CHAPTER 13

From Individual Card Catalogues to the National Union Catalogue: A Story of the Computerisation of Polish Church Libraries

Jerzy Witczak

1 The Development of Church Libraries before the Era of Personal Computers

As in the whole of Western Europe, church libraries were the first historical book collections in Poland. Their establishment dates back to the adoption of Christianity in 966. The oldest are the cathedral or chapter libraries in Cracow (inventory of 1110), Gniezno, Wrocław, Poznan and Plock, all of which had been collecting manuscripts since the 11th century. The oldest Benedictine monastery libraries were also created in the 11th century, in Tyniec, Mogilno and Lubin. In modern times, the 16th century was the period of the greatest development of church libraries in Poland. This was the period of Poland’s political power and the so-called ‘golden age’ of national literature. That same period saw the popularisation of printing, influencing the spread of the Reformation, and especially the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent.¹

The 17th century wars against Sweden, the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, and the subsequent secularisation of monasteries wrought havoc with many book collections. In 1795 Poland was finally partitioned between Austria, Prussia and Russia, so the secularisation of monastic libraries was carried out by the respective authorities. This resulted not only in the partial destruction and dispersal of these book collections, but also in their frequent relocation outside the Polish territory.

During these partitions, the Catholic Church – the only independent institution on Polish soil – was concerned with preserving national cultural heritage in that it acted as a collective publisher and ran libraries. The 19th century reorganisation of the structure of Polish dioceses and the establishment of

* Translated by Monika Szela.

new seminaries increased the importance of seminary libraries. These same libraries took over the chapter and monastery book collections that remained after the secularisation. This situation has essentially continued to the present day: seminary libraries are the most important church libraries, which systematically increase their resources and serve as research aids for theology students.

After Poland had regained independence in 1918, there were 25 dioceses and archdioceses of various rites within its new borders. Each of them had its own major seminary with its library. Apart from this, significant theological book collections could also be found in university libraries. The Catholic University of Lublin (founded in 1918), as well as the libraries of the theological faculties of the Universities in Cracow, Warsaw, Lviv and Vilnius merit special mention.

The Second World War inflicted heavy losses on Polish culture, including, of course, library resources. Poland is estimated to have lost at least 13.9 million volumes of books and periodicals, 200,000 old prints, 75,000 manuscripts, 25,000 antique maps, 50,000 units of music collections and 300,000 units of graphic collections which were seized or destroyed by the Third Reich. The total number of losses in cultural assets is often estimated at more than two thirds of the national resources (excluding the eastern borderlands of pre-war Poland). All of this does not include the eastern territories lost by Poland, but comprises school, public and scientific libraries, most of which involve church – seminary – libraries. During this period Polish theology suffered the tremendous loss of the universities of Lviv and Vilnius and their theological faculties together with their library collections. The lack of accurate data, due to the destruction of some of the documentation, makes it hard to assess the quantity of the resources in 1939,2 nor have the war losses sustained by Polish church libraries been fully investigated. Table 13.1 gives selective data for the largest and best documented libraries.

The liberation of Poland from Nazi occupation by the Red Army resulted in the country’s dependence on the USSR and the dictatorship of the Polish Communist Party. At the same time, as a result of the Yalta Conference, Poland lost the Eastern Borderlands to the USSR (now parts of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine) including university centres in Vilnius and Lviv, receiving in return the mostly culturally-alien former Prussian lands in the west and north, only partially compensating for the losses in the east. The population from the Eastern Borderlands was resettled to the western and northern territories. As far as possible, they brought their cultural heritage with them: library and

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### Table 13.1 Losses in church libraries during World War II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Assets Aug. 1939</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Losses [%]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archdiocesan Library</td>
<td>Poznań</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Włocławek</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Catholic University of Lublin</td>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>80,596</td>
<td>5,468</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Library of the Jesuit College Bobolanum</td>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>80,170</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan Library</td>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Convent of the Capuchin Order</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Convent of the Redemptorist Order</td>
<td>Toruń</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Łódź</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathedral Library</td>
<td>Gniezno</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Poznań</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Latin Seminary</td>
<td>Przemyśl</td>
<td>21,050</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Convent of the Benedictine Order</td>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Library of the Basilian Academy</td>
<td>Chełm</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Łomża</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Cracow</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Higher Seminary</td>
<td>Gniezno</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of the Convent of the Franciscan Order</td>
<td>Glogówek</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Museum collections, home libraries, church archives or even church furnishings, including miraculous images of the Virgin Mary. Religious life began in these lands in 1945, which manifested itself in the establishment of major seminaries. The libraries of these institutions were created on the basis of the remnants of church and monastic book collections found in the area,
complemented by private collections of the clergy that had arrived from the East. A special situation existed in Silesia with its capital city of Wrocław, where the historical collections of the Chapter Library and the Library of the Theological Convent, connected with the Catholic and multinational tradition of this land, had survived. Thus, from the beginning, they could serve scientific and formative purposes.3

One of the main targets of the communists was the fight against the Catholic Church, which also took place in the field of culture. First of all, Catholic mass culture – magazines, religious publications, publishing houses, parish libraries – was restricted through censorship and limited paper rations, bans and liquidations. Scientific institutions enjoyed relative independence but were also subject to strict surveillance. In 1954, the state authorities liquidated the theological faculties at the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, creating on their basis the state Academy of Catholic Theology (‘Akademia Teologii Katolickiej’, ATK) in Warsaw. The book collections of those faculties were transferred to the library of the new Academy. At the same time, the Faculty of Evangelical Theology of the University of Warsaw was liquidated; the multi-faith Christian Academy of Theology (‘Chrześcijańska Akademia Teologiczna’, ChAT) in Warsaw was founded in its place. A few years earlier, the state authorities had not agreed to reactivate the Faculty of Theology at the University of Wrocław, which had been renewed after 1945, and the theological book collection had been partly given to the library of the local seminary. Thus, for many years (until 1994) the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) remained the only university in Poland with a theological faculty in its structure. The University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, despite the difficulties and persecutions by the communist authorities, and thanks to numerous foreign donations, gained the status of the largest and leading ecclesiastical and theological library in the country.4 In 1975 its book collection amounted to 681,500 volumes (including 36,571 old prints).5

As a result of this situation, the education of the clergy and the practice of theological research were concentrated mainly in higher (diocesan) theological

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seminaries. Their libraries, since they only served the clergy and candidates for the priesthood and were housed in closed church buildings, could continue to operate and expand their collections. The communist authorities, however, conducted censorship of book resources. The most spectacular action took place in 1960. On 22 August, representatives of the Press Control Office, accompanied by representatives of the Office for Religious Affairs and sometimes the Police, simultaneously entered church libraries in 67 different locations. During a two-day action, libraries all over the country were deprived of approximately 12,000 books, mainly those focused on the social activities of Catholics, Catholic Action and church associations.6

It was also very difficult to collect foreign publications. Customs authorities controlled and often confiscated books sent or transported from abroad. Purchases were practically impossible due to the very high black market exchange rate of Western currencies. The library collections were supplemented mainly by donations, if these managed to get across the border, so it was all rather ad hoc. Despite all these difficulties, thanks to the efforts of the Polish episcopate and the rectors of the universities, the book collections of the libraries of major seminaries, as the most privileged church libraries, were constantly growing. Table 13.2 presents the 1975 inventory.

