

| The National Museum in Warsaw Incunabula Collection

The Library of the National Museum in Warsaw is one of the city's largest art-historical libraries, valued by researchers for reasons that include its wealth of exhibition and collection catalogues, with some published prior to 1939. But only a handful of specialists are familiar with its collection of early printed books; it is by no means equal to the collections held at institutions such as the National Library of Poland or at the University of Warsaw Library, but it is nonetheless sizeable, with over 2,900 titles or 3,587 volumes.

This article endeavours to give an overview of the oldest printed books in the museum, incunabula, focussing on their outstanding features, and goes on to consider this collection's contribution to the museum's research, educational and exhibition missions.¹

The History of the Collection

The National Museum in Warsaw began to acquire palaeotypes as early as the First World War. But because at that time they were registered in the general inventory of exhibits, it is now difficult to determine their exact initial quantity. After the Second World War, probably in the early 1950s, the oldest volumes were separated and recorded in an inventory of early printed books of the museum's Library. At the same time, some of them were moved to other departments, such as medieval art or prints, sometimes even before they could be registered. Only a few of them returned to the Library decades later.²

Today, the Library's collection of incunabula comprises thirteen titles (in twelve volumes), of which three have not been recorded in *Incunabula que in bibliothecis Poloniae asservantur*.³ There are differences in the books' condition and completeness, as well as presence of the

¹ This article does not take into account two French prognostics that are bound into a single volume, *La reuelation diuine que dieu reuele au bo[n] saint prophete Esdras pour scauoir et congnoistre les annees fertiles and Les iours et heures perilleux de l'annee reuelez par lange au bon saint Job* (inv. no. Inc. 11) because their dates are uncertain and because they are not listed in central incunabula catalogues (i.e., *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz – henceforth: GW, and *Incunabula que in bibliothecis Poloniae asservantur* – henceforth: IBP).

The formal analysis of and information about the number of editions is based principally on GW and on a comparison of digital copies of a given title. See GW, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz [online], updated 8 February 2013 [retrieved: 20 February 2013], at: <<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de>>. The appendix provides basic data about these publications, including their inventory numbers.

² In 1946 today's Department of Prints and Drawings received a copy of the first edition of Hartmann Schedel's *Liber chronicarum* (inv. no. Gr.Ob.Alb.13 MNW), which was duly noted in the Library's inventory. In April 1973 the volume *Margarita Davitica, seu Expositio Psalmorum* (sign. Inc. 14), was moved to the medieval art collection, then returned to the Library probably in the 1990s.

³ It does not include items inv. nos Inc. 12–14. See IBP, [vol. 1], moderante Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa, composuerunt Maria Bohonos et Elisa Szandorowska (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970).

original cover (**fig. 1**) or degree and extent of microbiological damage. In several instances, unfortunately, we also have incomplete knowledge about their provenance, which will be discussed below.

Subject Matter

The subject matter of these palaeotypes breaks down into two groups: theological literature and monuments of historiography. Both include titles that were very popular in their day, virtual “bestsellers.”

The first group are mostly handbooks for the clergy. They include *De sacramentis* (inv. no. Inc. 1) by Nicolaus de Plove (? – before 1448), which explains the fundamentals of clerical functions and *Manipulus curatorum* (inv. no. Inc. 2) by Guido de Monte Rochen (active c. 1331), *Sententiarum liber IV, cum Conclusionibus Henrici de Gorichen, Concordantiis Bibliae ac Canonum, Problematibus s. Thomae Artieulisque Parisiensibus* (inv. no. Inc. 13) by Petrus Lombardus (c. 1095–1160), which summarizes the dogmas of faith, and *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* (inv. no. Inc. 3) by the Franciscan Johannes Marchesinus (active at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), which serves as an introduction to an exegesis of the Bible, or *Margarita Davitica, seu Expositio Psalmorum* by Anonymous (inv. no. Inc. 14). Completing the collection are Saint Jerome’s *Epistolae* (inv. no. Inc. 12) and a three-part edition of the sophisticated *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis, sive Hortulus reginae* by the Meissen preacher Meffreth (inv. no. Inc. 6).

Volumes on theological topics include a German translation of *Summa confessorum* (inv. no. Inc. 4) by Joannes Friburgensis (c. 1250–1314), which – albeit initially an examination of canon law – became a practical lexicon, an advice book on morality and Christian ethics that became a huge success primarily in lay society.

