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Jagiellonian University Museum, Poland

University Museums in Poland

The Annual Universeum Meeting in Kraków has given an opportunity to present the current situation of university museums in Poland. In the present report we describe the condition of museums attached to state higher education institutions taking into consideration the following aspects: establishment date, staff, type of collections and museum exhibitions.

In Poland, university museums are units directly subordinated to the authorities of the higher education institution and indirectly to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Their activity is usually pursuant to the statute of the particular higher education institution and its internal rules. In Poland, in 2008, there were 30 museums¹ attached to higher education institutions. The number of state higher education institutions is 84, thus about 36% of them have museums (Cf. Appendix, Tab. 1). Among 18 Polish universities, 10 have museums² (Fig. I). Among 66 specialist universities, 20 have museums (Fig. II). These are mostly museums of technical (9) and medical (4) universities as well as universities of other scopes: artistic (2), agricultural (2), military (2)³, pedagogic (1) and economics (1).

A museum with a structure and activity as defined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) must meet the following requirements: to be open to the public, to acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and entertainment. Apart from a few exceptions, Polish universities are precisely in the process of

¹ 18 from the above-mentioned institutions are universities receiving government subsidy and 66 are specialist higher education institutions also government-subsidized. Specialist universities analysed here are: technical (20), medical (9), agricultural (7), martial (6), economic (5), pedagogic (6), of physical education (6) and art (7).

² The Museum of the University of Silesia was closed down in 1980, so currently there are 10 university museums.

³ The Museum of Polish Health Service of the Łódź Medical University is a museum of two universities: medical and martial. Here it is mentioned for the second time as a museum of martial university. Thus the total number of the museums of specialist universities is 20.

establishing such museums. One can observe a tendency for establishing and developing museums.

The museums are positioned differently in the structure of the university, depending on the decision of its authorities (tab. 1). Some are independent units – outside the department or all-university, others are parts of larger units, for example university libraries or archives. In Polish universities, almost half of the museums are independent units. There are 5 independent museums belonging to universities and 10 to specialist universities. The rest are attached to libraries (3), archives (5) or departments (5).

Separate structures are specialist collections serving primarily the purpose of education and only occasionally shown to the public. Their activity is aimed mostly at carrying out classes as part of the university programme (Fig. III, IV) and scientific research. Often, the collections are still growing, preserving not only historical artefacts, but being systematically supplemented. That allows maintaining continuity for scientific needs, for example to carry out documentation of evolution of living organisms or environmental changes. Such collections are often small and attached to particular departments, for example the Anthropology Museum of the Jagiellonian University (JU); some are thematic, for example the Museum of History of Medicine of Collegium Medicum of JU or the Zoological Museum of JU. Some higher education institutions create one big collection from separate collections from its institutes and other units to facilitate their protection, conservation and display. The Collection of Natural History of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań could serve as a good example. It came into existence in 2004 as an all-department unit due to the merging of smaller departmental zoological and botanical collections during the construction of a new campus in the suburbs of Poznań. It also merged with the collections from the Department of Agricultural and Forest Biology of the Polish Academy of Science (Fig. V, VI).

The majority of university museums are relatively young institutions (tab.1). Only four universities established museums before the Second World War (the Jagiellonian University, the Catholic University of Lublin, the University of Medical Sciences in Poznań, and the Gdynia Maritime Academy). Eleven museums came into existence in the period 1950–1989, whereas fifteen are new institutions, established after 1989. It is worth mentioning that more than half of them appeared during the last three years. These are the museums of the Medical University of Gdańsk, the Lublin University of Technology, the Wrocław University of Technology, the University Museum in Toruń, the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, the University of Łódź, the Gdańsk University of Technology, and the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw. Possibly this is the result of a new perception of university history and its cutting edge.

Museums are created either by universities with long-lasting traditions such as the University of Life Sciences in Warsaw, active since 1816 (the museum established in 2008) as well as new institutions like the University of Rzeszów, established in 2001 (a museum since 2002) or the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz (established in 1997, a museum since 1998).

Smaller institutions are mostly oriented at gathering mementoes and archive material connected with university history. Such are the museums of: the Technical University of Łódź, the Kraków University of Technology, the University of Life Sciences, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and the University of Łódź. Usually these are

units functioning within an archive or promotion office. There are also museums gathering special collections not directly connected with the history of the university. Such are the University Museum in Toruń (Fig. VII), the Museum of Diplomacy and Polish Refugees of the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz or “the Tradition Hall” of the Gdynia Maritime Academy.

