

History

The Library in the years 1922-1954

The traditions of libraries in the Konecki County date back to 1922 when the Universal Library was established, located in the premises of the Polish Women's Association. Its collection consisted of books donated by the town's residents as well as those purchased with public funds. In 1929, it was renamed the Municipal Universal Library. As of January 1, 1930, the library had 1,611 volumes and 144 readers. In the same year, the County Department established the Central Library of the Konecki County Assembly, which had 1,404 volumes and offered free access to its collection.

The trend in the Kielce Voivodeship to create permanent municipal institutions led to the establishment of libraries in 17 out of 22 municipalities in Konecki County by 1935, with a total collection of 10,300 volumes. In the same year, the Central Educational Library of the County Municipal Association was started, intended to provide comprehensive support to municipal libraries. The strong tradition of library activities in the former Konecki County during the interwar period, interrupted by World War II, led to the immediate creation of public libraries after the liberation.

The first public library in the town of Końskie was the Municipal Public Library, opened in 1945 on the initiative of the educational authorities. Initially, its collection consisted of books donated by the community and remnants of manor libraries. The library also received books regularly through central purchases made by the Ministry of Education and later the Ministry of Culture. The head and sole employee of the institution was Mrs. Anna Strzelecka, who had incomplete secondary education. The library was open three times a week in the afternoons. Despite the modest financial resources allocated for its needs, the collection gradually grew, and the number of readers steadily increased.

Alongside the Municipal Library, the County Public Library was opened in October 1947, housed in the historic Małachowski Palace, occupying a space of 45 m². Its main task was to organize a network of municipal and town libraries throughout Konecki County and to instruct those running library points.

The foundation of the County Public Library, like that of the Municipal Library, consisted of books donated by the community and those from manor libraries. The first phase of work involved gathering and organizing the collections of former libraries that survived among the local population. Significant contributions were made by Mr. Jan Pacak, the Junior Inspector for Education and Adult Education. The responsibilities of the head of the County Public Library were entrusted to Mrs. **Helena Cukrowska**, who had secondary agricultural education and obtained professional qualifications through a librarianship course. As the number of library branches in the county grew, so did the library staff. By 1954, the library employed three people: Mrs. Helena Cukrowska (head), Mrs. Wiktoria Chonin and Mrs. Helena Janczewska. In 1952, Mrs. Maria Kowynia took over the position of head of the library.

District and Municipal Public Library in Końskie

Significant changes in the operation of the Konecki County libraries were introduced by a regulation from the Minister of Culture and Art regarding the merger of district and municipal libraries. Based on this regulation, the previously independent institutions - the Municipal Public Library and the District Public Library - were combined to form the District and Municipal Public Library in Końskie. This merger allowed for an increase in the staff, which facilitated the

reorganization of the library, a process that required a considerable amount of time and effort. The leadership of this institution was taken over by Mrs. Krystyna Wąsowska. Thanks to her efforts, the library's spatial situation improved, enabling the establishment of a Children's Department in 1958. The first employee of this department was Mrs. Danuta Serafin.

A very important task of the District and Municipal Public Library in Końskie was to create a complete network of libraries within the district. This was fully achieved in 1964. Thanks to the efforts of the librarians, there were 31 library branches in rural areas, the Municipal Library in Przedbórz and the Settlement Library in Stąporków. The District and Municipal Public Library in Końskie oversaw the entire network. The network was supplemented by 145 library points.

It is important to acknowledge the achievements in educational activities, initiated and organized by Mrs. **Krystyna Wąsowska**, who motivated the subordinate branches to participate in many reading campaigns. She widely promoted literature by organizing small theatrical performances, often involving library staff. These performances were presented not only in the town but also in the rural areas throughout the district. In 1967, there was a change in the leadership of the Library, with Mrs. **Genowefa Rek** assuming the role of manager. She energetically began organizing the library collections in the District and Municipal Public Library and branches across the district. Documents concerning books transferred from the District and Municipal Public Library to the commune libraries were completed. Intensive work on creating library catalogs began. The instructional and methodological activities were expanded, and various forms of professional development for employees were systematically organized. Efforts to establish a reading room in each commune library were also successful. Proven forms of educational activities were continued, and new ones were introduced. The libraries actively participated in campaigns initiated by the Provincial Public Library in Kielce. As a result of these efforts, there was a systematic increase in readership in the district. In October 1973, Mrs. **Halina Milczarek**, a long-time employee of the institution, took over as director of the Library. Later that same year, thanks to the new director's efforts, additional space was acquired, allowing for the opening of a reading room, which was managed by Mrs. Barbara Zielińska.

Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie in the years 1975-1989

The decree of the Council of Ministers on May 30, 1975, which abolished the country as an administrative unit, contributed to another reorganization of the Library. The County and Municipal Public Library in Końskie was renamed the **Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie**. From that point, its responsibilities included meeting the reading needs of the residents of the city and municipality of Końskie. The library network consisted of the main library and six rural branches (Dziebałów, Kazanów, Modliszewice, Nieświn, Pomyków, and Rogów). Additionally, there were 35 library points.

