

The readership indicators in Poland and programs promoting the reading

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Abstract: The results of the recently published report by the National Library of Poland contain alarming data. Polish society is slowly losing tangency with literature, and therefore the competencies of interpretation, analysis and synthesis of the texts, including literary texts and others. For this purpose, librarians, individuals and institutions interested in the promotion of reading more and more often organise numerous events addressed to various audiences: children, youth, seniors, young parents, but also socially excluded people. The following article presents selected Polish initiatives designed to address the promotion of reading.

Key words: the readership indicators, the reading promotion, Poland

1. Introduction

Reading is a process of interpersonal communication allowing contact between individuals and collectivities, regardless of the media content and the type of data. Reading is also a form of cultural participation, knowledge acquiring, source of inspiration and tool of building the intellectual capital. Reading shapes values, attitudes, ethical and emotional enrichment. It is crucial for children intellectual development because of creating the reading habit from early age. In the context of values acquired by reading the results of research carried out in Poland by the National Library are incredibly alarming. They clearly show that readership in Polish society is decreasing.

2. Indicators of readership in Poland

According to the research carried out in Poland by the National Library [3] among the 3 thousand respondents over 15 years old the percentage of people who read regularly decreases. Thus in 2004, seven books or more were read during the year by almost 25% of society, while in 2012 this number had dropped to 11.1%. The number of people reading six books a year is also decreasing. In 2004 it was 32.9%, while in 2012 only 26.5%. The number of people not reading at all has significantly increased - from 41.8% in 2004 to

60.8% in 2012. At least a single contact with broadly defined book (included dictionaries, guides, albums, etc.) in 2012, was declared by only 39% of respondents, while in 1992 by 71%. This is even more worrying when we realise that the percentage of people reading decreases with age. Research carried out in Poland showed that reading books was declared by 62% of teenagers, whilst among 60-year-old and older people by only 32%.

Tab. 1. Respondents declarations concerning reading books during 12 months of preceding the survey (2002-2012)

Year of the survey	Respondents not reading at all	Respondents reading from 1 to 6 books	Respondents reading 7 and more books
2004	41,8	32,9	24,4
2006	50,3	31,7	17,2
2008	62,2	24,8	10,6
2010	56,0	31,1	11,6
2012	60,8	26,5	11,1

Source: Chymkowski R. (2015). *Spoleczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2012 r.* [electronic document]. Available online: <http://bn.org.pl/download/document/1362741578.pdf>.

Equally worrying data were obtained by the author of this article. In order to investigate the competence of students at lower or upper secondary level concerning the use of media and health and safety in 2012 survey of 400 Pomeranian students was carried out in several areas:

1. Habits of learning process, gathering information, free time management, forms of rest.
2. The use of media (television, Internet, newspapers).
3. Readership.
4. Persuasive transfer - advertising.

Apart from the students of the above mentioned schools also a smaller group of 186 primary school students and teachers (86 people) was tested. This study had a complementary character and helped to illustrate the background of behavior relevant to young people, i.e. their opinions and attitudes embedded in the context of mechanisms occurring in the community.

Performed studies allow to formulate some conclusions that are briefly presented below:

- Almost 50% of secondary school students does not read any books or read less than one book per month.

- 44% of students read newspaper at least once a week, mostly treating it as entertainment.
- Newspaper is read at random; students do not read the whole magazine but choose some articles or their excerpts.
- Only 2% of secondary school students dedicate an hour a day for reading activity.
- For 46% of young people reading is a coercion, only 31% of them read for pleasure.
- Students asked about spending their leisure time replied that even if they had more free time they would not read more (71%).
- The literature most often read by students is belles-lettres(59%). Then comes the comic book (11%).
- Among the favorite literature of school students first place is taken by fantasy novels and science fiction (45%).
- Older school youth spend the most of their free time: watching television (33%), playing on the computer (32%), meeting with friends (17%), reading (12%), listening to the music (2%), going to the cinema, theaters, museums, galleries or concerts (1%).
- Even in the age groups between 8-9 years and 10-11 years, the computer begins to play a significant role in the structure of leisure activity and is the most common form of entertainment (39 and 37%). What should be emphasised is that as much as 78% of eight and nine years old children like or would like to read books together with their parents. Unfortunately while growing up the readership among children is systematically decreasing. Reading fairy tales to children is only the tradition in the family homes. Nowadays children grow up in front of the TV, in the company of television cartoons that are increasingly being viewed on the computer or, even worse, on the phone, or are replaced by computer games which are also targeted for infants (sic!). When searching for phrase "computer games for 2-year-old" we find quite impressive selection of games, also such that "do not require the presence of parents." An incredible interest in computer games is also confirmed by international studies, according to which Polish children among all surveyed children from other European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Portugal, the UK and Italy), reaches for this form of entertainment the most often [6, p . 18].
- 27% of children from level IV class spend more than three hours a day in front of the computer. The older children are the more time in front of the computer their spend.
- More than 1/3 of youth are watching TV without moderation, indicating that TV is turned on from 15 a.m. till late night hours, also during learning process (always 23%, sometimes 39%).
- The reason of watching TV is the most often boredom (40%) or pleasure (39%).

