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NEW LIBRARY BUILDINGS IN POLAND. THE LAST 25 YEARS (1990-2015)¹



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ABSTRACT: Thesis/purpose of the article – The purpose of this article is to review the major investments in library buildings in Poland over the last 25 years. The description includes the buildings' architecture in connection with their functional purpose and the rapidly changing library technology. **Methodology** – The method of comparative analysis (along with autopsy) of library investments was applied. **Results/conclusions** – In the history of Polish libraries, the last 25 years were a time of exceptionally profuse investment and large

¹I have discussed (independently or as a co-author) the topic of new library buildings in Poland as well as the technological and international context of their construction on several occasions over the last twenty years (see items 1-8 of the attached bibliography).

financial output due to the free market, Polish membership in the EU, and access to modern information and communication technologies.

THE LEGACY OF COMMUNIST POLAND (1945-1989)

The years 1945–1989, the forty-four years of communism in Poland, can hardly be called a time of large-scale investment in libraries, as public expenditure tended to focus on industry. Poland's growth was supposed to be powered by mines, steel mills and shipyards; libraries were seen rather as institutions that would survive driven by the mere power of tradition and good will rather than by money and investment. However, to do justice to this era, let us not forget that the post-war decades were first and foremost marked by the reconstruction of the library network against the backdrop of an educational "boom", fostered by propaganda slogans on eradicating illiteracy and increasing access to public education. Also of great importance was the restructuring of scientific libraries under the new regime and within the country's new borders — on the one hand, direct access to the collections of Polish libraries in Vilnius and Lviv had been lost, and on the other, the difficult process of integrating the German ones from Silesia and Pomerania into the Polish library and scientific circulation had begun.

Therefore, construction efforts were neither intense nor state-of-the-art. Two notable exceptions were: the construction of the Nicolaus Copernicus University Library in Toruń (BUMK), built to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the astronomer's birth in 1973, with significant help from the military, and that of the National Library (BN) in Warsaw, which started in the late 1960s, survived the communist regime and was successfully completed in the 1990s, almost at the same time that its enlargement was needed [photo 1].

It was also in the communist era that the legal environment governing libraries in Poland to this day was codified. Their activity is subject to the regulations of as many as three different ministries:

- the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage with respect to the National Library and the public library network;
- the Ministry of Science and Higher Education with respect to academic libraries;
- the Ministry of Education with respect to school libraries.

Other ministries also run their "own" specialised libraries, often affiliated with their research institutes. The Polish Academy of Sciences also has a dozen scientific libraries.

This diversity in legal subordination, although backed by a long tradition, has hindered complex reforms of the methodologies and technologies

of library operation on numerous occasions, and has led to a lack of uniform library policy on a national scale up to now.

Despite this legal complexity, the last 25 years, following the profound political and economic transformation initiated in 1989, have also brought Polish librarianship several spectacular achievements. Among the most important being of these were the introduction of ICT to academic libraries as of 1992, thanks to a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which in the long term helped establish The Union Catalogue of Polish Research Library Collection (NUKAT); At the same time and, as far as construction investments are concerned, the construction of the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) which set new standards in the structure and organisation of modern academic libraries in this part of Europe, even as early as at its design stages (1993-1995).

SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIES. SPATIAL EVOLUTION AND TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

The turn of the centuries was a time of dynamic changes for scientific libraries in Poland, as shown by quantitative indicators. In the early 1990s, 1,209 scientific libraries were operating in Poland, including 981 belonging to higher education institutions². 20 years later (2012), their number had fallen to 1,087; however, the capacity of their reading rooms had increased by over 1,200,000³. In 1999, 600 scientific libraries, i.e. half of their total number, had collections of over 10,000 volumes at their disposal, with 217 libraries having over 50,000 volumes⁴.

