POLISH LIBRARIANS’ ASSOCIATION

KNOWLEDGE – EXPERIENCE – TRADITION – MODERNITY

SBP
POLISH LIBRARIANS’ ASSOCIATION
Dear Readers

In 2017, the Polish Librarians’ Association (PLA) celebrates its 100th anniversary. Our jubilee celebrations coincide with another event of foremost importance for the librarians’ community: the World Library and Information Congress organised by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Wrocław on 19-25 August 2017.

The PLA, a member and co-founder of the IFLA (1927), is one of the main organisers of the Congress in Poland (together with the National Library of Poland and the Wrocław City). This is a great honour for us and a chance to present on a global forum our educational, cultural, editorial and integration activities, which represent the potential and the distinguishing mark of our Association among other library organisations in Poland and abroad.

Therefore, we have prepared this publication, introducing its readers to the history and accomplishments of the PLA as well as to its main fields of activity. Our wish is to show how the PLA builds up on the traditions, knowledge and experience of several generations of librarians and scientific information professionals, while also confidently working for the future, being open to new initiatives and applying innovative technologies. We aim to further develop our Association to increase the visibility of librarians and libraries in building a knowledge-based society in accordance with our long-term vision, in partnership with a wide range of actors.

We hope the participants of the IFLA Congress in Wrocław and other readers learn about inspiring activities which will encourage them to take on similar initiatives and to cooperate with us.

Elżbieta Stefańczyk

President of the Polish Librarians’ Association
VISION, MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Polish Librarians’ Association (PLA) has been operating under its current name since 1953 and continues the activities of the ZBP. Like in the first decades and after WWII, the PLA’s mission is to work for the development of librarianship, to build its professional identity and to create a positive image of the profession of librarian, to integrate the librarians’ community and to promote their activities. The PLA’s vision is to create a partnership-based space for the development of libraries in the information society.

In 2009, our members prepared a document defining the following strategic development goals for the years 2009-2021:

• gaining strong influence on the shape of the Polish library policy and practice
• becoming a strategic partner in building the information society
• integration of the professional community
• increasing each librarian’s access to various modern forms of education and vocational training

HISTORY OF THE POLISH LIBRARIANS’ ASSOCIATION

The history of the Polish Librarians’ Association dates to the early 20th century. The Polish Librarians’ Union (ZBP) was established in October 1917, at the end of World War I in Poland, which had been divided into three partitions and deprived of its own state since the late 18th century, by the directors of Warsaw libraries, book science and bibliography theoreticians, historians, book lovers, librarians and social activists aware of the importance libraries have for the future of Polish science, culture and education in order to foster the cultural and social cohesion of the country. ZBP, which at the end of 1917 already had 117 members, soon reached the entire Polish territory with its activities. In the interwar period, its units were set up in many locations all over the country, led by eminent founders of the library field in each region. They built the very foundations of modern Polish librarianship in areas such as the national bibliography, central catalogues, conservation and preservation of collections and library practice standardisation as well as endeavours to establish the National Library of Poland, adopt an Act on Libraries and build a public library network. During World War II, many of its members worked hard to safeguard and save the holdings of Polish libraries. Once the war was over, they participated in efforts intended to provide the legal bases for libraries, to set up the public library network and to develop scientific libraries.
Today, the Polish Librarians’ Association has approximately 7,000 members and is one of the largest professional organisations in Poland. The PLA’s 16 district boards correspond to the country’s 16 regions. They supervise 55 branch offices which comprise the key organisational units of the PLA, namely its 277 circles.

The circles usually operate at libraries, mostly public ones. Public library workers are the largest group among the PLA members. The members – who include librarians, top-level specialists, library directors and research workers – contribute diverse experience to the organisation, thereby providing a broad platform for professional debate, which is the power of the PLA.

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The Association’s supreme governing body, the National Congress of Delegates, is convened every four years. It adopts the statutes and elects the PLA chairman, the members of its General Board, the Audit Board and the Arbitration by Fellow Members. The General Board appoints the Presidium out of its members to manage the Association’s activities between the meetings of the General Board. In addition to this, there are district and branch audit boards as well as district fellow members arbitration bodies in the Association.

