB may be exposed. This includes: disruptions in electricity supply, failures of heating infrastructure, failures of water supply infrastructure, flooding due to heavy rainfall, high outdoor temperatures, storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, severe frosts and heavy snowfall, microbiological and biological threats, thefts, cyber-attacks, epidemics, chemical contamination, radioactive contamination, social protests, forest fires, building disasters, aviation disasters, floods, terrorism, fires in the Library, and military conflicts. The author of the Plan attempts to assess the risk of individual threats. The final part discusses the possible evacuation of the NZB, the behavior of employees in crisis situations, methods for documenting potential losses, and the measures planned to improve the security of the collections.

In 2024, another document was created at the NCU Library in Toruń concerning the handling of cimelia in the event of various types of threats. Specifically, this document is an evacuation plan for the most valuable part of the NCU Library collection (Evacuation plan for the National Library Resource…). This document outlines the procedures for handling the most precious collections, stored in the manuscripts and old prints repository (this plan also applies to the collection stored in a separate repository and belonging to a separate unit, namely the Department – Archive of Emigration and University Museum). Undoubtedly, a strong incentive to work on this document was the beginning of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian conflict and its consequences for historic collections. The library purchased several dozen specialized aluminum cases for transporting historic objects. A list of items selected for evacuation was prepared. Each case is equipped with a list of items that are to be evacuated in that particular case. The cases are locked, and the lists are kept inside the cases. Outside, the crates received markings of the Hague Convention

describing cultural monuments. Additionally, each crate is labeled: 'Cultural Monuments. Property of Nicolaus Copernicus University.' As part of the Plan, evacuation sites for objects were designated in case of various types of threats, including military actions. It is, however, assumed that evacuation is a last resort. At the same time, the process of digitizing the most valuable collections selected for evacuation has begun, as making copies of them is considered an additional safeguard. The inventories of both manuscripts and old prints are also being digitized, which serves as an additional safeguard for information about the most valuable collections in the Library. In addition to the collection of medieval manuscripts, which is the NZB, the following groups of objects have also been selected for evacuation: incunabula, relics from the modern and contemporary manuscripts collection, relics from the old prints collection, including the Silver Library of Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern and his second wife Anna Maria, early Polish prints from the 16th century, part of the collection of foreign prints from the 16th century, and rare prints from the collection of early Polish books from the 17th and 18th centuries. In total, there are 1208 objects (not including the collection stored in the Department – the Emigration Archive and the University Museum of the University Library in Toruń, see above).

Other important documents in operation at the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń concerning security issues include:

1. Protection Plan. Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Main Library, 2022.

2. Protection plan for movable cultural goods in the event of an external threat to the security of the state (political-military conflict) and war at Nicolaus Copernicus University, 2004.

The first document discusses the security systems operating in the Library, including those related to the storage of manuscripts and old prints. However, from our perspective it is a very general document that does not contribute much to the detailed issues of managing the security of the manuscripts and old prints collection. The second document, on the other hand, would be extremely important for our considerations, but unfortunately it is already very outdated and completely irrelevant. The document was prepared by someone outside the Library, resulting in its collections being treated very broadly, which unfortunately meant that right from the beginning its informational value was rather low, and after two decades since its creation it is negligible. An update of it is currently being prepared. The person responsible for drafting the new document is working closely with the library staff, and there is hope that it will be significantly better as a result. However, it covers such a wide range of issues that its update requires a very long time to complete. Most likely, the information regarding the security of the manuscripts and old prints

collections contained in the document will reiterate the findings included in the above mentioned library documents.

It is worth mentioning, moreover, two documents that regulate the issues of making special collections available, namely:

1. Regulations on Access to the University Library Collections, dated June 16, 2020.

2. Regulations on Access to Special Collections at the University Library in Toruń, dated November 26, 2020.

The first of these refers to the collections held in the manuscripts and old prints storage only very generally. The second, on the other hand, addresses the topic in detail, describing the procedures for handling special collections, including manuscripts and old prints. This document is divided into three chapters. The first pertains to the availability of the Special Collections Reading Room for use by individual users, which is under the constant supervision of the on-duty librarian and of cameras. The sharing of medieval manuscripts, incunabula, as well as rare manuscripts and old prints requires the consent of the Library Director, and in their absence, the head of the Special Collections Department. A reader is allowed to request five inventory items at a time, and when using the most valuable collections, they can have only one volume on their desk. The second part of the Regulations concerns the availability of objects to institutional entities, primarily for exhibitions. The third chapter pertains to the movement of objects within the Library, primarily to the Conservation and Security of Collections Department and to the digitization workshop.

Apart from the monitoring system (there are several cameras in the Reading Room) and a supervising librarian, the Special Collections Reading Room is also equipped with gates featuring an RFID control system. These gates prevent unauthorized removal of books from the reference collection, which are secured with magnetic strips. Both manuscripts and old prints do not possess magnetic strips; therefore, the aforementioned gates do not protect them from unauthorized removal. Manuscripts and old prints awaiting readers are stored in a metal safe located behind the Reading Room. The items may remain in this safe provided the reader has declared their intention to use them at a later date. However, this procedure does not apply to cimelia, which must be returned to the storage immediately after being used by a reader and brought back to the Reading Room the following day, if necessary. Special collections, including manuscripts and old prints, cannot be loaned outside; they can only be used on-site in the Reading Room. A similar rule applies to the reference collection. Primarily, scientific staff and students and doctoral candidates of Nicolaus Copernicus University have the right to use special collections. Additionally, any other person registered in the NCU Library

system as a reader, as well as external individuals who register in the system as guests, can access them. Before using special collections, the reader is required to fill out a declaration in which, in addition to noting the purpose of their visit and their research topic, the reader commits to citing the materials they used in their work. In justified cases, a reader may be asked to provide a certificate from their supervisor or institution justifying the need to use a given facility.

The collections stored in the manuscripts and old prints repository are under conservation care. The NCU Library employs a relatively large team of qualified conservators, consisting of five members, who diligently carry out their tasks. The most important objects undergo full conservation, which, however, takes a lot of time and is only possible for a selected, highly curated group of items. Currently it is assumed that a better overall result for the entire collection can be achieved by subjecting as many objects as possible to preventive conservation. At the same time, a program has been introduced that aims to secure the objects stored in the repository with protective boxes. The subject boxes are produced by the bookbinding workshop operating in the Library, and are also ordered from the specialized company Beskid Plus. Roughly speaking, it can be estimated that both preservation conservation and protection through storage in boxes have been applied to about 10% of the entire collection in the library storage. The entire collection has passed through the fumigation chamber at least once, which minimizes the development of harmful microorganisms. The library storage worker responsible for the described space continuously cleans the entire collection with a specialized vacuum cleaner, which additionally protects the books. The library storage undergoes microbiological testing every two years, allowing for constant monitoring of the air composition.

Are the objects stored in the manuscripts and old prints storage safe? They seem to be well secured, in every respect. However, of course, there is always room for improvement to the existing security systems. We are considering a system of sensors that react to changes in humidity, which would protect the library storage from potential flooding consequences. A permanent gas fire suppression system is also being considered. In the near future we plan to raise the lower shelf of the racks so that the height from the floor is at least 10 cm. We also want to purchase a climate-controlled cabinet which would be placed in the Reading Room for storing items intended for sharing. This would ensure that objects waiting to be released would have conditions identical to those they have in storage. It seems that the most important factor in this system is the human element, which is why it is very important that the individuals hired for positions that will have access to the most valuable objects are employed with particular care in order to eliminate any threat from this side (Makiłła-Polak, 2024).