A collective edition of the most important writings by Flavius Josephus (c. 37 – after 94), *De antiquitate Iudaica* and *De bello Iudaico* (inv. no. Inc. 8), devoted to Judaism and describing the historical background to the events in the New Testament, is a sort of link between the two groups of incunabula in the Library.

The remaining books are all world chronicles, a category popular since the beginning of the Middle Ages. A history of Salvation running parallel to human history, *Fasciculus temporum* (inv. no. Inc. 7) by Werner Rolevinck (1425–1502); the first printed town chronicle, *Die Cronica van der Holliger Stat van Coellen (Kölnische Chronik)* (inv. no. Inc. 5) and the first edition of a German translation of the monumental *Liber chronicarum* by Hartmann Schedel (inv. no. Inc. 10) occupy an eminent position among these works, for reasons that include their rich graphic design, which is discussed in detail further on in this article.

Even though these two types of texts were written in the same era, there is a peculiar difference between them. The texts intended for a clerical readership are firmly set in traditional theological thought. The world chronicles, on the other hand, while appearing in a form established long before, are already markedly steeped in humanist ideas.⁴

A Chronology of the Incunabula and Their Publishing Houses

All the incunabula in the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw were published in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The oldest ones, *De antiquitate Iudaica* and *De bello*

⁴ Entry “Chronik” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 2: *Bettlerwesen bis Codex von Valencia*, Robert Auty et al., eds and advisors (Munich-Zurich: Artemis-Verlag, 1983), col. 1964.

Iudaico and *Margarita Davitica*..., appeared in 1475/76.⁵ The others, with the exception of *Fasciculus temporum* (1479), were printed in the late 1480s⁶ and the 1490s.⁷ The oldest *polonicum* in the Library, *De sacramentis* of 1487, is one of them.

Only *Kölnische Chronik*, *Liber chronicarum* and *Margarita Davitica*... are first editions; incidentally, none, apart from the second work, had subsequent editions. The other books are later editions, which by no means diminishes their importance in the history of book and printing. For example, of the three editions of letters by Saint Jerome published by Nikolaus Kessler (c. 1445 – c. 1519) in 1489, 1492 and 1497,⁸ it is the last one, a copy of which is in the museum's collection, that is the most interesting for reasons including its antiqua, which was very rarely used by Kessler.⁹

Nearly all of the Library's palaeotypes, like those in most Polish collections,¹⁰ were made by German printers.¹¹ They come from: Strasbourg – three, Augsburg, Basel, Cologne, Nuremberg – two each, and Lübeck – one. These are all items from only the most important publishing houses of the day: Martin Flach (?–1500) of Strasbourg, Günter Zainer (?–1478) and Johann Schönsperger (c. 1455–1520) of Augsburg, Johann Koelhoff (? – c. 1502) and Heinrich Quentell (?–1501) of Cologne, Anton Koberger (c. 1440–1513) of Nuremberg and Nikolaus Kessler of Basel. Many are among their publishers' earliest products (e.g., Flach's books from 1487)¹² or their greatest achievements, e.g., the jointly published *De antiquitate Iudaica* and *De bello Iudaico* from Lucas Brandis's (before 1450 – after 1500) printing press, *Liber chronicarum* from Koberger's press or *Kölnische Chronik* from the Koelhoff publishing house. Some are unique among early printed books for other reasons (such as *Epistolae* from Kessler's printing press mentioned above).

Publishing Characteristics and Embellishments

Features of handwritten books characteristic of incunabula are best seen in religious publications regardless of their publication date, such as *Margarita Davitica*... (1475/76), *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*... (1487) and *Sententiarum liber IV*... (1498) by Lombardus. Some, for example, *Manipulus curatorum* by de Monte Rochen or *Margarita Davitica*..., were typeset in a single column, but the semi-historical works by Josephus Flavius in two.

⁵ Since both have no colophons with their printing dates, their chronology was established on the basis of bibliographical sources. See GW M15150, GW M20961.

⁶ Inv. nos Inc. 1–4, inv. no. Inc. 6.

⁷ Inv. no. Inc. 5, inv. no. Inc. 10, inv. nos Inc. 12–13.

⁸ GW 12431, 12433 and 12436.

⁹ Heinrich Grimm, "Kessler, Nicolaus," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* [online], vol. 11: *Kafka – Kleinförche*, Die Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, eds (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1977) [online] [retrieved: 20 February 2013], pp. 541–2, at: <<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd137735677.html>>.

¹⁰ That is, those active in the territory of the German Reich or directed by printers of German origin (e.g., Nikolaus Kessler in Basel).

