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THE LIBRARY REVIEW
Founded in 1927

SPECIAL ISSUE

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LIBRARY REVIEW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Library science specialists have long realized that if libraries are to survive, they must be of use to the society and meet its needs and demands. This means that libraries cannot restrict their activity to duties and tasks regulated by their statuses; rather, they must be a site of spontaneous actions, and be prepared to quickly respond to new challenges. Challenges are unprecedented situations which go beyond previous experience. Although they are rare, such challenges may go on for long periods of time and, in the process, completely change our everyday lives. Their roots lie in social, economic, climate, and pandemic crises. Until now, our country had the good fortune to escape such disasters, and thus, we had only second-hand knowledge of challenges they bring.

However, this year and the Covid-19 pandemic brought them to Poland, and forced us to face them. Thus, we devote this special issue of *Library Review* to the functioning of libraries, librarians, and book market in crisis situations. Among contributors there are theorists of library science, as well as librarians.

The discussion opens with a text focused on the crisis of librarianship and its consequences for the society (Jacek Wojciechowski: 'Threats to Libraries'). Professor Wojciechowski directs our attention to the key issue in library operations, not only during the pandemic, but at any time: the necessity of combining print and digital communication, and unmediated interactions with the users – according to Wojciechowski, one should not replace the other. The decision to prioritize either at the expense of the other threatens the users as well as the library's image. To reduce this threat, libraries may extend the range of their services, vary their channels of communication, and adjust them to better perform their functions. As the articles published in this issue show, libraries and librarians made sure to offer multiple channels of communication, particularly during the lockdown.

All articles in this issue presented the activity of libraries in the time of the pandemic, difficult for the directors organizing their activity, as well as for the users themselves.

Librarians from academic and public libraries, as well as the representatives of Polish Librarians' Association, described the initiatives undertaken by these institutions to help the users with accessing the resources of closed libraries, to support the university staff, to acquire and develop skills required for remote work, and to organize the public's free time as well as possible, with cultural institutions closed and events cancelled as a result of lockdown.

The exploration of libraries' pandemic activity opens with 'The National Library of Poland During the Coronavirus Pandemic: A Brief History of the First Nine Months of the State of Emergency' by Tomasz Makowski, director of the National Library. Doctor Makowski gave an account of the multiple roles the library played during the on-going pandemic. Their goal was to provide the users and staff of the NL with safe access to the unparalleled resource that are national library's collections. Furthermore, as the central library of the country, the NL prepared recommendations and guidelines for over 30,000 Polish libraries, supporting the institutions incurring losses and suggesting methods of coping with these new challenges.

'Academic Libraries in Unusual Situations' by Anna Wołodko, director of Warsaw University Library, showed how academic libraries function in unprecedented situations, with Warsaw University Library as a case study. Director Wołodko pointed out that university libraries should be accustomed to changes, as it is their regular practice to accommodate a new group of users arriving every academic year with new attitudes and habits, to meet their demands and to satisfy their needs regarding channels of communication, as well as modes and methods of work.

Bożena Jaskowska, director of the Library of Rzeszów University (author of 'Organizational Flexibility of Academic Libraries in a VUCA reality; the example of the functioning of libraries during the Covid-19 epidemic') presented management solutions implemented at academic libraries under the volatile and unpredictable conditions described as VUCA (Volatility; Uncertainty; Complexity; Ambiguity), focusing on libraries' responses to the first phase of the lockdown imposed as the result of Covid-19, which lasted from 12th of March to early June 2020. The basis of the study was an online survey that Director Jaskowska carried out among the directors of Polish academic libraries. It bears repeating that hers was the first study of library activity during the lockdown.

Anna Wałek, director of Gdańsk University of Technology Library (author of 'Polish Academic Libraries in the Face of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Crisis Management and Communication within the Organisation') analysed the impact of the pandemic on the activity of universities and university libraries. The pandemic made it necessary to rapidly reorganise the work of libraries and their staff, to change the tools used in service pro-

vision and adjust the format of those services, to purchase the equipment required to ensure personal safety of the staff, and to organize a system for remote work. These needs informed the management decisions made during the crisis, under the conditions of anxiety and insufficient communication.

The article of Anna Grzecznowska, 'Initiatives of the Polish Librarians' Association for the Libraries and Users in the First Phase of the Pandemic' presented the actions PLA undertook for the benefit of librarians and libraries, particularly public libraries, which supported local communities in the first phase of the pandemic. PLA, the leading organization for librarians in Poland, supported library staff in two areas: communication with users, and development of skills required to provide remote services. Grzecznowska showed how the pandemic affected the services offered by libraries and explained how PLA's initiatives extended the availability of online resources and e-services, as and increased librarians' competencies in the area of virtual communication with users.

In the following article, Łukasz Wojciechowski from the Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences of the Higher School of Economics and Innovation (WSEI) in Lublin ('The Implementation of Online Training for Library Employees as an Activity Increasing Competencies in the Promotion of Culture on the Internet'), reminded us that libraries, as cultural institutions, play a special role in providing access to information and organizing cultural events. He emphasized that this task is especially important in local communities outside large urban centres. The article discussed various training programmes designed to increase librarians' competences in the area of promoting culture online, such as online courses, with particular attention paid to the distinction between synchronous and asynchronous training.

The pandemic impacted book market as well as libraries. Jerzy Leszek Okuniewski, Vice-President of the management board of wholesale-retail company Książnica Polska (The Polish Book Store), shared his remarks on the state of Polish book market. He began his discussion with a claim that, while print is one of the most important means of communicating thought and knowledge, as well as a basis of social bonds, economically speaking, the importance of print is marginal – globally, and in individual countries. Book market has many problems: there is no fixed book price, as the bill introducing fixed prices still has not been passed; sales are declining; readership is falling; the book stores are failing. The pandemic only exacerbated the situation. Furthermore, publishers, retail owners, and wholesalers have noted a significant decline in sales since the beginning of lockdown, which brought closures and a ban on events (such as book fairs, which had to be cancelled), as well as a drastic decline of publishing activity.

The issue concludes with a review of the newest Polish scholarship in the field of library science, published between 2019 and 2020 (Barbara Koryś, 'A Review of Domestic Publications').

The pandemics rages on; as the number of cases rises and falls, libraries close to the public and reopen again. The number of economic sectors suffering from the impact of the pandemic is rising; culture and education sectors are among them. It is necessary that the public knows the value of open libraries and their collections, and, more generally, that it recognizes the benefits of reading. It is highly likely that the library closure and limited access to print will have a negative impact on the state of learning, which informs our psychological experiences as well as our social life; we may well see our previous achievements in this area fade away.

In his thought-provoking text, Ryszard Robert Gajewski recalled the expression of Seneca the Younger: 'Fortune is of sluggish growth, but ruin is rapid.'[1] Gajewski applied the concept of 'Seneca effect,' developed by Ugo Bardi, to the state of higher education in Poland during the pandemic, showing how the period of lockdown left the system eroded, and describing the factors that contributed to the process. According to Gajewski, they included "digital dementia, caused by uncontrolled use of digital media." [2]. He clarified that "the phenomenon is particularly dangerous to children and youth, whose brains are more plastic and absorb external stimuli like a sponge. Excessive use of technological gadgets may cause difficulties with independent thinking, impair children's ability to communicate and think in abstract terms, decrease the strength of their memory, shorten their attention span, lead to a deficit in their spatial orientation ability, and cause serious problems with learning. Adults may struggle with memory and focus."[3].

Therefore, actions undertaken by librarians and booksellers to promote reading are incredibly valuable; as is prof. Jacek Wojciechowski's suggestion that libraries switch to multi-communication mediation and thus reduce the negative impact of technology described by Gajewski. After all, we are responsible for the education of youth who are our future, and for the quality of every Polish citizen's life, to which books and print are absolutely critical.

Although the crisis brought on by the pandemic severely limited human contact and the activity of various institutions – cultural institutions among them – it also spurred people on to cultivate their bonds with

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[1] R.R. Gajewski: *Edukacja pandemiczna: Lessons learned*. „Informatyka w Edukacji" T.XVII, 2020 https://iwe.mat.umk.pl/iwe20/tom-iwe2020/27.pdf

[2] R.R. Gajewski: *Edukacja pandemiczna: Lessons learned*. „Informatyka w Edukacji" T.XVII, 2020, s. 6.

[3] R.R. Gajewski: *Edukacja pandemiczna: Lessons learned*. „Informatyka w Edukacji" T.XVII, 2020, s. 6-7. https://iwe.mat.umk.pl/iwe20/tom-iwe2020/27.pdf

others, to stimulate their minds, to exercise their creativity – and to promote books and reading.

We may find hope in the initiatives of private business owners such as the manager of Big Book Cafe in Warsaw, which gives customers access to a collection of books, organizes literary events, and helps the local community to cope with the lockdown by running a book club and offering reading recommendations.

We should remember the lessons our community learned in this crisis, which has affected libraries as well as book market. We learned new things about ourselves: we learned what we should avoid, what we may yet improve. The experiences we have gained may inspire us to change our routines, and become the first step towards further actions: thus, we may prepare ourselves to meet new challenges that may come our way.

I believe that the initiatives presented in this issue will inspire others who wish to stop, or at least, to slow down the Seneca effect. The articles gathered here present the crisis situation as an opportunity to seek new solutions, better suited to meet the needs of the public, and as a chance to develop a sense of responsibility for the society in which we live.

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THREATS TO LIBRARIES

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KEYWORDS: Communication. The crisis of librarianship. Direct offer. Information. Internet. Knowledge. Librarianship. Libraries. Polysemioticity. Preparation of perception. Print. Reading. Remote services. Thinking.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Purpose of the article** – The present multitude of forms of communication requires diversified intermediation and promotion, and these seem now to be now the main functions of libraries. However, the basis of these endeavours is still print. A departure from supporting print media would result in a crisis in librarianship. In mediation there is a need to verify the content and support a critical reception, as well informational as non-informational. Direct services are essential, but so are remote services and the facilitation of interpersonal contacts. **Research method** – an analysis of the literature allows us to conclude that the overall library offer requires the supply of print media, delivery of digital media, and also the creation of conditions for direct contact between users. Without that, there will be no future for librarianship. **Results and conclusions** – The advantages of print are: wisdom, reflective concentration, non-informative (fictionalized) freedom. The possible elimination of print is therefore a serious intellectual and emotional threat. The advantages of digital communication are: multi-semioticity, informational; richness and extensive range – while its weaknesses are overinformation, shallow knowledge, and passivity of inspired thinking. Furthermore the related co-presence of smart-

phone users is only an appearance. Therefore, there is a need for the coexistence of print and digital communication and the facilitation of direct contacts between users. Libraries provide all of this in their offer. In turn, any departure from this, even partial, threatens librarianship with a fundamental crisis.

The advantages of print are: reflective concentration, wisdom. The elimination of print is thus a serious threat.

The advantages of digital communication are: extensive range and multi-semiotic nature. Its weaknesses – overinformation, shallow knowledge, and passive thinking. Moreover the co-presence; that is made possible by smartphones; is only an illusion. Therefore, there is a need for the coexistence of print and digital communication, as well as the facilitation of direct contact between users. Libraries provide all of this in their offer.

In the long history of librarianship there have been favourable periods, but there have also been more calamitous ones, when libraries were destroyed with no new one being built in their place. Nevertheless, there has been a timeless preservation of the very model of the library in the general consciousness, with its collecting of books, its task of disseminating knowledge, and its promotion of creative thinking. And in this spirit, when times of devastation have passed, library initiatives have been reborn and developed over time. Because, objectively speaking, they were needed.

The contemporary situation, however, is no longer a repetition of this state of affairs, and there can be only a partial continuation. The need for changes are significant and at the same time appropriate to the requirements of the time. They are more pressing than ever; because social communication has never before been so extensive and varied. All innovations in this area have taken place mainly in the last half-century. So it seems now that the library's intermediation in communication should cover numerous possible variants of communication – but without cancelling the existing forms. Rather promoting each one, precisely according to its characteristic features and executive possibilities. Libraries should be prepared for this.

Meanwhile, following the extensive literature on this subject from many countries, I do not see a properly balanced tone or a tendency to regard the preservation of communicative diversity in libraries as a necessary achievement. In pursuit of alleged modernity, some conceptualizers turn only to media communication, and therefore to entirely technical communication. Others, on the other hand, see only old forms of communication. So all of this together does not look productive.

If in the future libraries are to be useful on their own – and this is a condition for their continued existence – they must switch to multi-communication mediation. Not by replacing some forms with others, but by enri-

ching their repertoire and adapting to the tasks they can fulfil according to their characteristics. And that requires some fundamental reflection.

IN THE WORLD OF MULTICOMMUNICATION

Libraries were established a long time ago so that the book or book--like products, produced with considerable difficulty, could serve a larger number of readers. And this was the first important contribution of librarianship to the development of social mentality. With time, a lot has changed, but the belief that libraries invariably have communication tasks to fulfil is still valid (Aleshin, 2018, p. 123).

However, many current opinion makers try to convince us and our sponsors that the book and print in general; are no longer such significant communication tools as to be more effective than others. So in total they diminish their importance. But the argument is highly perfunctory, superficial and does not penetrate to the very essence of communication.

At this point, it is worth adding that numerous conceptualizers – not only in Poland – have groundlessly agreed to identify communication essentially solely with information, or if you prefer: information from as total communication (Kulczycki, 2012, p. 30). This is a fundamental mistake. The non-informative part of communication is as important as the informational (Kulczycki, 2012, p. 37). Therefore, it cannot be marginalized or regarded as of little use. However, this is what has happened at least in the sphere of many recent library and bibliological concepts. This is because, not only in Poland, IT specialists have been in the lead in academic librarians' training centres. And from this follows one of the major dangers facing librarianship today, namely over-information. I would not argue that it is the only one.

While emphasizing the remarkable value of printed literature as such, I would like to point out, however, the innovations in communication that were certainly not overlooked by librarians working intensively; these are, after all, the results of their initiatives. For some time libraries have abandoned – I would not say relinquished – the exclusive use of books and other written materials as their tools by undertaking parallel mediation efforts in many other, very different forms of public communication. Also in media and in direct forms. All with a deep conviction that each communication variant has a different effect and serves different purposes, and therefore cannot be replaced by others. Attempts at such a substitution are as risky as taking a tight corner at high speed: it is easier to spoil everything than to achieve anything.

Communication consists in transmitting the form and content of an Utterance as well as constructing relations in such a way that the recipient

accepts the content and interprets it for his own use (Cave, 2016, p. 110; Kulczycki, 2012, p. 27). One variant of communication alone is therefore not enough for this purpose. Naturally, all communication is based on interaction through signals, symbols, and abstracts, representing certain meanings (Chandler, Munday, 2011, pp. 59, 389, 415). But no one has agreed in advance; that it has to be a remote interaction, nor that it has to be either through media or in writing. It all depends on the participants, their attitudes, conditions, and the goal set for each communication project. If you cannot recall it, it is difficult to rely on positive effects from communication.

All the more so as the circumstances we are now entering; are much more diversified in terms of communication, than they have ever been before. Libraries must switch to multi-media, multi-semiotic intermediation – but not to the detriment of print (because it serves a different purpose and does so differently) – as well as to facilitating direct inter-user contacts, not only indirect ones. According to some experts, we should not stop at merely arranging projects, but we must prepare the audience for participation in various forms of communication (Asselin, Doiron, 2013, pp. 6, 122). Otherwise, the future for libraries may be uncertain, or even nullified.

The situation of public communication becomes complicated not only due to the multiplication and diversification of its forms, but also as a result of a widespread loss of trust in the sources of content broadcasting. Print is losing its high prestige, but there are also signs, that over 80% of the audience do not trust the media (Botsmanova, 2018, p. 15; Travnićek, 2017, p. 380). This means, that content can be difficult to get across into public circulation.

Even in direct contacts, communication is sometimes difficult. People most trust broadcasters, whom they consider to be like themselves (Botsmanova, 2018, p. 62; Travnićek, 2017, p. 142). This, in turn, suggests the need for friendly intermediation, and it seems that libraries could play such role – assuming a multivariance in media and mediation.

But there is also another circumstance that prompts this. Namely, widespread and increased distrust towards sources of public communication, does not always inspire caution. It happens that messages generated mechanically, even by communication robots, are accepted unreservedly: they do not raise any doubts, do not provoke reflection. This is a dangerous situation (Botsmanova, 2018, pp. 142, 230). After all, not full content, disseminated on the web, is truly productive and reliable. The automatic nature of generating the content has nothing to do with it.

Theoretically, libraries could take care of authenticating the content transmitted, building on this a conception of their future. But it would require the creation of an appropriate verification system – created from scratch, because there is no such thing yet.

The library's verification capability does not seem overlarge these days, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist at all. It should be looked for especially in the activation of recipient behaviours and in encouraging recipients to create their own, individual contexts; when receiving the transmitted content. These contexts can be largely similar or common, but not completely or fully (Cappelen & Dever, 2016, pp. 8, 159, 184). They differ more or less in details, and therefore the ways of interpreting the content are also different. And it must continue to be so.

Libraries can contribute to this by persuading people to be intellectually active, and more specifically to receive content critically (Brozo, 2019, pp. 166, 206). Sometimes they do take on this role, nowadays. And in the future, they should do so all the more.

Intensifying this task, treating it as our main duty, may, over time, meet with the acceptance and recognition of our audience in current practice, offering new social benefits from library activities. Although I'm not saying it will be easy.

For the problem is also precisely that the public now has at their disposal a wide variety of forms of communication – more numerous and more varied than ever before. They are often dissimilar to each other and function differently, but these differences are not fully realized, clearly enough, or broadly enough. Therefore, there is no place for them in accordance with the nature of a specific form of communication. On the contrary: there is convergence, i.e. mixing and combining various media in random ways (Gmiterek, 2012, p. 24; Maryl, 2015, *Życie* p. 14); and remediation, i.e. accidental replacement of one semiotic form with another, without thinking or caring whether they are suitable or not (Maryl, 2015, *Życie* p. 299; Sikora, 2007, p. 185).

Moreover, this functional multi-media communication and the simultaneous multi-tasking of the same means of communication definitely hinder the perceived focus, content, thus reducing the quality of its transmission (Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 120). There is a general infantilization of communication processes, with excessive and at the same time multifarious dependence on the network (Godzic, Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, pp. 36, 76), which now also interferes in circumstances in which it previously did not participate (Maryl, 2015, *Życie*, p. 302). It only seemingly looks like enrichment and progress. In fact, it is rather a step backwards, as it subordinates all communication to a network variant, in a simplified, digital version.

But it is what it is. Not only the coexistence, but also the mixing of traditional and new media; that looks to be irreversible. The question then arises whether they will all survive. Some are of the opinion, that only the most effective ones will (Kubica, 2016, p. 39). But which ones? For in any case there is no appropriate guarantee.

It seems that communicative variety, the richness of forms – where each is assigned the tasks for which it is most suited – are to be the priority pursuits in communicative practice. Libraries could contribute to this, especially by appropriately adjusting their intermediary behaviour, and thereby differentiating, and they could also base their further existence on this. On the other hand, standardizing communication, reducing the richness of the repertoire and forms, does not indicate any communicative effectiveness. Nor does it create a successful existential premise for the future of librarianship. On the contrary: it threatens it with disappearance.

This is therefore; a problem that at the moment requires special consideration. Especially in the context of pandemic-induced remote library services; which are nonetheless temporary, or at least ultimately unworkable, due to exclusive rights issues. Under normal conditions, the library offer via the Internet – which has recently discovered various advantages and can by no means be the main offer of library services – if only because the majority of users will still prefer to read printed books, which are therefore available in the direct editorial sense (Travnićek, 2017, p. 293). At the same time, the library's internet service, as it has turned out, may be much richer than previously thought. But this is by virtue of being a complementary, additional tool, not a substitute. It should work together, multilingually, and in multiple forms of broadcast.

Therefore, there is a need to maintain and implement services and programs in a direct mode, on site and for the home, using contacts between users, as well as between the public and librarians. This is the specificity of libraries! And the more such relationships occur, the many more times content is transmitted, and therefore, as a result, the richer is the public communication mediated by libraries (Whitworth, Ahmed, 2013, p. 150). In this way, the role of the library as a link in communication is radically intensified; and the monopoly of networks in this respect then weakens.

What is more, perhaps in turn the social concretization of the library becomes active as a centre for arranging interpersonal contacts, which in the modern world, in open practice, are being reduced. At least in direct forms. And with their reduction, the need for a library service repertoire is also reduced. This can and must be prevented.

The functioning of digital network communication on a global scale is already an obvious fact. Just as obvious too is the functioning of written communication – with its mainly printed variants – on a universal scale, and of many other versions of media communication, and further still of direct (verbal) communication. There is no doubt that these are all different from each other and will probably still undergo changes that will further intensify these differences, heading, as it would seem, towards a narrow specialization of application, and thus towards coexistence side by side. Although it is difficult at the moment to completely rule out the

opposite solution, which would consist in the mutual elimination of some forms, or indeed in a convergent merging into one or several common formulas. But I see this as a negative act.

At this point, the fluidity and unstructured nature of network communication are noticeable (Zubkov, 2018, p. 319). Thus, this is a formula of agreement completely different from any previously known. It allows for a specific, different method of content transmission (Landow, 2006, p. 109), but there is no indication that it is any deeper than those known so far. Although opinions have been voiced that the youngest generations of recipients of communication messages are now different from previous ones, transmedia-savvy and adapted to the new circumstances of reception (Travnićek, 2017, p. 379), there is no explanation as to what this difference would be. There is not even any evidence that this is true.

Very general characteristics of particular types of communication prevail, without a full investigation into their essence, as well as their benefits and shortcomings. But most of all, there is no psychomental description of the reception processes. It seems we don't know enough about it at the moment.

Opinions expressed are groundless, one-sided and, above all, emphasize the current widespread dependence of the audience on the network transmission of content (Godzic, Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, p. 76). This is accompanied by the tacit assumption; that not only will this dependence continue, but the Internet, along with other media, will change the nature of public circulation of content even more – into sound and image. This means that global communication will become predominantly electronic. Online and offline blend into onlife (Fazik & Hrdinakova, 2019, p. 3; Floridi, 2014, pp. 12, 43).

The main concern is that at first; digital hypertext will function alongside print for some time, but then will eliminate it (Landow, 2006, p. 361). There is fear, because it is tacitly assumed, that the intellectual and cognitive potential of digital communication is lower than that of print communication. Therefore, the forecast is not good. Nor is it developmental. Not unless we manage to undermine it conceptually, or oppose it in practice – for which, however, there are no indications.

Nonetheless, future productive ideas are also formulated in this respect. Most generally, it comes down to the functional connection of the existence of digital and print materials (Zubkov 2018, p. 320). Thus, writing and reading would be digitally complemented in those content areas, that would be most suitable for this. Or vice versa: writing and reading will deepen the content, initially communicated via the Internet and in multi-media mode. As far as I can tell, such a solution would also mean the continuation of the functioning of the library.

DIGITALIA

Thus, the basic dilemma for libraries stems from ignorance of the position of digital communication in public practice: whether it is to be one of many forms – even the dominant one, but still within conditions of co-existence – or ultimately the only one. With the second option, it is impossible to create favourable prospects for the future of libraries, even in the short term. Because this means a radical reduction in reading and readership on a mass scale, and the disappearance of the demand for facilitation of direct contacts (Gorman, 2015, p. 16; Jacher, 2007, pp. 19, 21). Thus the end of that upon which librarianship is mainly based. So what, how, and why should libraries intermediate from now on?

This, in rational parameters, cannot be specified at the present. There are only suggestions; that future public communications will be mostly electronic (Floridi, 2014, p. 12) (but what does that mean, *mostly*?), and this is basically a guessing game. It is supported by the global observation that currently younger generations, in terms of communication, definitely prefer the Internet, which is already (or only?) used by 1/3 of the world's population (Fazik, Hrdinakova, Majdan, 2020, p. 3; Franklin, 2013, p. 14; Sheikh, Mills, 2012, p. 163; Serova, 2016, p. 65; Travnićek, 2017, pp. 137, 379).

At the same time, however, to these reports are added the opinions that these preferences result from attitudes towards pleasure, comfort, and low mental effort generally (Sheldon, Rauschnabel, Honeycutt, 2019, pp. 9, 13; Serova, 2016, pp. 64, 67). What is worse, there are already credible conclusions, that the replacement of print and reading with digital communication has a destructive effect on both the structures of the mind and the course of thinking processes (Carr, 2010, pp. 184, 187; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 14, 20).

Therefore, the future picture of public communication requires consideration, and in connection with it a prognosis for the next few years for librarianship. With our limited knowledge, this can only be done by analysing the features of the new digital communication – at least the recognised ones – in the context of their dominant applicability or dysfunctionality.

First of all, what is noticeable, is the high convenience of digital communication. No other current form of public communication is able to facilitate the transmission of one's own content to everyone, i.e. the exchange of content generally, to an equally extensive degree, thereby making life much easier (Glassman, 2016, p. 31; Maryl, 2015, *Życie*, p. 347; Reed, 2014, p. 43; Sheldon, Rauschnabel, Honeycutt, 2019, p. 164). From this point of view, the attractiveness and usefulness of this tool is indisputable.

However, what needs to be clarified, is to what end this serves. Also we need to add, that the criterion of attractiveness is not always important and fully acceptable.

Thus on the one hand, this form creates extensive, multi-semiotic and multi-path possibilities of content referencing, through mixed or combined verbal-written and visual-image transmissions, and also through its wide range, because such is the nature of the network (Bradshaw, 2018, p. 211; Landow, 2006, p. 2). On the other hand, however, there are plenty of distortions and deficiencies in this, not to mention the inability to fully protect intellectual property (Bradshaw, 2018, p. 93; Glassman, 2016, p. 205).

Among the most insightful observers of the Internet, there is a widespread and perhaps even dominant opinion (on a global scale), that the content transmitted in this way is mostly superficial, of the simplest kind, and focused on an immediate and unreflective reception, therefore it does not encourage any intellectual analysis (Baron, 2015, p. 222; Batorowska, 2013, p. 107; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, pp. 161-162, 170; Serova, 2016, pp. 64, 66; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, pp. 32, 34; Wolfova, 2020, p. 20). It is, or is meant to be, mainly functional, handy, and/or recreational, which is why the influence of the Internet on thinking is so often assessed as being destructive (Baron, 2015, p. 222; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 160, 164; Godzic , Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, p. 63; Serova, 2016, p. 64; Wolfova, 2020, p. 20).

This happens for a number of reasons. One of them is the multi--semiotic nature of the Internet language. In other words, its structure, and not only the multimedia composition itself, but also the manner of its composition, unique in other communications. It is therefore more than just another new multimedia and hypertext content transmission tool. It does, nevertheless, consist of elements already known, namely, images that have been animated, speech, sounds, and writing all tied together. But precisely: in a mode of exclusivity, as the only one (Adamiec, 2004, p. 34; Landow, 2006, pp. 6-7; Sikora, 2007, p. 289).

Therefore, this semiotics is not fully suited to the same or unique circumstances to; which the individual components fit separately, on their own. On the other hand, it can be useful in conditions, when other forms of communication are of little help or even dysfunctional.

The reception of Internet communications, based on a hypertext, multi-path network of signals to choose among, is different, unique – not even like that of other media variants (Fazik, Hrdinakova, Majdan, 2020, p. 3; Jack, 2019, p. 115; Kerr, 2008, p. 102; Landow, 2006, pp. 2-3). Such signals activate various neurons in the mind, but usually without reflective expansion, thus they do so differently than when reading (Wolfova, 2020, pp. 15, 29, 61). And in general, all the partial similarities of electronic communication to existing forms of communication are not able to radically erase the technological stigma of Internet content transmission, which is also important (Floridi, 2014, pp. 29, 219).

Such an aspect of digital communication gives the impression, that for the function of content transmission it is suitable for everything (Adamiec,

2004, p. 34; Devine, Egger-Sider, 2014, p. 182). The impression! But this doesn't mean it really is so.

After a deeper analysis, the opinion arises that the Internet is mainly about communication, wide-ranging and multi-directional content exchange; and that sometimes it is also about an instantaneous connection, that is, in the relationship between man and device (Adamiec, 2004, p. 123; Gmiterek, 2012, p. 42; Nichols, 2017, p. 119; Sheldon, Rauschnabel, Honeycutt, 2019, p. 164). But this does not apply with equally effect to all communication processes. Contrary to numerous suggestions, it is not even always an effective tool for the transmission of information, because there is no protection against the transmission of pseudo knowledge (Aleshin, 2018, p. 123; Nichols, 2017, p. 6).

Yes, the Internet is undoubtedly (but let me add: also, so not only) an information tool, and perhaps Jadwiga Woźniak-Kasperek is right in saying; that at least some information services must be networked (Godzic, Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, p. 63; Woźniak-Kasperek, 2011, p. 125). This, however, does not justify the exclusive and all-embracing, pan-informational ascription of information to the Internet by information science (almost all the achievements of which would be recalled here). After all, promoting such a concept would be disintellectualization.

In fact, it is an informational tool, that is not only useful, but also equally or even more dangerous, because it is not verifiable and it is embedded in the form of a popular medium. On the other hand, it contributes drastically to information overload, due to the excess of distributed notifications, transmitted continually moreover, in a continuous mode (Glassman, 2016, p. 73; Gmiterek, 2012, p. 22; Krzysztofek, 2014, p. 35; Nichols, 2017, p. 6; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 23, 83-84). And not all of this content is information.

Furthermore with such a degree of transmissive intensity, a full examination of the content distributed and possibly received; appears to be unlikely. So this is a superficial, uncritical reception that holds a vestige in the working memory for a short time. Without in-depth reading and rethinking of the new content, one cannot expand the boundaries of one's knowledge that is already mastered – neither in the longer term nor for more than 5 minutes, as suggested by George Miller (Wolfova, 2020, pp. 67, 84, 92). Thus, such a reception does not bring much informational use, apart from direct and temporally useful reports. In fact, it reduces one to listening to other people's statements (Nichols, 2017, p. 128).

Not only that: there is a different mode of remembering the transmitted content – if the effect of this method of reception can actually be called memorization. Namely, it is not the content of the recognized information – the sign or sequence (what) – that is fixed. But the location (where) of this content in the network (Brozo, 2019, p. 161), and possibly the recall method. This in turn means the reduction of one's own content and thoughts,

which are taken over and processed, i.e. assimilated. To put it bluntly: this is a hollowing out of the state of social knowledge. Can no one see this?

In the registry of the basic uses of the Internet, one of the leading positions is held by interactivity, but it is in a special mode, in dialogue mode so to speak. All network relations consist of verbal-written, as well as visual and sound contact; in the form of formulating and/or receiving (with possible replication) messages. These are mostly condensed, clip-like, shortened, so in all respects poorer in terms of content than the written or directly verbal ones (Deberdjaeva, 2015, p. 169; Glassman, 2016, p. 312; Godzic, Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, p. 81; Kerr, 2008, p. 102). And yet it is theses; that supersede or significantly reduce the use of other forms of communication, due at least to portability and convenience, and to simplifying the facilities of manipulation, compensating (?) possibly for other shortcomings. People paying attention and listening to smartphones can be found everywhere, in all circumstances. As a result, almost all of them remain in long-term and continuous relationships with others, but superficially and not necessarily synchronously. It is a partial and diffuse co-presence, thus only apparent.

Such contacts previously occurred fragmentarily only via radio headphones, but now they are common: they focus attitudes and behaviours in a variant of shared instant relations (Maryl, 2015, *Życie*, p. 17; Nichols, 2017, p. 113). Apparent, artificial and shallow. When their domination is consolidated, the consequences look dangerous (Nichols, 2017, p. 113; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 117-119). It is in fact because of their illusory attractiveness, ease of use, and dissimulation that they replace other forms of contact and understanding.

The result is that communication in each of the other modes is reduced. Especially in print and in direct presence: verbally. The process of communication – and thus intellectual – impoverishment does not even require a comment. It is obvious.

On the other hand, in terms of context, it is worth mentioning that libraries have been specially established to arrange and implement communication processes in many forms, especially through print, but not exclusively, and to inspire direct contacts. And nobody has changed or eliminated this, because they have had no such possibilities or powers. This, among other things, is a basis for concern and care for the intellectual standards of society.

Apart from that, there is also one more important feature of digital communication, clearly negative, and thus requiring effective counteraction. It is associated with this form of communication as a whole, and not only with individual messages, but destructive to the quality of communication in general, and to the standards of mental processes, also on a social scale. Namely, it is the hypertextual non-linearity of the content of digital

messages, elegantly called mosaicity, but it is nothing more than a multi-threaded mess and multi-content chaos (Adamiec, 2004, p. 38; Glassman, 2016, 71; Jack, 2019, p. 115; Kerr, 2008, p. 102; Landow, 2006, pp. 2, 109; Wolfova, 2020, p. 125). It does not lead in itself to productive and orderly reception, because it imposes scattered and superficial mental processes during and after reception: this some call grasshopper thinking (Wolfova, 2020, p. 118).

The avalanche of semiotically diverse signals creates an intensely rich, but chaotic, multi-content mosaic, not internally coherent, therefore non-structural and therefore usable only temporarily (Adamiec, 2004, p. 38; Devine, Egger-Sider, 2014, p. 102; Gmiterek, 2012, p. 42; Kerr, 2008, p. 102; Nichols, 2017, p. 108; Rankov, 2013, p. 4; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, pp. 32, 34-35; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 118, 125). This is because it is impossible to process - due to the lack of time and lack of probing – as well as to be remembered for a long time, while at the same time limiting the activity of the mind. And this presents the very real threat of a reduction in the quality (level) of thinking – in the general social dimension (Wolfova, 2020, pp. 67, 127, 131).

It is also because it contradicts the basic rule of hermeneutics, namely, the individualization of one's own view of the world, and the personal interpretation of the content of communication messages received in any form. If internet technology surpasses – meaning also that it will suppress – hermeneutic inclinations and reduce or completely exclude individual thoughts, then its destructive impact on the social mentality may turn out to be dramatic, because this is not how knowledge is created (Thomas, 2013, p. 49; Zimmermann, 2015, p. 131). And the symptoms of such a situation are already widely visible.

There are also attempts by various interest groups and influencers, especially of a commercial and even more so of a political nature, to take control of the network's flow of content. This has not yet been fully achieved, but it is partially the case, also in the form of hacking. Yet no one should have such a possibility. And although other variants of public communication are also not fully resistant to such compelling undertakings, the digital network is particularly susceptible to them, while print is the least (Franklin, 2013, pp. 195, 199; Krzysztofek, 2014, p. 33; Wolfova, 2020, p. 207). And as a result of such entanglement and of reducing the awareness of addressees, it turns out to be most negatively effective in this respect.

The characteristics of the Internet emphasize – usually with excessive intensity – various advantages, benefits, and profits. Which of course they do provide. However, numerous threats and dangers are kept hidden, signalled only by a handful of psychologists, specifically neuroscientists. But they stand no chance in an open argumentative confrontation with the aggressive promotion of the media and wealthy producers or distributors

of digital equipment and accessories. And this promotion has just gotten hold of social beliefs and behaviour.

For this reason, there is a dramatic need to reach the awareness of society at large with the suggestion of developing and promoting a multicommunicative coexistence of user and receiver attitudes. Namely, the parallel use of print-reading, media, and digital communication, without rejecting directly verbal communication (Brozo, 2019, p. 157; Wolfova, 2020, p. 144). And the involvement of libraries in encouraging and enabling this should be as meaningful as possible.

DISSIMILARITIES

One of the most important factors; distinguishing the processes of digital communication from print-reading communication, is the dynamic nature of the digital message, even when written text appears on the monitor. In print, written text is static: it is the reader who activates their perception and gives it an appropriate course. On the other hand, it is an uninterrupted stream of content that emerges from the network (Aleshin, 2018, p. 160; Carr, 2010, pp. 7, 103; Deberdjaeva, 2015, p. 170; Glassman, 2016, p. 71; Maryl, 2012, Pozorne, p. 155), much more intense than in other variants of media communication. This, of course, also dictates the appropriate nature of the reception processes. Which, therefore, must also be dynamic and fast (Diebierdiajewa, 2015, p. 171).

This is also the consequence of manoeuvrability in digital communication, which is actually two-way – and not only theoretically so, as is the case with concepts of print relations. The genealogical, subcutaneous model of the process of electronic communication is therefore dialogue, discourse, and the transmitting and receiving nature of the relationship (Carr, 2010, p. 85; Fazik, Hrdinakova, 2019, p. 10; Maryl, 2012, *Pozorne*, p. 59; Maryl , 2015, *Życie*, pp. 59, 203; Travnićek, 2019, p. 50). And this is its originality. No other form of indirect multi-semiotic communication is so responsive.

But it is not obvious. On the contrary: digital communication camouflages its otherness and conceals its artificiality. It does not reveal that it introduces mock-ups, substitutes for the transmitting and receiving environment, that it imitates the feeling of co-presence, which are anonymous after all, and sometimes pretends to follow the formula of a game, but is nevertheless not a game either (Wolfova, 2020, pp. 83, 88, 127; Zając, 2006, p. 168). The dynamics of relations, therefore, also have deceptive connections and justifications, which has a negative impact on mental processes.

It cannot be ruled out that it is this flaw of digital communication which imposes a dynamic mode on the reception processes (apart from

being overloaded with content) that reduces the receptive activity of human memory, which cannot keep up with and does not encompass all the disseminated messages. And this reduction applies not only to long-term memory – which requires a different way of transmitting and receiving content – but also to working memory, i.e. cache memory. All in all, there is a kind of sliding on the surface of messages, without penetrating their deeper meaning and excluding reflective analysis (Carr, 2010, pp. 184, 194; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 88, 127).

The semiotic nature of digital messages, that is, audio-visual ones, similar to media, but not the same, and completely different from print messages, also imposes a different, mainly pictorial, nature of reception – with the fundamental consequence that the recipient focuses on fragments, excerpts, and details (Fazik, Hrdinakova, 2019, p. 10; Fazik, Hrdinakova, Majdan, 2020, p. 11). Such a detailed (mainly) visual presentation has the following characteristic, that in reception it does not enforce activity. The content is passively accepted, away from reflection, consideration, conclusions, and often intentionally cutting itself off from critical and analytical deliberation (Bradshaw, 2018, p. 162; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 161; Wolfova, 2020, p. 205).

Like the language of media in general, digital language by its nature is also subject to a reduction in content capacity, preferring simple and possibly short forms of expression (Baron, 2015, p. 80; Glassman, 2016, p. 75). It means that this variant of communication is not oriented towards in-depth and expanded content.

All limitations, in connection with the dynamic nature of contacts, shorten the reception processes in time to a minimum, shredding the messages into crushed segments, and enforcing reception that is as fast as possible (Baron, 2015, p. 56; Deberdjaeva, 2015, pp. 169, 171; Glassman, 2016, p. 75). In these circumstances, the in-depth focus on the acquired content is greatly reduced, if possible at all (Baron, 2015, p. 181; Dill-Shackleford & Vinney, 2020, p. 113; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 170). And the consequence is – already signalled here – a shallow reference to the received messages: sliding only on their surface, only over the external layer (Baron, 2015, pp. 165, 173; Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, pp. 79, 89; Wolfova, 2020, p. 88).

The reception process described in this way falls into the categories of automation, i.e. passive acknowledgment, with reduced memory activity, even that of working memory (Botsmanowva, 2018, pp. 142, 230; Thomas, 2013, p. 96; Wolfova, 2020, p. 127, 205). And this brings a high risk of mental emptiness, an automation of reflexes in reactions and behaviour. Furthermore; there is no consequence in the form of critical mental analysis. At least in circumstances – frequent and especially new – when it is needed and useful.

The processing of the received content in digital communication is dif-

ferent than in print, due to a different, mainly visual explication, and as a result of the chaotic dispersion of the transmitted content, in addition to its smooth, uninterrupted transmission (Fazik, Hrdinakova, 2019, p. 13; Glassman, 2016, pp. 71, 166). This disturbs the sender's and receiver's traditional roles. Confusion ensues: one has to behave differently (Godzic, Rudzińska, Kowalewska, 2015, p. 46; Landow, 2006, p. 125; Maryl, 2012, *Pozorne*, p. 154; Maryl, 2015, *Życie*, p. 17).

But the differences are not over yet. As a result of such, a mode of receiving content (which I have already indicated), the activity of working memory decreases, and long-term memory – which requires the participation of special (specialized) genes – is basically completely disabled (Brozo, 2019, pp. 181, 187). For memory, as such, consists in picking up signals and placing their traces in the mind. Meanwhile, the signals taken over from the monitor do not fully reproduce the content – WHAT – but to a large extent they only suggest the addresses of the location of these signals in the network, i.e. WHERE (Brozo, 2019, pp. 161, 191). In essence, this is how the foundations of yet another memory are formed, namely external, i.e. artificial memory (Brozo, 2019, p. 181). Regarding which for the time being, we do not know in what proportion it relates to the whole area of natural human memory. But there is no doubt that it is a kind of introduction to the automation of mental processes. If something like this really were to happen.

Would it be a useful phenomenon? At present, it is not possible to make an appropriate evaluation: too little is known. In current situations, learned behaviours, based on automatic reactions, are sometimes necessary. At the same time, they are not always merely imitative, repetitive, and passive. Some observers point out that in virtual communities, where such reactions prevail, sometimes it is also possible to create new content, due to the diversity of participants' knowledge (Ren, 2020). But in general, social existence must be based on processing, remembering, and creating content, old and new – in conjunction. And for this, forms of communication are necessary that favour mental concentration and creative processing of possessed and recorded messages.

