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Monasteries and the digital humanities

Methodological explorations in the field of historical, culture-oriented research, are often interdisciplinary and open to new research models. Search for new interpretative methods accompanies reflections on past achievements. Since the 1950s, when "the traditional model of presenting culture/civilisation history was broken"[1], one can talk about general anthropology of the humanities[2]. This certainly had its impact on contemporary bibliographic studies, where the book's culture has become the central research category[3].

Restoring and highlighting of cultural perspectives calls for a rethink and precise definition of basic concepts such as collective memory and social memory and for pursue efforts to create clear analytical categories and aiming for greater theoretical coherence in research on the text and transmission in history[4]. Cultural optics in research on the memory opens new horizons by focusing on communication processes and various symbolic forms of past representation[5]. In addition, it has to be

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[1] G. Labuda, *Rozważania nad teorią i historią kultury i cywilizacji. Wybór studiów i rozpraw*, Poznań 2008, p. 17, 45.

[2] *Antropologizowanie humanistyki. Zjawisko – proces – perspektywy*, ed. J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, Olsztyn 2009.

[3] K. Migoń, *Bibliologia – nauka o kulturze książki*, „Nauka" 2005, no 2, p. 49, 51; ibid. *Bibliologia – nauka o kulturze książki*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Książki*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Skalska-Zlat, A. Zbikowska-Migoń, Wrocław 2017, p. 26. See also R. Estivals, *La Bibliologie*, Paris 1987; „Bibliologia. An international journal of bibliography, library science, history of typography and the book" 2004-, No 1.

[4] In the research, there is a visible focus of interest in the theory of history on the issues of memory and historical experience. See, e.g., K. Kaniowska, *Antropologia i problem pamięci*, „Konteksty" 2003, Vol. 57, No 3–4, p. 57–65; E. Domańska, *Miejsce Franka Ankersmita w narratywistycznej filozofii historii*, [in:] F. Ankersmit, *Narracja, reprezentacja, doświadczenie. Studia z teorii historiografii*, Kraków 2004, p. 8–9; A. Radomski, *Pojęcie doświadczenia we współczesnej refleksji humanistycznej i w historiografii – jego zmiana jako rezultat przeobrażeń kulturowych w świecie współczesnym*, „Historyka" 1999, Vol. 29, p. 57–68. See also: *Pamięć, etyka i historia. Anglo-amerykańska teoria historiografii lat dziewięćdziesiątych (antologia tekstów)*, ed. E. Domańska, Poznań 2002; F. Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*, Poznań 2003.

[5] *Kultura jako pamięć. Postradycjonalne znaczenie przeszłości*, ed. E. Hałas, Kraków 2012; *Kultura, pamięć i zapomnienie*, ed. B. Jastrzębski, K. Konarska, A. Lewicki, Wrocław 2012; A. Assmann, *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Warszawa 2013.

emphasised that memory as a person's ability to perpetuate experience and build knowledge of oneself and of the world as well as group identity is also particularly relevant for environments integrated by religion.

This is an important issue for understanding and analyzing historical aspect of Christianity and its cultural meaning, of perpetuating cultural goods and religious values in the practice of social life[6]. If one look at culture as a memory it turns out that writing and reading, text, document and the book are immortal witnesses of events not only in the so-called "chronological reality", but also in "deep-down history, with its operations measured in centuries: history of lengthy, very lengthy duration"[7] as well as taking into account the specifics and consistency of the presence of religion in the social space, its significance not only in the spheres of the sacred but also as a social phenomenon – existence of circles shaped by specific values and their influence on the society[8]. The existence of the text, its functioning and reception will always indicate not only spiritual values, but also the shaping and maintenance of the identity of groups constituted in the context of the faith[9].

In the humanities, new methodological approaches are currently being supported by information- and technology-based modern tools and methods. Additionally, they have gained institutional support of numerous institutions promoting Digital Humanities (DH), emerging mainly in university environments[10]. It is worth emphasising that the historical beginning of DH is connected with the work of an Italian Jesuit, Roberto Busa, on the elaboration of the texts of St. Thomas Aquinas. Currently, the so-called Corpus Tomisticus contains 118 of Thomas Aquinas' texts and 61 authors connected with Aquinas, is considered to be one of the pioneering projects of DH and Computational Linguistics[11].