¹¹ See IBP, vol. 1: A–L, moderante Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa, composuerunt Maria Bohonos et Elisa Szandorowska (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970), pp. XXXVII–XLII.

¹² François Ritter, "Flach, Martin der Ältere," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* [online], vol. 5: *Falck – Fyner* (Berlin: Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Duncker & Humblot, 1961) [retrieved: 20 February 2013], pp. 219–20, at: <<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd129016489.html>>.

The latter work best exemplifies the influence of illuminated manuscripts on the art of printing (**fig. 2**). Its printer, Lukas Brandis, substituted woodcuts for the old handmade ornamentation. Thus, the first pages were given a floral bordure, with frolicking birds, lions and even a dragon, while the rest of the text is embellished with many initials, which include the figures of scribes at their desks, battle scenes and the letters “I” with a figure of a scholar or of Christ printed from separate blocks. Halfway through the book it becomes clear that the printer lost his enthusiasm: some of the initials are only ordinary letters, while others are left out altogether.

At the same time, most of the incunabula in our collection have features characteristic of the modern book, although these features do not predominate in any of them. Thus, for example, *Manipulus curatorum*, *Summa confessorum* and *Sententiarum liber IV...* have title pages, while *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, *Summa confessorum*, *Kölnische Chronik*, *Liber chronicarum* and *Margarita Davitica...* have foliation, and only *De sacramentis* lacks an index and a table of contents. A colophon with complete publication data is included in books published by Schönsperger, Koelhoff, Quentell, Koberger¹³ and Kessler, all, incidentally, owners of dynamic internationally prominent publishing houses.

With the exception of *Epistolae*, all the palaeotypes in the Library were typeset in Gothic script. It is especially elaborate in *Kölnische Chronik*, in which the printer often varied the cut and size of the letters (e.g., in chapter titles and first lines of paragraphs).

Furthermore, books with a complex text layout and numerous illustrations serving as excellent examples of the high art of the early printers are represented in our collection by the world chronicles. *Fasciculus temporum* (**fig. 3**) stands out with its original editor's work, also seen in earlier editions, which can be ascribed to its method of narration. Nearly every page is divided by an axis of time, above which biblical events and the story of Christianity are marked, with lay history at the bottom. It is additionally embellished by woodcut illustrations (such as the Tower of Babel, Noah's Ark or Christ on the Cross) and the names of the personalities described in circles, which required individual typesetting for nearly every page.

*Liber chronicarum*¹⁴ represents the crowning achievement of the German art of printing in that period, especially in its use of woodcuts. Unlike the later *Kölnische Chronik*, the printer went beyond the simpler method of one-column typesetting, even though he did use it for the majority of the text. He set many pages in two or even three columns (for example, fol. X recto), which are amply interwoven with portraits, vedute and individually designed scenes (such as Elijah's ascent to Heaven, the death of Socrates or the genealogy of the Holy Roman emperors) printed from over 600 wood blocks in the workshop of Wilhelm Pleydenwurff.

Rubricating or colouring illustrations completed the typographic-editing work, which would make incunabula resemble manuscripts, considered a finer form of the book.¹⁵ The world chronicles, whose illustrations were coloured with shades that maintain their intensity to this day, are the most impressive examples of this work. Most often, however, the makers of these books merely added initials in uncial script in blue or, most often, red ink by hand, as is the case with, for instance, *Epistolae*, *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, *Sententiarum liber IV...*

¹³ The page with an extensive colophon in *Liber chronicarum* has, regrettably, not survived.

¹⁴ Horst Kunze, *Geschichte der Buchillustration in Deutschland das 15. Jahrhundert, Textband* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1975), pp. 368–81. The book also includes a wide-ranging bibliography.

¹⁵ Helena Szwejkowska, *Książka drukowana XV–XVIII wieku. Zarys historyczny*, 3rd ed., revised (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe – Oddział Wrocławski, 1980), p. 60.

and *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis...* (**fig. 4**), in which the first letters of the sections of the sermons were also painted in several colours and decorated with flakes of gold with a simple ornament imprinted on each flake.

Bindings

The majority of palaeotypes have survived with their original bindings, although many are in very poor condition. All were made by a method typical of that era, out of wooden boards covered in calfskin and decorated by blind tooling (mostly formed with single bookbinding stamps).

