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Information on scientists' private papers in Polish archives — the state and needs

Scholars' private papers are kept by various institutions. Gained as gifts, deposits or bought, they enrich Polish libraries, museums and archives. The big part of research workers' personal papers have the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences (APAS) in Warszawa and its departments in Kraków, Poznań and Wodzisław Śląski. Some portion of the private ones, after scholars are kept in Polish state archives and archives of universities, too. All of them accumulate, keep and work the papers out. But nowadays a most important thing is to work out accessible information about them.

There are a few types archival finding aids in Polish traditional archive science: an archival inventory, catalogues, indexes, repertories, lists of summaries of files, guides of archives, guides of separate fonds and thematic ones¹. Their variety let us make thorough description of archival fonds. It also allows to create efficient and universal archival information system, in theory at least. You can choose the best way of searching information. It depends on user's needs and specific character of archival materials, like in instance of scholars' private papers.

First of all it is worth remembering, that the papers of scientists include information such as biography data and details of scholar works. Thus, the research workers' personal papers are mostly a subject of interest of historians of science. It is not difficult for them to decide what kind of papers to look into, but the point is, where the papers are. The answer is not easy, especially that in case of private archives the principle of pertinence does not work.

A thematic guide with national range should play the most important part in the information system for scholars' private records. On the base of this guide describing each fond you can easily get to know a state and a place of research workers' papers. At the bottom of our modified information system, there should be a description of a fond. It would replace an archival inventory. Apart from that, archival indexes have a big meaning in describing private materials. They make looking for persons, places, facts easier.

The mentioned archival finding aids have been worked out in Polish archives. Unfortunately, we can not say, that the archival information system has been built according to the plan. Only archival inventories are made in Poland regularly, but they still stay in a

¹ B. Ryszewski, *Przegląd oraz systematyka pomocy archiwalnych polskich i obcych opublikowanych w ostatnim ćwierćwieczu*, „Archeion”, vol. 88, 1990, p. 7–20.

typescript in archives. The rest of archival finding aids are treated as optional and made sporadically. They are seldom published, too. This fact influences accessibility of research workers' private papers.

There is not a published nationwide thematic guide of scholars' private records in Poland. In 1979 preparing a guide of archival materials of families and persons in Polish state archives was concerned, but this idea did not succeed².

Theoretically, the gap can be filled with a nationwide guide of archival fonds and guides of particular Polish archives. Anyway, a quantity of these archival aids is insufficient. We can even say, that Polish archives do not have a nationwide guide. The Central Files of Fonds (Centralna Kartoteka Zespołów) is trying to play its part³. But its range is limited to state archives and it includes only descriptions of prepared fonds. It is not very helpful, because of e.g. conditions of access are not easy. Apart from that its index of names in fonds is not sufficient for the research workers searching information on scholars' private papers. We can assume, that improving The Central Files will cause transfer of data to an electronical carrier in database SEZAM.

The publication „Archiwa państwowe w Polsce. Przewodnik po zasobach”⁴ has got more important meaning for users interested in papers of scholars. Easy access to the guidebook is rising its value in searching information. Fonds of different state archives are the subject of separate descriptions, where is a place for information about records of families and about private papers. Unfortunately, the editors have not placed any indexes. It makes impossible to find information on archival materials of a person without looking over the book. The guide also includes information about other published archival finding aids. There are notes about guides of holdings, inventories and other aids in description of individual archives. It can play a big role for those who search more precise information on scientists' private papers. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned, that there are gaps in this field.

Nowadays the guides of individual archives are some of the most often published aids. These kind of finding for state archives in Gdańsk, Kielce, Radom, Lublin, Łódź were recently published⁵. Beside them brochures with lists of fonds are very popular. Thus branches of The State Archive of the Capital City of Warszawa had been worked out⁶. These kinds of aids — describing fonds of particular archives — have a big meaning in case of official records. In private papers their role is less important. They are helpful only when we are sure, that the papers are kept in a specific archive. Apart from that, these kinds of aids, accessible in a traditional published form are going out of date very quickly.

² R. Piechota, *Pomoce archiwalne — stan obecny i perspektywy*, „Archeion”, vol. 67, 1979, p. 57.

³ Central Files of Fonds is in the Archival Information Centre (Centralny Ośrodek Informacji Archiwalnej) of the Head Office of State Archives (Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych).

