

*Library and personal development of an individual
on the example of the Pedagogic Library
in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski*

*Biblioteka a osobisty rozwój jednostki na przykładzie
Biblioteki Pedagogicznej w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim*

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Słowa kluczowe

edukacja, rozwój, biblioteka, jednostka

Abstract

The article is a review of some educational initiatives addressed by the Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski branch of the Voivodeship Pedagogic Library in Kielce to current and potential receivers of different age groups who want to increase their knowledge and develop their personality.

Abstrakt

Artykuł jest przeglądem niektórych inicjatyw edukacyjnych kierowanych przez Pedagogiczną Bibliotekę Wojewódzką w Kielcach Filia w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim do odbiorców aktualnych i potencjalnych w różnych przedziałach wiekowych, chcących doskonalić swoją wiedzę i rozwijać osobowość.

Library and personal development of an individual on the example of the Pedagogic Library in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski

“Words instruct, illustrations lead” – as a Latin maxim says. Nobody is born an intellectual. The abilities hidden in our genes do not mould themselves into a desirable effect on their own. A didactic impulse is indispensable. Where, if not for a book, should we reach in order to broaden our knowledge, and where, if not to a library, should we go in order to get this book? A small child observing his parents will wish to do what they do and will learn the letters even before the shadow of suspicion of compulsory education occurs. Listening at first, then reading fairy tales will become synonymous with happiness for him. A child raised in an environment in which a book is a natural element will reach for one without fear but with curiosity. Another step for the parents in the process of a wise upbringing of their offspring (in the vein of “homo legens”) is to escort him to a library. A child that is properly prepared for it will experience happiness. I may affirm this using myself as an example – as a child being brought up and as a person upbringing a child. First of all, I, myself, as a child, and, many years later, my children, experienced the same joy of encountering a book.

Not all children may enter the world of books in such a natural way. Admittedly, in my opinion, we all should have such a comfort, but if a child was not taught the love for books at home, his teachers should implant the habit of communing with a book as soon as possible – during pre-school, after school day-care or school. A natural place in which a child gets to know a book – apart from his home – is a library, and a librarian should become a wise guide.

There is no lack of such places and people in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. There are many libraries: the Urban Public Library and its branches: no.1, no.2, no.5, no.6, no.7, no.10, and no.11¹ The Library of the College of Business and Entrepreneurship; and primary, secondary and high school libraries. Special attention needs to be drawn to the establishment with a long-term tradition – branch in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski of the Voivodeship Pedagogic Library in Kielce – the biggest of the 11 Voivodeship’s existing branches².

¹ Information available at the Urban Public Library website: www.biblioteka.ostrowiec.pl, [accessed on: 10.02.2017].

² Quoting: E. Grabowska, I. Sroczyńska, G. Cuper, *Main Library in Kielce, [w:] 70 years of Voivodeship Pedagogic Library in Kielce. 1945-2015*, red. M. Lis, Kielce 2015, p. 35.

The Urban Pedagogic Library has been so named since the Instruction of the Ministry of Education for organizing district pedagogic libraries dated 26 September 1957, but its beginnings can be dated even earlier – in the early 50s of XX century – in the Modest volumes of the contemporary Education Department.

In 1960, in the document titled *Instruction concerning joining district Polish Teachers' Union libraries with district pedagogic libraries* an actual fusion happened between the pedagogic library and the library of the district branch of the Polish Teachers' Union, which was planned in 1957, pointing out equal aims of both establishments. In the 70s, the Library diversified its actions:

...it covered the area of Ostrowiec Św. and a part of former Opatów, Lipsko, Białobrzegi and Kielce counties. Its region consisted of 18 administrative territory units: Ostrowiec Św., Białobrzegi, Sienno, Lipsko, Ożarów, Ćmielów, Opatów, Bałtów, Bodzechów, Bieliny and Daleszyce³.

The ordonnance of the Minister of Education dated 27 March 1976 brought a change in the structure of pedagogic libraries. According to the ordonnance, the establishment functioning as the Urban Public Library was renamed the Voivodeship Pedagogic Library in Kielce with a branch in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski⁴.

Housing conditions of the Library at the beginning were difficult. At first, the Library used the Education Department as a courtesy. Then, it moved into a tiny, 50-meter building on Kilińskiego Street. After that, it moved into better conditions, a 120-meters room on Sienkiewicza Street. Finally, a 240-meters chamber was found on Iłżecka Street in the Heine's House, a nice building, which became neglected and, unfortunately, was never renovated. It was demolished in 2014. From 21 June 2011 to the present, the Library is in a spacious room of the former Technician's Club on 26 Ogrody Estate.