Professional sections, committees and units are an important part of the PLA’s organisational structure. They have been established to perform specific tasks relating to the librarians’ skills. Their activities improve the librarians’ professional knowledge and practical skills by initiating and organising conferences, workshops, training sessions and preparing publications.

The following units operate within the PLA:

- Information Literacy Committee,
- New Technologies Committee,
- Committee on the Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials,
- Awards & Honours Committee,
- Classification Schemes Committee,
- Marketing & Management Committee,
- Music Libraries Section,
- Research Libraries Section,
- Section for Libraries of Non-State Universities,
- Section for School and Pedagogical Libraries,
- Public Libraries Section,
- Section for Readership among Patients and People with Disabilities,
- Sound Libraries Section,
- Regional Bibliography Unit,
- PLA Publishing House Program Committee.
One of the main tasks of the Polish Librarians’ Association is the education of library staff, enabling them to access modern forms of professional training, so that they can respond to the ever-increasing user expectations. This is done through the publications issued by the PLA as well as through its regular conferences and seminars (both national and international), and workshops.

The PLA’s own publishing house is its distinguishing mark among other similar non-governmental associations and organisations in other countries. **The PLA Publishing House is one of the major professional publishers in Poland.** It issues journals disseminating the achievements of the Polish and global library and scientific information field:

**Przegląd Biblioteczny**

[The Library Review] is a quarterly published since 1927. It is the oldest Polish research journal in library and information science, with contents quoted e.g. in The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. The journal has been entered into the ERIH PLUS Index (European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences). According to experts, it is one of the best periodicals in its field in Europe, greatly contributing to the dissemination of research in library and information science both in Poland and worldwide. It presents the newest tendencies in bibliography, information and book science, in both theoretical and practical aspects. The Library Review also publishes papers describing educational solutions all over the world, contributing to the improvement of the librarians’ status and visibility as well as to building the knowledge-based society. A special issue in English has come out for the IFLA Congress to introduce the achievements of modern Polish librarianship in areas such as: the establishment of digital repositories and libraries, building and cataloguing library collections by means of modern technologies, conservation and preservation of library holdings and the evolution of library architecture.
**Zagadnienia Informacji Naukowej – Studia Informacyjne**

[Problems of Scientific Information – Information Studies] is a semi-annual journal published since 1962. It discusses issues related to the theory and practice of scientific information, e.g. studies on the effectiveness of information and library systems, the usage of information languages, the methods of preparing and sharing databases, the digitisation of information resources as well as knowledge and information management. It also features book reviews and reports from research conferences, and presents PhD and habilitation dissertations along with the best master’s theses in the field of information science. The content of the journal is indexed in CEJSH, CSA and LISTA. The journal has also been entered into the ERIH PLUS Index (European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences).

**Bibliotekarz**

[The Librarian] is a professional monthly published since 1929, especially useful for librarians interested in bibliology and information methodologies, management and the legal aspects of library work.

**Poradnik Bibliotekarza**

[Librarian’s Guidebook] is a monthly published since 1949 which represents an instruction-and-methodology centred approach, focused on the issues of readership promotion, especially among children and the youth, and on promoting educational and cultural activities at public, school and pedagogical libraries. Apart from the traditional printed version, the journals are also available in digital format.
Furthermore, the Polish Librarians’ Association also publishes ca. 20 books a year, mostly in thematic collections, in particular:

- **Research – Didactics – Practice**, published in collaboration with the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies of the University of Warsaw, consisting of monographs, dictionaries, academic textbooks and the results of research in library and information science; over 120 books have come out within this collection thus far;

- **Literature for children and the youth. Studies.** A research collection launched a few years ago in cooperation with the Faculty of Polish Studies of the University of Warsaw

- **Libraries – Children – The Youth.** A collection dedicated to the cultural education of the youngest generation and to the formation of reading habits. It inspires librarians, teachers and parents to foster creativity among the youth through contact with the book.