History of religious orders and monasteries on the Internet

In the recent years, there has been a pronounced revival in the study of the Order, which brings a differentiation discussing in a multifaceted way their operation,

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[6] *Uniwersalizm i swoistość kultury polskiej*, ed. J. Kłoczowski, Vol. 1–2, Lublin 1989; Poland in Christian civilization, ed. J. Braun, London 1985.

[7] F. Braudel, *Historia i nauki społeczne. Długie trwanie*, [in:] *Historia i trwanie*, Warszawa 1999, p. 49.

[8] K. Maliszewski, *Rola Kościoła katolickiego w procesie komunikacji społecznej w kulturze polskiej doby baroku. Zarys problematyki*, [in:] *Od liryki do retoryki. W kręgu słowa, literatury i kultury. Prace ofiarowane Jadwidze i Edmundowi Kotarskim*, ed. I. Kadulska et al., Gdańsk 2004, p. 107–112.

[9] D. Hervieu Léger, *Religia jako pamięć,* Kraków 2007, p. 29; S.R. Fischer, *History of Reading*, London 2005, p. 11–12, 40–43.

[10] One of the basic works discussing the goals and directions of DH development is work of A. Burdick, J. Drucker, P. Lunenfeld, T. Presner, J. Schnapp, *Digital Humanities*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2010. A periodical documenting the development of research and initiatives in the digital humanities is a quarterly issue by Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO) „Digital Humanities Quarterly" 2007–.

[11] Index Tomisticus, [online] http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/ [accessed: 01-07-2017]; The Index Tomisticus Treebank Project, [online] http://itreebank.marginalia.it/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].
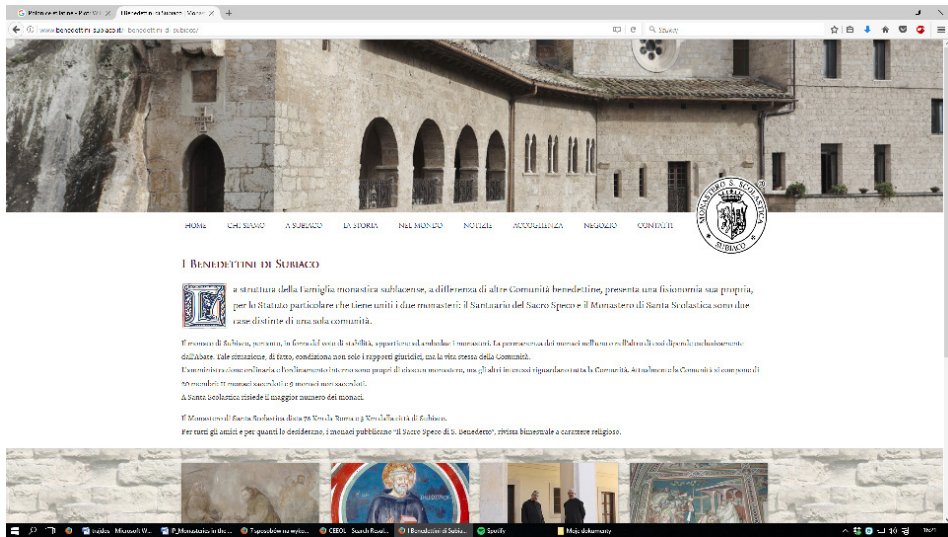
Fig. 1. Screen of Monastero di Santa Scolastica, http://www.benedettini-subiaco.it/

works. This interest is also evident in the number of projects and initiatives utilising modern digital tools and the Internet to present spirituality, outstanding figures, history of particular monasteries, preserved monuments, etc. However, the Internet is no longer just a medium of dissemination of historical collections, but also a space for co-operation, negotiation of the vision of history of institutions connected with cultural heritage as well as of information as a public domain and as a commodity.

There are a lot of information on the Christian orders to be found in navigators available on the web. Authors of presented resources come from both church and lay circles. Some of them obey religious message, which complements the process of passing over tradition of particular monastery or orders and their heritage (websites, portals and blogs, iconography, cartography etc.). Clear examples of this type of online presentation of the orders are, among others, numerous sites devoted to the Benedictines[12].

Self-presentations of the orders are often complemented by informations on research works undertaken or co-ordinated by these circles, especially within research institutes operating inside religious structures. There are also projects aimed at education and popularisation of the history of religious orders such as *Klášterní stezky*, prepared by the Charles University in Prague[13]. The website is trying to centralise all information on Czech monasteries, placing emphasis on education of children and adolescents as well as on tourism.