The richest and most diverse collections are owned by museums attached to the oldest universities, such as the Jagiellonian University Museum, the Museum of the University of Wrocław (Fig. VIII) and the Museum of the University of Warsaw. These collections contain mementoes connected with the university history, objects documenting development of science, historical laboratory equipment and scientific instruments as well as works of art and handicraft products.

Besides typical university museums there are also specialised museums. Good examples are the Pharmacy Museum of the Wrocław Medical Academy, the Pharmacy Museum of Collegium Medicum of JU, the Museum of Inclusions in Amber of the Gdańsk University, the University Natural Museum of the Białystok University, and the Geology Museum of the University of Silesia, among others.

The situation of university museums in Poland generally is not bad. They have financial support from their universities wherever possible as well as approval for their activities and development. However, as units either outside the departments or subordinate to libraries, archives, promotion offices, and individual institutes and departments they are dependant on the university authorities’ decisions and financing.

Most of the museums engage only few employees, often one or two workers. Sometimes, the museum is run by one person transferred to take care of the collection without being permanently employed. Such situation takes place for example in the Museum of the History of the Medical Academy of Gdańsk and the Museum of the University of Agriculture in Kraków. Only four museums engage four employees or more: the Jagiellonian University Museum, the Warsaw University Museum, the University Museum in Toruń and the Museum of the University of Wrocław.

The surface area usually covers several showrooms. The following museums have the biggest display surface: the Jagiellonian University Museum, the Museum of the University of Wrocław (Fig. VIII), the University Museum in Toruń (Fig. IX), the Museum of the Wrocław University of Technology, the Museum of the Kraków University of Economics and the Museum of the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław. Museums of higher education institutions are actively involved in the life of their universities and the local community. Most of them take part in open days and university holidays, days of science, and some in the recently organized Museums’ Night. They prepare temporary exhibitions.

The weak points of the majority of the Polish university museums are: lack of own conservator’s base and limited publishing activity in the form of periodicals. The Jagiellonian University Museum has its own Conservation Department. The Museums of the Wrocław and Warsaw Academies of Fine Arts, the Catholic University of Lublin and the University Museum in Toruń are exceptions because their departments of conservation and renovation serve as a base. Most of the museums publish, of course, studies, catalogues of long-term and temporary exhibitions and the collections, but only three of them publish or co-publish independent periodicals: the Museum of the Technical

University of Łódź – Historical brochures of the Technical University of Łódź, the Museum of the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin – Archive of the History and Philosophy of Medicine. Since 1986, the Jagiellonian University Museum has published *Opuscula Musealia*, a periodical dedicated to the collections of the museum and to the basic problems of the museology.

In conclusion we may say that:

- There has been an increasing tendency to create new museums in Polish universities since 1989.
- Museums usually function as departments in the university structure.
- Most employ 2–3 people from the scientific staff.
- Most do not have own infrastructures: storage rooms, restoration workshops, etc.
- Often they have databases of the objects without having a digital version of it.
- The prestige of many museums has not been established yet; it depends on the current policy of the given university.
- Even very young higher education institutions are aware of the need to document their own history.

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STRESZCZENIE

Muzea uniwersyteckie w Polsce

Doroczne spotkanie organizacji skupiającej europejskie muzea szkół wyższych – UNIVERSEUM – odbyło się w 2008 roku w Krakowie. Była to dobra okazja do krótkiego scharakteryzowania sytuacji muzeów uniwersyteckich w Polsce. W niniejszym komunikacie przedstawiono obecny stan takich placówek istniejących przy państwowych szkołach wyższych – uniwersytetach, politechnikach, uczelniach medycznych, rolniczych, ekonomicznych, pedagogicznych, wojskowych, akademiach sztuk pięknych oraz akademiach wychowania fizycznego. Skupiono się na następujących zagadnieniach: czas powstania muzeum, miejsce w strukturze uczelni, personel fachowy, charakter zbiorów i ekspozycje muzealne.

Pomimo że sytuacja muzeów uniwersyteckich w Polsce nie jest zła, to jednak są one zależne od decyzji i finansowania władz uczelni. Słabą stroną jest, poza nielicznymi wyjątkami, brak własnego zaplecza konserwatorskiego oraz możliwości stałego prezentowania problemów muzealnych i badawczych np. w formie periodyków. Coraz więcej uczelni dostrzega jednak potrzebę organizowania placówek muzealnych: spośród 30 muzeów działających obecnie, aż 13 powstało w ciągu ostatnich 8 lat – w samym 2008 r. powołano 2 muzea.