- **“Librarian’s Guidebook” Handbooks Collection.** A collection of handbooks and information publications on improving the methods of working at the library, helping users, and applying latest technologies in library practice.
Conferences and seminars (both national and international), as well as workshops, are a popular and highly appreciated forum of meaningful networking and provide a form of spreading good library practices. The PLA organises around 30 such sessions a year. Some of the conferences are recurring events, for example: Automation of Libraries; Library Management and Organisation; Libraries of the 21st Century: modern architecture, original interior design and functional facilities. Each of them gives librarians a chance to learn how recent technologies can make their work more efficient, introduce them to modern management methods as well as help them discover ideas for appealing interior design and for local community activities.

The topics of the workshops, held in small groups of 15-20 people, are adapted to the issues put forward by the librarians as problems in need of solving, e.g. working with diverse types of users (including the disabled or people with autistic spectrum disorder), applying bibliotherapy to develop reading competencies in children and the youth, creating library websites, data protection at libraries, copyright, digitisation of library collections or running library blogs. Coaching forms part of some of these sessions.

Also, e-learning courses – e.g. on using the Web 2.0 tools to promote libraries, learn languages, conduct information brokering or manage data – are becoming increasingly popular (around 2,000 people have completed them so far). The training courses are delivered by external experts and coaches specialised in professional competences (also from other countries). Webinars are held too, attended by several hundred participants to date.

Disseminating best practices, ideas and solutions discovered within the community forms part of the librarians' education. Assuming that each library, irrespective of its size, can inspire others, the PLA has launched a tab entitled “Your Achievements” on its website where librarians can tell about their accomplishments. An example of sharing knowledge and experience as well as of inspiring others to take on new challenges are study visits organised by the PLA. In 2014, the Association held 50 such events whose motto was “A visit for one smile. Come, see, act”, attended by ca. 1,500 people. Their topics included library services and management as well as the professional development of library staff.
In order to modernise the image of the profession, make it appealing to young, well-educated people and to encourage them to participate in library activities, the PLA has been organising the Forum of Young Librarians since 2006. Each year in autumn, in a different location every time, young librarians up to the age of 35 from the entire country gather to share their ideas, enthusiasm and visions of their professional future. For two days, they attend seminars, panel discussions, expert tables and workshops to expand their knowledge, inspire others and to look for opportunities for personal development and for making the library services more attractive.

The Forum combines educational aspects with integration, and always involves team games, entertainment and some exercise. It also provides an opportunity for a wider public to learn about the activities of local libraries in the area where the event is organised. In this way, young people can see that the library is a space where they can both accomplish their professional ambitions and take part in leisure activities. The events are considered very useful by their participants; in a survey conducted among those who attended the 10th Forum ca. 85% of respondents stated that the Forum had helped them to develop their latent potential and creativity in taking on new initiatives to draw the public of all ages to the library. Later, the reflections and proposals of young librarians are often taken on board by their home libraries or by the PLA itself. This compelling aspect of the Forum is highlighted by its annual mottoes: Your career at the library (2006, Zielona Góra), Library of the future (2007, Wrocław), Young advocates of modernity in the library of the 21st century (2008, Szczecin), Initiatives of young librarians in building the global village: people and technologies (2009, Cracow), The quality of libraries is in our hands (2010, Lublin), openlibrarians.eu (2011, Poznań), The library as a brand (2012, Łódź), The Library – your time, your space (2013, Olsztyn), The Library – a haven with no borders (2014, Gorzów Wielkopolski), Fall in love with the library (2015, Warsaw), Home free at the library (2016, Opole).
The Prof. Maria Dembowska Prize is also intended to support young people, as it is awarded by the PLA to university graduates for the best theses and dissertations in library and information science. The prize-winning papers are published and disseminated within the community of librarians, book sellers and editors.