This dominant position of academic libraries is no coincidence, nor is their supremacy solely based on numbers. In fact, in the 1990s Polish university libraries became the avant-garde of library practice in many aspects. It was in the libraries of renowned universities of the humanities and technology that idea emerged to collaborate with others in selecting and implementing integrated library systems and in building central and local catalogues, as well as to coordinate cooperation on building digital libraries. While at a later stage these positive models were increasingly taken on by public and specialist libraries, which have now managed to

² According to: *Sieć bibliotek w Polsce, zbiory biblioteczne oraz czytelnictwo w latach dziewięćdziesiątych* [The library network, library holdings and readership in Poland in the 1990s]/ Małgorzata Dziubińska-Michalewicz, Andrzej Kojder. (Information of the Expert Report Office of the Polish Parliament; issue 797).

³ According to: B. Budyńska, M. Jezierska, G. Lewandowicz-Nosal, G. Walczewska-Klimczak: *Libraries in Poland as of 2012*. In: *Polish Libraries / National Library of Poland*; [ed. Tomasz Makowski], Warsaw, 2014, pp. 69-85.

⁴ According to: *Sieć bibliotek w Polsce, zbiory biblioteczne oraz czytelnictwo w latach dziewięćdziesiątych* [The library network, library holdings and readership in Poland in the 1990s], op. cit.

catch up with or even surpass the academic ones, setting technological and organisational standards in Polish library practice has remained the domain of academic libraries. Thus, it is no wonder that most of the construction investments in the 1990s discussed in this article consisted of building new academic libraries or in upgrading and radically expanding their old buildings. One of the few exceptions is the construction of the Silesian Library (BS) in Katowice, begun in 1989. This scientific – rather than academic – library was historically the first library of the Silesian Parliament, aspiring to the status of a local “national library”. Its designers⁵ took inspiration from similar solutions applied in the 1980s in French and British libraries, and drew on experiences in multiple areas (including logistics and transport) for the purposes of automated storage technologies [photo 2]. The distinguishing feature of the building is the centrally located block of the automated storage room, rising up to the highest storeys where both the sequence of the containers (transport units) and that of the books are a random result of the current readers’ orders and returns, recorded by a computer. It is only on the lower storeys that compact and permanent storerooms can be found, while the lowest floors: (± 0) and (-1), form a chain of reading rooms and workshops. Due to this pronounced hierarchy – first the book storeroom as a treasury reaching to the highest levels, then traditional storerooms inaccessible to readers, and even lower the reading rooms, located near the entrance, but with poor access to daylight and a limited free-access collection – the building has been considered monumental in conceptual terms and technologically impressive, while nothing but correct as far as functional features are concerned. The solution applied at the Silesian Library was not replicated by any other library designer or investor in Poland in the following decade.

The design of the Silesian Library is one of the last examples of the 19th century three-piece model, where the library building consists of distinct segments for the books (storerooms), the readers (reading rooms) and the librarians (workshops). Storerooms unavailable to readers represented 2/3–3/4 of the building’s volume, workshops for librarians grew larger as more space was needed for computers and an increasing number of materials to work on, while the working area for readers regrettably shrank, limited to a reading room with a small free-access collection and OPAC terminals stuck in the corner of the corridor. Unfortunately, this was the reality of many Polish libraries in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

However, for Polish libraries, the years following 1989 saw the construction of a dozen new buildings for major scientific libraries, as well as the

⁵ The Silesian Library building was designed by: Marek Gierlatka, Jurand Jarecki and Stanisław Kwaśniewski (the ARAR Group).

successful upgrading and revitalisation of others, along with innumerable smaller, but also significant projects on a local scale.

An investment that set standards for planning and designing modern library buildings in this part of Europe was the construction of the new University of Warsaw Library (BUW). The history of this investment perfectly reflects the political, economic, and library-related transformations in Poland throughout the last 25 years. Disregarded by the communist authorities as being a hotbed of political opposition and for its intellectual background, the largest Polish university had to wait for years for its new library building despite its 19th century edifice becoming paralytically overcrowded and worn out. It was not until the first “Solidarity” government with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister that funds were allocated for the design and construction of the new University of Warsaw Library. This was back in 1990. However, the modest state budget, struggling to recover from the economic crisis of late communist Poland, adopted the economic reforms included in the Balcerowicz Plan⁶. The design and construction of the new library were to be financed by renting out the building of the Central Committee of the former PZPR for commercial purposes⁷; it became, for example, the home of the newly born Warsaw Stock Exchange. Thus, the very idea of building a new University of Warsaw Library contrasted with the previous era, first in symbolical terms, reminding us that the seat of the communist party had been financed from voluntary contributions (“building blocks”), and second in financial terms, by transforming one of the symbols of communist Poland into an efficient financial and investment mechanism making it possible for this 4-year (1995-1999) construction project, worth 80m USD, to maintain financial liquidity, and further financing it in the technical and organisational start-up phases.