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PREVENTING THEFT IN LIBRARIES

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KEYWORDS: Theft of library collections. Library collection protection. Library video surveillance systems. Library user control. Magnetic strips. RFID tags. University libraries. University of Warsaw Library.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose** – The aim of this article is to discuss methods for protecting library collections against theft and the problems that arise in this regard. **Method** – A literature review method was used, combined with an analysis of sources in the form of annual reports of selected libraries and their websites. **Results/Conclusions** – Technological developments in recent decades have allowed libraries to rely on analog and digital systems to perform some of their book protection tasks. Video surveillance systems and anti-theft security measures in the form of magnetic strips and RFID tags, which utilize radio frequency identification (RFID), are most frequently mentioned in this context. Investing in such resources is expensive, but worthwhile. However, experts agree that technical solutions cannot completely eliminate theft in libraries. Therefore, technical tools should be considered a support for conventional measures, which

emphasize consistent adherence to library regulations and discreet monitoring of unusual user behavior. Practical methods for protecting library collections against theft are discussed using the example of solutions used at the University of Warsaw Library (hereinafter also referred to as BUW)[1].

INTRODUCTION

The practice of stealing from libraries is as old as libraries themselves. This is evidenced by the texts of curses and warnings addressed to book thieves dating back to antiquity cited by Zofia Walczy. In subsequent centuries, popes sometimes issued decrees imposing the penalty of excommunication on those who stole from libraries. For example, a decree for the protection of the collections of the Jagiellonian Library was issued by Pope Clement X in 1672 (Walczy, 1976, pp. 841-846). The National Library in Warsaw, then known as the Załuski Library of the Commonwealth, received a similar papal brief imposing excommunication on book thieves in 1752 from Benedict XIV (Pamiątki, 1997, pp. 84-85).

In one of the chapters of his book *Dziwne historie książki* ("Strange Stories of Books") Zbysław Arct wrote about "bookcatchers", a term he used to describe those who borrowed books from monastery collections without any intention of returning them, sometimes simply hiding valuable titles in the recesses of their large cloaks. Among them Arct singled out distinguished bookcatchers that included such important figures in the development of Polish librarianship at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries as Józef Andrzej Załuski, Tadeusz Czacki, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, and Samuel Bogumił Linde (Arct, 1969, pp. 67-93).

Theft in libraries is one of a number of undesirable behaviors among users. The most common problem in this regard is the late return of borrowed materials, with more serious offenses such as drug-related offenses and indecent behavior sometimes cited. However, theft of library collections remains a significant issue and has even earned a dedicated Wikipedia entry (Library theft – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_theft). Moreover, the problem of theft in libraries today is not limited to theft of collections but can also involve the theft of items belonging to other library users, possibly identity theft, and other similar offenses related to cybercrime.

It seems that in recent decades, the means of protecting library collections from damage and theft have become significantly less stringent. First, the idea of open access to shelves emerged, leading to modern libraries,

[1] I would like to thank Justyna Koziak, Agata Mickiewicz, Andrzej Regmund and Grzegorz Kłębek from the University of Warsaw Library for their help in obtaining information about the security system and protection of collections at BUW.

especially academic and public ones, being designed to allow users to freely access portions of their collections without the need for librarians. When this practice first began, many considered it a revolutionary, bold, yet risky innovation, threatening the order on the shelves and the security of the collections. Today, however, especially in academic and public libraries, it is a standard solution. Almost two decades ago, Henryk Hollender wrote: "[...] open access may have been *controversial* twenty or thirty years ago, but now it is no longer so. A library without it is begging for the mayor or rector to close it down, posting a sign on the door announcing that the reading material is provided by Google, Inc., with a little support from bookstores, publishers, and digitization enthusiasts. Free access, group and individual workspaces, the ability to mix document types and workflows [...] this is the strength and *raison d'être* of today's library [...]" (Hollender, 2009).

Those for whom free access to shelves was already a bold solution must have been even more surprised when, later on, another revolutionary innovation emerged, especially in academic libraries: so-called unstaffed hours (or staffless library hours), meaning situations where library staff are significantly reduced or even—with the exception of security staff—completely absent. In some libraries, this occurs most often in the afternoons and evenings, sometimes in the mornings and during the summer holidays. In addition, the possibility of independent borrowing was introduced through the use of self-service devices called self-checks. These modern conveniences, however, have made the protection of library collections and the control of user behavior a significant challenge in the organization of library operations. These improvements have allowed users to feel more free to navigate the library and engage in activities there. At the same time, however, the implementation of modern technological solutions has ensured that no library user should feel completely at ease, as technology not only records the moment of entry and exit from the library but also logs what happens within and verifies any unauthorized attempts to remove library materials.

Library science literature abounds with publications that address specific cases of theft from library collections, the methods used by thieves, and the actions taken to recover them. Some of these texts resemble crime stories in popular magazines (Reed, 2000). However, this is undoubtedly valuable reading, as it provides insights regarding the methods used by thieves and how to cope in crisis situations based on the difficult experiences of others. Actions undertaken by libraries in cooperation with law enforcement agencies when a theft has occurred and the stolen materials are particularly valuable are primarily aimed at identifying the perpetrators as quickly as possible, or at least identifying the suspects, preventing attempts to sell the stolen materials on the

antiquarian market or in online auctions, and ultimately achieving at least partial recovery of the lost items. The procedures for handling such cases are well-documented in library science literature and should be familiar, especially to staff managing special collections in libraries. A set of such actions, which should be included in an "emergency plan", can be found, for example, in the American Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Special Collections Guidelines, which begin with the need to maintain a contact list of law enforcement agencies to be notified upon discovery of a theft as well as a contact list of institutions maintaining databases of stolen and missing materials, and to notify local and regional used bookstores and other specialized dealers as soon as possible (ACRL/RBMS Guidelines, 2009, rev. 2023). This article, however, attempts to identify procedures before the need to activate an emergency plan arises, following the principle of "prevention first, then minimization of damage". Therefore, it does not describe specific theft cases or how the perpetrator was identified. Rather, it aims to identify appropriate methods and tools, meaning what libraries have at their disposal to prevent theft. A discussion of the spectacular thefts committed in Polish libraries in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s can be found in an article by Joanna Prokop (Prokop, 2014). The author recalled, among other things:

– the theft of the first edition of Nicolaus Copernicus's 1543 work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* from the Scientific Library of the PAAS and PAS in Cracow in 1998,

– the theft of several dozen old prints from the Jagiellonian Library in 1999,

– the theft discovered in 2000 of old prints from the Library of the Catholic University of Lublin,

– the theft of old prints from the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Zielona Góra in 2005,

– a series of thefts of old prints from seminary and monastery libraries in the 1990s.

To this sad yet far from exhaustive list of thefts in Polish libraries, one should add the high-profile theft of books from the 19th-century collections belonging to the University of Warsaw Library, which took place between 2022 and 2023 (Stańczyk, 2024). One of my interlocutors from the University of Warsaw Library stated that the security systems currently in use in libraries are useful and should be invested in, but an attack by well-trained professionals acting on commission, such as the one discovered at the University of Warsaw Library in 2023, is difficult to effectively defend against.

