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**DIGITAL COMMUNITY ARCHIVES –  
SELECTED EXAMPLES**

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Słowa kluczowe

archiwa społeczne; cyfrowe archiwum społeczne; Ośrodek KARTA; archiwistyka społeczna; zasoby cyfrowe; Łódzkie Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Miejskich Topografie; Miastograf; Cyfrowe Archiwum Łodzian; Archiwum i Muzeum Polskich Korporacji Akademickich;

Keywords

community archives; digital community archive; the KARTA Center; community archiving; digital holdings; Society for Urban Initiatives Topografie in Łódź; Miastograf; Digital Łódź's Citizens Archive; the Archive and Museum of Polish Students' Associations

Streszczenie

Tekst rozpoczynają rozważania dotyczące rozumienia terminu „cyfrowe archiwum społeczne”; autorka prezentuje otwarty katalog stopni i rodzajów cyfryzacji w oddolnych inicjatywach dokumentacyjnych, co obrazuje skomplikowanie tej materii. W kolejnej części artykuł przedstawia krótką charakterystykę prezentacji materiałów archiwalnych on-line przez archiwa społeczne: Ośrodek KARTA, Łódzkie Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Miejskich Topografie (Miastograf – Cyfrowe Archiwum Łodzian)

oraz Archiwum i Muzeum Polskich Korporacji Akademickich. W artykule autorka zwraca uwagę na niedostateczny opis materiałów umieszczonych w Internecie przez tego typu inicjatywy, a jednocześnie – na wysoką wartość tych materiałów. Zadaje również kolejne pytania badawcze mające związek z tematem – co dzieje się z tymi materiałami historycznymi w momencie, gdy oddolna inicjatywa przestaje istnieć? jakie jest miejsce oddolnych inicjatyw digitalizacyjnych, które właściwie nie są w posiadaniu żadnych materiałów archiwalnych, a jedynie ich kopii?

In the Polish archival reality community archives are neither new, nor rare. But the discussion on understanding the term is still in progress and I can state with absolute certainty that there are at least several stands among academics and practitioners.<sup>1</sup> But the matter of the text is not the definition of a community archive, so I will mention my general, currently used understanding of the phenomenon: a community archive is a historical (long preservation) archive created from the grass-roots level, that collects own and/or foreign archival materials for providing public access to them for the general interest.

But what are the characteristics of a group of community archives, that can be called digital? There are several possibilities, several levels and types of “being digital” in grass-roots documenting initiatives.

1. Community archives that have only born-digital objects – objects that originate in a digital form. In community archives these are most of all digital photographs and oral history accounts recorded in a digital

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<sup>1</sup> T. Grygier, *Współczesne zadania dokumentacyjne archiwów*, Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne, vol. 42, 1981, p. 12, [cited in:] T. Czarnota, *Archiwa społeczne w badaniach i dydaktyce uniwersyteckiej w Polsce*, [in:] *Archiwistyka społeczna*, ed. K. Ziętał, Warszawa 2012, p. 41; T. Czarnota, *Komu są potrzebne społeczne archiwa?*, *Archiwista Polski*, no. 4(64)/2011, p. 15–16; K. Ziętał, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Archiwistyka społeczna*, ed. K. Ziętał, Warszawa 2012, p. 9; NAJCZĘŚCIEJ ZADAWANE PYTANIA, [www.archiwa.org/as\\_o\\_projekcie.php?co=faq](http://www.archiwa.org/as_o_projekcie.php?co=faq) [accessed: September 8, 2015]; T. Czarnota, *Problemy polskich archiwów społecznych za granicą*, [in:] *Arkhivy Rossii i Pol'sbi: istoriya, problemy i perspektivy razvitiya = Archiwa Rosji i Polski: historia, problemy i perspektywy rozwoju*, ed. L. Mazur i Ya. Losovski, Jekaterinburg 2013, p. 145–148; M. Wiśniewska, *Postmodernizm a archiwa społeczne*, *Archiwista Polski*, no. 2(70)/2013, p. 27; there is also a text that contains an unparalleled understanding of the term “community archive” – as an archive created by parties other than state institutions – that includes also private, personal archives: A. Jabłońska, *Tak zwane archiwa społeczne w Archiwum Państwowym w Szczecinie*, *Szczeciński Informator Archiwalny*, no. 21, 2012, p. 153–173.

form (audio or video), but also personal archives can be considered, more specifically, their electronic fragments.