- The most popular among high school students are: entertainment (26%), series (21%), sport (20%), information (16%) and music programs (15%).
- Very popular among series are reality shows series. These programs intend to emulate the daily life, to shock and scandalise. Among the most often watched are: „Ukryta prawda”, „Trudne sprawy” i „Pamiętniki z wakacji”. Young people who watch them can be divided into two main groups: one that is aware of the mediocre level of this production, but watches it because of boredom (54%) and the other one that presented in these production problems considers to be very important and gets involve while watching, treating it as a fragment of reality (41%). As many as 77% of teenagers who have declared to watch this type of program, talk about them with their peers. This might indicate that they are important to them, or that students are not enough engaged in other interesting activities.
- Only 32% of young people exercise or find some time for a walk during the day. Learning schedule can be described as chaotic and unplanned. Many students learn only before exams (always 31% and sometimes 62%), rarely systematically (68%), mostly using the Internet as a source of knowledge (85% always, 14% sometimes).
- Students collect on the computer the educational materials necessary for learning (60%) and in special files (21%), less on the bookshelves (16%).
- Only 16% of students use the school library collection while preparing for classes.
- Young people watch television and use the Internet for many hours every day which means that they have more contact with persuasive messages. Over 80% of respondents claim to be resistant to mechanisms of advertising and knows its construction, while empirical studies have shown that only 50% of respondents are able to define procedures used in advertising.

To summarise the research results has shown that the current model of using new media by young people needs to be changed by education in the field of health and safety at work and by shaping desired cultural and social patterns. Research has shown little rank of library and reading in life of the modern teenager (none of teenagers has indicated the library as a main source of information for school work, and the Internet was indicated by 85% of teenagers). This negative effect is also confirmed by previously carried out research, according to which the reading of Gdansk schoolchildren and teachers! has decreased year by year - an average school student in Gdansk read in 2011 only 6 books [4, p. 40], and his Danish peer read about 42 volumes [2].

The form of spending free time by children and young people indicates the growing social alienation and reduction of direct contacts in favor of online communities, which comes at the expense of physical health and family life. While in rural agglomerations this phenomenon does not have so great

influence, in larger urban school centers activities of children and young people focus mainly on the electronic media. Contact with peers often means playing together the computer games. Unfortunately libraries which play the role of places dedicated for not only promoting literacy and health and safety, but also for socialising with children, young people and adults, are sometimes willingly removed from the cultural map of Polish. In 2010 the number of these institutions has decreased - 50 libraries were abolished - which means that nearly twice as much of these institutions were closed comparing to the previous years [1, p. 9].

Young people are not motivated to read no by their busy parents who also read less and less, nor by teachers, often focused on the school rigors and not being able to cooperate actively with the school libraries in order to use their potential. Results of surveys and interviews conducted with the teaching staff, and school children allow to draw some (general) conclusions:

- Teachers cannot see any prospects for the reading development among school children;
- They admit that they read less;
- They cannot cooperate with librarians and school library. Very often teachers treat library as a boring place and cannot imagine that library could be attractive for young people;
- Many teachers need to work some additional hours in the library and treat this work as unwanted obligation, not engage themselves at work or motivate students to read.
- Only few teachers use library collections in the classroom, teaching young people the use of different sources of knowledge (50%), teachers rarely report to the library the need to purchase the relevant literature (27%).