The most notorious and most frequently reported cases of library theft in the literature, of course, concern the most valuable collections—manuscripts, old prints, and iconographic materials. The loss of such items

is particularly devastating, so such cases gain publicity, and information about them ultimately reaches the public. However, in most cases the thefts go unnoticed because the social impact is considered low. Library users therefore attempt to appropriate materials that may not necessarily have significant bibliophilic value, but are valuable to them for some reason, for example, a helpful resource in studies or a missing element in a collection. It sometimes happens that determined students steal contemporary books that, on the one hand, they need for a course, but on the other hand, are too expensive to purchase, and the university library does not have the necessary number of copies available for loan.

There are therefore certain differences in the approaches to protection against theft of special collections and of contemporary collections. The exceptionally valuable portion of special collections is protected using more conventional methods. This doesn't mean that technology is secondary. On the contrary, alarm systems and video surveillance play a significant role, but precisely because of the exceptional museum, historical, and artistic value of special collections, modern additions such as magnetic strips or RFID tags are not installed. In their case, it is crucial to adhere to the regulations that restrict access to certain areas and selected collections. Particularly valuable special collections are stored in vaults and other dedicated rooms, sometimes in lockers with password access and additional mechanical and electronic security. Users of such collections are subject to constant direct observation and monitoring.

Regardless of the fact that the person using special collections must be verified[2] and belong to the category of authorized users, who, according to the adopted regulations, have the right to use special collections, these individuals must be under constant, yet discreet, observation while using these collections, and they should be aware of this. The direct and electronic monitoring system should be designed to discourage attempts to leave the field of view of the librarian on duty and the video surveillance cameras. A particularly sensitive moment is leaving the special collections reading room, especially when the user declares only a temporary departure. The literature on the subject indicates that thefts often occurred precisely at the moment when the perpetrator left the reading room, seemingly temporarily, leaving behind low-value items, but in reality completely departing, taking with them a collection item. Therefore, recommendations for accessing particularly valuable collections emphasize that each time a user leaves the reading room the materials should be returned to the librarian on duty. One additional idea recommended for accessing the most valuable collections is to weigh the materials twice, before they are

[2] I would add here that employees of special collections departments with the most valuable collections should be initially trained in identifying forged or stolen identity documents.

made available and upon return by the user (Wilkie, 2006). Of course, such a scale would have to be particularly accurate to detect the difference in weight caused by cutting a fragment from a valuable volume or replacing the original book block with worthless material or a facsimile.

Contemporary collections of significantly lower value, on the other hand, are made available in a less restrictive manner, often on a free-access shelf basis. However, in these cases, anti-theft protection is enhanced by elements that facilitate the location, identification, and provenance of materials, such as ownership stamps, barcodes, magnetic strips, and RFID tags.

THE EXTENT OF THEFT

The extent of library book theft is difficult to estimate because, as Z. Walczy noted many years ago, libraries do not keep statistics on materials deemed stolen. Therefore, they are reluctant to disclose such details, and sometimes they only learn of the theft when law enforcement agencies apprehend a criminal and seize library materials from him (Walczy, 1976, pp. 850-851). Piotr Ogrodzki, based on many years of experience at the Center for the Protection of Public Collections, concluded the same, writing that the discovery of the theft can occur even after several years and is sometimes a matter of chance (Ogrodzki, 2003). Joanna Prokop provides a specific example of how, in 2000, the management of the Catholic University of Lublin Library was unaware of the theft when police seized several dozen old prints from the home of the library's warehouseman (Prokop, 2014, p. 13). Christopher Reed made a similar observation, citing, among others, a case once conducted by the FBI during where it turned out that library representatives, asked to confirm the provenance of the seized loot, were unaware of the losses incurred (Reed, 2000, p. 46). Leading Polish university libraries do not include book theft data in their statistics, which is understandable, as it is difficult to definitively conclude that the absence of a book on the shelf and the absence of a record of its loan in the loan records necessarily mean it was stolen. For example, none of the Jagiellonian Library's last four reports from 2020-2023 mention the number of stolen books[3]. We also don't find such information in the reports of the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń, the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, or the University of Gdańsk Library. The same is true for the reports of the Wrocław University Library

[3] As a side note, it is worth noting the significant disproportion between the amount collected by the Jagiellonian Library in fees for late returns and for damaged or lost books. The total amount of fees for overdue books in 2023 was PLN 175,000, while the total amount collected for damaged or lost books was only PLN 795! See M. Kusak, E. Valde-Nowak: Activities of the Jagiellonian Library in 2023. Report. "Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej". Years 73-74, 2023-2024, p. 159.

(WUL). There is no mention of stolen books in the last four years. The only surrogate for such information is data on the number of books removed from the inventory due to identified shortages and losses. However, if we were to rely solely on data from 2021-2022, the relatively small numbers would allow for cautious optimism. In 2021, WUL recorded only 65 such deletions from the inventory due to missing/lost items (WUL Report 2021, p. 39), while in 2022, the figure was 77 (WUL Report 2022, p. 47). However, the latest available report from 2023 presents a more alarming number. As many as 1,476 volumes were deleted from the inventory due to missing/lost items (WUL Report 2023, p. 46). This, of course, does not necessarily mean a sharp increase in the number of lost books in a given year, as this can easily be explained by more thorough and comprehensive inventory.

And here, the keyword for the issue under discussion appears – inventory. Library thefts are rarely detected *in statu nascendi*, and situations where specialized and well-prepared criminals are caught "red-handed" are rare. Although there are exceptions, such as the 2003 case when thieves were apprehended by the police while stealing valuable iconographic materials from the Jagiellonian Library (Ogrodzki, 2005, pp. 10–11). Therefore, when a suspicion of theft arises, it occurs either when a material ordered by a user based on a catalog description is not found in the correct location, or during a routine inventory. A periodic inventory is the moment when the librarian says "I'm checking", and it provides an initial overview of the library's losses caused by thefts. Ewa Barteczko, based on the experience of the National Library in Warsaw, wrote: "Probably many librarians are anxiously thinking about the annual inventory of reference collections and are relieved when it turns out that the total losses in the collections, in comparison with the previous year, have increased slightly, but have not doubled" (Barteczko, 1998, p. 24).

The lack of information in Polish university library reports about theft of library materials or user items might suggest that the problem is marginal and of little importance to librarians' work. However, this is not true, and in some countries theft is cited as one of the main problems hindering librarians' work and affecting the image of libraries. This is evidenced, for example, by the results of a study conducted by K. Ramesh Dhuri and J. Lobo among university librarians in India. When asked about various acts of vandalism and other undesirable behaviors observed in academic libraries, respondents most frequently cited theft of library materials (90% of responses). Behaviors such as damaging books and tearing out pages, drawing on pages, rearranging collections, late return of borrowed materials, and damaging library furniture were listed next (Ramesh Dhuri & Lobo, 2021).

TECHNICAL SUPPORT – ELECTROMAGNETIC AND RADIO SYSTEMS

When it comes to technology supporting librarians in preventing library theft, the most common technologies mentioned are advanced video surveillance systems and anti-theft devices in the form of magnetic strips and RFID tags. Anti-theft magnetic strips (also known as *Tattletapes*) are an older technology developed by 3M in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A strip that has not been properly deactivated at the lending desk will trigger an alarm upon exiting the library when a book with the strip hidden within it enters the electromagnetic field of the anti-theft gate. RFID tags, on the other hand, began to be used in libraries for managing and protecting library collections three decades later.