There is no doubt that print media has served this purpose well for a long time. Its adaptation to such a task and such an intentional attitude, precisely because it is rooted in tradition, additionally promotes practical effectiveness. The most important result is the possibility of reflective concentration, focusing on the read content, probing it and processing it mentally (Aleshin, 2018, p. 167; Jack, 2019, p. 20). And that's what intellectually advanced communication processes are all about, after all. However, there is also a repetitive obstacle, the standard liability of reading, namely a simple (if not permanent) lack of patience on the receiving side (Nichols, 2017, p. 128).

In the opposite context, it is emphasized that in digital communication, the reception of content from the monitor is accompanied by a fundamental limitation, and often even complete exclusion, of mental concentration (Carr, 2010, p. 119, 194; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 170; Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, p. 79; Tapscott, 2010, p. 194; Travnićek, 2019, p. 15). There are no reflections that would deepen and develop the meaning of the adopted content (Botsmanova, 2018, p. 142; Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 161; Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, p. 79; Wolfova, 2020, p. 210). So it is a superficial, shallow reception, limited to details (Baron, 2015, pp. 165, 173; Thomas, 2013, pp. 16, 98; Wolfova, 2020, p. 84).

There is not only no deeper reflection, but also the complicity of subconsciousness and (usually) other sensations – apart from the mere taking over of external content signals (Nosal, 2009, p.115). This significantly minimizes cognitive processes and reduces learning outcomes (Tang, 2017, pp. 13, 51). In combination with the attempts to replace direct didactics with remote digital learning, this particular finding takes on a special meaning. Namely, it suggests bad consequences; application is allowed only in forced circumstances, or as a complement to media coverage and reading.

However, it is also necessary to add that the abandonment or reduction of reflection is a drawback not in every communication process of receiving content, and not in all of its reception phases. It is not always necessary, or it does not have to be activated in all variants and/or stages of acceptance. Unreflective or low-reflective reactions are sufficient, where and when the purpose of the reception procedure is to obtain quick information about the existence and location of the required content, possibly also its micro-detail, as well as a simple derivative of instruction. In general, no one is focused on analysing the content, when they are at the stage of searching for information about the possibilities of obtaining the content sought, and when they want to facilitate this acquisition. There are many such circumstances (Francuz, Pisarek, 2015, p. 150; Maryl, 2015, *Życie*, p. 347; Travnićek, 2019, pp. 18, 50).

This means that in the general mode of notification, digital communication fulfils and is even sometimes irreplaceable as a handy signalling system, and complements content obtained by other means (Aleshin, 2018, p. 167). Thus, it is an effective tool for finding and for timing information signals that have been found. And it serves to introduce – and complete too – content from other forms of communication, especially from print and from reading (Brozo, 2019, p. 157).

BALANCE

In connection with the perceived and traced expansion of digital communication, and with the ubiquity of visible to the naked eye, the view has been expressed both in common opinion and in the explanations of many experts; that a print media and readership crisis is growing on a global scale. Numerous, unequivocal statements also suggest, that in science the importance of monographs and print media in general has diminished radically; and it is also speculated that even reading books as such may turn out to be old-fashioned (Aleshin, 2018, p. 17; Alvesson, Gabriel, Paulsen, 2017, p. 137; McCain, Jukes, Crocket, 2010, p. 70). Reliable evidence for such views is usually, however, absent.

Usually, the main reason for the reduction in readership is seen in the coexistence of digital communication, with the far-reaching (although not exclusive) addendum, that it is at odds with print communication and therefore limits the reading of printed materials. According to these suggestions, there is a deep communicative antagonism between print and digital media (Deberdjaeva, 2015, p. 171; Gorman, 2015, p. 16; Maryl, 2015, *Antropologia*, p. 533; McCain, Jukes, and Crocket, 2010, p. 70; Wolfova, 2020, pp. 111, 126). Statements that there are no such conflicts, on the other hand, are very rare. However, they do sometimes appear (Travnićek, 2019, p. 86).

The opinion is rarely held, that the reduction of possible negative consequences (if they really exist) of the coexistence of both these forms of communication largely remains in the hands of the audience, because everyone acts according to their own intentions (Muraszkiewicz, 2014, p. 15). Rather it lies within the purview of communication intermediaries and transmitters, and thus also of library institutions and librarians.

However, in order to get down to it, one must first establish, in which areas and functions these forms of communication are possibly in conflict with each other, and in which they can coexist in parallel, and also in which areas they can complement and support each other. This must be specified in detail, and then – based on this – an appropriate offer should be developed and the public should be persuaded to use it. It is not easy, but there is no other way to achieve overall progress and development. A reasonable balance of various forms and variants of communication, specialized according to the functions performed, should serve as a specific foundation, a basic premise, and an opinion-forming consensus.

Conclusions from observation, analysis, and research, clearly emphasize the reflective stimulation of recipients during and after the processes of reading printed texts. Therefore there is justification to direct society towards the intellectual aspects of reading (Brozo, 2019, p. 206; Landow, 2006, p. 29; Wolfova, 2020, p. 200), and its final results, which we call wisdom (Wolfova, 2020, p. 200). This is due to the physiology of mental pro-

cesses. Namely, when reading from printed media, the mind works differently, than when it receives content in a different form, and the main manifestation of this is mental activity. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to use it.

There are additional indications as well, resulting from numerous suggestions that reading from print is particularly suited to long and very long messages (Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, p. 89; Travnićek, 2019, p. 19). Moreover, there are also some; who are of the opinion; that the printed book turns out to be the best carrier and transmitter of literary texts (Landow, 2006, p. 179). Well, this is how to put together a set of reliable hints, which may suggest to what end printed media is most suitable.

On the other hand, the reception of media messages, especially digital ones, is different and has a different character, because in this case the mind works in a changed mode (Carr, 2010, p. 121). Therefore, it is necessary to understand this process in detail up to completion (it has not reached this point yet), and on this basis formulate proposals for the use of digital media, promoting them to the fullest extent possible and necessary. What is particularly important here, is their use not instead of printed media, but simultaneously with it.

Although not everything is known about this, the range with which we must orient ourselves is considerable. First of all, attention is drawn to the basic difference, namely the domination of chaos in the digital communication offer, or at least the deficiency of logical aspects – subject scope and order (Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, p. 35). This definitely makes it difficult, and usually even impossible, to concentrate (Carr, 2010, p. 194). The perception of content is shallow, superficial, not directed towards creativity, but oriented towards the passive reception of signals (Dill-Shackleford, Vinney, 2020, p. 113). In addition, it is selective, due to the overload of memory with excessive content (Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, p. 79; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, p. 32).

This is not always wrong and not in all circumstances. There are tasks and functions in which the use of digital communication, crafted in this way, constitutes the optimal formula and should be preferred. After all, this is what the distribution of basic, elementary, simple information signals is about (Travnićek, 2019, p. 18). And this is how one should understand the specialization of this communication variant, which is easy to say, but very difficult to promote and implement. Another thing is that there is a widespread risk (but less so in print communication) that the excess of information disseminated in this mode, associated with the possibilities of intentional manipulation, may contribute to spreading untruths and to shaping false consciousness in society (Wasiuta, 2020, pp. 125, 130, 135, 146).

Moreover, observers associate the use of the Internet with a technocratic attitude, which also signals a kind of user specialization (Batorowska,

2013, p. 91), although for the time being it is difficult to say with certainty, whether this is right or not. Perhaps, however, there is justification for the specialized suggestion that digital messages do not work well for the transmission of fiction (Landow, 2005, p. 265). With such an incomplete image of Internet communication, it is worthwhile to signal, in turn, its specific, intertextual, or rather intersemiotic, communication possibilities (Landow, 2005, p. 55). There are no such possibilities in other variants of communication.

The preferences for the use of digital communication for primarily informational purposes, without in-depth discussion and mainly through short messages, are justified given this attitude and functioning of the mind (Carr, 2010, p. 121; Tałuć, Tomaszczyk, 2018, p. 79). It follows from observation that during the reception of content from Internet messages, only (or mainly) working memory is activated (and also overloaded), gathering for a short time undeveloped exchangeable signals – for one--time use and in a small amount (Cowan, 2012, pp. 111, 113; Ormrod, 2017, p. 56). Therefore, penetrating new, complex, and difficult issues, particularly when combined with reflective analysis, requires the use of a different variant of communication (Cowan, 2012, p. 119).

This is the natural rationale for the varied applicability of different forms of communication, dictated by the various structures of the brain and by the different functioning of the mind. It is what is sometimes called bilingualism, i.e. the ability to use different (or at least two) semiotic systems (Wolfova, 2020, p. 192). However, it is neither mutual replacement nor interchangeability.

Following upon descriptions of the invasive expansion of the Internet and the suggestion of digital mastery over all public communication (although there is no evidence for this), there is also a proliferation of opinions, in the form of scientific statements as well, about alleged threats to social mentality and awareness from mechanical devices, which are in this way called intelligent; more generally referred to as Artificial Intelligence (AI). The argument is that the media –but most of all the Internet – automate (thus dehumanize) mental processes in communication, thus reducing natural thinking in general and taking control of beliefs and behaviours themselves (Wolfova, 2020, p. 197). In fact, this is not so at all as long as there is communicative diversity. The reduction of the receptive reflection takes place only in some variants of communication, and not in all of them. In general, there is a divergent gap between the technical offer of communication and what people expect from it (Whitworth, Ahmed, 2013, p. 55).

Stories, that machines can think better than humans, are fairy tales (Smith, 2020, p. 3; Whitworth & Ahmed, 2013, pp. 177, 188). In light of what is known today, this is out of the question. As computers cannot

deliberate, draw conclusions, or decide, for they have no scale of values, and because they also have no emotions – after all, they use only numbers – according them higher mental abilities is unfounded and even dangerous (Smith , 2020, pp. 2-3). Therefore, one should not mythologize or demonize illusory threats. Proper behaviour consists of the optimal use of various forms of communication – which are after all, created by man – in accordance with their character, nature, and possibilities.

These are not identical. There are many reasons for the fact, that digital messages work best in transmitting simple, not too complex content of a concise and handy nature. Therefore, it is best if they are relatively short, or at least not very extensive (Aleshin, 2018, p. 167; Baron, 2015, pp. 80, 222). On the other hand, printed texts are better suited for developed reflections and in-depth analysis, and increased volume does not go against their nature (Aleshin, 2018, p. 167; Baron, 2015, pp. 19, 222; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, p. 36). Thus, there are no contradictions between characteristics and potential applications, as long as there is no attempt to substitute any one of these forms with another.

In addition, it also seems that the specificity of digital communication renders it less attuned to the transmission of fictional messages, but more favourable to the dissemination of information. In these circumstances, therefore, some are of the opinion that literary fictional texts are better received from printed media (Landow, 2006, pp. 179, 265; Travnićek, 2019, p. 18).

From all this, it can be theoretically concluded; that in the case of mutual coexistence, apart from the spontaneous, independent transmission of content that is mainly informational, digital communication is also suitable for introductions and supplements to content taken from the print media. On the other hand, the reception of printed texts, regardless of their autonomous functioning, may also serve to deepen the content; received from the network, and to compensate for the negative effects of interaction with the Internet, such as reducing reflection and empathy (Brozo, 2019, p. 157; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, p. 36; Wolfova, 2020, p. 210).

But this is only a theoretical conclusion. Its practical implementation, especially on a global scale, does not seem to be a fully achievable task. The publics, in their conduct, are not guided by the suggestions of observers, especially if these are unknown to them.

 For the time being, in practice it is clearly the replacement of print, i.e. its elimination from public communication; in favour of digital media, which is difficult for specialists to accept. This is even so in relation to poor readers – where it is sometimes suggested (Wolfova, 2020, p. 187) – and even more so as a general occurrence.

The rational conclusion resulting from these analyses and observations, as well as from all circumstances, suggests the need to maintain a balance.

Between various forms of communication. First of all, between the two, that are currently (and in my opinion nonsensically) declared to be in competition, namely print and digital (Batorowska, 2020, p. 31; Bawden, Robinson, 2012, p. 332; Brozo, 2029, p. 157; Bushuev, 2014, p. 111; Kwanya, Stillwell, Underwood, 2015, p. 18; Wolfova, 2020, p. 176). There is no justification: indeed it is harmful, to promote either at the expense of the other; and to argue for interchangeable use. Not to mention to attempt; to reduce all public communication to only one version, namely digital. The optimal solution is to use each of them for what they are best suited for.

But this is (again) a purely theoretical formulation, extremely difficult to implement in practice. Especially in a society; where the vast majority of pedestrians move about with their eyes welded to their smartphones.

It sounds terrible, but the truth is that it is necessary to create – almost from scratch – an elementary and universal consciousness regarding, what each variant of communication is best suited for, or moderately so, or as a last resort, or not at all. And to prepare these for productive use, in accordance with their relevant specialization (Asselin, Doiron, 2013, p. 2; Batorowska, 2020, p. 19; Wolf, Barzillai, 2009, p. 39; Wolfova, 2020, p. 41).

There are some; who are of the opinion that the very differentiation of use, as long as it is intensive (and, moreover, intentionally implemented) with time contributes to the correct perception of different semiotic forms. This is because, in consequence, new neurons and synaptic connections develop in the brain, and thus a bilingual structural configuration of the mind is formed there (Wolfova, 2020, p. 192). But of course all of this is neither that simple; nor that easy to implement. However, appropriate initiatives and shaping measures are absolutely necessary. Especially in the implementation by institutions such as schools, universities, mass media centres, and… libraries.

LIBRARIES?

The role of libraries in communication mediation and adoption, so in content transmission too, is important – especially as long as they do not restrict access or charge fees. However, it cannot be said that it is the most important thing. Various reports, provided by libraries, suggest that library services reach the majority of the population, but there is no indication that this is true everywhere. Therefore, library undertakings, necessarily rational, should also be prudently correlated with the activities of other institutions, centres, and environments, which also take part in communication mediation and training. Indeed, independently undertaken initiatives have little chance of success.

The basic recommendation is that a library's intermediary offer absolutely must be multi-communicative (Kwanya, Stillwell, Underwood, 2015,

pp. 18, 36, 45; Wolfova, 2020, p. 176; Zubkov, 2018, p. 320). Libraries are service institutions, so their main task is to participate in the transmission of content. On the other hand, attempts by them to impose forms of communication – something possibly predominant in school teaching – do not have to be accepted by the public. Yes, libraries can suggest preferences for this or that semiotic variant, recommend choices according to the circumstances and tasks, but this is something completely different.

Under these conditions, the library's task is also to prepare users to utilize various types of communication (Asselin, Doiron, 2013, pp. 6, 122), with a possible indication of what is best suited for what. But it is also primarily advice, not a command, nor the enforcing of behaviour, because no library has the appropriate power of inducement for such enforcement. This becomes stronger only when other opinion-forming sources promote the same or similar communication attitudes and behaviours. And vice versa.

Balance in the implementation of the library consists in maintaining reasonable proportions between mediation in the transmission of information, mainly (but not only) with the use of the Internet, and the dissemination of other content – especially literature and the promotion, above all, of print media. Moreover, the facilitation of direct contacts with and among users is also something not to be marginalized.

Information communication, currently in a stage of explosion, requires special search and transmission intermediation, smart sorting, and verification, as well as practical training for users (Stepanov, 2012, p. 251; Wilson, Kellerman, Corey, 2013, p. 192). Libraries are institutions, that are especially suited to this by their very nature. It is not true, however, that they have always successfully dealt with these obligations, and that they have proven themselves under all circumstances. These projects still require significant improvement, a raising of standards, and adjusting to the needs of the audience and the current circumstances.

In terms of these obligations, but mainly at the basic level, i.e. in the field of quick messaging, the Internet is currently the best solution. In contrast, in complex information tasks, informative print media can also be of great use, and sometimes are the only solution. All the more, so as the messages get more complicated – also with the task of verification and elimination of adulterations. This important bi-semiotic connection now needs to be recalled and refreshed in a library-based implementation. At the moment, it is completely invisible.

In addition, this library offer also begins to develop a bit into fossilized features, as it does not change over time. First of all, it too rarely takes into account the degree of ownership of computers and smartphone by the public, formerly limited, but now more and more abundant. As a result, a significant section of users are now focused on using library materials

(provided by libraries), but not their devices. On the other hand, there is still an accompanying factor, namely that it is free of charge.

The current situation and configuration of public communication does not however mean that it will continue as it is. There is no guarantee that the semiotic systems we know and currently use, will not be complemented by others in the future, and that they will not change their structures or functions, or that there will be no selective elimination. Libraries therefore need to follow this closely.

For now, an important duty of libraries, perhaps even the most important one, is their active (aggressive? leading?) participation in promoting the use of print communication. Not only for the purpose of extensive and in-depth information, but especially for the dissemination of non-informational and non-informative content. First of all, libraries must support the circulation of literary texts (Asselin, Doiron, 2013, pp. 6, 122; Kwanya, Stillwell, Underwood, 2015, pp. 18, 36). And this is absolutely necessary in their printed versions, because the digital ones – as I have already mentioned many times – are not equivalent. In general, the whole huge range of intellectual communication requires the use of printed carriers. This is what libraries should definitely promote.

However, they only do so occasionally. The entire professional and scientific (?) library-related literature – not only in Poland – together with its concepts, has been infected by the fascination with digital communication and focuses professional reflections mainly on it; by suggesting that this is a form of communication that is truly and exclusively modern, and praising the library's remote offer beyond all measure.

Indeed, this is inevitable in the conditions of an intensified pandemic. On the other hand, promoting it as optimal in more or less normal and stable circumstances – with incredible emphasis, and enumerating its alleged advantages, supremacy, and even uniqueness – is a dramatic misunderstanding.

Probably it should be assumed that digital communication as a co-existing form will last for a long time, just like the library's offer of remote services, complementing direct services. Therefore, they must be accepted and implemented for their own use. But nothing more.

Other forms of communication (as well as different variants of library services) are still necessary precisely because they are different and diverse. They are better suited for some things, worse for others. Therefore, it must be assumed that they will also persist. Possibly for different tasks and specialized functions – if society can be induced to make use of these. This is also related to the prognosis for print media, and it is possible that it is also favourable.

Although G.P. Landow says that print may disappear one day (Landow, 2006, p. 361), for now this is a completely unfounded opinion, al-

though he is not the only one who, states it. But there are no strong arguments that this will or will not be the case.

If, however, print disappears, it must be brutally and unequivocally stated, that then there will be no place for libraries in the social space. Their main basis for functioning is intermediation in the transmission of print media – with additional intermediation in digital communication, and with the facilitation of direct contacts. So if electronic communication ends up being the only form, then with possible transformations and improvements, including technological ones, it will manage without libraries.

The final outcome is only partly dependent on the libraries themselves. However, the current, unreflective, and downright insane applause among libraries for (exclusively) digital communication is shocking. After all, this is an obvious form of conceptual (library science) and professional suicide.

Only a multi-communication balance, which is useful after all and necessary for the whole of society, is a formula for the prospective survival of libraries. It should therefore be promoted as far as possible, and feasible within the conditions of the library.

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THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF POLAND DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

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KEYWORDS: Pandemic. National Library of Poland. BNP. Cooperation between libraries. Recommendations for libraries. COVID-19. Pandemic.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Objective** – This article describes the situation of the National Library of Poland (BNP) during the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The BNP played multiple roles at the same time: as the biggest library in Poland it provided readers with safe access to its unique collections; it acted as the central body for cataloguing the latest publications for libraries in Poland; and as the country's central state library it issued recommendations for the 30,000+ libraries across Poland. **Results/Conclusions** – A paramount concern was ensuring the safety of the employees and readers of the BNP and other Polish libraries, as well

as issuing instructions on what libraries should be doing during the pandemic. The BNP offered support for institutions which found themselves at a loss under these extraordinary circumstances. The BNP maintained its key activities during the period, especially cataloguing the legal deposit intake of new publications.

This article describes the situation of the National Library of Poland (Biblioteka Narodowa Polski, BNP) during the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I should begin with one important reservation. At the time of writing it is unclear how long the pandemic will last, and it is possible that the way it develops will soon make the measures, plans and fears described here obsolete one way or the other.

From the very outset it was essential to make a rational assessment of the situation, putting our fears on one side. Western societies were facing, for the first time in living memory, the prospect of a pandemic and few had even read about such events in historical or literary works. We very quickly realised that standard actions would not be enough. Literally overnight we had to rethink the functioning of the library both as an entity in itself, one of many libraries in Poland, and as the country's central state library.

As nothing was known about the virus at the time, the scientists could not provide the authorities and bodies responsible for healthcare – let alone libraries – with reliable information as to which activities should be stopped immediately, which should be limited and which could carry on as normal. Protecting the health service and ensuring that it had sufficient capacity was the most important thing. All other activities needed to be subordinate to this goal until such time as reliable information was available both about the virus itself and about how it might develop.

Our paramount concern was to ensure the safety of our employees and readers: this formed the basis for determining which services we should provide. We knew that the pace of the epidemic and the unprecedented scale of the global threat meant that we could not simply wait for guidance to be issued by the official bodies, beyond a general plan of action. Our view was that each of us should anticipate the possible needs and potential dangers relating to our own specific area of work. The rise in the number of infections and above all the lack of basic information about the virus itself – how deadly it was, how it was transmitted, which groups were the most vulnerable, what were the possible short and long-term complications, and so on – meant that we needed to take action without delay, as prudently and safely as possible.

It was important for us to embrace responsibility rather than trying to shirk it. In an extraordinary situation such as this, our employees might be afraid and they needed to know that any decisions we took were both justified and necessary. It seemed to us that one of the biggest dangers

would be trying to keep things the way they were, in other words, a situation in which we knew that the virus was dangerous but did not take any action, because no-one had told us what to do. Today, nine months on, we know that the virus will be around for some time to come. According to optimistic forecasts a drug treatment or vaccine will be ready by autumn 2021. That means that the BNP and other libraries will have to live with the virus for at least another year. We need to prepare for radical changes. Much will change about our business in the near future, and much needs to change in order for us to continue operating as before. We must accelerate the digital revolution taking place in our libraries.

The issue of the coronavirus was raised for the first time at the meeting of the *Kolegium* (management board) of the BNP[1] on March 3. In light of the large number of cases of coronavirus-related diseases occurring across the world, the risk of an epidemic was taken very seriously and the situation monitored daily. Our initial actions were based on the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO). First and foremost, managers – and through them other members of staff – were kept up to date about the situation and possible safeguards against infection. In the early days this meant issuing reminders about maintaining a high level of hygiene, above all washing hands thoroughly and often and ventilating rooms. We turned up the water temperature in the sinks in the library's toilets to make it easier to kill viruses by washing hands. We also fitted dispensers with hand sanitizers, put up instructions about how to wash hands properly and disinfected door-handles and the surfaces of desks and tables in our offices and reading rooms. We reminded employees to clean their work computers themselves, including disinfecting keyboards and mice, and told them that the necessary liquids for doing so were available in the library. We told them that anyone with a cold should take special precautions when dealing with their colleagues in order to reduce the risk of spreading infection[2]. At this time we also slowly started shifting some employees to working from home (remote work).

The meeting of the *Kolegium* on March 10 was an important milestone. At the meeting key decisions aimed at stopping the spread of the virus were announced[3]. Seminars, conferences, training courses and all events involving a large number of people were cancelled, first temporarily and

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[1] According to the BNP's statutes the *Kolegium* is made up of the directors, deputy directors, heads of institutes, departments, offices and other organisational units, in addition to other individuals whose work is essential to the functioning of the BNP.

[2] Protokół nr 9 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 3 marca 2020 r. (9th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, March 3, 2020).

[3] Actions were taken in line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and in constant consultation with the Department of State Patronage monitoring the activities of libraries in Poland.

then until further notice[4]. This decision was dictated by the need to minimise the risk of the virus spreading among BNP staff and visitors. Our chief recommendation was to keep direct contact between individuals to a minimum, communicating via email or telephone instead. It was already known at the time that some cases of coronavirus infection were asymptomatic, so we decided to keep staff apart as much as possible, not just by having some of them work from home but also by putting those who remained in rooms on their own and not allowing them to visit the rooms of other members of staff. The BNP took the view that although it could not protect individuals from infection at home, on public transport or in shops, for instance, it could stop transmission of the virus between members of staff by isolating them from each other. Above all, the management and heads of departments worked hard to reorganise work quickly so that staff could perform the most important tasks at home. A key decision – one that was taken quickly, early on in the process – was to buy a large number of laptops before they disappeared from the market. Employees who had symptoms of any type of infection were instructed to stay at home; if they had any symptoms typical of the coronavirus, they should stay at home and immediately call the local District Sanitary and Epidemiological Station to find out about recommended further treatment. The BNP's *Kancelaria* (Administrative Office) provided information about the precautions that should be taken when dealing with Post Office workers and couriers delivering parcels. Employees aged over 60, a high-risk group, were the first for whom arrangements were made to work form home. The Director General of the BNP, Tomasz Makowski, also asked the heads of departments to check if any retired BNP employees who were living alone needed help.

It was decided to suspend all non-essential business trips, initially on a temporary basis and then until further notice. Staff members currently away on business trips were given guidelines on how to minimise the risk of falling ill. In particular, a team of four female members of staff were working on the digitisation of the collections of the Kultura Literary Institute at Maisons-Laffitte near Paris, which was affected by the epidemic. This is part of a long-term project financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage on the basis of an agreement between the BNP and the Kultura Literary Institute; the collections themselves are listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. After many problems, the team managed to return to Poland on May 13[5].

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[4] The Director General of the BNP, Tomasz Makowski, instructed those responsible for organising events at the BNP to inform participants that all meetings were cancelled and to warn speakers who were scheduled to give talks in the following two months about possible changes to the schedules of seminars and conferences.

[5] Protokół nr 13 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 19 maja 2020 r. (13th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, May 19, 2020)

Another key decision was arranging for the almost 80 individuals involved in cataloguing the legal deposit intake of new publications to be able to work from home, and organising a designated driver to continually deliver and collect copies of the publications for cataloguing. This required a major effort on the part of the Zakład Katalogowania Dziedzinowego (Department of Domain-based Cataloguing), the Zakład Wypożyczania Krajowego i Zagranicznego (Domestic and International Lending Department) and the Zakład Administracyjno-Gospodarczy (Administrative and Economic Department)[6]. The BNP wanted to maintain its standard of cataloguing incoming publications for the legal deposit within 24 hours – one of the BNP's great achievements – and also continue cataloguing all multi-author publications, such as post-conference volumes, and articles from 2,500 scientific and cultural journals. In the subsequent weeks and months it was not always possible to maintain this 24-hour turnaround time due to publications arriving for the legal deposit at irregular intervals, but the turnaround time was never more than a week and usually books were catalogued within 48 hours of receipt by the BNP.

Taking into account the recommendations of the health authorities, the Library's Director General, Tomasz Makowski, decided to limit the number of places in the reading room so that the distance between readers could be increased to 1.5 metres. It was also decided that staff accepting items returned by readers should wear gloves. Relevant announcements were published on the BNP website and the staff website[7].

The next day, March 11, 2020, Tomasz Makowski cancelled his trip to attend a ceremony at the Municipal Library in Elbląg, and called another meeting of the *Kolegium* and a meeting of the Crisis Management Team. He announced that the Library would be completely closed to visitors from March 12-25, 2020, including the reading rooms, and that this period of closure might be extended. He further stated that no training courses, conferences, meetings with external guests or domestic or foreign trips by employees would take place at the BNP until April 13, 2020. If their jobs allowed it employees should work from home, in agreement with their superiors and subject to the relevant regulations. If the nature of their jobs made working from home impossible, employees could be entrusted with the job of creating records of copies of journals. Support was available

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[6] Special mention must be made here of the contribution of Karolina Łuczyńska, who in the early days of the pandemic took over the management of the Zakład Katalogowania Dziedzinowego (Department of Domain-based Cataloguing) and did an excellent job organising the work under the leadership of Kacper Trzaska, Deputy Director of the BNP in charge of supervising cataloguing. Barbara Morawiec also did an outstanding job organising the Zakład Wypożyczania Krajowego i Zagranicznego (Domestic and International Lending Department) so that copies could be transported to and from cataloguers quickly and efficiently.

[7] Protokół nr 10 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 10 marca 2020 r. (10th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, March 10, 2020)

from the Zakład Czasopism (Department of Journals). Heads of departments should consider reorganising the work, taking into account the nature of their unit and the skills of their employees, so that members of staff could look after family members and limit their contact with other people on their way to work. It was announced that all desks were occupied in the temporary reading room, services were operating smoothly and there were no queues. Tomasz Makowski decided to suspend the online ordering of publications and recommended redirecting readers towards the POLONA digital library and other electronic resources. Monika Mitera, Deputy Director of the BNP, drew attention to the Act of March 2, 2020, on specific solutions to prevent, counteract and combat COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them (Journal of Laws, item 374), which among other things provided for the introduction of a special care allowance for a maximum of 14 days for one of the parents caring for a child under eight years of age due to the closure of a crèche, children's club, kindergarten or school. It was noted that the Biuro Spraw Pracowniczych (Office of Employee Affairs) would post detailed information on the staff website together with an example of the statement that should be submitted in order to claim this benefit. Occupational Health and Safety Service (Służba BHP) announced that staff in direct contact with readers and returned items from the Library's collections would be provided with personal protective equipment in the form of gloves. It was noted that the Occupational Health and Safety Service (Służba BHP) was in contact with the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate (Główny Inspektorat Sanitarny, GIS), which had that day confirmed that the precautions and prevention measures put in place at the BNP were for the time being sufficient.

Tomasz Makowski asked the heads of departments for an update on the situation in each of their departments. No serious problems were reported. In view of the government decision to suspend the activities of cultural institutions, he asked the heads of the departments to come to an agreement with museums about the starting dates of exhibitions that involved loans from the BNP.

Tomasz Makowski invited everyone to the next meeting of the Crisis Management Team, and to the meeting of *Kolegium* the same day at 3.30 p.m. The break was used for a meeting with the heads of the trade unions to discuss the situation with regard to the pandemic. During the early days of the pandemic, Tomasz Makowski and the Deputy Director of the BNP met with the trade unions many times to agree next steps and to communicate any decisions that had been taken.

Throughout the day the reading rooms were well occupied, despite the new sanitary regime and the required distance of 1.5 metres between readers. A decision was taken to speed up the transportation of early printed books from the Palace of the Commonwealth to the main building of the

Library[8]. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, there came a point when the transportation had to be stopped; it was resumed in June when the level of infections had fallen, and completed in August.

On March 11 the BNP announced that it was cancelling all conferences, seminars and training courses up to April 13, 2020, and recommending other libraries to take similar decisions and implement preventative measures to reduce the epidemiological risk associated with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

On the same day, the Government Crisis Management Team, of which the Minister of Culture and National Heritage was a member, decided to close all cultural institutions, concert halls, opera houses, operetta theatres, other theatres, museums, cinemas, community centres, libraries, art galleries, schools, universities, colleges and art education institutes from March 12, 2020, on a temporary basis[9]. The BNP immediately informed other libraries about this decision via its website and social media.

Now closed, the BNP decided to bring its digital resources to bear for the benefit of both its own readers and those of other libraries. On March 13 the Library launched a campaign advertising the POLONA digital library under the slogan *Czytanie on-line bez ryzyka zakażenia. Największa biblioteka cyfrowa w Polsce otwarta* ("Read online without the risk of infection. Poland's largest digital library is open.") POLONA has over three million digital items: books, journals, manuscripts, early printed books, maps, drawings, graphics, photographs, postcards, sheet music and ephemera. It is currently one of the largest digital libraries in Europe. In 2019 the BNP was ranked second among Europe's national libraries in terms of the number of digital scans made each year.

On the evening of Friday, March 13, the Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 13 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu zagrożenia epidemicznego (Ordinance of the Minister of Health of March 13, 2020, declaring a state of epidemic threat on the territory of the Republic of Poland) was published[10]. During the night, Tomasz Makowski and Deputy Director Dominik Cieszkowski carefully went through this lengthy document, each of them working independently of the other; in the morning Monika Miter, Deputy Director for Scientific Affairs, joined in the task. On the Saturday, after agreeing on how the regulations should be interpreted and what the possible problems for the Library staff were, they asked Professor Hubert Izdebski, an outstanding legal expert, long-standing Director of the Instytut Nauk

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[8] Protokół nr 12 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 11 marca 2020 r. (12th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, March 11, 2020)

[9] https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/zawieszenie-dzialalnosci-instytucji-kultury-i-placowek-szkolnictwa-artystycznego

[10] https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2020000043301.pdf

o Państwie i Prawie (Institute of State and Law Studies) of Warsaw University and Member of the Scientific Council of the BNP, to draw up a legal opinion that libraries could use when talking to the local authorities under whose control they fell. On the basis of this legal opinion, which was sent on Monday morning, the BNP then drew up an official statement on the activities of public libraries in the light of the aforementioned ordinance. This official statement by the BNP was used by many libraries not only in their interpretation of the regulations but in the difficult discussions they held with local authorities, who sometimes wanted to interpret the ordinance to the disadvantage of the libraries and their staff. Thanks to the official statement by the BNP it was possible to ensure fairly consistent library operations throughout the country and avoid differences between the decisions in different areas.

The BNP's official statement said that libraries should aim to perform remotely, to the maximum extent possible and within the regulations in question, the duties necessary for the functioning of the library.

Specifically, the BNP recommended that libraries carried out the following tasks remotely:

- Communicating with readers via email and answering queries using online sources
- Improving and expanding their online catalogues by copying records from the combined catalogues of the BNP, the Jagiellonian Library and regional libraries in Kielce and Lublin, available on the BNP website and via data.bn.org.pl
- Expanding the contents of their own websites (for example using the resources of the BNP and POLONA to identify items relating to local history or creating their own collections based on the contents of POLONA)
- Reading specialist publications such as reports on the situation with regard to libraries and reading as a whole, and familiarising themselves with new cataloguing regulations and changes in the BNP's descriptors (przepisy.bn.org.pl)
- Planning purchases by looking at websites announcing new and forthcoming publications
- Developing potential activities, workshops for children and adults, lessons and training courses that could be offered once the threat subsided
- Running information campaigns about online resources such as POLONA on their website and social media
- Writing articles, reviews and reports about the state of reading in their own municipality, district and so on

- Preparing marketing materials for use after the epidemic
- Creating or participating in online courses[11].

It should be noted that the BNP's actions covered two distinct areas: it had to work out internally what its own role and activities should be during the pandemic and, in parallel, it had to provide assistance to over 30,000 libraries in Poland. Thanks to a number of quick decisions taken early on, the situation at the BNP did not get out of control. Tomasz Makowski set out the decisions concerning BNP employees and established the longer-term principles on which the Library would now operate in the *Zarządzenie nr 41/2020 z dnia 17 marca 2020 r. w sprawie działań zapobiegawczych podejmowanych w Bibliotece Narodowej w celu przeciwdziałania narażeniu pracowników Biblioteki Narodowej na zakażenie wirusem COVID-19* (Regulation No. 41/2020 of March 17, 2020, on preventative actions taken at the National Library of Poland to prevent exposing its employees to the COVID-19 virus). This decree remains in force at the time of writing[12].

On the evening of Friday, March 20, the Rozporządzenia Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 20 marca 2020 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Minister of Health of March 20, 2020, declaring a state of epidemic on the territory of the Republic of Poland) was published, banning library activities until further notice. In fact, such a ban was already included in the March 13 ordinance, but on a temporary basis[13]. Naturally this also meant closing the BNP reading rooms until further notice.

On Monday, March 23, following the decision to close libraries indefinitely, the BNP issued a statement concerning making preparations for their reopening. The purpose of this statement was first and foremost to get librarians to use their free time to prepare for the way they would be operating once they reopened. The statement said that due to the need to break the transmission chain of the coronavirus, a decision had been made to close libraries in Poland until further notice. Since March 13, libraries had not been allowed to operate reading rooms or lending services, including accepting returned items. The BNP gave the following recommendations concerning the handling of returned items when libraries did reopen, based on the very limited knowledge about the virus at the time:

The SARS-CoV-2 virus can survive for some time outside the human body. This means that surface contamination of publications is also possible.

We recommend that libraries apply the following rules when handling items from their collections which are returned by readers:

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[11] https://www.bn.org.pl/w-bibliotece/3930-opinia-biblioteki-narodowej-dotyczaca-ograniczenia-dzialalnosci-bibliotek-publicznych.html

[12] October 30, 2020

[13] https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2020000049101.pdf

- *Staff should wear latex or nitrile gloves when receiving returned copies lent out to readers*
- *Only touch copies directly in order to identify them*
- *Do not disinfect returned publications with detergent or alcohol-based disinfectants*
- *Returned copies should be "quarantined" for 10-14 days*
- *Disinfect any surfaces that come into contact with returned materials by washing them with detergent or a disinfectant containing at least 60 percent alcohol*
- *In the event of a member of staff who is in contact with the collections being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, 10-14 days' quarantine must be observed and that part of the collections which the member of staff was in contact with must not be used*

Quarantining all copies returned after libraries reopen should ensure that the work carried out is safe.

- *The following general safety rules should also be observed:*
- *Wash your hands properly with soap and water for at least 30 seconds*
- *Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth)*
- *Keep a safe distance (one to two meters) from other people*
- *When sneezing or coughing, cover your mouth and nose with a disposable handkerchief, then throw the handkerchief away*
- *If you show any symptoms of having a viral disease (fever, coughing, difficulty breathing) seek medical assistance, in the first instance by telephone*[14].

Following the publication in April of the results of a new study on the Sars-CoV-2 coronavirus, on May 4 the BNP issued an announcement amending its recommendations regarding the quarantining of books and other publications in libraries. In the announcement it stated that the virus remained active for up to 72 hours (three days) on plastic surfaces such as book covers, CDs and so on. The recommendations relating to cardboard and paper, where the virus can survive for up to 24 hours, were not changed. The other recommendations for protecting against the virus also remained unchanged. The authors of the studies on which the shortening of the recommended quarantine period was based themselves advised caution when interpreting their results, so the BNP recommended using a longer period of quarantine if possible and treating the period of three days as a minimum. The BNP reminded libraries that returned books should be put aside in a box, container or bag or on specially designated shelves in the stores, some other room or a bookcase. Quarantined items should be marked with the date when they were returned and not lent

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[14] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3938-bezpieczenstwo-epidemiczne-w%26nbspbibliotekach.html.

out again until the quarantine period was over, after which they could be put back into circulation. Gloves should be worn. Separate "quarantine rooms" were not required as the virus could not spread unassisted. Copies returned to the library by readers should not be disinfected with disinfectants. Ozone should not be used to disinfect books as it had oxidising properties that were harmful to cellulose materials. UV lamps should not be used on books as the UV light had a detrimental effect on the materials from which books were made. The BNP also reminded libraries that each time returned books were received from readers, the counter on which they were placed should be disinfected[15].

On April 19, 2020, a Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów (Ordinance of the Council of Ministers) was published extending the period of closure of libraries until the start of the second phase of lifting the COVID-19 restrictions[16]. It was not stated when this would be as it would depend on the situation with regard to the epidemic. On April 29, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced that the second phase of lifting restrictions would begin on May 4, 2020; in other words libraries could reopen on that date.

The same day, May 4, the BNP announced that decisions to reopen libraries should be taken by the director of the library in question in consultation with the local authorities, ministers and the State Sanitary Inspectorate (Sanepid). Reopening should take place when the library had taken the necessary steps to be able to function safely during the epidemic. The decision should take into account the number of users and local factors, including the size of the room to be accessed by users. The BNP recommended operating a lending facility only. Until the number of infections fell significantly or the state of epidemic was ended, it did not recommend reopening reading rooms or allowing free access to card catalogues, books or journals. It would make a separate announcement about the reopening of reading rooms once the number of infections had fallen, after consultation with health services.

The BNP reminded libraries that although books were printed on paper, their covers (for example in the case of varnishing) were made of plastics, so the virus could survive on their surfaces much longer than on paper. Both users and librarians were advised to wear masks and gloves while in the library. Readers should reserve a specific time slot by phone or email in order to avoid queues. A protective screen (for example made of Plexiglas) should be installed at the point of contact between users and librarians, for example on the library desk. Users showing any signs of illness or who find themselves among a group of people who are not required to

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[15] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3978-skrocenie-okresu-kwarantanny-ksiazek-w-bibliotekach-do-3-dni.html

[16] https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2020000069701.pdf.

wear masks should stay at a safe distance. Libraries were encouraged to provide a hand-washing and disinfection station where possible, plus access to disposable gloves and masks. Where librarians did not have access to masks, gloves and disinfectant, the BNP recommended that they should simply not reopen, even for lending only.

Each time books were returned by users, the counter which they were placed should be disinfected as the virus could survived up to 14 days on stone surfaces. Returned books should be put aside for three days[17] in a box, container or bag or on specially designated shelves in the stores, some other room or a bookcase. Quarantined items should be marked with the date when they were returned and not lent out again until the quarantine period was over, after which they could be put back into circulation. Gloves should still be worn when handling books. Separate "quarantine rooms" were not required as the virus could not spread unassisted. Copies returned to the library should not be disinfected with disinfectants. In addition, it was recommend that rooms should be ventilated and "biblioboxes" (self-service boxes for book returns), door handles, keyboards, telephones, light switches and other frequently used surfaces or equipment should be disinfected as often as possible.

The BNP announcement of May 4 further stated that it was imperative that library staff complied with the preventative rules issued and updated by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and the Ministry of Health. Instructions about washing hands, disinfecting hands and how to put on and take off protective masks, available from the website of the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate (GIS), should be displayed where readers would see them. If a member of the library staff became infected with the coronavirus, the procedures outlined by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate should be followed. The BNP recommended encouraging readers to use the resources available online[18].