Follows the author's opinion at the end of these sad reflection it may be worth mentioning that the low level of literacy among young people and the poor condition of the book come from not only irreversible changes in culture and technology, but also appears as the result of omission. Actively operating and modern library can concentrate around quite a group of young people. Opening attractive library spaces, such as Gdańsk Library of Manhattan, results in growing number of users, and therefore the young people are ready to dedicate their free time to reading in the library. Not reading is very often not only the result of reluctance to literature, but a consequence of lack of information for young people about the attractiveness of this form of entertainment or leisure activity. A very common problem is lack of knowledge about the attractiveness of library services, and lack of awareness that such institutions exist. It is worth to promote reading and change the inefficient education system for children and young people in the field of acquiring competencies of reading and creating the proper information habits.

3. Programs promoting readership among children and young people

The key question that frequently appeared during research conducted by the author, was whether the information behavior of teenagers and adults should be consciously shaped by a number of activities and programs implemented by the state and partly implemented by the library? Is the lack of information classes may lead to the emergence of a number of pathologies in the way of information usage and have the impact on reading as a leisure activity among school students?

Numerous research has shown that early contact with the book is important for the child development, it also affect the interest in literature in the future and shape reading habits. Institutions such schools and libraries may significantly influence the reading habits of society, especially of children and young people. As a result of alarming data concerning readership many Polish libraries have undertaken a number of actions promoting the literature. There have appeared a great number of projects which priority was reading promotion, including various types of advertising campaigns on television, radio and internet, festivals, competitions, lectures, meetings with authors, as well as sport activities with a book in the background and extensive social campaigns. It is worth to describe some examples of the most interesting initiatives. They are presented in Table 2.

Tab. 2. Selected events promoting readership in Poland

Event title	Organiser	Event area	Description
Awesome librarian	Bibliosfera.org	International	Bike ride for librarians and book lovers organised on the Librarian Day or during Library Week.
All of Poland reads to kids	Fundacja ABCXXI	National	A broad-based campaign promoting reading for children for 20 minutes every day. As part of the action some commercials in television were implemented, schools, kindergartens and supporting institutions were involved, celebrities from the world of science, culture and sports appears, games and competitions were conducted.
Do you read? If not I am not going to sleep with you	Grupa Twórcza Klub Xsiążkowy	National	The action performed in media showing people (unknown as well as respected representatives of culture), reading books in bed. A number of happenings, panel discussions and flash mobs were organised.
Book is a woman	Portal nowoczesnej kobiety	National	This campaign was dedicated for fashionable, educated and ambitious women intended to promote fashion

	Moda i Ja		for reading. During this campaign photographic competitions, books rankings, review styles, and final grand gala were organised.
5 minutes for the book	Granice.pl, DuzeKa.pl, PrzyKomin ku.com	National	The volunteers campaign persuading pedestrians to visit the nearest bookstore or library. Among other forms encouraging to read was urban games based on the book motives, "Czytanie pod chmurką" or reading "Pan Tadeusz" (Polish national epic) with the president participation.
Read! And see more!	Biblioteka Uniwersyteku Warszawskiego	National	This event involved broadcasting on Facebook spot filmed inside the library, in which famous actors, journalists and artists, being associated with the activity of reading perversely argue that reading is not worth.
Reading epidemic	Serwis społecznośc i owoy Lubimyczyt ac.pl	National	This event consisted of handing books to accidentally met person: at work, while shopping, at school, so that they spread like a virus during an epidemic.
What for are you using the books?	Sieć księgarska Empik	National	This event showed in a humorous way different use of the book (as furniture pads, computer mouse, etc.). This event aimed to cause a shame among people who don't read and use books only for such purposes.
Off to a good start	Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna we Wrocławiu	Regional	Preparing for parents approximately 2 thousand of books and educational materials (including, among others, a list of recommended books, ideas for organising fun for children, etc.), distributed to mothers and newborn children in hospital in Wrocław.
Lodz region reads	Instytucje regionalne (e.g. Urząd Marszałkowski w Łodzi, Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Łodzi, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna	Regional	Social campaign encourages reading by organising various events, e.g.: urban games, meetings with authors, books distribution in the streets, reading books of regional writers by students in public, organising photo competition - „Z książką mi do twarzy” celebrating „Dni Gutenberga”, „Parady czcionek”, „Pisanie listów do przyszłych pokoleń” and placing them in „Kapsuła czasu”.