⁴ *Archiwa państwowe w Polsce. Przewodnik po zasobach*, ed. A. Biernat and A. Laszuk, Warszawa 1998.

⁵ *Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku. Przewodnik po zasobie do 1945 roku*, ed. Cz. Biernat, Warszawa-Łódź 1992; *Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach i jego oddziały w Jędrzejowie, Pińczowie i Starachowicach. Przewodnik po zasobie archiwalnym*, ed. S. Marcinkowski, Warszawa-Łódź 1993; *Archiwum Państwowe w Radomiu. Przewodnik po zasobie archiwalnym*, ed. H. Kisiel, Warszawa 1996; *Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie i jego Oddziały w Chełmie, Kraśniku i Radzynie Podlaskim. Przewodnik po zasobie archiwalnym*, vol. 1, ed. F. Cieślak and M. Trojanowska, Lublin 1997; *Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi. Przewodnik po zasobie*, ed. M. Bandurka, Warszawa 1998.

⁶ E. g.: *Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy, Oddział w Górze Kalwarii. Informator o zasobie archiwalnym*, Góra Kalwaria 1992; *Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy, Oddział w Mławie. Informator o zasobie archiwalnym*, Mława 1992; *Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy, Oddział w Nowym Dworze Mazowieckim. Informator o zasobie archiwalnym*, Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki 1992; *Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy, Oddział w Otwocku. Informator o zasobie archiwalnym*, Otwock 1992.

Two editions of „Przewodnik po zespołach i zbiorach Archiwum PAN” have a special place among guides⁷. They can be a first step in searching, because there are descriptions of fonds of the biggest owner of scholars’ private papers. Nevertheless as other published guides they have gone out of data quickly. The second edition „Przewodnika po [...]” includes description of the fonds from the 1st of January 1977 and only in 1996 the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences had gained 22 private papers⁸. Fortunately, a supplement is being worked at present⁹.

The activity of the APAS seems to be the most systematic one. Before the first edition of the guide there were published contents of department of private papers¹⁰ and descriptions of historians’ private records kept in the Archive¹¹. The APAS has not given up this form of information, what is proved by the description of orientalist’s papers in the holdings of Kraków department of the Archive¹².

Next proof of consistent work in popularization of information about researchers’ private papers in the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences is the fact of systematically published archival inventories in „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN”. In the 38th issue there were about a hundred aids. Apart from that chronicle in each issue allows to successively learning about new private materials of the Archive. Thus the periodical of the APAS is becoming an important link in its own information system.

In the contrast to „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN”, „Archeion” has never become a widespread publication including smaller size archival finding aids. We can even say, that during the postwar history of the periodical there was only once an article with an archival inventory of Michał Sokolnicki’s papers¹³. Besides four times, in the oldest Polish archival periodical, there were surveys of contents of fonds made by scholars. Twice the Józef Paczkowski’s¹⁴, once Jan Glinka’s¹⁵ and Józef Szaniawski’s papers were the subject of description¹⁶. This state is surprising, even though during the 8th Common Convention of Polish Historians in Kraków Tadeusz Mencil emphasised the need of making the publishing activity widespread, in cooperation with Polish Academy of Sciences¹⁷. The consoling thing is, that two of mentioned surveys were published in „Archeion” in a few last years. Perhaps it means bigger interest in scholars’ private papers in state archives.

⁷ *Przewodnik po zespołach i zbiorach Archiwum PAN*, ed. Z. Kolankowski, I ed., Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1965; II ed., Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1978.

⁸ *Sprawozdanie z działalności Archiwum PAN w roku 1996*, „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN”, 1997, no 38, p. 134–136.

⁹ E. Głowacka, *Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Oddział w Poznaniu. Historia, organizacja, zasób, perspektywy*, in: *Pamiętnik I Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Studentów Archiwistyki*, ed. W. Chorażyczewski and R. Degen, Toruń 1998, p. 92

¹⁰ M. Flis, *Przegląd zawartości działu „spuścizn” Archiwum PAN*, „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN”, 1959, no 2, p. 46–88; 1962, no 5, p. 71–95.

¹¹ Z. Kolankowski, *Spuścizna historyków w zbiorach Archiwum PAN*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, vol. 68, 1961, no 4, p. 991–998

¹² E. Dziurzyńska, *Spuścizny orientalistów w zbiorach Oddziału Archiwum PAN w Krakowie*, „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN”, 1995, no 36, p. 3–12.