In addition, the BNP set up an "advice centre" to answer questions about the activities of libraries in relation to the pandemic. Frequently asked questions were also published on the website[19].

On April 30, the BNP announced that until the number of infections fell significantly and the fourth phase of lifting COVID-19 restrictions was announced, the BNP's reading rooms would remain closed to readers. Modernisation works had been ongoing in the reading rooms since 2018 and the collections had been available in small temporary reading rooms, where it was not possible to guarantee safety with regards to the epidemic. Users were encouraged to use the online resources on POLONA.PL and

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[17] In the announcement of April 29 this was 10-14 days; on May 4 it was changed to three days.
[18] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3971-od-4-maja-mozna-otwierac-biblioteki.html
[19] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3972-poradnia-biblioteki-narodowej.html

other libraries' lending facilities, which could reopen from May 4, 2020[20]. At the same time the BNP recommended that other libraries open their reading rooms during the fourth phase of lifting COVID-19 restrictions[21].

On May 2, 2020, a Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów (Ordinance of the Council of Ministers) was published lifting the ban on library activities from May 4, as had been announced the previous Wednesday. In this connection the BNP reminded libraries that the guidelines for the operation of libraries during the COVID-19 epidemic in Poland issued by the Ministry of Development in consultation with the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate on April 28, 2020 and contained in the announcement by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage should be regarded as obligatory. According to these guidelines, the decision to reopen a library and when to do so should be taken by the director of the library in consultation with the with the local authorities and sanitary inspector, by phone or email. The consultations with the sanitary inspector should cover issues of how the work was to be organised after the library reopened in terms of meeting the conditions outlined in the guidelines and the recommendations of the BNP (for example concerning long-term staff illness, small library spaces and difficulties maintaining distance between users) and any other sanitary issues relating to the specific nature of the library's activities[22].

On May 11 the BNP launched its new "Digitisation on demand" service, inviting anyone interested to submit their suggestions about what material they needed digitised, be it for their day-to-day work, the purpose of study or their hobbies. The BNP provides this service free of charge. Only library materials in the public domain can be digitised, in other words material in respect of which the economic rights set out in the Act on Copyright and Related Rights have expired or which were not subject to copyright in the first place. This applies primarily to publications created more than 70 years after the author's death (currently persons who died before January 1, 1950). Access to publications via POLONA was also possible if the authors or their heirs transferred the relevant licences to the BNP, something which the BNP encouraged them to do[23]. At the beginning of the campaign there were more than 100 submissions a day, which were implemented on an ongoing basis[24].

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[20] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3973-czytelnie-biblioteki-narodowej-zostana-otwarte-dla-czytelnikow-w-iv-etapie-znoszenia-ograniczen.html

[21] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3976-otwarcie-czyteln-w-bibliotekach-w-iv-etapie-znoszenia-ograniczen.html

[22] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3977-rekomendacja-bn-dotyczaca-konsultacji-bibliotek-z-inspektorami-sanitarnymi.html

[23] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3981-digitalizacja-na-zyczenie.html

[24] Protokół nr 13 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 19 maja 2020 r. [13th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, May 19, 2020]

A summary of the first two months of the pandemic presented at the meeting of the *Kolegium* on May 19 reported that more than 45,000 articles from journals and multi-author publications, plus 1,500 copies of books for the legal deposit, had been catalogued remotely by the Zakład Katalogowania Dziedzinowego (Department of Domain-based Cataloguing)[25].

At the meeting of the *Kolegium* on May 26, Tomasz Makowski recommended that the heads of departments adopt flexible rules concerning working from home, analysing the situation of specific employees on a case-by-case basis, including their ability to commute to work. He said that the fact that remote workers had to submit a daily progress report on their work meant that heads of departments could monitor whether the tasks entrusted to them were being carried out properly or not, but that these reports were also a tool for employees to monitor their own work. He recommended that heads of departments continued to require these progress reports[26].

Following the announcement that the fourth phase of lifting COVID-19 restrictions would begin on June 6, 2020, the BNP published an announcement on May 28 recommending that libraries reopen their reading rooms for users. However, it encouraged libraries to allow readers to borrow items and take them home with them, rather than consulting them in reading rooms. The specific recommendations were are follows:

The decision about when to open reading rooms and under what conditions is to be taken by the director of the library. The decision should take into account the number of users, local conditions, how long users spend in reading rooms and the local situation with regard to the epidemic at a municipal, district and provincial level. It is also important that preventative measures are taken ensure the safety of both library staff and readers. The directors or managers of libraries may, in light of their authority to manage the library or their powers of attorney if the library does not have legal personality, introduce additional conditions for using the library.

The BNP reminds libraries that they should observe all rules relating to safety during the epidemic as issued and updated by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and the Ministry of Health.

The BNP recommends social distancing in all public areas of the library, both in smaller areas (such as corridors) and larger spaces (such as reading rooms) as far as the limitations of the library building itself allows. It is recommended to place markings (points or lines) on floors indicating a safe distance of two metres between people.

The BNP recommends providing a hand-disinfection station for readers before they enter the reading room, with appropriate instructions. We recommend that

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Protokół nr 14 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 26 maja 2020 r. [14th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, May 26, 2020]

librarians who are in contact with users wear disposable gloves. After disinfecting their hands, readers are not obliged to wear gloves while in reading rooms. Readers who are worried about being infected by touching books, especially reference works on open shelves, should be informed that they may wear gloves if so desired. Currently, the risk of coronavirus infection through contact with books is considered to be low. Some libraries in Europe have recently stopped quarantining books, but most maintain a three-day quarantine period for books returned by readers. The decision about whether to allow free access to books on open shelves should be taken by the director of the library, taking into account the local situation regarding the epidemic. This should not be allowed in areas where new infections are still appearing.

The BNP recommends that librarians and readers wear masks or visors while inside the library as the risk of infection while inside rooms is not yet considered low. For this reason it is also important to ventilate reading rooms.

The BNP recommends disinfecting the surfaces of desks in reading rooms, handrails, door handles and other surfaces frequently touched (for example light switches) and cleaning floors more often. In addition we recommend disinfecting computer workstations, keyboards and other computer equipment after each reader has used them, and likewise self-service scanners and multifunction devices, in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

As concerns reading rooms, the BNP recommends limiting capacity to 50 percent of the available places for readers while maintaining sanitary requirements and a two-metre distance between readers' desks. If it is not possible to move tables or desks further away from each other, we recommend installing protective screens between them, for example made of Plexiglas. The maximum number of people allowed in the reading room should be clearly displayed and seats that are not to be used should be marked as such.

The BNP recommends introducing breaks in the opening times of the reading room so that the room can be ventilated and surfaces, door handles and keyboards disinfected. To avoid queues and overcrowding we recommend that readers should have to book a specific time slot by phone, email or other messenger service.

The BNP recommends cancelling all subscriptions to print newspapers and weeklies and instead subscribing to them digitally until the end of the pandemic.

The BNP recommends installing a protective screen, for example made of Plexiglas, at the point of contact between users and librarians – on the library desk for instance. If possible, libraries should avoid any work that requires staff who are over the age of 60 or chronically ill coming into direct contact with people outside the library. The Duty Librarian or other designated staff member must disinfect the surface and other parts of the work station before and after dealing with each reader. Readers should only be served if they disinfect their hands before entering the reading rooms. The BNP does not recommend allowing readers whose are visibly sick to enter the library; in this case the procedures outlined by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate should be implemented immediately.

The BNP recommends encouraging readers to use online services such as Academica, POLONA and other digital libraries and databases, and granting access to commercial digital resources. We also encourage libraries to inform readers about the option of using the free "Digitisation on demand" service.

The BNP does not recommend engaging in traditional interlibrary loans due to potential difficulties with deliveries both within Poland and abroad, the need to implement a quarantine procedure for items and limitations on making publications available in reading rooms. We recommend providing a terminal with access to the Academica interlibrary loan system, which is free of charge for libraries and readers[27].

The BNP encourages library staff to continue working from home and to replace direct contacts with contact via email, telephone or other messenger service where possible. We do not recommend organising conferences, seminars or meetings unless they can be held online[28].

The same day, May 28, the BNP announced the launch of a newsletter entitled *Poradnik i Biuletyn BN dla bibliotekarzy* ("The BNP Guide and Bulletin for Librarians"), which would be sent to librarians on a daily basis to provide them with the latest information they needed.

On June 3 the BNP announced that its reading rooms would reopen on Monday, June 8, 2020. Out of concern for the safety of the Library's readers and staff, new rules for using the reading rooms during the epidemic were introduced. Until June 21 only readers who already had BNP library cards could use the reading rooms; after that date new cards could be issued.

According to the new rules, readers were obliged to disinfect their hands after entering the BNP and cover their mouth and nose. In order to use the reading rooms it was necessary to make a reservation in advance. Since August 2018 modernisation and renovation works have been underway at the BNP and access to the collections is only possible in small, temporary reading rooms with space for 90 readers[29]. Due to the small size of the temporary reading rooms and the need to maintain two metres distance between readers, fewer desks were available in the reading rooms following the reopening on June 8, and readers had to reserve a desk for one of the following time slots:
- 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
- 1.30 to 5.30 p.m.
- 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.[30]

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[27] The BNP reopened its interlibrary loan facility in May. Protokół nr 14 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 26 maja 2020 r. (14th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, May 26, 2020)

[28] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3993-rekomendacje-biblioteki-narodowej-dotyczace-otwarcia-czyteln-w-bibliotekach.html

[29] Due to the rise in infections and the need to maintain more space between readers, there are currently 28 places available in the reading room (as per October 30, 2020).

[30] Due to the low number of reservations this system was abandoned the following day, in line

During the hour-long breaks, desks and other surfaces were disinfected and the reading room ventilated[31]. Every day 50 places were available, until the sanitary regulations were relaxed. It was announced that if the number of readers was smaller than the number of available desks, the reservation system would be abandoned. The reservation system was launched on Friday, June 5 at 10 a.m.

To give the maximum number of readers access to the the BNP's unique collections, readers were allowed to order two items (that is, books and journals from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries) per reserved time slot. Further orders could be placed once these items had been returned. To limit the number of readers, it was decided that orders for early printed books and most microfilms would be sent for free digitisation and made available on POLONA within a week of the order being placed. Thanks to these measures the waiting time for a desk in the reading room did not exceed one day.

Manuscripts were available for consultation in the Heritage Collections Reading Room between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. by readers who had booked a visit in advance by email. To consult graphic materials, maps and musical scores, readers had to make an appointment with the head of the collection in question[32].

On June 10 the BNP published a statement on the organisation of events in libraries. It recommended that open air and indoor events only be held in areas where there were no cases of coronavirus or where the number of such infections was clearly falling. The sanitary rules set out in the regulations applied. Online events were still to be preferred[33].

At the meeting of the *Kolegium* on June 23, Tomasz Makowski drew attention to the situation regarding the pandemic in the Mazovian Voivodeship, where there was a drop in the number of infections. He stressed, however, that the Ministry of Health and the WHO were warning about a second wave of the pandemic in the autumn. He asked the heads of departments to make plans for the work of their units in the event that restrictions were reintroduced due to a significant rise in the number of infections. He further called for rooms to aired frequently, lifts

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with the announcement. It was reintroduced on August 26 following an increase in the number of people wanting to use the reading rooms and the formation of queues. This increase in turnout was probably influenced by the fact that the reading rooms of the University Library in Warsaw had remained closed from March 11, 2020, and did not even reopen when the number of infections fell during the holidays.

[31] On June 21 the ventilation of reading rooms was reduced to half an hour and the time slots adjusted as follows: 8.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 1.30 to 6 p.m., 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.

[32] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3998-czytelnie-biblioteki-narodowej-beda-otwarte-od-8-czerwca-w-godz.-8.30-20.30.html

[33] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/4007-rekomendacje-biblioteki-narodowej-dotyczace-organi-zowania-wydarzen-w-bibliotekach.html

not be used unless necessary and door handles and surfaces to be disinfected[34].

Following the introduction of additional restrictions from Saturday, August 8, 2020, in the 19 districts in Poland ("yellow zones" and "red zones") which had seen the largest increase in coronavirus infections, the BNP recommended that libraries located in these areas follow the general recommendations and introduce new rules for the safety of their employees and readers. Specifically, libraries in both zones must:

- Strictly ensure that librarians and readers covered their mouth and nose and used hand disinfectants or put on disposable gloves before entering the library
- Rigorously ensure a minimum of 1.5 metres was maintained between people in all public spaces
- Continually ventilate rooms, especially if they are small (including toilets and corridors if possible)

The BNP further recommended that libraries in the red zone closed their reading rooms and did not offer free access to their collections, instead offering only lending and returning facilities. The Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 7 sierpnia 2020 r. w sprawie ustanowienia określonych ograniczeń, nakazów i zakazów w związku z wystąpieniem stanu epidemii (Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of August 7, 2020, on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and prohibitions in connection with the occurrence of a state of epidemic) limited the number of participants in events and meetings to 150 people throughout the entire country, 100 people in districts in the yellow zone, and 50 people in the red zone. In libraries in the red and yellow zones, the BNP recommended that events and meetings are only organised online[35].

Following an increase in infections and the inclusion of Warsaw in the red zone from October 17, and the whole country from October 24, the BNP tightened its sanitary regime and, once again, as many workers as possible were shifted to working from home. However, it has remained possible to use the reading rooms thanks to the sanitary regime effectively maintained by the Library's employees and readers. The BNP's recommendations for libraries in Poland are also amended on an ongoing basis.

The situation of the BNP in the nine months since the pandemic began is good compared to other institutions, which have been hit harder by the virus. The first case of a BNP employee being infected was on October 21. Given that the BNP employs 800 people, has many contacts with other people and welcomes visitors from various parts of Poland every

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[34] Protokół nr 18 posiedzenia Kolegium Biblioteki Narodowej z dnia 23 czerwca 2020 r. (18th Minutes of the Meeting of the Kolegium of the BNP, June 23, 2020)

[35] https://www.bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/4036-rekomendacje-bn-dla-bibliotek-w-powiatach-objetych-specjalnymi-obostrzeniami-podczas-epidemii.html

day, this confirms that the decisions made so far during the pandemic and the self-discipline of our staff, who are aware of the seriousness of the situation, have had a positive impact[36]. We would draw attention to the excellent cooperation between the directors, heads of departments, other staff, trade unions and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage[37]. The investments made over recent years as part of the reorientation of the BNP towards digital services were also important; during the pandemic they proved invaluable.

Throughout the pandemic, the Director General of the BNP was in constant contact with the directors of other national libraries and public networks in Europe, the chairpersons of conferences of directors of various types of libraries and the directors of Poland's leading libraries, in particular the Director of the Jagiellonian Library, Poland's largest and oldest university library.

During the pandemic it has been possible for most tasks to continue without delays thanks to the new way in which work is organised. The magnificent collection of manuscripts of the Counts Tarnowski Library from Dzikow Castle has been purchased and Professor Leszek Kołakowski's library transported from Oxford to Poland. The BNP has received new grants for digitisation, completed the relocation of its manuscript and early printed book collections from the Palace of the Commonwealth, where a complete renovation of the building began in August 2020, to the BNP's main building. The BNP has also continued with the modernisation and renovation of the reading rooms in the main building.

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[36] At the time of writing (October 30, 2020), four BNP employees have so far been diagnosed with COVID-19.

[37] The heads and other staff of the services involved in the running of the BNP played a particularly important role here, namely the Zakład Administracyjno-Gospodarczy (Administrative and Economic Department), the Zakład Technologii Informatycznych (Information Technology Department), the Biuro Spraw Pracowniczych (Office of Workers' Affairs), and also Barbara Morawiec, responsible for the BNP's information policy. The BNP's success during this difficult period is to a large extent due to their contribution.

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ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

Anna Wołodko, senior academic librarian, has been employed at the University of Warsaw Library since 1992. In 1995-2006 she served as Academic Secretary, 2014-2018 as Head of the Targeted Projects and Fund Raising Department, and from 2018 as Director of the University of Warsaw Library. She has been involved in nationwide e-learning projects: BIBWEB (in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation), and „login: library" (in cooperation with the Information Society Development Foundation). She has coordinated the EU projects „NUKAT – Digital Information Highway" (Operational Program Innovative Economy, 2008-2013) and „New quality of access to cultural goods at the University of Warsaw – creating a center for digitization of library and museum collections (Operational Program Digital Poland, 2016-2019). From 2019 she has been a member of the OCLC EMEA Regional Council.

KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries. Crisis. Crisis management. Unusual situations. University of Warsaw Library. Pandemic. COVID-19.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis / purpose** of the article – the aim of the article is to present the situation of academic libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular emphasis on the University of Warsaw Library. **Method** – analysis of the literature, analysis of the situation of the University of Warsaw Library in March-May 2020 on the basis of unpublished reports of heads of BUW organizational units and the author's own observations and experiences. **Results / conclusions** – the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and the size of the risks associated with it cannot be compared with any previous experience of academic libraries, therefore the libraries did not have ready-made procedures and procedures. The example

of the University Library in Warsaw shows that in the period of lockdown and remote work, institutions were able to learn and gather valuable experience for future use.

Academic libraries should be used to changes. The largest group of users of academic libraries, functioning within the university structures, are students; academic librarians are therefore accustomed to the constant overturning of that group, occurring in regular cycles the length of which is determined by the duration of their studies. New students keep coming, often completely unaware of customs and traditions in the library of their university, expecting – rightly – that the library will meet their expectations. Usually, it does. As its audience changes, so do the possibilities for satisfying its needs. For a long time, libraries – especially academic libraries – have offered a wide selection of online licensed and open access resources to which they provide access, alongside their physical collections. Some recipients of their services perceive an academic library as a set of services, but the library as a space, for at least some, remains important. Finally, the relations between the library and its users are changing. In the past, the readers' expectation that the building would be open with its collections available 24/7 seemed extravagant. Today, libraries are more understanding of such demands and extend their opening hours as much as their organizational and financial resources allow, not only as a part of one-off actions ("Night of the Libraries"), but also for longer periods, especially during winter and summer examination sessions (Grygrowski, 2019; Grygrowski, 2020).

Change, then, seems to be a natural state for contemporary libraries.

However, in all of these areas changes progressed gradually, giving people and institutions time for adjustment. Such changes, properly carried out, do not cause crises. It does not mean that crises do not occur, but they may involve different areas and it such experiences are more difficult to generalize.

In the literature on the subject, one can find many articles on crisis situations in libraries, but these texts mainly pertain to natural disasters, and thus they focus on institutions in areas threatened by earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis (Superio et al., 2019). Libraries which experienced natural disasters also share their experiences (Corrigan, 2008). In such cases, the authors describe physical, often irreversible, destruction of buildings and collections, a struggle to preserve what could be saved and to return to normal activities – in financial and organizational terms. An important issue here is the need for disaster response plans prepared in advance and systematically updated after each new experience.

The 2008 financial crisis, which affected libraries alongside other institutions (e.g. Powell, 2010; Spadafora, 2012), also has its own literature.

The authors focus on questions of how to adjust to significantly worsened financial conditions and how to succeed in difficult circumstances.

Finally, libraries want to share experiences of isolated crisis situations – as in a text on crisis communication at the Marriott Library in Utah regarding a forced, two-day (!) closure due to a plague of bedbugs (Soehner et al., 2017). It would seem, therefore, that neither the previous experience of academic libraries, with the changeability of their audiences as a part of their normal operations, nor professional knowledge grounded in the subject literature, could prepare libraries for the coronavirus pandemic, which we have been dealing with for five months.

A common element of various discussions occurring from the first days of the pandemic is the belief that this is a shockingly new situation, incomparable to any previous event; we cannot understand it by extrapolating from our previous experiences, or predict its scale.

CLOSING, RESTRICTIONS, CANCELLATION

The first signals of the impending danger appeared in January 2020. First, universities recommended the cancellation of trips to China, then in February it was suggested to limit contact with northern Italy as well. In early March, the rector of the University of Warsaw (UW) recommended reducing domestic mobility and cancelling events with a large number of participants planned.

On March 10, the UW decided to suspend all full-time classes at the university (initially until April 14, and finally until the end of the summer semester). Open events were cancelled, business trips were suspended, and the University Library (BUW) was closed. The Minister of Science and Higher Education finally decided to suspend classes at all public and private universities in Poland on March 11, 2020 (Łukaszewska 2020). Most of academic libraries in Poland were closed by decision of the university authorities on the 11th or 12th of March. The intensive e-mail correspondence between the library directors shows that they all used this opportunity to plan various cleaning operations that were impossible to carry out while maintaining regular activity. For a time, it was possible to assume that while other institutions would be closed, librarians would continue to work as before. Soon, however, universities began to reduce the duty to work and the entire activity of libraries moved online.

Early spring is usually the time when librarians spend planning their conference activities, including participation in major international events. This year, however, the pandemic affected global library organizations, and conferences were either postponed or re-formatted. The OCLC EMEA

RC conference[1] "Library Futures" scheduled for March 2-5 in Vienna, with the expected participation of librarians from 27 countries, was cancelled in the last days of February. The place of the event had long been chosen, the program had been formulated in detail, and it can be assumed that most of the participants had purchased airline tickets. OCLC, bearing in mind the safety of participants, speakers and organizers, decided to move the conference for the next year – it is to be held in the same place in early spring. Other OCLC regional councils were more fortunate: Americas RC had held its conference in Phoenix in October 2019, and Asia Pacific RC had held its conference in Singapore in November 2019.

The OCLC Global Council meeting scheduled for the second half of March, traditionally held at the company's headquarters in Dublin, Ohio, has been moved online[2]. Similarly, the elections to the Board of Trustees were held remotely. The OCLC made no compromises: each of the four candidates gave an online self-presentation and answered the questions prepared by the Nominating Committee. Everything happened as it would have been an actual Global Council meeting. Out of all library organizations with a global reach, OCLC made the most visible effort to support libraries in the pandemic, running a COVID-19/Information service and offering resources to help (https://www.oclc.org/en/covid-19.html), promoted by the slogan *We're in this together*.

In March, one could still hope that the pandemic would end soon and would not threaten the organization of other library events. It soon became clear, however, that this year neither the LIBER conference scheduled for the end of June in Belgrade, nor the IFLA Congress planned for August in Dublin, Ireland, would take place. LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche) decided to hold its 49th annual conference entirely remotely during the week of June 22-26, 2020. It was possible to register and take part, free of charge and without any restrictions on the number of participants. It was an opportunity which many librarians eagerly took – 2,000 people participated in the LIBER online sessions, exceeding by many times the number of participants from the previous years when the conferences were held in a traditional form[3]. A record of all sessions is available on the organization's website. It is commendable that LIBER, which lists open access, openness in science and science communication among its main areas of interest, has used the full openness of

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[1] Online Computer Library Catalog Europe, Middle East, Africa Regional Council.

[2] I had the opportunity to write a few words about this on the blog of the University of Warsaw Library http://buwlog.uw.edu.pl/doroczne-konferencje-oclc-zdalnie

[3] The conference was described in detail and enthusiastically from the point of view of BUW librarians on BuwLOG: http://buwlog.uw.edu.pl/liber-online-2020-49th-annual-conference, http://buwlog.uw.edu.pl/liber-2020-online-new-trends-in-civic-science, http://buwlog.uw.edu.pl/liber-2020-online-fairsfair

its annual conference to face the crisis affecting many European libraries and librarians.

The success of the LIBER conference proves that less panache and more economy in organization does not have to mean smaller scale. We hope to meet in Belgrade next year, at the 50th jubilee LIBER conference, planned for 23-25 June 2021.

The organizers of the annual IFLA Congress, traditionally scheduled for the second half of August, had more time than other organizations to make a decision. On April 9, a joint statement by the IFLA board and the Irish organizing committee announcing the decision to cancel the Congress appeared on the IFLA website. There was no plan to transfer it to an online platform, which is understandable in the case of this particular organization. Annual IFLA congresses gather crowds of participants (3,100 in Wrocław, 2017; 3,500 in Kuala Lumpur, 2018; 3,600 in Athens, 2019): personal contact among participants and meetings of steering committees of several dozen sections are as important as the speeches of the speakers. An online IFLA might have gone awry. We all hope that the Rotterdam congress will be held as planned in 2021. Next year, IFLA will return to Dublin, while in 2023 it will again attempt to organize its conference in Auckland[4].

IFLA has a COVID-19 FAQ on its website[5] with the information regarding the operating of its administration in the present situation. Next to it, we find the information service "COVID-19 and the Global Library Field"[6] with information materials. The organization maintains constant contact with its members, e.g. through mailings, which did not slacken during the pandemic. IFLA's activity is the best proof of how much can be done online. For example, it is currently collecting declarations to transform the Special Interest Group Environment, Sustainability and Libraries into a new section.

National events were cancelled for the same reasons as major international library conferences. Some of these are to take place in autumn 2020.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW LIBRARY IN A PANDEMIC SITUATION

I will present the situation of my institution in three aspects – people, collections/services, and space – with full awareness that the boundaries are slightly blurred. This model has informed our thinking about the lib-

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[4] Auckland was originally planned as a location for 2020, but the event was also postponed due to the fact that the construction of the planned congress venue - New Zealand International Convention Center - is still not completed.

[5] https://www.ifla.org/covid-19

[6] https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries

rary, as well as our formulation of the institution's strategy for 2019-2023 (Strategy, 2020).

People

In the BUW Strategy for 2019-2023, we wrote that "The University of Warsaw Library is an entity whose aim is to actively support the community of the University of Warsaw in the research and teaching processes". We have identified members of the UW community as priority users: academic teachers, employees who are not academic teachers, doctoral candidates, and students. When planning the activities of the University of Warsaw Library in the period after March 10, when the building was no longer available, we tried to fulfil that aim as far as possible. As is usually the case in relations between the institution and the recipients of its services, communication is the key. This was carried out all the time, without any obstacles, through electronic channels (e-mails, instant messaging, chat). The Information Centre's telephone line resumed operation on the day that temporary lending was launched (May 18).

In this unusual situation, informal channels turned out to be even more important than ever. Thanks to the contacts established in this way, it was possible to better understand and take care of the needs of our users. It appears that the principle written into the strategy of the University of Warsaw Library that "BUW is an institution friendly to users from outside the University of Warsaw" was impossible to follow during the pandemic. In fact, we could not offer people outside the UW community anything – no access to traditional or electronic collections. We could not offer the former because the building was unavailable, the latter – because of the terms of the license agreements.

When thinking about people in the context of the effect of the pandemic on the University of Warsaw Library, one cannot fail to mention the employees. 244 people working in the library found themselves in a completely new situation overnight. The managerial challenge was to organize their work in such a way as to ensure smooth implementation of the few services that we could still offer, and to make good use of the working hours of each employee working remotely. Out of the organizational units of the University of Warsaw Library, only the NUKAT Centre had significant experience with this mode of work, and we often relied on their expertise . Effective communication was crucial in relations between the BUW management and the heads of organizational units of the library, as well as in the relations between managers and employees: setting clear expectations, sending and receiving periodic reports, and finally keeping spirits up. At the beginning of the lockdown period, the workload was unevenly distributed. The organization of remote work on a large scale was made possible by the IT Department, thanks to whom it was possible

to gradually configure VPNs on the devices of those employees who had not used it thus far. The Information Services and Training Department invariably had many responsibilities, mainly to ensure effective communication with users. Numerous tasks were performed by the Administration Department, especially the financial services. Despite the new rules of document circulation introduced by the Bursar's Office of the University of Warsaw, most cases required the presence of BUW employees on the spot. In the departments working with collections or readers on a daily basis, remote work often involved catching up on specialist literature – an activity difficult to fit into the course of daily work. From personal contacts with BUW employees, I know that many of them appreciated this moment of reduced workload and the opportunity to read texts that they should long have been familiar with. It should be noted, however, that this type of work organization makes sense only for a limited period. The prolonged lack of contact with the institution, team, and current tasks does not have a good effect on the institution or the employees.

The University of Warsaw Library made sure to maintain contact with users by publishing photos of its employees, working remotely, on Instagram (#teamBUW). The employees published their photos, showing what their home offices, the places from which they still work for BUW, look like. After a gradual return to the workplace, started posting photos of people working in the library under the sanitary regime (#BUWdlaWas). An important aspect of work organization during the pandemic was the need to ensure the mental well-being of employees. Some people working at the University of Warsaw Library coped with this new situation admirably well: they enthusiastically learned new communication methods and enjoyed the opportunity to use their free time to catch up with work. However, other employees were understandably anxious about their own fate, the health of their relatives, and the future of their workplace. These fears were only partially dispelled by contact with superiors or colleagues. The webinars offered by the University of Warsaw turned out to be a significant source of support. As a part of the Academy of Leaders project (an element of ZIP – Integrated Development Program of the University of Warsaw), management teams could attend online meetings on the following subjects: "Managing your own and employees' emotions in a situation of change and remote work", "How to build one's own and one's employees' involvement – specifics of remote work and work in isolation" and "Assertive communication and cooperation in remote working mode". The session "How to deal with emotions and stress related to remote work" was open to all, so everyone could take part.

The library was also supported by one of the training companies with which we have previously cooperated: it offered two online meetings, "I have the POWER" with further suggestions for supportive reading and

exercises to complete independently. For the majority of BUW employees, this period of remote work has been a difficult, albeit interesting, experience: an unplanned training ground to test out hypothetical scenarios for the future.

Collections / services

BUW's physical collections became unavailable overnight. When on March 10, the Rector of the University of Warsaw decided to close the Library the following day, we made an *ad hoc* decision to increase the loan limit to 20 volumes per person: most of the readers present at the University of Warsaw Library that day eagerly took advantage of the new limit. The loan desk was open until midnight, and with the devices for self--service loans and returns further supporting the queue. The system registered 8,000 transactions, 2,331 of which were in self-service terminals (the average daily borrowing is 1,478 volumes). From March 11, BUW limited its offerings to e-resources. While the UW CRISPA digital library has in its resources public domain objects, available to all recipients without any restrictions, the licensed resources have become inaccessible to readers from outside the University of Warsaw – those who up until now have been using electronic journals and databases on site. The rich offer of the University of Warsaw Library collections has been significantly limited.

The author of an unpublished report on the activities of the Information Services and Training Department during the remote work period, accurately observed that: "During this extraordinary time it became evident how important its scientific infrastructure should be for each university and how much the University of Warsaw and the University of Warsaw Library have so far supported students and scientists from other universities. During the time when libraries' activities were limited, it became clear that a BUW card with the right to borrow and use e-collections is a privilege" (Książczak-Gronowska, 2020).

The University Library in Warsaw was ready to expand its e-book offer to meet the expectations of its readers. It turned out, however, that these expectations could be met only to a limited extent, as not all the titles required were available for purchase, and not all expenses were within the library's budget. A significant increase in the prices of e-books has been noticeable in recent times, causing justified frustration among academic librarians (Anderson, 2020).

 The library also ceased to provide services that could not be carried out remotely (e.g. copying collections).

From mid-March, the University of Warsaw Library provided its readers only with information services provided via electronic communication channels: mail, chat, Ask a Librarian, messenger, regularly updated website and social media. Contact was much more intensive than in pre-

vious periods. The chat service "Ask a Librarian" was until 2020 viewed as a tool of decreasing usefulness, but over the ten weeks between mid--March and the end of May it facilitated 590 interviews (by comparison, in the entire year of 2019 only 352 such interviews were noted)[7].

The Information Services and Training Department, responsible for informing readers about the library's operational mode, the availability of collections, and the scope of services provided, modified the content of the library website on an ongoing basis. The website was modified almost 400 times in that period. Aside from updating the website, the library provided the information regarding its functioning on social media (Facebook and Instagram).

Space

Before the pandemic, the longest break in access to the BUW building had been the period when the library was moving from Krakowskie Przedmieście to the new building in Powiśle in 1999 – from July 19 to December 15, a total of 149 days. This time, the break will be longer. BUW was closed to its users on March 11, 2020; one can hope we will return to normal functioning with the commencement of classes at the University of Warsaw, scheduled for October 15. On April 27, a trezor, a device for returning books, appeared in front of the library door. On May 18, we started lending books in a room temporarily not used for other purposes on the ground floor of the library building, adapted to the needs of the library. With the support of the university administration, it was possible to quickly organize and equip the space in such a way that book borrowing would be safe for readers and librarians. Service points are equipped with plexiglass shutters, readers are required to wear a mask and disinfect hands, employees wear masks or visors. Before entering the room, the reader's body temperature is measured using a non-contact thermometer; people with a temperature higher than 37 degrees Celsius are not allowed inside. The library carefully ensures maintenance of distances in the queue – the appropriate markings are glued to the floor. The surfaces are systematically disinfected and the books are quarantined for five days after they are returned. Precise control of the movement of people and collections would not be possible inside the BUW, which is an open space.

The free access area is still closed. We made use of this time to clean, remove old and damaged furniture, clean chairs and carpets, and re-organize visual information. Work in this space goes on comfortably, without disturbing anyone, but with full awareness that a library closed to readers is a contradiction in itself. This space should serve people. In recent years,

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[7] These and subsequent figures from the already mentioned OUIS Activity Report on March 11-31, 2020 [mat. unpublished].

we have taken many steps to increase the availability of our building even more – extending the duration of the "BUW for owls" campaign and opting not to shorten the opening hours during the summer holidays. The current situation is therefore definitely exceptional.

WHAT'S AFTER THE CORONA CRISIS?

The Rector of the University of Warsaw, prof. Marcin Pałys, at the meeting of the University Senate on June 24, 2020, conducted remotely (as all meetings of this body have been from April 2020), summarizing the atypical end of his and the Senate's term of office and referring to the exceptional situation of recent months, recalled a saying attributed to Churchill: *Never waste a good crisis*. And it seems that this will be the real challenge – to draw conclusions from a crisis situation that can be referred to in other crisis situations and during regular activity.

Forums for the exchange of experiences and sharing opinions on the current situation appeared very early on. COVID-19 Roundtable, organized as part of the online OCLC Global Council meeting, had an open formula: it allowed participants to share their experiences, but also feelings about the situation, to admit helplessness, and to complain of stress related to an uncertain future. The editors of the American Libraries Live website allowed a similar discussion, organizing a series of webinars under the common title of "Libraries and COVID-19", devoted to the following issues: *Managing Strategies and Stress* (March 20), *Providing Virtual Services* (March 26), *Considering Copyright during a Crisis* (April 3 and 17), *Using 3D Printing to Make Personal Protective Equipment* (April 9), *Reimagining Programming during a Pandemic* (June 1)[8]. Two editions of a webinar on the organization of remote work were conducted by EBSCO: during the first one, on April 2, 2020 ("Library on the Internet – how to organize remote work for librarians and readers"), the following participants spoke about their experiences: Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko, Centrum NUKAT ("Experience in remote work from the perspective of the central catalog"), Anna Grygorowicz, Library of the Medical University of Gdańsk ("Supporting research needs online from the point of view of the medical library"), Izabela Gajda, Library of the Łódź University of Technology ("Library on the Internet – remote work of librarians and readers of the Łódź University of Technology Library during the suspension of classes at TUL due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus threat ")[9]. In the second, which took place on April 23 ("Library on the Internet – remote work of librarians as support for stu-

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[8] A record of all webinars is available at https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/al-live/
[9] https://www.ebsco.com/e/pl-pl/blog/biblioteka-w-internet-jak-zorganizowa-prac-zdaln-bibliotekarzy-i-czytelni

dents and lecturers"), the speakers were Dr. Leszek Szafrański, Jagiellonian Library ("Open access to library collections in the age of a pandemic – experience from remote work at the Digital Collection Department of the Jagiellonian Library "), Monika Gościk, Library of the Academic State University of Pope John Paul II in Biała Podlaska ("Will emergency solutions become standardized – and which ones – based on the example of remote work of the PSW Academic Library in Biała Podlaska")[10].

Relatively early, there were attempts to consider specific areas of social life and to assess the impact of the pandemic on them (Chamera-Nowak, Kisilowska, 2020). Dr Bożena Jaskowska from the University of Rzeszów attempted to systematically gather the experiences of librarians from the pandemic period in a comprehensive survey "Managing academic libraries during a pandemic – practices, barriers and challenges" – the results of this study are to be published soon..

We might distinguish two, markedly different, periods of the current crisis. In the first one, after the regular operation of the institution was suspended, the focus was on the continued provision of on-line services. The example of the University of Warsaw proves how intense such activities might be. As Katarzyna Łukaszewska writes in the "UW Journal". "So far, about 700 e-courses have been offered annually on the university's e-learning platform. Now this number was about to rise rapidly. Thanks to the huge efforts of teachers and the Digital Competence Centre (CKC) staff who support them, 1,371 new e-classes were made available on the Kampus platform within 10 days. [...] The interest in remote classes was so great that CKC launched an additional platform for their implementation. In total, 2,481 new courses were launched on the two platforms from mid-March to early June, with 36,524 students attending. The lecturers could also use other IT tools enabling remote lectures, e.g. G Suite for Education. The Department of Computer Networks supported them in this, running a special Facebook group 'DSK Usługi IT', which over 1000 people signed up for. Before March 10, 65 classes were conducted in Google Classroom, and by March 23, 900 were launched. From mid-March to June, 8,808 unique videoconferences with the use of Google Meet were conducted" (Łukaszewska, 2020, p. 6). The libraries mentioned above operated with a similar intensity.

The second period was marked by a gradual return to regular activity. Here, the most important thing was (and remains) to conduct this activity effectively and safely. This temporary stage will probably last until we are sure that the full opening of buildings and running of services in a manner employed before the pandemic is completely safe for users and employees.

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[10] https://www.ebsco.com/e/pl-pl/blog/biblioteka-w-internecie-zdalna-praca-bibliotekarzy-wsparciem-studentow-i-wy" \h

What lessons will we learn from the pandemic? We should be aware that remote operation of the university was a good solution for surviving the lockdown, but it should not become the dominant business model. The chairman of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland explicitly addressed this issue: "Distance learning will not replace direct relations between students and lecturers. Studies are not only about rigid knowledge, information, and procedures, but also intellectual formation. You won't get this remotely. Yes, some people may like the current situation and the solutions applied, because, for example, they do not have to come to work every day, but it has nothing to do with the real activities of the university. [...] This is a temporary solution, and certainly not a target"(Szmidt, 2020).

Academic libraries seem to be stronger from this experience. It can be hoped that they will be better prepared for crisis situations of various natures, learn to better plan for them and know how to maintain the continuity of service in different circumstances (developing a set of good practices in dealing with a crisis common for various libraries should be the next task). It can be assumed that libraries will pay attention to their relations with employees, enabling more remote work, intensify digitization so that more collections are available online and strengthen the technical infrastructure (Breeding 2020).

Paradoxically, the pandemic and lockdown resulted in positive developments for the university as well. In May and June 2020, the University Library in Warsaw became involved in the preparation of an application to the EU Horizon 2020 competition "Science with and for society" along with other universities associated in the 4EU + Alliance (which include also Charles University in Prague, the University of Heidelberg, Sorbonne University, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Milan)[11]. The difficult situation in which the application was prepared did not interfere with the work: on the contrary, it gave it more urgency even though the project team met only online. The project includes, among other things, activities related to open access, its implementation and promotion. The circumstances influenced the argumentation of the application in these areas. These days no one needs to be convinced of the value of open resources and open science, but in the present situation their value seems even greater. At the end of July it was announced that the application was positively assessed and that the project TRAIN4EU + ("Transforming ReseArch & INnovation agendas and support in 4EU") has received funding, which will enable the development of research and support for innovation for the universities of the 4EU + Alliance.

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[11] http://4euplus.eu/4EU-1.html

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ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN A VUCA REALITY: THE EXAMPLE OF THE FUNCTIONING OF LIBRARIES DURING THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

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KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries. Organizational flexibility. COVID-19 outbreak. Lockdown. Remote work. Change management. VUCA.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis / purpose of the article** – The aim of the article is to present management solutions used in academic libraries in a changing and unpredictable environment, on the example of the functioning of units during the lockdown period caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, which lasted from March 12 to the beginning of June 2020. **Research method** – Research was conducted among

the directors of Polish academic libraries using an online survey as a research tool. **Results and conclusions** – The research analysis shows that academic libraries showed considerable organizational flexibility during the lockdown period, especially in terms of changing duties, forming plans "just in time", extending the scope of services and organizing large-scale remote and rotational work. Some libraries have also changed decision-making processes. This is the first such study of the functioning of academic libraries during the lockdown period.

For years there has been talk about the need for a flexible approach to the management of academic libraries, the ability to quickly adapt to environmental changes and requirements, and an agile approach to processes and tasks. But it seems that only the COVID-19 epidemic and the nearly 3-month lockdown introduced in relation to it in 2020 have made management face the real problems of quick, flexible, and effective introduction of changes to the core operations of their facilities and redefine their current operating philosophy.

The aim of this article is to take a closer look at management practices and solutions, with particular emphasis on the organizational flexibility that was implemented in Polish academic libraries during the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. Lockdown is understood as the period from March 12 to the beginning of June 2020. The characterization was carried out on the basis of the author's own research, which was carried out using the sociological method of an online survey as a research tool among the directors of academic libraries in Poland.

