

The National Library

Annual Report to the Conference of European National Librarians

1997 - 1998

1. General issues

Since 27 June 1997 new library law „Ustawa o bibliotekach" has become operative in Poland, after several years of consultations within library circles. The library law confirms free-of-charge library services, updates tasks of public libraries, reflecting new competencies of local authorities responsible for financing of local institutions, libraries inclusive, it also updates the tasks of the National Library.

As the result of the new library law the National Library has been given by the Ministry of Culture and Art the new Statute on 1 June 1998. The new Statute has introduced changes, as to the functions of the Scientific Council, acting at the National Library, and established 4-year's term of the Librarian's office.

Library law authorizes the Minister of Culture and Art to introduce several regulations governing the organization and the rules governing libraries' performance, especially though public libraries.

A part of the regulations shall also deal with the National Library, therefore one should expect, in the years to come, the modifications of the organizational structure of the National Library to fit into those new tasks.

2. Collections

Some 75 per cent of the National Library collections are acquired as legal deposit copies. According to the legal deposit law of 7 November 1996, the National Library is entitled to receive two copies of each print (previously - four copies), and of sound recordings. The new legal deposit law has broadened up the scope of types of library materials acquired within the legal deposit law, to include also audiovisual and electronic documents. In this respect, the National Library staff has been involved in the preparation of relevant standards and instructions of how to process, house and give access to electronic documents.

The Library acquired in 1997 a total of 117,043 library units, amongst them 82,382 legal deposit copies. The Library spent a total of zloty 1,334,345 (approx. \$ 370,700) on purchase acquisitions of 11,839 library units, 60 per cent of which was spent on enriching historical holdings of the special collections.

By the end of 1997 the National Library holdings total number of library units was 7,152,959, amongst them:

- monographs published since 1801 1,924,727 units
- serials 679,717 vols.
- documents of social life (gray literature) 1,663,253 units
- library and information science collection 150,647 vols.
- manuscripts 22,060 units
- older monographs (pre-1801) 153,621 units
- printed music scores 160,150 units
- sound recordings 43,107 units
- graphics 370,771 units
- cartographic prints 74,240 units
- microforms 117,039 units
- graphical manuscripts 86,228 units
- duplicate materials 1,646,356 units

3. Access

In 1997 two new reading rooms have been made available to the public: Library and Information Science Reading Room (for 20 users), and Serials Reading Room (for 100 users).

At present there are 9 reading rooms open to the public at the National Library for a total of 600 users.

Similarly to previous years, the use of the Library collections and the number of users have increased: the number of volumes used in reading rooms has increased by 10 per cent and numbered 517,719 volumes, and the Library visits have increased by 17 per cent and numbered 178,916 visitors.

The National Library reading rooms and services at its premises are considered as the most modern and advanced in Warsaw. That is why the National Library acts also as a big public and inter-university library. The immense growth of the number of students in the nineties and a big number of new universities founded, however without relevant library services, has led to additional overload of the National Library. The National Library services are free of charge - due to the library law of 27 June 1997 - and its reading rooms are open to all citizens over 18 years old.

4. Library automation

In 1997 the National Library proceeded with the implementation of the integrated library system INNOPAC. The cataloging module was fully operative in 1997, however, it had been decided to wait with the start-up of the cataloging in the new system until the majority of catalog and national bibliography databases, maintained so far in the other system, and in the different data format, are

relevantly converted and downloaded into the new system. Since January 1998 the national bibliography of monographs is created in the INNOPAC system, and the processing of all new additions to the Library in the new integrated system has been introduced in July 1998. Full implementation of the new system, though, has not been completed, yet. The conversion of the following parts of the national bibliography databases is going on. Acquisition, serials control and circulation modules are being tested.

The National Library databases include altogether 650,000 records, 110,000 of which are already maintained by the INNOPAC system.

The National Library data are available on CD-ROM, floppy discs and over the Internet.

5. Preservation and conservation of collections

The National Library vividly entered into the action of helping libraries that had suffered losses during the disastrous flood in Poland, in July 1997. On behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Art, the Library has coordinates activities in order to evaluate losses in library collections, to distribute recommendations and instructions of how to deal with swamped collections, as well as to elaborate the program of rescuing the most valuable parts of the collections affected with the flood.

The National Library coordinated also collecting of publications to be donated to public and research libraries severely affected with the flood.

Two national conferences, organized by the National Library, were devoted to the evaluation of the flood losses, preventive actions and relevant activities serving the liquidation of the disastrous losses. As the direct result of those conferences, in December 1997 the National Council to Rescue Library Collections from Flood Losses has been founded.

Simultaneously, the National Library participated the elaboration of the State program of massive conservation of the nineteenth and twentieth century collections held by libraries and archives.

The success of both actions - of rescuing collections affected with the flood, and of a long-term program of massive deacidification of the nineteenth and twentieth century collections - shall depend on the availability of government financial means for those purposes in the years to come.

6. Public activity

Cultural events concentrated around two anniversaries - the 250th Anniversary of Za?uski Library, the predecessor of the present National Library, and the 70th Anniversary of the National Library.

Three events were celebrated: the opening of the public exhibition halls at the new premises of the National Library, enabling Library for organizing big professional exhibitions, the 70th Anniversary of the Decree of the President of the Republic, founding the National Library after the first world war after Poland had regained its independence, and the opening on 24 February 1998 of the big exhibition in the new premises of the National Library - „Za?uski Library. Corona Urbis et Orbis”, devoted to one of the most eminent Enlightenment library in Europe, with the national library features, opened to the public in 1747, and receiving legal deposit copies since 1780. After Poland had lost its independence on the turn of 1794 and

1795, its collections, numbering over 400,000 volumes, were transferred to Sankt Petersburg, as the war plunder. Only a part of this collection was regained after Poland's liberation, and incorporated into the National Library collections. The exhibition was a great cultural event within library circles, due to both, esthetic and scientific merits.

7. International cooperation

In 1997 the National Library organized three big international conferences.

2 - 3 October 1997 Warsaw Royal Castle hosted the CENL meeting. This conference was preceded with „1st Gabriel Workshop" (30 Sept. - 1 Oct., 1997) at the National Library premises, and gathered together 38 representatives from 24 CENL member libraries, responsible for Web pages in those libraries.

16 - 18 October 1997 the National Library hosted international conference devoted to library automation efforts in Central and Eastern Europe, financed with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grants (the A.W. Mellon Foundation was the sponsor of the conference). Over 100 participants from Europe, America and South Africa took part in this conference.

All three events were very successful.

Similarly to previous years, the National Library continued the cooperation with Bayerische Staatsbibliothek within the program of microfilming prints from Polish-German cultural borderland, held in the collections of Polish libraries, financed by the Foundation of the Polish-German Cooperation, acting in Poland. This program shall go on until at least the year 2000.

The National Library is a member of the following international organizations: IFLA, LIBER, CENL, ASLIB, AIB, IAML, and FID.