For all the incompleteness of the data, the inventories of the libraries of religious seminaries were equally impressive. The combined resources of just ten of the libraries listed there – those of the Dominicans, Vincentians, Redemptorists, Pauline Fathers, Divine Word Missionaries, Jesuits (in Warsaw and Cracow), Bernardines, Dehonians and Salesians – amounted to some 618,000 volumes in 1975.

Despite such a rich and extensive network of church libraries there was no central system of information about their resources, with the exception of a few printed partial lists and bibliographies. Individual libraries relied almost exclusively on traditional alphabetical card catalogues, while material catalogues based on systematic classification were rare. This significantly hampered bibliographic search and the use of book collections, especially of foreign literature which was scarce and difficult to access.

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Table 13.2 The size of the book collections of the libraries of major seminaries in 1975

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seat of the seminary</th>
<th>Published since 1801</th>
<th>Old prints</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Białystok</td>
<td>16,845</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>17,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Częstochowa</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drohiczyn</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gdańsk</td>
<td>21,383</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>21,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gniezno</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorzów</td>
<td>26,330</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>27,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katowice</td>
<td>39,300</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>39,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kielce</td>
<td>36,918</td>
<td>8,452</td>
<td>45,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>36,100</td>
<td>14,845</td>
<td>50,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Łomża</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>26,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Łódź</td>
<td>26,525</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>26,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nysa (diocese of Opole)</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>8,700</td>
<td>41,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olsztyn</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelplin</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poznań</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>11,200</td>
<td>96,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Przemyśl</td>
<td>24,864</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>26,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandomierz</td>
<td>59,500</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>79,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siedlce</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarnów</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>7,036</td>
<td>80,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>58,910</td>
<td>23,595</td>
<td>82,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Włocławek</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>25,765</td>
<td>86,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrocław</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>69,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>963,675</td>
<td>152,183</td>
<td>1,115,858</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2 Association for Computerisation

On 4 June 1989, communism in Poland ended and opportunities for society to organise opened up. Likewise, since the early 1990s, Microsoft operating systems and Intel hardware has dominated much of the personal computer
market and the era of standard PCs began. Both of these factors together laid an ideal basis for the creation of a special association of church libraries in Poland.

After the breakthrough year 1989, thanks to opening up to the West after the fall of communism, microcomputers began to arrive in Poland in increasing numbers, especially personal computers compatible with the IBM PC, and the idea of computerising libraries based on this relatively cheap equipment began to spread. In the same year, 1989, two experienced Polish computer scientists, Jerzy Swianiewicz and Jan Wierzbowski, began to create a program at the National Library called MAK (short for Polish ‘Małe Automatyczne Katalogi’ or Small Automatic Catalogues) designed for computers with the MS-DOS system; its 1.0 version was rolled out in 1990. In some church libraries attempts were also made to use individual personal computers to create catalogue databases or to automate the printing of catalogue cards.

It was in these circumstances that the computerisation of church libraries in Poland began, and at the same time the Federation of Church Libraries ‘Fides’ was founded, primarily for this purpose. This happened thanks to one man – Fr. Krzysztof Gonet, a visionary who was passionate about the use of modern computer technology to automate libraries. From a historical perspective, Fr. Gonet appears to be a man of the moment for the new times. A distinguished graduate of the Institute of Library and Information Science at the University of Warsaw in 1981, he initially began working in the Data Processing Department of the National Library after his graduation, but a year later he left to join the Metropolitan Higher Seminary (Polish: ‘Wyższe Metropolitalne Seminarium Duchowne’ – WMSD) in Warsaw. His contacts with the staff of the National Library and the library community continued during his seminary studies, from which he graduated in 1987, and later during his pastoral work. When he was appointed deputy director of the WMSD Library in 1989, he could immediately draw on his knowledge and familiarity with the milieu. He was guided by the thought, heard at an academic conference, that “the computerisation of libraries is a condition for their continued existence in society because the libraries that do not function properly, that are slow to provide library and bibliographical information, will become dead, will lose their readers, and will live only for themselves.”

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“A new stage of work on the computerisation of church libraries,” as Gonet insists, or rather the proper computerisation of the network of church libraries, began with a relevant conference which took place on 24 June 1991 at the headquarters of the Metropolitan Higher Seminary in Warsaw. Convened under the auspices of Franciszek Cardinal Macharski as chairman of the Polish Episcopal Commission on Catholic Doctrine, it was an overwhelming success, as it brought together representatives of 48 church libraries and a total of 130 participants. In addition to speeches by invited guests and demonstrations of hardware and software for libraries, eight libraries shared their experiences with computers. In the final discussion, all participants confirmed the urgent need to begin work on a unified computer system for Polish church libraries. To this end, it was decided to convene a working meeting.

This meeting of leading libraries was also held at the Metropolitan Higher Seminary Library in Warsaw, on 23 September 1991. Thirteen libraries from Catholic colleges and faculties of theology and others already having some achievements in computerisation participated. The declaration adopted by the participants specifically stated the need for uniformity of format and the usefulness of uniformity of software, with the suggestion that it should be the MAK program. There was also a clear reference to the creation of a uniform computer system and a common catalogue base in the future. This theme, as well as the entire declaration, is mainly the work of Fr. Gonet, who from the beginning saw the need for systemic solutions and integration of library systems. The most important fruit of the meeting was the creation of the Federation Fides, whose aim was to “co-ordinate work on the computerisation of library work and to create a computerised network of church libraries.” A provisional Bureau of the Federation was also set up, headed by Fr. Tadeusz Stolz, PhD, Deputy Director of the University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, and the seat of the Bureau was also located there.

