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POLISH AMERICAN LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION (PALA) AND THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Professional organizations play an essential role in the development of librarianship and libraries in the United States. Among the leading library associations in the United States are the American Library Association, Academic and Research Library Association, Public Library Association, Special Library Association, and regional/state associations. There are also several associations of ethnic librarians, which are affiliates of the American Library Association: American Indian Library Association (AILA), Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), and The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA) [Associations]. These organizations play a very important role in advancing ethnic librarianship and serving American multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities [Echavarria]. Among these organizations the history of APALA [Yamashita] was a great inspiration for the Polish American Librarians Association's founding members. The PALA was founded in 2010 by a small group of librarians of Polish descent in the Chicago metropolitan area who combined their efforts to create this much needed organization [PALA].

The mission of the Polish American Librarians Association is to positively impact services provided to library patrons of Polish descent and individuals interested in Polish culture. The purpose of the organization is outlined as follows:

1. To enhance professional knowledge by developing forums for discussion and networks of communication among library staff working with Polish collections and patrons of Polish origin.

2. To promote understanding and respect among all cultures by expanding the means to access reliable, current information about Polish and Polish-American culture.

3. To promote Polish American librarianship.

4. To provide opportunities for cooperation with other library associations.

During the first four years of existence, PALA focused on increasing its visibility and recruiting new members. Currently the organization has about 100 active members from 18 states across the United States (Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Texas, New York, New Jersey, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, North Dakota, and Maryland) and two members from Canada. PALA members represent all types of libraries (public, academic, school, special) and some other organizations and institutions, which support PALA's mission. There are students, actively working library professionals and paraprofessionals, and retirees, which bring to the organization a diverse set of work experience and skills.

At the end of 2010, PALA board and members developed a strategic plan for the next few years. The highlights of this plan include the following goals grouped under four main strategies:

1. Networking and services: utilize online social networking tools (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google groups etc); use PALA website to develop a bank of reliable, motivating information regarding: Polish bestsellers; bibliographies on topics of interest; Polish collections in American libraries; successful outreach and programming events; signage; and provide support in library job search.

2. Marketing: promote PALA among regional and national library associations; develop relationships with other Polish American organizations; maintain a close cooperation with Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polskich; promote Polish American librarianship among prospective library science students; promote Polish literature and culture; and promote library services among Polish Americans.

3. Organization structure: establish committees, regional chapters and forums/sections.

4. PALA prestige: become affiliated with the American Library Association; establish a PALA presence at library local, national, and international conferences (ILA, Reaching Forward, ALA, PLA, IFLA etc), and publish in American and Polish media.

In 2012 and 2013 the PALA board conducted several surveys to better serve its members and to develop future goals and priorities of the organization. The main reasons members decided to join the Polish American Librarians Association were: to support PALA's mission, to network with other Polish-American librarians, and to become involved in the organiza-

tion. In the evaluation of the Annual Meeting and Open House, networking opportunity was voted as the most valuable part of the event followed by the keynote speaker.

The PALA Annual Meeting is held according to organization bylaws in February, the month of the association's official registration, which took place on February 18, 2010. PALA's first three annual meetings were held at the Polish Museum of America in Chicago and were followed by the museum Open House, to give our members and guests a unique opportunity of a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum, library and archives. The aspiration of the organization is to always have an interesting annual meeting keynote speech delivered by a well-known figure in the profession of Polish-American community. During the first PALA Annual Meeting in 2011, Leonard Kniffel, editor and publisher of the *American Libraries*, magazine of the American Library Association; Polish-American author of "The Polish Son in the Motherland"; and PALA member, delivered a very important speech "Why Does the World Need a Polish Librarians Association?", which empowered and inspired members and guests for action. Kniffel concluded:

"We have our work cut out for us, we have a professional role to play, and we can best play it by doing everything in our power to make sure that our stories are told and preserved and read and understood" [LKniffel_speech].

Shortly after this event, PALA received a generous donation of \$7500 from one of its attendees, Michael Zubrzycki, in memory of his mother, a Polish-American children's librarian. This donation allowed PALA to offer a Vera May Zubrzycki Scholarship to the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois.

The attendees of the PALA Second Annual Meeting had the opportunity to meet Brigid Pasulka, author of "A Long, Long Time Ago and Essentially True" and listen to stories about her book, her Polish-American experience, and the importance of libraries in her personal life. During PALA's Third Annual Meeting Stuart Dybek, an award-winning Polish American author and poet, called libraries "sacred places" and said, "My library card was like a passport that could be stamped over and over again on my journey to becoming a Polish-American" [PALA]. For the fourth annual meeting held at the Loyola University in Chicago in February 2014 PALA leaders invited Keith Michael Fiels, American Library Association Executive Director to discuss the power of professional library associations and career development.

