

## **The Role of Legal Deposit of Books in the Polish Library Scheme: The Case of Poznań University Library**

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*This article discusses the legal deposit system in Poland, outlining important issues, legal regulations, cooperation with publishers, and the importance of delivering books for academic environment. It emphasizes the significance of legal deposit for shaping collections and improving institutional quality. Poznań University Library is presented as an example of the Polish approach to the issue of book acquisition, including the library's mission statement and elements of its collection development policy. The author also writes about tasks for the Legal Deposit Office and the library in the near future, including implementation of electronic legal deposit in Poland.*

**KEYWORDS** *Poland, legal deposit, obligatory deposit, Polish library law, publishers, collection quality, academic environment, faculty libraries, departmental libraries, universities*

### **LEGAL DEPOSIT AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN POLAND**

According to the relevant decree of the Minister of Culture and Arts,<sup>1</sup> there are 16 libraries and *Filmoteka Narodowa* [National Film Archive] that are entitled to receive legal deposit. The law determines the number and type of books received. If a publisher releases 100 or more copies of a title, the Jagiellonian Library and the National Library of Poland should be provided with two copies, while the other recipients are entitled to one copy each. When a print run is less than 100, legal deposit copies must be sent only to

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the Jagiellonian Library and the National Library of Poland. Poznań University Library has a long tradition concerning the delivery of legal deposit copies. The library was granted the right to receive a regional deposit copy in 1919 and an all-Polish deposit copy in 1927.<sup>2</sup> Since then, it has been an essential source for the library collection. As with other forms of acquiring library material—purchase, donation, exchange—legal deposit, too, fulfills functions related to the user's needs and, thereby, the Library Mission Statement, which includes the following:

- To provide a supportive environment for academic studies [ . . . ];
- To support the research and educational endeavors of students, faculty, and researchers by collecting, organizing, preserving, and disseminating information in any format;
- To provide service and instructional programs, and, by utilizing electronic information systems, to enhance access to information resources and services;
- To grant access to a friendly place for all users, open to the needs of those who are ready to make use of its resources;
- Poznań University Library is committed to cooperating with the regional cultural and academic community.<sup>3</sup>

It is essential for an academic library to provide access to important and diverse scholarly literature while adhering to the highest standards. It is also crucial for staff working in the Legal Deposit Section to work in accord with the fundamental goal of the library's acquisition strategy. That strategy, in turn, includes current and future tasks for the library and for academic education. Knowledge of readers' needs will determine the library's specializations and how legal deposit can strengthen its collection development activities. As Claire Jenkins states,

It is assumed that effective collection development and collection management policies need to be based on an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current library stock, and an assessment of how well it meets the needs of its present and potential users.<sup>4</sup>

Material received via legal deposit in Poland reflects the diversity of titles in the publishing marketplace; one can even say that this method of acquisition depends more on the marketplace than any other. Unlike with purchase, acquisition by legal deposit does not depend on the state of the library's finances, a factor that can be an obstacle in acquiring books. The quality of the books acquired by deposit, however, depends very much on the commitment of publishers.

The political and economic transformations in 1989 are said to be the cause of the initial success, but also of the subsequent collapse of many publishing houses in Poland. The changeable and unstable market situation



tested the existence of many of them. At that time *Ustawa o obowiązkowych egzemplarzach bibliotecznych* [Law on library legal deposit copies] was not fully observed and libraries' statistics did not reflect the actual number of books that appeared on the market.<sup>5</sup> Since then, a number of publishing houses still apply the principle that if the library wants a book, it must buy it. Nevertheless, those publishers who do respect the law contribute to building archives of their works for future generations.