2. Community archives that possess both born-digital and “traditional” (paper, analog) objects – and all of them are in their original versions.
3. Community archives that consist of documents that are both born-digital and digitized (e.g. scans or digitized audio or video recordings), and have no analog original versions of the latter (and any other “traditional” materials).
4. Community archives that possess, as mentioned above, both born-digital and digitized materials, but also materials born-analog that may, but do not have to be originals of these digital documents (their original versions may be preserved outside the particular community archive).
5. Community archives that have no born-digital materials, but only analog and digitized materials, and those latter might be reproductions of those first or of materials that are physically in possession of other persons or organizations.
6. Initiatives that collect only digital copies of analog materials possessed by other persons or organizations.

Naturally, it is not a closed catalog or an attempt to establish a division of community archives. But I believe, that listing these types shows complication of the matter – at least partially.

I must also mention, that there are other possibilities of understanding the term “digital community archive”, for example as a community archive that in everyday works and collections management applies digital technologies, using tools like a web page, social networks, databases or electronic archival aids. But I assumed, that the title “digital community archive” is a community archive that possesses archival holdings, which are recorded in digital technology, at least in some part.

The last case mentioned on the list, initiatives collecting only digital copies of analog materials possessed by other persons or organizations, is not, in my opinion, a community archive, according to the definition given above; but it surely is a type of initiative running a documenting activity (understood as all actions taken towards documents, which are recorded information), since it is only management of copies of archival materials, and not archival materials themselves. It is worth mentioning though, that this type of grass-roots digitization actions are also present at the circles of people interested in documentary activism.

Even without the last case, the situation seems, and truly is, complicated. There are still five levels or types of “being digital” in case of subjects that can be called community archives. Moreover, my experience tells me, that it is frequently difficult to tell, what type a particular initiative represents. Insufficient archival description on the Internet gives rise to the following questions: Does the archive possess analog originals of digitized materials put on-line? What part of the archive’s holdings is represented by on-line digitized materials – if it would be possible to establish, that the archive stores the original versions; did the archive publish on the web all its materials (which is possible in small archives), or just a fragment of the collections? What part of the particular object is presented on-line – its whole, or only its part, serving as a representation – it relates mainly to audio and video recordings, including oral history testimonies. In most cases answers cannot be given just after analysis of the web sites, and a personal contact with archives’ representatives is needed. Despite insufficient data (or maybe because of it) below I present short descriptions of community archives’ on-line presentation of archival materials.<sup>2</sup>

### THE KARTA CENTER (OŚRODEK KARTA)

The Foundation of the KARTA Center was created in October, 1996, after combining the East Archives Foundation and the KARTA Foundation, established in February, 1990;<sup>3</sup> but informal activity of the Center dates back to 1982.<sup>4</sup> At present the KARTA is the biggest and most influential Polish community archive, and apart from the documenting activity, it also runs major publishing and educational activity, organizes numerous exhibitions, and for some time takes actions connected with the national movement of community archiving, including the project Digital Archives of Local Tradition (described below).

Currently, the KARTA possesses born-digital archival materials, electronic versions of analog objects and traditional objects without digital copies. Part of the materials is accessible on-line on web pages of the Oral History

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<sup>2</sup> Although there are some doubts, if the Archive of Students’ Associations is a community, or a private archives; regardless of that controversies I have decided to describe it in the article.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Gluza, *KARTA – sposób na historię*, Karta, no. 50, 2006, p. 111–112.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 102.

Program<sup>5</sup> or the Photograph Archives.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the KARTA provides access to its materials on the Internet using for example multimedia presentations, combining text, images and sound, like the presentation entitled “Czas bibuły” (“Time for underground publications”)<sup>7</sup> or the presentation “W kolejce po równość. Polska 1945–1956 w opowieściach kobiet” („A line for equality. Poland 1945–1956 in tales of women”).<sup>8</sup>

The most significant tool used by the KARTA for presenting its digital materials is the Digital Library of the KARTA Center (Biblioteka Cyfrowa Ośrodka KARTA), running since 2009. Until 2014 “the Library has been filled with 235 thousand of scans of documents from personal, subject and society collections, as well as underground journals from the Opposition Archives, reminiscences, accounts and personal collections from the Eastern Archives, as well as photographs and lists of the citizens of the Second Polish Republic repressed by the Soviets in 1939–1956 from the Repressed Index”.<sup>9</sup> According to the plans for 2015, the KARTA will publish another 60 thousand of scans.<sup>10</sup>