The adoption of the founding declaration of the Fides Federation both launched and intensified activities, which were reported during successive annual working meetings. These meetings also included some of the characteristics of the meetings of MAK program users, combined with presentations of novelties and problem solving. The first such meeting, attended by 21 libraries, took place on 30 September 1992 at the KUL University Library. A year later, on 8 May 1993 the second working meeting was also held in Lublin. At that

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time Fides was comprised of 53 libraries. The participants discussed the need for creating a central computer catalogue of theological libraries in Poland and cooperation in creating a computer bibliography of church writings. These two main topics would recur in various ways in the activities of Fides in the coming years, along with the issue of the creation of a dictionary of key words in theology. The hospitable staff of the Computing Centre of the Catholic University of Lublin held second level training in the use of MAK twice. The third working meeting of Fides took place on 9th May 1994 at the Metropolitan Higher Seminary in Warsaw, at which time efforts were already underway to approve the statutes of the Federation. The Polish Episcopal Conference approved the Statutes and officially established the Federation Fides on 18 March 1995. In the Statutes the aim of the Federation is broadly defined as “streamlining the activities of Polish church libraries, the implementation of technical progress, and in particular the computerisation of library work” (Article 6), while the following article lists ten measures for achieving this goal, all of which refer to computerisation. The Statutes makes no mention at all of other forms of cooperation between libraries. Here we can clearly see Fr. Gonet’s intention that the federation should have a specialised character. The third point of this article is the most forward-looking: “Creation and administration of a computer-based, nationwide network of church libraries,” where the main idea of the creator of Fides again comes to the fore.

12  “Art. 7. In view of the widespread influence of the printed word on education, the formation of personal attitudes and the extension of the Gospel message, and in order to provide effective means for the extension of this influence, the Federation shall pursue its objectives by:
(a) research activities and studies on the application of new techniques in library work;
(b) coordinating work on the computerisation of library work;
(c) the creation and administration of a computerised, nationwide network of church libraries;
(d) the creation of useful standards in the computerisation of library activities;
(e) helping individual libraries to implement the computer system and other forms of modernisation of their work;
(f) stimulating work on the creation of computerised bibliographies and catalogues of literature on theology and related sciences;
(g) training of library staff in computer work and other modern working methods;
(h) mandatory exchange of information between members on the state of their individual computerisation work;
(i) the dissemination of experience through meetings, conferences and publications;
(j) obtaining material resources for its own activities and to support the activities of individual libraries and the legal entities to which they belong, aimed at obtaining resources individually for computerisation and the implementation of technical progress” – “Statut Federacji Bibliotek Kościelnych FIDES,” Fides: Biuletyn bibliotek kościelnych 6, no. 1/2 (2000): 31–32 (our translation).
Due to the decision of the Episcopal Conference to approve the statutes, the next meeting of Fides libraries on 20 June 1995 at the Metropolitan Higher Seminary in Warsaw had the character of the General Assembly of the Federation, during which the statutory authorities of Fides were elected, headed by Fr. Jan Bednarczyk, Director of the Library of the Pontifical Theological Academy in Cracow. This event ends the initial period of the existence of Fides.

I do not intend to discuss here in detail the history of the next thirty years of the activities of the Fides Federation, especially in terms of the computerisation of libraries, as they are comprehensively described elsewhere. Instead, I would like to show how consistently the Federation strived to achieve its goal, despite the lack of resources and interest on the part of the Church scholarly circles. All the time efforts were made to keep up with technical progress and the development of IT tools; new solutions were initiated and new opportunities for cooperation created. The people concerned never lost sight of the primary goal of computerisation, which is to satisfy the information needs of the users of church libraries, to give them wide and easy access to catalogue and bibliographic information.

As mentioned above, from the beginning the Federation took on the character of a consortium of libraries using the MAK system, although this was not a prerequisite for membership in Fides and some libraries kept their own solutions or adopted other systems. Four church libraries took advantage of a grant from the Mellon Foundation and joined the VTLS or Horizon consortiums (Catholic University of Lublin, Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Poznań, and Theological Seminary in Łódź). In total over eighty church libraries out of over one hundred that have passed through the Federation have implemented the uniform MAK program, with its format enabling the exchange of data.

In accordance with the outlined programme of activities, the creation of central catalogues – separately for books and for theses – was started from the very beginning, at first through a simple offline accumulation of data sent on floppy disks. From 2001 the data was partly merged automatically with the inclusion of library symbols. The central catalogue was made available on the Internet as early as 1993, initially on a host server, and then using its own server, Fides. From 1994 the central catalogue was distributed to church libraries across

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Poland also on CD-ROM and became an aid for copying ready descriptions for libraries beginning computerisation. From that time until 2005 databases in CD-ROM form were issued annually, and from 2001 were equipped with a graphic interface in the form of the MAKWWW program. The latest version of the central catalogue of books in 2005 had 470,742 entries from 30 libraries, while the “FIDES-Magister” database had 29,419 entries from 22 libraries.

However, the central catalogue created and made available in the manner described above was never really up to date. This is why, in 2004, the central catalogue was replaced by a “union catalogue,” that is the FIDKAR multibrowser (named after the Fides Distributed Catalogue), working with the Z39.50 protocol. The software needed to run it was entirely written on commission from the Fides Federation. Its advantage was its ability to simultaneously search any library system and the catalogues and bibliographies available in the Z39.50 protocol. It could be said to be a very innovative ‘discovery service’ for those times. At the peak of its existence, FIDKAR offered users simultaneous searches in almost a hundred databases of various types, of which about half were available online and the rest from copies placed on the Fides server. Undoubtedly, this solution was a big step forward and served well both librarians making cataloguing easier, and users looking for up-to-date information. However, ten years on, FIDKAR slowly became outdated. There arose new possibilities for collaboration and real co-cataloguing, while the said software was no longer developed. The year 2014 saw a new solution, which will be discussed below. The FIDKAR multibrowser itself is still in operation, but has lost much its relevance. Currently, 46 databases are connected to it: 24 library catalogues (including two central ones), 11 bibliographic databases and 11 dissertation catalogues.14

At this point, speaking about various types of databases which are searched simultaneously in the FIDKAR system, I would like to discuss the issue of creating bibliographies of the contents of journals and collective works. From the very beginning, apart from the creation of a central catalogue, Fr. Gonet and Fides set themselves an equally important goal of creating computer bibliographies of theological writings and related sciences. Originally, the Polish bibliography of theological sciences was to be modelled on the ATLA Religion Database (earlier name: Religion Indexes), which had been already distributed in the form of a CD-ROM. The Federation’s guest at the First General Assembly (19–23 May 1995) was John Bollier, ATLA’s development director. The participants discussed possible forms of cooperation and the exchange

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of databases on optical discs.\footnote{Marta Wójtowicz, “Federacja Bibliotek Kościelnych FIDES w Polsce w latach 1991–2001,” \textit{Fides: Biuletyn bibliotek kościelnych} 9, no. 1/2 (2003): 39.} Although further cooperation between Fides and the American Theological Library Association did not take shape due to the limited capacity of Polish libraries, the innovative publishing of the first database on CD-ROM by Fides in 1995 was appreciated by the American side.

