Polish Digital Libraries System in Historical-Geographical Outline

Tarihsel ve Coğrafik Ana Hatlarıyla Polonya Dijital Kütüphaneleri Sistemi

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Abstract: The paper describes historic and geographic background of regional cooperation between libraries and other cultural institutions. A notable Polish phenomenon is the wide network of regional digital libraries. The paper presents the first Polish system to create and manage a digital library named dLibra. It has been developed by a public research and development institution the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Centre (PSNC). The system is now the most popular software of this type in Poland and enables building professional repositories of digital documents which can be accessed by external individuals and systems on the Internet. Communication and data exchange is based on well known standards and protocols.

Keywords: Digital libraries, dLibra, cultural heritage, Poland

Öz: Bildiride kütüphaneler ve diğer kültürel kurumlar arasındaki bölgesel işbirliğinin tarihi ve coğrafi arkaplanı açıklanmaktadır. Geniş bölgesel dijital kütüphaneler ağı Poonya'ya özgü kayda değer bir olgudur. Bildiride dLibra adlı ilk Polonya dijital kütüphane kurma ve yönetme sistemi sunulmaktadır. Sistem Poznan Süperbilgisayar ve Ağ Merkezi (PSNC) adlı bir kamu AR-GE kurumu tarafından geliştirilmiştir. Polonya'daki türünün en gözde yazılımıdır. Dış kullanıcılar ve Internet sistemleri tarafından erişilebilen mesleki dijital belge arşivlerinin yaratılmasına olanak sağlamaktadır. İletişim ve veri değişimi iyi bilinen standartlara ve protokollere dayanmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Dijital kütüphaneler, dLibra, kültürel miras, Polonya

Introduction to the Background of the History of Poland

Polish library collections have been shaped by important historical events in Polish history, namely 123 years of partition between three foreign powers, followed by a reshaping of borders after the First and subsequently the Second World War. As a result, the library collections were subject to instability, changing hands on many occasions. Digital libraries simplify sharing the intercultural heritage.

History of Digital Libraries in Poland

The success of the independent regional digital libraries and their spectacular development is a notable phenomenon in Poland. Centralized governments projects are not as successful. There is no coherent centralized digital resources policy in Poland. Since Poland's accession to the European Union, government strategic documents contain some assumptions about the necessity of digital libraries building. The first digital library created on governmental order, the Polish Internet Library (http://www.pbi.edu.pl/), was executed contrary to library or archival standards. This caused heterogeneity and incoherence of metadata (Bednarek-Michalska, 2006).

Librarians could not wait for central regulations or directives if they wanted to catch up with their colleagues from developed countries. In 1996 the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Centre (PSNC), a non-commercial scientific institution, started research on the e-repository issue. In 2002 for the first time dLibra, the first Polish software for building digital libraries, was installed in the Digital Library of Wielkopolska (www.wbc.poznan.pl/). It is constantly being developed as a result of enthusiastic cooperation between librarians and IT engineers and has become the most popular software for building digital libraries in Poland.

Two main organizational models of digital libraries have evolved in Poland. In the first one, several institutions from a particular region of the country agree to create a single digital library containing objects related to the history and culture of the region. In the second, one institution creates the digital library, which contains mostly materials related to the history of the institution and its present activities (Mazurek & Werla, 2009).
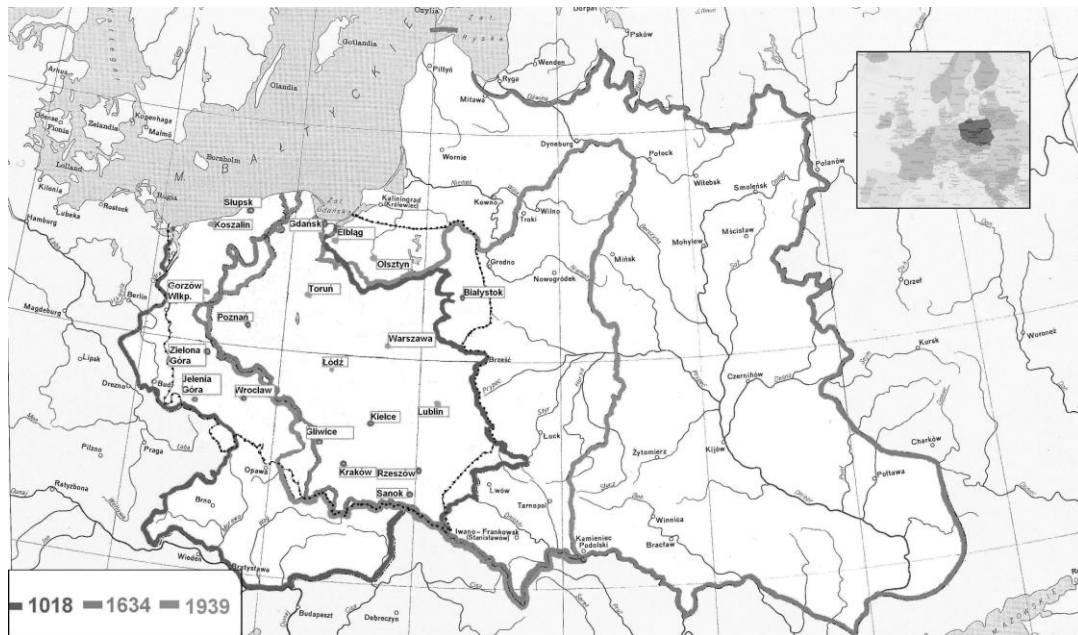
Figure 1. Polish digital libraries' locations on the historical borders translocation background

