Podręcznik dla archiwistów społecznych (*A handbook for community archivists*), Małgorzata Pankowska-Dowgiało, Centre of Community Archives, Warszawa 2023, pp. 261

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There is little doubt that Polish archival science, which has focused for many decades on state archives and their tasks – foremost among them the elaboration of archival materials – is increasingly interested in community archives, which have been hailed as a cultural phenomenon[1] by Waldemar Chorążyczewski. Much attention was paid to community archives by Tomasz Czarnota, who focused specifically on their role and significance for cultural heritage.[2] Social archives have become primarily the subject of study conducted by Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak, who pointed to their broadly understood relationship with emotions, recognised the place of memory in them,[3] and dealt with many other aspects of social archives.[4] She is primarily the author of a monograph on social archives in Poland.[5]

Parallel to the research conducted by academics, scientific and publishing activities were undertaken by the community of social archivists associated with the KARTA Center Archive, and later with the Centre of Community Archives. It brought about several collective publications devoted to the broad issue of community archives,[6] including one book of a manual nature[7] published in 2012. Since then, community archiving has grown tremendously. The number of social archives has increased. In 2020, the Centre of Community Archives was founded to support community archives. Even earlier, in 2016, the Open Archiving System

1 W. Chorążyczewski, *Archiwa społeczne jako fenomen kulturowy*, in T. Czarnota, M. Konstankiewicz (eds.), *Archiwa organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce*, Warszawa–Lublin 2015, pp. 9–21.

2 T. Czarnota, Komu są potrzebne społeczne archiwa?, "Archiwista Polski", no. 4 (64), 2011, pp. 15–33; *idem*, *O archiwach społecznych i ich znaczeniu dla polskiego dziedzictwa narodowego i tradycji lokalnej*, "Archiwa – kancelarie – zbiory", no. 5(7), 2014, pp. 125–143; *idem*, *O archiwistyce społecznej i jej możliwych drogach rozwoju*, in W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa (eds.), *Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne*, vol. 5: *Archiwistyka uniwersalna, archiwistyka lokalna*, Toruń 2017, pp. 225–242.

3 M. Wiśniewska, *Archiwum społeczne – archiwum emocji*, in W. Chorążyczewski, W. Piasek, A. Rosa (eds.), *Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne*, vol. 4, pp. 77–86; M. Wiśniewska-Drewniak, *Emocje, afekty, archiwa i selekcja. Ekscytujące drogi nowej humanistyki*, "Archeion", vol. CXXII, 2021, pp. 169–195.

4 M. Wiśniewska, *Funkcje archiwów społecznych*, in T. Czarnota, M. Konstankiewicz (eds.), *Archiwa organizacji*, pp. 63–69; *eadem*, *Postmodernizm a archiwa społeczne*, "Archiwista Polski", no. 2 (70), 2013, pp. 25–29; M. Wiśniewska-Drewniak, *Education in community archives: the KARTA Centre and the General Elżbieta Zawacka Foundation*, "Journal of Education, Culture and Society", vol. 2 (2017), pp. 296–305.

5 M. Wiśniewska-Drewniak, *Inaczej to zniknie. Archiwa społeczne w Polsce – wielokrotne studium przypadku*, Toruń 2019.

6 *Archiwa społeczne. Modele współpracy z państwem*, Warszawa 2015; *Archiwa społeczne w Polsce. Stan obecny i perspektywy*, Warszawa 2016; cf. K. Ziętal, *Archiwa społeczne w Polsce – ogólna sytuacja i perspektywy*, "Archeion", vol. 119 (2018), pp. 267–296.

7 K. Ziętal (ed.), *Archiwistyka społeczna*, Warszawa 2012.

(Otwarty System Archiwalny, OSA) was created, and the dedicated website zbioryspoleczne.pl. Since 2015, Social Archives Congresses have been organised (five have been held until 2023). Therefore, it is not surprising that in view of this progression, there was a need to publish a new manual for social archivists.

The publication under review consists of two parts preceded by an introduction. Part one, as its title – *Handbook* – indicates, is textbook or even instructional in nature and includes eleven texts. *Inspirations*, is the title of the second part, which consists of six chapters that are the stories of the creators of individual community archives. The title page of each chapter contains a short biography of its author.

In the *Introduction*, Katarzyna Ziętal, the Head of the Centre of Community Archives, accentuates passion as the driving force behind creating social archives, not forgetting such important factors as community, grassroot activity, personal commitment or sensitivity. She also emphasised the dynamic development of social archiving in Poland.