From the beginning, therefore, the individual member libraries undertook to create partial bibliographical databases of the contents of the journals published in their theological centres. After a simple accumulation they became part of a central service on the internet and on CD-ROM. The last version in 2005 of the ‘Bibliografia Nauk Kościelnych (fragment)’ (Bibliography of Ecclesiastical Sciences [fragment]) database comprised 37,709 entries and was a combination of 17 bibliographical databases of various scope and range, created by libraries belonging to the Federation. Next, the bibliographic databases were connected to the FIDKAR multibrowser, in an analogous way to the connection of catalogue databases. Both solutions were very imperfect due to shortcomings in scope and completeness and due to the heterogeneity of the compilation.

In 2011 the Federation managed to solve this problem of the lack of a single, coherent – and reasonably complete – bibliography of the ecclesiastical sciences, for which it had been calling for many years. The cooperation with the National Library resulted in the project called Electronic Bibliography of Theological Sciences (Polish: ‘Elektroniczna Bibliografia Nauk Teologicznych’, EBNT). The National Library made available, free of charge, bibliographic descriptions created by the Department of the Bibliography of Journal Articles, both those included in existing databases from the years 1996–2011 and those newly added in a monthly cycle. This bibliography covers mainly the contents of publications issued by ecclesiastical universities and theological faculties, starting from 1980. A novelty was the combination in one database of both the bibliography of journal contents and the contents of collective works, such as anniversary books and conference materials, modelled on the ATLA bibliographical database. Those descriptions which were not in the data coming from the National Library – i.e. descriptions of chapters from multi-author monographs and descriptions of articles from non-indexed journal issues – came from the Fides libraries. For this purpose, previously created partial bibliographic databases were used. Many descriptions received from the National Library were also corrected and complemented with abstracts. Author’s entries
were unified in accordance with authority records in the NUKAT\textsuperscript{16} union catalogue, and the subject headings language of the National Library was used.

Initially, the EBNT database was developed in the MAK program and accessed from the Fides server. In 2013 it was transferred to the Koha system, and these were the first experiences of using this system to computerise the Federation’s libraries. The bibliography is available at http://biblio.fides.org.pl and through the FIDKAR multi-search engine. As of 30 April 2021, the bibliography contains almost 139,000 bibliographic records, and indexes the full content of over 230 titles of Polish theological, religious and broader ecclesiastical sciences journals, as well as over 520 collective works (publishing series, jubilee books, conference materials, among others). It includes mainly publications issued by Polish ecclesiastical universities and theological faculties.\textsuperscript{17}

3 Union Catalogue of Church Libraries Fides

The rapid advances in information technology and the announcement by the National Library to cease the development and distribution of the MS-DOS-based MAK program, fundamental to the computerisation of church libraries to date, as of 1 January 2013, presented the libraries affiliated with Fides with a very difficult problem. Of the 85 member libraries at this point, only seven were using systems other than MAK – these were the large commercial integrated library systems available through state funding of some universities and theological faculties. The remaining several dozen church libraries, using

\textsuperscript{16} NUKAT is a union catalogue of more than 170 Polish research libraries and also non-research libraries with special collections. NUKAT offers access both to bibliographic and authority records. NUKAT Union Authority File built by NUKAT member libraries is a guarantee of correct and uniform headings used in NUKAT descriptions of documents. NUKAT Centre is a division of the University of Warsaw Library (BUW) which supervises NUKAT union catalogue. https://centrum.nukat.edu.pl/en/about-nukat [accessed May 4, 2021].

\textsuperscript{17} Complementing the work on computerisation of libraries and meeting the information needs of readers, the Fides Federation’s own digital library was created. It was launched in 2006, on the 15th anniversary of Fides. The digital library was conceived as a platform where both Church institutions and individual authors could publish their works. Its content was also to be taken care of by the member libraries by providing digitised objects for publication. Due to the weakness of the member libraries of the federation and due to the lack of funds for digitisation, the expectations of the launch of the digital library have not been fully realised and it still has a relatively small amount of content. It is available at: http://digital.fides.org.pl/.
the virtually-free MAK program, were in danger of losing access to catalogue databases.

The question of which library program would replace the well-deserved MAK was the subject of concern of the Fides Board after the National Library had stopped working on a new version in client-server architecture. The possibility of using one of the Polish library systems for the whole Federation was analysed, due to their lower prices. There was also no doubt that it was necessary to change the concept and move to the model of co-cataloguing with one central database of bibliographic authority records. This model was adopted in national systems intended mainly for public libraries. However, this very resource of bibliographic authority records, not corresponding to a large extent to the resources of Polish and foreign theological literature in church libraries, constituted one of the most serious obstacles in using the offered solutions. Then the Koha system arrived on the scene, and its adoption resulted in the creation of a central catalogue in the full sense of the word.

Already in 2010, thanks to Janusz Kaczmarek, a Dominican, there appeared a Polish implementation of the Koha system, which he used to create a central catalogue of Dominican libraries based on the catalogue of the Library of the Dominican Philosophical and Theological College in Cracow. In 2013, after a longer period of analysis and comparison with other available systems, Koha was presented as a solution during the 19th General Assembly of the Federation in Wrocław. The Board shared the opinion of Fr. Kaczmarek that it is a modern solution, adaptable to new needs, cheap, tried and tested. It was decided that one central catalogue should be created in place of separate catalogues of individual libraries, on the model of the organisation of the catalogues of other library networks in Poland. Prior to the implementation of the Koha system by the Federation as a successor to the MAK program, Kaczmarek had tested the Electronic Bibliography of Theological Sciences (EBNT) in this system, which made it possible to check the mechanisms for updating authority records from files of the NUKAT catalogue and that of the National Library.

On 29 November 2013, the chairman of the Board of Fides, Fr. Jerzy Witczak, invited representatives of libraries interested in participating in the joint project to a meeting at the Library of the of the Congregation of the Mission in Cracow. Twelve libraries were represented at the meeting, some of them as observers. As a result, representatives of seven libraries decided to create a

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common Central Catalogue of Church Libraries. The following assumptions were made:

1. The central catalogue to be maintained in the Koha system and hosted on the Fides server.
2. A common, unified bibliographic record database (one description – many resources).
3. A common interface for the presentation of bibliographic data.
4. A common lending mechanism (but separate readers) and support for inter-library loans.
5. Formal headings in accordance with the NUKAT Union Authority File.
6. Subject description in accordance with the National Library Language File.
7. Inclusion of the catalogue in NUKAT, which implies mandatory active or passive cooperation of member libraries with the NUKAT Centre.
8. The project is to be self-financing: for the necessary IT work, the permanent maintenance of the catalogue and for the salary of the system librarian, the member libraries will pay a fixed monthly contribution to the Fides account.

