

Polonicum – the concept and its potential application in bibliographical works¹

The Latin word *Polonicum* (*Polonica* in plural), meaning „that what is Polish”, defines the core of the Polish national bibliography. Decision if an early printing is *the polonicum* or not actually shapes the volume and range of the published resources being included in the bibliography. In consequence, it influences its main goal, which is offering complete information about the writing heritage of the country, and quantitative data for statistical purposes (for instance the volume of typographic production). The *Polonicum* term receives particular meaning while developing a retrospective national bibliography, registering publications from the middle of the 15th – up to the end of the 18th centuries, being called in Polish tradition „early printed books”. In works concerning old written and printed heritage, definition of a *Polonicum*, i.e. actually selection criteria for the resources, has a fundamental meaning. Our predecessors, the authors of the first lists being developed since the 17th century, faced problems in such works. Adam Jocher (1791-1860) explicated these difficulties, writing in the Foreword to the *Obraz bibliograficzno-historyczny literatury i nauk w Polsce* (Bibliographical and historical image of literature and sciences in Poland): „there is no country, in which development of a complete bibliography would be as difficult as in Poland, which comes from the particular circumstances of that country”². These „circumstances” included insecure political conditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, changes in state borders and its feudal lands, and in consequence – multi-ethnicity of its inhabitants. Additional difficult was differences between state borders and the range of the Polish Roman-Catholic church administration, like in the Silesia region. These are the reasons of different meanings of *the Polonicum* definition in our bibliographic tradition. Nowadays the term’s definition is at least generally agreed, however its interpretation is not unambiguous, what results in many troubles in bibliographic works.

Historical overview

The beginnings of the Polish bibliography are connected with Szymon Starowolski (1588-1656), however his *Scriptorum Polonicorum Hekatontas...* (Frankfurt 1625), including 100 biographical notes of the subjectively selected writers, presents quite synthetic picture of the Polish literature of that time, not a bibliographic list. The Kiev bishop

¹ This text is the translated version of the article in Polish (*«Polonicum» – definicja pojęcia, zakres doboru materiału, zastosowanie w bibliografii*) published in the „Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi (Studies into the History of the Book and Book Collections) 2015, vol. 9, pp. 21-30.

² A.B. Jocher, *Obraz bibliograficzno-historyczny literatury i nauk w Polsce, od wprowadzenia do niej druku po rok 1830 włącznie, z pism Janockiego, Bentkowskiego, Ludwika Sobolewskiego [...]*. T. 1, Wilno 1840, p. XVIII.

Józef Andrzej Załuski (1702-1774), bibliophile, animator of the intellectual life of his time, co-founder (together with his brother Andrzej Stanisław) the first public library in Poland, called the national library. Referring to the collection of this library, Józef Andrzej prepared ten volumes of the *Bibliotheca Polona magna universalis* bibliography. This monumental work, available in the National Library before the World War II only in a manuscript version (the author has not been able to finance its publication), regrettably burned down after the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. However, a handful of information concerning its composition and contents J.A. Załuski presented in the work published many years after his death *Biblioteka historyków, prawników, polityków i innych autorów polskich lub o Polsce piszących*³ (The Library of the historians, lawyers, politicians, and other Polish writers or those writing about Poland). One can find out, that Załuski registered not only printed books, but also manuscripts, as well as that for the first time he included to the Polish bibliography the works of authors of other nationalities living in Poland, foreign texts translated into Polish, or dedicated to the Poles. The book knowledge phenomenon of the European scale is, with no doubts, the voluminous *Bibliografia polska* (The Polish Bibliography), started in the middle of the 19th century by Karol Estreicher (1827-1908), the historian of literature, called often and reasonable „the father of the Polish bibliography”, continued by his son Stanisław (1869-1939), his grandson Karol (1906-1984), and nowadays – by the team of the Centrum Badawcze Bibliografii Polskiej Estreicherów (The Estreichers’ Polish Bibliography Research Center) at the Jagiellonian University. This bibliography consists of three parts (series): part I – the Polish bibliography of the 19th century, in alphabetical order of authors and titles; part II – the Polish bibliography of the 15th-19th centuries, in chronological order of editions; part III – the Polish bibliography of the 15th-18th centuries, in alphabetical order of authors and titles. K. Estreicher applied broad criteria of materials selection, indicating two reasons for that. The first one referred to the needs of the history of literature, for which a bibliography should offer the most complete resources. The other, he perceived an important patriotic role of his work. In the second part of the 19th century, when the bibliography was developed, the state of Poland was absent at the map of Europe, its territories were included to the neighbouring powers: Russia, Prussia, and Austria. K. Estreicher believe, that the more older books were listed in the Bibliography, the more it would indicate an intellectual vitality of the Polish nation. In consequence, it would prove to the Europe, and the invaders in particular, how reach is our literature and the Polish cultural tradition⁴. In his monumental work he tried to collect complete publishing production of the Old-Polish period, including: books published in the state of Poland within his historical borders; works of the Poles and written in the Polish language regardless its publication place; works of the foreign authors concerning Poland or related to Poland and the Poles somehow⁵. Further development of the Polish retrospective bibliography was strongly influenced by K. Estreicher’s concept. His opinion concerning the meaning of the *Polonicum* has been corrected in time, but it is obligatory up till now. However, it stimulates vivid discussions. The outstanding representatives