A huge area of 708 m² made it possible to provide readers with comfortable work conditions. They may use a spacious, bright reading room where they can use big desks, and they can work in silence. A very well-equipped Multimedia Information Centre invites everyone to use the Internet and write a variety of papers. Additionally, one can use a scanner and a printer, and if a member needs literature on a given subject, he or she will find it in the spacious loan area. Equally good storage conditions are in the book collection [...] which presently is stored in a big area in both traditional and modern mobile bookcases⁵.

³ There, p. 88.

⁴ I will use the terms: Pedagogic Library or the Library in this work.

⁵ B. Pawelec, *Branch in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski*, [w:] there, p. 90.

The place obliges – one might want to notice, but even in less comfortable conditions the library was a service to a great multitude of readers, meeting the challenges of changes in education, professional teachers' training and helping teachers develop their passions.

The Act concerning libraries of 27 June 1997 sets the tasks of libraries and includes the following:

1. Gathering, editing and protection of library materials.
2. Users' service, mostly sharing the collection and managing information activities, especially informing members about its own collections and those of other libraries, museums and scientific information facilities, as well as cooperation with the archives in this regard. (r.1, art.4, p. 1, p. pkt. 1,2)⁶.

Chapter 7 of the mentioned *Act* refers to school and pedagogic libraries, saying in article 22, point 2 that:

Pedagogic libraries act towards education needs including teacher training.

And in point 3:

The rules for organizing and managing school libraries and pedagogic libraries are set in separate regulations.

The Pedagogic Library has been realizing its general tasks, enlarging library collection since the beginning. At first, between 1956 and 1969, the book collection totalled 7250 volumes, which was an average of 517 purchases annually. The next years are as follows:

1970 – 1984, 28128 more books, which is an average of 2009 purchases annually (four times higher than the previous period);

– 1985 – 1999: 11,180 volumes bought, which is an average of 798 purchases annually;

– 2000 – 2014: 4,907, which is an average of 350 purchases annually⁷.

The manager of the Library, Barbara Pawelec, emphasised in an interview⁸ that purchases are currently made based on a collection gathering policy, which is dictated by statutory requirements and not the best economic situation of such establishments. The Library provides teachers, students, pupils and other readers who want to broaden their knowledge with a rich and

⁶ Journal of Laws 1997 No. 85 pos. 539 Act of 27 June 1997 concerning libraries, Internet System of Legal Acts [web.]: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19970850539>, [accessed on: 10.02.2017].

⁷ B. Pawelec, *Branch...*, p.96.

⁸ The conversation concerning the functioning of the Voivodeship Pedagogic Library of Kielce with a branch in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski was conducted with the Director Mrs Barbara Pawelec in October 2016.

up-to-date set of publications through the subscription of volumes via purchase or by contributions by sponsors and exchanging books. Apart from the traditional access to the library resources when books on loan can be taken home, there are modern facilities in the reading room such as electronic folders, computer database, free of charge Internet access, and a rich set of audio and visual materials.

The activity of the Pedagogic Library in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski remains based on market demands.

Modern pedagogic libraries, willing to consciously exist in the knowledge society, need to change their image, forms and tools. Libraries that want to actively and genuinely support educational activities in the region, must intensify their current activities, look for new and attractive forms of work and be ready to fight the odds⁹.

– wrote Monika Górczyńska in the article *Pedagogic library and promoting its actions*. The topic discussed in this article is the issue of promoting an institution, that is, realizing the task of presenting the best image of a library among real and potential users. It is, therefore, connected with the issue of educating readers, as discussed in the current paper. The author emphasises the necessity to intensify and modernise activities in this area because a library does not exist without readers. Modern media have a variety of ways to attract potential readers. In view of all that, the decrease in interest in traditional reading forms and broadening knowledge is becoming rare.

The Voivodeship Pedagogic Library presently maintains a regularly updated website. It is possible to see all the branches, read about their activities and learn many interesting facts. In this context, the website of the Pedagogic Library Branch in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski presents itself well. We can find regularly updated notes, dating back to the year 2009, concerning projects directed at current and potential explorers of the library collection. In order to verify and develop these reports, I have conducted a cycle of interviews with the above-mentioned Barbara Pawelec. I have learnt that, according to the statutory regulations of the Public Pedagogic Library in Kielce, the allocation of tasks takes into account the skills, interests and additional competencies of the librarians (at present: Justyna Polanowska, Małgorzata Szurek, Małgorzata Golis) in a casual atmosphere of discussion.

My interlocutor emphasised and confirmed the thesis of this paper pointing out the necessity of taking care of the youngest. Numerous initiatives are directed at children in pre-school and the early years of primary school.

⁹ M. Górczyńska, *Pedagogic library and promoting its actions*, [w:] *A library and a librarian for a teacher and student*. red. R. Kordas, Kielce 2011, p. 43.