THE VUCA REALITY AND THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

In December 2019, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which appeared in the Chinese city of Wuhan, quickly spread to the entire country and other continents. Since February 2020, the world has not talked about anything other than the "coronavirus" – the rapid spread of the disease, lack of vaccine, high mortality in the elderly or those with comorbidities, information noise and, above all, the lack of preparation of state institutions and the inefficiency of health services turned the event, which up to that point had been perceived as a marginal and local problem of Chinese society, into a powerful global crisis. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, and experts, virologists, and doctors generally agreed that the wave of further illnesses and fatalities could only be effectively stopped by a strict lockdown. Most governments introduced extensive restrictions on public, social, and economic life. Enterprises, schools, airports, cultural institutions, as well as service and gastronomic premises were closed. Movement restrictions were introduced, borders were closed. Epidemic statistics became more and more disturbing: on April 30,

2020, over 3 million cases were registered and nearly 218,000 deaths were identified (WHO, 2020), and despite the sanitary restrictions introduced, the epidemic did not end. For companies and institutions, their continued existence depended upon quick and flexible adaptation to the new reality. Many of them – for the first time in their histories, in fact – have now had direct contact with the phenomenon known as VUCA (Worley & Jules, 2020).

VUCA is an acronym for the following words: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, which in the military and political environment were first used to describe the changing and turbulent reality that emerged after the end of the Cold War, which then found application in depicting the world in the crisis after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 (VUCA, 2020). Since then, the term VUCA has experienced a kind of renaissance, especially in the concepts of strategic leadership, where it is used to outline the context of functioning and creating models of effective management of organizations (Judek, 2020). What is the reality of VUCA? Volatility (changeability, elusiveness) refers to the dynamics of the conditions for the functioning of an organization (e.g. instability of the legal and economic system, natural disasters, terrorist attacks), which make created plans, procedures or strategies of action quickly obsolete or even inadequate. The greater the volatility, the more perceptible insecurity (Uncertainty) about the future appears, which makes decision-making processes very difficult and forces the preparation of various action scenarios and risk management concepts. Complexity, in turn, has its source in the overlapping of many different areas of activity and in the interpenetration of relationships and influences. It is also in the dynamics of the system, the flood of information and big data, i.e. large, diverse, and variable databases. Such phenomena disrupt the classic cause and effect chain and may additionally hinder planned and effective management. Ambiguity appears in unknown or multi-meaning situations, as well as when not everything can be explained in a simple way on the basis of logic or previous experience (Krawczyńska-Zaucha, 2019).

In the face of the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, where each new day brought new surprising news, where many forecasts and scenarios regarding the development of the health, social, and economic situation did not work, where the world was flooded with false information, of which there was so much that the phenomenon has been referred to as infodemic, it seems that there is no other adequate term than VUCA to describe such a changing and turbulent reality. And in the organizations themselves, the ability to flexibly and boldly adapt to unexpected events began to count even more than before.

The reality of VUCA can put leaders into total management stagnation, lure them into the trap of over-control, and influence wrong decisions. The

discomfort associated with uncertainty may result in abandoning entrepreneurial actions and force one to make conservative or, on the contrary, hasty and ill-considered decisions. For many managers, VUCA may, however, be an opportunity to redefine the organization's goals, method of operation, and human resource management. And thereby to improve the efficiency of operation.

How did Polish academic libraries cope in these new conditions, forced by the COVID-19 epidemic? Have the directors and employees of Polish academic libraries shown flexibility in reorganizing library and information services? How did remote work – not very common so far in the library environment – work? What was the biggest problem and what turned out to be an opportunity? What conclusions were made? These questions, among others, as well as the author's own experiences in the field of academic library management in the aforementioned period, were the basis and inspiration for a closer look at the phenomenon of organizational flexibility of libraries and to undertake the research described in this article.

ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Flexibility, understood as the ability to adapt an organization to the conditions in the environment, is nowadays considered one of the basic criteria of organizational effectiveness (Ziębicki, 2010). In the case of librarianship, this aspect is most often discussed in relation to the flexibility of the organizational structure, which consists in the ability to quickly adapt to changes. Flexible structures efficiently react both to changes originating in the external environment of the library and to those resulting from inside the organization. In this case, flexibility is supported by: delegating powers, reducing the management levels, minimizing formalization and bureaucracy, as well as being sensitive to signals from the environment (Wojciechowska et al., 2018, p. 66).

Flexibility and the related openness to changes and signals from the environment can be considered in several dimensions, which are also confirmed in modern management concepts. In the case of knowledge management and organizational learning, flexibility ensures a continuous flow of knowledge and its effective use to transform the organization. In process management and reengineering, flexibility is associated with the monitoring of signals from the environment and customer satisfaction as the basis for the improvement of organizational processes. Changing one's way of thinking, understanding the environment, and providing adaptive responses are also basic conditions for effective management in the spirit of lean management (Ziębicki, 2010, pp. 390-391). The same is true in the

case of agile management, where flexibility is the determinant of project implementation. Iterative, incremental approaches to the organization of team work, along with a flexible and interactive forms of activities, arose from the practice of IT project management, where instead of cascading and planned project management there is an emphasis on changes, which are a natural element of project delivery. *Agile Manifesto (Manifesto for agile software development)*, which is the particular mission statement of the creators of this programming philosophy, lists the following pillars of the approach discussed: individuals and interactions (over processes and tools), customer collaboration (over formal arrangements and contract negotiations), working software (over comprehensive and detailed documentation), and responding to changes (over following a plan) (Manifest, 2001). Currently, the agile approach, due to its flexibility, universality, and the possibility of using it in a changing and turbulent environment, is widely used outside the IT environment, e.g. in many areas of business, in the public sector, and in research and development. It is also implemented in library practice (Haricombe, ed., 1998).

C.G. Worley and C. Jules, in the context of analysing the organizational flexibility of companies during the COVID-19 epidemic, point to the need to distinguish so-called "brilliant improvisation" from the repetitive ability to learn and flexible adaptation to the environment. While the first phenomenon, based on creativity, spontaneity, and considerable courage, can bring spectacular effects, they are usually one-off and short-lived. Organizations that care about the long-term agile ability to organize processes must have the ability to constantly learn, test, and consciously implement innovations and novelties. Agility in the case of reality VUCA can support the organization's resistance to turbulence and facilitate flexible introduction of changes to its procedures, as well as be the basis for the practice of so-called "change fluency" as an element of the natural development of an organization (Worley & Jules, 2020, p. 281).

Already in the 1990s, the importance of implementing a flexible agile approach to the management of academic libraries was being emphasized, to be a response to significant technological, social and organizational changes in higher education. Creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, the ability to take risks and manage them, as well as the ability to implement changes effectively – these were the features that allowed academic libraries to respond effectively and quickly to the needs of users and to changes in the entire academic ecosystem (Haricombe, ed., 1998). At the beginning of 2020, when in the economic, social and scientific areas the whole world stopped due to the emergence of the virus and the threat it carried to people's health and lives, the organizational flexibility of companies, enterprises and non-profit sector entities became basically the only chance to function effectively in the reality of VUCA.

As in commercial organizations, also in libraries the key to effective functioning in a turbulent environment is organizational flexibility, the ability to learn and introduce changes. S. O'Connor points to the following areas of library practice which are particularly important in this area: focusing on people, taking into account their experiences and emotions, with a focus on action and on overcoming anxieties and fears; treating change as an ongoing process; clear, understandable, honest communication between stakeholders with an emphasis on commitment, empathy, education and inclusion; treating resistance to change as an opportunity and shaping an organizational culture conducive to change and the introduction of changes to the natural environment of the library's functioning (O'Connor, ed., 2015, pp. 3-18). The deployment of agile practice to implement processes in the library (first in IT projects, then in other areas) is a difficult task, but the benefits obtained confirm the point of taking these actions, which can be seen in the example of the Chalmers Library. The following benefits should be mentioned here: the organization learns all the time, librarians know how to react to changes, how to modify priorities and distribute tasks among themselves, and how to build effective teams, and they are also able to identify risks early and react to them. It is worth adding that the implementation of the agile approach in the library forces employees to open communication and discussion, reveals differences of opinion and makes them think about what is being done and for what purpose, what is indirectly shaped by commitment and a sense of agency (O'Connor, ed. 2015, pp. 97-98). It is therefore emphasized that the success of agile functioning in the library environment depends on the charisma of the leader and the maturity of the team. Librarians need to be aware of the role they and the organization as a whole play in sharing information and disseminating knowledge.

M. Ali and P. Gatiti, listing the most important tasks that scientific libraries should perform during the COVID-19 epidemic, first of all mention: promoting public health awareness by creating and disseminating information on preventive measures; supporting research teams, scientists and lecturers by providing them with the latest research results and necessary literature; and meeting the basic needs of ordinary library users (Ali & Gatiti, 2020). Another, very important role of librarians in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic is emphasized by S. Naeem and R. Bhatti, who underline that it is the professional information services that bear the responsibility for fighting the massively emerging fake news (Naeem & Bhatti, 2020). The Infodemic, defined by the World Health Organization as the rapid and immediate spread internationally of various information, including gossip, rumours, and untrustworthy facts, via social media, the Internet, and other communication technologies, is a huge threat (WHO, 2018). People develop fear, insecurity, sometimes aggression, as well as

distrust of public institutions and improper behaviour that threatens health or life. S. Naeem and R. Bhatti cite the IFLA recommendations according to which the identification of fake news should follow this scheme: checking the source of the information, its author and publication date; verifying it in terms of one's own (biased) beliefs; checking the context of the information and additional sources; reflecting on whether the information is not a joke or a provocation; conducting expert inquiry (Naeem & Bhatti, 2020). Librarians can support users in principle at each of the mentioned stages of fake news verification.

ACTIVITIES OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD – LEGAL CONDITIONS IN POLAND

The functioning of academic libraries during the lockdown period, understood as the period from about March 12 to the beginning of June 2020, was regulated by legal acts published by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Development, as well as by the recommendations of the National Library and internal procedures and decisions of university authorities based on central guidelines.

On March 11, 2020, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, following the recommendation of the Government Crisis Management Team, decided to introduce measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in higher education institutions (MNiSW, 2020a). Classes at universities were suspended from March 12, at the same time indicating that scientific activities were to be continued. On March 16, 2020, in connection with the introduction of further restrictions by the Government of the Republic of Poland, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education published a new recommendation on "considering work restrictions by university employees, including non-academic teachers", in particular regarding the use of remote work in conjunction with the on-call system and limited access to buildings on the campus. On the same day, another information was published on the website of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education regarding the exemption from the obligation to work at the university, except in cases where it was necessary to ensure the continuity of the university's operation (MNiSW, 2020b). The aforementioned guidelines on remote work, on-call duty or release from work obligations had a direct impact on the way of organizing library activities during the lockdown period.

The announcement of the epidemic in Poland (MZ, 2020) on March 20, influenced further decisions on the operation of the school system:

first the functioning of the university was suspended until April 10, then April 26, and finally May 24. In the meantime, on April 28, the Ministry of Development published extensive *Guidelines for the functioning of libraries during the COVID-19 epidemic in Poland* (MR, 2020), which included recommendations for ensuring the safety of library employees and staff, security in buildings, and procedures for dealing with suspected coronavirus infection. On May 22, 2020, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education provided information about the gradual lifting of restrictions on the activities of universities, among other things regarding the introduction of exceptions where necessary to the principle of distance learning. Guidelines were also published to help in the development of new university procedures, which were approved by the Chief Sanitary Inspector and which were to ensure safe functioning in the event of a threat of infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2020c). As far as the operation of libraries is concerned, these guidelines were based on the recommendations of the Ministry of Development of April 28 (MR, 2020) and stressed the need to: limit the number of people entering buildings, equip librarians with personal protective equipment, i.e. masks and gloves, "introduce a system of online lending to limit contacts between borrowers and library employees" and create conditions for contact-free reader service, and enforce obligatory hand disinfection and the use of gloves. At the beginning of June 2020, despite the fact that teaching at universities was still based on remote technologies, academic libraries, taking care of compliance with the sanitary regime and ensuring safety, gradually began to open up to users again. Various solutions were adopted, but in most cases the following precautions and safeguards were implemented: limiting the number of people in the building and/or separating some rooms as an open zone, equipping the direct user service stations with Plexiglas protection, introducing the obligation for readers to wear masks and disinfect hands, subjecting books to quarantine for several days, frequent airing of rooms and disinfection of worktops, equipping librarians with masks, gloves, visors, changing opening hours, restricting access to computer stations, etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD – THE AUTHOR'S OWN RESEARCH

The study, the subject of which was the functioning of Polish academic libraries during the lockdown period (understood as the period from about March 12 to the beginning of June 2020), was carried out using the sociological method of a survey as a research tool. The on-line survey, to-

gether with an invitation to participate in the research, was published on the discussion list of the Conference of Directors of Polish Academic Libraries, drawing on directors of academic libraries. It was also sent to the libraries of the top ten non-public universities according to the Perspektywy 2019 Ranking, in order to collect data from the directors of libraries of non-public universities. The data collection period was June 29 – July 10, 2020. 37 correctly completed questionnaires were obtained (a return rate of 30%), which makes it difficult to consider the survey results representative for all academic libraries in Poland. However, the information obtained and the collected conclusions provide a broad insight into the principles of functioning of Polish academic libraries during the lockdown period and their organizational flexibility, and can offer an interesting voice in the discussion on the operation of academic librarianship in the reality of VUCA.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

As mentioned, 37 respondents (directors) from academic libraries in Poland took part in the survey. At this point, it is worth mentioning the number of people employed in the surveyed institutions, as in many situations it affects management strategies and the ability to flexibly adapt to the environment. The study thus represents establishments diversified in terms of the number of employees (see Chart 1). The largest percentage (43%) were academic libraries employing 16-50 people, every fourth (24%) employs up to 15 people, 11% were large libraries with over 100 employees. As for the form of ownership, 84% of the surveyed information services were entities operating at public universities.

Size of surveyed libraries – number of employees

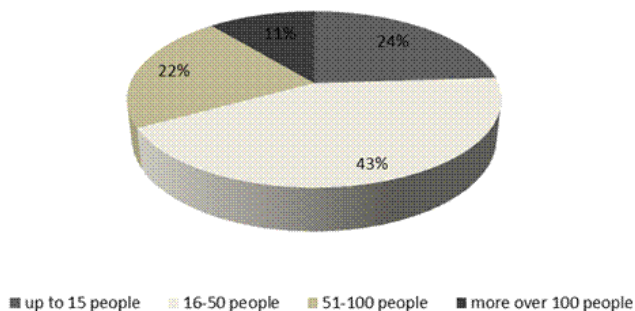■ up to 15 people   ▨ 16-50 people   ▨ 51-100 people   ■ more over 100 people

Chart 1. Size of the surveyed libraries in terms of the number of employees.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

The survey shows that 89% of academic libraries were operational during the discussed period. However, the activity was limited, both in terms of the type of services provided and the periods in which they were available. 11% of the surveyed units were completely closed to users.

WORK MODE AND ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

The fact that academic libraries provided services to users during the lockdown period is in itself a confirmation that there were some changes in their organization and flexible adaptation to the existing situation. Chart 2 shows the range of services that were provided to the academic community. It is impossible not to notice – understandable during the lockdown period – the shift of emphasis from traditional to electronic services. However, it is worth noting the activities aimed at extending this access, also by purchasing new licenses, as well as the emergence of new forms of services, such as digitization on request or the organization of remote events for users. In the open question, the respondents also mentioned other forms of activity, such as active involvement of librarians in interdisciplinary university teams for distance learning or strengthening cooperation with educators in the selection of electronic sources.

Services provided by academic libraries

Service	Percentage
sharing electronic resources - remote access	86,5%
extending e-sources made available by publishers	83,8%
scientific information services	73,0%
digitization on request	67,6%
expanding electronic resources through purchases	56,8%
accepting returns	56,8%
on-line user training	43,2%
lending books	37,8%
organization of remote events for users	18,9%
reading room available on request	8,1%

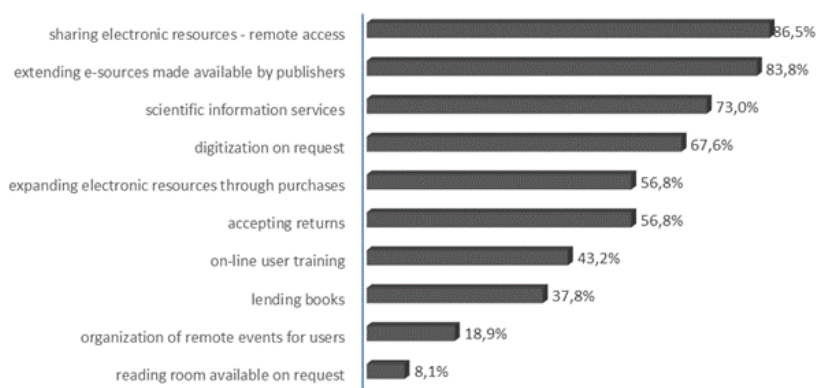Chart 2. Services provided by academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own study, 2020.

Organization of processes, ability to predict activities, risk estimation, rational use of resources and effective division of tasks, as well as awareness of control and impact on the course of events, both for managers and employees, are the undoubted advantages of having a plan and following

its guidelines. However, persistently and unreflectively sticking to the plan can also have negative effects. The survey therefore asked directors of academic libraries how activities during the lockdown period had been organized and planned. It turns out that basically all libraries (97%) had an action plan, but in the vast majority it was created on an ongoing basis according to the current situation. So there was something like "just in time" planning. The uncertain and unpredictable reality of the COVID-19 epidemic meant that any long-term planning was out of the question.

Was there an action plan?
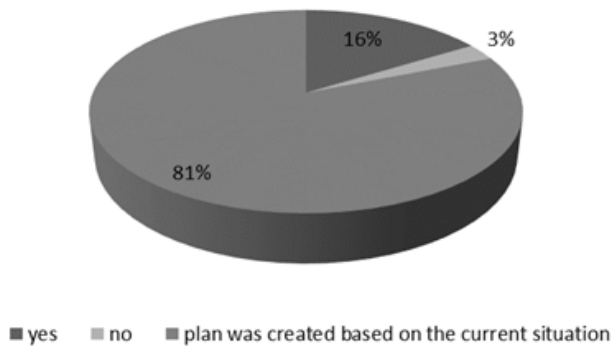
Chart 3. Action plan of academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

Organizational flexibility in academic libraries may be manifested in the reorganization of the organizational structure, changes in responsibilities, changes in decision-making processes, or in the approach to plans and procedures. These issues, among others, were the subject of this research.

When it comes to decision-making processes, more than half of the directors (54%) admitted that as part of the rector's recommendations regarding the functioning of the entire university during the pandemic, they could independently decide on the rules of library operation. Almost 38% could manage their libraries themselves, but to a very limited extent. In only 8% of cases the directors had nothing to say. This result confirms the fact that it is difficult to treat the library like other administrative units, and so it is good that the directors had been left independent in this matter.

Decision-making processes inside the library

10,8%

27,0%

56,8%

■ decisions were made in the same manner

▫ managers have been more involved in decision-making processes

■ employees have been involved to a greater extent in decision-making processes

■ employees have been involved to a greater extent in decision-making processes

■ managers participated in decision-making processes to a lesser extent than before
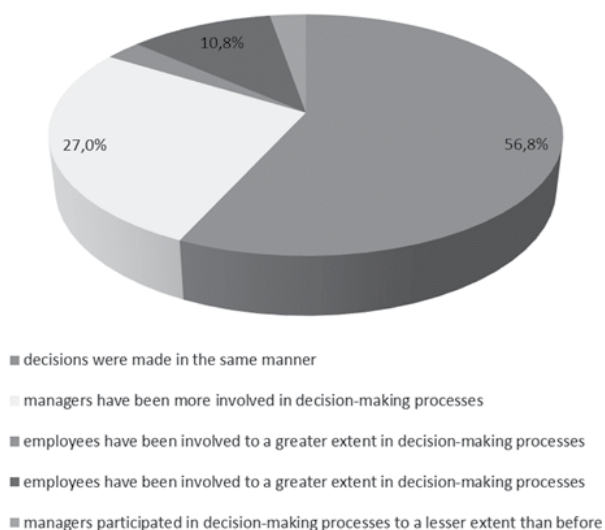
Chart 4. Decision-making processes in academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

And how were the decision-making processes carried out inside the library? Have they changed from before the lockdown? The analysis of responses to the question concerning making executive decisions shows that most libraries (57%) did not introduce changes in this area. But it is impossible not to notice the fact that in the remaining part of the surveyed libraries there were modifications in this matter: in every fourth library (27%) managers were more involved in decision-making processes, and in 11% they were excluded from this process. A closer look at the results shows that the changes in decision-making processes were mainly introduced in smaller libraries, employing up to 50 people. The previous decision-making system was maintained in larger libraries.

However, while changes in decision-making processes took place but were not a common phenomenon, when it comes to changes in the scopes of duties, the external situation forced specific actions in this regard. As it turns out, in 73% of cases changes were made to the scope of duties. Interestingly, the vast majority of this happened in an informal manner.

Were there changes in the scope of responsibilities?

27,0%   16,2%

56,8%

■ yes   ■ yes but not formally   ■ no
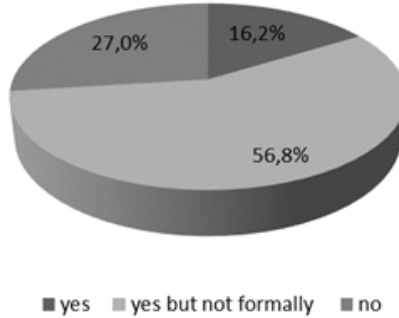
Chart 5. Changes in the responsibilities of academic librarians during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

Changes in the scope of responsibilities were forced, among other things, by the need or requirement to assign remote work to librarians whose traditional duties could not be transferred to the virtual space (e.g. warehouse workers, direct reader service). Remote work is another manifestation of the organizational flexibility that has become quite common in libraries due to lockdown. Similar is a rotational system of work, in which remote work, on-call duty in the library, and "readiness", i.e., no work performed for the employer, are alternated.

The research shows that the most common organizational solution was either rotational work in which librarians alternately worked remotely and were on duty in the library – this was used in over 78% of cases – or remote work only (62%), where no roster was used. In a few cases, also confirmed by an analysis of the answers to the next question, there was a "state of readiness" maintained.

Mode of operation

rotational work: in the library / remote work	78,4%
remote work (from home)	62,2%
work in place in the library	21,6%
providing only work that ensures continuity	16,2%
rotational work: library duty / "standby"	16,2%
rotational work: remote work / "standby"	13,5%

Chart 6. Mode of operation in academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

"Standby" is a new phenomenon that has arisen in academic libraries in connection with the lockdown. The possibility of its introduction was given by the Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of March 16, 2020 on "limiting the obligation to perform work by university employees in their area, except for cases where it is necessary to ensure the continuity of the university's operation" (MNiSW, 2020b). The research analysis shows that this solution (otherwise questionable in terms of a fair division of labour and negatively influencing the motivation of the entire team) was used, but not in a common way. In almost half (48.6%) of the libraries there was no "standby", and in the remaining cases it covered only a few people: up to 10% of the staff (27% of responses), and 11-25% of the staff (13.5% of responses). Not surprisingly, "standby" was much more frequent in larger libraries employing over 50 people.

"Standby" in academic libraries

5,4%   5,4%

13,5%

27,0%

48,6%

■ there was no standby, all employees had assigned tasks
  a few people were on standby (up to 10% of the crew)
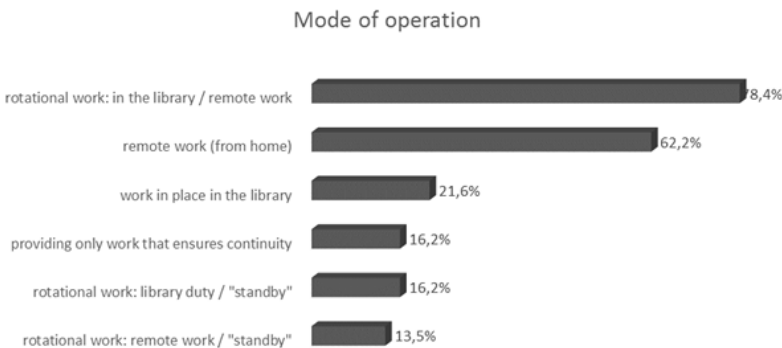■ 11-25% of the crew were on standby
■ 26-40% of the crew were on standby
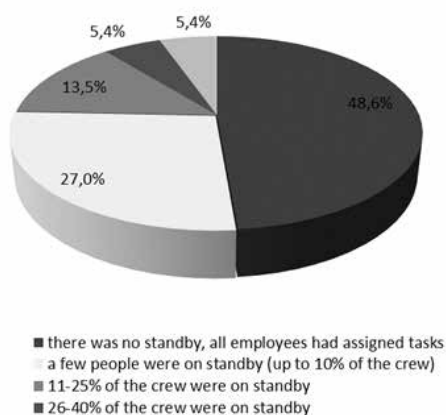
Chart 7. "Standby" in academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

Managing such a dispersed team of employees is not easy. You can fall either into the trap of excessive control, or – counting on the maturity and honesty of your subordinate employees – give up monitoring, and thereby lose access to up-to-date information on the progress of work. How was the control of tasks, performed remotely or in rotation by librarians, performed during the lockdown period? Very different solutions, adequate to organizational and cultural conditions, were used. It is difficult moreover to point to a clear dominance of one of them, especially since several different options were often used simultaneously. Thus systematic remote meetings were held in libraries as well as monitoring via computer systems. As for frequency, control was usually carried out once a week or ir-

regularly depending on the decision of the supervisor. It can be concluded that the methods of control were adapted to the individual conditions prevailing in specific libraries. It is worth adding that when answering the question about the forms of exercising control, one could choose the phrase: "control was not exercised" – however, no respondent indicated this answer.

Maintaining control

systematic remote meetings	35,1%
reporting at least once a week	29,7%
work monitored via computer systems	24,3%
irregular reporting - conditioned by the...	21,6%
daily reporting to the immediate supervisor	21,6%
random checks	18,9%
use of remote work management programs	5,4%
minimum reporting once a month	5,4%
reporting at least once every two weeks	2,7%

Chart 8. Controlling work in academic libraries during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

REMOTE WORK

Remote work (telework, home office) – is an organizational solution that has rarely been used in library practice so far. Despite its advantages (e.g. the ability to reconcile work and family life, greater commitment and flexibility, time savings resulting from the absence of travel to work, greater loyalty, and less stress), it also has many disadvantages, e.g. the need to independently plan and organize the day, lower productivity and efficiency, limited access to the resources of the organization, lowering the comfort of living, limited contact with colleagues, technical difficulties, depreciation of remote work as "sitting at home" (Dolot, 2020. p. 37). Lockdown, however, forced directors and librarians to switch to this mode of work. How was it dealt with? What tasks were carried out in this regard? What was the issue of procedures, equipment and IT support? These issues were also the subject of the research.

Tasks performed as part of remote work

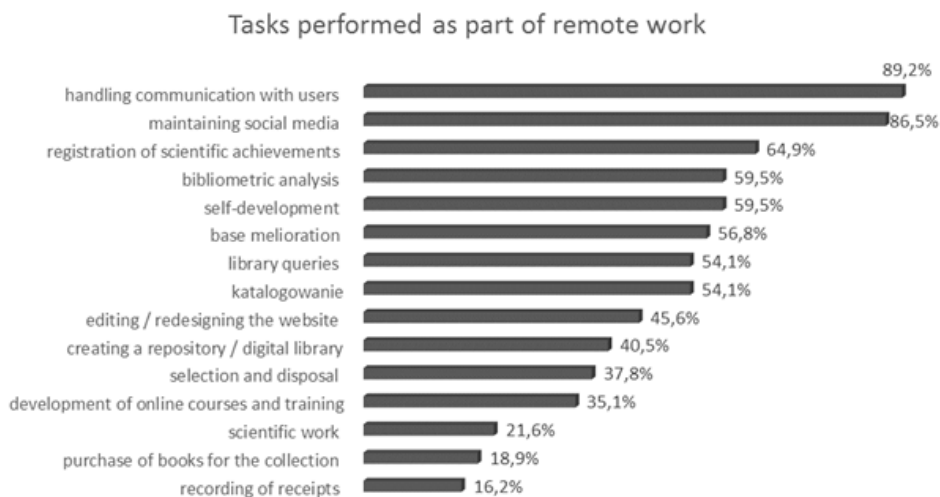| Task	Percentage
handling communication with users	89,2%
maintaining social media	86,5%
registration of scientific achievements	64,9%
bibliometric analysis	59,5%
self-development	59,5%
base melioration	56,8%
library queries	54,1%
katalogowanie	54,1%
editing / redesigning the website	45,6%
creating a repository / digital library	40,5%
selection and disposal	37,8%
development of online courses and training	35,1%
scientific work	21,6%
purchase of books for the collection	18,9%
recording of receipts	16,2%

Chart 9. Tasks performed as part of remote work in academic libraries during the lockdown.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

The most common tasks performed remotely were handling communication with users (89%) and maintaining a library's profile in social media (86.5%). Not surprisingly, scientific information was also conducted remotely: the scientific achievements of researchers were recorded (including the preparation of data for migration in the new Polish Scientific Bibliography system), bibliometric analyses were conducted, and queries were carried out. Interestingly, the "self-development" of employees was also widely practiced. Chart 9 shows the wide range of tasks performed through remote work – many of them, as suggested by the answers in the open question, are new tasks, assigned to employees who so far had not had it in their scope of duties. Analysing the results of the study, it can be concluded that the organization of remote work to such a large extent and in such a wide, unprecedented scope confirms the organizational flexibility of academic libraries.

How was remote work organized? It is not surprising that the vast majority of librarians (54%) who performed their professional duties in this way did it using their own computer equipment. In 19% of cases, all employees worked on their own equipment, and business equipment was used to a similar extent (18%). It is worth adding that there were libraries that provided their employees not only with equipment, but also the possibility of purchasing an additional data transfer package.

In terms of ensuring the security of information processed remotely, more than half of the libraries (51%) relied on already existing procedures. In every fourth library, the existing procedures needed updating.

Procedures ensuring security of information

- ■ procedures were in place before the pandemic and were sufficient

-   procedures were in place before the pandemic but had to be updated and adapted to the current situation

- ■ procedures were developed on an ongoing basis in line with the developing situation

- ■ there were no procedures in place and so far there are none

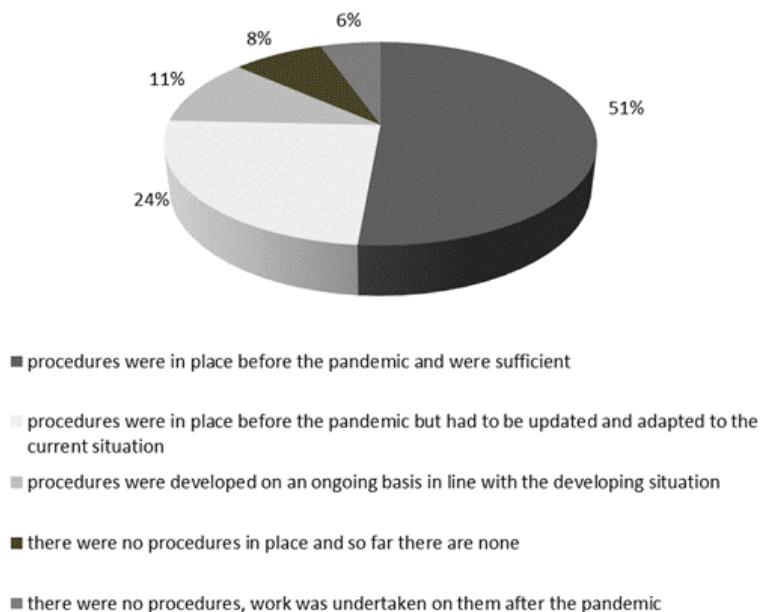- ■ there were no procedures, work was undertaken on them after the pandemic

Chart 10. Procedures ensuring security of information processed remotely in academic libraries during the lockdown.

Source: Author's own research, 2020.

What IT solutions were used when working remotely? The most popular solutions used in over half of libraries were access to library websites and servers by a VPN client (59% of responses), and access to websites via a remote desktop (54%). Cloud-based solutions were also used (40%), and offline work was organized in manner resembling the putting-out system, being then "ripped" to the systems in the library (19%). The vast majority of librarians had IT support: it was provided either by a library IT specialist (49%) or by the university's IT department (40%).

When describing work modes, it is also worth describing the ways in which employees communicate with each other and with the management. Organizing work in a dispersed and changing work environment is not easy. It turns out that the most commonly used were e-mail, as well as telephone contact (see Diagram 11). In 41% of the libraries surveyed, commercial communication applications were purchased, and in every fourth free external programs were used. The application names given in the open question are as follows: MS Teams, Zoom, Slack, Big Blue Button, Google Meet. It is worth adding that in the questionnaire one could also choose the answer: "maximum limitation of information flow" – but none of the respondents did so. This confirms the fact that the methods of com-

munication were efficiently adapted to the situation, and communication itself was not limited.
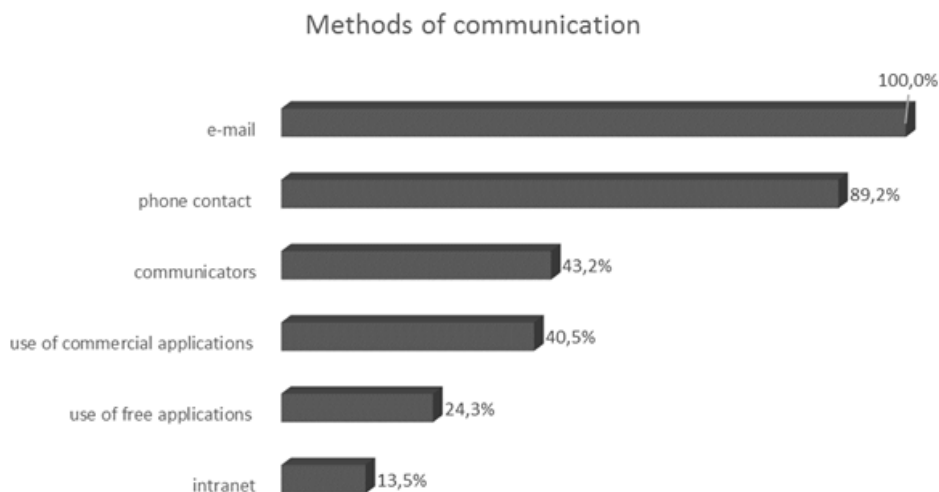
Methods of communication

Chart 11 Means of communication of academic librarians during the lockdown period.
Source: Author's own research, 2020.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

What was the biggest problem for university library managers during the COVID-19 epidemic? Chart 12 presents the phenomena which, in the opinion of the directors, occurred always, very often and often. It turns out that it was not easy to quickly create new rules and procedures for action (65%) and there was often an inability to plan long-term activities (59.5%). That is to say, the phenomena "typical" of the VUCA reality, which most managers and management organizations in the country and in the world must have encountered. When it comes to issues more specific to the librarian community, difficulties were indicated with assigning tasks to be performed remotely and awareness of the unfair division of work between librarians (46% each). Human issues related to employees' motivation and control were also problems for management during the lockdown period, which was pointed out by the respondents. Emotional instability of employees was also on the list of encountered difficulties – this is all the more important because, according to the study, most of the libraries surveyed (78%) did not provide psychological help for employees. In the open question, directors additionally emphasized the perceived lack of direct contacts with employees ("social and emotional ties"). Other problems mentioned by the respondents include lack of flexibility of database and electronic platform distributors in terms of extending access and copyrights inadequate to the current situation.

Difficulties in management

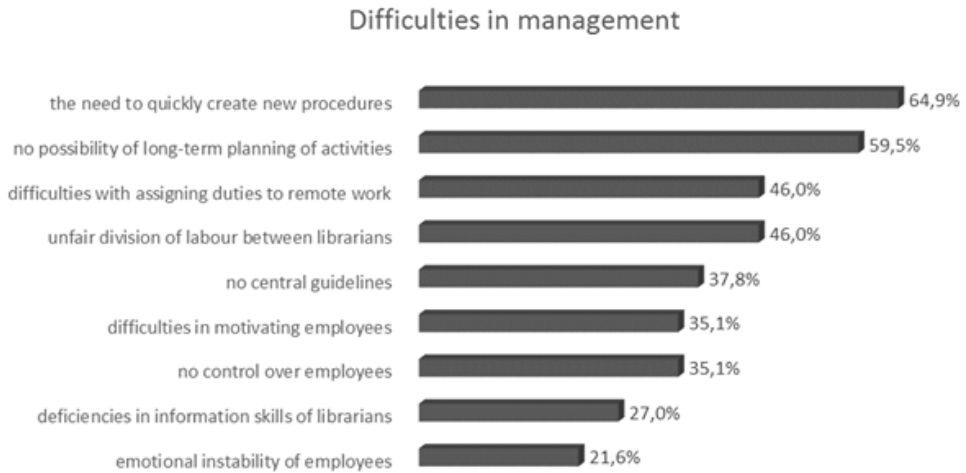|	
the need to quickly create new procedures	64,9%
no possibility of long-term planning of activities	59,5%
difficulties with assigning duties to remote work	46,0%
unfair division of labour between librarians	46,0%
no central guidelines	37,8%
difficulties in motivating employees	35,1%
no control over employees	35,1%
deficiencies in information skills of librarians	27,0%
emotional instability of employees	21,6%

Chart 12. Problems and difficulties in managing academic libraries during the lockdown period. Source: Author's own research, 2020.

The fact that the libraries operated during the lockdown period, providing the academic community with necessary knowledge and information, confirms that despite the aforementioned difficulties and barriers, the problems have been overcome. How do the directors perceive this time and the "lessons in management" they have undoubtedly received from the reality of VUCA? Are there solutions that have proven successful and which are likely to be used to a greater extent in the future? Chart 13 presents those practices whose probability of implementation in the future on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 means not at all, and 5 for sure) was determined to be 3, 4 and 5. Remote work has undoubtedly proved successful, which is also confirmed by additional comments that directors shared in an open-ended question, as well as a task-oriented approach to performing tasks in the workplace. Implementation of these practices is predicted by over 62% of respondents. Organizational flexibility, which may scare one a little and generate resistance at first, and which in practice works well in a changing environment, has also, according to the respondents (49%), a great chance for the future. Certainly, IT tools and solutions should also be developed (57% of responses) to facilitate remote implementation of tasks and the flow of information and documents. The directors also noted the importance of tightened cooperation between librarians and academics in the preparation of teaching materials and research facilities. Interestingly, the decision-making process changed under the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic also has a chance to remain a permanent fixture in selected academic libraries.

What management practices will be used in the future?

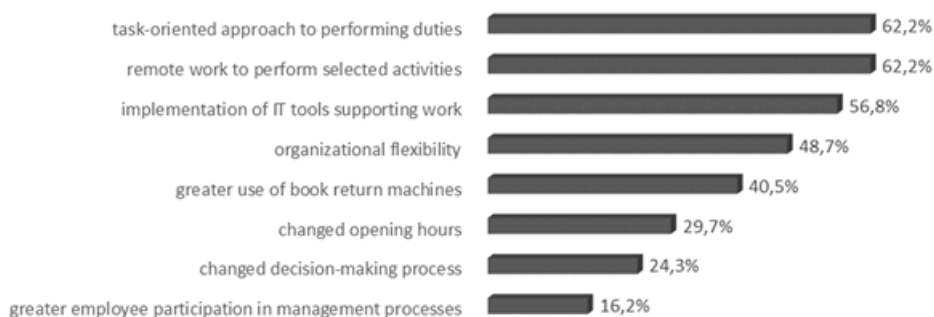| Practice	%
task-oriented approach to performing duties	62,2%
remote work to perform selected activities	62,2%
implementation of IT tools supporting work	56,8%
organizational flexibility	48,7%
greater use of book return machines	40,5%
changed opening hours	29,7%
changed decision-making process	24,3%
greater employee participation in management processes	16,2%

Chart 13. Management solutions in academic libraries from the lockdown period that have proved successful and may be used in the future.

Source: Author's own research, 2020.

Finally, it is worth quoting a few statements of the directors of academic libraries on the management experiences gained during the lockdown period:

- "A lesson in effective management, often without the support of superiors. Quite a lesson in humility towards employees' fears, without showing one's own weaknesses and fears.
- "Need for quick and specific decisions and reactions to emerging problems as well as anticipating possible problems."
- "There are staff reserves in the library. The library continues to have excess employees."
- "The threat of coronavirus forced us to change the work system, solve problems creatively, react quickly to new needs, re-evaluate current organizational solutions, rethink how to manage the team, how to communicate with the team."
- "One can't ignore emotions."
- "It is necessary to have clear and precise delegated tasks and control of their implementation. Employees need constant contact with their superiors."
- "Remote work is possible in a library, 50% of the team can work from home permanently, only direct user service requires staff presence. Purchasing, cataloguing, database control, bibliometrics, scientific information – all of this can be done remotely."
- "Predict the development of the remote work platform in the future budget. 2. Plan the purchase of an external automatic book return machine. 3 Amend the agreement with PKN, thus ensuring remote access to the subscribed standards."

- "The need to change the organization of free access collections and the methods of making them available, any facilitations in electronic access, creating an educational base founded on electronic copies of documents, adapting the library's tasks to distance learning."

The research analysis shows that the directors of academic libraries efficiently dealt with the management of institutions in the real VUCA. Despite the emerging problems of an organizational (procedures and principles of operation), technical (ensuring appropriate hardware and software) and human (fair division of labour, optimal control system, empathy and care for employees) nature, it was possible to lead academic libraries through the difficult period of lockdown – and allow users to access research and teaching materials. Academic libraries have demonstrated organizational flexibility in the following areas: extending the scope of services, organizing a rotational system of work and performing tasks remotely, changing responsibilities, planning "just in time", and in some cases modifying decision-making processes. Many of these practices have a chance to be used in the future, which only confirms their effectiveness and the openness of directors to the use of new and effective solutions.