With four years of existence and a significant number of about 100 active members, the Polish American Library Association meets the criteria for becoming an ALA Affiliate member and hopes to join the aforementioned ALA affiliated ethnic librarians associations. Benefits of the ALA

affiliation are numerous. [American] The affiliation will definitely increase PALA's prestige and allow the organization to sponsor and co-sponsor meetings and programs at the American Library Association conferences. These meetings and programs will be included in the Final Program at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, which is distributed to all attendees. Since the ALA meetings and conferences bring together thousands of American and Canadian librarians, a formal presence at these events is greatly desired by PALA's members. Although not yet an affiliate ALA member, PALA was already present at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago and promoted Polish and Polish-American culture in multiple ways. In partnership with the ALA's Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table, PALA cosponsored the Taste of the Town ethnic tour to the Chicago's historical Polonia Triangle, featuring a visit to the Polish Museum of America and Polish-style lunch at Podhalanka restaurant. In addition, PALA had its own booth in the Exhibits Hall of the ALA conference, where the organization's board members and several Polish American authors engaged with the conference attendees as ambassadors of the Polish and Polish-American culture. Authors present included Leonard Kniffel, Brigid Pasulka, and Wesley Adamczyk, among others.

The Polish American Librarians Association is already an affiliate member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and has a well-established partnership with the Polish Librarians Association, Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polskich (SBP). Aldona Salska, PALA founding president, visited the National Library in Warsaw, where she met with Elżbieta Stefańczyk, SBP President and Marzena Przybysz, SBP Secretary, to establish a partnership between this leading librarians organization in Poland and PALA. During the IFLA congress in Singapore in August 2013, Leonard Kniffel, PALA board member, connected with other Polish librarians and initiated a strategy for increasing visibility of the Polish and Polish-American librarians in IFLA. Kniffel said, "The 'infinite possibility' that I envision is to see IFLA in Poland! To make that a reality, however, Polish and Polish American librarians must increase our visibility and activity in the federation" [PALA]. As the very first step in this process, Kniffel is organizing a meeting of the Polish librarians in Paris during or directly after the 80th World Library and Information Congress of IFLA in Lyon in August 2014.

Besides library professional associations, PALA cooperates closely with two academic institutions: Dominican University in River Forest and Loyola University in Chicago. With the Graduate School of the Library and Information Science at Dominican University, PALA partnered in providing the Vera May Zubrzycki scholarship. The Polish Study Department at the Loyola University and PALA partnership was established in 2013 in order to create a joint promotion of the Polish and Polish-American literature, history and culture. As a result of this cooperation, the Loyola University

became PALA's Fourth Annual Meeting host. Further, Loyola University and four PALA member libraries - Polish Museum of America Library in Chicago, Prospect Heights Public Library, Indian Trails Library District in Wheeling, and Eisenhower Public Library in Harwood Heights - will offer the "Third Tuesday Polish Book Club," starting at Loyola with a program and discussion of *Story of a Secret State* by Jan Karski. Selection of that important book for the inaugural program of the Loyola-PALA cosponsored book club in the Year of Karski was natural to program partners, which supported the Jan Karski US Centennial campaign successfully implemented by the Karski Educational Foundation.

Another campaign, which PALA supports and got actively involved in, is the All of Polonia Reads to Kids. Two PALA members, Barbara Bilszta and Elizabeth Marszałik, completed an online course in 2013 "Wychowanie przez czytanie" and became official coordinators of the All of Polonia Reads to Kids campaign in the United States. The very first program promoting reading aloud to children in Polish 20 minutes a day, every day, was held in October at the Indian Trails Library District in Wheeling, Illinois. The attendance, audience participation, and received feedback greatly exceeded expectations of program organizers - PALA and the hosting library. PALA's plans for the 2014 and beyond include expanding the All of Polonia Reads to Kids campaign to other libraries and institutions, such as Polish Saturday schools, first in the Chicago metropolitan area and later in other states.

During the first four years of its activities, PALA established a strong foundation based on cooperation and mutual support with other organizations, institutions, and individuals, who share common mission and purpose: to positively impact services provided to individuals of Polish descent and individuals interested in Polish culture. Engaging in these partnerships has been integral to the possibility and success of the organization's activities to this point and will continue to be, as PALA continues to expand. Additionally, partnerships with other ethnic and multicultural librarians associations is something the organization will strive for in the future. This will help promote the importance of multiculturalism in libraries both in the United States as well as on a global scale, and encourage the various communities and cultures to support and learn from each other.

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Elizabeth Marszałik

Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polsko-Amerykańskich (PALA) – siła współpracy

Streszczenie

Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polsko-Amerykańskich (PALA) zostało założone w 2010 r., a jego misją jest pozytywnie wpływać na usługi świadczone na rzecz polskich bibliotek oraz osób zainteresowanych polską kulturą. W ciągu czterech lat działalności PALA aktywnie wspierało zarówno inicjatywy lokalne na terenie Chicago, jak również na poziomie międzynarodowym. Okazały się one możliwe w dużej mierze dzięki zaangażowaniu stron i współpracy. Organizacja stara się rozszerzyć swoje wpływy i ma nadzieję stać się oficjalnym partnerem Amerykańskiego Stowarzyszenia Bibliotek (ALA). Celem PALA jest również zwiększenie widoczności polskich bibliotekarzy w Międzynarodowej Federacji Stowarzyszeń Bibliotekarskich (IFLA) oraz zacieśnienie współpracy z innymi bibliotekarzami przynależącymi do stowarzyszeń etnicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: amerykańskie organizacje bibliotekarskie, Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polsko-Amerykańskich (PALA), Stowarzyszenie Bibliotek Amerykańskich (ALA)