The success of the new University of Warsaw Library in cultural, media, social and, finally, library practice terms – intensely discussed in the reference literature over the last 8 years – was due to several factors⁸. The first of these was the political and economic boom of the late 1990s, which made it possible for this project to be implemented fully

⁶ Leszek Balcerowicz, Minister of Finance in Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government, was author of a package of financial and economic reforms aimed at stopping the country from falling into an ever-deeper economic crisis and helping it transition to a free market economy.

⁷ Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR).

⁸ See i.a. 1) H. Hollender, E. Kobierska-Maciuszko, *Nowy gmach Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie* [The new building of the University of Warsaw Library], *Rocznik BN [National Library Yearbook]*, Vol. XXXII: pp.195-214; 2) *10 lat nowej Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie. Debata: Marek Budzyński, Henryk Hollender, Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko, Tomasz Kruszewski, Piotr Matywiecki, Anna Wołodko* [10 years of the new University of Warsaw Library. Debate: Marek Budzyński, Henryk Hollender, Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko, Tomasz Kruszewski, Piotr Matywiecki and Anna Wołodko] (eds. Tomasz Kruszewski and Anna Wołodko), „Przegląd Biblioteczny” [Library Review] 2010, issue 2, pp. 155-156.

in line with the ambitions and vision of its authors⁹; the second was its architecture, monumental postmodernism with strong symbolical features [photo 3]; and third, its functionality, which allowed users to directly access items that were most recent and most frequently used in academic didactics. Among Eastern European libraries, the University of Warsaw Library building was the first to implement the 10 commandments of Harry Faulkner-Brown¹⁰ in such a full and coherent manner, especially those recommending that the library be flexible and compact in its structure, with an open-planned building design allowing for rearrangements and unrestricted access to the holdings [photo 4] – all of which should be arranged systematically, leading the reader from general to detailed information in a suggestive way without limiting individual choices. This, together with the value of the collections, allows the BUW librarians to compete on relatively equal terms with the flurry of information available online in terms of educational effectiveness, usefulness for research purposes, and social appeal.

The new University of Warsaw Library soon began to set the standards for several further buildings designed for large academic libraries; this is especially visible in the Wrocław, Gdańsk, and Łódź university library designs.

The design of the Wrocław University Library (BUWr) was authored by designers previously working on the BUW building¹¹. The edifice, comparable to the University of Warsaw Library as far as its size and capacity are concerned¹², is located on the boulevards along the Oder river in Wrocław [photo 5]. It was designed as two compact blocks: the main part of the library, where service desks and storerooms for general holdings are located, along with free access books and departments for the cataloguing of new acquisitions, and a second part for reading rooms, storerooms and special collections workshops. The two parts are connected by a walkway with the main entrance to the library. The functional solutions applied make it possible to flexibly rearrange the building structure in the future if need be, also by transforming closed storeroom spaces into working areas for readers.

⁹ The building was designed by Warsaw-based architects Marek Budzyński and Zbyszek Badowski; the authors of the library technology design were BUW librarians Zdzisław Piszczek, PhD, and Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko; for the full list of members of the design team see: *Magazyn Budowlany* [The Construction Magazine] 7/1999.

¹⁰ Harry Faulkner-Brown, British architect, designer of numerous libraries, author of the “10 Commandments” to which library buildings should adhere; see also: Faulkner-Brown H.: *Factors affecting the planning and design of academic libraries: speaker's notes for the British Council Seminar*, in: *Library planning and design*. – Newcastle upon Tyne, 11–24 Sept. 1994.

¹¹ The building was designed in 1999. Its chief designer was Jacek Rzyski, student of Marek Budzyński; Henryk Hollender was responsible for the library technology design.