Accordingly, activities for the youngest at the Library are prepared in an innovative way, e.g. children have a possibility to move around the library's huge area freely, although in a monitored way. They participate in very interesting contests, paint pictures for the stories they have heard on the floors of the library with colourful chalk. Such directed activities, in my opinion, is a wonderful way to domesticate the library space, interest a child in the contents of bookshelves, capture a child's imagination and encourage a child to have discussions¹⁰.

Barbara Pawelec prefers calling library lessons "reading events" categorizing them as adventures and not classes, which would remind everyone of school lessons. For this reason, she makes sure the events take place in the Library building.

From September to October 2016/17 – there were three reading events for the youngest. The subject of the events with second-grade students was one of the seasons of the year – Autumn. The children listened to fairy tales (teachers know and use fairy tale therapy while working with children) and stories. Then, they made up their own stories, talked about the responsibilities of the Queen of Autumn, recognized fruit while having their eyes closed and consumed the fruit after that. The conclusion, aptly enough, resulted from the interesting progress of the meetings and took the form of a motto: "A good book and vitamins are a companionate duet for a student".

Kindergarteners and older children were also presented with another attraction – kamishibai fairy tales. Kamishibai is the traditional Japanese art of telling stories by means of pictures. Justyna Polanowska, who completed a course in working this method, conducted a cycle of such events. Not only was this enjoyed by the youngest listeners, whom the method helps develop their imagination, learn about the world and broaden their fine motor skills, but also by older students because it enabled them all to associate reading with an adventure. The events were also held for older students from the fifth grade. For them, the story told became a starting point for their own search for artistic and literary skills. Thanks to such events, students learn how to write stories, create illustrations, think logically, associate facts, draw conclusions and work in a team.

¹⁰ When I was listening to this fascinating idea, I could imagine the characters from Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* – William of Baskerville and Adso of Melk and other monks who wander a mysterious labyrinth of a medieval library. Here, they would have an extraordinary guide – a librarian who can safely guide the charges through the actual and figurative alleys of the library, sharing emotions and knowledge.

In what way do the librarians receive feedback on whether or not the events were effective? It seems that the best methods of verification are as follows:

- observation of children; many of them express their contentment or disapprobation spontaneously,
- conversation, thanks to which they can check how much knowledge was acquired,
- analysis of the drawings and artworks.

There are also forms of conducting surveys which can be done by any child without even the smallest problems, and such surveys are also used. However, the best feedback is the fact that children happily attend such events. Their enthusiasm gives hope for the future.

It is not easy to find one's way to middle school students with an educational message. At this stage of education, one often needs to overcome display of rebellion and to break negative attitudes. There are also forms of activities for this age group. The idea of "monitored truancy", organized by Mrs Monika Górczyńska, proved to be extremely successful. Middle school students and teachers accepted this idea as a way of dealing with a day when all students are, according to custom, to play truant and, frequently, creates situations that put the youths' safety at risk. Instead of wandering around the city, the students watch interesting and attractive films in the library, such as a film about the Nobel Prize winner who created the game theory – John Nash. After the screening, they participated in quizzes, discussions and theme games. They come back home rewarded and satisfied. The meetings in the library on the "Truant's Day" have become a tradition for the Library.

Debates – this popular and attractive form of development for slightly older students has been transformed into an educational proposal directed this time at high school students.

Oxford debates have quite a long tradition in Ostrowiec. Participants have to accept certain conditions: a time limit, the necessity to use precise arguments and build a coherent and logical statement with clear content. The ability to settle disputes, the art of forming statements and showing respect towards the opponent, no matter his beliefs, is very important in this debate. The debate is an opportunity to show high competences. The youth learn how to give public speeches, overcome stage fright, shyness and lack of self-confidence. It needs to be mentioned that the Library has not been a self-reliant organizer of the debates. This task has been shared by other establishments, e.g. high schools and the College of Business and Entrepreneurship. Teacher-librarians participate in preparation for the debate, help in the search for literature, giving the arguments a rich foundation and root for their charges during their struggles.

High school students can attend workshops and lectures e.g. “On a first-name basis with genealogy”, given by Mr Władysław Kostkowski – a person from Ostrowiec passionate about this topic. Genealogy is a study of history connected with tracing family lineage. This can be an interesting topic, giving possibilities and tools to research family background to many people searching for their identity, including young people in the discussed age range. Young people participating in the workshops can become acquainted with tools that are helpful for retracing family history. Some of them have been inspired by the lecture and the workshops to do this kind of research. The meetings, organized at the initiative of Małgorzata Golis, have been thoroughly enjoyed.

There is a place for everybody in the library, no matter the age. Organizing a meeting in order to promote, in a broad sense, safety among older people became a very interesting initiative. The library organized it in cooperation with the Polish Red Cross Medical Rescue and City Guards for the students of the University of Third Age at the College of Business and Entrepreneurship within a project aiming at promoting, in a broad sense, safety among older people. The meeting consisted of theoretical and practical parts concerning first aid and self-help in emergencies. The classes attracted clear interest proclaimed by detailed questions and hot debate.

