The Role of Information Literacy and Libraries
in Shaping 21st Century Skills
in Poland

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2014 – a special year for Poland...

- ✓ **25th anniversary of our freedom (1989 – the first democratic election and the end of communism)**

- ✓ **10th anniversary of Poland's accession to European Union**

- ✓ **Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, elected the President of the European Council**

- ✓ **Poland became world volleyball champions ☺**

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21st Century Skills

A „buzzword" that highlights changes in technology and society

BUT:

- hundreds of descriptors of the skill set
- many definitions
- term seems vague and confusing
- can be discussed from several angles:
  - ✓ life
  - ✓ workforce
  - ✓ interpersonal
  - ✓ applied

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21st Century Skills

- ✓ **Language competencies**
- ✓ **Intercultural competencies**
- ✓ **Ways of thinking**
- ✓ **Way of working**
- ✓ **ICT competencies**
- ✓ **Information competencies**

In the U.S. …

MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, AND
21st Century Skills

INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/21stCenturySkills.pdf

Purpose of the study

- ✓ **to draft a problem of omitting MIL in official documents**

- ✓ **to identify the gaps where MIL programmes and practices promoting acquiring and developing those skills could be implemented**

- ✓ **to prepare a proposal arguing that libraries are able to actively participate in shaping 21st century skills since it is not solely the domain of educators and schools**

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Poland and the notion of 21st century skills

✓ **In Poland, there exists no document (governmental, NGO, or other) that describes the 21st century skills and competencies, using explicitly this umbrella term**

✓ **The most common is using the name of one or several specific skills and/or competencies, e.g. digital competencies, information competencies, IT skills**

✓ **The most "popular" competencies in use, listed in Polish projects and publications are:**

- • **media competencies (media education)**
- • **digital competencies (digital education)**

METHODOLOGY

http://www.ebay.ca

Rhetorical analysis, based on Kenneth Burke's <u>rhetoric and identification theory</u>

In his theory, Burke defines three stages of identification:

1. the process of naming something (or someone) according to specific properties (i.e. observation)

2. the process of associating with and disassociating from others

3. the product or end result of identifying

For Burke, identification is more a concept than a method.
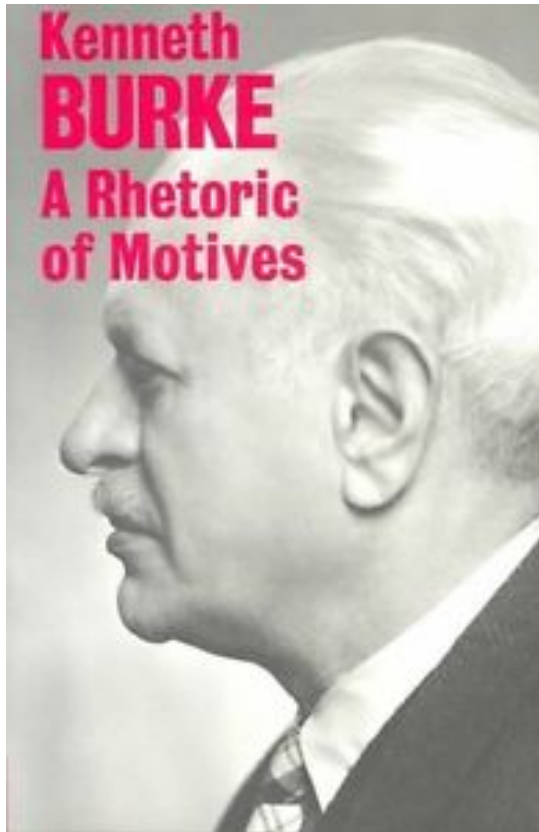
Documents Analysed (1)

The documents related to libraries and 21st century skills published up to date in Poland by governmental agencies as well as by higher education institutions:

- ✓ **Law on Higher Education**
  (Pl. *Ustawa Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym*)

- ✓ **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications**
  (Pl. *Krajowe Ramy Kwalifikacji*)

- ✓ **Ministry of Administration and Digitization service of media education, named *Media Guidance***
  (Pl. *Drogowskaz Medialny*)

- ✓ **Wide Agreement in Aid of Digital Skills**
  (Pl. *Szerokie Porozumienie na Rzecz Umiejętności Cyfrowych*)

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Documents Analysed (2)

Statutes of three prominent, Polish public universities:

Jagiellonian University in Cracow, est. 1364

University of Wrocław, est. 1702

University of Warsaw, est. 1816

Main results (1)

**Two general tendencies
could be observed while analysing
the data**

Main results (1)