³ Józefa Jędrzeja Załuskiego, biskupa kijowskiego i czerniechowskiego *Biblioteka historyków, prawników, polityków i innych autorów polskich lub o Polsce piszących*, z przypisami J.E. Minasowicza, nowemi przypisami pomnożył i wyd. J. Muczkowski, Kraków 1832.

⁴ M. Dembowska, *Metoda «Bibliografii i Polskiej» Karola Estreichera*, Warszawa 1954, pp. 21-22.

⁵ Idem, *Ewolucja pojęcia bibliografii narodowej od Karola Estreichera do naszych czasów*, [in:] *Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Karola Estreichera (1827-1908): studia i rozprawy*, [red. R. Hennel], Kraków 1964, p. 101.

of the Polish bibliography and book history took part in the debate, including Kazimierz Piekarski (1893-1944)⁶ and Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa (1903-1990)⁷ at the head. The latter proposed a division of so-called exact *Polonica* or *sensu stricto*, and subsidiary (second degree) *Polonica*, called *sensu largo*. This differentiation should be reflected in the methodology of bibliographic description: a full description for the *sensu stricto Polonica* (including transcription of the title, collation, register of signatures, etc.), and a shortened one for the *sensu largo Polonica*.

The range of materials' selection

Let's look which formal and meritorious features decide about selection of the works to the *Polonica* collection. Basic criteria include: (1) a territorial criterion, also called a state one; (2) a national criterion, also-called an ethnic one; (3) a subject criterion, also called a content one; (4) a language criterion.

A territorial criterion. It includes territory within the historical borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as the so-called Polish cultural area. In the time of our interest, i.e. 16th to 18th centuries, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth consisted of the territories of: the Polish state (the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, Masovia, part of Ukraine included into the Crown in 1569); the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (since 1385 in personal union with Poland: currently territories of Lithuania, Belarus, and part of Ukraine); Royal Prussia (incorporated after 1466: Gdańsk Pomerania, the Chełmno region, Malbork, Elbląg, and Warmia). If definition of the territorial criterion is relatively easy, its application happens to be troublesome. Incorporation of the total typographic production of the above mentioned territories to the *Polonica*, regardless their language of nationality of its authors, leads to the question: „Is it reasonable?”. The doubts refer mostly to German language documents published in the regions inhabited mostly by people of German origin (Gdańsk, Elbląg, Toruń) or liturgical books for the readers of different confessions, being used in synagogues, Orthodox churches, etc. According to K. Estreicher, Hebrew books from Polish territories do not belong to our literature, unless related to the Polish history or dedicated to the Poles⁸. However, the books in Cyrillic script, starting with the prints by Sz wajpolt Fiol (Kraków 1491), Estreicher perceived as „implicitly and exclusively belonging to the Polish literature, as [...] they were printed by the Poles, within the borders, and for the inhabitants of their provinces exclusively”⁹. K. Piekarski also supported registering complete publishing production within the borders of former Crown of the Kingdom of Poland (including Russian, Jewish, Hungarian, and Greek books printed in Kraków, etc.). He perceived a bibliography as a source for research concerning development of the Polish typography¹⁰. Therefore, regarding postulates of these bibliographers, we enrol to the list of *Polonica* each book published on the territory

⁶ K. Piekarski, *Zadania bibliografii polskiej XVI stulecia*, [in:] *IV Zjazd Bibliotekarzy Polskich w Warszawie. Referaty*. P. 1, Warszawa 1936, pp. 327-335.