The Digital Libraries Federation

The Digital Libraries Federation service (DLF, http://fbc.pionier.net.pl/) is available since June 2007 (Mazurek & Werla, 2009). This service aggregates bibliographic descriptions coming from Polish digital libraries and offers new functionality for users and for internet services and applications. The DLF facilitates the use of resources from Polish digital libraries. It increases the visibility and popularity of resources from Polish digital libraries on the internet. It provides new advanced network services based on the resources from Polish digital libraries to internet users and digital library creators. Currently the system capacities include simultaneous searching in the metadata of available objects from all member libraries, access to associated libraries' digitalisation schedules, mechanisms for duplication detection and prevention of concurrent digitalisation of the same edition of a particular book by different libraries. The cooperation is free of charge both for repository stakeholders and for DLF end-users. The metadata of digital objects is harvested automatically with the OAI-PMH protocol, and the process does not require any additional staff at member libraries. The basic metadata scheme used for harvesting is the Dublin Core schema, which is obligatory in the OAI-PMH protocol (Mazurek, Stroiński, Werla, & Węglarz, 2006).
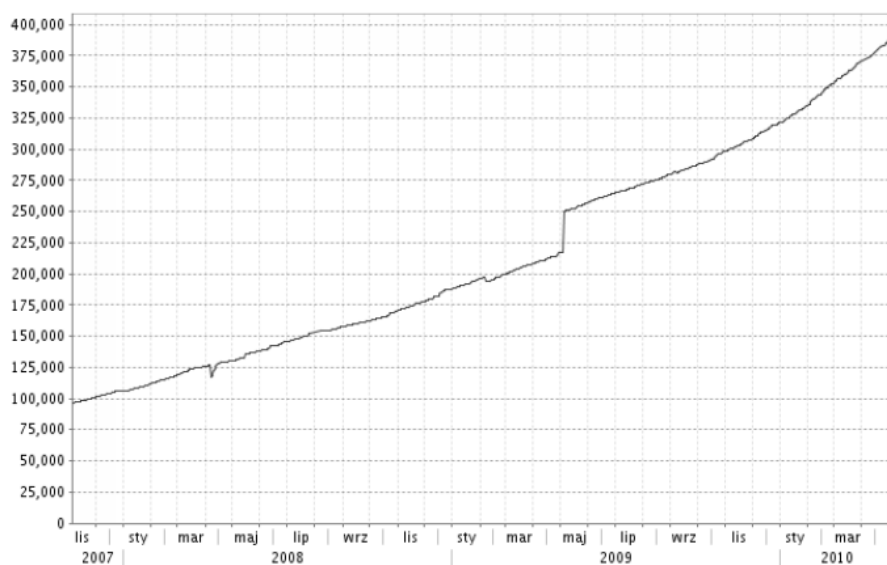

Figure 2. Number of objects aggregated in the Digital Libraries Federation (Liczba publikacji w Federacji Bibliotek Cyfrowych, 2010)

The Digital Libraries Federation is a single access point to over 375 000 electronic publications from 52 regional and institutional digital libraries. DLF resources are accessible in Europeana. Polish research theses aggregated in DLF are posted on DART-Europe.

The Polish Digital Libraries development would not have been possible without the initiative of enthusiastic and charismatic librarians. Polish digital librarians like innovations and high-tech solutions. They have a sense of mission. Most important, they share knowledge and experiences and are open-minded. It seems that social projects, rank-and-file initiatives for creating digital collections, are much more effective in Poland than centralized government policy. Maybe it is because Poles had bad experiences with centralization and monopolization of administration in the Communist period.

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