Most impressive is the cover of *Summa confessorum* decorated with a double bordure filled with a floral ornament (convex stamps), which surrounds the motifs of twigs and flowers in the centre (convex and concave stamps). The front cover bears embossed writing in Gothic script: [summa?] iohanis (partly obscured by glued-on paper), and the same script was used to engrave the catches for two, unfortunately missing, clasps.¹⁶

These bindings are almost as splendid in their rich ornamentation as *De sacramentis*, *Manipulus curatorum* and *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* (**fig. 1**), which are almost fully covered by different kinds of embossing in plant motifs (concave stamps), and also initially had two clasps.¹⁷ The greater precision in the drawing of the ornaments on the cover of *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* makes it likely that it was made in a different workshop from the other two.

The cover of *Margarita Davitica...*, with its slowly disappearing type of monastic binding, is the most modest, albeit no less sturdy. Originally, an additional clasp was used to bind its covers, but only its catch with engraved textura writing: [maria?] survives.

An example of a modern, but nonetheless quite successful, intrusion is the binding of *Fasciculum temporum*. Its original binding of wine-red leather had lost its brilliance over time, and the embossing (stamps with crosses, shields with an eagle and lion?) is barely visible today. It was probably in the nineteenth century that someone added corner fixtures, massive studs on both covers and a decorative clasp, of which only the catch and hinge survive.

Glosses and Reception of the Books

From today's perspective, "acts of vandalism," such as readers' comments, written on the margins of a book, are a priceless source of information about how the book was received.

Of the incunabula in the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw, the religious ones were studied most intensively. Comments in Latin and underlining or drawings of hands (a practice dating back to the Middle Ages) to highlight important parts of the text can be found in books including *Manipulus curatorum* and *De bello Iudaico*. *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis...* have also been given leather bookmarks on the edges of the pages. In this respect, a copy of

¹⁶ The same motifs and composition were used in the copy of *Summae confessorum* in the collection of the Bavarian State Library (sign. 2 Inc.c.a. 2283), whose description in *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Inkunabelkatalog* identifies it as Late Gothic, made in Augsburg. See Johannes de Friburgo, *Summa Johannis*, Augsburg, 1489.11.27, sign. 2 Inc.c.a. 2283, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek – Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum [online] [retrieved: 21 February 2013], at: <<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb00029488-4>>; Johannes Friburgensis, *Summa confessorum* (German), in *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Inkunabelkatalog* [online], updated: 28 June 2011, [retrieved: 21 February 2013], BSB-Ink: I-571, at: <http://inkunabeln.digitale-sammlungen.de/Exemplar_I-571,2.html>.

¹⁷ Only two metal hinge plates with engraved letters in Gothic script survive on the cover of *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*.

Sententiarum liber IV..., in which the columns of print virtually disappear under diminutive, neat remarks written in the sixteenth century,¹⁸ stands out.

A mere handful of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century glosses in German, in different handwriting and style, of *Liber chronicarum* are evidence of its critical readings. Evidently, this copy of the work was used by its owners not necessarily as a source of knowledge, since it bears distinctive pen drawings of torture wheels and gallows on virtually every one of its cityscapes (fig. 5).

The number of a book's editions can serve as an indicator of its popularity, although exceptionally well-liked titles were practically destroyed by frequent use, and hence contemporary bibliographies do not take them into account. With the exception of *Margarita Davitica...* and *Kölnische Chronik*, which are mentioned a single time in the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, all of the other titles had at least five editions in the second half of the fifteenth century. Of these, *Manipulus curatorum* (120 editions), *Fasciculus temporum* (50), *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* (29), *Sententiarum liber IV...* (28) and *Epistolae* (17) were especially popular, but even *De sacramentis* was issued thirteen times. The number of editions of *Summae confessorum* is an interesting example of the growing importance of national languages. It was written in Latin, but first appeared in print in 1476, four years after its German translation by the Dominican monk Berthold. Catalogues of incunabula register only three Latin editions of it and ten German ones.¹⁹

The dating of glosses from no earlier than the seventeenth century and an absence of new editions in the modern era²⁰ tells us the subsequent history of the analysed works: made obsolete by the Council of Trent (1545–63) or by the development of knowledge about the world, they ceased to function in their owners' collections.

Provenance

Our knowledge of the provenance and history of the individual incunabula remains incomplete. The sources of acquisition have been successfully established for only five of them. Incidentally, they serve as examples of the Poles' enormous generosity towards cultural institutions. The Library of the National Museum in Warsaw owes its copies of *Epistolae* and *Sententiarum liber IV...*²¹ to Stanisław Bojakowski, a painter who died in battle in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–20. We are indebted to the Malcz family, descendants of the well-known doctor and social activist Jan Fryderyk Malcz, for *De sacramentis* bound as a single volume

¹⁸ They were most probably written by the same person, but by someone other than the authors of the provenance notes. Short notes in other writing styles that are no older than the seventeenth century can be found on only a few pages.