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[12] See, e.g., *The Online Guide to Saint Benedict, 1994–2016*, [online] http://www.e-benedictine.com/ [accessed: 01-07-2017]; *Monastero di Santa Scolastica*, [online] http://www.benedettini-subiaco.it/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

[13] *Klášterní stezky*, [online] http://www.klasterni-stezky.cz/ [accessed: 01-07-2017]. The website is supplemented by educational materials available at *Monasterium*, [online] http://monasterium.kub.cz/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

Users

In this context, it is worth looking at available resources from their users side. Analogies between historical sites and those focused exclusively on the history of Christian orders are quite obvious. British History Online (BHO) project[14] providing primary and secondary sources on medieval and modern history of Great Britain and Ireland emerged in 2002 as a result of co-operation between Institute of Historical Research, University of London and the History of Parliament Trust. It takes into account many original sources and contemporary literature, including those concerning monastic heritage relating to art and architecture, education, science and the history of ideas. Analysis of the search methods used in the search of digital content of this site makes it possible to distinguish three basic types of users: academic user, genealogist user as well as casual user[15]. Questionnaire-based survey studies conducted among them reveals the specifics of search strategies used by specific users pointing to unique needs of researchers who are interested in ability to narrow search results and viewing methods, and want to have maximum control over what and how they are made available to them. The expectations of this group are also linked to the widest possible access to the original sources, accurately described as well as ensuring efficient work with the document. Text search is one of the basic conditions for researchers, for whom the use of manuscripts or old prints is an elementary component of their work.

Digital archives and libraries – documents – projects

In the bibliological aspect, one must pay attention to a number of most important activities undertaken within the framework of the DH, which are implemented as specialised, narrow thematic projects as well as extensive, research-oriented activities. They primarily concern the digitisation of archival and library resources, development of metadata collections, creation of open resources, but also creation of platforms that integrate accessible sources, present current knowledge and facilitate interdisciplinary research. With the dynamic development of DH, the need to harmonise and standardise structural data has become a very significant issue[16].

A typical example of a website focused on creating a useful workplace for Jesuit researchers is the *Jesuitica* project started at the Catholic University in Leuven (University of Leuven)[17]. It uses resources of the Maurits Sabbe Library, which was created

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[14] *British History Online*, [online] http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ [accessed: 10.08.17].

[15] A. Crymble, *Digital library search preferences amongst historians and genealogists: British History Online user survey*, [online] „Digital Humanities Quarterly" 2016, vol. 10, no 4, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/10/4/000270/000270.html [accessed: 01-07-2017].

[16] V. Osińska, P. Malak, B. Bednarek-Michalska, *Badanie struktury i dynamiki zasobów cyfrowej wiedzy przy pomocy metod wizualizacji – projekt realizowany na UMK*, [in:] *Humanistyka cyfrowa. Badanie tekstów, obrazów i dźwięku*, ed. R. Bomba, A. Radomski, E. Solska, Lublin 2016, p. 15–16.

[17] *Jesuitica*, [online] https://www.jesuitica.be/homepage/ [01-07-2017]. In the bibliographical studies of the Jesuit environment is often used an electronic version of the *Encyklopedia wiedzy o 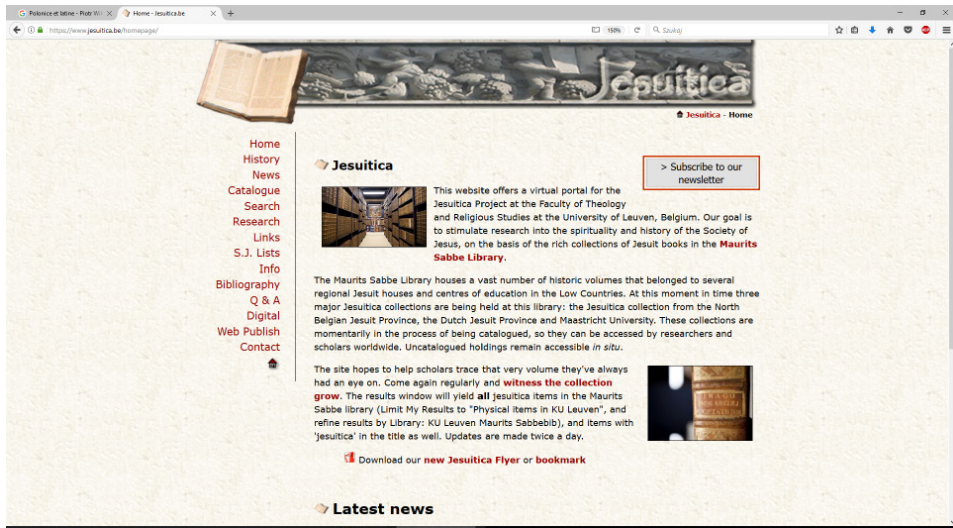jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy, 1564–1995*, [online] https://www.jezuici.krakow.pl/Bibl/enc.htm [accessed: 01-07-2017].