¹² Surface area (excluding service and commercial areas): BUWr: 37,000 m², BUW: 36,000 m², capacity of both buildings: ca. 4 m book volumes.

Another successful design was implemented by the Gdańsk University Library (BUGd)¹³. Its architectural form subtly uses marine themes and makes its up-to-date didactic and scientific collections fully available on site (no closed storerooms), providing outstanding results, for medium-sized university standards, in terms of efficiency and aesthetics [photo 6]. The building is located in the very centre of the university campus and has a usable surface area of 15,000 m². Ever since it was opened to the public in 2006, it has been gaining in popularity and getting more and more interest from the public.

All three projects used spatial and organisational solutions commonly applied in Western European and American Libraries – sometimes, however, with excessive caution, succumbing to pressures to modify and adjust these ideas to “Polish conditions”. Nevertheless, in this part of Europe they were truly avant-garde projects which took into consideration the rise of new, mainly digital technologies of storage, cataloguing and sharing information on the one hand, and fostering the noble idea of freeing the reader from numbered tables at the reading room, making his or her work at the library more independent and with free access to ever larger parts of the printed holdings as well as online resources, along with a variety of other services.

The Łódź University Library (BUŁ), one of the largest Polish academic libraries, used to be located in a building dating back to the early 1960s; at the beginning of the 2006/2007 academic year, a new segment, integrated with the old one, was put into service [photo 7]. As a result, the library’s surface area nearly doubled, which was crucial considering its overloaded storerooms. However, it was equally important that at an early stage a decision was made to change the arrangement of holdings and service areas in the projected new part of the building. Over its several floors, the Library provides an area with freely accessible collections organised systematically in accordance with the Library of Congress Classification (like in BUW), connected with the old storeroom area with a Telelift transport system. Its terminals reach the service desks of librarians on the entire floor, which allows users to work with both new and older materials.

The libraries of several smaller universities were also designed in a similar way, namely the Białystok University Library, opened to the public in 2004, the University Library of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (launched in autumn 2007), and the libraries of the University of Silesia and the University of Economics in Katowice (not to be confused with the Silesian Library, discussed above). These last two are linked in terms of space and organisation within one of the most impressive Polish library

¹³ The building was designed in 2001. The chief designer was Konrad Tanasiewicz; Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko was responsible for the library technology design.

buildings of the 21st century, namely the Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library (CINiBA), located in the heart of Katowice and opened to the public in 2011 [photo 8]¹⁴.

The Jagiellonian Library in Cracow opted for a different path. There were plans for its building to be upgraded as far back as in the original pre-war project by Waław Krzyżanowski, and it was first expanded in the 1960s. The current design by Romuald Loegler has been methodically inspired by both previous stages¹⁵. The Jagiellonian Library was able to avoid the common investment issue many large libraries face when they operate in their historical locations, in old academic and urban centres where space is tight – namely insufficient land available for spatial extension and upgrading – owing to the building's urban planning, luckily projected already in the original design¹⁶. It was enlarged by a new segment with a surface area of 15,000 m² and a capacity of 1.5 m book volumes [photo 9]. Hence, the usable area and storeroom capacity was doubled to provide space for new holdings for the next 20 years, assuming a business-as-usual scenario as far as the influx of printed materials is concerned¹⁷. The area available to the public was expanded by a set of new thematically divided reading rooms: for science, modern languages and multimedia. Waiting time has been reduced as much as possible given the capacity of the Telelift transport system, which provides books from storerooms unavailable to the public. This description alone indicates that the traditional arrangement has been kept for the storerooms (which are not available to the reader) and loans (in special, thematic reading rooms): This, in the author's opinion, ignores completely the experiences of modern library practice in terms of intra-library spatial arrangement and its role as a stimulating factor for the reader's individual research and the development of their own working methodology.

As far as investments in spatial infrastructure are concerned, academic and scientific libraries were ahead of public ones all throughout the democratic period in Poland (1989-2004). This is significant considering that at these libraries as many as 66.2% of registered users are readers of academic libraries (students and academics), and that accessing holdings on site is more than twice as frequent as external loans¹⁸.