Introductory note has the chapter written by Joanna Michałowska, who tries to answer the question posed in the title, *Social archive – what is it and how to start keeping it?* In the first place, she provided a definition and discussed mechanisms for creating social archives. Further on, a typology of social archives was made according to the criterion of their subject matter and the operators. The accent was placed on the human component in community archives, which consists of their creators, donors and recipients. Another aspect addressed in the chapter are the archive's collections. The Author reviewed the various types of archival materials that are most often collected in community archives (documents, photographs, memoirs, audio and video recordings). The diversity and variety of activities undertaken by community archives, as well as the supporting role of the Centre of Community Archives, were also highlighted.

In the chapter *Acquisition of Collections*, Adriana Kapała and Joanna Michałowska attempt to answer the question on what should guide the acquisition of collections, thus establishing selection criteria specific to community archives. Specific suggestions were then given as to whom to approach to enrich the social archive's holdings with more material. It is interesting to consider a certain dilemma in the collection of original and digital copies of collections. The Authors drew attention to the active acquisition of archival materials by community archives through the organisation of various initiatives, e.g. meetings, exhibitions, workshops, implementation of documentation projects. They also provided guidance on the formalities involved in receiving archival materials and creating the relevant documents.

The chapter *Collecting Stories: Oral History in Social Archive Practice* by Adriana Kapała is an excellent compendium on interviewing. It begins with a brief discussion

of the advantages of oral history and the types of interviews. The Author provides clear instructions on how to conduct an interview and how to prepare for it substantively, including suggested questions in the examples. There is also ample advice on how to find appropriate interviewees. A notable strength of the chapter is the technical guidance it offers, covering aspects such as recording equipment, documenting permissions to record, recording locations, and the technical processing of recording files, including their description and transcription. It is noteworthy that Kapała also raised the issue of acquiring other collections (e.g. photos or documents) while collecting oral accounts.

The chapter by Małgorzata Pankowska-Dowgiało entitled *Collection Elaboration* provides basic information, or rather advice and guidance, on how to develop archives in community archives. The Author begins by outlining the goals and benefits of processing, and then recommends the Open Archiving System as a tool for developing the collections of community archives. Next, the stages of elaboration, or even the methodology of elaboration, are presented, with a particular focus being placed on structuring the resources – dividing them into groups (archival fonds and collections, and within them, series). Much attention is given to the descriptions of archival fonds and units (including photographs, documents, and oral accounts), as well as the use of signatures and indexing.

Ewa Majdecka in the chapter *Open Archiving System and zbioryspoleczne.pl portal* covered the features and benefits of the Open Archiving System, a free tool for processing and recording the collections of community archives. A handful of practical information was provided on how to join OSA, how to use it, and, most importantly, how to describe archival records and search the system. The Author then analysed the operating principles of the zbioryspoleczne.pl portal.

The issue of storage and preservation of archival materials was taken up by Monika Supruniuk (chapter: *Storage of Original Collections*). She first discussed the physicochemical and biological factors that threaten archival materials, unfortunately omitting mechanical factors. This was followed by recommendations for archival rooms and protective packaging, along with practical advice on common problems related to collections. However, it is unfortunate that the Author omitted an aspect that may particularly concern community archives: namely, the issue of unprofessional attempts to salvage archival materials, which, without proper knowledge and skills, can do more harm than good to the collections. This is because there are known cases where the guardians of the archives, acting in good faith, took actions (e.g. using adhesive tape, lamination, or punched pockets) that ultimately caused more damage to the archival materials.

In the chapter *Digitising Collections*, Aleksandra Brzozowska discusses the bene-fits of digitising, the types of equipment used to make digital copies and the

preparation of materials for digitising, where, however, such important aspects as pagination of documents or rectifying various folds obscuring the text are missing. Most attention is paid to the various stages of digitisation, scanning parameters and storage of digital reproductions. An interesting and very practical addition is the presentation of the most prominent mistakes that are made during digitisation, which is illustrated with photos of improperly made scans.

Securing Digital Resources is the title of paper by Dawid Żądłowski, which relates very strongly to the previous chapter. The Author discusses places where social archives store digital collections, noting risks such as the short lifespan of digital media, the risk of losing access to data due to technological changes or mechanical factors. Next, the most important recommendations for securing the electronic resources of community archives are pointed out (including creating backups, ensuring the security of the media). Finally, a few words are devoted to the possibilities offered by Internet archiving.