Fresh ideas and new initiatives of the youth – promoted by the PLA by means of modern communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube – expand the Association’s ability to spread information and reinforce its visibility within the online community.
Since 2004, the Polish Librarians’ Association has been organising the Library Week. This well-received event is dedicated to nationwide promotion of libraries and readership.

It highlights the role of libraries in improving the quality of life and education of the public as well as increases the visibility of librarians as a professional community.

It is correlated with the National Long-term Programme for Readership Promotion and its strategic objective of ensuring constant increase in readership in Poland. The Library Week is inaugurated each year on 8 May, the Day of Librarians and Libraries in Poland (celebrated since 1961 at the initiative of the PLA). Librarians organise a variety of activities in the entire country for local communities to encourage the public to read, visit libraries and use their abundant educational and cultural services. Libraries, community centres and schools host a series of meetings with authors, literary festivals, competitions, exhibitions, games, leisure activities as well as arts, music and drama workshops for people of all ages. In the recent years, outdoor events – such as street happenings, group reading sessions (also in sign language), giving out books and other book crossing campaigns in public spaces – have become particularly widespread. These activities are accompanied by sports contests, out of which the “Cool Librarian Bike Ride” has been especially successful. It is estimated that each year a dozen thousand events are held within the Library Week, attended by thousands of people. Local governments, sponsors and the media support their organisation and promotion.
The PLA runs competitions for the best poster promoting the programme and the most original activity held within the Library Week.

Since 2008, the PLA has also been organising the Master of Readership Promotion competition to reward libraries for their activities disseminating readership in the past year. In collaboration with editors of historical books, the PLA has been running the Library Salon at the Historical Book Fair which takes place annually at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The idea is to promote libraries that release historical publications. In addition to the chance to purchase books, the Salon offers an opportunity to meet authors, attend seminars and take part in the “Historical Escapes with the Library” competition. The attractions for children include a series of events entitled Listen to Tales and Legends with Us (group reading, drama, quizzes, games etc.). The fair is attended by ca. 20,000 people every year.

The intended long-term goal of these activities is to improve reading competencies, especially among children and young people, to spark interest in literature, increase access to Polish and worldwide writing and to foster social activism resulting from reading.
Since 2011, the PLA has been running the national web portal for librarians available at www.sbp.pl, which is a powerful tool to spread information and to communicate with the leaders of the Polish book and culture sector. It provides updates on the Association’s recent activities as well as on libraries and other cultural institutions, interesting events, initiatives, conferences, workshops and programmes aiming to foster the potential of libraries. Its daily news feed also features other relevant information such as job postings for librarians, changes in legal regulations and self-study materials.

Through the website, users can purchase publications of the PLA and use an on-line library which gives access to digitised versions of the PLA periodicals and book series.

Over a brief period, the PLA web portal has gained much credit among professionals in the book field and has become a highly inspiring place of information exchange and sharing, as confirmed by statistics. In one month, between 17,000 and 25,000 users visit the website. In its first year of operation (2011), ca. 188,000 sessions, 82,000 users were recorded. Over the recent period, the analogical data were as follows: 330,000 sessions, 166,000 users.
In 2005, the PLA compiled and published the Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals, specifying the basic rules that identify the social mission and ethical responsibility of this profession towards the public, library users, information resources, the professional community and the employers.

Since 2010, the PLA has been organising the nationwide "Librarian of the Year" competition. The purpose of the competition is to honour librarians who stand out for their professional or research accomplishments as well as social activity.

This is an area where the PLA’s achievements are particularly noteworthy. The Association regularly organises all sorts of community initiatives (annual meetings for librarians in specific districts, debates, occasional sessions, excursions) which provide space for exchange views on the role of libraries and librarians as a professional community, also increasing the visibility of the Association.

The prizes and distinctions awarded by the PLA to librarians who stand out in their professional activity within the Association or their local community, as well as to members of other professions and local government bodies, are especially appreciated by the Polish librarians. These are the Association’s Badge of Honour (1967) and its Acknowledgement Medal (1997).