¹⁹ "Johannes Friburgensis," in GW [online], updated 14 February 2012 [retrieved: 20 February 2013], at: <<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de>>.

²⁰ *Sententiarum liber IV...* and *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis, sive Hortulus reginae* alone had new editions after 1500: the first title continued to be published all the way until 1892, the second until at least the seventeenth century. See Joseph de Ghellinck, "Peter Lombard," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* [online], vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911) [retrieved: 23 February 2013], at: <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11768d.htm>>, Stanonik, "Meffreth," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* [online], vol. 21: *Kurfürst Maximilian I. – Mirus* (Leipzig: Die Historische Commission bei der Königl. Akad. der Wiss., Duncker & Humblot, 1885), pp. 175–6 [retrieved: 23 February 2013], at: <<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd100307310.html?anchor=adb>>.

²¹ Bequeathed to the museum in November 1917 via Kazimierz Pawłowicz and Piotr Olewiński (bequest receipt no. 244, inv. nos 4898–4899 MNW).

with *Manipulus curatorum* and *Mammothrectus super Bibliam*.²² *Fasciculus temoporum* from the collection of Józef Choynowski (Chojnowski) and his Archaeological Museum in Kiev was given in 1903 to the Zachęta Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, whose whole book collection was transferred in 1923 to the National Museum in Warsaw.²³

The other incunabula were probably acquired after the Second World War within the so-called restitution campaign, but only *Kölnische Chronik* definitely came from the Schaffgotsch family library in Bad Warmbrunn (Cieplice Śląskie).²⁴ Little is also known about earlier collections that included the palaeotypes. We know the most about the incunabula donated by the Malcz family. They were once in the library of the monastery of the Canons Regular of the Lateran in Wolbrom,²⁵ who were by no means their first owners.

In 1606, the handbooks for the clergy written by Nicolaus de Plove and Guido de Monte Rochen were donated by one Marcin Raczyński (or Kaczyński) from Morawica (*in Morawicza*) most likely to a church institution, which the impersonal form of the provenance record (*donatu[s] hoc opus per...*) on the title page suggests. It most likely found its way to the Wolbrom priests after they had fully settled in their new monastery, something that may be deduced from the form *conventus Volvramensis* instead of *ecclesia Volvramensis* on the form, which also appears in a note written in 1634 on the book by Joannes Marchesinus.²⁶ It will remain a mystery, however, when the volume with *De sacramentis* and *Manipulus curatorum* found its way into the collection of Jan Rzepka (*Joannes Rzepka*), who signed his name on the back of the last page of the tome. His writing style allows us to presume that it was written at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As has already been mentioned, *Mammothrectus super Bibliam* was in the library of the congregation of Canons Regular at Saint Mark's Church in Krakow, a fact confirmed by two notes dated 1577 and 1588, written on its pages by priors Wawrzyniec Wolski and Adam from Trzemeszno. But in 1634 the book was donated by one Adam Smoleński (or Smoloński) to the church in Wolbrom (*pro Ecclesi[a] Volvramens[e]*), which was already occupied by other priests living by the Rule of Saint Augustine, also from Krakow.²⁷

Sententiarum liber IV... also contains information about its previous owner. In 1549 it belonged to Jan Łaski (*Ioannes de Lasko*, *Ioannes a Lasko*) – *chlericii et vicarii perpetui ecclesiae cathedralis Vladislaviensis*, who in 1564 donated his copy to the parish church of Saint John the Baptist in Włocławek, where it remained until at least the seventeenth century.²⁸

²² Bequeathed to the museum in October 1935 by Elżbieta Klewinowa (bequest receipt no. 244, inv. no. 3863 MNW, inv. nos 100446–100447 MNW).

²³ General inv. no. 32177 MNW.

²⁴ Stamp: *Freistandesherrliche Maiorats-Bibliothek zu Warmbrunn* upper right corner and on the verso of the title page.

²⁵ Actually: Wolwram or Wolfram. See *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 13, Bronisław Chlebowski, ed., according to a plan by Filip Sulimierski, [s.n.] (Warsaw, 1893), p. 825.