The Digital Library of the KARTA Center is a member of the Digital Libraries Federation (Federacja Bibliotek Cyfrowych) and uses the dLibra system.<sup>11</sup> Since October, 2013 the library has had over 600 thousand visitors.<sup>12</sup> While publishing digital objects in the library, the KARTA received help from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy in the Ministry of External Affairs of Poland, the Na-

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<sup>5</sup> Archiwum Historii Mówionej, <http://www.audiohistoria.pl/web/> [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>6</sup> fotoKarta [Archiwum Fotografii Ośrodka KARTA], <http://foto.karta.org.pl/> [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>7</sup> Czas Bibuły, <http://karta.org.pl/bibuła/> [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>8</sup> *W kolejce po równość. Polska 1945–1956 w opowieściach kobiet*, [http://www.opowie-scioxxwieku.karta.org.pl/wkolejce/opis\\_projektu/](http://www.opowie-scioxxwieku.karta.org.pl/wkolejce/opis_projektu/) [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>9</sup> Informacje o Bibliotece Cyfrowej Ośrodka KARTA, <http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/text?id=example-page> [accessed: September 4, 2015].

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Look: *dLibra: Biblioteki cyfrowe*, <http://dingo.psn.pl/dlibra/> [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>12</sup> *Informacje o Bibliotece Cyfrowej Ośrodka KARTA*, <http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/text?id=example-page> [accessed: September 4, 2015].

tional Audiovisual Institute, the Rothshilds Foundation or AGORA-Holding Sp. z o.o.<sup>13</sup>

The collections in the library are divided into three main parts: the Opposition Archives, the Eastern Archives and the Repressed Index (other parts of the holdings are presented, in fragments, on other web pages<sup>14</sup>). Every part is further divided to sections, which consist of smaller pieces.

I would like to stress two interesting issues.

Firstly – some part of the materials is secured. It turns out while browsing documents from the Opposition Archives, e.g. the object entitled “Certificate of release of the internee [MaciejKuroń]” (“Świadectwo zwolnienia internowanego [Macieja Kuronia]”), file: Documents of the family of Jacek Kuroń (Dokumenty rodziny Jacka Kuronia), fonds/collection: Collection of Jacek Kuroń (Kolekcja Jacka Kuronia). After clicking the button “Show content” (“Pokaż treść!”) the user sees the following announcement: “Secured publication. This publication is not available for this account. If you have more privileged account, try using it. You can send a request for access to this publication from this account. Type the reason below and click <Send>”<sup>15</sup>. Beneath there is a place, where the user can put reasons for accessing the object, and below that – a place for login and password; but these are inactive, and the only thing that can be done is leaving the site.

Secondly – using the library (e.g. in the case of the collection of Jacek Kuroń) causes problems, because description from the catalog published on the Internet page of the KARTA<sup>16</sup> does not fit the description in the digital library; for example:

- catalog description: AO III/12K.3 – Teksty własne (notatki z lektury) (Own texts (notes from reading)),
- library description: AO III/12K.03 Teksty własne – notatki z lektury (Own texts – notes from reading).

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Photographs are presented on the site [www.foto.karta.org.pl](http://www.foto.karta.org.pl), and oral history interviews on [www.audiohistoria.pl](http://www.audiohistoria.pl).

<sup>15</sup> Biblioteka Cyfrowa Ośrodka KARTA > Archiwum Opozycji > Kolekcje osobiste > AO III/12K Kolekcja Jacka Kuronia: Świadectwo zwolnienia internowanego [Macieja Kuronia], [http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=251&from=publication\\_](http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=251&from=publication_) [accessed: June 23, 2015].

<sup>16</sup> *Archiwum OPOZYCJI Kolekcje osobiste, tematyczne i środowiskowe*, Warszawa 2012, <http://www.karta.org.pl/pdf/orginal/13917725479045.pdf>, p. 34–114 [accessed: June 23, 2015].

Unfortunately, the search engine in the digital library finds none of these signatures – regardless of sections searched (publication description, title of document, title of file...). Thus it is best to browse the collections manually.