Fig. 2. Screen of Jesuitica, https://www.jesuitica.be/homepage/

from several historical collections of Belgian Jesuit monasteries. From 2016, as part of the project, digitisation of selected old prints from this collection is being realised. The website centralises rich bibliographical material devoted to Jesuits and Ignatian spirituality, and publishes electronic versions of unpublished scientific texts.

The same University is also the originator of a similarly organised project: The Study and Documentation Centre *Capuchins in the Low Countries*[18]. The Centre focuses on activities of the Capuchin in the Netherlands, placing emphasis on cataloguing and providing online access to traces of their presence and activity in the area. Catholic University of Leuven has also organised KADOC – *Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture, and Society*[19], which has been carrying out interdisciplinary research devoted to Church circles in Belgium ever since 1976 and has accumulated extensive literature on this topic. As part of co-operation work of several Belgian scientific institutions, ODIS, a contextual database of Belgian history and literary heritage, was established[20]. However, it is worth emphasising that databases are constantly being expanded and modernised, the multi-lingual interface and the possibility of obtaining data not only about specific institutions, people, archives, or prints, but also family connections, regional historical events or preserved buildings confirms the usefulness of ODIS.

A broad perspective on the issues of description and access to medieval documents is presented by *Monasterium.net*[21], which was developed in co-operation with

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[18] *Study and Documentation Centre Capuchins in the Low Countries*, [online] http://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/research_units/ru_church/ru_church_capuchins [accessed: 01-07-2017].

[19] *KADOC – Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society*, [online] https://www.kuleuven.be/onderzoek/portaal/#/team/50000759?hl=en&lang=en [accessed: 01-07-2017].

[20] *ODIS*, [online] http://www.odis.be/hercules/_nl_home.php [accessed: 01-07-2017].

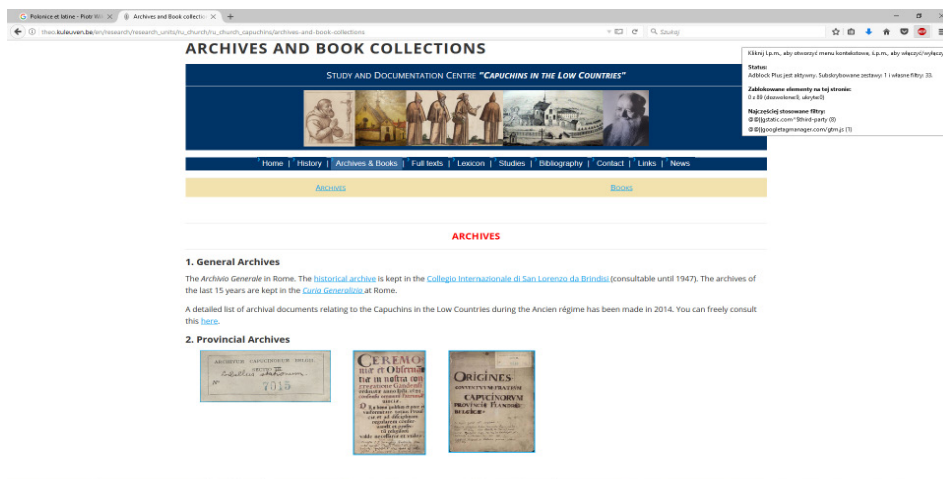[21] *Monasterium.net*, [online]http://monasterium.net/mom/home [accessed: 01-07-2017].