Purchasing an RFID system is a significant expense, which, apart from national libraries, only the largest university and public libraries can afford. For example, the purchase and implementation of an RFID system at the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń in 2023 cost over PLN 1.2 million (BGUMK Report, 2023, p. 5). Implementing an RFID system at the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) was not much less expensive. Currently, BUW operates a hybrid system – electromagnetic and radio frequency (EM+RFID), as books are still supplied with magnetic strips regardless of RFID tags. At the same time, older books that previously had magnetic strips were retrospectively fitted with RFID tags, as this was the only way to allow older books to be borrowed through the self-service system.

The purchase of the RFID system alone in 2018 cost nearly PLN 320,000 (BUW Report, 2018, p. 56). However, in the same year and in the following years BUW also incurred significant expenses with the purchase of labels and the labeling process itself[4]. In 2018 this expense amounted to as much as PLN 430,000 while in the following year "only" just over PLN 26,000 was allocated for this purpose (BUW Report, 2019, p. 78), but in 2020 labeling costs were again significant, exceeding PLN 96,000 (BUW Report, 2020, p. 76). In 2021-2022, the cost of supplying books with security elements was also significant, amounting to PLN 38,000 (BUW Report, 2021, p. 72) and PLN 43,000 (BUW Report, 2022, p. 81) respectively. Only in 2023 were these costs lower, amounting to less than PLN 3,000 (BUW Report, 2023, p. 81). It is true that the BUW report provides in this category the total amount allocated for marking library materials with magnetic strips and RFID tags, but due to the fact that RFID tags intended for securing books

[4] It is worth noting that the RFID system was implemented at the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) in 2018, and from August of that year, when RFID labels began being placed in books, nearly 130,000 volumes were marked with RFID by the end of that year (BUW Report 2018, p. 24). The following year, over 220,000 volumes were marked with RFID (BUW Report 2019, p. 40). Full implementation of the RFID system, along with the selection of collections for open access labeling, was completed in 2020.

are twice as expensive as magnetic strips it can be assumed that the cost of labeling with RFID tags constituted 2/3 of the above amounts[5]. The average price of a single magnetic strip ranges from 0.50 to 0.70 PLN per unit, although it can be lower for larger orders. It also depends on whether they are single-sided B1 strips (adhesive tape is on one side and is applied to the spines of hardcover books using special applicators called bayonets) or the slightly more expensive double-sided B2 strips, with adhesive tape on both sides, allowing the strip to be placed deep within the book's block between pages. Meanwhile, the price of an average RFID tag depends on the frequency to which its antenna responds. More efficient tags, placed in books and operating at the high UHF frequency, can cost over 2 PLN per unit.

The introduction of an RFID system at the University of Warsaw Library has allowed inventory checks to be conducted more frequently and quickly, rather than every five years. The first inventory using a mobile RFID reader was conducted at the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) in 2020. Data on identified deficiencies reported in subsequent BUW reports can be used as a starting point to determine the scale of collection theft. For subsequent years:

– in 2020, 135,000 volumes were inspected, and 472 absolute deficiencies were identified[6], which constituted 0.35% of the inspected collections (BUW Report, 2020, p. 34);

– in 2021, a total of 151,000 monographs were inspected and 469 absolute deficiencies were found (0.31%) (BUW Report, 2021, p. 37);

– in 2022, a total of 157,000 monographs were inspected and 441 absolute deficiencies were found (0.28%) (BUW Report, 2022, p. 36);

– in 2023, a total of 104,000 monographs were inspected and 179 absolute deficiencies were found (0.17%) (BUW Report, 2023, p. 47).

The percentage of absolute shortages detected in recent years at the University of Warsaw Library is therefore at an acceptable level, not exceeding 0.5%. If it exceeded 1%, it would be cause for concern, as it would mean that, on average, one book in 100 is missing. It is also worth noting that the percentage of absolute shortages has gradually decreased over the last four reporting years. But the problem lies not only in the scale of

[5] Among companies supplying libraries with hardware and software supporting collection management and protection, as well as related consumables, the price difference between magnetic strips and RFID tags can be even greater. This depends, among other things, on whether the tags offered are active (with their own power sources) or passive (in which case the transponder uses the reader's energy), and on the transponder's operating frequency. The price of inter-page magnetic strips used at the University of Warsaw Library in 2025 is PLN 0.31 gross per unit, while the price of RFID tags (49x81 mm) is PLN 0.64 gross per unit.

[6] Relative shortages identified during the inspection are those recorded for the first time, assuming that such materials may still be found. Absolute shortages are those identified again, meaning that the missing materials are considered irretrievably lost.

this phenomenon; it should also be considered from the perspective of the value of the stolen materials. The theft of, say, ten contemporary academic textbooks, which can be somehow reconstructed in the collection, is one thing, but the theft of a single rare book, not necessarily a manuscript or incunabulum, but even from the first half of the 20th century, for which finding an equivalent can be time-consuming and expensive, is another.

Compared to barcode systems, placing RFID tags on books is undoubtedly a significant advancement in facilitating collection management – keeping records of loans and returns, conducting inventory, and, above all, checking at the library's exit gates. However, the question arises as to whether RFID tags (also known as RFID markers or transponders) provide greater protection for books marked with them. On the one hand, the answer is clearly affirmative, as the RFID system will raise an alarm if an attempt is made to remove a document from the library without being checked out. On the other hand, RFID tags are just as susceptible to destruction or removal as barcode labels or magnetic strips. Bartłomiej Gładysz and Paweł Wiśniewski are unequivocal on this issue, stating: "It should be noted that RFID is not primarily an anti-theft technology, and if a user deliberately tries to remove an unborrowed book, neither RFID, barcodes, nor magnetic strips can prevent this" (Gładysz & Wiśniewski 2015).

That is why it is so important that all such anti-theft measures be placed on books and book blocks so that they are difficult to find and remove. Thieves are quite clever and inventive in this regard. One original idea is to swap barcode stickers. Gregory Seppi and Dainan Skeem described one such case in which a thief stole books approved for outside lending, but had no intention of returning them to the library. Broadly speaking, this method involves gently removing barcodes from the borrowed materials after borrowing them, returning to the library, and pasting these codes onto other similar books in the library's collection. They can then go to the lending library and fictitiously "return" the books to the library, so that a return receipt is recorded, but in reality, they aren't returning the books, just their barcodes attached to other books (Seppi & Skeem, 2020, pp. 103-104).

At the University of Warsaw Library, acts of vandalism involving the removal or destruction of RFID tags and magnetic strips also occur. However, the magnetic strip has the advantage that, if cut in half, it can still activate the anti-theft gate. Finding a magnetic strip, which is quite small, used to be easier. Older books are equipped with strips made of transparent foil. This makes the metal strip easier to see. Newer strips, which the University of Warsaw Library's Collections Department places in books, are on paper. This allows the magnetic strip to blend into the background of the book's page and makes it more difficult to

locate. However, this doesn't guarantee the book's complete security. A determined and patient criminal who decides to damage or remove the security element from a book can do just that. Employees of the Circulation Department at the University of Warsaw Library say that they find books from which the magnetic strip or label has not necessarily been brutally torn out or cut out, but rather where such elements have been slowly and gently removed, leaving almost no trace. It sometimes happened that the labels or strips were found in trash bins, but it was also possible that a strip removed from one book was glued to another. Several books a month are thus re-labeled, but it is important to remember that this only applies to books where the security elements were found to have been removed. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the scale of this practice. Older books were labeled under the spine. Currently, the University of Warsaw Library doesn't use spine labels, but only ones between the pages.