Copyright and Other Legal Aspects of Collections is a very important text by Katarzyna Płażyńska, who focuses on three issues: copyright, image protection and personal data processing. Several tips are provided, including how to assess whether the archives in question constitute a work, as well as what constitutes copyright personal rights and economic rights. Since the collections of social archives often consist of photographs and various recordings, an important issue is the observance of image protection by social archivists, which the Author also highlighted. Reference was made to the secrecy of correspondence in the context of letters stored in social archives. The Author also addressed issues related to the protection of personal data, which arise during the activities of social archives, such as when compiling collections. The entire argument was supported by interesting examples.

Community archives cannot function without finances, and how to get them is explained in chapter *Raising Funds for Activities* by Agnieszka Wargowska-Dudek. The Author advises to first plan the archive's activities and schedule them over time. Next, community archivists can apply for funds offered by local governments through competitions and non-competitions, as well as compete in programs of, for example, Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the General Directorate of State Archives, the National Centre for Culture, the National Institute of Cultural Heritage of Poland, and foreign entities. This is followed by a series of tips and advice on preparing grant applications.

In her article *We Are and We Act! The Basics of Community Archive Communication*, Ewa Pietraszek argues how important it is for community archives to build and maintain positive relationships with the public, as this enhances collection development and fundraising efforts. To begin preparing a promotional strategy, she suggests starting with a SWOT analysis of one's own resources. The next task

is to identify the goals of promotional activities and define the target audience. The Author then reviews the communication tools available to community archives, which include traditional media with local coverage, their own promotional events (such as picnics or workshops), websites, social media profiles or groups, and Wikipedia entries.

The second section of the handbook is also extremely valuable, which, in keeping with the title, can serve as a source of inspiration or a certain template for anyone wishing to start or improve a social archive. Kamil Kmak introduced the genesis and activities of the *Saga Grybów* – Social Archive of Grybów initiative, which aims to protect "local tangible and intangible heritage to save its fragile, ephemeral substance from oblivion and perishing" while uniting and bringing together representatives of different generations, cultures, faiths or languages. Extraordinary are the passages referring to the Author's emotions, sensitivity, interests, passions and motivations, which found an outlet in his "archival and social" activity. Particularly striking is Kmak's reflection that "each person is a separate world, perceived in an individual way, and each death is the end of a world. The archivist can save some fragments of it, which can probably become the foundations of his and other worlds."

The Social Archive of Warsaw, which is the aftermath of the "Here it was, here it stood" project dedicated to documenting the changes in the city's architecture, has an interesting genesis, as discussed in the text by Patrycja Jastrzębska. The Author (and the archive's creator), wanting to document structures that had disappeared from the map of Warsaw, not only conducted searches in archives, but also turned to the residents of the capital and their private collections. Jastrzębska's confessions about the lesson in patience and humility that the social archive gave her sound particularly poignant in this chapter. The subject of the chapter authored by Łukasz Jakubowski is his personal experience of the creation and operation of the Digital Archive of Local Tradition at the Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz Public Library in Sępólno Krajeńskie. The Author points out that libraries are natural and adequate places for salvaging, elaborating and popularising local heritage, and what is the most important in creating a social archive is the commitment of their staff and the establishment of proper relations with the community.

In turn, Anna Miller presented her experience in creating and building the herstory archive "Shipyard is a Woman." She emphasised the importance of interpersonal relationships in collecting and writing herstories, as well as the involvement of some female participants in the project, who later became guides to the post-shipyard areas. She noted that there were many equivalent perspectives and many equal "truths" of women telling their labour history in the Gdańsk Shipyard, as well as the predominance of emotion over the escaping details of dates

and events in these stories. What is important, collecting archival materials was not the only objective for Miller in this initiative. Rather, this was a platform for the realisation of various popular science and educational activities.

For Wojciech Olejniczak, the Author of the following chapter, the need to organise the photographs left by his deceased father – a photographer and regionalist – served as a catalyst for reflecting on the documentation of local community lives and for establishing the "TRES" Foundation in Zbąszyń, and a social archive within its walls. The story of the awakening of local awareness among Zbąszyń residents regarding the history of the local Jewish community is significant. Here, the Author points out the multiplicity, diversity and sometimes inconsistency of the collected accounts, which, after all, are not intended to establish a single truth, but to show different perspectives. The last chapter by Marta Madejska is a story about the initiative Digital Archive of Łódz Residents Miastograf.pl conducted by the Łódz Urban Initiatives Association "Topographies," aiming to acquaint the Łódź inhabitants with the history of their city. This is realised based on the collections of the social archive. No less important is restoring of broken social networks, saving the perishing slang of the Łódź textile industry workers, or reviving, somewhat frozen, memory.