Fig. 3. Screen of Study and Documentation Centre Capuchins in the Low Countries, http://theo.kuleu-ven.be/en/research/research_units/ru_church/ru_church_capuchins

the International Centre for Archival Research (ICARUS), an institution focused on international co-operation and implementation of diversified projects within DH in the field of culture[22]. This is a virtual archive of medieval documents from more than 100 European archives (for Poland, it co-operates with the State Archives in Lublin), where we find not only original documents and their precise description, but also information about known editions or literature connected to them.

A project of a much broader chronological reach but concentrated in one country is *Germania Sacra*[23], which is based on source and editorial research, started at the start of the 20th century, on the history of the German Church (currently being carried out in co-operation with the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen). It collects sources related to the history of the local Church institution from the 3rd/4th century until the time of its liquidation during the Reformation or secularisation early 19th century. The idea of digitising the publication with the same title and elaboration of its supplements and discussions became the basis of the project. However, it was decided to significantly expand the resources available in it, through building independent bases: personal and institutional. The first collects information on both the clergy and lay connected with monasteries and diocesan structures, the second collects information on monasteries and churches from the Holy Roman Empire. In addition to basic information on chronology, affiliation to specific structures, known literature, institutional data is additional complemented by geographic location.

A very significant element of projects important for the monastery's cultural heritage implemented in the so-called memory institutions – archives, libraries and museums - is a digitization. As regards special collections, they require special selection and resolving of problems connected with access to them. Due to emergence of a variety of thematic, institutional, regional, and national projects, it was observed that there was a need to consolidate these activities. One of the most important

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[22] *International Centre for Archival Research (ICARUS)*, [online] http://icar-us.eu/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

[23] *Germania Sacra*, [online] http://www.germania-sacra.de/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].
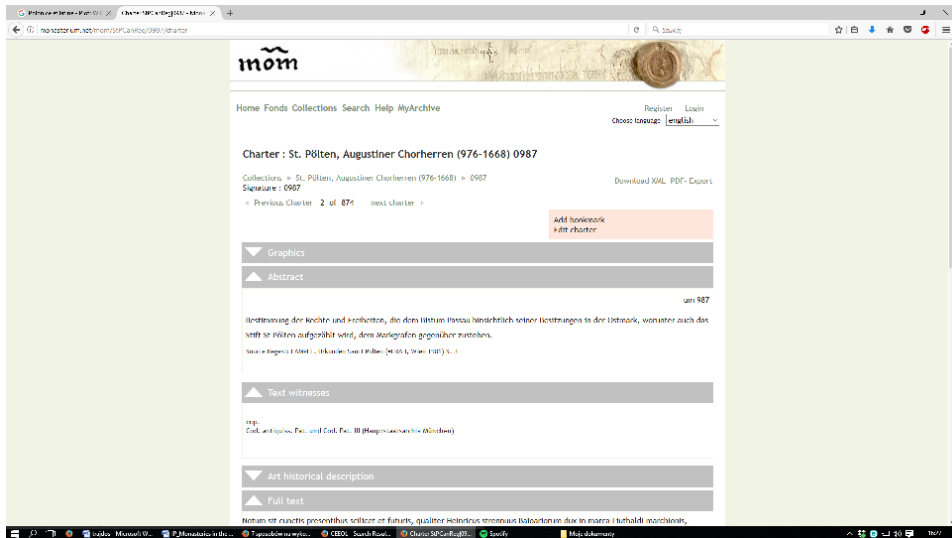
Fig. 4. Screen of Manuscriptorium. Digital Library of Written Cultural Heritage, http://www.manuscriptorium.com/en

Fig. 5. Screen of Germania Sacra, http://www.germania-sacra.de/

initiatives was the establishment of *the European Library* (TEL)[24], within which national libraries now co-operate. Digital collections documenting the cultural heritage of Europe are available at *Europeana*[25], which currently offers more than 50 million manuscripts, printed matter, magazines, cartographic, iconographic or audio-visual

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24 *The European Library*, [online] http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/, [accessed: 01-07-2017].

25 *Europeana*, [online] http://www.europeana.eu/portal.en, [accessed: 01-07-2017].

materials stored in archives, libraries, and museums. *Europeana Manuscriptorium*[26], which is aggregated into historical collections, is among the projects that are of great importance for bibliologists interested in the literary heritage of European Orders.