THE INTERNAL ENEMY

Efforts to prevent attempted theft and destruction of library collections are primarily aimed at deterring outsiders who may attempt to use the collections in violation of library regulations and in an illegal manner. However, when establishing access procedures to certain parts of the collection, especially special collections, it is necessary to consider limiting this access for certain employees. It is not uncommon for library thefts to be committed by employees themselves, including those with the highest privileges. F. Trzebski refers to such cases as "employee crime", stating that "the internal thief is the most dangerous type of criminal" (Trzebski, 2020, p. 137). The question may therefore arise as to whether anti-theft gates should also be installed at entrances/exits used exclusively by library employees, thus following the principle of "everyone is a suspect". The answer should be affirmative, because, as Piotr Ogrodzki once wrote, "employee theft" is the most dangerous form of theft of library collections (Ogrodzki, 2003). The University of Warsaw Library can be cited as an example. In addition to two gates for entry and exit for readers, there is also one gate installed at the entrance/exit exclusively for staff and one gate at the entrance/exit to the underground garage. A review of the study conducted by Todd Samuelson, Laura Sare, and Catherine Coker states that the majority of internal thefts (69%) are committed by people working in the library but not strictly speaking librarians. This includes support staff, temporary workers, student volunteers, security guards, and so on. As the authors state, this is little consolation, considering that 31% of insider thefts are committed by employees with professional status as librarians, including top-level employees (Samuelson, Sare & Coker, 2012, p. 565).

TECHNICAL SUPPORT – VIDEO MONITORING

In large libraries, such as national libraries and larger university and public libraries, surveillance of the library interior using a camera system takes place practically throughout the entire building, though particularly in critical areas such as the special collections reading rooms and the library entrance. Although perhaps the word "video recording" should be used instead of "observation". Technology has advanced significantly in this regard. I remember at the turn of 1990/91, a monitoring system was installed in the old building of the University of Warsaw Library, in its main reading room, to support staff in monitoring the situation in the reading room. One camera was installed in each of the three rooms in the main reading room. To cover the entire room, the cameras were placed quite high. The cameras were static, the image resolution was low (HD was, of course, not yet an option for such applications), and needless to say, the image was black and white. In short, the possibility of observing any unusual behavior of individual readers in detail was limited. The center of this system was located in the largest room, at the librarian's station which provided materials from the reference collection. This center was simply a monitor no larger than 10 inches, connected to a VCR with VHS tapes. This was intended to record events in the reading room—of course, not simultaneously from all cameras, only from a selected camera. However, in practice, it wasn't used that way. To record images from just one camera throughout the entire reading room's working day, one would have to use four VHS E-180 cassette tapes, remembering to replace them every three hours. In this situation, long-term archiving of recorded material was out of the question. And yet, it is not just about real-time viewing, but also about long-term archiving of recordings. It happens, not only in action movie scripts, that the police or other authorities request access to surveillance footage, which allows them to identify individuals suspected of committing criminal acts. The condition of such a situation is, of course, not only that the recording itself be made, but also that the perpetrator of the offense can be identified based on the recording. Modern surveillance systems make this much easier.

One of the key elements of installing a video surveillance system is arranging the area under surveillance and recording so that the camera image shows what the user is doing with the document placed on the table in front of them, not their back. Simultaneous observation of images from multiple cameras to catch potential criminals in the act would be quite difficult. Video surveillance systems are therefore designed to have a significant psychological impact. A criminal doesn't know if someone is watching them while performing a prohibited act, but they must be aware that the image from this camera and all others within the library is

recorded and then archived for at least several weeks, allowing them to determine the time of the crime and identify the suspect. As G. Seppi and D. Skeem note, "cameras are most often useful after the theft has already occurred" (Seppi & Skeem, 2020, p. 109).

Of course, the installation of a surveillance camera system should be appropriately marked to protect users' images. The American Association of Academic and Research Libraries (ACRL) Special Collections Protection Guidelines state that libraries "should post information about video surveillance at the entrance to monitored areas and publish this information online as part of general information for users" (ACRL/RBMS Guidelines, 2009, rev. 2023).

Six cameras are installed in the largest reading area of the University of Warsaw Library, the lobby (103 stationary seats and 18 seats on movable "bar stools" directly next to the shelves)[7]. These are older generation CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) cameras, operating on coaxial cables and installed when the new University Library building was completed, a quarter of a century ago. Just because there are only six cameras and they are of an older type doesn't mean they don't primarily serve their "deterrent" function. The tables in this large room are arranged so that all users face one direction. Therefore, four cameras capture images showing users from the front, while two cameras capture their backs. The angle of the four front cameras also allows those working in individual work booths located above the reading room to be in view. There are no "blind spots" in the reading room where someone could try to hide from the camera, intending to engage in prohibited activities. Even if the distance from the furthest workstation to the camera facing that direction is approximately twenty meters, the mere knowledge that a camera is constantly recording the image from that workstation can deter potential offenders from committing an offense. Furthermore, the furthest workstation from the front cameras is also the closest to the cameras at the back. Therefore, the sense of "surveillance" only increases. However, this "deterrent" effect would certainly be improved if there were more cameras in other reading areas and their placement provided greater coverage. One example is the eastern room with library and information science periodicals, adjacent to the main reading area and with 55 seats available to readers. However, the activities undertaken here are recorded by only three cameras, one of which does not actually show the reading room seats because it is directed towards the restrooms. As a result, the remaining two cameras do not provide full coverage of this space. There are at least a few blind spots.

[7] The architectural design of the University of Warsaw Library includes approximately 1,000 seats for readers. More than half of these seats are located in 10 reading rooms with at least 20 seats each (Grygrowski, 2020, p. 22).

However, it should be clarified that both the first and second examples refer to reading areas within the free-access area. When it comes to the room functioning on the same level as a de facto reading room, with full librarian service and the ability to order materials from the library's storage room, the differences are significant. There are only ten seats for readers, but above them, literally above their heads, are a staggering nineteen cameras. Of these, sixteen are modern IP cameras, meaning they use the Internet Protocol (IP) which can be controlled via the Internet or at least via the LAN's Intranet. They operate on UTP (Unshielded Twisted Pair) cables, transmitting color images in HD resolution and switching to infrared recording in darkness. The remaining three cameras are older CCTV devices. Such "camera coverage" of a relatively small space may seem overly cautious, but years of practice and sometimes difficult experience prove P. Ogrodzki's claim that library reading rooms are places particularly vulnerable to criminal activity, as a potential robber:

"– receives items ordered from librarians,

– has the opportunity to calmly (multiple times) check the book (its condition, contents, number of engravings, etc.),

– can recognize the habits of library staff and assess whether their behavior gives rise to the possibility of theft" (Ogrodzki, 2003).

In the control room there are a dozen or so monitors, each divided into a dozen or so smaller screens. Effective monitoring can be difficult for the average person to maintain when staring at a single monitor with sixteen windows in a 4x4 arrangement. However, with sixteen monitors, each displaying images from sixteen cameras, staring at 256 small screens is pointless, as such monitoring is practically impossible. Security personnel can, in some situations, select a specific camera and display it on the entire monitor screen, but then they temporarily lose the view from the other cameras. Therefore, the security officer on duty in the control room isn't tasked with constantly staring at a wall of monitors. An academic library is after all no Fort Knox. This confirms the general opinion about complex video surveillance systems: they are most often not used for real-time response, but primarily for recording events and possibly delayed playback of recorded material. This is where the issue of archiving recordings arises. Because video files in satisfactory resolution take up a relatively large amount of disk space (in HD quality, an hour of recording will take up several GB of memory), camera recordings are not archived for long periods; they are instead overwritten by newer recordings. At the University Library, such temporary archiving lasts 2-3 weeks, meaning that the detection of a prohibited act should be confirmed relatively quickly if the camera recordings are to be used in investigations.