What could continue to be a problem and where should the emphasis be to find an appropriate solution? In addition to legal and financial problems, such as inadequate copyright, limited resources for the purchase of electronic sources, the lack of automated book return or electronic platforms for information management, it is worth paying attention to issues related to human resource management. The unfair separation of remote work, limiting the "standby state", refining the system of informing, controlling, and motivating employees – certainly these problems still need to be addressed in the future.

SUMMARY

The reality of VUCA related to the emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic and the nearly 3-month lockdown ordered by the state authorities put managers, as well as employees of companies and institutions, very much to the test. In academic libraries, until now operating in a fairly predictable, as well as standardized and structured environment, the need to adapt to the environment so quickly and flexibly was in fact a completely new phenomenon. The analysis of the research results shows that academic libraries to a large extent were able to adapt to the situation, and also – what is equally important – to draw appropriate conclusions from this lesson.

The libraries examined showed a lot of organizational flexibility, which manifested itself in planning "just in time", introducing remote work and rotational work systems, changing scopes of duties, extending the scope of

services, as well as using IT tools (also free ones) to organize and monitor work. Moreover, the directors see the need to refine the communication system and implement additional IT solutions, and they also see the fact that many of the current operating practices no longer exist and should be changed (e.g. delegating tasks to remote work, eliminating excess employment). These activities are in line with the "Vuca Prime" model developed by Bob Johansen from the Institute for the Future, in which it is recommended that organizations in response to the evoked VUCA phenomena acquire the following set of skills: Vision, Understanding, Clarity and Agility. A clear vision in place of a detailed and rigid plan; the manager's ability to obtain a variety of feedback from the environment (employees, customers, suppliers) as a response to uncertainty; clarity, i.e. reliably developed tasks and processes and providing information helpful in making decisions in response to the complexity of phenomena, as well as flexibility and agility manifested in recognizing situations using experiments and tests, combined with the ability to quickly adapt and implement changes (Johansen, 2017). The set of these features, also referred to as VUCA 2.0 (George, 2020) (in the VUCA 2.0 model, instead of Clarity, it is often referred to as Courage, manifested in taking risks and boldly applying decisive movements and solutions), is considered the basis of modern leadership in the variable and unpredictable reality.

Time will show whether the organizational flexibility demonstrated by academic libraries during the lockdown was only a "brilliant improvisation", or whether it will be a feature that will permanently enter the organizational culture of libraries and institution management strategies, and will also be a manifestation of organizational learning in how to effectively function within the VUCA reality.

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POLISH ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

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KEYWORDS: COVID-19. SARS-CoV2. Coronavirus pandemic. Academic libraries. Remote work. Crisis management. Problem situation management. Risk assessment. Management control. Gdańsk University of Technology Library.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis/Objective** – The developing SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic, which was announced in March 2020, has had a significant impact on the activities of universities and their academic libraries. The article aims to present the activities of academic libraries at the time of introducing restrictions on their activities and closing for several months to users and reformulating the services they provide, on the example of the Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology (GUT). First of all, attention was paid to how the principles of crisis and

problem management were introduced at universities. It was also essential to examine how the changes and management decisions were perceived by the library employees who worked according to the new rules in the indicated period. **Research methods** – The article is based on the analysis of available scientific publications in Polish on crisis management, especially in the era of epidemiological threats. Legal acts and regulations dealing with both crisis management in general and issued in connection with the announcement of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic were also taken into account. The method of survey research based on a questionnaire was also used. The questionnaire was anonymous, provided to the employees of the GUT Library via e-mail. The respondents provided a printout of the questionnaire with answers to the GUT Library Office. Since the survey was addressed only to employees of one institution, it had a limited record. It aimed to collect the respondents' opinions on the work of the GUT Library in the period from March 12 to May 24, 2020, when remote work in special conditions was in force. **Results and conclusions** – A sudden change in the work mode of the GUT Library itself and its employees, a change in tools and forms of services provided, the need to purchase appropriate equipment and personal protective equipment, the introduction of remote work and other factors became the subject of management decisions made during the emerging crisis. These decisions were in line with the applicable guidelines, both the laws and regulations issued at the national level, as well as the policies and recommendations regarding the functioning of libraries issued by various state institutions and the National Library (book quarantine). However, many of the decisions were individual due to the lack of guidelines and benchmarks on which to base. The reason was also the delayed emergence of procedures. A survey conducted among the employees of the Gdańsk University of Technology Library in May 2020, after the employees returned to stationary work, showed that the adopted solutions were well assessed. The results showed that the adopted solutions had a positive impact on the employees' sense of safety and the work comfort in the period of changing the mode and rules of the Library's functioning.

INTRODUCTION

The developing SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic, which was declared in March 2020, has had a significant impact on many aspects and areas of life, activities, and the economy. Among these are also those directly related to the activities of universities and their academic libraries. The sudden reformulation of the work of the library itself and its employees, changes in tools and forms of services provided, the need to purchase appropriate devices and personal protective equipment, the introduction of remote work and other factors became the subject of management decisions that were made during the emerging crisis, in an atmosphere of uncertainty and lack of communication.

It is necessary to settle the issue of definitions at the beginning of this study. The Dictionary of the Polish Language provides the following defi-

nitions of crisis: 1. "a situation in which a conflict becomes so serious that it threatens an outbreak of war, a change of government or other radical solution"; 2. "a collapse of the process of economic growth and regression in the economic development of the state"; 3. "a state of discouragement and loss of motivation to live and work"; 4. "the disturbance of a system of values or position of something"; 5. "the most difficult and critical point in the course of a disease" (Dictionary of the Polish Language).

The concept of crisis management is defined, inter alia, by the *Act of April 26, 2007, on crisis management*: "Crisis management is the activity of public administration bodies that is an element of national security management, which consists of preventing crisis situations, preparing to take control of them through planned actions, responding in the event of crisis situations, removing their effects and restoring critical resources and infrastructure" (Sejm RP, 2020).

An essential element of management control is the assessment of risk that occurs or may occur in the organisation's activities. Risk, as defined in the Encyclopedia of Management, is: "the probability that an economic entity will suffer losses as a result of making a given economic decision. Also, such activity or project in which not all variables are estimated or cannot be estimated on the basis of probability theory. Risk differs from uncertainty in that it deals with repetitive phenomena that are, to some extent, quantifiable. Risk often results from the functioning of a large number of complex and variable entities, the dependencies between them, changes in their environment, limited controllability and the results of these. The main direction of activities of each company should be to limit and reduce risk" (Encyclopedia of Management).

Although libraries are subject to an annual process of management control evaluation, similarly to other university units, no risk factor in the form of an epidemiological threat has appeared in any of the previous reports of the Gdańsk University of Technology Library, or other libraries. This situation will undoubtedly change as a result of the current situation, which has had such a significant impact on the activities of libraries.

On the basis of the definitions mentioned above, it is difficult to unequivocally determine whether the decision-making process related to the reformulation of the rules of library activity in the face of a pandemic is related more to crisis management or risk management, because in both cases specific criteria should be met. While the pandemic itself caused an economic crisis, which is still difficult to define unequivocally, talking about a crisis in libraries resulting from the pandemic constitutes a premature and so far unconfirmed claim. As far as risk management is concerned, after analysing the regulations and other documents relating to the activities of libraries, it turns out that the risk associated with the epidemiological situation was not formulated and no procedures were de-

veloped. As a consequence of the pandemic and changes that have taken place in the functioning of libraries, it can be stated that this risk has been identified and entered into the catalogue of issues taken into account in monitoring management control.

The situation that was triggered by the coronavirus pandemic can undoubtedly be described as a problematic situation, by recalling and using research and practice related to both crisis management and risk management.

As Regester and Larkin write, "effective management of problem situations and the proper response to them is based on two principles: early identification of the situation and an organised response. Managing problem situations is a proactive, anticipatory and planned process, designed to influence their development before they move to the stage that requires the implementation of risk management techniques" (Regester, Larkin, 2005, pp. 71-72).

The problem situation management model, described by Regester and Larkin, includes six stages:

1. Awareness – corresponding to the first phase of the problem's life cycle; at this stage, the management team should focus on listening and learning – people involved should be alert, open, inquisitive.
2. Exploration – indicating an increase in the urgency and significance of the problem situation, the awareness of the organisation increases, it begins the process of analysis and formulation of opinions – thereupon responsibilities should be divided in their details.
3. Decision making – the organisation needs to think about specific follow-up – the management team should objectively assess options and make decisions, while still stimulating broad thinking and creativity in formulating an action plan.
4. Implementation – requiring that the necessary steps be taken to ensure the effectiveness of management decisions.
5. Fine-tuning – allowing the evaluation of the current activities and their effects in such a way as to introduce improvements to the action plan.
6. Conclusion – key activities at this stage include appropriate delegation of powers and responsibilities and ensuring the implementation of each approved change in the organisation (Regester, Larkin, 2005, pp. 108-111).

Jarosław Marciniak, in the monograph *Managing people and work in a crisis situation related to COVID-19* describes the changes resulting from the epidemiological situation and their importance for the management staff. He writes about the pandemic crisis as follows: "A crisis is a condition that threatens the survival of the company, the achievement of its goals, limits the time available for remedial action, and surprises the

management with its appearance, thus putting the conditions under severe pressure. In view of the risk of coronavirus infection, the most important thing for the company is to care for the health of employees and to follow precautionary rules that minimise the existing threats and allow the organisation to continue functioning. A crisis can be viewed through the prism of serious threats due to the high unpredictability of its consequences" (Marciniak, 2020). As the author further writes: "Crisis situations are such that one day they end: possibly through preventive, interventional, or restorative activities, they cease to be crisis situations". Among the symptoms of a crisis, Marciniak mentions: the feeling of high uncertainty and high risk; the emergence of a very serious threat to the achievement of primary goals and functions; inability to determine the time perspective of difficulties in the operation of the enterprise or organisation; limited reaction time (there is a strong pressure when making decisions and actions, related to time); a tendency to radicalise decisions and the lack of clear guidelines and guidelines for further activity (Marciniak, 2020). All the above-mentioned symptoms have also been identified in the case of the reality of academic libraries. The above definition of crisis and its reference to the current situation have been adopted in this study as a starting point for discussing crisis management in academic libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CRISIS SOLUTIONS AND THEIR APPLICATION

As Hajkowski and Szewczyk write in an article published on the website of the Polish Economic Society, "The crisis is an emergency situation that got out of hand. (...) It is a series of circumstances/incidents. (…) Observing the current crisis, one gets the wrong impression that the principles of crisis management are being developed on an ongoing basis – as if they never existed before. The pandemic is hitting the foundations of our civilisation. It violates the social and economic order. It paralyses many areas of life. It affects politics, as well as the functioning of public services, including health service. We are witnessing feverish actions by states aimed at minimising the effects of the crisis on citizens. The fight for public health turns into a series of activities aimed at stopping the spread of the virus: quarantine, isolation, and distancing, disturbing the functioning of individuals on the scale of entire societies. (...) Against this background, crisis management appears to be largely responsive, improvised and dependent on the type of crisis and the development of the situation. Nothing could be more wrong. Crisis management begins in times far from a crisis. It means designed and applied prevention aimed at preventing the outbreak of crises and careful preparation for possible crises – if preventive actions

do not prevent it" (Hajkowski, Szewczyk, 2020). Risk analysis of potential threats should be an introduction to crisis management. The first principle of crisis management, quoted by Hajkowski and Szewczyk, is allocating resources and efforts to combat real threats with an estimated probability of occurrence. The response to less likely threats may be much more modest and based on the general principles of crisis management structures. When you consider the global experience related to epidemic threats, the epidemiological situation as a potential threat should be taken seriously. The authors emphasise that prevention and response to incidents are at the heart of crisis prevention, while knowledge of crisis mechanisms is the foundation of crisis preparedness. A natural continuation of the reception of early warning signals in crisis management is escalation, which builds awareness of the threat and the need for a proportional response, depending on whether we are dealing with an incident, an emergency, or an already formed crisis. In the event of a real crisis, escalation leads to full mobilisation and activation of crisis management structures, the application of previously prepared procedures for dealing with a crisis, and gaining access to resources accumulated in the event of its occurrence (Hajkowski, Szewczyk, 2020). When analysing the signals that reached individual countries, including Poland, one gets the impression that the epidemiological threat was not treated as an object of crisis management. With proper involvement, preventive measures and appropriate decisions could have been taken earlier and their implementation prepared for in line with the principles of crisis management. Crisis management in the final phase focuses on accelerating a return to normalcy at the lowest possible cost.

In the study entitled *Management in crisis situations*, Witold Lidwa distinguishes the following phases of crisis management:

1. Prevention – actions aiming at the main anticipatory steps eliminating or reducing the possibility of a crisis situation – this refers to activities that eliminate or reduce the probability of a disaster or limit its effects.
2. Preparation – the key element of which is the development of emergency response plans, which describe who will do what and when, with what forces and means and on what legal basis – before, during and immediately after a crisis event. Preparation also includes the provision of specialised capabilities and means of response, such as a command post, crisis communication system, alarm system and crisis response personnel, as well as records of capabilities and resources useful for crisis response.
3. Reacting – which takes place after a real threat or event occurs. The purpose of this is to initiate preventive measures to prevent or minimise the possibility of damage, and after its occurrence, to take res-

cue actions to provide assistance to the injured and limit secondary damage and losses.

4. Reconstruction – this is the final phase of the crisis management cycle. Rebuilding continues until all systems return to a previous state or better than the previous state. It is divided into short-term and long-term (Lidwa, 2010, pp. 37-38).

An essential task in each of the phases mentioned above is the preparation and application of appropriate tools and procedures. In the case of the situation in Poland and Polish universities, the measures taken depended on the guidelines and recommendations formulated by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Development.

One of the first studies containing guidelines for libraries for the duration of the pandemic was the *Guidelines for the functioning of libraries during the COVID-19 epidemic in Poland*, which was issued on April 28, 2020 by the Ministry of Development in consultation with the Chief Sanitary Inspector. The objectives of implementing the procedures were defined as: additional enhancement of the security of library (service) staff and users; minimising the risk of infection of (service) employees and users; limiting the number of contacts in the library in a given time period, in order to protect against possible infection; comprehensive anti-epidemic action adjusted to the stage of the epidemic. The guidelines are divided into four parts: 1. Ensuring the safety of employees/staff; 2. Ensuring security in the facility; 3. Preventive procedures – suspected coronavirus infection of employees/staff; 4. Procedures to be followed in the event of a person/user being suspected of coronavirus infection (Ministry of Development, 2020).

Based on the guidelines of the Ministry of Development, as well as other studies and legal acts issued by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, internal procedures and regulations for the use of library space and collections were created, both for library users and employees.

REMOTE WORK

One of the systemic crisis solutions is remote work. This term was introduced under the *Act of March 2, 2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, counteraction and combating of COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crises caused by them* (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2020). Chapter 2 of the Act says that "During the period of the epidemic threat or epidemic state announced due to COVID-19, and within three months after their cancellation, to counteract COVID-19, the employer may order the employee to perform, for a specified period, work specified in the employ-

ment contract, outside the place of its permanent performance (remote work). (…) Remote work may be recommended if the employee has the technical skills and capabilities to perform such work and if the type of work allows it. (...) At the employer's request, an employee performing remote work is obliged to keep records of performed activities, taking into account, in particular, a description of these activities, as well as the date and time of their performance. The employee draws up a record of the activities performed in the form and with the frequency specified in the order" (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2020).

CARE ALLOWANCE

The Act of March 2, 2020 also introduced another solution aimed at preventing the consequences of a crisis situation, in the form of an additional care allowance. Introduced from March 2020 to June 28, 2020, and then extended, an additional allowance in the amount of 80% of monthly remuneration for work was given, among other things, in the event of the closure of a nursery, children's club, kindergarten, school or other facility attended by the child, or the inability to provide care by a nanny or day caregiver due to COVID-19 to the insured person released from the obligation to perform work. Many employees caring for children up to the age of 8, could benefit from this allowance regardless of the regular care allowance or sick leave. Employees who had to undergo quarantine were also entitled to 80% of the remuneration.

BOOK QUARANTINE

In the announcement of March 23, 2020, the National Library formulated recommendations for libraries, including dealing with copies of books returned by users.

The following rules of conduct were recommended:
• copies lent for home use should be accepted by personnel wearing latex or nitrile gloves,
• direct contact with the copy prior to its identification should be limited,
• disinfecting returned publications with disinfectants based on detergents and alcohol is not allowed,
• the received copies should be quarantined for a period of 10 days to 2 weeks,
• surfaces in contact with the returned materials should be disinfected by washing with detergent or disinfectants containing at least 60% alcohol,
• in the event of a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus infection among

employees who come into contact with the collections, it is necessary to quarantine for 10 days to 2 weeks and exclude from using the part of the collections with which the employee had contact.

Exclusion of use (for the period of quarantine) of all copies returned after the end of the library closure period should ensure the safety of the work performed" (National Library, 2020).

In connection with further results of research on the Sars-CoV-2 coronavirus, on May 4, 2020, the National Library changed its recommendation regarding the quarantine period for books and other publications stored in libraries. It was then confirmed that the virus was active for up to 72 hours on plastic surfaces (e.g. book covers, CDs, etc.). However, the recommendations for cardboard and paper on which the virus is active up to 24 hours have not been changed. Other recommendations regarding protection against coronavirus infection remained unchanged. Since, as reported by the National Library, the authors of the studies on the basis of which the recommended quarantine period was shortened urge caution when interpreting their results, it was recommended to extend the quarantine, if possible in the library, and treat as minimal a period of 3 days (National Library, 2020a).

GDAŃSK UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY – A CASE STUDY

The beginning of March 2020 in academic libraries was marked by preparation for work in a new formula and a new reality. Although the epidemiological situation was developing dynamically in many European countries, the critical point in Poland occurred on March 4, 2020, with the first diagnosed case of COVID-19. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a pandemic of the novel SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Until then, little action had been taken. The first signals that some restrictions in the functioning of universities might be possible were provided to the managers of libraries a few days before the administrative decision.

Due to the increased risk of infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and subsequent COVID-19 cases in Poland, the Minister of Science and Higher Education – following the recommendation of the Government Crisis Management Team – decided to introduce preventive measures to prevent the spread of this virus, and reduce the risk of an epidemic. At that time, the teaching activities conducted by universities supervised by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education were suspended throughout the country.

The Ordinance of the Minister of Health of March 13, 2020, on the declaration of an epidemic in the territory of the Republic of Poland (in § 5

section 1, point 2 and § 6 section 1, point 1) directly concerned the activity of libraries. The regulations, introduced for the duration of the state of epidemic threat in connection with SARS-Cov-2 virus infections, included restrictions on the activities of libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural actions, the restriction of which was a complete prohibition of certain activities. According to the guidelines, libraries could continue work other than direct user services, such as documentation works, preparation of collections, electronic handling of user inquiries, digitisation, or cleaning and selection of books.

On March 11, the Rector of the Gdańsk University of Technology (GUT) issued an ordinance regulating the issues related to the functioning of the university for the period from March 12 to 29, 2020 (later updated). It concerned, among other things, cancellation of classes for undergraduate students, doctoral students and postgraduate students on March 12-29, 2020; recommendations on cancelling events (conferences, symposia, open lectures, arts and other events); suspension of business trips abroad and visits of guests from abroad, as well as cancelling all plans for making the GUT Library available until further notice. In practice, the restrictions were extended for the next months, and thus the library was closed to users until May 24, 2020.

During this period, most of the university employees, including the employees of the GUT Library, were assigned to work remotely.

The first case regarding sending an employee of the GUT Library to work remotely took place in the first week of March 2020. At that time, one of the employees had informed her superiors about her return from vacation in Italy. The decision to send her to work remotely for a period of two weeks was made individually because no procedures had yet been developed that could be used. In many universities, including many units of the Gdańsk University of Technology, the remote work order did not have a unified form or did not exist in practice in any official form. In the GUT Library, immediately after the announcement of the rector's decree on counteracting COVID-19, steps were taken to standardise the rules for assigning employees to remote work. The team consisting of the director of the library and the heads of individual sections developed a procedure for referring an employee to remote work and monitoring the tasks performed by them. Each employee received a written order to work remotely for a period specified in the order (usually a calendar month). Then the immediate supervisor assigned the scope of tasks to be performed to the employee. The employee was obliged to submit reports on the implementation of tasks to the supervisor at the end of each week. Communication between employees took place via e-mail, through online meetings, as well as through business phones, which were partially redirected to cell phones.

Directors of academic libraries, associated as part of the Conference of Directors of Polish Academic Libraries (KDBASP), exchanged opinions, adopted solutions and encountered difficulties within the KDBASP discussion list.

The information provided by the directors showed that the solutions adopted by the university authorities differed among themselves. Most libraries remained closed, but there were also those that were open to users for the entire period (or for some time), possibly during limited working hours (including the Library of the Silesian University of Technology, the Library of the Leon Schiller National Film School in Łódź, the Library of the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, and the Library of the Warsaw School of Economics).

Depending on the solution adopted at the university, the rules of assigning employees to remote work also differed. In some libraries, all employees were assigned to work remotely, in other libraries some staff remained in so-called readiness (e.g. warehouse employees) due to the fact that they could not perform their typical tasks remotely or worked in rotation or on call. In some libraries, as in the GUT Library, employees were ordered to work remotely (in writing, by e-mail or orally), in others it was on the initiative of an employee who had to submit an appropriate application for the possibility of remote work.

In the GUT Library, the principle was adopted that, as far as possible, all employees should work remotely (except for a few people on one-person duty or performing, for example, warehouse, counter, or cleaning work). In the first days after the announcement of the pandemic, employees who had outstanding vacation leave were also asked to take it. The order to use the outstanding leave by all GUT employees also appeared at a later date in the Circular Letter of the GUT Rector.

By the decision of the university authorities, university-wide and central units, as well as the entire central and faculty administration, resumed stationary work from May 11, 2020. This was the first phase of returning to standard activities. In the period until May 24, 2020, preparatory work for the resumption of service activities was carried out. Procedures were developed and implemented; protective measures were collected, workplaces and schedules were prepared for the return of users.

From May 25, 2020, service activities resumed to a limited extent. Loans and returns became possible again, in accordance with the developed procedures. A reading room for standards and services of the Scientific and Technical Information Section (including the Open Science Competence Centre) was made available. Individual reading rooms, seminar rooms, and independent queries in the Historical Section remained unavailable until September 2020.

Detailed rules for using the Library, including guidelines on the number of people who can stay in individual rooms at the same time (calculated on the basis of the area and the possibility of maintaining distance), as well as the rules for returning and borrowing books were published on the Library's website and updated on an ongoing basis (GUT Library COVID rules). In October 2020, in all reading rooms, branches, and lending rooms, users are still forbidden to view books on their own, in particular those in open access. All library materials are ordered online or by phone in agreement with a Library employee. Returns are made using a night safe or a self-check device, and in branches that do not have these devices, directly. The books are then sent to quarantine (during the holiday period for 6 days, and since October for 4 days), and also exposed to UV lamps or ozonated in a separate room. A book dispenser (remote locker) was also purchased, which, in the event of the library being closed again, will ensure the continuity of user services; meanwhile, it will allow for non--contact loans from all locations of the GUT Library. All rooms have been marked for, among other things, the number of people who can be in a given area at the same time. The places for users have been marked with regard to their prescribed distance, and disinfectant dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the rooms. Users are required to wear protective masks in the library and follow safety rules.

Photo 1. The main hall of the GUT Library with designated zones inaccessible to users
(photo: Tytus Caban)

Photo 2. An area in the main reading room of the GUT Library for book quarantine and UV lamp exposure (photo: Tytus Caban)

LIBRARY ACTIVITY DURING REMOTE WORK

When the Library was closed for users, it began operating with a completely new formula, based primarily on contact via electronic channels, phones, social media and dedicated websites. From the collections process to scientific information and research data management support services, all services have become more virtual. The collections policy at the GUT Library from 2017 has put increasing emphasis on the purchase of electronic sources. The epidemiological situation and the related limitations convinced and in some ways forced the use of e-books also by users who had not been won over so far (in particular, researchers conducting remote classes). They appreciated this type of source, placing more and more orders for the purchase of new titles needed for teaching and research purposes. From March to June 2020, in response to the change in the way the book collection is used, the e-book resources of the GUT Library increased by over 100 new titles. The collection of Polish books was supplemented on the Ibuk Libra platform, and new e-book titles from publishers such as Wiley, Taylor & Francis have appeared. The ProQuest Ebook Central e-book database was purchased. In the face of the pandemic, many publishers have also decided to make some of their publications, including e-book collections, available to students and researchers free of charge.

To make it easier for the readers to find these materials, the librarians gathered information about the released resources on the library website. A collection of video courses on the NASBI platform (Scientific Academic Network Internet Library) was also made available.

In response to the limitations resulting from the situation, several new subpages of the GUT Library website were developed and made available, whose main task was to support the academic community in effective remote work. *The Remote access to electronic resources of the GUT Library* tab contains detailed instructions on how to use electronic sources from home. It contains all the necessary information – a description of logging in to the HAN system, recovering a password to one's library account and the procedure for dealing with a blocked account. The tab also contains the most useful links with access to a wide range of Polish and foreign databases in the fields of technical, economic, natural, social, and human sciences. Reading accounts that were blocked as a result of, for example, arrears in the return of library materials, could be unblocked by phone or e-mail by employees of the Reader Service Section at the Main Library and its branches. Penalties for holding books were suspended from February until the end of September 2020, and all return deadlines were also automatically extended until the end of September 2020.

The widespread movement towards openness, as well as the initiatives of publishers willing to support libraries and scientists themselves in this challenging period, led to the permanent or temporary availability of many e-sources. To organise and popularise these resources, the library staff created a tab *Released in remote access*, in which initiatives to open scientific resources are collected. Users can find here information about access to special collections, released e-books and e-journals with a lifted access limit, for example to academic textbooks on the Cambridge Core platform, to the De Gruyter and Springer Nature e-book collection, or to a set of educational materials from JSTOR. The tab also included information about free tools for remote work and distance learning, such as free e-learning modules developed by Elsevier Researcher Academy, online training programs from Oxford University Press, and the Science Education module from JoVE.

During the pandemic, libraries have also become an important source of verified and reliable information on the pandemic, its course, and the results of virus research. To provide users with access to reliable sources of knowledge, GUT Library created a subpage containing scientific *materials on COVID-19* on it's the website.

As part of a test access, organised by the Library, users were given the opportunity to use resources to which they would not have access on a daily basis. The resources included in the test access differed from those released publicly in that, as in the case of subscription resources,

they could only be used by authorised persons, in this case, affiliated with the Gdańsk University of Technology. The organisation of the test access was based on a process whereby the Library would request access from the publisher. After obtaining the consent and setting the test date, would configure IP addresses and create unique links in the HAN system, thanks to which users could search for resources remotely from home. In the period from April to May 2020, 10 test accesses were organised at the Gdańsk University of Technology, thus ensuring the possibility of using a total of over 450,000 e-books and journals, as well as conference materials, presentations, dissertations and press releases. Librarians made an effort to select the collections tested so that their subject matter corresponded as much as possible to the scientific interests of the employees of the Gdańsk University of Technology. Resources included sources from disciplines such as physics, engineering, computer science, chemistry, life sciences, but also art and architecture, economics, and finance. Particularly noteworthy is the e-book collection on the Taylor & Francis platform, containing publications from Routledge, Cogent OA and CRC Press, as well as ProQuest Central – an interdisciplinary platform that brings together the resources of 47 different full-text databases.

In response to the emerging need for education in, among other things, e-learning, the use of sources and the development of other competencies necessary in remote work, a tab was created that includes a constantly updated list of proposed online training, collected in one place and properly grouped. The offer of the training mentioned there is addressed to researchers, librarians, young scientists, and all interested parties. Each training in the tab is free of charge.

The period of seclusion was also a time of increased correspondence and contacts for the employees of the Library using various channels and communicators. The largest group of inquiries were problems with remote access to electronic databases, blocking of a library account, repayment of amounts due for books not delivered on time, an extension of an account's validity, etc. Another group of inquiries covered the issues with publishing in Open Access journals from Elsevier (Science Direct platform) and Springer-Nature (Springer Link platform). Under the national license, researchers affiliated with the institutions covered by this license could choose one of the Creative Commons open licenses for their publication without incurring the costs of the APC (Article Processing Charge). However, it should be remembered that the pool of such articles is limited. Scientists from GUT willingly use this option, but often they are not sure whether they will be charged with the costs of publication or they do not know which license to choose. Clearing up these doubts was an important part of the Library's activities. The third group of inquiries were those in which authors reported problems with linking the profile in the Polish

Scientific Bibliography with ORCID identifiers and the POL-on system. This obligation was imposed by the provisions of the *Law on Higher Education* and the regulations implementing it. As early as December 2019, the employees of the Library conducted the first training courses in this area, and the next ones were also held in January and February 2020. Although the epidemiological situation prevented further meetings with scientists, every effort was made to support scientists in this matter.

The activity of the GUT Library in the field of social media at that time was mainly focused on continuing promotional activities on the library's Facebook page, on the two Twitter accounts run by the GUT Library – @BibliotekaPG and @BridgeofKnowledge – and on Instagram. A series of Facebook posts have been prepared – in Polish and English – containing information on remote work of the GUT Library, how to share electronic collections, and how to use these collections in the process of preparing diploma theses. Some of the posts on Facebook and Instagram were devoted to the 2020 Libraries Week, this year held under the slogan "Savour the library", and fully transferred to the Internet. A particular set of GUT librarians' reading curiosities was presented on the Facebook library profile, titled: *The Kitchen Book in the Background.* The original idea of disseminating knowledge about Creative Commons licenses was also introduced, consisting in the preparation of descriptions of individual licenses, accompanied by drawings by Anna Sobala, an employee of one of the GUT Library branches. On Instagram, there is a photo gallery called *At the Literary Table*, a series of photos showing dishes inspired by literature. Besides, on Twitter were regularly posted tweets with the hashtag #MOSTWiedzy (#BRIDGEofKnowledge) related to the promotion of articles by researchers deposited in the *MOST Wiedzy* Repository. In addition, a series of tweets (39) were prepared to promote datasets produced at universities in Gdańsk (the Gdańsk University of Technology, University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk Medical University), which were deposited on the *MOST Wiedzy* website, in the "Research data" catalogue.

Moreover, most of the library's employees were intensively trained, using, among others, webinars described in the tab on the website. Employees participating in the work for the *MOST Danych* (The Bridge of Data) project performed project tasks, including continuing work related to the creation of the database of Polish scientific journals archiving policies. Other duties included cleaning, selection, and inventory verification. The collections were also organised, especially in the branches, by preparing selection protocols and removing duplicates. A lot of work was also done in the field of retroconversion and entering descriptions into the NUKAT database. Many employees were connected remotely to their office computers via remote desktop or were given the ability to access data and tools on their personal computers.

The Interlibrary Loan was also open to a limited extent: previously borrowed books were returned, and questions about articles appeared. Orders for publications from digital databases were carried out, and – if they were physically available – for journals and fragments of paper books, but the lending of printed books was suspended.
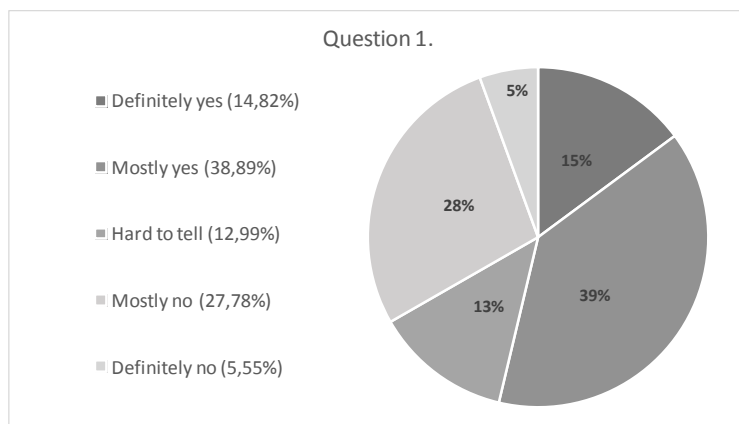
ASSESSMENT OF THE ADOPTED SOLUTIONS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION – SURVEY RESULTS

In May 2020, after the employees of the GUT Library returned to stationary work, a survey was carried out to collect, among other things, their opinions on the organisation of work during the closure of the library, the difficulties encountered, and the assessment of communication channels and effectiveness.

The survey included closed and open-ended questions. In most closed questions, it was also possible to add comments in the appropriate field.
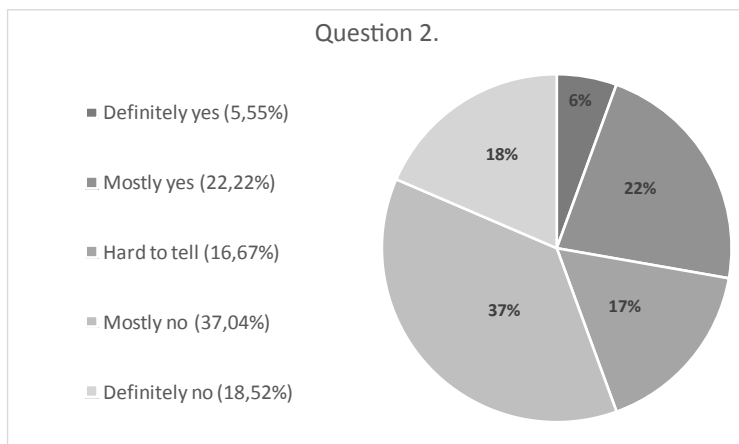
The questionnaire was sent to 60 people, of which 54 respondents replied. The questions and the results were as follows:

1. Has the pandemic situation influenced your sense of security (fear for your health and life, uncertainty about finding yourself in the new reality)?

Question 1.

- Definitely yes (14,82%)
- Mostly yes (38,89%)
- Hard to tell (12,99%)
- Mostly no (27,78%)
- Definitely no (5,55%)

5%
15%
28%
13%
39%

Most of the respondents indicated that they felt threatened or insecure as a result of the pandemic.

2. Was your job during the pandemic more difficult than before?

Question 2.

- Definitely yes (5,55%)
- Mostly yes (22,22%)
- Hard to tell (16,67%)
- Mostly no (37,04%)
- Definitely no (18,52%)

Most of the responses indicated that work during the pandemic was not more difficult than stationary work.

3. Have you taken advantage of the possibility of remote work? If not, what were the reasons?

Question 3.

- Yes (96,30%)
- No (3,70%)
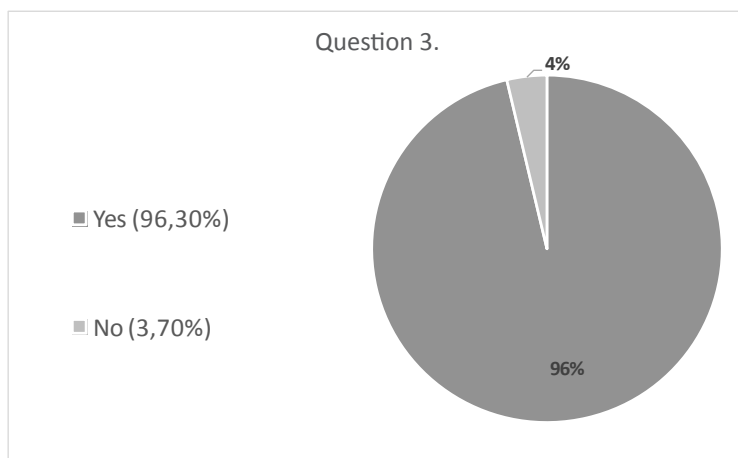
In both questionnaires with a negative answer, the reason was the lack of right working conditions in the place of residence, problems with the Internet connection and/or the lack of computer equipment.
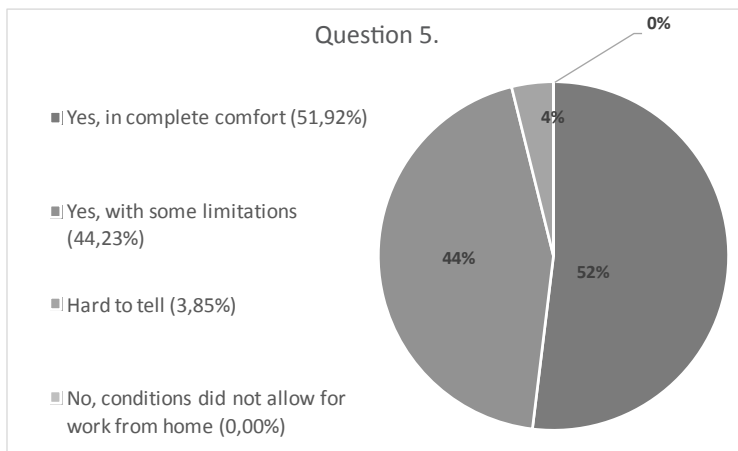
4. Was the information related to a secondment to remote work communicated precisely and comprehensively?

Question 4.

- Definitely yes (69,23%)
- Mostly yes (21,15%)
- Hard to tell (7,69%)
- Mostly no (0,00%)
- Definitely no (1,93%)
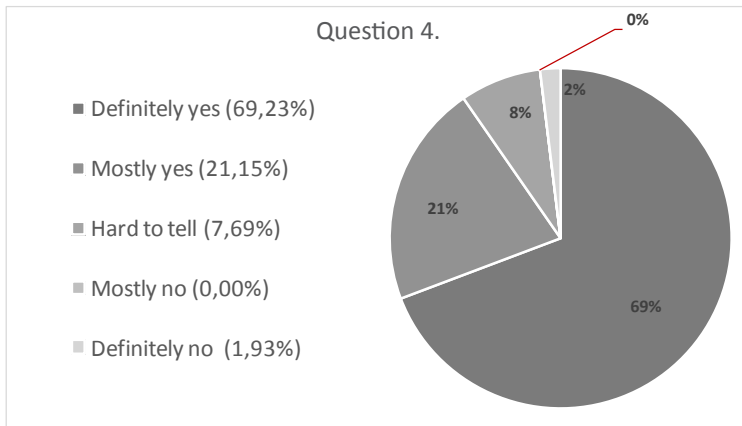
The responses to this question showed that the adopted rules for providing information and instructions proved to be successful and that they were delivered in a precise and understandable manner for the vast majority of employees.

5. Did you have the opportunity to organise a comfortable place to work at home?

Question 5.

- Yes, in complete comfort (51,92%)
- Yes, with some limitations (44,23%)
- Hard to tell (3,85%)
- No, conditions did not allow for work from home (0,00%)

The most frequently reported problems included: the inability to designate a place to work, sharing one computer with a spouse who also worked remotely, combining remote work with childcare, and a limited
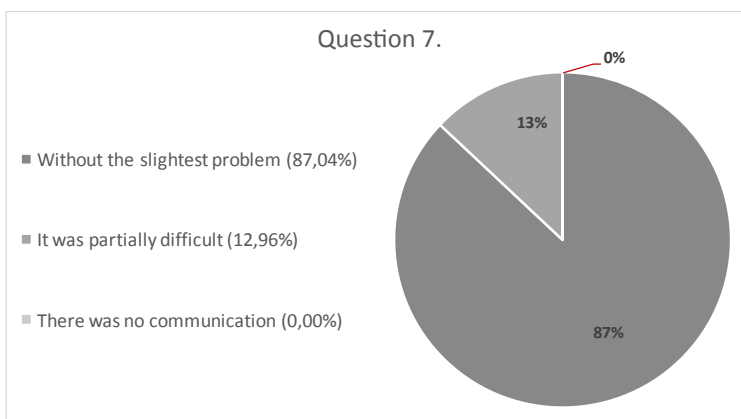
Internet connection. Overall, however, the vast majority of the respondents answered yes to this question.

6. Did you have technical problems while working remotely (e.g. problems with the Internet connection, logging into Moja.PG)? If so, what were they?

Question 6.
- Yes, it made work practically impossible (0,00%)
- Yes, but sporadically (42,31%)
- No (57,69%)
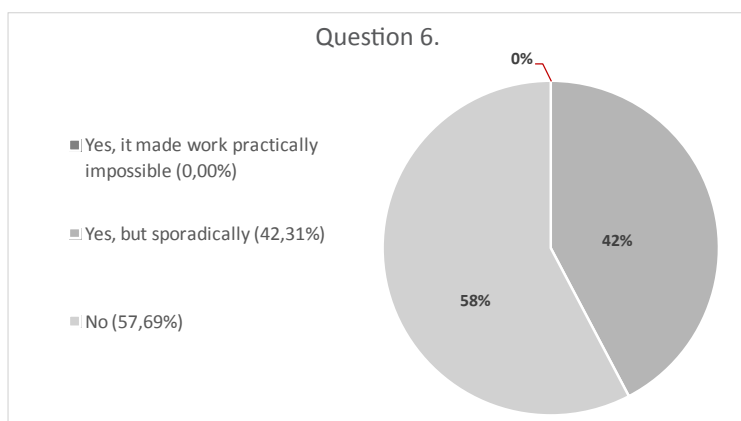
Most of the respondents did not report any significant technical problems while working remotely, with nearly half describing such problems as sporadic. The most frequently reported problems include: too frequent automatic logging out of systems, problems logging on to webinars, quality of the Internet connection, hardware failure or too old equipment. On the other hand, remote access to one's own computer in the Library was positively assessed.