The Legal Deposit Section, part of the Acquisition and Collection Development Department, remains a link between the library and the publishing world. Large publishers play the greatest role,<sup>6</sup> but there are also a number of smaller ones that are extremely important from the library's point of view. In contrast to the former, those small publishers' output is hardly accessible through vendors, and that is why receiving them as legal deposits is even more rewarding. Although legal deposit has been a subject of controversy between publishers and libraries over many years in Poland,<sup>7</sup> it is still important to find a satisfying solution for the delivery of publications.

#### TRENDS IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AT POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND THE ROLE OF LEGAL DEPOSIT

The basic task of collection development at Poznań University Library is to archive books written by the academics of the parent institution, Adam Mickiewicz University. It works to preserve the literature of the local institution and provides documentation of the varied scholarly research conducted there. This is the main reason why the librarians of the Legal Deposit Office pay attention to collecting literary activity published either by the university departments or by the university publishing house. A great emphasis is put on the leading university fields, which are considered also to be the basis of the Poznań University Library collections development. Among them there are: German studies, history and ethnology, Masonic material, and books from and about the nearby geographical region, Wielkopolska. Such trends in acquisition are connected with the library's history.

At the end of the nineteenth century there was an initiative to establish a large library for public educational and scholarly purposes in Poznań (located at that time in the Kingdom of Prussia), in order to become a center of German culture and a hub of propaganda operations.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Legal Deposit Office Also Responds to Current Users' Needs

Libraries exist to serve the needs of their users. This service philosophy has always been a basic tenet of our profession. In the management of information resources, too, librarians must seek to serve the needs of their users.<sup>9</sup>

Taking the above-mentioned statement into consideration, it is worth noticing that legal deposit is an essential source for providing university textbooks, which are then directly accessible to students at the Lending Department. Because the library provides information resources, users have a reason to visit, in person or virtually. There they will find an institution with many opportunities, including research support and facilities (for example, social space). Speaking about legal deposit of books, it is also important to emphasize its role in gathering innovative collections, *inter alia*, comics and "literature."<sup>10</sup>

In general, collecting such types of literature in the research library becomes doubly advantageous: firstly, it keeps the interest of those who want to conduct research about such collections, and secondly, it attracts the attention of users who want to learn about this kind of literature. While focusing on its educational mission, Poznań University Library is also open to different kinds of users. In addition to providing core texts for students, it can supplement the educational experience with information about non-standard forms of publishing, and it keeps up with changes in reading trends.

## QUALITY

The library's focus is based on well-balanced collection management supported by weeding. In order to maintain the quality of the collections, librarians must decide about books they wish to send to other libraries on the basis of common agreements. In case of Polish legal deposit, the law allows weeding of materials that do not conform strictly with collection policy.<sup>11</sup> Books dedicated to a specific subject can be passed to a departmental library in the academic network, allowing them to remain available to university faculty and students. Without weeding, some library collections would become a jungle, where finding a needed book would be very difficult.<sup>12</sup> Weeding helps to preserve the library's identity and to achieve collection development goals.

In summary, sustaining and developing the quality of collections is connected with the regular duties of Legal Deposit Section. The main purposes of this office are:

- To verify timely delivery of books from publishers and, if necessary, negotiate with them so that all of the most important titles are received in the library;
- To distribute books to the appropriate sections in the library (Lending Library, Reading Rooms, Special Collections).

It is worth mentioning that what really supports quality is librarians working in different departments setting common goals.



## COOPERATION INSIDE THE LIBRARY

Good organization and prompt delivery of books would not be possible without cooperation among library staff. Staff in the Legal Deposit Office of Poznań University Library, when deciding how to index certain books, consult with subject librarians and heads of the library's departments. Using their experience concerning particular subjects is the best way to build valuable collections. With the diverse titles delivered via legal deposit, they are able to point out those books which would serve users best and would contribute to the highest quality collections.