Cooperation with the pedagogic community and supporting teachers in their professional activities are two of the most important aims of the pedagogic library. The Pedagogic Library in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski has accompanied teachers during the educational changes from the beginning, consistently realizing the calling to “actively support the development and activities of the education community, primarily by providing cooperation with educational establishments in our area [...] conferences, trainings and workshops, needs of schools and the need for teachers’ self-development, open classes, seminars, consultations, and exchanges of experience”¹¹.

An achievement in this range is a cycle of meetings within the framework of a project called “Network of cooperation and self-education of teachers”. “Network...” is “an interschool team of cooperating teachers and principals from different schools. The aim is to solve problems together and share ideas, observations and proposals – through both an Internet platform and face-to-face meetings. Members of the Network use their own knowledge, but they may ask for the help of experts. They work under the supervision of a cooperation and self-education coordinator”¹².

¹¹ The Library report for the year 2015 remaining in the establishment’s documents.

¹² M. Hajdukiewicz, *Cooperation and self-education networks*, [w:] *A teacher in a learning school. Information on the new support system*, Education Development Centre, Warsaw 2015, p. 50.

Even though the Pedagogic Library does not participate in the project officially, it eagerly started cooperation with the Centre for School Education Development because it is natural for this kind of establishment to be with teachers in every new situation. Within the “Network of cooperation...” project, thanks to an invitation from the Library, I was able to share my long-term experience of working with talented young readers and with teachers interested in this topic. It could happen during a meeting: “We are exploring literary talents among children and teenagers – how to motivate to develop creative abilities”. I had a chance to present my observations to a group of teachers, to answer their questions concerning the formal and practical aspects of working with young writers, to show the results of our activity by presenting students’ writing collections, to talk about contests and other initiatives for schools – within the region, nationwide and even internationally.

Within the frames of a network, Mrs Barbara Bakalarz–Kowalska, the director of the Library at the College of Business and Entrepreneurship, met with the teachers. The subject of the meeting was, similar to previous ones, how to inspire the youth to read books and to promote reading. To this end, the speaker presented to those the gathered at the library, a game which was very interesting to the listeners and perhaps the meeting will inspire its use in different establishments in the future.

During a conversation with Barbara Pawelec, I found out about other interesting events, including meetings with regional artists Jarosław Edward Gryz and Stanisław Rogala.

Jarosław Edward Gryz is an artist – a sculptor of many beautiful wooden figurines – and a poet – the author of a few books of poems. The meeting, during which the artist had a chance to show both fields of creativity to a crowd of listeners, was exceptionally well planned. The art of words connected with plastic art enabled a full appreciation of the artist from Ostrowiec. The readers of the Library could admire the exhibition for a few days and the visitors learned about the dynamics and attractiveness of the library in Ostrowiec.

The meeting with regional historian and writer Stanisław Rogala was not only of a cognitive value but was also a promotion of the region. The lecturer presented a new issue of the quarterly “Nad Kamienną”, published under the auspices of the Local Cultural Centre in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, in which, apart from internationally recognized names which are from the world of science and literature, there were also the names of writers of the Aspekt Literature Club, the University of the Third Age section and students’ debuts.

Moreover, Barbara Pawelec initiated an interesting meeting with two writers of the young generation. Young authors, who have recently graduated from high schools in Ostrowiec – Anna Bellon and Marek Łasisz – met

high school students to present their book debuts. *Save me (Uratuj mnie)* by Anna Bellon is in the modern genre of New Adult. The author studies mechanics and mechanical engineering and she is interested in rock music and hockey. Marek Łasisz – an archaeologist, acultural expert and a traveller – is the author of a book called *Wolf's house (Dom wilka)*. The hospitable Library enabled young writers to have a chance to talk with slightly younger readers. Maybe one of them, encouraged by the experience of their older friends, will reach for a pen.

The Library often invites academic staff of Jan Kochanowski University who enrich the listeners with their knowledge. In wanting to show the diversity of initiatives, meetings which sensitize participants towards the needs of disabled people need to be noted. Here I should mention a cycle of meetings concerning autism among children. There are also many periodic initiatives connected with e.g. Language Culture Week or the European Heritage Days, Mass Media Day as well as exhibitions and theme contests, e.g. a recently announced Literature Contest on the occasion of commemoration of Józef Konrad Korzeniowski which is directed at students of upper secondary schools.

The choice I made in the present work points out the diversity of proposals directed at recipients at all ages and at different educational levels. People can and need to improve themselves effectively and care about their intellectual development at every age. We are effectively supported in this journey by libraries and the evidence of this can be seen in the activities of the Ostrowiec branch of the Pedagogic Library of Kielce.

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