7. How was communication with colleagues?

Question 7.
- Without the slightest problem (87,04%)
- It was partially difficult (12,96%)
- There was no communication (0,00%)

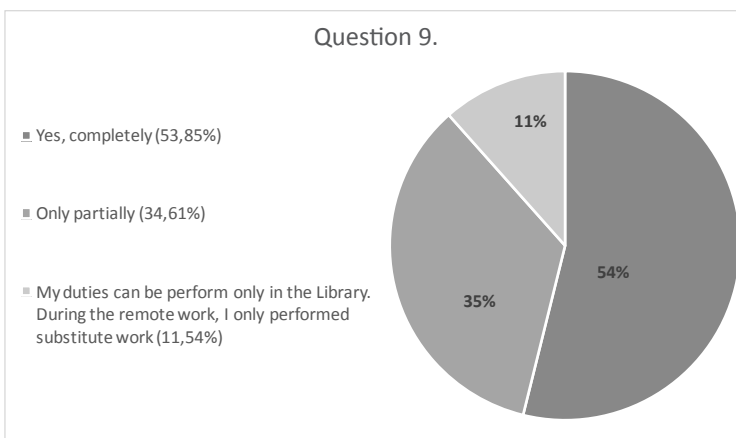Communication was defined as very good by the respondents. In the first question about communication with colleagues, only seven people replied that it was partially tricky. These difficulties, according to the respondents, resulted from the lack of direct contact and the need to contact via e-mail, telephone or communicators.

8. How was communication with the supervisor?

Question 8.

Without the slightest problem (87,04%)

I was partially difficult (12,96%)

There was no communication (0,00%)

0%

13%

87%
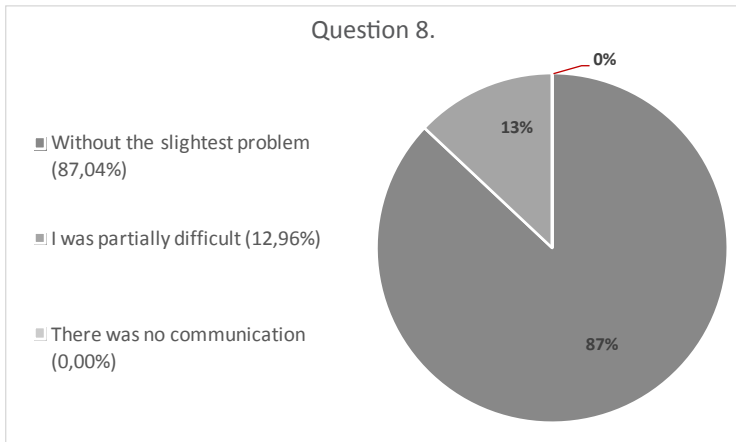
Moreover, communication with the supervisor was assessed as being very good. Only seven people indicated that it was partially tricky. Among the problems, the respondents indicated mainly imprecise commands, as well as a long waiting time for an answer or lack thereof.

9. Was the scope of duties performed during remote work related to the scope of duties performed during stationary work? If not, how much different was it?

Question 9.

Yes, completely (53,85%)

Only partially (34,61%)

My duties can be perform only in the Library. During the remote work, I only performed substitute work (11,54%)

11%

54%

35%

Only 6 respondents indicated that the duties performed while working remotely were substituted and differed from those performed on a daily basis in the library. Others indicated that their tasks were related to the scope performed during stationary work. Twenty-eight people indicated that their duties completely overlapped in both forms of work. The most significant number of respondents indicated problems with access to the resources they use while working in the office. Usually, it was about physical access to the collections. Some employees were delegated to work in a project implemented by the GUT Library (*MOST Danych*) due to the inability to perform typical duties as part of remote work (e.g. branch employees).

10. Were you on duty at the Library in the period when the Library was closed for external users?

Question 10.

- Yes (27,78%)
- No (72,22%)

28%

72%
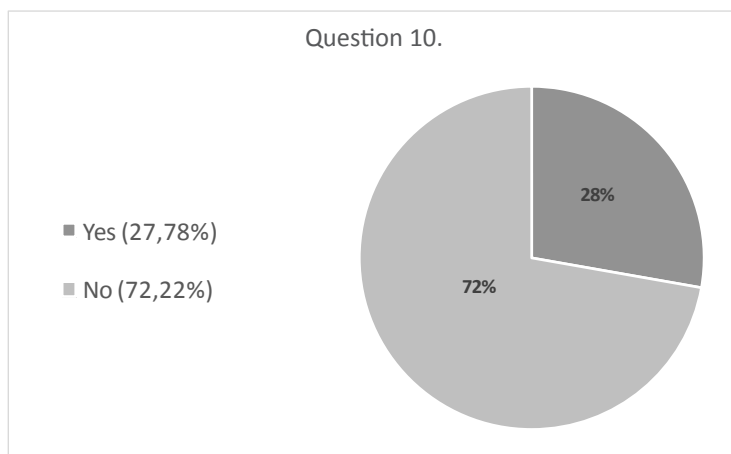
The vast majority of respondents indicated that they performed their duties only remotely, without on-site duty hours.

11. Please list the advantages of remote work in their position of importance from your point of view.
Among the advantages of working remotely, the respondents mentioned:
  • Flexibility of working time;
  • Higher efficiency;
  • Possibility of better focus on the implementation of tasks;
  • Time saved on commuting;
  • Feeling safe during a pandemic;
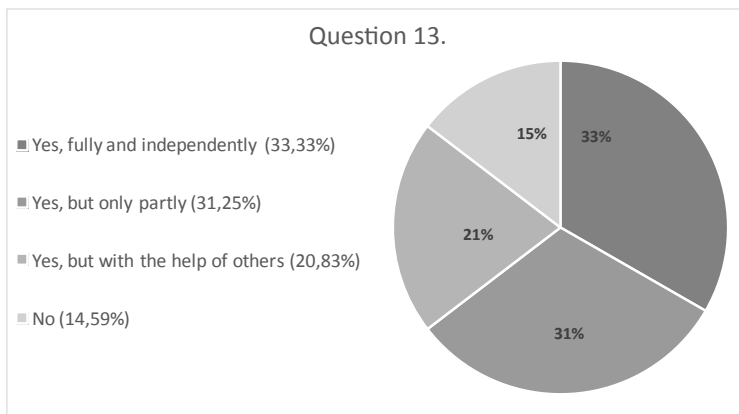 • More time to improve their qualifications;

• Ability to perform overdue tasks, previously postponed "until later";
• Better working conditions – "peace and quiet."

12. Please list the shortcomings that are significant from your point of view, limitations, problems encountered in the provision of remote work for the position you are in:

Among the key disadvantages of such a solution, the respondents indicated:
• Lack of direct contact with colleagues;
• The fact that not all work related to the scope of duties could be performed remotely (no access to the book collection);
• Lack of precise communication;
• Lack of specifically assigned tasks;
• No remote access to their computer;
• Lack of ongoing access to documentation;
• Technical conditions (small monitor, old computer, poor internet connection, no desk);
• Greater consumption of utilities;
• Problem with organising their working time (other distractions);
• Difficult contact with colleagues;
• More tasks to be done than usual;
• Monotony of performed tasks.

13. Have the encountered problems been resolved?

Question 13.

- Yes, fully and independently (33,33%)
- Yes, but only partly (31,25%)
- Yes, but with the help of others (20,83%)
- No (14,59%)

15%   33%

21%

31%

Only seven respondents indicated that the encountered problems could not be solved. In the remaining cases, it was possible in whole or in part, sometimes with the help of other people. Six respondents did not answer this question.

14. Did you like the possibility of remote work?
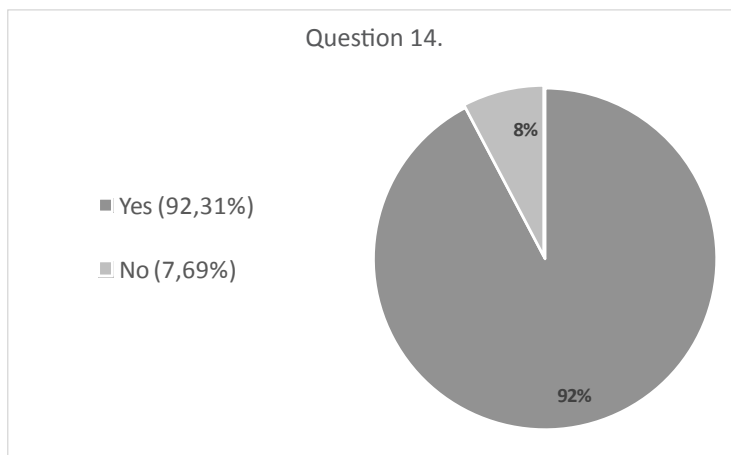
The vast majority of respondents liked the possibility of remote work. Only four people replied that this form did not suit them completely.

15. Would you like to use this form of work in the future, if necessary?
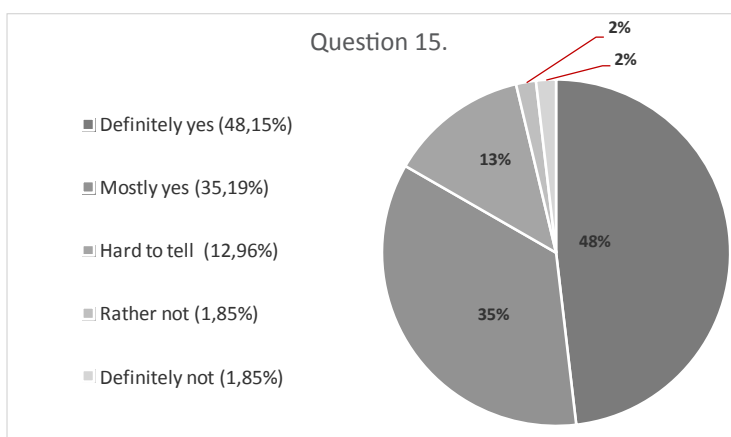
If it was necessary to perform work remotely, the vast majority opted for such a solution (45 people). Only two people replied that they would definitely or rather not want to use such a solution in the future.

16. Do you have any comments and observations about the period of remote work that you would like to share?

The last open question allowed the collection of general opinions and observations on the period of remote work. Among them were both positive and critical comments. Ultimately, however, this solution was well assessed and well received. Critical remarks included: organisational chaos; lack of ongoing verification of performed tasks; unfair distribution of duties; lack of tools (use of a private telephone, computer). Among the positive comments were, among others, those about opportunities, such as time for training and improving qualifications. Some respondents indicated that during the pandemic they willingly used the on-site "on-call" option because they could not fully perform their duties remotely. Combining remote and stationary work in the future was described as "an ideal situation".

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey showed that most of the adopted solutions were well received by the employees, giving them not only a sense of security but also the possibility of effective use of time for catching up and self-education. An interesting conclusion from the survey was that one of the most critical factors affecting the comfort of work is efficient communication, both between colleagues and with superiors. Taking into account the fact that the situation required rapid adaptation, both on the part of the employer and employees, the actions taken seem justified and accurate. The transfer of the activities of the academic library to the virtual space was a massive challenge for the entire GUT Library team. However, the steps taken turned out to be a reasonably good solution, which is also indicated by reports submitted by employees. The comments to the survey responses included information that employees were disturbed by the fact that the tasks were not always fully verifiable and not always, in their opinion, fairly divided. Based on these comments, it can be concluded that employees need not only transparent and precise instructions but also feedback on the quality of their implementation. This process was positively assessed in most of the responses. Essential elements of the process of commissioning and verifying remote work were weekly reports submitted to managers and then periodically to the library director. In these reports, employees stated, among other things, the number of records created in databases, the scope of thematic works, results in the form of protocols, studies, articles, etc., as well as the titles and topics of training sessions. It was of value not only for the superiors, but also for the employees themselves, who on the one hand indicated this form as being a bit burdensome, but largely motivating. Although there were some obstacles, the employees of the GUT Library were satisfied with the possibility of remote work. The most crucial argument in favour of such a solution tur-

ned out to be flexible working hours. The biggest obstacle was the lack of direct contact with colleagues, which also showed that the GUT Library team is harmonious and assesses work within the team very well.

SUMMARY

When considering issues related to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on academic libraries and their functioning, one should first of all pay attention to how the principles of crisis management were introduced more or less consciously at universities and how the problems of sudden closure and isolation of entire institutions were dealt with. The definitions and diagrams presented in this article in relation to real solutions show that the main problem that arose in this pandemic was too long of a reaction time to warning signals, lack of preparation of institutions for crisis situations, information noise and difficult communication. However, as practice shows, from the example of the Gdańsk University of Technology Library, but also of other academic libraries, these institutions coped quite well in this new, difficult situation. Reformulating their tasks and responding to users' needs on an ongoing basis, especially in the context of access to scientific and teaching materials for distance learning. Although the library might seem to be a unit in which remote work has no chance of complete success, as it turned out, from the example of the GUT Library, the appropriate allocation of tasks and their verification contributed to a specific successful outcome which was not always possible to repeat in other units of the university. The primary functions of academic libraries, i.e., providing scientific and didactic resources, were not wholly suspended as a result of the library closure. The transition to the format of remote services and the organisation of access to additional electronic resources contributed to the positive assessment of the library by the research and teaching staff as well as by students of the Gdańsk University of Technology, expressed, among other ways, in acknowledgements sent by e-mail.

The epidemiological situation showed that it is necessary to implement the principles and tools of crisis management in academic libraries, including the development of diagrams and scenarios of conduct in problematic and critical situations. Among such situations that have not been analysed so far, we must consider not only threats related to the epidemiological situation. It seems advisable to develop rules for dealing with other types of risk as well, even if they are unlikely at the moment. Among them should appear, among others, threats of terrorism and of armed conflict, as well as procedures in the case of, for example, long-term deprivation of media (electricity, Internet), failure of IT systems, a situation in which first aid should be provided to an employee or user, or situations related to another failure or problem. It is puzzling that in recent years routine

fire alarm tests have even been abandoned in university buildings. Few people also pay attention to and recognise the signals of the alarm siren. The situation in which not only universities and their libraries, but the whole country found themselves showed that more attention should be paid to various key aspects of management, including crisis management.

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INITIATIVES OF THE POLISH LIBRARIANS' ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARIES AND READERS IN THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PANDEMIC

Anna Grzecznowska holds a PhD in economics. In the period from 2007 to September 2020, she was director of the Main Management Board of the Polish Librarians' Association. Her research interests are focused on the economic aspects of scientific information. Her scientific achievements include several dozen articles in national and foreign journals. For many years, she has been coordinating projects implemented by the SBP, concerning, inter alia, promoting reading, disseminating access to culture of various social groups, including people with disabilities, and increasing the competencies of librarians in the use of modern information and communication tools. She is a co-author of several studies, including *Librarian, make friends with an autistic person* (Warsaw, 2016) and *Chronicles of the Polish Librarians Association in 2013-2018* (Warsaw, 2018).

KEYWORDS: Librarians. Library. COVID-19, Pandemic. Lockdown. Online training. Virtual services.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis / Purpose of the article** – The aim of the article is to present the activities undertaken by the Polish Librarians' Association in the first period of the pandemic, which supported librarians in two areas: maintaining communication with readers and self-improvement and improving competences in the field of remote reader service. **Research methods** – The article uses the method of

analyzing available sources, i.e., reports presenting activities undertaken by the SBP and libraries until the end of June 2020, including: reports, reports posted on websites, in social media, articles in industry magazines, surveys of training preferences of librarians and online training evaluation. **Results / conclusions** – Showed the effects of the pandemic with regard to the services offered by libraries, the impact of SBP on increasing the dissemination of digital resources and electronic services, as well as increasing the competence of librarians in the use of tools to work with the reader in the virtual space, through online training.

INTRODUCTION

The corona virus pandemic that began in Poland in March this year, continues to be a difficult experience that changes a lot in every person's life. It influences all areas of society's functioning, including the book sector – writers, publishing houses, bookstores, libraries, and readers. On the one hand, it brought about a crisis in the book industry, whereby both publishers, bookstores and wholesalers recorded a significant drop in turnover resulting from the introduced restrictions (closure of libraries, stationary bookshops) and ban on the organization of events (cancellation of fairs), a drastic reduction in publishing production. High costs were also incurred by the writers who were canceled or postponed to the fall of literary meetings "live".

On the other hand, the coronavirus has mobilized a lot of human energy in the promotion of books and reading. UNESCO has issued a message encouraging in a period of isolation to strengthen the bonds between people, stimulate our minds and creativity, and libraries to express a love of reading that symbolizes the power of books (UNESCO, 2020). Associations supporting librarians have published information services containing guidelines, recommendations, and collections of resources and tools to help libraries to carry out information work and provide services during a pandemic (ALA, 2020; CILIP, 2020; IFLA, 2020).

In the first period of the pandemic, the libraries' direct contact with the user ceased.

From March to May, librarians working remotely followed the announcements published by the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage, the National Library, followed the restrictions while waiting for the green light for library activities. At that time, they were organizing book collections, rebuilding the library space, marking out corridors for the flow of books to be returned, places for their quarantine, etc. Virtual space, rich digital resources, and social networking sites remained.

Despite the closure of libraries in Poland (from March 12 this year), creative librarians did not leave their readers, on the contrary – the interactions intensified, and the unusual situation increased the will and desire to act. Meeting the expectations of their users, who, in isolation, were

looking for other, mainly online, forms of activity, librarians quickly developed a new offer of services for them, using only the Internet and social media. They proposed, among others online reading of books tailored to the needs of readers of different ages, discussions about them during meetings with authors on the web, they posted attractive games, quizzes, art classes for children using the content of books on social media, launched e-subscriptions to libraries and borrowing e-books on tablets, organized a virtual tour of libraries. Reports were created from thousands of various activities, which were presented on the pages of libraries and in social media (Facebook, Twitter).

The Polish Librarians' Association quickly joined in to activate librarians and readers during the pandemic. President of the SBP, Joanna Pasztaleniec-Jarzyńska, on March 18 of this year, made an appeal to librarians from all types of libraries to maintain contact with readers by undertaking remotely carried out activities, while maintaining epidemic safety. She encouraged the use of new technologies and internet tools, especially activity in social media, as well as self-education and professional development. She announced that SBP will inspire and support librarians in meeting new challenges and disseminate information about the most interesting events (Pasztrzeniec-Jarzyńska, 2020). For this purpose, in the first phase of the pandemic covering the period March-June 2020, the Polish Librarians Association:

1. Launched the nationwide campaign #NieZostawiamCzytelnika (#Idon'tLeavetheReader) (SBP 2020a),
2. Developed a wide range of online training courses for librarians, some of which were free (SBP 2020b),
3. Transferred to the virtual space the flagship program for the promotion of libraries and reading – Library Week (SBP 2020c),
4. Used all available communication channels to broadly promote activities undertaken by libraries, including mainly the nationwide library website www.sbp.pl, social media, scientific and industry magazines, and local structures of the SBP.

#IDON'TLEAVETHEREADER

The action initiated by SBP was aimed at promoting online access to culture on the Internet and in social media. Writers, bloggers, journalists joined the action, incl. Jacek Dehnel, Robert Małecki, Rafał Hetman, Mariusz Czubaj, Magdalena Witkiewicz, Olga Gitkiewicz, Justyna Sobolewska. During organized webinars, they shared with librarians their knowledge of how to effectively and safely communicate with readers, prepare remotely attractive and activating cultural events for them. Libraries of all kinds gradually joined the action. The most interesting initiatives of libra-

ries were systematically published on the www.sbp.pl website and on the SBP Facebook profile.

In the period March-April 2020, the Office of the Main Board of SBP, using the existing ClickMeeting platform, organized the following webinars, which were attended by over 200 librarians in total:

1. *Social media for libraries* (March 20), a well-known blogger Rafał Hetman, during a live broadcast on Facebook, SBP shared with librarians (about 40 people) his experience in running FB, Instagram, YouTube channel, using the newsletter. In addition, 773 people heard the blogger's presentation on Facebook on the promotion of the library in social media, and the recording was viewed 5,800 times.

2. *Coffee brainstorming* (March 19 and 23); The webinar was conducted by Beata Gamrowska, graphic designer, copywriter and illustrator. A total of 104 librarians participated in the two meetings. Together with the lecturer, they discussed the ways of communicating with readers using social media, looked for inspiration and shared ideas for interesting activities. There were about 1.5 thousand views.

3. *The real story of Anaruka. The results of the literary investigation* (April 1); Dr. Agata Lubowicka from the University of Gdańsk discussed the results of research on revealing the forgotten context of the 1937 creation of the book "Anaruk, a boy from Greenland" by Czesław Centkiewicz (once belonging to the school reading canon) and the discovery of the boy's identity from the cover of the publication, and presented a panorama history and culture of Greenland in the first decades of the 20th century. 30 people participated in the meeting.

4. *Autism-friendly library. A few starting tips* (April 2); Aleksandra Sztajerwald from the Culture Without Barriers Foundation suggested what to do to make the library autistic-friendly, as well as how to meet the obligations arising from the Act on the digital accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public entities and the Act on ensuring accessibility to people with special needs. 48 librarians participated in the online meeting.

The series of literary meetings "The Author in the Evening Time", attended by over 400 people, was very popular. The guests were: Robert Małecki (April 27), Jakub Szamałek (May 4), Katarzyna Kobylarczyk – laureate of the 11th edition of the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize (May 11), Joanna Gierak-Onoszko (May 18), Marta Matyszczak (May 25), Olga Gitkiewicz (May 30), Monika Sznajderman (June 15). Recordings of meetings conducted by, among others journalists from Polish Radio were made available on the YouTube channel of SBP; 1,232 views were recorded https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCroRMlYlK5tz3ghYjsnDe7w/videos

Through social media, the SBP also informed about other online literary meetings carried out by entities supporting the #NieZostawiamCzytelni-

ka campaign, including Union of Literature (an association of writers), the authors and publishers http://www.sbp.pl/artykul/?cid=22370&prev=260

The address of the editorial office of the SBP portal received reports from events organized by libraries that joined the campaign. It is impossible to discuss all of them, they are available, among others at http://www.sbp.pl/o_bibliotekach/wydarzenia/niezostawiamczytelnika and on the library websites. There were also many articles on this subject in trade journals published by SBP: "Poradnik Bibliotekarza", "Bibliotekarz" and others. Below are examples of selected undertakings of the participants of the SBP campaign – smaller and larger public libraries:

Public Library of the Capital City of Warsaw, the Main Library of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, as part of the series "Skarby na Koszykowej", presented the most valuable rare editions on its website, incl. selected works of W. Shakespeare, J. Milton, Japanese poetry, or books lost during the war. Several dozen recordings of literary meetings and debates that took place as part of the "Talks about books" and "Books not only for children" and "Delights of discussing art" series are available on the YouTube channel.

The Municipal Public Library in Opole has posted an online library guide on its Facebook page with suggestions for creative and cultural spending of time at home. An interactive smartphone game has been prepared for young people – *Find your destiny* encouraging them to solve puzzles about fantasy literature (Klichowska; Żółtowska; Kampa 2020).

The Public Library in the Praga Południe District of the Capital City Warsaw has launched the #czytamwdomu initiative for which: it has posted on its website sets of digital sources providing literature, as well as games, plays and crosswords using the book theme; conducted online cultural and language classes for seniors; published radio plays for children on FB; recorded and shared a video (kamishibai theater) about the genesis of St. George (April 23) and the tradition of giving a book and a rose to loved ones on that day; realized several virtual meetings with authors of children's literature and travelers; invited readers to the online exhibition "Women for Women" prepared in cooperation with the gallery "House with Art", and engaged the inhabitants of Warsaw to develop an electronic cookbook "A recipe for a book, Readers cook" (Alicka, Płocka, Wąsowska 2020).

Public Library in the Bemowo District of the Capital City of Warsaw introduced e-registration to the library via a mobile phone; it converted audiobooks from CDs to mp3 format, which enabled their remote sharing (approx. 400 e-audiobook titles and approx. 700 e-books). On the library's YouTube channel, educational videos with workshops for children, adolescents and adults were posted, radio plays (in English), stories about customs, the passions of librarians were shared, films were recommended

to watch, legends and fairy tales were read to children, literary quizzes for young people were prepared (Gołębiowska, 2020).

The Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Gdańsk launched the "Library phone for talks" – every day from Monday to Friday, librarians talked by phone for 3 hours to the elderly about literature and culture, and were also trustees of their problems, thus helping to survive the isolation at home. As they admit themselves, by listening carefully to seniors, they got to know their preferences better and recommended appropriate books that are a source of optimism, alleviate pain and sadness, and inspire them to act. In this way, "on a living organism" they conducted bibliotherapy (Dettlaff-Lubiejewska, 2020).

The Municipal Public Library and the Municipal and Communal Center of Sport and Culture in Choroszcz carried out the action "Chorosz, engrossed in reading, or three questions to ..." addressed to the inhabitants of the community. Their reading preferences and expectations during the pandemic were examined online, and then program proposals were prepared (including small theater forms using Kamishibai, literary competitions), which were presented on regional television as part of the "Home Culture" series. In turn, the Public Library of the City and Commune in Barcin, winner of this year's SBP Master of Reading Promotion competition, offered its readers a weekly program of activity in social media, which included, among others, online meetings with the history of the area, virtual walks around libraries and museums, information about e-books and audiobooks (access to Legimi, Ibuk Libra, EmpikGo), as well as something lighter – memes, jokes, anecdotes (Chruścińska, 2020).

Public Pedagogical Library – Alfonsa Parczewski's Pedagogical Library in Kalisz focused her activity on supporting distance learning in schools and universities. ICT tools supporting education and reading were collected and published on the library website and on Facebook, indicating legal online sources, including free e-books. An absolute novelty on a national scale, which was created during the pandemic, was the educational project on Facebook "Chopin for Intermediate Level", aimed at popularizing knowledge about the composer and preparing recipients to participate in the 18th International Piano Competition. Fryderyk Chopin (https://www.kp.kalisz.pl/html/chopin.html) .

The Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, like many other libraries, decided to send e-book access codes to e-book readers via LEGIMI (mainly fiction), IBUK Libra (scientific publications), also encouraged to use the collections of the West Pomeranian Digital Library. With the help of social media, she organized a series of video meetings with people of culture, organized literary games for children and youth, recorded and made available short films introducing readers to interesting library rooms (studios), usually inaccessible to them (Liskowacki, 2020).

The City Library in Łódź offered its readers remote language learning. For a period of 3 months (April-June), test access to the Rosetta Stone platform obtained from EBSCO was launched, which includes 30 languages. The most popular courses were language skills at B1 level.

An interesting initiative came from the Provincial Public Library in Łódź, which prepared two games for smartphones combining knowledge with fun: *Literary surfing* – a virtual walk around Łódź and discovering its literary secrets together with outstanding writers and poets related to the Łódź region, including. Maria Konopnicka, Julian Tuwim, Władysław Reymont. The second game – *Around the world with a book* invites you on a journey with the bookworm. Details of the games were available on the library's website. Adult residents of the Łódź Province were invited by the library to participate in the project *Inhabitants of the Łódź Region during the pandemic* and to describe their experiences and reflections related to life during the coronavirus epidemic. Collected memories will be published in electronic form in 2021. A number of online exhibitions were also organized to present the collections held, incl. Polish comics, travel and adventure literature, lists of writers and artists in the Special Collections Department. On the library's Facebook page, readers were engaged to solve film quizzes, read encrypted literary entries, and participate in a musical knowledge game show (Szymczak-Ryczel; Zwierzyńska; Baranowska, 2020).

Editors of scientific journals published by SBP also joined the campaign. "Library Review", "Scientific Information Issues. Information Studies ", which undertook work on the preparation of special issues devoted to the situation of libraries and the book market in times of crisis and the role that information science can play in controlling and managing them.

Wydawnictwo Naukowe i Edukacyjne SBP made available in March this year. The Digital Archive http://ac.sbp.pl/ containing about 280 publications useful in the professional work of librarians and nearly 1800 issues of library magazines. The editors of SBP trade journals – "Poradnik Bibliotekarza" and "Bibliotekarz" were also encouraged to reach for valuable and practical texts available in the Archives, which can be used for remote classes with readers.

The campaign #Idon'tLeavetheReader enjoyed great interest and support from Internet users. During the lockdown period, the number of unique users of the sbp.pl portal more than doubled and exceeded 40,000. The reach of all posts on SBP's Facebook page reached 800,000 recipients per month, and the posts with the campaign reached even 200,000 recipients at a time. The campaign was reported by nationwide media, incl. TVN, Polish Radio, Radio Plus, Gazeta Wyborcza. Local structures of the Association actively participated in the promotion through social media and websites of libraries all over the country.

REMOTE LEARNING

During the lockdown period, librarians' interest in online education increased. Answering numerous questions on this matter to SBP, which has experience in conducting this type of education, the Association quickly developed a distance learning offer that was to raise the professional qualifications of librarians and help them in communication with readers, taking on new challenges and providing online services. library. The offer included synchronous training (participants and the trainer are in direct contact at a specified time) and asynchronous (participants learn at any time using the training materials provided to them). When starting its development, the following were taken into account:

– transfer to the virtual environment of the traditional workshops planned by the SBP to be implemented in 2020,

– results of a survey conducted on the sbp.pl portal at the end of 2019, on a sample of 156 librarians. The research showed that a large group of librarians (1/3 of the respondents) had not used e-learning training so far and had no knowledge of how to use this type of teaching in everyday librarian practice. However, it favored them mainly for economic reasons (lower participation costs) and the possibility to learn at any time. At the same time, the respondents formulated their expectations regarding the subject of e-learning training that they would be interested in. The vast majority (about 70% of responses) concerned information and communication technologies, modern forms of working with the reader, and promotion of the library in social media. Coding and programming, GDPR, creating mobile applications, websites, bibliotherapy, applying copyright law, simple programs for creating advertising materials were also mentioned.

For the purposes of remote education, SBP purchased access to the ClickMeeting educational platform, on which synchronous training was held, and used the existing Moodle platform for asynchronous training. Contacts were established with experienced online training trainers, including academic lecturers, bloggers, graphic designers, librarians, therapists, and personal data protection specialists. It was agreed that asynchronous trainings will last 2 hours and may be attended by up to 25 people, and the trainers will also provide consultations. A special website was launched http://www.szkoleniadlabibliotekarzy.sbp.pl presenting the training offer, which has been and is still updated on an ongoing basis. A new newsletter of the Association has been developed, devoted to remote education, which is systematically sent (1-2 times a month) to approximately 2,500 recipients. SBP members from local structures got involved in reaching the largest possible number of librarians from all types of libraries with the training offer, publishing it on websites and in social media of parent libraries.

The online training offer, carried out in the period March-June 2020, in the form of 19 meetings on the ClickMeeting platform, covered the following topics (Grzecznowska; Dargiel-Kowalska, 2020):

Conducting webinars and online training; participants learned about online tools for creating multimedia projects, programs supporting the visualization of library activities, projects of interactive tasks involving readers.

Webinar – a way to interact with the reader; the methods of planning and implementing webinars and building positive relations with users using this tool were discussed. Examples of virtual meetings with authors, literary games and creative activities promoting reading were presented.

Unconventional methods of working in the library; participants were introduced to gamification, book sprints, inspiration slots and other modern tools that can be used in the library to make it an attractive place.

ICT inspirations in promoting library activities; presented various information and communication techniques enabling the development of interactive presentations, e.g. selected books, creating unconventional link magazines, infographics, quizzes, and video files using the genial.ly web tool.

Creating films for the Internet; the specifics of creating and publishing videos in media such as You Tube, Facebook, Instagram were discussed. Basic techniques of filming, the necessary equipment and simple tools for film editing are presented.

Less is more, or how to interest the recipient in social media; participants learned the principles of creating creative content in social media, the basics of copywriting, constructing transparent messages that stimulate the interests of recipients, using specific graphics.

Library in changing social media; training on the use of tools in libraries such as: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr (an application that allows you to create blogs), newsletter and YouTube channel.

Podcast – how to create an interesting podcast from scratch?; discussion of a new, simple tool for promoting library activities, which is a type of Internet broadcast that can be played anywhere and anytime.

Book and reader – (not) everyday duo; participants learned about the forms of working with a book, useful during classes with readers, including word games and ideas to encourage reading and enabling them to test their knowledge about the book, book characters, authors, etc.

Implementation of personal data protection in the library in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR, taking into account the latest legislative changes, guidelines and good practices; during the training, the experience of applying the GDPR in libraries to date was summarized, the most common errors in the documentation and procedures carried out were discussed, templates of documents in the field of personal data protection were made available.

Preparation of libraries for control and external audit; participants found out, inter alia, what checks and external audits can be carried out in libraries, how to prepare for them, how to carry out management control and ensure the protection of personal data.

In total, in the above-mentioned training courses, about 300 librarians, mainly (about 85%) from public libraries, raised their professional qualifications. The training offer was very well received by them, which was confirmed by the results of the evaluation carried out immediately after each meeting with the help of a quality assessment questionnaire. It shows that over 80% of participants were satisfied with the quality of the trainings, approx. 70% found the information obtained very useful, and nearly 90% found it worth recommending the trainings to others.

The Polish Librarians Association also obtained funding from the operational programs of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage for the implementation of 3 free training cycles, which involved not only acquiring new skills by 140 librarians, but also checking them in practice, which was the condition for obtaining a certificate by the participants:

– *Library accessibility advocates*; The aim of the project, co-financed by the *Partnership for Books* program, is to prepare librarians to act as advocates for accessibility for people with disabilities, in particular those with autism. A group of 20 librarians from all over the country (from public and school libraries), for whom in May-June this year specialists from the Culture Without Barriers Foundation (project partner) conducted 8 online workshops. The training program is divided into three thematic modules: Disability in a nutshell; Idea for partnership; Idea creator. Participants learned about the obligations resulting from the Accessibility Act, the needs of people with various disabilities, tools facilitating communication with them and the preparation of an educational and cultural offer. In the second stage of the project (which lasts until November 30 of this year), training participants develop and organize events that activate people with disabilities in their libraries. Their reports will be available on the dedicated website http://autyzm.sbp.pl/

– *Passion of reading – asynchronous series of free e-learning trainings for* librarians from public libraries. 3 courses for 75 librarians were prepared: *Reading websites and blogs; Electronic publications; Interview – it's simple.* People from libraries for children and teenagers were preferred to qualify the participants. Participation in the project enabled them to acquire new skills allowing them to conduct attractive activities encouraging reading and discussion about the readings. The teaching materials provided made it possible to learn about the tools for preparing simple websites, blogs, creating e-publications, rules for conducting and registering interviews, programs for recording and modifying audio files.

The trainings were carried out in the period July-September 2020, and until November 30, participants conduct classes in the local environment. Their works are available on the project website http://szkolenia.sbp.pl/pasja-czytania/

– *Virtual training = real competences*; The aim of the project implemented as part of the *Culture on the* Web program, conducted by the National Center for Culture, was to raise the competences of 45 librarians from various libraries (mainly public ones), which will enable them to transfer some of the existing, stationary cultural offer of libraries to cyberspace. The goal was achieved through:

a) carrying out in July this year. a substantially coherent cycle of 2 webinars and 4 online training sessions, with each participant being required to take part in the entire cycle. The webinars were devoted to the interpretation of copyright in the organization of cultural activities and the practical aspects of GDPR application in libraries in the light of the processing of personal data in cyberspace. The topics of the training courses included: planning and implementing online events, multimedia forms of communication with the reader, building relationships using copywriting and social media, as well as visual materials (posts, infographics, posters) and analytical tools that can be used to promote cultural events, maintaining the requirements caused by crisis situations,

b) development of teaching materials (electronic publications, hyperlinks, infographics, a set of tasks, recordings of webinars and online training), which were placed on the Moodle e-learning platform,

c) training participants to organize at least one online cultural event in the local environment and send its documentation to the SBP,

d) launching the project website with basic information and teaching materials and descriptions of activities carried out by the project participants www.wsrk.sbp.pl

Training activities during the pandemic were also conducted by the local structures of the Association. For example, the Board of the SBP District in Warsaw and the SBP Branch in Ostrołęka organized two online trainings: *Librarian as an animator of culture and reading in the 21st century* and *Methods and forms of working with a difficult reader*. Additionally, the district in Warsaw, in cooperation with the SBP Branch in Radom, organized the *Senior training in the library.*

ONLINE LIBRARY WEEK

Due to the pandemic and the closure of libraries for readers, the Polish Librarians' Association decided to transfer to the network the implementation of the 17th edition of the Library Week – a nationwide program for

the promotion of reading, libraries and the librarian profession, which is celebrated every year on May 8-15. The inspiration for librarians in undertaking various activities was the slogan of this year's edition of the Library Week – "Savour the Library", which convinces readers that it is worth enjoying the book so that each of them can find sources in the library to pursue their interests and passions. .

Libraries of all types throughout Poland have prepared occasional events using the Internet and social media. Thanks to applications and programs such as Genial.ly, ZOOM, Canva, Padlet, Obraz.me, librarians in an attractive way organized numerous events in the virtual space, attracting the attention of thousands of readers.

Throughout the Library Week, the editors of the sbp.pl portal posted reports of the events on the TB website www.tydzienbibliotek.sbp.pl. The statistics show that in May 2020 it was visited by 11,117 users, there were 40,914 hits. For comparison, in 2019, in the same period, there were 1,138 users and 2,944 pageviews. Many articles presenting the activities of libraries and a summary of this year's edition of the program appeared in the periodicals "Poradnik Bibliotekarza" and "Bibliotekarz" (Dargiel-Kowalska, 2020).

43 libraries submitted their initiatives in the competition for the most interesting online event announced by SBP. The winner was the Władysław Broniewski Library of Płock, who conducted the action "Sweet and bitter stories " in the form of a city game transferred to the Internet. In short stories, the profiles of the young heroes of the defense of Płock in 1920 were presented together with the atmosphere of horror of those days, as well as the flavors of the books that accompanied them. The game, aimed at young readers, combined elements of fun with education. It showed how many flavors each story can have, and at the same time it strengthened the sense of belonging to a small homeland among the participants.

The analysis of the submitted competition entries and reports posted on the program website confirms that during the Library Week many of them decided to make books available in PDF format, virtual tours with audio guides, quizzes with a book theme, numerous competitions carried out via social media: art, literary, recitation, photography, film. There were also online author meetings. Among other proposals, the following were very popular:

– virtual tours of libraries and presentations of the most valuable collections (they were proposed, among others, by voivodeship public libraries from Zielona Góra, Gdańsk, Łódź, Poznań). A film about the resources of Polish digital libraries was made available by the Pedagogical Library in Kalisz,

– online workshops for children and teenagers on comic book development, drawing illustrations,

– listening to audiobooks,

– livestreaming on Facebook – sharing theatrical performances and concerts (the actions were carried out by, among others, the Municipal Public Library in Sosnowiec, the Municipal Public Library in Słubice),

– digital exhibitions; they were organized by, among others University Library in Poznań and University Library in Toruń.

The interest of young people was aroused by initiatives of the Provincial Public Library in Lublin and public libraries in Piaseczno and Ustronie Moskie, which organized an online escape room based on literary motives. As librarians admit, the most noticeable effect of this type of event was the increase in reach and likes and an increase in the number of comments on the library fanpage, which had an impact later (after the opening of the library) on the increase in borrowing.

On the other hand, the action #payabook carried out by the Culture Station – Library in Rumia, attracted many well-known readers from the local community, incl. actors, athletes. The reading fun consisted of the readers recording short films showing the handing over of the book. The videos were shared on the library's social media. The Municipal Public Library in Wrocław organized an online literary stint – a game referring to the tradition of field fun, and at the same time testing knowledge about literature. The event was promoted in local media.

An interesting initiative was presented by the Municipal Cultural Center in Laseczno, which invited 15 people from different parts of the world, speaking in 9 languages, to read together a poem by the Nobel Prize winner, Wisława Szymborska, "Miracle Fair". The film with the recorded event was made available on the YouTube channel, and the library won a distinction in the SBP competition for the most interesting online event for young readers.

The Municipal Public Library in Kielce recorded and shared on Facebook a series of meetings with young volunteers cooperating with the Regional Volunteer Center in Kielce, who came from different countries (Armenia, Spain, Italy, England, Turkey, France) and talked about their favorite books, contemporary and those they remembered from childhood. Young people also remembered the flavors of regional cuisine associated with literature.

The local structures of the SBP also appeared with the digital offer. The Board of the SBP District in Opole prepared a multimedia presentation on the initiatives of Opole libraries carried out during the Library Week. The Zielona Góra branch was a co-organizer of the "Online Reading Marathon", under which videos of reading an excerpt from a selected book were recorded by readers and shared on Facebook. The district in Poznań carried out an internet-based nationwide photo competition "Librarian other than you think", presenting the passions outside of work for libra-

rians. The Katowice District, in cooperation with the Katowice City Hall, launched the project "Action of the novel – Katowice!" encompassing a series of online meetings with writers who located their book actions in this city. The meetings were broadcast on Facebook of the Silesian Library and the SBP District Board. The SBP circle in Dąbrowa Tarnowska recorded a spot "Challenge for a librarian" with statements from readers of the local public library on "Why are books so important?", which was made available on its profile.

The course of this year's Library Week has confirmed that libraries, despite the ongoing pandemic and limitations, are very creative in virtual space and still play a leading role in accessing culture and information, regardless of the prevailing conditions.

SUMMARY

The pandemic has shaken the principle of universal access to library collections and services. The libraries were closed to the public almost overnight. Other librarians who transferred their activities to the Internet were open. Their spontaneity, care for readers staying at home, and creativity translated into ideas and implementation of best practices. Online services have grown in importance and will most likely become the norm for libraries. Various remote classes were organized for readers, including workshops, competitions, exhibitions, meetings with authors, as well as virtual walks around libraries and presentations of the most valuable collections. Libraries promoted access to online resources through their websites, identifying e-book and e-media platforms. On social networks, they encouraged readers to stay home and read books.