⁷ A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Problèmes actuels de la bibliographie nationale rétrospective en Pologne*, [in:] *Conférence Internationale de Bibliographie, Warszawa 19-21 IX 1957*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 49-63; Idem, *Nad uzupełnieniami Bibliografii Polskiej Estreichera*, [in:] *Z problemów bibliografii*, [red. M. Lenartowicz, J. Pelcowa, H. Sawoniak], Warszawa 1970, pp. 195-219.

⁸ However, he included a part of them to the Bibliography, following the choices of his predecessors (K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*. Vol. 12, Kraków 1891, p. X).

⁹ K. Estreicher, op. cit. Vol. 8, Kraków 1882, pp. VIII-IX.

¹⁰ K. Piekarski, op. cit., p. 329.

of the former Crown. „The Polish cultural area” comprises of the territories outside the Polish borders, where Polish influence on intellectual life, writings, and printing were quite strong. These are, primarily, the regions at the border of two cultural circles: Polish and German: the Duchy of Prussia (former state of the Teutonic Order, since 1525 Polish fief, since 1657 under sovereign authority of the Hohenzollerns) and Silesia (since 1526 reigned by the Habsburgs, the Diocese of Wrocław under the Archdiocese of Gniezno until the 19th century). From among the publications from these territories, typographic production of the 16th century is included to the *Polonica* category, regarding quite vivid cultural, personal, and religious contacts with Poland of that time. As to the books of later period, when these relations were not that strong any more, a text’s language or contents is deciding, not territory, neither Silesian nor Prussian origin of an author. The territory of South-West Ukraine is an exclusion, joined to the Russian Tsardom in 1668, according to the armistice in Andruszów, but still maintaining its provisional autonomy and relations with Poland far stronger than with Russia. The books published in Kijów, Nowogród and Czernihów, cities formally not belonging to Poland anymore, were also included by Estreicher to the Polish bibliography¹¹. However, regarding books from Livonia, the Duchy of Courland and Semigalia, temporal fiefs of Poland, and the West Pomerania (incorporated into Poland after 1945), language, national, and contents criteria are deciding for their belonging to the *Polonica*, not the territorial one.

The nationality criterion. As the *Polonicum* can be treated a work created by a person related to Poland: ethnically (i.e. a person of the Polish nationality), by state ties (i.e. an inhabitant of the former Poland territory), by self-identification (feeling to be the Pole or perceiving oneself as a subject of the Polish sovereign). K. Piekarski recommended application of the nationality criterion together with the territorial one, otherwise one can face an insuperable difficulties¹². Customarily, the following documents have been perceived as the *Polonica*: works created by the Poles, regardless their language or publication place, including both independent and co-created works, translated, elaborated, published, etc. Publications from outside the Polish border are also registered, i.e. the foreign *Polonica*. K. Piekarski called for broadening the range of the *Polonica* interpretation, including for example books from the printing house of the typographer called Stanisław Polak, active in the 15th century in Italy and Spain (Neapol and Sevilla), or Rafał Skrzetuski-Hoffhalter (died 1568), the Polish noble active in the second half of the 16th century on the territories of today’s Austria, Hungary and Romania (Wien, Debreczyn, Alba Julia): works of the writers of foreign origin, created during their stay in Poland, regardless its publication place. As K. Estreicher wrote beautifully, „these works sink in a great body of our literature”¹³. A part of these texts are the writings of people of different confessions acting in a broadminded Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries, like for example the Czech educationist Jan Amos Komensky (1592-1670), follower of the Czech brothers, living in Leszno, author of the Latin language textbook *Janua Linguarum Reserata...*, republished many times in European publishing houses¹⁴; publications of foreign printers living in Poland. Their outstanding representative was Hieronim Wietor (died approx. 1546-1547), born in Lower Silesia, the Habsburgs’ subject, who started his work in Wien, in next twenty years was printing in

¹¹ K. Estreicher, op. cit. Vol. 8, p. IX.