In the context of the consolidation and unification of activities aimed at ensuring efficient access to digitised collections of various cultural institutions in Europe, it is also worth mentioning the MICHAEL website (*Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe*)[27], which encourages standardisation and creation of a model of digital access of Europe's heritage.

The issue of co-ordination and unification of bibliographic databases of historical collections constitutes a separate issue that is extremely important to bibliological research. One of the basic projects in this area is The Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL)[28]. As part of the consortium, the *Heritage of the Printed Book Database* (HPB), in which old prints and early 19th-century editions from several dozen scientific institutions are recorded, has been created. *CERL Thesaurus*, which is a primary tool also for historians of monastic collections, production of monastic monographs, and search for edition by authors coming from this circle, helps resolve problems that are so important for bibliologists, such as searching for copies, print variants, authorship identification, or provisional search.

The above-mentioned provisional studies are one of the most important issues for bibliological research. It is worth emphasising that apart from the dispersed activities of individual institutions, they have become the subject of coherent projects facilitating integration of data in this field. As an example of such initiative, it is worth mentioning the undertaking of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, which for several years has been carrying out the *Proveniencijos* project devoted to their registration[29]. In the created database, one can find a lot of information about private as well as institutional owners of books connected with orders for hundreds of years of presence in the historical lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In addition, it is worth drawing attention to Polish DH initiatives connected with monastic environment. The *Dziedzictwo kulturowe po klasztorach skasowanych na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej oraz na Śląsku w XVIII i XIX w. Losy, znaczenie, inwentaryzacja*[30] project realizes the concept of elaboration and cataloguing of cultural heritage left after dissolution of monasteries. It covers not only the structure of basic databases of preserved documents: manuscripts, prints, archives, but also collects, among others, information on the architecture or equipment of these facilities as well as personal data. Organisers of the project also try to integrate the community of researchers representing diverse disciplines through organised conferences and publishing initiatives (a series of scientific publications

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26   *Manuscriptorium. Digital Library of Written Cultural Heritage*, [online] http://www. manuscriptorium.com/en [accessed: 01-07-2017].

27   *Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe* [MICHAEL], [online] http:// www.michael-culture.org/, [accessed: 01-07-2017]. See also: MICHAEL Culture Association, http://www.michael-culture.eu/, [accessed: 01-07-2017].

28   The Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL), [online] https://www.cerl. org/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

29   *Proveniencijos*, [online] http://proveniencijos.lnb.lt/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

30   The *Dziedzictwo kulturowe po klasztorach skasowanych na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej oraz na Śląsku w XVIII i XIX w. Losy, znaczenie, inwentaryzacja* [online] http://www. kasaty.pl/home/ [accessed: 01-07-2017].

Fig. 6. Screen of Dziedzictwo kulturowe po klasztorach skasowanych na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej oraz na Śląsku w XVIII i XIX w. Losy, znaczenie, inwentaryzacja, http://www.kasaty.pl/home/

as well as the journal "Hereditas monasteriorum"). For bibliologists, the fact that descriptions of the documents contain data on ownership marks and origins as well as information on past and present places of their storage is of particular importance.

A bibliographical look at the current status and development prospects of DH in research focused on monastic historical heritage demand placing emphasis on organising digital archives and libraries, creating open resources that facilitate not only centralising of data, but also active working with text as well as visualisation of data. The constant development of digital tools useful in humanities research, setting up of institutions supporting research in the field of DH and their increasingly active co-operation with various cultural institutions show that these activities allow for intensification and deepening of study of the heritage of European religious orders.

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Monasteries and digital humanities

Abstract

In humanities, new methodological search in the area of historical research oriented at culture and its different manifestations, also those of the library sense, are often characterized by the interdisciplinarity of research and openness to new research models. They are currently backed up with modern tools and methods based on information technologies. They have also gained an institutional backing of many institutions promoting digital humanities (DH), created mainly in university circles. Improvement in the range of DH is clearly noticeable in the range of research concentrated on the historical aspect of Christianity and its cultural meaning, preserving in the social life practice the cultural goods and religious values. The autopresentations of orders and monasteries in the web - internet websites, blogs, projects devoted to the architectonic reconstruction are supplemented by such tools as digital archives and libraries, personal and geographic databases, bibliographic databases or projects devoted to provenience research - they are becoming a basis for building new Net 3.0 tools necessary for bibliographic and historical research.

Keywords: Monasteries, history, digital humanities, bibliology

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