The above leads to the conclusion that partial compensation of the effects of the closure of libraries was the dissemination of electronic resources and services, perhaps previously underestimated and neglected, especially in small towns, where digital documents and services were overshadowed by "paper" media and traditional services. Expanding access to digital resources in libraries is a positive direction of changes that should be continued.

The Association of Polish Librarians joined in to activate the society in the event of an epidemic, support libraries and spread online services by launching the #NiezostawiamCzytelnika campaign. Its aim was to promote access to culture in social media, organize webinars on reading, and to inform about attractive and valuable online events in libraries through the available, wide communication channels. Apart from librarians, the campaign was joined by writers, publishers and other representatives of the book market. The interest in the campaign was confirmed by the

growing statistics of visits to the sbp.pl website, information in social media, on library websites, and articles in national trade magazines.

During the pandemic, online training offered by SBP proved to be a great support for librarians, during which they learned new forms of communication with readers, promotion of the library in social media and strengthening its image. The acquired skills allowed them to transfer the cultural offer of libraries to cyberspace and build network relationships with readers.

The annual May promotion of libraries and the Librarian Day celebration were also carried out in the virtual space.

The time of the pandemic has forced an increased activity on the Internet, which brings tangible benefits – it allows you to meet many needs related to culture and education, allows you to stay in touch with existing users, and, which is very valuable, it allows you to attract new recipients. The good side of this situation was also the improvement of librarians' competences in the use of tools enabling work in the Internet space.

It is difficult to determine if and for how long the solutions used in the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic will maintain the attractiveness of libraries for the supported communities and the general public. It is not easy for libraries to function in the conditions of limited access to them on the one hand and the competition of news giants such as Google or Netflix, providing free access to information services, or mass distribution of content at low subscription costs.

One thing is for sure, the experiences from the first period of the pandemic cannot be wasted. Libraries should be better prepared for next, unexpected situations, and SBP should be better prepared to support the activities of librarians. It is worth taking care of increasing access to network services of people at risk of social exclusion and making the library operating in a virtual space still a friendly place for them. The reality in which librarians work now, after the reopening of libraries, gives a chance to meet new challenges and expectations of various groups of readers.

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE TRAINING FOR LIBRARY EMPLOYEES AS AN ACTIVITY INCREASING COMPETENCIES IN THE PROMOTION OF CULTURE ON THE INTERNET

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KEYWORDS: Training for library staff. GDPR. Management control. COVID-19 pandemic. Extraordinary situations.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis / purpose of the article** – The aim of the article is to analyse the process of on-line training for library employees as an activity increasing competencies in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. **Research methods** – The training process concerning areas that have a direct or indirect impact on the subsequent activities of library employees on the Internet is discussed. Various forms of online training are indicated, among which priority is given to the division into synchronous and asynchronous training. **Results and conclusions** – Libraries, as cultural institutions, play a special role in providing access to information and cultural events. This scope of activity is of exceptional importance in the case of local communities, in particular those located outside large urban centres. Therefore, business continuity is very important, even in unusual situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Libraries, like all other public administration entities, operate on the basis and within the limits of the law. The legislature has defined the general principles of the functioning of libraries in several normative acts, among which the Libraries Act of June 27, 1997 (Journal of Laws 2019 item 1479) is of particular importance[1]. This legal act indicates that libraries organize and provide access to the resources of Polish and world science and culture. Indicating such a scope of libraries' tasks is not innovative and is characteristic of this type of institution around the world (Younghee, 2020). On the one hand, organizing and providing access to the indicated resources should be done in a creative, modern and attractive way for recipients, resulting from the specific conditions of information management in the 21st century (Wyrzykowski, 2000). On the other hand, it should be conducted with care to ensure the rights and freedoms of all natural persons. This applies to both people using the services of libraries and employees of these institutions. The priority in this case is security, broadly understood, in the traditional dimension of personal physical security and in the sectoral dimension, e.g. in the field of personal data protection, which closely correlates with the protection of privacy. Therefore, libraries are covered by a wide range of legal regulations aimed at building a professional management system for individual sectors of the institution's functioning. An example of such a legal requirement is the obligatory nature of introducing a management control system in libraries that are independent entities. This is to enable effective and cost-effective management of the library while achieving its statutory objectives. It is a legal obligation resulting from the provisions of the Public Finances

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[1] Relations between libraries and other cultural institutions and the organizer are defined in the Act of 25 October 1991 on organizing and conducting cultural activities (Journal of Laws 2020, item 194).

Act of 27 August 2009 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 869). The indicated activities require systematic improvement of the qualifications of library managers and employees, which is largely done through training (Szałkowski, 2002).

It is worth emphasizing that libraries must be prepared to function in various circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 became a factor that verified the functioning of libraries in extraordinary situations. The role of cultural institutions in such times is unique, as people forced into solitary confinement especially need access to culture. Universal access to the Internet and applications enabling live transmission of sound and image, as well as various forms of interaction with users, is an opportunity to organize cultural events and access them for people living in isolation. It is also a challenge for the management and employees of libraries, because such projects must be carried out in accordance with the law, with particular emphasis on the protection of personal data and respect for intellectual property. At the same time, access to such functionalities makes it possible to raise the qualifications of people working in libraries through the implementation of effective training.

The aim of the article is to analyse the process of on-line training for library employees as an activity increasing competencies in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. In addition to the direct implementation of tools for organizing cultural events online, it is also important to ensure the proper functioning of libraries in the administrative and legal dimension and to improve employees' qualifications through online training. The author used three research methods to investigate these issues. The first of these is a decision-making method that enabled the analysis of potential activities in the field of organizing training and implementing cultural events remotely. The second is a comparative method by which the forms of traditional actions and actions in extra-emergency situations (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic) were compared. The third is an institutional and legal method that enabled the analysis of normative acts and documents prepared on their basis which had an impact on the adopted solutions. Moreover, the author bases his considerations on his own empirical experience in cooperation with libraries as an on-line trainer for library managers and employees.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF IMPLEMENTING ONLINE TRAINING FOR MANAGEMENT STAFF AND LIBRARY EMPLOYEES

An analysis of the general principles of conducting on-line training for librarians requires a distinction between the obligatory and optional nature of this type of education. Remote training was popularized on a large scale in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also carried out

earlier (Wojciechowski, 2020). The advantages of organizing such events were, among others:

– reduction of training costs understood as remuneration for the entity providing the training;

– the possibility of participation by participants without the need to incur travel costs (in addition to financial resources, the time allocated for travel is also important);

– no need to prepare a training room, which in the case of some libraries had meant that they had to be temporarily closed, despite the fact that only some of the employees participated in the training;

– in the case of some training sessions, the ability to provide a recording of the training, making it possible to return to the presented content at a later date;

If the library management wanted to organize training during the period of forced isolation (the so-called *lock down*), the remote form was *de facto* obligatory. Therefore, in addition to continuing to offer training, which so far had been conducted in a remote form, an attempt was also made to adapt training offered in a traditional form to electronic training platforms. For some thematic scopes, this form of knowledge transfer has proved to be effective and may still be used in the future, when decisions regarding in-person versus remote forms of training rest solely with the management. The period of the pandemic also made it possible to check which training topics do not work within remote education. This is one of the positive experiences resulting from isolation, because if it had not happened, it would most likely not be possible to test this in practice.

The methodology of building the training process in the case of online training does not differ significantly from the methodology of creating such a process in the case of training carried out in a traditional form. In the case of both forms, we can speak of six stages, which were indicated by Ricky W. Griffin (Griffin, 2004):

1. Assessment of training needs.
2. Setting the goals of the training.
3. Development of the training program and methods of its evaluation.
4. Implementation of the training.
5. Assessment of the training.
6. Modification of the training program based on its evaluation.

Of these six steps, only the first is the exclusive prerogative of library management and staff. It should be emphasized, however, that entities that provide training services may also participate in this stage as advisory bodies[2]. Offering relevant and up-to-date training topics may inspire

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[2] Among the indicated entities there are not only companies that offer commercial training, but also libraries with instruction and methodology departments. The organization of training courses

organizers to order training on a topic not originally planned in the training calendar (Mayo, 2002). The remaining stages are most often activities carried out by entities providing training, but in this case setting goals and developing the program is done in cooperation with representatives of libraries, as is the implementation of the training. Traditional training courses are most often held at the library premises, while in the case of online training, a library employee very often takes part in organizational activities, e.g. sending information directly to participants, which at the same time reduces the scope of personal data processing by the entity providing the training. The remote form of conducting training has allowed for a significant improvement in the process of their evaluation (Bramley, 2001; Younghee; Rosa, 2020). Traditional paper-based surveys have been replaced by electronic surveys, which include automatic counting of points, segregating answers and presenting results in a clear form, e.g. diagrams and charts. Such a solution also enables the preparation of anonymised reports that can be presented to a larger number of people for whom evaluation data may constitute an important source of information in the context of planning subsequent projects.

An important factor that has an impact on the implementation of online training is the mode of content provided. Such training can take place in a synchronous mode, which enables live contact with the teacher, asking questions and performing exercises (Kopciał, 2013). Despite the fact that such training takes place remotely, it no longer concerns an independent analysis of materials, but allows the use of a wide range of didactic methods, often similar to those carried out in a traditional form. Synchronous training takes place at a designated time with direct participation of the teacher and participants, hence it is possible, among other things, to work in groups, jointly solving exercises in various forms, e.g. *case study* and immediate feedback from the teacher. Some training platforms offer the functionality of moving groups of participants to separate virtual rooms where they can solve the exercises by seeing and hearing other participants. A popular form of performing tasks during synchronous training is also the use of forms that participants can fill in at the same time and see each other's statements, which are then read and discussed by the teacher. This form of on-line training is most similar to traditional classes. More and more entities also offer training in asynchronous mode. Their essence is posting didactic materials on a dedicated remote learning platform with the possibility for the participant to read them at any time (there is no set time for training). The participants can most often see the presentation, podcasts, recordings in the form of video files, legal acts and other mate-

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for library employees in Poland often takes the form of a cascade, e.g. voivodeship or poviat libraries organize training sessions attended by smaller entities from the region.

rials, e.g. in the form of links to websites related to the subject of the training. In the case of an extensive thematic scope of training, it is possible to divide the material into smaller batches, which allows one to perform revision exercises. Secondary recapitulation is in this case an important factor that allows the participant to prepare for solving the test or the final task. Electronic training platforms allow you to check knowledge in the form of a quiz, or to solve a task in a descriptive form, which the trainer checks at a convenient time and sends feedback to the training participant. In some cases, participants have the option of asking questions to the trainer via e-mail or via the electronic training platform.

A comparison of the synchronous and asynchronous training modes based on the divisions presented in the Polish Qualifications Framework leads to the conclusion that in the case of asynchronous training, it is possible to achieve learning outcomes primarily in the field of knowledge. On the other hand, synchronous training enables the extension of this scope to include skills, and even social competences. However, they must be conducted in a creative and thoughtful manner, and a variety of teaching methods must be used as part of such training.

Regardless of the form and mode of training, it is also important to comply with copyright and the principles of personal data protection. In the case of asynchronous training, participants can easily copy the materials and share them with others. It is worth emphasizing, however, that library employees are a professional group that deals with the practical implementation of copyright law on a daily basis, due to their work with the book collection. Therefore, during the implementation of synchronous training for this professional group, it is important not so much to introduce the participants to the rules of copyright, but to explain the specific aspects of this area of legislation as part of the implementation of a specific project. Some materials can be copied and some will be protected. On the other hand, in the case of synchronous training, it is the duty of the entity providing the training to protect the privacy of participants. If they take an active interactive part in training that is recorded, their image and voice may be registered. In such a case, particular attention should be paid to the extent to which and to whom such a recording will be made available. It is also possible to anonymise or to remove some fragments that might not be considered a significant substantive contribution to the recording and at the same time might contain a wide range of personal data.

RAISING QUALIFICATIONS IN SELECTED ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL AREAS

Increasing the competencies of management staff and library employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet does not only involve

providing useful tools for carrying out online cultural events. There are areas that are not largely visible to people using library services, but are of key importance for shaping the appropriate organizational culture and procedures that ultimately increase the safety of such people. Among such areas, priority is given to personal data protection and management control, with particular emphasis on planning and risk management (Janczak, 2013).

Libraries have been operating in the reformed personal data protection system since May 25, 2018, which entails the entry into force of the GDPR provisions[3]. The implementation of new legal obligations is a challenge for the management and library staff, and at the same time generates deficit areas. This is mainly due to the fact that the provisions of the GDPR, which should be applied in practice in libraries, are dispersed and, unlike legal acts that are no longer in force, they do not constitute concise and transparent guidelines regarding the required documentation and security of IT systems. The new regulations require skillful and professional interpretation, which allows understanding the re-defined priorities of personal data protection, including an approach based on the risk of violating the rights and freedoms of natural persons (Mizerski, 2018). This leads to a situation in which most libraries use, to a greater or lesser extent, the support of external entities in coordinating the implementation of the provisions of the GDPR or at least conducting training aimed at increasing the competencies of employees in the area of personal data protection.

In the case of this area, training conducted in a synchronous mode is of great importance. The problem is not access to valuable materials, among which it is worth mentioning first of all the "Code of Conduct for Libraries", created by specialists in the implementation of GDPR provisions in libraries in cooperation with the Polish Librarians' Association. What is of key importance, however, is the need to present practical aspects of the implementation of the provisions governing the protection of personal data and to answer the doubts of training participants, including solving practical problems occurring in their institutions. An example of a difficult area is the set of dilemmas related to publishing photos of children participating in library lessons on the library website and on profiles in social media. Discussing such an issue during the training often requires a diagnosis of dependent and independent variables related to the functioning of libraries and interaction with the person asking the question. At the same time, other trainees have access to the questions and answers and can use the information provided.

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[3] Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46 / EC (Journal of Laws No. of 4.5.2016).

It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of personal data protection procedures should not result solely from legal obligation. The value of the actual introduction of adequate solutions at the level of the daily functioning of each library was verified after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Employees of institutions in which the protection of personal data functioned well could effectively adapt the previously adopted solutions to the new reality. Both the remote work of library employees and the organization of on-line events were automatically regulated by internal regulations that already existed in the institution. At the same time, in the case of libraries where this area was neglected or insufficiently developed, there was a need to quickly develop new internal regulations and their implementation, which was particularly difficult due to the limitations caused by the pandemic.

The second key area for improving the qualifications of library management and employees in selected administrative and legal areas is management control. As indicated previously, the introduction and implementation of a management control system is a legal requirement resulting from the provisions of the Public Finances Act of 27 August 2009 (Journal of Laws 2019, item 869). The legal act provides a legal definition of management control. According to it, "management control in units of the public finance sector is all activities undertaken to ensure the implementation of goals and tasks in a lawful, effective, economical and timely manner" (Bogacki; Dmowski; Wołowiec, 2019). It is worth noting that, despite the fact that regulations relating to the management control system are included in the Public Finances Act, this process applies to all spheres of the institution's functioning (Ćwiklicki, 2015). In libraries that are independent units (not included in the structure of another institution, e.g. schools, universities), which is most often signalled in the assigning of a separate Tax Identification Number, it is the library director who is responsible for the introduction and implementation of the management control system. Among the broad spectrum of activities performed as part of management control, planning and risk management as well as self-assessment of the management control system have the greatest impact on increasing the competencies of employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet. In the first case, it is important to analyse potential threats that may have a negative impact, on the one hand on the implementation of training and other projects increasing the competencies of employees, and on the other on activities promoting culture on the Internet. At the same time, the process of self-assessment of the management control system has a significant impact on planning the next training calendar and analysing the needs of employees by diagnosing deficit areas that require increasing competencies. Risk estimation should also take into account other factors, including the possibility of an exodus of employees to other entities. There

is a correlation between increasing employee competencies and making decisions about changing the place of employment (Gonera, 2016).

Contrary to training in the field of personal data protection, increasing the knowledge of the management control system may also take place asynchronously and in some cases this does not have to negatively affect the participants' gaining of knowledge. The choice of the training mode should be related to its detailed scope. The legal regulations of management control are not evolving as fast as those relating to the protection of privacy. At the same time, there are less valuable materials available on the subject, so the mere sharing of them as part of the training and discussion, e.g. in the form of a podcast or film material, can be a significant added value for library employees.

IMPROVING QUALIFICATIONS IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING ACCESS TO CULTURE

In addition to the areas that have an indirect impact on increasing the competencies of library management and employees in the field of creating access to culture on the Internet, it is also important to provide tools that serve this directly. It is a good practice to adopt a solution according to which library employees acquire appropriate knowledge and competencies in the field of copyright, personal data protection and other areas of the institution's functioning, and only then is the next step to start developing creative forms of promoting culture on the Internet.

It is worth emphasizing the special role of libraries in increasing access to culture for local communities (Jezierska, 2018). In unusual situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the related temporary closure of institutions or limitation of the scope of activities, library management and employees faced the difficult task of providing alternative solutions. The initial balance in this respect was strongly determined by the actions that had been taken before. It was much easier to reach people using the library's services for those institutions that had previously ran library profiles on social networks. This applied both to ongoing communication with readers and recipients of other services, where the profile on the social network served as a conveyor belt, with the possibility of presenting messages regarding the current access to individual functionalities as well as preparing new projects and promoting them. The effectiveness of activities was also influenced by other factors, including positioning the website in search engines, which also directly correlated with how providing valuable content was carried out in the past and how diligently. The number of visits to the library website also directly correlates with the advancement of the digitization of the collection (Caro, 2016).

One of the most effective forms of learning to implement new solutions promoting culture on the Internet is organizing training courses for library employees in this field. Also in this case, training conducted in a synchronous mode should be indicated as the most effective means. The situation in which participants learn during on-line training how to conduct activities remotely should be considered as a specific one, therefore it is important to ensure the maximum level of interactivity and the possibility of ongoing verification of information by asking questions to the teacher.

There are areas of knowledge in the field of promoting culture on the Internet that can be effectively adapted to on-line training. These are primarily topics related to the use of specific applications and tools that can be used for such purposes. The tutor can discuss their functionalities and at the same time suggest to participants to install the application on their computers in order to practice selected activities (Oleksyn, 2006). It is also possible to use existing resources on the Internet, among other things to convey knowledge in the field of modern methods of working with the reader, e.g. gamification and inspiration nests. However, it is worth emphasizing that practicing some skills remotely may be impossible or significantly difficult. An example in this respect can be workshops on the use of a camera to shoot short film materials, appropriate processing and editing of the materials and posting them on social media and on the library website. If the training is attended by a group of participants who have prepared (recorded) material and want to learn how to process it, it is possible in the form of synchronous on-line training. However, practicing recording different shots, properly framing and holding the camera, or recording a mobile device is notably difficult with such training. It requires individual or traditional training.

It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of training courses increasing the competencies of library employees in the field of promoting culture on the Internet does not follow a simple scheme, according to which a library employee participates in the training and then organizes an event. Trainings very often have to take the form of a cascade. First, a library employee is trained, and then they have to act themselves as a trainer conducting the training and properly preparing other people participating in the project. An example in this respect can be the organization of an online meeting with authors. The role of the management and employees of the library is not only to provide the appropriate IT infrastructure to carry out the project and to promote the event. It is also important to properly prepare the author to master the technical aspects of participating in the project. In this respect, it is of key importance to check the equipment in advance and eliminate possible problems, e.g. paying attention to the author's Internet connection bandwidth, which may not be enough for smooth video and image transmission online.

SUMMARY

The considerations presented here lead to several conclusions. As the first of these, it is worth mentioning the significant importance of access to training courses on a diverse range of topics for the management and library staff in the context of developing the promotion of culture on the Internet. Some thematic scopes have an indirect and some a direct impact on the conducted on-line cultural activities, but each of them is a component of a later project and has an impact on selected technical and organizational aspects.

The second conclusion is the observation of the fact that when planning training activities for library employees, it is important to clearly agree with the entity providing the training as to its mode – synchronous or asynchronous. As indicated in the article, some thematic areas, e.g. personal data protection, clearly qualify for synchronous training, during which the instructor is present at the same time as the participants and the experience is closest to traditional training. The remaining topics can be implemented in both modes, and decisions in this regard should be preceded by an analysis of the needs and opportunities to participate in training.

The third conclusion should be the necessity of cooperation between individual libraries, both in order to organize trainings in a cascading form (e.g. a county library organizes training in which smaller communal libraries from within this county take part) and the exchange of information and experiences. On the one hand, such activities make it possible to reach a larger number of entities with training projects, and on the other, they eliminate training companies from the market that provide low-level services or do not know the specifics of library functioning.

The last conclusion, and at the same time this author's postulate, is to draw attention to the need for further research on the impact of various forms of online education on the development of the promotion of culture on the Internet. This article was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is the further development of this situation of epidemiological threat that will be of prime importance in shaping the promotion of culture on the Internet. Undoubtedly, regardless of the development of events, such promotion will develop, but the scale of the phenomenon may vary. It is also not without significance that new tools are regularly being created that enable the promotion of culture on the Internet. It is worthwhile to systematically analyse their implementation potential and effectiveness in reaching recipients.

The considerations presented here do not contradict the position that, if possible, libraries should return to a large extent to traditional forms of providing services and promoting culture. Cultural institutions play an

important role in accessing information and preventing digital exclusion. Even the most professional online activities will not reach audiences who do not have Internet access (Holcomb; Dunford; Fopefoluwa, 2019).

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THE POLISH BOOK MARKET
CONSIDERATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In 1992 Mr. Okuniewski led the privatization of the publishing house "Dom Książki" in the form of employee leasing. From that time until June 20, 2017, he was the president of the management board of Przedsiębiorstwo Hurtowo-Detaliczne „Książnica Polska" in Olsztyn. From June 21 this year, he has been serving as the vice president of the management board of this company.

A long-time member and activist of the Polish Booksellers Association (SKP) and former chairman of the District Board of SKP in Olsztyn and vice-chairman of the Main Board of SKP, in 2017-2018 he was the chairman of the Main Board of SKP. In 2017-2019, he was a member of the Council of the Polish Chamber of Books. He has been a lecturer in postgraduate studies at the Polish Academy of Booksellers and in postgraduate studies in Publishing Policy and Bookselling at the University of Warsaw. He has also been a lecturer in courses and webinars for booksellers initiated by the Institute of the Book. In 2001 he obtained the Expert's Certificate in the field of book trading, awarded by the Expert Committee at the ZG SKP. In 2010, he was nominated for the IKAR 2010 award and the Special Award for the ability to combine the passion of being a bookseller with the realities of the contemporary book market.

ABSTRACT: **Thesis / Purpose of the article** – Books are (still?) one of the most important transmitters of thoughts and knowledge in time and space, and they provide a very important form of bond and communication among societies. In the economic dimension throughout the world and in individual countries, books have been marginal for hundreds of years. The global book market accounts for just over 0.5% of the global trade market, with an estimated annual value of USD

26-28 trillion. In Poland, this indicator is slightly higher, but still marginal. **Methods** – the author's own experience, observations, and tracking of what is happening on the book market have allowed for capturing the most important trends. **Conclusions** – The importance of the book and the role of reading are unquestioned. The book market is struggling with many problems (lack of a fixed price for a book, laws regarding books, a drop in sales, readership, diminishing importance of bookstores, etc.), which have additionally been aggravated by the pandemic.

ABOUT THE MEANING AND NATURE OF THE BOOK

The intellectual history of mankind is associated in particular with the invention of writing and later printing. As Walter Ong (1912-2003) – an American Jesuit, cultural anthropologist, expert in English literature, religious scholar and philosopher put it, this invention allowed for the (modernizing) "technologization" of the word, thoroughly changing, among other things, the relationship between speech and thought. In the place of speech, which always takes place in the conditions of the physical proximity of the people talking and the related impairments – impermanence, understatement, the ephemeral nature of words and thoughts, and often communicative chaos – introduced a kind of order, continuity and consistency. It also introduced a certain order, a repetition of the message, of thoughts and – especially from around 1540, along with the spread of printing – visual regularity, correctness of language and orderliness of the text.

Giving the text a paper codex form became the "leaven" of the phenomenon in the form of a printed book. Thus, a book means "writing down" intangible texts on a material medium, which is paper, and thus specific content, ideas, messages and images, which are created, developed, preserved, shared and promoted in this way. The printed book becomes a kind of duality. On the one hand, it is a "commodity" subject to the rules of the market and commerce, and on the other hand, it becomes one of the most important communicators, transmitters and carriers of culture, knowledge, education and a number of other phenomena, the meaning of which goes beyond what is symbolic and economic. This is where the deep specificity of the book as a thing, object, and work, comes in, which is to enable the reception, transmission, and circulation of the text, meeting complementary aesthetic, intellectual, social, and economic goals. One could say that it constitutes a specific cultural and commercial idiom.

One thing should be highlighted and emphasized. It is commonly said that "the author wrote the book". Well, authors don't write books. Authors write texts which others – in the process of giving the book its physicality and material existence – transform into a book in its physical sense. Books are the result of the work or activities, next to those of the author, of publishers and printers, their editors, proofreaders, reviewers, illustrators,

and people of many other professions, who give the book the final form of the material text, it's shape and appearance.

So the book to some extent becomes a collective product, dependent both on the author of the text and on other people and institutions participating in the final bestowing of what we can define as its materialization. The process of creating a book is therefore not only related to writing, but also to the publisher's and printer's labours, which are subject to autonomy/limitation according to the author's decisions. It is their actions that ultimately "build" the book. The selection and size of fonts, page illumination, margins, the number of chapters, paragraphs, illustrations, tables, charts and drawings, layout on individual pages, as well as indexes, links, in particular the title page, spine and covers – construct what we call the "readability "of the book, which is of paramount importance in its perception and reception.

The above-mentioned efforts and activities always contribute to making the text as communicative as possible and legible for thousands, and often millions of readers. Hence the multiplicity and, in very frequent cases, the complexity of adaptational tasks related to the "product" that the book ultimately becomes.

But it should also be noted that we seem to be witnessing a crisis in the editorial arts, and also in the art of publishing to a great extent. This is the result of, among other things, minimizing the costs of publication, haste, and often a lack of proper care for the correct Polish language. We are also dealing with a specific, gradual, progressive anemization of the book.

Andrzej Tomaszewski, a well-known typographer, polygraph, promoter of typography and beautiful books, made an attempt to point out to the "bookmakers" – as he somewhat mischievously describes the animators of the printed word – the basic requirements of the book, the fulfilment of which largely determines the success of publishing, sales and reading:

• first – an element of the aesthetic quality of a book is the compliance between its content and form,

• second – shaping the graphic design of the publication in such a way that the visual quality of aesthetic unity harmoniously combines all its elements,

• third – ensuring the functionality of the book in the context of the convenience of its future user/reader,

• fourth – creating an original approach consisting in shaping the book based on an innovative concept,

• fifth – the graphic and artistic value of book illustrations (graphic, painterly and photographic),

• sixth – the quality of the book, technical perfection in individual production runs, as well as the high standard of materials used, such as paper, inks, bindings, etc.

To sum up, we are dealing with two basic mechanisms: those that reveal the strategies and intentions of the writer and those that result (in a general sense) from the decisions of the publisher and the printer.

Understanding a book is not only about reading it, but also about the perception of the above-mentioned labours and treatments by its recipient/reader. The sociology of texts pays strong attention to the essence of the form in which the text reaches the reader of a book from almost every angle. This is of almost fundamental importance for the perception and appearance of the book, creating a space suitable for the reading and understanding of readers. Thus, the book provides readers with an almost metaphysical experience.

A book without a reader exists only potentially. It is the reader who gives it real life. Thus, reading practices do not only depend on the textual content and type of text with which the reader is dealing, but also, as I mentioned above, on the material form of the text. Therefore, publishers pay more and more attention to the subsequent editions of titles entering the book markets.

A book is more than a medium for text, and many see it that way. The book may evoke various reactions among its recipients/readers, and may also be endowed with sometimes extreme feelings and emotions: from love, through indifference, to hatred. In the past (both distant and near) it was also destroyed and burned. There may even occur the so-called Stendhal's syndrome, consisting in mental disorders related to, for example, exposure to a large number of books or various other works accumulated in a small area, combined with the loneliness of persons during, for example, forced quarantine. But the book in such situations can also be a therapy, an effective antidote to trauma and depression, a kind of psychedelic, a salvation from boredom and nothingness. Libraries and media clearly testify to the growing interest in books and reading during the current pandemic. This can also be seen in the example of the Book Centre in Olsztyn, "Książnica Polska". Many customers also believe that the text of a book is only the starting point for further development of the imagination, and that, for example, the illustrations and other aspects of the book also become important, e.g. the type of paper on which it was printed, its colours, as well as individual cognitive characteristics, e.g. how it feels or smells. Thus, perfectly printed/published books will take these specificities into account.

When writing about reading practices, it is worth remembering that "consuming" or reading a book takes place in two manners: quiet and loud.

Silent, quiet reading, although known in antiquity, did not spread until the end of the Middle Ages, and fully assimilating the text in this form came even later. Quiet reading is, of course, reading with the eyes only. So, for obvious reasons, it is very individual and, one might say, intimate.

On the one hand, reading aloud gives people who do not know how to read on their own the possibility of getting to know the given text, while at the same time it can bind, for example, social relationships of relatives and acquaintances, friends, etc.

It is worth noting that reading aloud has been practiced to this day to a limited extent, including in churches during the liturgy. Reading aloud in community life has been taking place for centuries in religious orders and congregations, both male and female. Spiritual readings, Church documents, writings and lives of saints are read aloud, among other times during meals, such as at supper and on other occasions.

The book in its current codex form has replaced its earlier media, e.g. scrolls. Printing, in turn, has replaced the manuscript. The current possibilities resulting from the digitization processes, transferring almost the entire textual heritage from one medium to another, is relatively simple, but it can also raise growing concerns, as it can create a very real risk of losing our understanding of the culture of the text. After all, we are dealing with the issue of a specific "lightness" of digitized knowledge and content. We can take a book in our hand, fold the corners of its pages, listen to the rustle of the pages being moved, feel the delicacy of the paper, its smell, etc. – that is what we will always associate with reading a book. Text contained in files is usually perceived by the sense of sight, less often by hearing – we absorb it faster than a book on a paper carrier, but much more shallowly. We "accumulate" less and less content in this way for longer. Giving texts a new electronic format cannot and should not, under any circumstances, burden us with abandoning, forgetting, eliminating, or simply destroying their current medium/carriers.

In practice, we assume that the text is the same regardless of the carrier on which it was placed. However, the same text, although stabilized in meaning, depending on the medium on which it was placed and the way it is assembled, may acquire new meanings. It is therefore a mistake to assume that the text always remains the same, regardless of its material form.

Positive changes in the medium are also important – in this way, the text can gain a new reader who has various limitations and aversions to the paper form of the text.

When its medium changes, the text is no longer the same text, because as a rule both the manner of reading it and the process of creating it change. Present and future e-books will probably continue and develop, but as a marginal format, an addition or a supplement to traditional paper books, which will still prevail for tens or even hundreds of years, and which will continue to be produced, printed and purchased and read by their users. But we must also be aware that the traditional book is ceasing to be what it used to be. In many environments, the book begins to be treated as a relic

of the past. The death of the book – which, of course, should not be expected – would be a catastrophe, a threat to our contemporary cultural civilization and the harmonious development of mankind. It would mean the eradication of basic human skills that shape and determine the mind, the psyche, spirituality, our means of learning about the surrounding reality.

VALUES GAINED FROM READING BOOKS

Colloquially it is said that "books teach, entertain, educate". This statement gives the essence of the function and meaning they have or create. But these are not the only values, properties, or attributes that books fulfil in social circulation. We do not see or appreciate many of them. This is even understandable to some extent, because each of them is revealed only in the process of "consumption" of the book – that is reading.

Books, apart from cognitive, educational, playful or socializing values, have therapeutic properties in particular, preventing – by creating cultural competencies – cultural impairment, stimulating (especially in children and adolescents) a natural hunger for knowledge. Although they do not have healing properties, they undoubtedly have a very positive effect on treatment processes, stays in health institutions, etc. They can also fulfil specific rehabilitation goals (hence the popularity of reading books in prisons and other places of detention).

Currently, Polish (and not only Polish) society combines a peculiar civilizational and political ADHD. Culture broadly understood, including books and reading in particular, can visibly weaken and tone down these processes and their effects – be a kind of "detox" to the problems of the modern world, politics, social and economic processes, as well as the flood of informational garbage from which the modern man – often busy, overworked, tired, stressed – begins to simply fall behind. Librarians know this very well, and maybe a little less so teachers, as well as book people – writers/authors, publishers, and booksellers. Unfortunately, readers, especially potential ones, who do not appreciate the book as an atypical catalyst, tempering everyday stress, the pace and complexities of life, everyday problems or various adversities, have much less knowledge about these specific properties.

The campaigns promoting books, carried out more and more intensively, most often speak of encouraging or persuading a potential customer to buy a book or borrow it from a library and read it. The real – often enormous – benefits of having a home book collection, actively visiting bookstores and libraries, and benefits related to "live" contact with books and their reading are very rarely shown. It is all the more important as the popularity of television, computers and all electronic media and con-

tent, of watching movies, playing computer games, or surfing the Internet, not to mention of mobile phones, is growing fast and ever faster – to the obvious detriment of book readership. This is especially true for children and adolescents. Therefore, as early as possible, the initiation of reading among children and adolescents should be particularly actively instilled and conducted.

Reading books certainly extends your life. Books stimulate and develop the mind. They stimulate many areas of our brain through reading – they develop the imagination, support concentration and form associations. Books have a calming and balancing effect on our lives. Dr David Lewis, the French-born neuropsychologist, founder and director of the Mindlab International research centre at the University of Sussex, internationally renowned lecturer and author of over 30 books on psychology, has conducted research and made measurements showing changes in heart function under the influence of various activities considered to be sedative. It turns out that reading effectively reduces the level of stress by as much as 68%, while, for example, listening to music reduces stress by 62%, drinking tea by 54%, or going for a walk by 42%. It is worth reading books before going to sleep, because this activity significantly improves its quality and causes the necessary relaxation before falling asleep. Books develop analytical thinking and deepen knowledge – each book we read leaves fragments of varied information contained in its contents in our mind. They significantly expand important cultural capital, creating powerful added value.

Researchers from Yale University in the United States conducted research on people aged 50+, subjecting them to various health tests, related to their reading skills. And what did they find? 30 minutes of reading a book every day is enough to improve your chances of extending your life by as much as 17% in the next dozen years. Reading books every day for about one hour can extend your life by almost 25%. Statistically, book readers live on average two years longer than book abstainers. It should be added that people who do not read either books or newspapers are – especially in today's reality – more susceptible to simplifications and manipulations.

These are only some of the benefits of reading. In fact, there are many, many more.

RESTORE THE DIGNITY OF THE BOOK, OR A FIXED BOOK PRICE

Generally speaking, a fixed price for a book is a type of decision made through an industry agreement or state regulation in the form of a legal act, e.g. an act whereby the producer (publisher) of the book sets the (re-

tail) price of the book for the final recipient (buyer-reader). The price specified by the publisher is valid for a specified period (in practice, from 6 to 24 months from the date of publication/entry to the market), throughout the country, in all sales channels. The retail price is printed on the cover of each copy of the book. The agreement/statutory regulation usually specifies a catalogue of exceptions to this price, listing end customers who may (to a limited extent) use rebate benefits during the price protection period. This usually applies to libraries, schools, sales during book fairs, or to individual recipients on special terms.

The fixed price of a book has a long (almost 200-year-old) tradition in the world. The idea of a fixed final price appeared in Great Britain as early as 1829, where publishers agreed against the devastating rebates practiced by booksellers. Similar solutions began to be used in Denmark (1837), Germany (1888), and France (1889). The standardization of relations between booksellers and publishers was carried out in the form of the so-called recommended retail prices for books. In recent years, similar regulations on book markets were introduced, in among other places Hungary, Sweden, Japan, the Netherlands, Australia, Iceland, Finland, Austria, South Korea, Mexico, Greece, Norway, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium and Spain. In 1981, the so-called Lang Law (after then Minister of Culture Jacques Lang) was introduced in France, which later served as a model solution in other countries. In 2002, the industry-specific agreement in force in Germany for decades was replaced by a state law on a fixed price for books.

A fixed price for a book, valid for a specific period of time, is primarily intended to equalize the chances of cooperation between large book distribution networks (bookstores, large-format chains, the Internet, and other sales networks) and independent bookstores. A dense network of bookstores offering a wide, ambitious literature is widely regarded as one of the basic conditions for the development of sales and readership. One can probably risk the statement that there is a kind of correlation between the decreasing number of bookstores in Poland and the decreasing level of readership. This conclusion seems to convey an obvious message: the density of the book sales network and the possibility of physical contact with a book (which is never and never will be provided by the Internet) have an impact on both the growing level of sales and readership.

It is also difficult to agree with the claims of opponents of price regulation on books that this will lead to an increase in book prices. There is no evidence for this, while the simulations carried out (while working on the bill on a fixed book price in Poland) indicate that book prices may drop by as much as 10-12%, although "point" price increases (in the case of some titles) may occur.

It should be added that several countries, including Hungary (after having a law in force for more than 100 years), Norway, Iceland, Australia,

Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Israel, and the United Kingdom, in time withdrew for various reasons from the statutory regulation of book prices. In some (Finland, Austria) this solution was reintroduced. The case of the UK is interesting: In Great Britain the withdrawal from this regulation meant that it became commonplace to see independent bookstores rapidly displaced by chain stores, combined with lower prices of bestsellers at the expense of increasing prices for other publications. By comparison, in 2004, in France, which was covered by the Lang Act, there were over 2,500 bookstores, managing nearly a quarter of the local book market. In Great Britain, 40% of the previously functioning independent bookstores were closed shortly after the act was repealed, and in 2014 shrank to just less than 4% of the British book market. The resignation from the Net Book Agreement in 1995, due to a strong lobby from the dominant bookstore chains, meant that the British book market is currently very strongly dominated by a global player – Amazon, with over 60% market share, including 85% in the e-book segment.

Efforts to normalize the book market in Poland have over 10 years of history. The apogee of these efforts took place in the second half of 2014, when the draft act was discussed by the relevant parliamentary and senate committees thanks to the PSL (Polish People's Party). Due to the end of the term of office of the Sejm and, it can be said, clear resistance and obstruction by some prominent politicians of the Civic Platform, the bill was not discussed by the Sejm at the time.

The Polish Chamber of Books again dealt with the drafting of the law on the fixed price of books at the beginning of 2017, referring it to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which earnestly addressed the submitted document. Several consultation meetings with the book community, i.e., publishers, booksellers, and booksellers from online bookstores were held at the Ministry's premises. The meetings were attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, prof. Piotr Gliński. I had the pleasure and honour to participate in these meetings as a member of the PIK Council at that time and the Chairman of the Board of the Polish Booksellers' Association. The temperature at the meetings was very high at times. It was clearly visible that a part of the book world did not identify with the submitted project. I admired the calm and composure of the Deputy Prime Minister, who had to call the participants to order and rein in their emotions many times.

Before and after the meetings, extremely active hate activities occurred and so-called open letters appeared. There was a buzz on the Internet about the proposed bill. Numerous haters and trolls appeared, spreading provocative comments and apocalyptic visions of the collapse of readership and the end of the book after the law was passed. In *Gazeta Wyborcza* of March 16, 2017, editor Wojciech Maziarski published an article entitled

"How to finish off the book readership". The content which is altogether bizarre follows the final punch line: "… a further decline in readership, which is already dramatically low in Poland, which in turn affects the state of knowledge and awareness of citizens. We observe the effects from time to time during elections… ". It would be a pity to quote further. If you read the content and message of the quoted article literally, then after the law came into force, the book in Poland would await the proverbial Armageddon.

The meetings were attended, among others, by representatives of the Jagiellonian Club from Krakow (a Polish association and socio-political think tank with a conservative and republican profile), and the Republican Foundation from Warsaw (a non-governmental organization running a think tank, publishing, and educational activities related to the "Republican" Association). Of course, both organizations came up with very harsh criticism of the book bill. After the meetings, the foundation published an "interesting" position on the Internet: "For several weeks there has been a storm over the alleged draft law on changes that would affect the trade in books. Everything seems to indicate that the scandal around the uniform price of the book is based on manipulation and/or deliberate disinformation." In turn, the Jagiellonian Club published five "bright" better ideas for the book market in Poland: 1. Deducting in the PIT declaration – a better idea, but imperfect; 2. No VAT – The best, but a difficult solution; 3. Lower VAT on e-books and audiobooks – this is up to the European Union; 4. Library purchases – a systemic and civic solution; 5. Local bookstores – for this you need to build a reading "ecosystem". I only signal these better ideas. Their development and description would require a separate article.

From the meetings, I got the impression that the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is seriously interested in the draft bill submitted by PIK. I remember the words uttered and emphasized by Deputy Prime Minister Gliński during the first meeting (March 2, 2017) – I quote: "the book is one of the basic pillars of culture and this is the basic indicator of its place and meaning in the lives of Poles". For this reason – as Deputy Minister Gawin stated – "further consultations will be conducted, but so far there are no binding decisions. We try to balance all arguments. We have doubts that uniform pricing of books will translate into readership in any direction, but it may save small, independent bookstores, especially in smaller towns where residents buy books (or – my note – book-like products) at food discount stores (and again my comment – usually smothered in baskets, located, for example, in sections with alcohol or women's clothing). The profession of the bookseller is a dying profession today. An anonymous seller from a "chain" will also not replace a reader's contact with a real bookseller, for whom selling books is not only a business, but also a mission."

