

Cooperation between Gdańsk University Main Library and the academic libraries of the Pomeranian District

(Communiqué)

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Abstract:

Current and new methods of cooperation between academic libraries of the Pomeranian District. Formalization of current cooperation methods by establishing a new body – the Pomeranian District Academic Libraries' Association, with 12 member libraries participating.

Cooperation between the libraries in Poland takes place both on the national and regional scale. This phenomenon is consistent with the spirit of the times, because through the cooperation the quality of library services can be improved and the costs of any innovations can be significantly reduced. There are many examples of a successful cooperation on the national and regional scale in Poland. Among many of these the all-Polish consortium VTLS and the Foundation of the Academic Libraries in Poznań are worth mentioning.

Gdańsk University Main Library

The University Library was founded in 1970 following the merger of two other libraries: the Library of the Higher School of Pedagogy in Gdańsk and the Higher School of Economics in Sopot. At that time its collection consisted of about 300 000 volumes whereas the present collection numbers more than a million volumes. As for periodicals, the Library subscribes to 729 printed foreign titles and has access to 14 000 electronic titles.

The present collection is of a universal character. However special consideration is given to the disciplines represented at the University and maritime issues. The Library is particularly interested in the acquisition of special collections concerning the history and culture of the Pomeranian region, in traditional, as well as electronic form. Since 1997, the University Library has become one of 17 institutions in Poland entitled to receive a legal deposit copy of respective publications. The Library has been a member of the national "VTLS users Association" and participates in consortia that offer access to electronic periodicals databases such as Science Direct (Elsevier), EIFL EBSCO and other. Currently the University Library constitutes the largest library in Pomeranian region and serves

the whole of the Three-Town complex (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot) academic community.

Current methods of cooperation

Cooperation between Gdańsk University Main Library and other academic libraries of the region, dates back to the '70-ties. In 1971, a common code of practice was agreed upon by all academic libraries of the Three-Town complex of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot. According to this agreement, students and employees of the academic institutions were awarded the right to borrow books from all the libraries that participate in the agreement.

In July 1972 Deans of Gdańsk Technical University and the University of Gdańsk passed a decree covering the creation of the Inter-Academic Library of Chemistry and Biochemistry Periodicals, located in buildings of Gdańsk Technical University. The contents of this library constitute the sum of the holdings of Gdańsk Technical University, complemented by deposits of periodicals from the University Library. This institution has become a vital element of consolidation of the academic circles of chemists and biochemists of Northern Poland.

Cooperation between libraries also takes place when organizing educational exhibitions. An example of this was a historical exhibition entitled "Distinguished Gdańsk Citizens of the 1000-year History of Gdańsk" organised by academic libraries and open to the general public.

Upgrading of professional qualifications of academic librarians, exchange of staff members for practical training is also a matter covered by various agreements between the libraries. Collective training of the librarians takes place in connection with implementation of VTLS library system. Many librarians benefit from the University Library's sessions devoted to cataloguing of periodicals.

For many years the University Library has produced newsletters informing about opening hours of all academic libraries in the Three-Town complex. Such information is also published on University Library's website at <http://www.bg.univ.gda.pl>.

New methods of cooperation

In times of the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies the available methods of cooperation between academic libraries appear to be insufficient. Closer cooperation concerning acquisitions, security, access to sources of information, staff training is undoubtedly necessary. Hence the necessity for the following:

- formalization of current cooperation methods
- establishing of a new body - Pomeranian District Academic Libraries' Association with 12 member libraries participating

The following libraries will be included in the Association:

- Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library
- Naval Academy, Main Library
- Medical University of Gdańsk, Main Library
- Gdynia Maritime University, Main Library
- Academy of Music, Main Library
- Academy of Fine Arts, Main Library
- Academy of Physical Education, Main Library
- Gdańsk Technical University, Main Library

- Pomeranian Pedagogical University, Main Library
- University of Gdańsk, Main Library
- Voivodeship and City Public Library
- Pedagogical Library in Gdańsk

Within the framework of the Association certain key issues are to be included, e.g.:

- joint, unified electronic administration service
- purchase of licenses
- purchase of access to databases
- library staff training
- protection, preservation, security and storage of holdings (joint storage magazine and conservation lab, sharing of archiving of annuals)

According to the Legal Deposit Copy Act of 7.11.1996 the University Library receives a legal deposit copy which, as a part of the Association's strategy, it shares with other libraries. For the time being, two work-groups were formed – one took up the task of updating the current circulation mode, the other worked on the coordination of subscription of periodicals within the circle of member libraries. A collective list of subscribed periodicals was drawn up and recurring titles were noted. This is expected to help modify the subscription policy for periodicals of the Academic Libraries' Association.

We suppose, that the formation of a purposeful, representative body for the participating academic libraries will in the near future, become a tool with which to overcome the challenges facing libraries participating.