¹⁴ The authors of the project were Dariusz Herman and Piotr Śmierzewski (HS99), see also <http://projekt.ciniba.edu.pl/>

¹⁵ The new building of the Jagiellonian Library was built in 1931-39, chief architect: Waław Krzyżanowski; 1961-1963: 1st extension, chief architect: Jerzy Wierzbicki; 1996-2001: 2nd extension, 1999-2002, chief architect: Romuald Loegler.

¹⁶ The Jagiellonian Library building follows a T-shaped layout. An undeveloped plot was left to allow for future extensions that would transform the building's layout into an H-shape.

¹⁷ Typically, large academic libraries in Poland receive an annual influx of 30,000-40,000 volumes.

¹⁸ According to: *Analiza Funkcjonowania Bibliotek Naukowych. Wskaźniki efektywności i dane statystyczne* [Functional Analysis of Scientific Libraries. Efficiency Indicators and Statistical Data]. [online: <http://afb.sbp.pl/afbnp/>].

PUBLIC LIBRARIES. SPATIAL CHANGES AND THEIR FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL IN THE AGE OF CULTURE DOMINATED WITH IMAGES

According to the most cautious estimates, ca. 70% of all public library buildings in Poland required upgrading and enlargement at the beginning of the 21st century. After Poland joined the European Union (2004), large and comprehensive support programmes for libraries were launched¹⁹. It was only a question of agility on the part of local governments and librarians whether they could be utilised for the libraries' benefit. Dozens of local (municipal, school and county) library buildings and premises were upgraded. Some of them were aesthetically impressive and practically implemented the concept of the Third Place (supplementing home and workplace), providing the reader with access to library services on their way to and from school or work – at railway stations, in supermarkets or beside sports centres – and attracting much attention from the public and the media as well as from readers. This brought about an unprecedented success in terms of turnout rates and media coverage. Such libraries operate for example in the small towns of Chrzanów, Oświęcim and Legionowo as well as in many other localities: the library located at the Rumia railway station was awarded the 1st prize in the Library Interior Design Awards international competition²⁰ [photo 10]²¹.

From among the worthwhile revitalisations of large public libraries, let us have a closer look at two: the recently completed (1st stage) radical transformation of the Warsaw Public Library and the subtle but functional upgrade of the Raczyński Library in Poznań, located in a historic building.

The building of the Warsaw Public Library, which is also the Central Library of the Masovian Voivodeship, was funded by the Warsaw Kierbedź family in 1905, and soon after opened to the public. Even back then, it was located in the very heart of the old Warsaw city centre. World War II destroyed the main collection of the library, its building was also partially burnt out and completely ruined. In the 1950s and 60s, it was reconstructed and its book collection rebuilt, which was followed by a rapid increase in readership and usage for all the library services and functionalities. Rather than being rebuilt, the Kierbedź library was ex-

¹⁹ Such programmes were run, among others, by The Book Institute (within the KULTURA+ Multiannual Programme LIBRARY+ PRIORITY – LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE) and by the Information Society Development Foundation (Library Development Program).

²⁰ More about this competition at: <http://www.iida.org/content.cfm/ala-library-interiors>

²¹ All such new and upgraded libraries have been documented in professional media, for example at: <http://lustrobiblioteki.pl/category/nowe-biblioteki/>

tended on several occasions to include the new buildings nearby²², as well as smaller outbuildings and annexes added to it on an ad hoc basis.

Architects Andrzej Bulanda and Włodzimierz Mucha, awarded the 1st prize in the 2006 competition of the Association of Polish Architects, faced a challenging task given, on the one hand, the complex urban planning and technical conditions of the confined space available within the city centre, and on the other, the functional requirements of a large library where it is never easy to switch from traditional procedures to new features and topographical principles. They suggested that the makeshift structure from the 1960s be replaced with a compact building illuminated top-down with daylight through a glass roof, softly adjoining the internal façade of the Kierbedź building to the south, and filling the entire space between the multi-storey “storehouse” building and the external residential and office buildings of the Warsaw city centre that surround it from all the other sides. The entrance through the “Mermaid” gate leads readers to a large stone patio from where several routes can take them to various reading rooms at different levels.