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BookCollecti on	Mieszkańcy Łodzi	Regional	The social initiative involving people gathering in one place and time to read books in silence. This aimed to show that every place is suitable for reading. During this event books were read on streets, in shopping centers and trams.
Reading inclination	Wydawnictwo W.A.B. oraz PKP Intercity	Regional	The action performed in trains departing from Warsaw, in which passengers could take books left in the compartments and return them after reading on the return journey.
Literary map of łodzkie region	Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Łodzi	Regional	The aim of the project was to show interesting places, objects, and literary institutions and organisations operating in Łódź area. On the interactive map were presented traces of presence and activity of writers, poets, play writers: places where they lived, created their works, relaxed or visited. This map also presented monuments, memorial plaques, and other cultural monuments associated with artists, as well as streets, squares, parks, and cultural institutions named by their names. Each person could add their spot on the map, as long as it met the criteria set by the organisers of this event.
Hit, flop or OK?	Dolnośląska Biblioteka Publiczna we Wrocławiu	Local	This event involved reviewing books by young people by stamping hit, flop or ok.
WWW/ENTER/ LEND/ RELAX	Dolnośląska Biblioteka Publiczna we Wrocławiu	Local	This campaign was addressed to teenagers aged 13-19 and involved music workshops, critical literacy and other competitions in order to present the library as an attractive place for teenagers.
Library libdub	Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Radzynie Podlaskim	Local	This event involved filming the so-called libdub promoting library and integrating the local community benefiting from library services.
Second life of the book	Portal Bookeriada oraz Krakowskie Biuro Festiwalowe	Local	Regularly performed event involved cashless exchange of books between readers.

Free reading zone	Fundacja Sztuki Nowej Znaczy Się, <i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i> , Krakowskie Biuro Festiwalowe, Instytut Książki	Local	This event involved granting certificates of reading for friendly places, not necessarily associated with activity of reading. During this event some cafes, parks, clubs, squares, etc. were rewarded.
Reading on the grass	Firma Bibliocreatio zajmująca się tworzeniem bibliotek biznesowych i osobistych oraz klub Centralny Basen Artystyczny z Warszawy	Local	A series of events for children in the form of a picnic, in which well-known actors and journalists read fairy tales and other books. Reading was accompanied by workshops, competitions, books exchange. During the event, children receive a rucksack full of books.
Mobile reading	Wojewódzka i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Gdańsku	Local	During this event books were left in trams to make the journey pleasant. Books could be read in the traditional version, or downloaded in thee-book form.
Reading somewhere else	Studio Teatralne Koło, Teatr Ochota w Warszawie	Local	Outdoor game combined with reading books in unusual places: museums, flower shops, at the hatter, the photographer, the linen press.
I go to the library	Wojewódzka i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Gdańsku	Local	Campaign encouraging library readers to take photos and send them for the competition, showing how many people of different beauty, style of dress, interests and age like to visit the library. Awarded photos were presented on the city lights around the city.

Source: own elaboration

Examples of events promoting the development of reading placed in Table 2 are only some examples of many initiatives implemented in Poland. In fact, there are many more of them. However on the basis of described examples can be noticed that many communities are actively involved in the literature promotion. Contemporary projects are significantly differentiated from the standard

exhibitions or meetings with writers. They tend to engage people to use social media and new technologies, and increasingly promote the book outside the library, e.g. in the urban space which is not always associate with reading. Many events combines the pleasure of reading with other interests, e.g. sport, making photos, etc. The weakness of presented events is their periodicity. There is a lack of extensive, systematically organised by the state reading events which would include not only large urban agglomerations in Poland.

4. Summary

As a result of picture culture is clearly visible that structure of leisure activities for children and young people, the so-called generation Y, millennium generation or Google generation, called like this by Beata Taraszkiewicz, is changing [5, p. 136].

Generally speaking, the role of books and press for young generation is limited in favor of other forms, children are not interested in literature. These trends are confirmed by the research results.

It is believed that through the activity of working committees associated with the art of reading it will not become only the domain of intellectual elites, as it was centuries ago, but it will be a source of inspiration and entertainment for wide range of readers.

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