CLASSIC ENTRANCE CHECKS

After the tragic events in May 2025 on the main campus of the University of Warsaw[8], management decided that security staff on duty at the library entrance were required to check the bags and briefcases of library visitors (BUW – Circular Letter No. 2/2025). Many years ago, when I had the opportunity to participate in a tour of research libraries in Germany with a group of Polish librarians, one of the images I remember vividly was the situation at the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig. At the library entrance, an employee dressed in a uniform reminiscent of previous centuries greeted entering users, which was quite charming. And because of his elaborate attire, it also had an air of dignity about it. However, at the same time, this employee was checking the contents of the hand luggage of those entering the library, which had nothing to do with dignity. A similar scene occurred later at the British Library in London, where uniformed personnel also inspected the contents of people's bags entering the library. However, the London situation could be explained by general security concerns, as it was still a time of heightened IRA activity. I noticed these incidents because I had previously worked at the University of Warsaw Library, in its central location, the main reading room. At that time, reading room staff had never inspected the contents of users' bags. The reason was simple: no bags, briefcases, backpacks, etc., were allowed into the reading room. Any readers who intended to do so were asked to return to the cloakroom and leave their hand luggage there. There were readers who initially declared they would be happy to show the contents of their backpacks upon leaving, but this was not permitted. This was a time when students with laptops were still a rarity, so entering the library with just a library card, pen, notebook, and perhaps their own book wasn't logistically complicated. Nowadays, when a student entering the library has to carry a laptop, possibly with a power adapter and cable, a notebook, a smartphone, and a bottle of water, it seems more cumbersome. That is why, for years, it has been possible to enter the library with small hand luggage, such as a backpack or laptop bag, without any inspection. And now, after years of experience, baggage inspection has been introduced. However, it is worth noting that hand luggage is checked almost exclusively at the library entrance; no one checks it when a user leaves the library, even though the aforementioned circular from the director states that the contents of briefcases, bags, and backpacks must be presented to security "each time before entering and upon leaving BUW" (BUW – Order Regulations, 2025). Clearly, this inspection isn't intended to protect the library's collections or

[8] On May 7, 2025, a University of Warsaw student attacked and fatally wounded a female administrative staff member. He also wounded two security personnel who came to her aid.

detect attempted theft. Rather, it is primarily for user safety and to prevent users from bringing dangerous items into the library.

Library regulations often specify that access to the library is permitted only after leaving outerwear, such as a coat, jacket, or overcoat, in the cloakroom. Clearly, this is intended to prevent insubordinate users from easily hiding books, especially smaller books, in the capacious pockets of such clothing. As E. Barteczko, quoted earlier, wrote based on the experiences of the National Library in Warsaw: "Reading room staff are very reluctant to add small-format books to the collections, as they disappear immediately" (Barteczko, 1998, p. 26).

NOT ONLY COLLECTIONS ARE PREY TO LIBRARY THIEVES

The problem of theft in libraries extends beyond library collections to any items that might attract the attention of potential thieves. This applies not only to library property, but also to items belonging to library users. Library visitors, especially those using the reading room, sometimes carelessly leave their property behind and wander away from their seats for extended periods. Items such as laptops, mice, tablets, but also backpacks, bags, and even library cards or prepaid photocopy and print cards, if left unattended, can become targets for thieves. I have often seen students at the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) wandering away for extended periods, leaving their laptops on tables as well as smartphones or Bluetooth headphones charging. This is likely driven by the belief that nothing bad can happen because the building is monitored. However, the fact is that most of the spaces occupied by readers at BUW are not monitored by video surveillance, and even in those reading areas where cameras are present, there are also so-called blind spots. Video surveillance cameras at BUW are located in circulation routes and reading areas with a capacity of between a dozen and several dozen, but in the spaces popular with students, integrated into open-access shelves, there is no video surveillance. Therefore, users should first be made aware of this and encouraged to take greater care of the security of their items and only then rely on technological support. As it turns out, this phenomenon can be combated with relatively simple methods, not necessarily involving advanced technology. Heidi Simmons, among others, has written about this, citing the solutions implemented at the McGill University Library in Montreal, where laptop thefts were the primary focus. One idea was to place a notice at the library entrance with information about laptop thefts and a warning. Periodic announcements were also made over the library's public address system advising users to secure their property. Additionally, security staff left notes on tables where equipment and other

valuables had been left unattended, warning them not to do so. This, of course, served not only as a warning to careless users but also to potential thieves, informing them that the workstation was under surveillance. As H. Simmons writes, the results were excellent in a short time and using simple methods, as no more laptop thefts were recorded in the library in the following academic year (Simmons, 2018, p. 282).

Although the literature suggests that the main entrance to the library is a critical location for detecting attempted thefts, cases of book theft using other routes cannot be ruled out. A simple and rather brazen idea, for example, is to throw books out the library window for the thief's accomplices to retrieve. Such situations would be possible in smaller libraries, where users could open windows undetected. However in large, modern libraries with automatic ventilation systems and an interior monitored by cameras and security personnel, opening windows on your own would be highly suspicious, if even possible at all. Therefore, the main entrance to the library should be a place under special surveillance. A system monitoring the flow of materials at the main entrance to the library using RFID technology must, of course, be supported by librarians or security personnel on duty nearby. This would be pointless if the system signaled an unauthorized attempt to remove undecoded materials from the library when no one was nearby to respond appropriately.

The anti-theft system in the form of gates that respond to unauthorized attempts to remove library materials is primarily intended to act as a deterrent. There's no point in deluding yourself into thinking that library thieves operate so unprofessionally that their nefarious activities risk triggering the alarm system. While some unwise thieves do get caught at the gates, it is rare. BUW staff once told me about someone who triggered the alarm system while leaving the library. She explained that she wasn't taking any books from the library, but only had a stack of copies made on the library copier. Upon closer inspection, it was discovered that one of these "copies" had a magnetic strip attached to it, and as we know, copiers don't apply magnetic strips themselves. Such bizarre cases, however, are rare. If the system responds with an audible signal, the reaction of both parties – the alleged "perpetrator" and security—is usually calm, as the initial thought is of a misunderstanding. Companies that install RFID--based anti-theft systems in libraries also offer the option of automatically locking doors when an alarm is triggered. The University of Warsaw Library hasn't installed this, but no one has the intention of running away or of chasing down another in such situations.

It is possible that the system will work properly and signal an attempt to remove a book from the library that actually passed through the lending library. This happened to me once, even though I had confirmation of the checkout on my receipt from the lending library. Security asked me to

return to the lending library and ask for the book to be decoded again. It is clear that such situations aren't uncommon, as the security staff's reaction was rather indifferent. Patrick Charles attributes such situations to lax procedures in sensitizing/desensitizing library materials during loan registration, or a possible IT system error (Charles, 2017, p. 49). It is possible, of course, for the system to work flawlessly and respond with a visual and audible signal when someone unknowingly, perhaps absentmindedly, removes an undecoded library book along with their own collection. No staff member makes a big deal about it, as anyone can be distracted. The mistake is quickly resolved, and the "unlucky" person is left momentarily confused. Unless, of course, security decides there was no mistake and the attempt to remove the book was deliberate. Even then, it is not usually considered a criminal offense. The matter will be considered a minor offense, which, of course, won't result in calling the police or filing a lawsuit. Initially, many libraries offer less drastic but decisive action against those who break the rules and regulations, such as suspending the user's library card for at least a specified period and banning the individual from access. For example, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) guide to safety and security in public libraries provides detailed and exemplary guidelines for suspending users, applicable suspension periods, and formalities for potential appeals (CULC/CBUC, 2023).