1. In analysed governmental documents libraries as independent institutions do not exist; the vague need for establishing the "space where skills can be shaped" is postulated in the documents, however not explicitly named

   But these "spaces" exist already! They are named "libraries"

2. The critical analysis of the documents from the higher education sector pointed out that, if the library exists, it plays a somehow „optional" role

   "May" is a verb often used in all documents (*the library may play the role…, the library may support...*)

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Main results (2). Higher Education

**In the Higher Education Act,
Article 88 is dedicated to libraries**

Main results (2). Higher Education

"there is a library-information system at the university and the library constitutes its basis. The statute of the university defines the organization and functioning of this system"

At once the national law refers to higher education institutions and their independence, and gives them a carte blanche in defining the role and mission of academic libraries

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**The rhetorical analysis of statutes
of three Polish universities allowed
to chart Burkean "equation" related to
a didactic role of university library**

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Main results (3). Higher Education

The vagueness of libraries role arises at the academia level

University of Warsaw Statute: "The library fulfills the scientific, didactic and publishing tasks in the frame of its competencies"

University of Wrocław: "The library is a basic university unit, considering its scientific and didactic nature as well as services provided to other units"

Jagiellonian University in Cracow: does not even mention the didactic role of library and narrow its role, by stating "The library-information system's task is, particularly, providing access to library and information collections, necessary for didactic process and scientific research"

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Main results (4). Higher Education and Bologna Process?

✓ **Its implementation that had to be done in Poland in academic year 2012/2013**

✓ **None of the analysed universities has changed or modified its statute in the regard of European Higher Education Area**

✓ **Introducing the Bologna Process seems to be a good opportunity to change and adjust the academic didactics to the needs of modern students**

Main results (4). Higher Education and Bologna Process?

- ✓ **Information skills defined as generic ones in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, implicate the need for realisation of information literacy programmes at the universities**

- ✓ **Hence, the university library should be an obvious partner to achieve this goal**

- ✓ **But, for the time being, this solution has not been taken into consideration yet by the authorities of Polish universities**

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Main results (5). Government

- ✓ **In November 2011, the Ministry of Administration and Digitization was established**

- ✓ **One of the ministry main missions – to promote digital competences among citizens**

- ✓ **July 2013 a service of media education, named *Media Guidance* (Pl. *Drogowskaz Medialny*) was launched**

- ✓ **Also in July 2013 The Wide Agreement for Digital Skills (Pl. *Szerokie Porozumienie na Rzecz Umiejętności Cyfrowych*) was inaugurated**

- ✓ **These two initiatives focus on chosen skills and provide a vague vision of the results to be achieved**

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Main results (5). Government

In the ministry vision, digital competencies found their place, and the terms "media education" and "digital education" were used

However, neither the role of libraries in shaping those "educations" was signaled, nor the term "information literacy" or "media and information literacy"

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Conclusion / Discussion (1)

- ✓ **What kind of competencies should student develop: adaptive or emancipation ones?**

- ✓ **Should adaptation to the market be a determinant?**

- ✓ **Poland is still perceived as a market of employees and not employers. The competencies described in Ministry of Administration and Digitization project seem to respond entirely to the need of the labour market**

- ✓ **Is it a right path to follow?**

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Conclusion / Discussion (2)

- ✓ **Are there any hidden assumptions in the governmental programmes?**

- ✓ Should the employers dictate to higher education institutions what competencies should be taught?

- ✓ **Should the corporations' values be taken for granted?**

- ✓ What is more important: the interest of citizens or the interest of corporations?

- ✓ **Should the education be provided in the spirit of neoliberal economy?**

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What Next? (1)

- ✓ **It appears that** **Polish libraries must find themselves their place** **and define their role in shaping 21st century skills**

- ✓ **The major universities** **in the country, being signatories to the Bologna Process** **seems to ignore libraries** **as spaces appropriate for doing so**

- ✓ **There is a strong need for applying in practice the term** **"library advocacy"** **in order to strengthen the librarianship in 21st century and to emphasize its values and services**

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What Next? (2)

- ✓ **The role of librarians' associations may be crucial in advocating for strengthening the position and visibility of libraries both on academic and public forums**

- ✓ **Also, on business forum which is, as showed above, the strong and influential player**

- ✓ **However, the question still remains open, should librarians take part in this *adaptation vs. emancipation* debate, opting for one of those?**

- ✓ **And will it be possible to remain impartial while advocating for shaping the skills necessary in the 21st century?**

- ✓ **How can academic libraries influence on the change of current situation?**

Thank you

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