¹² K. Piekarski, op. cit., p. 329.

¹³ K. Estreicher, op. cit. Vol. 8, p. VIII.

¹⁴ See: K. Estreicher, op. cit. Vol. 19, Kraków 1903, pp. 440-445; he also notes editions from Amsterdam, Geneva, Leipzig, London, Nuremberg, etc.

Kraków, and became one of the outstanding printers in Poland of first half of the 16th century. The whole typographic output of Wietor, including also the part from the Wien period, is included into the *Polonica*, which is sometimes perceived as controversial. In the catalogue of the *Polonica* of Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel collection, prepared by the colleagues from the Jagiellonian Library, this part of his production was omitted „with some hesitation”, mostly because of the difficulties concerning Wietor’s identity: „Who he was, or rather who he felt to be. German, Pole, or the Silesian simply”¹⁵. This example shows clearly the dilemma of a Polish bibliographer, trying to select texts to the national retrospective bibliography.

The content criterion refers to a work’s content. Obviously, it refers to foreign printing, to which the territorial, nationality, or language criteria are not applicable. Estreicher’s general opinion, that these are works „referring to Poland either in its warp or dedicated to the nobles”¹⁶, resulted probably in the most confusion in supplements and continuations to the Polish bibliography being developed in modern times. Their authors „automatically” treated as the *Polonica* works, where even an individual appearance of the word „Polonia” could be found. An outright opinion of A. Gryczowa in this matter enabled narrowing of the selection rules. In the result, the following are included to the *Polonica*: works in total or longer fragments concerning Poland, the Poles, dedicated to the Poles, regardless their publishing place or language. There is a problem with foreign publications of universal range, like encyclopaedias or bibliographies, in principle comprising information concerning different countries or persons. A. Gryczowa excluded these text definitely. However, in practice the authors of published catalogues, in particular of the *Polonica* of the 16th century, includes them quite often, since it is difficult to settle, if a given fragment of text about Poland is „longer” or „shorter”. How to measure it – by a number of sentences? From the other hand, even the smallest parts, not fulfilling criteria of a *Polonicum*, can be interested for the researchers in the humanities. That is why in the *Katalog druków XV-XVI wieku*¹⁷ (Catalogue of the 16th century books) published by the team of the Early Printed Books Department of the University of Warsaw Library we accepted the rule, that – not deciding if the work is a *Polonicum* or not – we always cite in the bibliographic description even the smallest mentions regarding Poland or the Poles. Numbers of these positions are indexed in a separate list of *Polonica* and *parapolonica*.

The language criterion is not problematic theoretically. It includes texts in Polish language, regardless place of their creation or publication, nor an author’s nationality. Apart from original works written and printed in Polish, the following are also included: translations into Polish of works of foreign authors; texts in foreign languages translated from Polish language; multilingual works, if Polish is included. Observation of these rules leads sometimes to surprising results. For example – the text published in Petersburg in 1741 „Monarchija tureckaja opisannaja przez Rikota [...] pieriewiedena s pol’skawo na rossijskoj jazyk”¹⁸. The basic for the Russian translation of this very popular work „Present state of the Ottoman empire” by the English author Paul Rycaut (1628-1700) was the

¹⁵ *Polnische Drucke und Polonica 1501-1700. Katalog der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel*. Bd 1: 1501-1600. Teil 1, bearb. von M. Gószka, M. Malicki, München 1992, p. XIV.

¹⁶ K. Estreicher, op. cit. Vol. 8, p. VIII.

¹⁷ *Katalog druków XV-XVI wieku w zbiorach Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1994-2015: Vol. 1. P. 1: 15th century; Vol. 1. P. 2, vol. 2-5: 16th century. A-O (following volumes in preparation).