Moreover, not only does searching for signatures create difficulties, but also finding any word (documents with that word). The simple search in the dLibra system (available from every sub-page of the Digital Library of the KARTA Center) gives proposals of word to search, while typing it; these are words (and phrases) already used for description of object in the library, and the user sees also in how many documents' descriptions such word (or phrase) was used. To exemplify: if we want to find a word "świadectwo" ("certificate"), after typing several letters a list with suggested phrases pops up; it contains also the word "świadectwo" with the number of documents described with this word – in this case the number is 227.<sup>17</sup> After choosing this position on the list (and clicking "Search" – "Szukaj") the user should see these documents – but that does not happen. We got a feedback "Found: 0. No search results. Try to modify your question." But we know that at least one document with the word "świadectwo" in its title is present in the library (not to mention all the 227 positions shown by the search engine) – according to the manual browsing we did, which gave us the above mentioned secured document – the certificate of release of the internee. Still, the answer from the system is negative. But it does not happen in every case. Sometimes the search system gives a feedback – a list of found documents that fit the search question (or at least – some number of those documents).

It seems that the Opposition Archives are excluded from the search on the one hand, and on the other that the Eastern Archives are included (but I am not able to tell what is efficiency of this search). To challenge this theory, I looked up a word "listy" ("letters") using the simple search. It finds 77 positions.<sup>18</sup> On the left there is a menu that enables, among others, narrowing results according to collections – which are the Opposition Archives, the Eastern Archives and the Repressed Index. Clicking the Opposition Archives gives 0 search results (the same after picking the Repressed Index); all 77 re-

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<sup>17</sup> State for September 4, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> [BibliotekaCyfrowa OK – wyszukiwanie – „listy”], [http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/results?action=SearchAction&skipSearch=true&mdirids=\\_&server%3Atype=both&tempQueryType=-3&encode=false&isExpandable=on&isRemote=off&roleId=-3&queryType=-3&dirids=&rootid=&query=listy&localQueryType=-3&remoteQueryType=-2&token\\_1=&token\\_2=](http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/results?action=SearchAction&skipSearch=true&mdirids=_&server%3Atype=both&tempQueryType=-3&encode=false&isExpandable=on&isRemote=off&roleId=-3&queryType=-3&dirids=&rootid=&query=listy&localQueryType=-3&remoteQueryType=-2&token_1=&token_2=) [accessed: September 4, 2015].

sults are seen after narrowing the search to the East Archives. Even though manual browsing of the Opposition Archives shows some documents with the word “listy”.<sup>19</sup>

These difficulties might be a result of inefficient or incorrect searching system or, taking into account the KARTA's last problems with servers, of temporary inconveniences and mistakes.

Still, advantages of this solution must be seen. Especially worth stressing out is the fact, that the dLibra system provides easy access to materials in very good quality; what is more, it is a system users of digital libraries are already familiarized with.

### DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF LOCAL TRADITION (CYFROWE ARCHIWA TRADYCJI LOKALNEJ)

Also the Library of Digital Archives of Local Tradition works in dLibra system, as part of the Digital Libraries Federation.

Digital Archives of Local Tradition (DALT) are “a network of community archives operating within non-governmental organizations and libraries”,<sup>20</sup> created as part of cooperation with the KARTA Center Foundation. The project started in 2010 within the Libraries Development Program (run by the Foundation for Information Society Development). In this project librarians were trained in e.g. archival description, digitalization or recording oral history interviews.

All from almost 140<sup>21</sup> DALTs run their own web pages within the Internet domain *archiwa.org* sustained by the KARTA Center. These websites provide access to archival description and low definition images of archival materials, and, in some cases, link to proper sites in a digital library of particular archive (alternative situation is a phrase “Digital version available on site”). In

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<sup>19</sup> Look for example: Biblioteka Cyfrowa Ośrodka KARTA > Archiwum Opozycji > Kolekcje osobiste > AO III/12K Kolekcja Jacka Kuronia: AO III/12K.02 Teksty własne – listy otwarte, deklaracje i apele, <http://dlibra.karta.org.pl/dlibra/publication?id=13615&from=pubindex&dirids=998&tab=1&lp=2> [accessed: September 4, 2015].

<sup>20</sup> O projekcie, [http://archiwa.org/index\\_catl.php?type=o\\_projekcie](http://archiwa.org/index_catl.php?type=o_projekcie) [accessed: June 24, 2015].