Points 1 to 4 stem from the specificity of the central catalogue. From the technical point of view, the adopted solution relieves the libraries of the burden of dealing with the IT infrastructure (apart from having working Internet and efficient computers with Internet browsers). Currently the system operates on its own server, Fides, located in one of the member libraries, but it would be just as well possible to give up maintaining one’s own server and purchase such a service in the ‘cloud’, i.e. from a hosting company. This way, only one IT specialist is needed to operate the system for all libraries. In the case of small and medium-sized church libraries this argument seems to be crucial. Maintaining the catalogue in the MAK system already caused considerable problems with servicing and updating the software, and even more so, no modern library system can be used without professional IT support, which most libraries simply cannot afford. For librarians, on the other hand, adopting the principle of ‘one description – many resources’ allows cataloguing to be optimised: the description is made and imported by only one library, while other libraries add only their own items. This also saves time and finances. Finally, the task of central catalogues is to indicate the location of library resources, which helps readers to find out where the document they are interested in is stored. In this way

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the main purpose for which the Fides Federation was established – to enable readers a wide and easy access to catalogue and bibliographic information – is realised.

As far as the use of authority files is concerned, the choice of the formal NUKAT catalogue file seems obvious. It is primarily connected with the decision to establish close cooperation with the NUKAT catalogue and downloading from it the bibliographic authority records as reference records. Most libraries of the Fides Federation are scientific libraries and therefore their cooperation with the university NUKAT centre is natural. Only technical difficulties – using the MAK program – made it impossible to start cooperation earlier. Also, the resources and scope of the literature present in the NUKAT catalogue, co-created from the beginning also by the two largest church libraries in Poland, the Library of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and the Library of the John Paul II Pontifical University of Cracow, correspond to a much greater extent than in other networks to the profile of the collections of the Federation’s libraries. It is also worth mentioning that since 2001 the Fides Federation has been maintaining an updated copy of the NUKAT Authority File in the form of the MAK database, distributing it on commission from NUKAT to several dozen church and non-church libraries.20 Thus, in many church libraries this catalogue was already in use and the control numbers of formal authority records were added to bibliographic records, which during data migration to the new system allowed for unambiguous linking of entries with the current one.

The choice of the language of the subject description was under debate.21 Subject description of documents in NUKAT records is made with three subject heading systems: KABA Subject Headings (used by academic libraries), National Library of Poland Subject Headings (JHPBN), and the Polish version of Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). The language of the National Library of Poland, used by very few academic libraries, was chosen for two reasons: this language had already been used by some Fides libraries based on the MAK system, as its authority file was connected to the catalogues of these libraries, and its control numbers were entered into bibliographic records. The second argument, according to the decision-makers, was the greater advancement and simplicity of the language. In particular, the evolution of the JHPBN, which

20 Until 2009, a copy was distributed on CD-ROM, and since then interested libraries have downloaded it from the Fides server as a zipped MAK database.
had already begun, expressed itself in the abandonment of formal subdivisions (subfield “v”) and their replacement by formal subjects. The rightness of this decision was confirmed by the imminent announcement by the National Library of Poland to start work on the transformation of the National Library of Poland Subject Headings into National Library Descriptors.22

During the Cracow meeting it was also decided that the catalogue of the Library of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology (PWT) in Wrocław would be the starting point for the joint project. Among all the participants of the agreement the PWT Library had the largest catalogue of printed books in the MAK system in the MARC 21 format (maintained since 1992), containing about 91,000 records of good quality, without duplicates, with formal and subject headings organised according to NUKAT and JHPBN authority files. With the help of IT tools created by Kaczmarek a coherence check of the database was soon started and errors and shortcomings, mainly concerning the content of field 008 and ISBN numbers, were removed in the MAK system in order to prepare it for importing into the Koha system.

After six months of preparation, the project entered the implementation phase. As a result of intensive IT two-week work, 91,214 bibliographic records and lending library data were imported into the Koha system and the new system was configured. The catalogue was officially launched on 16 June 2014, and although it initially contained only the data of the PWT Library in Wrocław, from the beginning it has been called the Fides Central Catalogue of Church Libraries. Since then, it has been available at: https://katalog.fides.org.pl/.

The aim of the project is to transfer all previously created catalogue information about the library’s resources as well as the readers’ database (and information on loans, if a lending library was opened) to the new system without any losses, and then to consolidate the bibliographic data with the whole catalogue. This process is multistage and depends on the quality of catalogue data of the library being included in the central catalogue. The integration of the local catalogue into the common catalogue is carried out in the following steps:

1. Checking and correcting the original records in the MAK database so that they are consistent with what should be expected of them. This is essentially about the content of fields and subfields, what is already in the records, rather than complementing the records with new information.

2. Conversion to MARC 21, as correct as the condition of the records will allow, if the catalogue did not use the MARC 21 format.
3. Analysis and correction, where necessary (partly manual), of items’ information.
4. Analysis of information on readers and loans if there was an electronic lending library, and establishing current categories of readers.
5. Inclusion of the catalogue thus corrected and converted in the common catalogue Fides.
6. Automatic exchange of local bibliographical records with NUKAT records where possible. Merge based on NUKAT control numbers with records already existing in the shared catalogue.
7. For the remaining records, automatic preparation of possible replacements from NUKAT or/and records not previously listed due to lack of equivalents, and manual decision-making about replacement so as to maintain the rule of one edition of a work = one record in the catalogue.
8. Generation and consolidation of formal and partial subject headings found in records that are not replaced or merged.

The most important part of the whole process of inclusion of each new catalogue database is the exchange of local records into unified NUKAT records, which constitute a reference point for all local catalogues included in the central catalogue. The first stage of the process is automatic exchange with the use of scripts, which are the solution developed by Kaczmarek, based on multi-criteria analysis of records, with one hundred percent certainty of bibliographic descriptions matching. The success rate of automatic exchange depends on the quality of the local catalogue, but also on the nature of the collection. Most important, however, is the fact that in the collections of church libraries there are still many rare publications, local or foreign theological books which have not yet been included in the NUKAT catalogue because large academic libraries do not have them, so there are no equivalents for them.