Tab. 1. Museums of higher education institutions in Poland. Those attached to universities are in bold, the rest are museums of specialist universities

No.	Museum	City	The year of the university establishment	The year of the museum establishment	The time between the university and museum establishment	An administrative unit
1	Jagiellonian University Museum	Kraków	1367	1867 ¹	500	all-university unit
2	Museum of the University of Medical Sciences in Poznań	Poznań	1919	1920	1	all-university unit
3	University Museum of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	Lublin	1918	1932	14	Institute of the History of Culture
4	Tradition Hall of the Gdynia Maritime University	Gdynia	1920 ²	1935	15	Library of the Gdynia Maritime University
5	Museum of the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław	Wrocław	1946	1954	8	all-university unit
6	Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Pomeranian Medical University	Szczecin	1948	1957	9	Department of the History of Medicine and Ethics of the Pomeranian Medical University
7	Museum of the History of Technology and AGH – AGH University of Science and Technology	Kraków	1919	1960	41	Centre of the History of Science with a Museum
8	Museum of the Silesian University of Technology	Gliwice	1945	1961	16	all-university unit
9	Museum of the Polish Military Health Service of the Medical University of Łódź	Łódź	2002 ³	1973	16	Faculty of the History of Medicine
10	Museum of the University of Silesia	Katowice	1968	1978 ⁴	10	all-university unit
11	Museum of the Warsaw University of Technology	Warszawa	1915	1978	63	all-university unit

No.	Museum	City	The year of the university establishment	The year of the museum establishment	The time between the university and museum establishment	An administrative unit
12	Museum of the University of Agriculture in Kraków	Kraków	1953	1970–1980	ca. 20.	the Main Library
13	Academy of Fine Arts Museum in Warsaw	Warszawa	1816	1985	169	all-university unit
14	Warsaw University Museum	Warszawa	1816	1980	164	all-university unit
15	Museum of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University	Lublin	1944	1980	36	Archive
16	Museum of the Technical University of Łódź	Łódź	1945	1985	40	President's Historical Committee and Historical Workshop of the Łódź Technical University
17	Museum of the University of Wrocław	Wrocław	1811	1992	181	all-university unit
18	Museum of Diplomacy and Polish Refugees of the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz	Bydgoszcz	1997	1998	1	all-university unit
19	Museum of the Rzeszów University	Rzeszów	2001	2002	1	all-university unit
20	Museum of the University of Warmia and Mazury	Olsztyn	1999	2002	3	Archive
21	Museum of the Tadeusz Kościuszko Kraków University of Technology	Kraków	1946	2004	58	since 2006 in the Promotion Office of the Kraków University of Technology
22	Museum of the Kraków University of Economics	Kraków	1925	2004	79	all-university unit

No.	Museum	City	The year of the university establishment	The year of the museum establishment	The time between the university and museum establishment	An administrative unit
23	University Museum in Toruń	Toruń	1945	2005	60	the University Library
24	Museum of the Wrocław University of Technology	Wrocław	1910	2005	95	all-university unit
25	Museum of the Opole University of Technology	Opole	1966	2006	40	all-university unit
26	Museum of the History of the Medical University of Gdańsk	Gdańsk	1915	2006	91	Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine Sciences
27	Museum of the Gdańsk University of Technology	Gdańsk	1904	2006	102	all-university unit
28	Museum of the Lublin University of Technology	Lublin	1953	2007	54	all-university unit
29	Museum of the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education	Warszawa	1922	2007	85	all-university unit
30	Museum of the University of Łódź	Łódź	1945	2008	63	Archive
31	Museum of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences	Warszawa	1816	2008	192	all-university unit

(Footnotes)

¹ The Jagiellonian University Museum originates directly from the collections of the Archaeological Cabinet, which dates back to the year 1867. It became an independent unit in the university structure in 1953.

² At first it was in Tezew, in Gdynia – since 1930.

³ It came into existence in 2002 due to the connection of two medical universities: the Medical Academy of Łódź (established in 1945) and the Martial Medical Academy of Łódź (established in 1957).

⁴ It was closed down in 1980 and the materials – dispersed. Some part of the collections has been joined to the Main Library of the University of Silesia.