<sup>21</sup> Lista CATL, [http://archiwa.org/index\\_catl.php?type=lista\\_](http://archiwa.org/index_catl.php?type=lista_) [accessed: June 24, 2015].

some cases there are also materials which original, analog version is available at a particular library.

According to my list of various levels and types of “being digital” in community archives – in DALTs there are following cases possible:

- that a library possesses only digital copies of materials, that physically, in original versions are property of other institutions or, most of all, private persons – and are stored by them;
- that a library has some born-digital materials (especially oral history interviews);
- that a library stores original traditional materials;

and it must be stressed, that, as far as I am concerned, the latter two variants do not occur exclusively. I means that none of those archives possesses only born-digital or only analog materials – they always accompany digital copies. But, as I have mentioned above, there also are some libraries storing only digital versions of traditional materials, but without the original versions.

The Library of Digital Archives of Local Tradition resembles the Digital Library of the KARTA Center; unfortunately, with all inconveniences of the search system, described above.

## MIASTOGRAF.PL

What is Miastograf?<sup>22</sup> Quoting the project’s web page:

Every family archive hides some treasures of the national cultural heritage. It is worth to share them! That is the purpose of the Digital Łódź’s Citizens Archive Miastograf.pl. It’s a collection of changing Łódź’s pictures from private archives, connected with interesting clippings and fragments of citizens’ memories [...] collected by the Society Topografie. All materials are available under free license, thanks to that they become a part of common cultural heritage.<sup>23</sup>

A very interesting and worth mentioning feature of this project is the fact, that everybody, who has materials concerning the history of Łódź can add

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<sup>22</sup> I decided not to translate the original name of the archive. It alludes to the goal of the archive – describing the city Łódź; English version of the name might be “City-graph.”

<sup>23</sup> O Miastografie, <http://miastograf.pl/blog/3> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

them to the project, because it is organized like a social networking service.<sup>24</sup> To put an object on the server, one needs to log in using a Facebook or Google+ account and load a file. Description consists of just basic elements: title, description, date, author and tags (key-words); the system also requires marking the place, with which the object is connected on the map of Łódź, and choosing the type of license – either agreement for publication under Creative Commons, or a statement, that the material is a part of the public domain.<sup>25</sup> Materials can also be commented and discussed – for example on mistakes in description of photographs.<sup>26</sup>

Currently the web page presents 166 short fragments of oral history interviews,<sup>27</sup> 9 clippings and 953 photographs (state for September, 7<sup>th</sup> 2015). The society also actively records oral history reminiscences, that will be put on the Internet in succession.

### THE ARCHIVE OF STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS (ARCHIWUM KORPORACYJNE)

The Archive and Museum of Polish Students' Associations was created in 2001 in Poznań by Bartłomiej Wróblewski, the Society of Poznań Students' Associations' Members (currently: the Society of Students' Associations' Members) and the Student Association Lechia, but the idea of collecting mementoes connected with the Polish students' associations' movement is much older and dates back to the 1960.<sup>28</sup> The aim of the archive is to commemorate Polish students' associations (Polish "korporacja akademicka") operating between 1816 and 1989, to popularize knowledge on this Polish tradition and commemorate died members of associations.<sup>29</sup> Since 2007 actions of the archive are supported by the Museum of Polish Students' Associations.

<sup>24</sup> O portalu, [http://www.miestograf.pl/content/o\\_portalu](http://www.miestograf.pl/content/o_portalu) [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>25</sup> Podziel się, [http://www.miestograf.pl/add\\_asset](http://www.miestograf.pl/add_asset) [accessed: June 24, 2015].

<sup>26</sup> Look for example: UL. NARUTOWICZA (MIĘDZY KILIŃSKIEGO A POW) [comments], <http://www.miestograf.pl/asset/411> [accessed: June 24, 2015].

<sup>27</sup> It can be seen, that last months brought impressive progress in publishing oral history accounts. On June 24, 2015 there were only 9 fragments available on-line.