In addition to the automatic exchange, a new member library is required to review the automatically prepared lists of possible replacements from NUKAT for local records and mark them off the list. The reviewed files are then processed in a similar way to the automatically selected replacements, leading to further catalogue consolidation. In addition to such automatically created lists, other consolidation methods are used – searching for potential duplicates by title and number of pages; generating a list of possible equivalents based on ISBN numbers alone; lists of records for which lack of equivalents in NUKAT is unlikely (e.g. works published in Polish after 1945). Each time, librarians of a given library are required to review these lists and mark relevant suggestions.
or search manually in the NUKAT catalogue. For records which have not yet
been exchanged for NUKAT records, a particularly important activity is the
consolidation of formal entries. Here again, IT methods are used to support
this process. Libraries receive a list of suggested authority equivalents for the
headwords used in their bibliographic records and by selecting appropriate
options the operation of exchange and consolidation of authority headings is
prepared, which is performed by a system IT specialist.  

In principle, libraries have a maximum of six months to carry out this con-
solidation work. It is obvious, however, that they do not ensure a full match
with the current resources of the NUKAT catalogue nor a full implementa-
tion of the principle ‘one edition of a work = one record’. Some of the rea-
sons include misspellings, different ways of processing multi-volume works or
continuous publications, and incomplete records. Consolidation is therefore
a continuous process: it also takes place e.g. on the occasion of cataloguing
new items or browsing the catalogue, during consolidation work carried out by
administrators, or by means of periodical automatic comparison of the data-
base with newly created NUKAT records.

In addition to the main catalogue, libraries included in the Central
Catalogue often have other databases – for journals, old prints, textbooks or
theses. Ultimately, these should all be integrated in a single catalogue. The con-
solidation of journals – very desirable from the readers’ point of view – does
not entail major difficulties. However, the consolidation of catalogues of old
prints seems much more interesting. In 2016, the catalogue of the PWT Library
in Wrocław, with 9893 records, was imported as the first one. It was created
on a different basis – a separate record for each print. Moreover, in this case
each copy is provided with individual information on provenance and binding,
so record-merging is more difficult. It was decided, for example, to multiply
fields 561 and 563 for old prints, containing, apart from the content of notes,
also information on the library and the signature (in sub-fields 5 and 3). Two
additional local authority files were created for provenance – individuals and
corpora – which control the content of fields 900 and 910 assigned for stand-
ardised provenance. Descriptions of old prints from other libraries are slowly
being added to a common database together with the local catalogue. They are
also catalogued on an ongoing basis, so the consolidation between libraries in
this respect is also becoming a reality. Because of the complexity of descrip-
tions and variants of old prints, automatic exchange is not an option here, and

even an automatic search for exchangeable records is difficult, especially as
deciding on the exchange requires specialist knowledge and very often com-
parison of the description with the copy. It is worth noting that the NUKAT cat-
ologue still contains relatively few records for old prints, so for many there is no
reference authority point. On the other hand, adding to the Central Catalogue
descriptions of dissertations (doctoral and master theses) creates a large num-
ber of bibliographic records and author’s entries which will not have their
equivalents in the NUKAT catalogue. Therefore, we should not expect in the
future a full harmonisation of the Fides catalogue with the NUKAT catalogue,
which does not foresee cataloguing master theses.

In parallel with the consolidation work, the libraries have been carrying out
normal cataloguing activities since incorporation. For items that are already
in the shared catalogue, this consists purely of adding their own copy. Items
that are included in the NUKAT catalogue are catalogued by downloading a
description and adding a copy. Items that are missing from both the Fides and
NUKAT catalogues should generally be first catalogued remotely through the
client of the Virtua system and only then downloaded. Libraries that have not
yet started active cooperation with NUKAT are allowed to create catalogue
descriptions in the Koha system, but it is recommended that this applies only
to older and rare items. With regard to records previously entered into the cen-
tral catalogue from local catalogues, for which there are no counterparts in
NUKAT, actively cooperating libraries have no global obligation to create new
records for them, but in the case of adding their own copy such an obligation
does exist. Moreover, the practice of creating new records in NUKAT is well
established, e.g. for similar editions, e.g. within one year, which are most diffi-
cult to distinguish in automatic exchange processes.

In order to ensure the high quality and security of the catalogue, indi-
vidual libraries and administrators have special control IT tools at their dis-
posal. These include automatic checking for duplicates of bibliographic and
authority records, automatic checking for consistency with NUKAT, automatic
checking for quality of new records, and automatic checking for modifications
because neither NUKAT records nor other people’s records can be modified
locally. An automatic analysis of new and modified records in the NUKAT cat-
ologue, suggesting possible exchange of local descriptions, is conducted on
an ongoing basis. These tools generate daily or weekly reports, sent by e-mail.
Currently, the function of the administrator is performed by two people work-
ing with only a small capacity, supported by the work of the system librarian/IT specialist.
4 Results of Cooperation

Within almost seven years of its launch in June 2014 until the end of April 2021, twenty-six libraries were included in the Fides Central Library Catalogue in this way. The catalogue is growing and changing dynamically. As of 30 April 2021, the statistics of the database were as follows:

- 603,125 bibliographic records, including 384,870 records retrieved from the NUKAT catalogue (64%);
- 16,084 analytical records with descriptions of chapters in monographs;
- 495,200 authority records, including 438,400 from NUKAT authority file (89%);
- 2,033,330 copy records including:
  - more than 1,817,500 volumes of books published since 1801;
  - more than 176,500 volumes of periodicals;
  - 16,462 old prints (including 1,116 incunabula); and
  - more than 16,900 dissertations.

It is interesting to compare the current quantitative data of individual libraries participating in the Central Catalogue with the data obtained in the BETH survey conducted among Fides libraries in 2010 (although note that not all libraries returned the survey at that time).24 These statistics are presented in Table 13.3.

It is difficult to precisely compare all these figures. The 2010 figures were most often only estimates and did not include some collections, such as copies of journals or dissertations. Also, the percentage of computerisation was most likely counted in different ways, e.g. not including special collections. In turn, the data from the Central Catalogue is very precise, but says nothing about collections not yet catalogued. It is therefore best to compare only the numbers of copies of books printed since 1801, i.e. columns 2 and 6. Taking into account acquisitions of the last ten years, slow progress in cataloguing older collections can be seen in most libraries. Above all, however, thanks to the use of a single computer system, for the first time this statistic gives a very good and reliable picture of the current size of the book collections of member libraries.