²⁶ The decision to cede the Wolbrom parish to the Canons Regular of the Lateran had been made in 1627, but the first priests only settled at Saint Catherine's Church in 1633. They initially lived in the wooden parish house, but in 1635 moved to a building adapted to the needs of the monastery. The new monastery was not completed until 1645. A school had earlier been attached to the church, and later visitation documents mention a monastery library, which in 1708 contained 600 volumes. The monastery was shut down in 1864. See Kazimierz Łatak, *Kongregacja krakowska kanoników regularnych laterańskich na przestrzeni dziejów* (Krakow–Ełk: Kuria Biskupia Diecezji Ełckiej, 2002), pp. 131–3.

²⁷ See n. 26.

²⁸ The donor was certainly neither Jan Łaski the Elder (1456–1531) nor the Younger (1499–1560) because the notes are written in the first person (e.g., *Iste liber Sententia[rum] legatus est per me / Joannem de Lasko...*), and

It is noteworthy that the provenance notes on the incunabula described here stem mostly from the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, and we may thus assume that they rarely changed owners subsequently.

The collection of incunabula at the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw was built for predictable reasons: they represent a stage in the development of the book, while also serving as points of reference for a narrative of the book's role in the culture of the late fifteenth century and later, as well as of the history of printing.

Until recently, the incunabula described here were practically absent from the museum's activity. The condition of some of them, as well as the special requirements for exhibiting paper, continues to make it impossible to show them in exhibitions and at other events. The only occasions to "boast" about them have been demonstrations of selected prints that Chief Librarian Małgorzata Polakowska and this author have put on for student interns at the Library. The students have expressed a great interest in them, especially since they tend to have no exposure to old books during their studies.

But will it be possible to use the incunabula more extensively in the museum's activities? The first step could be to disseminate information about the very existence of the collection, which is the purpose of this text, as well as to create an online catalogue of the Library, which would include extensive descriptions of the incunabula, perhaps also photographs of their distinguishing features.

Digitizing the entire collection, or at least selected palaeotypes, would bring the greatest benefits. Making their digital copies available through the Digital National Museum in Warsaw (www.cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl) or similar Polish and international online databases would enable large numbers of researchers to conduct an initial analysis of these early modern books (for instance, to determine variants of editions or to conduct broader studies of old book collections). More importantly still, it would present our incunabula to more non-professionals, for example, as a virtual exhibition with accessible commentaries. Digital content, which would be easy to use in the museum's promotional materials, should also be created.²⁹

Modern media will make it possible to combine concern about preserving this cultural heritage with the educational and promotional activities of our museum, simultaneously making the public aware of the history and the quality of its collections.

Appendix: List of Incunabula in the Collection of the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw

Since detailed descriptions of prints will be included in the online catalogue of the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw, the data below are presented in abbreviated form based on the records of the IBP system. The bibliographic citation of each print is limited to GW and IBP, which include the full list of sources.

both the primate and his sister's son were no longer living at the time of their writing, 1549 and 1564. The 1564 note also includes a call to prayer for the donor and a mention of the plague that in that year decimated the populations of Gdańsk, Kujawy, Pomerania, Mazovia and the other regions of Poland, which leads us to guess the reason why the book was given to the Church of Saint John the Baptist.

²⁹ The University of Warsaw Library promotes its collection of old prints in this way, for example, in 2013 by issuing several types of wall calendars with photographs of showy covers, decorative cards and initials from incunabula.

Inc. 1. Nicolaus de Blonie, *De sacramentis*, Strasbourg [Typ. Iordani = Georg Husner], 18 June 1487, 4° (GW M26299, IBP 3926)

Inc. 2. Guido de Monte Rochen, *Manipulus curatorum*, Strasbourg, [Martin Flach], 10 May 1487, 4° (GW 11815, IBP 2587)

Inc. 3. Ioannes Marchesinus, *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, Strasbourg, [Martin Flach], 1487, 4° (GW M20808, IBP 3595)

Inc. 4. Ioannes Friburgensis (Johannes de Friburgo), *Summa confessorum*, Germ. trans. Bertholdus O.P., Augsburg, Ioannes Schönsperger, 27 November 1489, 2° (GW M13598, IBP 3125)

Inc. 5. [Kölnische Chronik]. *Die Cronica van der Holliger Stat van Coellen*, Cologne, Ioannes Koelhoff, 23 August 1499, 2° (GW 6688, IBP 1519)

Inc. 6. Meffreth, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis, sive Hortulus reginae*, Nürnberg, Anton Koberger, 14 February 1487, 2° (GW M22662, IBP 3685)

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