<sup>28</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Historia*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/archiwum-korporacyjne/historia/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>29</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Archiwum Korporacyjne*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/archiwum-korporacyjne/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

By far the archive has collected materials for biographies of thousands of associations' members, original caps, sashes and badges, photographs, publications and documents from old corporations from Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw, Lvov, Poznań, Cracow, Lublin, Cieszyn, Gdańsk, Vienna and many more. Moreover, between 2006 and 2007 accounts of several dozen of pre-war students' associations members were videotaped. Later these materials were digitized.<sup>30</sup>

Archival materials and museum objects are available for everyone interested in knowing the history of students' associations movement – those are, among others, researchers, journalists, families of pre-war associates or active associations. Access to these materials is provided through the web page of the archive. Some part of digitized mementoes is also presented on portals of students' associations (e.g. [www.magnapolonia.pl](http://www.magnapolonia.pl), [www.lechia.org](http://www.lechia.org), [www.surma.org.pl](http://www.surma.org.pl), [www.masovia.org](http://www.masovia.org), [www.cresovia.pl](http://www.cresovia.pl), [www.korporacjaroma.pl](http://www.korporacjaroma.pl)).<sup>31</sup> The holdings are also presented on exhibitions.<sup>32</sup> Traditional, on site access to the collections must be preceded with a mail or phone contact with the archive.<sup>33</sup>

Historical materials are presented on the website of the Archive of Students' Associations on two sub-pages. The section "About the archive" ("O Archiwum") contains information mostly about activity, history and funding of the initiative. On this page digital copies of materials are put into the text, and serve as illustrations of narration. These are miniatures, that after clicking on them, show in a new window, provided with a description – but images are still in poor quality.<sup>34</sup> The section "Photographs identification" con-

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<sup>30</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Ostatni filistrzy*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/akcje-i-dzialania/ostatni-filistrzy/> [accessed September 7, 2015].

<sup>31</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Udostępnianie zbiorów*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/akcje-i-dzialania/udostepnianie-zbiorow/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>32</sup> Look: B.P. Wróblewski, *Wystawy*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/akcje-i-dzialania/wystawy/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>33</sup> Look: Kontakt, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/kontakt/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>34</sup> Look for example: Archiwum i Muzeum Polskich Korporacji Akademickich, [photograph entitled] Spotkanie Slawitów, od lewej Jerzy Klepacki, prof. Zbysław Popławski, Stanisław Leśniowski, Kraków 8–9 IX 1979 r., <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/popup.php?obrazek=archiwum-03.jpg&opis=Spotkanie%20Slawit%C3%B3w,%20od%20lewej%20Jerzy%20Klepacki,%20prof.%20Zbys%C5%82aw%20Pop%C5%82awski,%20Stanis%C5%82aw%20Le%C5%9Bnikowski,%20Krak%C3%B3w%208-9%20IX%201979%20r> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

tains pictures of museum objects and digitized archival photographs that lack information; these materials are from abroad or from unidentified associations – most materials that still need description alterations or complement are put in separate sections, next to particular associations' description in section "The Museum of Students' Associations" ("MuzeumKorporacyjne").<sup>35</sup>

The Virtual Museum of Polish Students' Associations has been working since 2007; it presents the history of Polish students' associations and their members in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It contains a general description of the history of the associations, as well as presentations concerning particular organizations – divided into sections according to cities they worked in. The page contains information on 230 Polish and 40 minority students' associations, and lists of members have over 16 thousand names of associates from 1816–1939 (with biographical data and in case of 1500 persons – individual photographs).<sup>36</sup>

Description of a particular association consists of basic information (name, seat, date of creation, colors, motto, short history), usually illustrated with several pictures or documents' scans (miniatures in the text, clicking on it reveals a bigger format), and a list of members (with some photographs – individual or fragments "cut out" from group shots; clicking on it shows a group photo, and not only a face of the associate).<sup>37</sup>

The Internet page of the Archive and Museum of Polish Students' Associations was created mostly to provide information on students' organizations and their members, collected by creators of the archive (most of all, by BartłomiejWróblewski) – these are chiefly major studies on the movement's history, history of particular associations and their members. Digitized archival materials (possessed by the archive in their original form) are put on-line mostly to illustrate these historical and encyclopedic works; they are in low definition and quality – especially in comparison to materials available in digital libraries, in the DjVu format. But this form is just transitory – a final

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<sup>35</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Identyfikacja fotografii*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/o-archiwum/akcje-i-dzialania/identyfikacja-fotografii/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>36</sup> B.P. Wróblewski, *Muzeum Polskich Korporacji Akademickich*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/muzeum-korporacyjne/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

<sup>37</sup> Look for example: B.P. Wróblewski, *Polska Akademiacka Korporacja Chrześcijańska „Conradia” (Wilno)*, <http://www.archiwumkorporacyjne.pl/index.php/muzeum-korporacyjne/wilno/k-conradia/> [accessed: September 7, 2015].