Libraries, institutions and organisations can be awarded the Bibliotheca Magna Perennisque medal for their accomplishments relating to the development of library practice and readership.
In its activities aiming to promote readership, to expand the educational and cultural services offered by libraries and to strengthen the professional status of librarians, the PLA partners, among others, with public, scientific, pedagogical and school libraries, the National Library of Poland as well as with other related institutions and organisations, such as: the National Library Board, the Conference of Provincial Public Library Directors, the Conference of Polish Academic Library Directors, the Conference of Pedagogical Library Directors, The Book Institute and the Information Society Development Foundation (FRSI).

Some activities (such as the Library Week readership promotion programme or editing and digitisation efforts) get support from the government, e.g. the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education or the Ministry of National Education. Moreover, the PLA issues opinions for these institutions on draft legislation in the field of cultural management and the professional status of librarians.

The PLA regional structures (districts, branches) vigorously cooperate with local governments (joint initiatives for local communities, issuing opinions on candidates for the positions of library directors, etc.).

The Association's cooperation with higher education institutions includes publishing research results, delivering workshops and conducting public consultations on professional training curricula. In collaboration with the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies of the University of Warsaw, research journals are published along with books forming the Research – Didactics – Practice collection. Each year, the PLA awards the Adam Łysakowski Research Prize for publications of much significance for the development of library science, bibliology and scientific information theory and practice.

Collaboration with other institutions in the book field – such as the Polish Chamber of Books, the Polish Society of Book Publishers and the Association of Polish Booksellers – is also of significant importance, especially in terms of joint initiatives related to the World Book and Copyright Day as well as domestic and international book fairs. The Association also adopts common positions with its partners on issues such as copyright or the editorial and book markets.

The PLA maintains meaningful contacts with companies providing library software, information systems and interior furnishing.
The Libraries Activity Analysis Project has been implemented since 2010 by the PLA, in consultation with the Conferences of Directors of Polish Academic Libraries, Provincial Public Libraries and Pedagogical Libraries. Co-funded at an earlier stage by the Information Society Development Foundation, and today by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, it showcases the active contribution of the PLA to building modern tools for assessing the condition of libraries. Methods and IT tools for systematic assessment of public, scientific and pedagogical libraries have been developed and implemented based on the IFLA guidelines, the ISO standards as: ISO 11620:2008 Information and documentation – Library performance indicators, ISO 2789:2006 Information and documentation – International library statistics and the Polish library statistics compiled by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). They build on the analysis and comparison of statistical data and functionality indicators specific to each library type, including satisfaction surveys conducted among library service recipients. Even though participation in this project is voluntary, it has been warmly received, especially among public libraries. In 2017, over 80% public libraries have taken part (2,099 libraries together with their branches). The PLA aims to reach all public libraries in Poland with this project and to increase the participation of academic and pedagogical libraries.

An important part of the project is research, with contributions from the academic community, as well as educational activities such as seminars and workshops, training courses for librarians on library statistics, compiling handbooks and manuals to facilitate the collection and utilisation of statistical data as well as indicators used to study the efficiency of libraries in the entire country. With this project, libraries and their managing institutions have gained a modern tool to assess and compare their quality, as well their resources and services efficiency.

The project has its own website: www.afb.sbp.pl.
The PLA is a founding member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). It is also member of the European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) and contributes intensely to the works of the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML). In 2019, at the initiative of the PLA Music Libraries Section an IAML Congress will be held in Cracow.

For nearly 6 years, the Association has been active in the Library Development Program, a joint undertaking of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation (PAFW) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation within the Global Libraries international initiative. Within this programme, implemented in Poland by the Information Society Development Foundation, we share knowledge and experience at meetings with librarians from Poland and other countries.

In the recent years, we have also hosted intern librarians from Nigeria, organised educational trips to Germany (in collaboration with Goethe-Institut) and other European countries, networked with American librarians, and participated in satellite meetings and educational workshops.
Partners:

 Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

 MINISTRY FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

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