¹³ M. Grodzińska, *Tureckie archiwum Michała Sokolnickiego*, „Archeion”, vol. 99, 1998, p. 152–166.

¹⁴ C. Skopowski, *Papiery Józefa Paczkowskiego*, „Archeion”, vol. 37, 1962, p. 228–233; P. Bering, *Spuścizna Józefa Paczkowskiego w Archiwum Państwowym w Poznaniu*, „Archeion”, vol. 91, 1993, p. 31–44.

¹⁵ T. Zielińska, *Jan Glinka i jego spuścizna archiwalna*, „Archeion”, vol. 53, 1970, p. 121–134.

¹⁶ Z. Wojciechowska, *Archiwista Józef Szaniawski i jego spuścizna aktowa*, „Archeion”, vol. 99, 1998, p. 93–107.

¹⁷ T. Mencil, *Inwentarz archiwalny w pracy historyka*, in: *VIII Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich w Krakowie 14–17 września 1958. Referaty i dyskusja*, vol. 9, Nauki pomocnicze historii, ed. A. Gieysztor, Warszawa 1960, p. 45 i 50.

During last years the Polish state archives have been making their publishing activity more common. New periodicals have appeared¹⁸. Nevertheless, they give little information about private papers, e. g. survey of a curator of the museum in Przeworsk — Józef Benbenek's records¹⁹.

Periodicals which are not cooperating tightly with Polish state archives play a role, too. For a long time research workers of the APAS have placed the information articles or inventories of scientists' private papers in many periodicals²⁰. This kind of information are sporadically published in some publications, which are trade marked by Polish universities²¹.

Summing up the above considerations it should be stated, that the state of information on researchers' private papers in Polish archives is not ideal. During a postwar period we did not manage to work out a nationwide guide of scientists' private records. A real, sufficient countryside guide of Polish archives did not exist, either. Not every state archive has manage to publish a guide of own holdings. Only transformations of the 80s and 90s had livend up the publishing activity of state archives. New titles have started to appear. Nevertheless, like publishing of finding aids also in case of scientists' private papers has little meaning. University archives rather do not publish information about their own fonds. Only the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences has been working sufficiently to give an easy access to scholars' papers. The guides of the fonds of the APAS are a bit old and gone out of date, but there is „Biuletyn Archiwum PAN” — the periodical where archival inventories of researchers' private records are successively published. These all facts cause the situation in which the information on scholars' papers in Polish archives are not complete. Apart from that, the information are dissipated like the scientists' private papers.

This rather pessimistic picture of the real state of information about private papers kept by Polish archives induces us to formulate a few postulates. The basic task for Polish archives is to collect all information on scholars' private papers. The research should include not only archives but also libraries and museums. In future searching ought to be extended even abroad. The collected materials should be successively completed and published. It seems that this kind of task not be entrusted to a temporary team of researchers. It is necessary to create a centre which would manage the information. If it is possible to organize it by the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences it would be the best. Thus the APAS would execute one of its own statutory aims in a modified form, which could be preservation of information about scholars' private papers.

¹⁸ E. g.: „Krakowski Rocznik Archiwalny”, „Nadwarciański Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny”, „Płocki Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny”, „Poznański Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny”, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, erlier „Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny” i „Szczeciński Informator Archiwalny” — see A. Tomczak, *Czasopiśmiennictwo archiwalne w Polsce w 1997 r.*, „Archeion”, vol. 98, 1997, p. 245–250.

¹⁹ A. Nowak, *Akta Józefa Benbenka w zasobie przeworskiego archiwum*, „Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny”, vol. 10, 1995, p. 203–206.

²⁰ E. g.: M. Flis, *Przegląd zawartości działu „spuścizn” Archiwum PAN*, „Kwartalnik Historii Nauki”, vol. 3, 1958, no 2, p. 344–349; vol. 5, 1960, no 3/4, p. 567–573; vol. 8, 1963, no 1, p. 152–156; Z. Kolankowski, *Die Sammlung und Ordnung von Nachlässen im Archiv der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, „Archivmitteilungen”, Jg. 7, 1957, H. 4, s. 121–128; *Materiały Marcelego Handelmanna w Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk*, ed. H. Dymnicka and Zygmunt Kolankowski, „Przegląd Historyczny”, vol. 50, 1959, no 1, p. 93–115; J. Szajbel, *Materiały naukowe Stanisława Karwowskiego w Archiwum PAN. Oddział w Poznaniu*, „Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski”, vol. 9, 1968, no 2, p. 145–149; H. Zubalowa, *Materiały doc. dr Władysławy Knapowskiej w Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Oddział w Poznaniu*, „Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski”, vol. 6, 1961, no 2, p. 460–463;

²¹ E.g.: J. Mroczkowska, *Spuścizna rękopiśmienna Henryka Elzenberga*, in: *Studia o bibliotekach i zbiorach polskich*, vol. 2, ed. B. Ryszewski, Toruń 1992, p. 99–111.