The ground floor is the central part of the new building, where readers gather and are directed to other areas. Spacious courtyards covered with glass roofs, apart from housing the reception, registration, and information desks, have also become an area of recreation and informal meetings.

The ground floor of the new building is mostly occupied by the Faustyn Czerwijowski Reading Room²³ [photo 11], with considerably larger free-access collections than the ones that used to be available in the “old” reading room, being enhanced by items previously kept in the storerooms, and ensuring the possibility of further expansion of the collections through adding contemporary information publications as well as research and popular science literature from all domains. The reading room is a friendly and comfortable place of work²⁴ for school and university students, the main target group of the Library²⁵, freeing up in this way the main reading room of the Kierbedź building, oriented rather towards sharing historical holdings from the collections kept in storerooms.

²²The most important stages of the enlargement were the construction of the 7-storey “storeroom house” during the years 1949-1954, and that of the 5-storey “seal” building with reading rooms for free-access book and press collections in 1968-1973.

²³Faustyn Czerwijowski, director of the Library in the years 1912-1937.

²⁴This offers much convenience, together with the large working surface of the desks for readers: every reader’s desk in the Library, like in the University of Warsaw Library, is above standard size: 100x70 cm (Polish standard: 90x60cm), and is equipped with an individual lamp with adjustable brightness and access to power supply.

²⁵According to the Library’s loan statistics of 2012, 70% of those who visited it were students under the age of 25 [as per: *Sprawozdanie z działalności merytorycznej Biblioteki Publicznej m.st. Warszawy – Biblioteki Głównej Woj. Mazowieckiego za 2012 rok*] [Report on the main activities of the Warsaw Public Library and the Main Library of Mazovia Province of 2012], [typescript copy].

On the ground floor there is a separate area for the Children's Book Museum, with a spacious reading and workshop room; the Museum also holds numerous cultural events in the Library courtyards.

The Newspaper and Periodical Reading Room is located on the 1st floor, with an abundant collection of current issues (ca. 300 titles). Next to it, there is the Varsaviana Reading Room with a collection of around 12,000 volumes, freely accessible in its entirety. The large Arts, Crafts, and Cartography Reading Room is located on the 2nd floor, with its extensive and attractive free-access collection.

The spatial arrangement of this fully modernised area complies with the requirements of the usability programme stipulated by the competition rules. Now, the library faces a new challenge: planning the 2nd stage of its upgrade, which involves revitalisation of the "seal" and "storehouse" buildings. Both are covered by a single competition project and even by one building permit, but require verification due to the lapse of time, both in terms of technical solutions and library-related features²⁶.

The extension of the Raczyński Library in Poznań²⁷ did not affect the historic architecture and interior design of its monumental building to such a great extent as in Warsaw. The architectural design by the JEMS Architekci architectural office extended the historic part of the building by 11,000 m², while fully respecting the urban planning and architectural fundamentals of the existing structure, gracefully combining both modules [photo 12]. The new section houses public reading rooms with free-access collections, compact storerooms, and workshops.

The above examples are by no means exhaustive. This article calls attention to no more than a few most symptomatic and high-impact projects. The above investments alone, completed in the last 25 years, increased the available library surface by ca. 180,000 m² and provided ca. 12,000 new seats for readers. This reflects an unprecedented boom, contrary to stereotypical opinions that libraries are underfunded and neglected by political leaders and decision-makers.

New library investments in the last 25 years have made it possible for Polish libraries to catch up with the rest of Europe after the harsh commu-

²⁶ More details on the enlargement of the Library on Koszykowa Street as well as my reflections from the years 2012-2015, when I worked with the Library Managing Team as a Library Redevelopment Consultant, can be found in my commemorative article (Kobierska-Maciuszko, 2015, pp. 4-9)

²⁷ The Raczyński Library was founded by Edward Raczyński, a Greater Poland magnate, art and science sponsor, book author, journalist and editor who had the building erected especially for the Library (opened to the public in 1829). See also: http://www.bracz.edu.pl//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=256&Itemid=104.