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TABLE 13.3  Comparison of the collections of libraries forming the Central Catalogue in the years 2010 and 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>BETH 2010 survey</th>
<th>Fides Catalogue 30.04.2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Books copies</td>
<td>Total copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Białystok, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>48,140</td>
<td>49,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bydgoszcz, Institut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Częstochowa, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>88,300</td>
<td>88,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drohiczyn, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbląg, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>27,580</td>
<td>27,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gniezno, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>47,540</td>
<td>47,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalisz, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>44,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow, Bernardians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow, Missionaries</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>165,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow, Salesians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow, Ursulines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow, Higher Sem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legnica, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>101,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poznań, Society of Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poznań, Franciscans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, The JPII Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandomierz, Diocese</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>179,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siedlce, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>80,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadniki, Dehonians</td>
<td>65,170</td>
<td>65,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Świdnica, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>21,880</td>
<td>21,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw, Loretan Sisters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>198,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw, Higher Sem. Praga</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Włocławek, Higher Sem.</td>
<td>77,150</td>
<td>94,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrocław, PWT</td>
<td>132,900</td>
<td>140,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakroczym, Capuchins</td>
<td>43,300</td>
<td>51,833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another important effect of the participation of libraries in the Central Catalogue Fides, combined with the shared cataloguing in a single database, is the creation of a kind of single virtual library. The collections of this ‘library’ are very rich and varied (about half a million different works). It has become very easy to find the library that holds the item you are looking for and to access it through interlibrary loans or by ordering a digital copy. The cataloguers at these member libraries communicate with each other by e-mail and telephone, e.g., to uniquely identify the items catalogued or to request the exchange or merging of records. The modification of a local record created by another library also requires prior approval. Modifications to subject descriptions are analogous. This creates a sense of responsibility for a common catalogue, and at the same time a certain community solidarity, which can support librarians who work in very small teams, or run their libraries alone. It is also very important to improve one’s competence through contact with other libraries and church librarians, both in the implementation phase and in the collaboration phase.

As has already been said, an obligatory part of the project of the Fides Central Catalogue is the cooperation with NUKAT, active or passive. The NUKAT catalogue (http://katalog.nukat.edu.pl) constitutes, on the one hand, a source of authority for bibliographic records as well as formal and subject headings, together with a mechanism for their updating. On the other hand – but only as part of active cooperation – it allows for remote cataloguing of new items using the client of the Virtua system. This makes it possible to use the NUKAT Centre’s control procedures, which is particularly important given the lack of funds for employing in-house administrators. It was agreed with the management of the Centre that the Fides consortium will be treated as a federation of separate libraries, signing separate cooperation agreements with the Centre. This allows each institution to enter into cooperation at a time and to an extent convenient to it. Each library starts cooperation with NUKAT from data downloading (passive cooperation) and decides when it is ready to enter data into NUKAT (active cooperation).25

Moreover, moving to the Koha system and establishing cooperation with NUKAT fulfils the main goal of the Fides Federation, which is to disseminate information about the resources of Polish church libraries. As long as they were using the MAK program, cooperation was impossible for technical reasons. Now downloading descriptions to local catalogues provides NUKAT end-users with one-stop access to information on the resources available in

church libraries. The cataloguer downloads a selected bibliographic record to the local database and adds the library symbol to the original description in the NUKAT database. The symbol is displayed to the end-users as the name of the library hyperlinked to the copy of the given description in the local catalogue. As a result, the end-users are provided with information on which libraries hold a selected document and what its current circulation state is. This information can be accessed world-wide via the Internet. Bibliographic records from NUKAT are also uploaded into the largest international union catalogue, WorldCat. Since November 2019, the NUKAT database can also be searched with the KVK virtual catalogue. The NUKAT Centre uploads authority records from NUKAT into the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF). Among them are a (relatively small) number of records made by church cataloguers. This all means that information on holdings of Polish church libraries is available throughout the linked data world.

The cooperation of the member libraries of the Fides Central Catalogues with NUKAT can be summarised by the following figures (as of 30 April 2021). The total number of bibliographic records downloaded by particular libraries from the NUKAT database, or rather records to which their symbol is added in NUKAT, is 1,187,225. The percentage share of NUKAT records in the total catalogue of each library, related to the progress of consolidation and the nature of the collection, ranges from 50 to 99 percent. The number of bibliographic records and authority headings created and uploaded into the NUKAT catalogue by the 16 libraries that already have active collaboration rights amounts to: 32,780 bibliographic records and 14,034 authority records. A large part of descriptions entered in the NUKAT catalogue are unique items, often available only in one member library, which have not been catalogued by any large academic library before. The possibility of cataloguing at the national level is also an opportunity to widely promote local publications from one’s own theological and ecclesiastical environment.

As mentioned, the 26 libraries co-creating the Central Catalogue are not the only libraries of the Fides Federation cooperating with the NUKAT catalogue. This cooperation was started earlier by libraries of the Catholic University of Lublin and the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow, which were co-creators of NUKAT from the beginning, as well as the Library of the Major Seminary in Łódź and the Diocesan Library in Toruń,26 the last two using large integrated library systems. Two catalogues of Dominican libraries also cooperate with NUKAT: The Dominican Philosophical and Theological College in

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Cracow and The Thomistic Institute in Warsaw, also using the Koha system. Recently two libraries in Warsaw, the Bobolanum Library and the Library of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, have started individual cooperation, as well as the Jesuit-run Ignatianum Academy Library in Cracow, which have also implemented the same system. In total, there are already 35 libraries of Fides and three libraries of theological faculties at state universities (also members of Fides) belonging to the NUKAT catalogue via their main libraries, which constitutes one fifth of all institutions forming NUKAT. All these libraries in the process of co-cataloguing theological and religious collections build a common resource which can be used by each other. In this way the NUKAT catalogue has also become a platform for cooperation between very many church libraries in Poland (and one Polish library in Rome).

One can try to compare the contribution of the libraries forming the Central Catalogue Fides to NUKAT, treating them as one virtual whole, with the contribution of the other cooperating libraries of the Federation. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 13.4. Undoubtedly, the Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, as the biggest church library in Poland, has the richest and the biggest book collection and at the same time has introduced the biggest number of new descriptions. Second place in terms of the number of records downloaded – with over 400 thousands – takes the Fides catalogue, which shows the considerable diversity of the combined book collections of the libraries participating in the Central Catalogue. Considering the fact that all this constitutes only less than two thirds of the whole catalogued collection, it shows how important the presence of information about these collections in the NUKAT catalogue is. As far as the number of bibliographic records created is concerned, the contribution of the work of these libraries also turns out to be significant. Difficult to measure, but significant, are also numerous corrections of NUKAT (bibliographic and formal) records and eliminated duplicates, related to consolidation activities.

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27 See Agata Muc, “The Libraries of the Theological Faculties in Poland,” https://beth.eu/events/annual-conferences/previous-conferences/43rd-2014-wroclaw/ [accessed May 5, 2021]. Of the six libraries of theological faculties, four catalogue their collections within the university catalogue, and of these three are visible in the NUKAT catalogue (Olsztyn, Katowice, Toruń).

