

# Digitalization of Polish illustrations for children – examples of digital archiving of paper cultural heritage

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**Abstract.** *The paper discusses the issue of the lack of thematically oriented digital archiving of children's books in Poland. Original works of eminent Polish illustrators are not available anymore, they can only be seen in books. Meanwhile, books published long ago cease to exist. Digitization is being undertaken by only two institutions – the Municipal Library in Lublin and a private organization from Krakow: the Polish Illustration portal for children. This work is being pursued under the slogan of Polish picturebook.*

**Keywords:** digital library, Polish School of Illustration, digitalization of Polish illustrated book for children, Picturebook Center (OKO) at Hieronim Łopaciński Public Library in Lublin, Polish Illustration for Children in Internet.

## POLISH SCHOOL OF ILLUSTRATION

There are two important concepts in the history of Polish contemporary art, described both in professional literature and in common encyclopedias, dictionaries and textbooks – this is the Polish School of Posters and the Polish School of Illustration. Both relate to the phenomena of two narrow fields of creativity in which Poles have been winning international recognition and awards for decades, regardless of the economic conditions and the political system in Poland. This paper discusses research area which is the Polish illustration for children within the scope of the phenomenon of the Polish School of Illustration and its availability in digital version. This is an open topic, because it applies to both historical works – picturebooks by recognized artists working in past decades, as well as works currently being created. Most of the artistically

excellent works have been created for paper book formats. In the age of digitization of on-line culture and libraries, their digitization seems to be pending.

Organizers of cultural events, including in the field of books, meet the needs of the recipients. The Bologna Children International Book Fair Bologna 2020 (Bologna Children's Book Fair) took place in Italy on May 4-7 this year. Due to the pandemic, they were held online for the first time. In such a form – via the Internet, the winners of the international Hans Christian Andersen Awards organized by the IBBY under the patronage of the Queen of Denmark were announced on the day of the start of the fair. It was received by: Jacqueline Woodson – an American author of youth novels, winner of ALMA (Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award) two years ago and Albertine Zullo – a Swiss illustrator. Poles were also among the finalists in the Illustrator category – this year Iwona Chmielewska from Toruń. Interestingly, the organizers of the Bologna book fair invited the audience to a virtual exhibition of the finalists' work. To this end, they digitized their illustrations and created a virtual gallery.

## CHILDREN'S DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Other examples of how to interact online with an illustrated book are the activities of the European Digital Library Europeana, the International Childr's Digital Library – ICDL, and in Poland the Digital Libraries Federation (FBC) and the National Library on the Polona.pl website. Unfortunately, while under the intuitive search term “children's literature” or “illustrated books for children” we receive in the above institutions a whole series (counted in

hundreds) of titles, it is difficult to find a more narrow result, i.e. searching digital collections under the slogan “Polish book for children” or “Polish illustration for children”. Even Polish libraries do not create such separate catalogs. All of them, both at the local and national level, archive under the slogan "Literature for Children" all the titles in their resources, both Polish and foreign.

## GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

Against this background, two initiatives run independently of each other are particularly important and promising: OKO (Picture Book Center) of the Municipal Public Library. Hieronim Łopaciński in Lublin, and the Polska Ilustracja dla Dzieci.pl portal run by a private person – Magdalena Kaleta.

The OKO, which has been operating since 2014, invited readers to create a collection of old Polish picture books for children published from 1918 to the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981. Almost 5,000 volumes (4,790) were collected and almost all collections of books for children illustrated by such artists as Józef Wilkoń, Bohdan Butenko, Maria Orłowska, and Janusz Grabiański were reproduced. The process of professional digitization has begun. Currently 100 titles have been scanned. The online version is not available yet.

The Polish Illustration for Children website complements the activities of the Lublin library. On this website the digital version of all titles of Polish illustrators for children are currently published. Selected illustrations and fragments of books as well as announcements of those to be published soon are available on the website. All titles in good resolution are available after asking the site administrator and justifying the request (e.g. for scientific purposes). The Polish Illustration for Children portal has been operating since 2009. It presents (also in English) the works of 147 currently creating Polish illustrators. There is an internal search engine, thanks to which the work can be found not only by the author’s name, but also by the book's title. The administrator of the portal Magdalena Kaleta for her activities in the

dissemination of the Polish illustrated book for children received the IBBY award in 2014.

The above initiatives are currently the only archives of a digitally illustrated book for Polish children books separately. They are extremely valuable for research purposes, although they seem to be only at the beginning of a tedious and long journey.

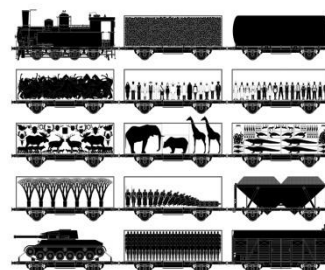


Fig.1. IDEOLO by M. Gurowska from the digital collection by Polish Illustration for Children

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