The bill (albeit with comments) is also supported by bookstore organizations and chambers: of course, the Polish Book Chamber and the Association of Polish Booksellers, not counting many booksellers and bookstore companies, which supported the bill in over 600 petitions to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

On the other hand, online shops/bookstores are strongly opposed to the bill, spreading information in the media that they will not be able to grant discounts when selling, and that readers will lose tens of millions of zlotys. This is clearly untrue and perhaps deliberate, sophisticated disinformation aimed at Poles.

During one of the meetings at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Grzegorz Majerowicz, vice-president of PIK, made an interesting comment, saying "I would like to see what the sale of online bookstores would look like if they could not use free showrooms, which is what stationary bookstores have turned into. The reader comes to them to look at the title, but buys the book online."

The bill provides for maintaining a fixed price (printed on the cover) and restrictions on granting a maximum retail discount on new publications only during the first 12 months after the book's launching. Thus the restriction in creating discounts applies only to a small part of the book offer on the market (not exceeding 20%) and only for a strictly defined period of time. During this period (12 months), sellers/booksellers could grant a discount of 5% of the book cover value in normal retail sales, 15% at book fairs during the period, and 20% for public institutions (cultural institutions – libraries, educational institutions, universities, research and scientific institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences). The regulation also covers school textbooks – the act allows the end seller to grant a 15% discount on textbooks when they are purchased by the parents' association of students of a given school, who use a given textbook, whose statutory goals provide for undertaking actions in this area.

The benefits from introducing price regulation on books can (or will) be:

1. Readers will be able to take advantage of a much wider publishing/title offer, they will also have easier access to the rich, valuable and ambitious offer of smaller (so-called niche) publishers, who are currently unable to cope with the price wars waged between sales networks in the retail market for books and can only enter this market with difficulty.

2. The process of liquidating independent bookstores, which have no chance of surviving in the current commercial conditions (I omit the pandemic period here), will also be slowed down (or even blocked), mainly in smaller towns, but also, for example, in Warsaw, where in the recent several years the number of bookstores decreased by almost 40%. What is more, there will be a chance to revive at least some of the over 1,000 bookstores closed in recent years.

3. The prices of books in bookstores and points of sale will not increase, but will even fall. This will obviously result from the following premises – producers (book publishers) will be forced to set rational, balanced and responsible book cover prices. Today, publishers often inflate the prices of books, calculating them right off the bat with very high discounts given to large sales networks and libraries in mind.

4. There will be a great opportunity to increase the production (new editions) of books, develop the publishing offer, its quality and availability. For example, reactivating half (i.e. 500) of closed bookstores within 5 years will result in a visible increase in sales (of at least 150-200 million PLN per year) and an increase in circulation (by at least 3.5-4.5 million copies), which of course will directly translate into an increase in average circulation (currently about 3,000 copies) and the obvious associated decrease in copy prices.

5. The Act will not eliminate competition in the book market in the slightest way. Both publishers and booksellers will compete with each other. Publishers will continue to compete with each other with the diversity of the title offer and different prices of books, while competition in bookstores, large-format stores, discount stores and online stores (bookstores) will consist in competing in terms of the breadth and quality/subject of the assortment/title offer, quality of service and competencies of booksellers/store personnel;

6. The Act gives hope for a visible improvement in conditions for the functioning of authors, providing them with the possibility of agreeing with the publisher in a clear, transparent and precise manner the royalties/fees for writing a book. Perhaps it will also stimulate native authors to write (for example, out of 18 titles in fiction which enter the market, 16 are titles of foreign authors).

And one more conclusion to end with. The Book Act alone will not ensure the full sorting of the book market, increasing book production, sales, and readership. It is the first and necessary condition, but not the only one. The Polish book market requires a deep reform.

THE POLISH BOOK AT A CROSSROAD – DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES

The Polish book market has been drifting more and more for several years. This drift is marked in particular by visible annual drops in publishing production (from 1 to 4% annually) and book sales, a decreasing number of bookstores operating on the domestic market, and their increasing degradation, both in the eyes of customers/buyers purchasing books and of their trade partners – mainly publishers and wholesalers,

among whom many of their most important partners in boosting sales volume began to consider more common sales networks (such as "Biedronka" or the post office), or other places of sale. Bookstores, which should obviously take precedence in selling books, are losing their importance also as vital cultural institutions. To this should be added the growing problems in finances and payments (loss of liquidity) in the industry, numerous bankruptcies and liquidations that cause confusion in the market, most often affecting publishers and printing houses, which are at the beginning of the book circulation chain.

Tab. 1

Basic indicators of the book market and the changes taking place therein

	Specification	Year 1998	Year 2010	Year 2018	Decrease (-) Increase (+) 2018/ 2010	Decrease (-) increase (+) 2018/ 1998	% decrease/ increase	
							2018/ 2010	2018/ 1998
1	Number of titles published	24.000	24.380	39.199	+14.819	+15.199	160,8	163,3
2	Of which: number of first editions	13.500	14.430	26.767	+12.377	+13.267	185,5	198,3
3	% of first releases in total	56,3	59,2	68,3	+ 9,1	-	-	-
4	Outlays – the volume of publishing production in millions of copies	150,0	139,2	91,0	-48,2	-59,0	65,4	60,7
5	Average circulation of a title in the number of copies	6.250	5.710	2.150	-3.560	-4.100	37,7	34,4
6	Revenues from sales at publisher's selling prices	1.450	2.940	2.250	- 690	+800	76,5	155,2
7	Average retail price of 1 copy – in PLN	19,50	32,50	43,90	+ 11,40	+24,40	135,1	225,1

| 8 | Number of bookstores | ca. 3.100[x)] | 2.450 | 1.450[x)] | -1.000 | -1.650 | 59,2 | 46,8 |
| 9 | Population per book-store | 12.471 | 15.528 | 26.109 | +10.581 | +13.638 | 168,1 | 209,4 |

x) approximate
Source: Author's own study – based on *B-ka Analiz* data

Looking at the table above, you can clearly see the aftermath of the total nihilism in this industry. Admittedly, a cause for modest optimism – although many have doubts in this regard – may be the ever-wider publishing offer (the growing number of titles offered on the market), but in the opinion of both book consumers and professionals, the offer for Polish readers is weakening – primarily in terms of quality. The state of the current market is increasingly influenced by the so-called "Readers", which are far from being valuable books with significant cognitive, educational or cultural values.

The condition of the bookstore network (the rapidly decreasing number of bookstores) is almost a threat, which can (and does) cause in many parts of the country (especially in rural and small-town environments) exclusion from direct access to books, which obviously overlaps with the very low reading rate (one of the lowest in Europe) and the absence of physical presence of books in households.

And one more interesting table illustrating the changing channels through which the book reaches buyers and readers:

Tab. 2

Fragmentation of the book sales market

Sales channel (%)	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2010	Year 2015	Year 2019
Internet	1	5	18	38	46
Bookstores	48	39	41	36	25
Hypermarkets/Chains	7	10	14	15	16
Press kiosks	4	14	7	8	10
Other	40	32	20	3	3

Source: Author's own study – based on *B-ka Analiz* data

The main reasons for the current situation on the book market are:
- Progressively faster changes in civilization, culture (the growth of so-called consumption culture), technological (including Internetization, progressive digitization) and biological (the aging of Polish society – in 2050 the country's inhabitants aged 60+ will constitute over 40% of the population; currently they are one quarter).

- Growing commercial space in ongoing social processes – the infantilization of adults and adolescence of young people, mainly children.
- A low level of readership (one of the lowest in Europe).
- Undoubtedly, the introduction of VAT on books in 2011, associated in the general public awareness with a visible increase in book prices.
- The submission of the Polish book to some form of brutalization, almost complete commodity production, disregard for its dual nature as one of the most important cultural and social communication assets as well as a commodity.
- The price and discount wars that have been going on for many years, have a destructive impact on the book market, its functioning and the perception of bookstore customers. Also resulting in the elimination of hundreds of bookstores from this market as a result of, among other things, unfair competition.
- Bankruptcies and liquidations of many companies operating on the market (publishers, wholesalers, bookstores), causing a visible decomposition of this market – also in a very important financial dimension.
- Drastic shortening of the life cycle of a book on the market. Many book titles are sold to the so-called cheap book bookstores, bazaars, markets, etc.
- Lack of basic regulations and principles of functioning of the contemporary book market in Poland, which causes almost complete disruption of this market.
- The "flight" of school textbooks and libraries from bookstores, which often contributed to their existence and financial condition and to the number of their visitors.
- The lowering of the level of professionalization in the book market – for example, we have book publishers and book producers, we have booksellers (already a very small group) and sellers of books (a rapidly growing group).

Certain catalytic mechanisms become indispensable in the book business, giving order to the book market and eliminating the anarchy and disorder that prevails in it:

- Organizations operating in the book market, including PIK, PTWK, and SKP, undertaking active measures aimed at returning the VAT rate to 0% on books, which, above all, would lower their prices. This in turn could undoubtedly be a good initiator and a forecast of readership growth in Poland. 0% of the VAT rate for books applies, among other places, in Britain, Ireland and Ukraine, with VAT rates on books ranging from 2.5% to 4% in wealthy countries such as Spain, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Italy. Why not Poland?
- Efforts towards a law on the book (the constitution of the book), determining its significance, functioning, promoting and emphasizing

the importance of the development of reading in the country, as well as the obligations of state and local authorities and other authorities in matters of protection of the book as a special good – social, educational and cultural – even providing some sort of privileges in renting premises to bookstores, rent preferences and other levies.

- Introducing tax relief for people buying books and building their own home book collections, in the form of, for example, annual income tax deductions, such as 500 PLN – which would be the equivalent of purchasing one book per month on average and an incentive to do so.
- Elimination (complete cessation) of the long-lasting price and rebate wars that destroy and restrict the book market. At least a partial "recovery" of the book as a basic cultural asset.
- Printing of retail/final prices on book covers.
- Centralized promotion of books and reading as a basic value of national culture, civilizational development, and increasing the competencies of Poles, financed from public funds.
- Establishment of at least 1,000 fully professional, highly qualified bookstores – also specialized ones, with additional benefits, services, values and services. Offering the highest standards to meet the book needs of customers. The introduction (discontinued earlier) of certification of bookstores – as an additional incentive to raise the standard of bookstores. During one of the meetings at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, in which I had the honour to participate, one of the discussants present in the room reacted negatively to the statement that we have nearly 2,000 bookstores in Poland, saying that we have at most 300 real bookstores in the country.
- Undertaking actions to eliminate the exclusion from access to books experienced in many regions of the country, mainly in rural and small-scale environments and towns, where there are no bookstores and books available to those who want to buy them, which undoubtedly has a direct impact on the low level of readership. There are 650-700 bookstores in the Czech Republic, which is four times smaller in population. There are on average 17,500 inhabitants per one bookstore. In Poland there are almost exactly 10,000 more than this.
- Raising the rank of the bookseller's profession and its higher professionalization. The situation right now is that we have an increasingly shrinking bookseller environment and a rapidly growing book sales community. The profession of a bookseller is slowly beginning to disappear, and the bookstore industry needs well-prepared specialists in the sphere of turnover, sales, promotion of books and activities developing the reading environment, as well as economics and bookshop management – reducing costs.

- Those within the book world, especially booksellers, are deeply aware of the ever-changing book environment – the book market will simply be more and more demanding and difficult, as well as requiring more and more investment in bookstore customers, acquiring them and building loyalty. Additionally, there will be rapidly changing technological conditions, involving progressive Internetization, digitization with the rapidly growing primacy of digital solutions over paper solutions, construction of mobile applications for the needs of corporate communication, personalization of sales through artificial intelligence (which, according to market experts, can increase retail profits even by 60%), self-service cash registers, digital payments and probably many other novelties and solutions.

As opposed to the market circulation, Polish books function much more efficiently in the library circulation. In the nationwide ranking of libraries recently published by the National Library, declines/regressions also take place, but compared to the relatively rapidly declining market position of the book, the decline in the library is much milder. And so:

- the number of public libraries and their branches decreased from 8,112 in 2013 to 7,925 in 2018, i.e. by 187, or 2.3%,
- the number of library points decreased from 1,271 in 2013 to 1,083 in 2018, i.e. by 188, or 14.8%,
- the number of readers borrowing books decreased from 6.435 million in 2013 to 5.953 million in 2018, i.e. by 0.482 million, or 7.5%,
- book lending decreased from 119 million volumes in 2013 to 102 million volumes in 2018, i.e. by 17 million, or 14.3%.

The structure of library visitors/readers (in %, by age) also gives food for thought:

- readers up to 24 years old constitute 41%, of which nearly half are the youngest readers up to 12 years of age,
- readers in the age range from 25 to 60 are 44.6%, including nearly 2/3 people in the age range of 25-44 years,
- the oldest library visitors, 60+, make up only 14.4%.

Here is a digression to think about:

1/4 of the population of Poland are people over 60 years of age – which means that it is the weakest "readership" group, with a large amount of free time.

Additionally, research carried out two years ago shows that the customers of *Książnica Polska* (as a target group) come from the following environments (in %):

- school and pre-school youths: from 15% to 30%, on average about 20%,
- students: from 2% to 10%, on average about 6%,
- adults up to 40 years of age: from 30% to 40%, on average 34%,
- adults over 40 to 65: from 25% to 45%, on average around 33%,
- people over 65: from 5% to 15%, on average around 7%,

- all depending on the bookstore, its size, location, reading offer and the activity of booksellers.

And a few more reflections to end with.

We currently live in a world in which the book is beginning to be treated by many as a relic of the past. It is no longer what it used to be. A man is indeed a biological being, but apart from satisfying basic needs – hunger, thirst, health, etc. – he also has many spiritual needs (Witkacy called them metaphysical experiences), various sensations, for example cultural ones. But their level began to drop significantly, which risks breaking the cultural code. In everyday life, the brutalization of language becomes very offensive, as does the increasing lack of care for its form and content, as well as numerous vulgarizations. Let's remember and keep in our minds: the death of the book (which I don't believe will happen) would be a total disaster for our culture and our lives.

PUBLISHING AND THE BOOK MARKET DURING THE PANDEMIC

For over 6 months, we have all been grappling with a situation that has never happened before – the Covid-19 pandemic with its consequences for society and the economy. The economic slowdown, which was already visible in the second half of last year, looked depressing in the first nine months of this year. Economic experts' forecasts are not good. Throughout 2020, GDP is expected to decline by as much as 3.5%. Much depends on whether Poles start working and shopping when the government introduces a full economic liberalization. To this should be added a decrease in the consumer confidence index, which is falling, although symptoms of its rebuilding are visible.

In "Książnica Polska", literally from the first day of the Covid-19 outbreak, we have focused on balancing the company's activities to the extent that we are able to run it, taking as absolutes:
- full safety of work and remuneration for our employees,
- maximum payment security both towards our suppliers and other business partners, as well as all our external fiscal and other obligations arising from our business activities,
- keeping business running normally and not restricting the bookstore network – on the contrary, promoting its development.

It is impossible to escape from thoughts and actions related to it. The absolutes mentioned above should be guarded as much as possible. Of course, it is difficult to judge at present how long this extremely difficult situation will last, how much the book market will be devastated and what courses of action will have to be taken.

In the fourth quarter of last year and in the first 10 weeks of this year, "Książnica Polska" had developed a fairly solid financial cushion that al-

lowed it to survive the most difficult period (March-May) – this is the result of an almost 20% sales increase in these periods.

The return of sales and income to levels comparable to the corresponding periods of the previous year will be very difficult, if only due to the previously introduced requirements of restrictions and social distance – social isolation, which most of us will probably "code" for a long time. There is also increasingly visible social impoverishment (almost 45% of people declare a worsening of their finances), growing unemployment, stagnation and reduction of income/salaries, which will undoubtedly be reflected in the rebuilding of household budgets and perhaps a sudden withdrawal from purchasing goods that are located on the end of the lists of survival items – let them not be books, which are probably at the end of the second ten shopping lists in the shopping hierarchy – worries about the new climate situation, as well as the rapidly growing deficit in the state's finances, which this year will exceed 100 billion PLN (there is no shortage of opinions stating that it may even be close to 200 billion PLN).

The previously discussed pandemic and the related restrictions and legal measures have caused the economy to fall into turbulence. Companies are recording significant drops in revenues, some of them have been liquidated, and some have ceased or suspended their activities. Most of these cases are due to very limited cash inflows from current sales, which in many companies (including bookstores and publishing houses) fell by as much as 75%, in a business where "cash is king".

In the bookstore industry, a decrease in the number of bookstores and the volume of commercial transactions is clearly visible (by almost 35% in March this year in our company, and in April this year by as much as over 55%) and the downward trend will continue for many weeks to come, probably for months, although not in such proportions.

However, the growing crisis was a clear stimulus for us, which should be used as a catalyst for the necessary changes in our business, in particular to create new fields of activity for the company and the booksellers working in it. The key to surviving the current crisis and remaining an active participant in the book market are:

1. Maximum strengthening and development of the e-commerce sales channel. In our company, the turnover in this channel has increased by over 10 times in April and over 5 times since May.
2. Wise and effective use of aid packages offered by the government and some local governments. Thanks to its own activity, "Książnica Polska", with the help of a law firm servicing the enterprise (due to the high inconsistency and chaotic nature of the regulations creating the anti-crisis protections), and – to put it mildly – with the positive attitude of the banks financing us, obtained the available support measures that ensure its financial security.

3. Effective management of commodity stocks and related obligations, and working out with our business partners (mainly suppliers) a model of cooperation that will ensure the parties a safe passage through this exceptional situation. In other words, we want to maintain the company's financial/payment capacity as fully as possible, as mentioned earlier.

4. Uncompromising business restructuring, deep cost reductions, cuts in necessary expenses and liquidation of permanently unprofitable bookstores. In our company, we closed only two bookstores, but in the past nine months the chain has grown by eight more: two in Warsaw, two in Kraśnik, two in Radom, and one in Braniewo and recently in Olecko.

5. Creating a climate of motivated, committed, and creative employees for the staff of the entire company, who will act alongside the management board as promoters and implementers of necessary changes.

In the current conditions, companies that have a relatively stable situation and greater risk tolerance can cope. Demand is likely to recover slowly and gradually. We are aware that this year it will be difficult for us to meet the sales budget undertaken by us – before the advent of the coronavirus – in this year's business plan, with a planned sales increase of about 25%.

In the first quarter of this year, the company saw a slight increase in sales and revenue. The second half of March, in which results "fell" sharply, had an impact on the strong reduction of the pace of growth. In the second quarter there was a 21.5% decrease in sales – this is mainly due to April, when sales and revenues decreased by more than half compared to the same month last year. The closing of our eight bookstores in shopping centres also contributed significantly to this decline.

In the third quarter, there was a strong positive rebound – sales increased by nearly 18%. The fourth quarter, especially December, will bring up the level of sales, which will be at least 13-14% higher. In total, 2020 should also close with a visible increase in sales of 7-8%.

In "Książnica Polska", in the first half of March, the management of the company began to take all necessary measures to ensure the stability of its operations and finances. With the full consent of the team, a decision was made to temporarily (until June) reduce salaries by 20%, with a parallel reduction in working hours. At the same time, the company's management undertook very intensive measures to reduce the operating costs of the bookstores, including mainly a temporary reduction in rents from the lease of the premises. The vast majority of decisions made were to lower the fees. In some cases, rent reductions continue up to 2021. We estimate that the decrease in sales and income will be balanced with the reduction in operating costs, as a result of which the annual financial result will be "positive" (i.e., profitable). We are also very active in maintaining and

developing high increases in sales in the e-commerce channel, which is already beginning to constitute an important – significant in the balance of trade – channel for the creation of sales.

However, looking from a wider perspective, we have the irresistible impression that the Polish book market is bleeding out and the mood is gloomy. The "food" chain throughout the book industry is beginning to break: from the author, publisher, printing house, distributor, wholesaler and bookstore or other end-seller, to the reader – the "consumer" of the book. The pandemic is a time of trial, which reveals the true state of the book business, and probably only through joint efforts, mutual empathy, understanding and reliability, honesty and professionalism, will the industry be able to recover from this deep crisis. Even in the short or long term we will come out of this, as an industry and its constituent segments, gaining new experience – even significantly strengthened.

One of the very important premises is the rebuilding of the book sales network. In Poland, a country with nearly 39 million inhabitants, at least 2,000 professionally operating bookstores should be functioning, so that books are widely available. Meanwhile, as the erosion of the sales network has been progressing for many years, the trend is exactly the opposite: the number of bookstores is decreasing faster and faster. We may also ask ourselves: how many of the currently operating establishments are not bookstores, but stores that sell books, where sales reps work instead of professional booksellers.

Paradoxically, the pandemic may be an opportunity for profound changes in the industry and permanent changes to many of the bad current rules of the game, which have been devastating, destructive, and destabilizing to the Polish book market for many years. Many of these changes and the "recovery" of the industry can be carried out by the people in charge of the publishing and book industry, but many necessary and beneficial changes might be brought about by more active and thoughtful actions on the part of the government, in particular the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Book Institute.

In recent weeks, Deputy Prime Minister Gliński has taken steps to restore the zero VAT rate on books. I wholeheartedly support the Prime Minister, so that his endeavours, and my own, will be successful as soon as possible. This decision will have significant economic and social significance for the book market, because on the one hand it will undoubtedly reduce the prices of books, and on the other, it will be very positively received by millions of Poles buying and reading books, because they will perceive it as a reduction in prices (much as the introduction of VAT years ago was commonly associated with an increase in book prices).

Another very important thing is to return to discussions and actions – as has already been said – about the fixed price of the book, as it is in many

European and non-European countries. The introduction of the decision (legal act) on the fixed price of a book (or more broadly speaking – the Book Act) would first of all eliminate or significantly reduce the discount and price wars that have been going on for many years and the mess in the margin policy of publishers and distributors of books, which, like the proverbial cancer, are effectively destroying the entire market and the circulation of the book in Poland, rendering its destruction more and more visible. Contrary to appearances, these actions can also significantly reduce the prices of books.

Currently, the Polish book is very much in need of measures to support the market, broaden its availability, and raise the level of readership (let us add that it is one of the lowest in Europe). And in this case, the actions and initiatives of Deputy Prime Minister Gliński seem almost indispensable. Local governments at all levels should also be involved in supporting the Polish book (many of them already identify with the importance of the bookstore as an important cultural institution in local communities). They may observe patterns of book and reading support introduced in other countries. And it is not only about reduced rents for bookstores (as in Krakow, for example). One might take the example of Italy, where, for example, the authorities of Florence (approx. 400,000 inhabitants) decided to encourage young citizens of the city to read books and press media. Under the slogan "Be curious", every inhabitant of the city aged 18 to 25 (about 7,000 people) was offered 50 euros from the municipal treasury to buy books, magazines and newspapers, to be released in local bookstores within 2 months. This is an excellent example of supporting reading, but also local bookstores. In total, the city authorities allocated over 330,000 EUR for this purpose. The campaign was of course very successful. The mayor of the city, Dario Nardelia, emphasized that the Internet allows easy access to a lot of information, but it is printed words that help to deepen knowledge and curiosity. It is worth adding that the subsidy granted in Florence supplemented a one-time voucher of 500 euros introduced earlier by the Italian government, which was supposed to support books, Italian bookselling, and reading.

In recent years, in our country, library purchases and school textbooks have been successfully "led out" of bookstores, and at the same time, in a visible way, also children and schoolchildren have been coaxed out of bookstores. Perhaps we must rethink the matter so that textbooks return to bookstores, and introduce support for school students in the form of special educational vouchers issued every year by the government (for example, in the amount of 500 PLN), with which parents and students could purchase textbooks and school aids just in bookstores (and only in them) as well as reading material. The benefits of such a solution would be obvious to all parties (including yourself). A burning issue is the return to

bookstores of public and school libraries. For decades or even hundreds of years, the bookseller and librarian coexisted "in one house". In the wild rebate wars, library purchases were appropriated by wholesalers and many publishers, "winning" libraries with unfair commercial practices on the book market. Fortunately, many of these companies have already dropped out of the market as a result of running a dirty game. The "removal" of libraries from shopping in bookstores and the "killing" of contacts/cooperation with booksellers caused – as many "old" librarians signal – degeneration in the form of limiting purchases to titles that are high in sales rankings and to those which are offered as new products with "crazy" discounts (sometimes reaching 50%). This can often lead to the impoverishment of the reading offer for library visitors. Meanwhile, the range of products offered in bookstores is usually a few, dozen, or even tens of thousands of titles, from which (with the possibility of putting away, booking, and ordering) a librarian can create a wide, well-thought-out offer for his readers. Contacts with booksellers are all the more important as virtually every professionally run bookstore in the country is able to supply, at the client's request, any book available on the Polish market.

I also hope that Poland will be very actively involved in the initiatives of the Association of European Publishers (FEP) and the International Association of Booksellers (EIBF) in solutions supporting the book, especially during the coronavirus crisis, by issuing special coupons for European citizens to buy books in local bookstores and coupons for book purchases by public, school, and other libraries – also only from local bookstores. Benefits from the above-mentioned initiatives – if they come into force – will benefit everyone: from the author, to publisher, bookseller and, above all, the reader. It is worth using the experiences of, for example, Belgium, France, or Italy, countries that have already introduced similar solutions – with good results, of course.

BREAKING NEWS

We are now in the second stage of the pandemic. Covid-19 has struck again, and it is probably not the end of these strikes. Companies, including bookstores and publishing companies, which in the third quarter at least partially "recovered" their previous losses, have found themselves in a deep impasse again. October turned out to be dramatic for most: again marked by high declines in sales and income, and for many by a renewed loss of the most important thing – liquidity. Bookstores will therefore be curtailing their activities for the second time, and many bookstores will either suspend their operations or go into liquidation. So the publishing and bookstore market will shrink. What is very painful for retail is a clear decrease in customer attendance, perhaps the most visible in bookstores

located in shopping centres (EMPIK has experienced a decrease by more than a half), but also visible in storefront bookstores (in "Książnica Polska" by 11%).

In "Książnica Polska", October, instead of the expected increases, also brought a relapse, with sales compared to the same month last year falling by 2%, and revenues by 0.2%. It is not much, but it causes fear and tensions.

It is all the more important as the vast majority of companies have limited their operating costs to the fullest extent – there is simply no further they can go. And autumn will bring visible increases: the costs of electricity and the heating of premises are rising. There will be additional costs related to the creation of employee capital plans/PPK, which are financed by employees and state budgets, but also by companies.

Whether we want to or not, we must also invest in the development of digital tools. Companies without innovative solutions and technologies will not survive on the market. And the bookstores in the marketplace are essential. Literature has shaped mankind, books are proof of our humanity.

Bookstores and booksellers – and also, to a large extent, libraries and librarians – infect people with the bug of buying and reading books. It is very important that bookstores continue to expand, respecting and systematically treating their spaces to influence customers.

Books, publishers and booksellers need visible support from the state to carry out their tasks. Recently, "Książnica Polska" proposed to industry organizations working for books and bookselling (the Polish Book Chamber, the Association of Polish Booksellers and the Polish Society of Book Publishers) a joint speech to the Deputy Prime Minister, Piotr Gliński, regarding the national issue of a special Christmas book voucher, for Poles during Christmas, which they could only use in bookstores. It would be a tangible, real, and significant support for readership and the entire book chain, and in particular for publishers and bookstores: increasing production, increasing sales, maintaining the active presence of bookstores on the market, and slowing down the processes of liquidating bookstores.

Also significant and beneficial for the book, as was mentioned earlier, and for which booksellers and most publishers have been striving many, many years, would be the introduction of a fixed price for new publications, stabilizing and coordinating the Polish book market. Many experts have been claiming for years that the potential of the Polish book market is largely untapped. If this market were properly arranged, organized, and freed from the current perversions, its "production and sales" potential could quickly increase by as much as 1.5 billion PLN.

A REVIEW OF DOMESTIC PUBLICATIONS

The research program carried out and presented in the dissertation by Marlena Gęborska entitled *Model of the library actively promoting children's books* (Gęborska, 2019), includes eight types of sources: "... responses obtained during a nationwide and international survey, statements by librarians and readers collected using a scenario, promotional materials collected in libraries and during book fairs, websites of public libraries, library and statistical documentation, publications in monographs and specialist journals, reports on the status of libraries and reading, and studies by the Central Statistical Office "(p. 26). The author devotes the first, introductory chapter to the functioning of libraries in Poland in legal and organizational terms. The second chapter analyses the social environment of the library and describes book fairs and library events promoting children's books. Selected initiatives in the field of such promotion in foreign libraries are discussed in the third chapter. In the last, fourth chapter, the author presents the activities of selected libraries, indicating strategies considered to be exemplary, and presenting conclusions on the activities of libraries aimed at young users in the form of the eponymous model.

The authors of the publication *A Meeting Place. The library as a social space (on the example of the Lubuskie Voivodeship*) (Buck & al., 2019) were guided by the ideas of the "third place" and the library as a place of integration for the local community. Various innovative projects in the field of infrastructure and activities undertaken by libraries of the Lubuskie Voivodeship serve as an exemplification of the analyses and proposals presented in the book. Shaping literary culture through drama and theatre are shown through the example of a wide range of events organized or co-organized by the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Zielona Góra, such as Lubuskie Literary Thursdays, Krakow Poetry Salon in Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra Film and Theater Festival, Drama Reading Room, and others. In turn, the media library Góra Mediów in the public library in Zielona Góra or the Światowid media library in Kargowa are examples of hybrid libraries designed in a flexible space, combining traditional functions with the functions of a digital library. The chapter devoted to the analysis of good practices describes, among others, computer and console game tournaments (e.g. media library in Krosno Odrzańskie), club activities (e.g. Youth Club for the World in Szprotawa), artis-

tic projects (e.g. painting workshops organized by the public library in Jasień). Important elements of the activities described are modernization changes in the infrastructure and library space.

Researchers from the Department of Informatology and Book Studies at the University of Łódź conducted research allowing them to identify the most important conditions that determine the use of public libraries by the inhabitants of Łódź. In the publication *Łódź public libraries. Time of change, time of challenges* (Antczak & al., 2020) an extensive research report was presented. "Factors of interest from the point of view of the planned research were divided into several groups: 1) collections, 2) organization and services, 3) staff, 4) interior and equipment, 5) information about the library and its collections, 6) location" (p. 10). The last group of examined factors influencing the use of libraries were individual ones, independent of the organizers of library activities, e.g. the attitude to reading or the amount of free time of library users. The analysis of the research results presented in the fourth chapter was preceded by chapters presenting the legal conditions for the functioning of libraries, the characteristics of Łódź libraries in organizational and economic terms, and an analysis of the density of the library network. The most important factors influencing the use of libraries are related to both investment (increasing the number of books purchased) and organization (adapting buildings to the needs of disabled people, promotion, a common library card, a central catalogue). The last chapter of the publication analyses the changes in the public librarianship in Łódź after 2017, taking into account, inter alia, the impact of recommendations resulting from the research.

Rafał Werszler's work of an interdisciplinary nature, *Equipment and arrangement of libraries in Silesia up to the end of the 19th century* (Werszler, 2019) is based on empirical research of the surviving rooms and equipment, ranging from medieval armaria to cast iron structures from the mid-19th century, as well as on analysis of various iconographic and writing sources. The author has attempted to take a holistic view of the changes in the rooms and the furnishings used to store books in Silesia against the background of similar processes in Europe. The research findings include, inter alia, the dependence of the organization of interior design with book collections on the sharing profile (public or individual), the dependence of the design and construction of equipment on the changes in the form of the book, the impact of the development of education or political and religious conflicts on the shaping of library arrangements. Published with great care by the Scientific and Educational Publishers of the Association of Polish Librarians, the publication contains rich illustrative material.

Scientific and professional journals played an important role in shaping the theoretical assumptions of book and library science in Poland in the years 1901-1939. An interesting attempt to reconstruct this phenomenon has been made by Beata Żołędowska-Król in the monograph *The Development of Accounting and Library Science in the Light of Scientific and Professional Journals Published in Polish Territories (1901-1939), Based on an Analysis of the Content of the Journals* (Żołędowska-Król, 2019). The first two chapters, divided chronologically (the period before independence and the interwar period), describe the conditions and initiatives forming the librarian and bibliological environment, and provide a review of the periodicals issued at that time, divided into five groups: bibliographic, book, prin-

ting, bibliophile and library journals. The results of the analysis of the content of nine titles are presented in the third chapter. In the last chapter, in the form of a summary, the shaping of the scope of librarianship and bibliological issues in the journals discussed, their contribution to the development of theory, methodology and terminology, as well as inspiration from Polish and foreign scientific works are discussed. The conducted research shows, among other things, that the editorial offices of journals considered the presentation of research results and research workshops to be the most important, devoting little space to discussion and theoretical reflection.

Agnieszka Łuszpak has made an attempt to reconstruct the philosophical assumptions that inspired the concepts developed by outstanding Polish bibliologists in the last two hundred years in her study entitled *Philosophical Inspirations in Polish Bibliological Thought* (Łuszpak, 2020). In the researched materials (books, articles, autobiographical documents, correspondence, etc.) concerning selected theorists of book science, the author searched for answers to basic philosophical questions in the field of ontology, epistemology, axiology and scientific methodology derived from the philosophy of science. In the chapter *The beginnings of book science in the nineteenth century and its philosophical background*, the philosophical views of Jerzy Samuel Bandtkie, Joachim Lelewel, Aleksander Bohatkiewicz, Józef Muczkowski, and Karol Estreicher have been reconstructed, while the chapter *Philosophical threads in the interwar bibliology* offers profiles of Mieczysław Rulikowski, Kazimierz Piekarski, Jan Muszkowski, Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński, Jan Stanisław Bystroń and Adam Łysakowski. The chapter entitled *The Influence of Philosophy on Contemporary Book Science* presents profiles of Paweł Rybicki, Kazimierz Dobrowolski, Stanisław Sierotwiński, Karol Głombiowski and Radosław Cybulski. In her closing remarks, the author outlines some common points in the analysed texts, for example ascribing, within bibliology, the belief in respect due to the book as a monument to human thought, as well as utilitarianism in treating the book, to the values of an objective being independent of the knowing subject.

Iwona Pietrzkiewicz's dissertation *The book culture in the male orders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania* (Pietrzkiewicz, Iwona, 2019) is part of a trend of monastic research that has been developing in recent years, as well as bibliological research using a cultural perspective. "In accordance with the premise of following the clues around which all manifestations of the intellectual culture of religious institutions in these lands were focused, an attempt was made to systematize various signs of the existence of the text in the monastery, both in a strictly spiritual and ideological and in a practical context, directly related to the functioning of the religious institution of the Church, which show the great importance of both *intellectus et scientie* and *fide et spiritus* in the religious life "(p. 30). The first chapter outlines the issues of religion and religiosity in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the development of the Roman Catholic monastic network. The second chapter analyses the practice of reading and writing in monasteries, while the third chapter deals with the monastery as an institution of literary culture and scientific work. The fourth and last chapter is devoted to book collections in the religious community, their typology, manifestations of individual collecting and bibliophilism, and an analysis of the collected texts based on the example of the Benedictine library in Senieji Trakai.

Research categories developed by cultural anthropology, such as patterns of culture, cultural identity, cultural text, social practice, and models of culture, were used in a study of the problems of the functioning of a private library in the past in the book by Barbara Kamińska-Czubała, *Collections by Piotr Moszyński. The noble library in the era of romanticism* (Kamińska-Czubała, 2019). In the succeeding chapters the author presents the biography of Piotr Moszyński (1800-1879) as an example of a Polish romanticist's life, discusses his collecting and reading interests, analyses the structure and functions of the library, as well as the functions and significance of the special collections he collected. The results of the analyses and interpretations are presented in the final chapter, the *Model of the Noble Library.* "The Moszyński library was not typical, but model. Its structure was distinguished by the intensity of the content of culture and a clear striving for integration, consisting in the elimination of what did not serve the standards, norms and values distinguished by the Romantic culture " (p. 218).

Maciej Matwijów's extensive dissertation *The Collection of Public Life Materials as a Type of Handwritten Book in Old Polish Times (1660-1760)* (Matwijów, 2020), the fruit of many years of research, is devoted to manuscript materials of public life from 1660-1760, which were created as a result of the wide participation of noble society in public life. "Collecting and registering them became an important element of the literary culture of Old Polish times and was carried out in two spheres: official, related to the office and archival functions of state and local government offices, and private, meeting individual needs in this respect. Compiled appropriately in this respect, the written documents (i.e., individual letters, speeches, official acts, etc.), or their sets, very often assumed the nature of independent works – handwritten books" (p. 11). In chapters three to nine, devoted to the main subject of the dissertation, the author distinguishes typologically the researched materials, reviews them, presents the milieu of authors, editorial methods, content, and also characterizes the owners and users. The first two chapters are an introduction to the issues of the handwritten book of the 17th-18th centuries and the circulation of materials from public life in that period.

Hanna Łaskarzewska presents the consequences of the armed conflicts of 1914-1920 for the condition of cultural property accumulated in the territory of the First Polish Republic in the book *Where the Storm Passed... The fate of Polish cultural heritage in the years 1914-1920* (Łaskarzewska, 2019). The uninterrupted battles sweeping through the Polish lands covering the period of World War I, the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, and the Polish-Soviet war caused huge losses in the area of archival, library, and museum collections, both private and institutional. The processes of the destruction of Polish cultural goods are presented starting from the first losses of Polish collections in the Congress Kingdom and Galicia in 1914-1915, through the fate of cultural goods under German occupation in 1915-1917 and Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1915-1918, losses incurred as a result of relocations to the East in 1914-1915, in the revolutionary years 1917-1918, in the clashes between Poles and Ukrainians and Soviet Russians in 1918-1920. An important part of the book is a reconstruction of the activities undertaken to save the collections, attempts to register war losses, and in the field of conservation and restoration of surviving cultural assets. The author also describes the activities of people, associations, and institutions involved in the protection of cultural heritage in these times.

Dorota Pietrzkiewicz devotes her dissertation entitled *Disputes over collections. Piotr Bańkowski – recovery and protection of the written heritage* (Pietrzkiewicz, Dorota, 2019) to the figure of Piotr Bańkowski and his outstanding achievements in the field of recovery of Polish collections located in the Soviet Union. The book was inspired by archival research conducted by the author, during which she came across interesting and previously unexplored materials concerning the activity of Piotr Bańkowski for the protection of the national heritage. The author outlines the biography of Piotr Bańkowski, presents the history of the difficult struggles of Poles in recovering Polish heritage in the interwar period and the state of research in this area, presents in detail Bańkowski's participation in documentation and recovery activities carried out in St. Petersburg in 1927-1935 (as a member of the Polish delegation to the Mixed Select Committee). Perseverance and the high competence of Polish experts, including Piotr Bańkowski, made it possible to recover most of the Polish resources from the State Public Library in Russia. The publication ends with a chapter on his participation in the creation of the Department of Old Manuscripts in the National Library and in the preservation of library and archival materials during World War II.

One of the bibliological thematic trends carried out in the Toruń university centre is research on the functioning and meaning of censorship. As part of these interests, since 2010, volumes of studies containing interdisciplinary texts by researchers from various research centres in Poland have been published. The most recent publication, *The Mark of Power. Studies on censorship and the scope of freedom of speech* (Ciszewska-Pawłowska; Centek, ed., 2020), opens with an article by Ewa Danowska presenting the profile and activities of Konstanty Majeranowski, a censor in the Free City of Kraków. The issue of censorship in the interwar period is discussed by, among others, Piotr Rudera in an article analysing the actions of the state apparatus towards selected Toruń press titles in Polish. Among the texts dealing with the issue of censorship in the People's Republic of Poland may be mentioned Wiktor Gardocki's article outlining an exemplary biography of "censorship", beginning in the mid-1940s until the beginning of the 1990s. The last group of articles, on contemporary censorship mechanisms, includes among others Adrian Madej's reflections on political correctness and silence in the German press discourse on migration.

The Scientific and Educational Publishing House of the Polish Librarians Association has published a memorial book, *Professor Jadwiga Kołodziejska. Researcher and promoter of libraries and reading* (Sadowska, ed. 2020), devoted to Jadwiga Kołodziejska (1928-2016), an outstanding librarian and researcher of reading associated with the Institute of Book and Readership at the National Library, which she headed in the years 1968-2000. Professor Kołodziejska's scientific, social, and journalistic research focused on the issues of the development of libraries, especially public ones, as well as her research on and popularization of reading. In the first part of the publication, the authors presented the life and activities of Jadwiga Kołodziejska, including the organization of work on reading research at the Institute of Book and Readership at the National Library, activity in the forum of the Association of Polish Librarians and of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the establishment of the Polish Reading Society. The second part contains a primary and a secondary source bibliography.

The third part contains the memories of Professor Jadwiga Kołodziejska's associates, students, and friends.

Transparent form and practicality are the features of the publication *Digital Humanist Workshop* (Matysek; Tomaszczyk, 2020), intended for humanities researchers, as well as students and doctoral students "... who would like to expand their scientist's workshop with computer tools with a view to using them to increase the effectiveness of research" (p. 9). In four chapters (*Conceptual Work, Information Sources and Methods, Information Gathering, Writing Workshop*) corresponding to the stages of the research process, the authors present programs supporting conceptual work (mind maps, hierarchical text editors), universal and specialized sources of information, as well as search methods and strategies, bibliography management programs (creating footnotes, generating an attachment bibliography), and electronic notebooks allowing for the collection of various types of information – text, graphics, sound, animations, websites. The final chapter discusses a working method that allows the systemic use of three applications – a word processor, a bibliography manager, and an electronic notebook to create a scientific text.

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