### Subject Librarians Are Essential in Developing Subject-Specific Collections<sup>13</sup>

First, the opportunity for the acquisitions librarian to consult subject specialists about particular problems gives him or her a broader view on the matter. Second, the ability to consult specialists allows him/her to learn more about material that is essential for the university environment. Another form of cooperation applies to mutual contact between the Legal Deposit Office and the Purchase Section within the service Recommend a Book. If a reader requests a book, the first step is to determine if it has already been received from the publisher as a legal deposit. It often happens that the book can be sent by the publisher as a legal deposit and the library does not need to purchase it. From the financial and strategic point of view it is profitable, because the library does not need to spend money on titles that should be deposited. This situation also shows that the user has a direct influence on the building of collections, and his/her actions and decisions are crucial for the modern library.

Shifts in the higher education environment will have an impact on libraries in terms of expectations for development of collections, delivery of collections, and services for both old and new audiences, and also in terms of how libraries continue to demonstrate value to their parent institutions.<sup>14</sup>

By fulfilling needs, the library communicates its value and proves its necessity. Money saved via the Legal Deposit Office can be used to buy foreign books, which are not deposited. Such cooperation helps the library to plan future budgets and to shape the content of collections more effectively. Additionally, the work of the office entails interacting with publishers and monitoring current publishing output. It is also worth mentioning that Legal Deposit Office in Poznań University Library cooperates with departments that lend books directly to the users, i.e., with the Special Collections Department and the Lending Library. This contact helps to sustain a good flow of information concerning needs for current books.



## CONCLUSION

The role of legal deposit of books in the Polish library scheme appears to be extremely important in terms of delivering books without financial liabilities on the part of libraries. Moreover, the cooperation between publishers and libraries benefits students by providing an access to academic literature in the shortest possible time. When it comes to collecting procedures, such cooperation is helpful for making decisions about purchasing additional copies of particular titles, and it also affords an outlook on the Polish publishing market.

The foreseeable future brings many challenges, including changes in the legal system and the beginning of electronic legal deposit, both of which will undoubtedly necessitate reaching new agreements with publishers.

## NOTES

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3. "Misja Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Poznaniu" [Poznań University Library mission statement], [http://lib.amu.edu.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1051&Itemid=213](http://lib.amu.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1051&Itemid=213).
4. Claire Jenkins, *Collection Management in Academic Libraries* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 6.
5. Bogdan Klukowski, *W tym niezwykłym czasie: początki transformacji polskiego rynku książki, 1989–1995* [In this unusual time: the beginning of the Polish book market's transformation, 1989–1995] (Warsaw, Poland: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Sedno, 2013), 14–16. Passages cited here and later in the article are translated by the author.
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7. See the article summarizing the polemic concerning legal deposit: Ewa Dąbrowska, "Polemika wokół egzemplarza obowiązkowego w latach 1989–2009" [Polemic around legal deposit during the years 1989–2009], *Biblioteka* 16 (2012), <http://hdl.handle.net/10593/6453>.
8. Jazdon, "Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Poznaniu," 190–192. The author's further considerations focus on Masonic material delivered to Poznań University Library after the end of the Second World War and mostly German-speaking material, which became the main specializations of the library collections.
9. Peter Clayton, *Managing Information Resources in Libraries: Collection Management in Theory and Practice* (London: Facet Publishing, 2006), 4.
10. For an English summary of the meaning of the term *liberature*, see Zenon Fajfer, "A Brief Comment for the Foreign Reader of Liberature," *Slideshare*, [http://www.slideshare.net/mik\\_krakow/zenon-fajfer-a-brief-comment-for-the-foreign-reader-of-liberature](http://www.slideshare.net/mik_krakow/zenon-fajfer-a-brief-comment-for-the-foreign-reader-of-liberature).—Ed. (KR)
11. *Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 24 maja 1999 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie wykazu bibliotek uprawnionych do otrzymywania egzemplarzy obowiązkowych poszczególnych rodzajów publikacji oraz zasad i trybu i ich przekazywania* [Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Art of 24 May 1999 amending the Regulation concerning libraries entitled to receive legal deposit

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