The two parts of the work discussed – the "manual" and the "inspirational" section – greatly complement and enrich each other. The first part is presented as a handbook, offering precise and accurate advice on the operation of social archives at the organisational, legal, methodological, technical, and communication levels. The second one focuses on reflections, experiences of community archive creators. There are numerous references to emotions, values, community activation and engagement, dialogue at various levels (e.g. intergenerational and international), empathy, as well as memory and oblivion.

The editorial side of the publication should be evaluated very positively. To facilitate perception, the most important issues were highlighted in boxes. This was done, among others, with the definition of a social archive (p. 13), brief information about the base of social archives (p. 19), digital copies of collections (p. 29), and the concept of oral history (p. 41). The footnotes were placed in the die margins. They are cross-referential and inform the reader that certain topics are developed in other parts of the book.

The clarity of the text and accessibility of the message are enhanced by including narrative parts in the form of bullet-point enumerations. For example, this format is used to discuss the types of collections stored in community archives (pp. 16–17), the types of entities creating community archives (pp. 18–19), good practices for daily work with collections (pp. 101–102), and scanning parameters (pp. 112–114). The narrative has also been made more accessible through the use of

short paragraphs in each chapter and accompanied by mid-headings, which have been bolded or italicised depending on the context. Readers using the handbook for self-education will certainly find the Author's argument supplemented and enriched with various examples, which are visually highlighted in the text, to be valuable. Exemplifications were included in chapters on oral history (pp. 48–56), collection development (pp. 62–79), and copyright (pp. 132–140).

It is worth noting that the language of the publication is clear and accessible, while still incorporating scientific terms and phraseology. The content is given in a concise, condensed and thoroughly instructional or guidebook manner. The Authors address their readers in the first person singular in part one (e.g. p. 15: "you already know that a community archive cannot exist without collections"; p. 27: "remember that you can acquire collections from various sources"; p. 128: "ensure that physical data carriers are safe"). These are not of course the standards typical of scientific publications (in the academic world, such an approach would probably be considered a transgression), but they work perfectly well in educational publishing. They make the language easier and more accurate, and shorten the distance between the Authors and readers. Such a trick makes the Authors freely share their knowledge, skills, experiences or reflections, rather than deliver their views *ex cathedra*.

In the reviewer's opinion, the language of the narrative should be appreciated also in one more aspect. The mid-headings are often formed as question, while the text below is an answer to them (e.g. p. 16: "what kinds of collections are collected in the social archive?"; p. 26: "should everything be collected?"; p. 44: "with what to record?"). Most of the mid-headings is written in language typical of instructional and how-to texts (e.g. p. 21: "at the beginning I'll need"; p. 46: "remember the extra things to bring to the recording").

Lastly, the educational value of the reviewed book is boosted by its illustrative content. It consists, obviously, of reproductions of archival materials from the collections of social archives, but also of graphics promoting various initiatives of social archives, photo reports from such events, photos showing safety packaging for archival materials, scanners, and, finally, screenshots showing the Open Archiving System and the zbioryspoleczne.pl portal.

The editorial solutions discussed above undoubtedly enhance the publication's educational value, making it easier to read and more accessible as a guide. It was a good decision to prepare not only a hard copy of the publication, but also a digital version in the form of a pdf file, downloadable free of charge from the website of the Centre of Community Archives.

In the reviewer's opinion, *A Handbook for Community Archivists* has one major shortcoming. It lacks a bibliography or a list of recommended literature. And it is

not a matter of taking into account the previous achievements of Polish archival science, but rather citing publications from the field of social archival science. And yet the yield of research and reflection on Polish social archives is quite abundant and at the same time scattered in various journals or serial publications. On the one hand, there are publications that are practical (and often have lost nothing of their relevance), and pointing them out could encourage readers to seek knowledge in other sources of information. On the other hand, some of the publications devoted to social archives are scientific works of a theoretical and reflective nature, constituting studies of the origins of social archives, their role in society, in historiography, etc. Such publications could, in turn, broaden the horizon of potential interested parties.

These scarce critical remarks, however, do not alter the reviewer's final opinion that social archivists have received an extremely valuable and successful publication, which will undoubtedly benefit Polish archival science – especially social archival science – and enhance the development of social archives in Poland in terms of both quantity and quality.