The University of Warsaw Library's regulations also provide for the possibility of refusing access to the library to individuals who fail to comply with the rules, including those attempting to remove books from the library without recording this in the loan register. For example, in the "Regulations for Access to the Collections of the University of Warsaw Library", which is an annex to the regulation of the Rector of the University of Warsaw of June 2, 2020, regarding the Regulations of the University of Warsaw Library and Information System, Chapter VI, § 16 states:

6. Removing items owned by the University of Warsaw Library outside its premises without completing the applicable formalities, damaging them, or failing to comply with generally accepted norms of social coexistence constitutes a violation of these Regulations.

7. Violations of the Regulations will result in:

1) a request to immediately leave the University of Warsaw Library;

2) temporary or indefinite deprivation of library card privileges;

3) filing a motion with the appropriate authorities for sanctions". (p. 24)

The University of Warsaw Library Regulations, updated in May 2025, also grant security staff the right to deny entry to library users who violate these regulations. Section I.5 of the "Regulations" states: "Library and Security staff have the right and obligation to warn users who violate these

regulations and, in justified cases, deny them access to the University of Warsaw Library premises" (University of Warsaw Library – Regulations, 2025).

It is also possible that the anti-theft system will react to a magnetic strip on a book that actually belongs to another library. Something similar happened to me once. Such alarms are easy to explain; the problem only arises when security staff attempt to pass such "surprise books" over the RFID gate, as this signals to nearby visitors that the anti-theft system is being bypassed.

Anti-theft system alarms can sometimes be false alarms, but it is better to have too many of these than for the system to remain unnecessarily silent. Worse still are cases where the book didn't actually pass through the lending library or the self-service checkout device, meaning it wasn't actually decoded, and the anti-theft gate still didn't respond with a light or sound. This could mean that the magnetic strip or RFID tag (or both) was removed from the book. It is also possible that the system won't respond because the person attempting theft has used shielding, for example, by wrapping the book in aluminum foil or placing it in a copper box. A University Library employee told me that they tested whether the system would respond when the book was wrapped in foil. It turned out that the system responded, thanks to the dual security of magnetic strips and RFID tags. While RFID tags are technologically more advanced and offer superior functionality to magnetic strips, they are also more susceptible to shielding. Magnetic strips are not only more easily hidden in books, but are also more difficult to sneak out using shielding.

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In October 2013, the first conference organized by the European Consortium of Research Libraries (CERL) took place in Poland. It is significant that most of the papers presented during the first session, titled "Stop Thief! Preventing and Investigating Theft from Collections in the Digital Age", included descriptions of thefts committed in libraries, sometimes brazen but always severe, and descriptions of the investigations conducted (Czapnik, 2013/2014). Meanwhile, it is important for librarians at such conferences not only to share their own theft stories but also to point out to other librarians good, effective, and original solutions that increase the chances of preventing theft.

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NATIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The collection of articles entitled *Bezpieczeństwo informacyjne. Zagrożenia, wyzwania i ryzyka* (Information Security: Threats, Challenges, Opportunities, and Risks) (Fałdowska, ed., 2025) begins with Juliusz Sikorski's article "Ochrona tajemnic jako fundament defensywnej walki/wojny informacyjnej w wybranych wczesnych koncepcjach teoretycznych" (Protecting Secrets as the Foundation of Defensive Combat/Information Warfare in Selected Early Theoretical Concepts). In the remaining articles, the authors present selected aspects of organizing classified information resources (Andrzej Żebrowski) and personal data protection (Agnieszka Warchoł), and emphasize the need to identify threats to Poland's cybersecurity and information security (Jan Jakimiec). In the article "Sztuczna inteligencja a bezpieczeństwo informacyjne" (Artificial Intelligence and Information Security), Adriana Dróżdż characterizes the role of artificial intelligence in the context of information security, highlighting the opportunities and threats it can bring. Reflections on the definitional framework of cyberspace (Mariusz Matacz) and an analysis of selected aspects of managing legally protected information in local government units (Andrzej Wyrzykowski) are other topics presented in the publication.

The Poznań bibliological community organized a conference in Poznań from November 13 to 15, 2019, with the broad title "Wojna i książka" (War and the Book). The post-conference publication *Księgozbiory, biblioteki, wydawnictwa i twórcy podczas konfliktów zbrojnych i politycznych* (Book Collections, Libraries, Publishers, and Creators During Armed and Political Conflicts) (Chrząstowska, Łuczak, eds., 2021), contains twenty-one articles grouped into five thematic sections. The first, titled "Dzieje książek i rękopisów przed 1914 rokiem, podczas pierwszej wojny światowej oraz w okresie międzywojennym" (History of Books

and Manuscripts Before 1914, During World War I, and in the Interwar Period), includes, among others, an article by Agnieszka Bartuzia on the fate of the Puławy Agricultural Research Library during the uprisings and wars. The second, "Losy bibliotek i księgozbiorów w czasie drugiej wojny światowej" (The Fate of Libraries and Book Collections During World War II) contains texts by Zdzisław Gołębyś on the occupation history of the Silesian Library and Agnieszka Łuczak on the wartime fate of the book collection of Izabella Działyńska, née Czartoryska. In the third part, "Losy książek w wyniku politycznych i kulturalnych skutków drugiej wojny światowej" (The Fate of Books in the Political and Cultural Consequences of World War II), Mariusz Zawodniak, among others, presents the government's cultural policy regarding books in the immediate postwar years. Among the texts in the section "Księgozbiory a problem likwidacji skutków wojen i totalitaryzmów" (Book Collections and the Problem of Eliminating the Consequences of War and Totalitarianism) is Monika Kuhnke's article describing the restitution efforts of state agencies, using the example of the return to Poland of valuable medieval manuscripts (the Płock Bible and the Płock Pontificate), and in the final group of articles, "Ochrona zbiorów bibliotecznych - wyzwania współczesności" (Protecting Library Collections – Contemporary Challenges), is Madeleine Reynolds' article on new ways to protect cultural heritage.

In the book *W sieci mediów społecznościowych. Teorie i metody badań* (In the Social Media Network: Theories and Research Methods) (Powierska, 2024), the author describes the difficulties in social media research as follows: "Social media research and research in social media is one of the greatest methodological challenges of the 21st century. Dynamic changes to services combined with the introduction of new functionalities, the secretive principles of algorithms, commercial interconnections between platforms, and unpredictable user actions raise not only questions about the selection of appropriate research tools but also numerous ethical dilemmas" (p. [9]). The initial chapters discuss theoretical, terminological, and methodological issues, including those related to the data collected in research and their context. The author then characterizes specific research methods (interview, survey, participant observation, content analysis, the walking method, the scroll-back method, and the media go-along method), illustrating them with examples from her own research and that of other researchers. The final chapter is devoted to mixed methodology in research, which is also the author's theoretical and research postulate.