28 On 2 June 2021, the Library of the Catholic University of Lublin terminated its cooperation with NUKAT catalogue and joined to the common catalogue maintained by National Library of Poland, due to the transition to the Alma library system. For 18 years, librarians from the KUL Library entered into NUKAT 109,975 bibliographic records and 125,018 authority records (information from the NUKAT Centre).
Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the benefits for librarians working within the Central Catalogue thanks to the participation in NUKAT; the constructive control of the correctness of the created descriptions by the administrators of the NUKAT Centre, free online training and consultations, auxiliary materials, and participation in conferences. Participation in this project serves to improve the professional competences of church librarians. Obtaining the right to enter data into the NUKAT catalogue is a kind of ennoblement for them and may contribute to a better perception of their work by the authorities of church institutions. To the best of their modest possibilities, the associates of the Fides catalogue, especially those in charge of its functioning, contribute to the development of NUKAT in that they propose new arrangements, signal system errors, take part in discussions, or make presentations during conferences. The result also is a full-fledged presence of church libraries associated in the Federation Fides in the central catalogue of scientific libraries in Poland. It should be emphasised that this presence is possible thanks to the openness and kindness of the whole team of the NUKAT Centre at the University of Warsaw, especially its director, Ewa Kobierska-Maciuszko, former director of the University Library in Warsaw, where the contribution of Fides libraries to this national catalogue is appreciated and emphasised. The organisation of a special session at the 22nd General Assembly of the Fides Federation in Warsaw on 14 September 2016 at the premises of the NUKAT Centre in the University Library was a special expression of this appreciation.
5 Challenges and Prospects

After ten years of using the Fides central catalogue in the form of the MAK database on CD-ROM, and after another ten years of using the ‘union catalogue’, i.e. the FIDKAR multi-search engine, seven years ago the Federation started to create its central catalogue in the full meaning of the term. It is to be hoped that this pursuit of progress will serve readers and librarians well for years to come. With that said, however, it is important to face current challenges and think about the future.

First, it should be noted that more than thirty libraries of the Federation, most of which are large academic libraries of diocesan and religious seminaries, are still using the outdated MAK program. In their case, the problem of data security and access to catalogue information is still not solved. We expect that sooner or later these libraries will ask to be included in the Central Catalogue. However, doubling the number of libraries cooperating in one system would certainly give rise to organisational problems that would have to be dealt with.

For libraries currently included in the Central Catalogue, computerisation is also not yet complete. Only a few have 100 percent of the books published since 1801 catalogued by computer, and many older descriptions need to be corrected and unified. Likewise, the journal collections of many libraries have not yet been added to the catalogue. Above all, cataloguing special collections, especially old prints, whose number (according to the BETH 2010 survey) exceeds 250,000 volumes, remains most problematic. Meanwhile, only 16,500 items are currently catalogued in the Central Catalogue. The cataloguing of these valuable historical books and the study of their provenance would be a very important contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Church. At the same time, however, it is an extremely difficult task because correct and complete cataloguing of old prints according to these standards requires very high qualifications and a lot of experience. Only a few church librarians are able to meet these expectations and undertake this task. It seems that the only possibility would be to obtain external funds within the framework of projects financed by the state, and to employ appropriate people.

As far as full bibliographical information is concerned, the Central Catalogue alone, by its very nature, does not provide access to data on the contents of books and journals in the form of descriptions of separate chapters and articles. For the time being, two compatible Fides databases must be used, the other being the Electronic Bibliography of Theological Sciences (EBNT) discussed earlier. Attempts have already been made to enrich the Central Catalogue with the so-called analytical records for collective works, which currently number about 16,000. They are downloaded automatically from the NUKAT catalogue for those books whose descriptions were entered into the
catalogue. For IT reasons it is difficult to download such records from other sources, especially from the catalogue of the National Library. Work is underway to transfer another 10,000 records from the EBNT database to the NUKAT catalogue (enriching its content in the field of theology), and to then download them back to the Central Catalogue.

With regard to the descriptions of journal articles, of which there are many more, a decision has still not been taken to include them in the Fides catalogue, which is used simultaneously for lending to all member libraries. This is problematic from the point of view of the reader, who might feel confused when encountering the catalogue descriptions of journal articles that are not available in his/her library. There are also technical and organisational difficulties. Both the NUKAT catalogue and the catalogue of the National Library contain numerous analytical records for journals. However, many more journals are indexed completely by the National Library, from which we can download descriptions to the EBNT database. In the NUKAT catalogue descriptions are created by individual libraries according to their own criteria and needs, so the indexing is not at all methodically structured. However, downloading data from the NUKAT catalogue does not present any technical difficulties and can be automated, while downloading them from the National Library database to the Central Catalogue would require much more work due to the inconsistency of authority files. Thus, the connection between the Central Catalogue Fides and the EBNT bibliographic database remains an open question.

This is not all. First there is the task of creating a full theological bibliography on an ongoing basis, based on criteria developed by the Polish theological community, which needs to be solved. At present, due to the lack of funds for employing personnel to carry out this work, we rely only on descriptions from the National Library in expanding the EBNT. Moreover, the aspirations of the theological community reach further, towards the modernisation of the whole database and linking it with the repository of full texts of articles and books. Therefore, the University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, in agreement with the Federation Fides, undertook to develop a project of such a knowledge base, which would easily provide access to the scientific output of theologians through access to full texts of studies in a digital version. After possible funding from the Polish Ministry of Education and Science, the transformation of the EBNT into a modern information system could begin. One of the aims of this project is also to shape the database in such a way that it can be searched by discovery services used in Polish academic libraries.

A further issue is the software for the Central Catalogue. Currently, this role is fulfilled very well by the Koha system, which is still being developed by an international community of volunteers. The launch of the Fides catalogue was
one of the first Polish implementations of this integrated library system and at the same time a successful attempt to use it for cooperation with the NUKAT catalogue. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of libraries in Poland using this software, which could also be partly due to the success of the Fides project. The increasing popularity of the Koha system guarantees greater IT security of the project and even better adaptation of the software to Polish conditions. This also bodes well for a possible future change of the Koha system to a new generation open system. As long as the bibliographic data is consistent and of high quality, which is the goal of all current activities of the Fides librarians, transferring it to the new system will not present any difficulties.

Finally, in the context of the BETH anniversary, it is worth noting that the next step in the integration of catalogues and bibliographic databases could be the creation of multilingual international systems, for example at a European level. At the moment there is only a very simple search for information on books in services such as KVK or WorldCat, while bibliographic and full-text databases from different providers – mostly licensed – are available from different addresses. Such a system should be able to use developments in artificial intelligence theory, semantic networks, and new data formats to automatically translate and retrieve information. Due to the price, it is difficult to imagine that such a future system would be open and accessible to small libraries. However, it may be worth taking the first steps on this path, at least in the field of theology. This should be the focus of efforts by BETH – an association of European national theological library organisations.

Bibliography