¹⁸ Edition noted in: *Сводный каталог книг гражданской печати XVIII века. 1725-1800*. Vol. 3, Москва 1966, No. 5989; University of Warsaw Library (Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie – BUW), Shelfmark Sd. 5.7.1.9.

Polish language version by Jan Wielopolski (died 1668), published in Słuck in 1678¹⁹. K. Estreicher did not include the Petersburg edition in his Bibliography. We do not know if he did not find a copy, or resigned knowingly. However, from a formal point of view (as it is a translation from the Polish language actually), this text should be included to the *Polonica*, even if we expose ourselves to an accusation of enlarging the national bibliography „beyond a common sense”. Objections in this category refer also to the publications, where Polish language is used partially, or even in single words. The librarians’ opinions differ in this matter as well. However, there is a tendency to include into the *Polonica* the most early books from the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Polish language was being developed. There are no obligatory statements concerning works from later times, and the bibliographers are ambiguous in their decisions.

Conclusions

We are aware that such a broad interpretation of a *Polonicum* concept, being used in the retrospective national bibliography, can be found in the Polish one only. Centres in other countries, developing their own bibliographic lists, apply mostly territorial and/or language criteria for selection of materials²⁰. However, the shape of our bibliography was decided by former generations, directed by sublime ideas. A *Polonicum* does not mean the Polish literature only. Regarding place of publication, author’s nationality, or the contents causes, that we include additionally works written and published outside the Polish cultural circle. In consequence, many works belong simultaneously to the Polish bibliography and bibliographies of other European nations. This duality, although makes it more difficult to prepare numerical charts concerning typography of a given country, reflects however historical realities – as the Pole’s works were published abroad. The national bibliography being developed according to such assumptions documents in total the national cultural heritage, and its relations with other countries, referring to mutual influences and interdependence.

What is the contemporary meaning of the *Polonicum* term? Nobody of us will try to develop a national retrospective bibliography from its beginnings, applying changed methodology. There is no need for that. However, in an everyday library work – while building library catalogues, storage selection, or counting of the *Polonica* collections – we lack clear rules very much.

Translated by Małgorzata Kisilowska

¹⁹ *Monarchia Tyrecka Opisana Przez Ricota ... Z Francyskiego Języka Na Polski Przetłumaczona Przez Szlachcica Polskiego...*, [Słuck] 1678, BUW, Shelfmark Sd. 714.1337.

²⁰ See for example: *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1-25, Stuttgart 1983-2000.

Summary

The article discusses selected issues related to the work on the national Polish retrospective bibliography. A short historical outline of the changes in understanding of the term *Polonicum* is presented (chiefly, with respect to the fundamental bibliography of the Polish literature, i.e. the *Bibliografia* by Karol Estreicher). The author provides the definition of the term *Polonicum*, currently accepted in the Polish bibliographic practice, and the rules of selecting materials to be included in the national bibliography. While discussing individual criteria (territorial, national, thematic, and linguistic) Halina Mieczkowska brings forth instances of writings from the period ranging from 16th to 18th century that demonstrate the difficulties, which arise from applying the aforementioned rules in picking out the *Polonica*.

Key words: methodology of bibliography – Polish retrospective bibliography – old prints – *Polonica*.

Streszczenie

Polonicum – definicja pojęcia, zakres doboru materiału, zastosowanie w bibliografii

W artykule zreferowano problemy związane z tworzeniem polskiej retrospektywnej bibliografii narodowej. Przedstawiono krótki zarys historyczny tego zagadnienia (skupiając się na podstawowym wykazie literatury polskiej, czyli *Bibliografii* Karola Estreichera), podano definicję *polonicum* funkcjonującą w dzisiejszej praktyce bibliotecznej oraz zasady doboru materiału do bibliografii narodowej. Przy omawianiu poszczególnych kryteriów (terytorialnego, narodowego, tematycznego i językowego) ukazywano na wybranych przykładach piśmiennictwa/wydawnictw z okresu XVI-XVIII w. trudności z realizacją przyjętych zasad typowania dzieł do zespołu *polonica*.

Słowa kluczowe: metodyka bibliografii – polska bibliografia retrospektywna – stare druki – *polonica*.