form will be achieved, when all materials will be digitized and put on-line – with a professional description. Unfortunately, it requires immense effort and considerable financial outlays.<sup>38</sup>

Among Polish digital community archives and grass-roots digitizing initiatives also the following might be mentioned:

- Digital Archives of Bemowo (Cyfrowe Archiwum Bemowa),
  - Center for Documentation of Independent Movements Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Dokumentacji Czynu Niepodległościowego),
  - Media Archives of John Paul II (Medialne Archiwum Jana Pawła II),
  - General Elżbieta Zawacka Foundation: the Pomeranian Archive and Museum of the Home Army and Polish Women Military Service (Fundacja Generał Elżbiety Zawackiej. Archiwum i Muzeum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej oraz Wojskowej Służby Polek),
  - Public Digital Archives of Agnieszka Osiecka (Publiczne Cyfrowe Archiwum Agnieszki Osieckiej),
  - Community Archive in Bronowice (Bronowickie Archiwum Społeczne),
  - „Augustów Healt Resort” Project (Projekt „Kurort Augustów”) and just emerging Augustów Digital Archive (Augustowskie Archiwum Cyfrowe),
  - “Arteria” Association (Stowarzyszenie „Arteria”),
  - „Wratislaviae Amici” Association (Stowarzyszenie „Wratislaviae Amici”),
- and many, many more, having various types and levels of digitization.

Concluding, I would like to suggest some problems concerning the issue of digital community archives.

Certainly, insufficient archival description of on-line materials causes dismay. In numerous cases it is needed to contact representatives of an initiative, to find out, what materials does it contain or what is the function of materials put on the Internet – are these all of holdings possessed by the initiative (or copies of all “traditional” materials), and the Internet is the main medium for providing access to these holdings; or just an insignificant piece of it has been put on the web, to illustrate or popularize the subject. It is frequent, that the archival description lacks quality, on various levels.

Apart from the description defects and quality of materials presented on-line, I would like to emphasize, that in many cases these collections are pre-

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<sup>38</sup> Look: P. Bojarski, *Po elitach pozostały czapki*, *Gazeta Wyborcza: Magazyn Poznański*, September 26, 2014, p. 8–9.

cious, interesting and worth using; they have significant educational and popularizing value, because they are publicly available. Although the mentioned poor description or low efficiency of search systems (and websites positioning done by commercial search engines) might restrict this publicity – but, naturally, it is still bigger than if those initiatives would not exist or present their materials on the web.

There also occurs the question about what happens to these historical materials when grass-roots citizen energy runs out, a non-governmental organization ceases to exist, a server's maintenance costs are no longer covered. It actually is a question about the condition and future of community archives and their potential relations with the state archival services – no matter if these archives are or are not digital. What with born-digital materials possessed by community archives?

And what about grass-roots digitizing initiatives which possess no archival materials, but only their copies? It is frequent that thanks to them documents, normally lying on the bottom of drawers, are brought to light. Those initiatives take actions towards archival materials (most of all of private provenance), do some documenting actions, but are not necessarily in circles of interest of persons, who earns their living taking up the archival domain.

It is natural that archivists will be interested mostly in the traditional (paper) and born-digital holdings possessed by community archives. But those archives also put huge amounts of energy into scanning materials possessed by private persons. In the context of archivists' interest in electronic documents, it is worth to think about the problems, that archivistics as a science will have to face – also in the context of the just bearing cooperation between community archives and the Polish state.

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## Summary

### Cyfrowe archiwa społeczne – wybrane przykłady

The text starts with deliberations on understanding the term “digital community archive”; the author presents an open catalogue of levels and types of digitization that occur in grassroots documenting initiatives, which shows complexity of the matter. In its next part the article shows a short description of the ways archival materials are presented on-line by following community archives: the KARTA Center, Topographies – Association of Citizen Initiatives in Łódź (Miastograf – Digital Archive of Łódź) and Archive and Museum of Polish Pre-war Students’ Associations. In this article the author stresses the unsatisfying manner of archival description put on the Internet by such initiatives, and at the same time – the high value of these materials. She puts more research questions on the subject: what happens to historical sources when a grassroots initiative ceases to exist? what is the place of grassroots digitizing initiatives that possess no original archival materials, but only copies?