nist period, although Poland, like other Eastern European countries, missed out on the library construction boom of the 1960s and 70s which strongly marked Western Europe and the U.S. Today, we are facing the same dilemmas as the rest of the world: how do we design new library buildings at a time when it is more and more frequently assumed that the only problem related to paper-based resources is their dense storage? To what extent will digitisation change the role and work style of a scientific library? How about its spatial arrangements? Will it still need any physical space at all? Are even the most visionary projects capable of reversing the decline in readership in Poland? On the other hand, after moving into new locations, each of the above libraries recorded a massive increase in interest in all their services, whether it was in numbers of readers, loans, website views, full-text downloads or other forms... as if the quality of their physical premises influenced interest in their information services, irrespective of whether these are provided in hard copy or in digital form. The number of around 3,000 users visiting the University of Warsaw Library every day is the best proof of this²⁸. Therefore, the Library, despite having its virtual locations too, has remained a primarily physical space of intellectual and social interaction for readers and librarians. Let us hope this kind of social activity, this free but organised access to various resources and information media, is maintained in the new library locations for good, for the benefit of further generations of users.

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²⁸ Yearly average, according to: *Sprawozdanie BUW i bibliotek wydziałowych UW za rok 2012* [Annual report of the University of Warsaw Library and faculty libraries for 2012], Warsaw 2013

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Photo 1. National Library of Poland, 1981, main entrance, glacial erratics in the foreground
[photo by Grzegorz Mazurowski, National Library of Poland]



Photo 2. The Silesian Library, the tower part contains automated stacks, Katowice, 1992
[photo by Joanna Rzepka, The Silesian Library]



Photo 3. The University of Warsaw Library, 1999, the front, so-called “culture” elevation – displaying quotes from various texts of culture and science [photo by Jadwiga Antoniak, The University of Warsaw Library]



Photo 4. The University of Warsaw Library, main hall holding the Library catalogs, surrounded with open stacks collections
[photo by Jadwiga Antoniak, The University of Warsaw Library]



Photo 5. Wrocław University Library, 2005
[photo by Justyna Żaczek, Wrocław University Library]



Photo 6. Gdansk University Library, 2006
[source: <http://www.bg.ug.edu.pl/o-bibliotece/prezentacja-biblioteki>]



Photo 7. Łódź University Library, 2006, side by side with the former Library premises (visible in the right upper corner)
[photo from the Library collections]

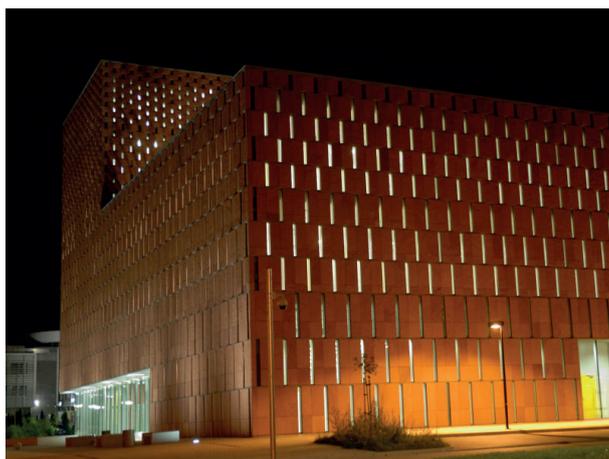


Photo 8. The Center of Scientific Information and the Academic Library (CINiBA), Katowice, 2011
[photo by CINiBA, source: http://projekt.ciniba.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=217&Itemid=88]



Photo 9. The Jagiellonian Library, a new building with the former premises and the passage joining both buildings in the background, Kraków, 2001
[photo by Ludwik Węgiel, the Jagiellonian Library]



Photo 10. „Culture Station” – Municipal Library in Rumia (Pomorskie region) situated at the railway station (before and after refurbishment)
[source: <http://stacjakulturarumia.pl/>]



Photo 11. „Koszykowa” – Main Library of the City of Warsaw,
Faustyn Czerwijowski new reading room, 2015
[source: <http://www.koszykowa.pl/biblioteka/rozbudowa/aktualnosc/>]



Photo 12. The Raczyński Library, the old building with a new extension, Poznań, 2013
[source: <http://www.bracz.edu.pl/>]