Collected information by the centre would enable making a scheme of acting, it means choosing this private papers, which have a big value for science and should be described in the first turn. Except this, the centre ought to indicate the archival materials of the same provenience but placed in various archives should be merged in archival description.

Anyway, the centre should decide something in other two matters. Firstly, it must opt for a standard of description of private papers. It is not worth considering details, because it is a subject of other report during the convention. Perhaps during the research we should only work out a simple description in a guide type. But it should be emphasized, that the way of describing scholars' private papers ought to guarantee thorough reflection of their contents.

The second decision should be a choice of a form of making the materials available. Of course, it always is possible to publish archival finding aids in a traditional form. Nevertheless it is an expensive and time-consuming form. It also is going out of date, sometimes even during publishing.

In this situation it seems that the modern recording techniques and making information available which are using CD and global network are the best. The first possibility remind a bit traditional published aids. It has similar disadvantages — a long period of preparing and a necessity of making them available in entirety. Anyway it also has advantage — bigger storage capacity. It allows e.g. to combine information with pictures of described records. The State Library of New South Wales had made an attempt to do it during preparing sir Joseph Banks' papers in CD-ROM²². We can find more examples in Poland, too. There were attempts of edition of „Metryka Koronna” in the Central Archives of Historical Records. It is worth mentioning, that the case of this kind edition the centre could count on help of the Centre of Electronic Historical Texts (Centrum Elektronicznych Tekstów Historycznych) in Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kórnik.

Anyway the global network gives bigger opportunities of accessibility and describing private papers. Nowadays Internet is present almost in all fields of living and this fact guarantees easy access to information. Besides, publishing on network is cheaper, less time-consuming and allows to complete information all the time. Some Polish state archives had already created their own pages on Internet. Among them there are archives in Poznań, Szczecin, Łódź, Przemyśl, Wrocław, Bochnia, Pszczyna, the State Archive of the Capital City of Warszawa and the Central Archives of Historical Records²³. By now only the archives in Łódź²⁴ and in Przemyśl²⁵ have decided to place broader information on fonds with short notes about private papers. The archive in Gdańsk gives an access only to list of more important fonds on network and the archive in Bochnia — a list of whole fonds.

This accessibility is not specific for only Polish archives, which are on verge of computerization. Similarly, most of archives of German universities have only information pages²⁶.

Regardless of it, we can find various forms of accessibility on network. Mostly they refer to traditional finding aids, they are different only in forms of preserving. The

²² H. Wajs, Review of the „Archives and Manuscripts” (Australia), vol. 23, 1995, no 1-2, „Archeion”, vol. 99, 1998, p. 277-278.

²³ <http://ciuw.warman.net.pl/alf/archiwa/internet/index.html>.

²⁴ <http://www.infocentrum.com/~mbj/zasob/index.html>.

²⁵ http://workjoy.com.pl/pmap_gos/archiwum/zasoby.html.

²⁶ <http://www.uni-marburg.de/archivschule/deuarch7.html>.

Central Library of University in Sheffield has been publishing on its pages description of private papers in guide form with general report of contents²⁷. The Archive of University in Liverpool reporting the professor William Henry Young's papers is thoroughly characterizing each series²⁸. The Archive of the Indiana University and the University of North Carolina, in Europe — the Archive of Institute for Mathematical Sciences of University of Copenhagen, publish inventories of scholars' private papers²⁹.

The described ways of accessibility are only some of them. Using CD's and network can be controversial. Anyway, in the age of European integration should aim at collecting all information about scientists' private records as soon as possible.

²⁷ <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~lib/special/special.html>.

²⁸ <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~archives/young.htm>.

²⁹ <http://www.indiana.edu/~libarch/colls.html>; <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/msspapers/index.html>; <http://www.math.ku.dk/imf/arkivet/collist.htm>.