Collective work prepared by the Central Military Library and the Armed Forces Doctrine and Training Center entitled *Zarządzanie informacją i wiedzą na potrzeby analiz strategicznych i operacyjnych Sił Zbrojnych RP* (Information and Knowledge Management for the Needs of Strategic and Operational Analyses of the Polish Armed Forces) (Tarczyński; Lis, ed., 2022) consists of three thematic blocks. The first one, concerning the issues of information and knowledge management for the development of armed forces, discusses, among other matters, the use of artificial intelligence and augmented reality in the context of their role in building situational awareness and in operations on the modern battlefield (Sławomir Augustyn). The articles in the second block, titled "Wymiar informacyjny środowiska operacyjnego i prowadzenie działań w domenie kognitywnej" (The information dimension of the operational environment and conducting activities in the cognitive domain) include a text by Karolina Kuśmierek describing the disinformation and propaganda activities of the Russian Federation, and an article by Patrycja Hrabiec-Hojda and Justyna Trzeciakowska describing the influence of social media on the activities of "white intelligence". The thematic block "Bibliotekarze wojskowi jako brokerzy wiedzy w siłach zbrojnych" (Military librarians as knowledge brokers in the armed forces) includes, among others, reflections by Henryk Hollender on the new roles of librarians in the world of cyberwar threats and a presentation of the Central Specialist Database run by the Central Military Library (Jerzy Kunikowski).

The library can become a safe place for sick and disabled people. This is demonstrated in the anniversary publication *Człowiek jest nieskończonym źródłem inspiracji. Czterdzieści lat Ośrodka Czytelnictwa Chorych i Niepełnosprawnych w Toruniu. Wspomnienia pracowników* (Man is an Infinite Source of Inspiration. Forty Years of the Reading Center for the Sick and Disabled in Toruń. Memoirs of Employees) (Niedźwiecka-Ambroziak, ed., 2024), which presents the achievements of the Reading Center for the Sick and Disabled, an important part of the Copernican Library's activities. The book contains interviews and reminiscences from its long-time employees, beginning with a conversation with the Center's initiator and long-time director, Franciszek Czajkowski. Interviews with Maria Skarżyńska and Dorota Motylewska, who served as managers for many years, reveal a picture of a business full of initiatives, innovative solutions, and a rich cultural offering. These interviews are complemented by engaging statements from employees Barbara Momot, Katarzyna Kowalska, Magdalena Gogulska, and Arleta Tuleya, demonstrating emotional commitment, pas-

sion, and professionalism. An easy-to-read (ETR) version of the content is provided at the end of the publication.

The book *Bezpieczeństwo informacyjne i medialne w czasach nadprodukcji informacji* (Information and Media Security in Times of Information Overproduction) (Batorowska; Motylińska, ed., 2020) consists of nine chapters, each authored by a different author. In the first and second chapters, Hanna Batorowska presents the issue of information overload as a challenge to shaping an information security culture and presents new research areas in the field of security culture from an information science perspective. In subsequent chapters, the authors discuss, among other things, the ideological and political determinants of security in an environment of information overload (Paweł Łubiński), the phenomenon of media hypertrophy as a fundamental problem of media security (Rafał Klepka), the issue of information security threats in social networks (Olga Wasiuta), and the issues of prevention and awareness-raising regarding information security in an environment of information overload (Paulina Motylińska).

The security of library collections also includes their protection against microbiological threats. The subject of the publication titled *Zagrożenia mikrobiologiczne zbiorów muzealnych* (Microbiological Threats to Museum Collections) (Dyda, 2020) also applies to book collections, antique bindings, and paper documents. It summarizes workshops organized by the National Institute of Museums and Public Collections in collaboration with the Faculty of Biology, University of Warsaw. The study presents information on applicable standards, regulations, and guidelines. It also discusses and illustrates best practices, preventive measures, methods for combating microorganisms used in the protection of collections, and issues related to protecting the health of cultural institution employees from the harmful effects of microorganisms.

The collection of articles *Explicitus est liber. Studia o starych drukach* (Explicitus est liber. Studies on old prints) (Fluda-Krokos; Łukawski, ed. 2024) is the result of a conference organized by the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Archive and Library of the Carmelite Fathers in Piasek, Crakow, on November 17-18, 2022. The volume begins with a paper by Arkadiusz Adamczuk, who presents the symbolic and cultural significance of illustrations in the work

Skład albo skarbiec znakomity sekretów oekonomiej ziemiańskiej (A Storehouse or a Treasure House of Secrets of Landowner Economy), written by Jakub Haur in 1693. Other articles address the protection, conservation, and digitization of old print collections, such as Kamila Kokot Kanikuła and Anna Sobolewska's article on the Gdańsk University of Technology Library's experiences in raising funds for the conservation and digitization of old prints, and a report by researchers from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw on the conservation with minimal interference of old prints. Other articles explore topics such as popularizing old print collections on social media (Julia Rédey-Keresztény) and using old prints in provenance research (Alicja Łuczyńska). Some articles are devoted to individual printing houses, for example the Basilian publishing house in Supraśl (Olga Tkachuk), Old Polish authors (including Krzysztof Sitnik's work on the translation activity of Paweł of Łęczyca), or single editions of works (Przemysław Wątroba's text on an unknown edition of Jean-Francois Neufforge's work from the collection of Stanisław August Poniatowski).

One aspect of library safety was highlighted in a study on the collection and distribution in libraries of children's books that could be considered controversial. The study was presented by Magdalena Paul and Michał Zając in their book *Otwarci/ostrożni/niezdecydowani. Opinie i postawy bibliotekarzy publicznych względem kontrowersyjnych książek dla dzieci* (Open/Cautious/Undecided: Public Librarians' Opinions and Attitudes Regarding Controversial Children's Books) (Paul; Zając, 2022). The authors present issues related to the research, such as the presence of controversial children's books in journalism, social media, and professional literature, and attempts to define controversial children's books. For the purposes of the study, five children's book titles were selected, conventionally designated as indicators (including those with "scatological" themes, LGBT themes, and domestic violence), and used in a series of survey questions addressed to librarians. In one of the conclusions summarizing the survey results, the authors stated: "The Polish library community, as portrayed in our survey, is neither ready for uncritical acceptance of controversial books nor does it reject them outright" (p. 208).

The result of the next, seventh edition of the New National Forum of Pedagogical Libraries (Crakow, June 15-16, 2023) is the book *Biblioteka pedagogiczna przyszłości. Niekonwencjonalne zasady i użytkownicy jutra* (The Pedagogical Library of the Future: Unconventional Principles and Tomorrow's Users) (Ślusarek; Bukowczan, red., 2024). The volume opens with an article by Dorota

Kamińska, "Wizje i zadania biblioteki przyszłości w opracowaniach z francuskiego obszaru językowego" (Visions and tasks of the library of the future in studies from French-speaking countries). Magdalena Wójcik presents the processes of developing new specializations and innovative competency profiles in the librarian profession, while Karol Baranowski addresses the topic of artificial intelligence in librarianship. Other articles address issues such as creating a librarian's personal brand (Paweł Marchel) and assessing the digital competences and educational needs of Generation Alpha in the context of library use (Katarzyna Sanak-Kosmowska). Several pedagogical libraries shared their experiences in building modern librarianship, for example, Magda Płatonow's article on selected activities of the Pedagogical Library of the Voivodeship Methodological Center in Gorzów Wielkopolski.

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