By order of the Governor of the Kielce Province on August 20, 1975, the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie was entrusted with additional responsibilities as the **Field Branch of the Provincial Public Library in Kielce**. This meant overseeing libraries operating in seven municipalities (Końskie, Stąporków, Suchedniów, Bliżyn, Mniów, Miedziana Góra and Radoszyce). The library's development was significantly aided by the allocation of a new space with a total area of 350 m², previously used by the former County Office. During this period, a new building was also acquired for the library branch in Modliszewice, and major renovations were carried out in branches within the Końskie municipality. This was also a favorable time for other facilities under the Field Branch, with consistent improvements in local infrastructure, equipment, and the growth of library collections.

By decision of the Director of the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie, work began on re-inventorying the collections. Separate inventories were introduced for the reading room, the Children's Branch and the Adult Lending Library. Following this, in accordance with the current bibliographic description standards, work on creating new catalogs was initiated. These tasks required significant time and effort from the entire team of employees. It was also a period of intensive librarian training, with staff obtaining professional qualifications, at the level of the Library Studies College and several individuals achieving higher education in library science. This high level of professional qualification allowed for the efficient and professional completion of these tasks. The library's broad educational activities promoted books and libraries, resulting in steadily increasing readership statistic. However, the difficult socio-economic situation in the early 1980s in the country affected the Library's operations. There was a noticeable decline in interest in books and a drop in reading activity was recorded. In 1983, another change in the Library's organizational structure took place. The Field Branch of the Provincial Public Library was replaced by the Library Region, which oversaw 29 facilities in the city-municipalities of Końskie and Stąporków, and the municipalities of Mniów, Radoszyce, Ruda Maleniecka, and Smyków.

The year 1984 proved particularly beneficial, with the establishment of three new library branches: Branch No. 1 in Końskie in the "Warszawska" housing estate, a branch in Józwików in the Radoszyce municipality, and a branch in Węgrzynów in the Mniów municipality. The locations of the municipal libraries in Mniów and Radoszyce were also changed.

Public Library of the Town and Municipality of Końskie after 1990

The year 1990 marks a new chapter in the history of the Końskie Library, which has since become a local government instruction. From this point on, its primary source of funding is a budgetary grant awarded by the Town and Municipality Council (previously, the Library was financed by the Culture Development Fund). As a budgetary entity, the Library also engages in various forms of business activity to generate its own income. These revenues come from services such as photocopying, a video cassette rental service, and book sales. For several years, language courses were also organized, generating significant income. The Library currently holds a collection of over 130,000 volumes and 1,000 audiovisual items. Rural branches in Dziebałów, Kazanów, Modliszewice, Nieświń, Pomyków, and Rogów possess about 60,000 volumes, which constitutes 46% of the total collection. In the town itself, two branches are operational: the Osiedlowa Branch and the Children's Branch, which, along with the main library, hold around 70,000 volumes, accounting for 54% of the collection. Annually, over 8,000 readers use the library, borrowing more than 162,000 volumes for home use and accessing about 60,000 books and periodicals on-site. The readers are mainly young people, students, employed professionals, the unemployed, and retirees. For the first time, a significant group of unemployed individuals has appeared in the readership demographics. Unemployment is a new phenomenon in society, which obliges the library to take appropriate action. Through the selection of readings, methods, and forms of working with readers - such as bibliotherapy - the library helps mitigate the effects of unemployment.

The library has rich traditions in promoting reading. Among the activities particularly appreciated by the community and still popular are author meetings, community events with representatives from the fields of science, culture, and art, small theatrical performances and competitions. Thanks to the Library, residents of Końskie had the opportunity to meet writers such as Wiesław Jażdżyński, Igor Sikirycki, Czesław Czubak, Jan Koprowski, Stanisław Rogala, Marian Reniak, Danuta Brzosko-Mędry, Jacek Wilczur, Aleksander Rymkiewicz,

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The Library has made notable achievements in the “Closer to Theater” initiative. Staging of fairy tales and excerpts from literary works were recognized at provincial reviews. Among the most notable were: "Gifts of the Four Fairies" by E. Szelburg-Zarembina (Modliszewice Branch), "Cinderella" by J. Brzechwa (Children's Branch in Końskie), "Bronka's Education" by Z. Przybylski (Children's Branch in Końskie), "The Kingdom of Fairy Tales" by E. Szelburg-Zarembina (Modliszewice Branch), "Aladdin's Lamp" (Modliszewice Branch), "Curtain Up" (Dziebałów Branch), and puppet shows prepared by the youth from the Educational Center in Barycz: "Dratewka the Shoemaker" and "About Janek, Who Ran Without Stopping." Regular activities with readers include library instruction, conducted in close cooperation with schools. These classes prepare young people to independently use the library's resources and teach them how to use the information tools available. The Library has initiated many reading competitions and also participated in competitions organized by the Provincial Public Library in Kielce and national contests. In 1988, the Public Library of the Town and Municipality of Końskie was among the laureates of the national competition titled “Golden Laurel for the Creator, Golden Laurel for the Library.” The central committee awarded the Library a cash prize. A pleasant highlight was the central individual award granted to the Library Director, Halina Milczarek, and provincial awards for staff members Mariola Cholewa-Nowak and Jolanta Milczarek.

Together with the Library Friends' Circle and the Polish Librarians' Association, the Library organized several trips aimed at exchanging experiences between libraries. The trips to the Tri-City area, Nowy Sącz, Kraków, Poznań, Nowy Tomyśl, Opoczno, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Jędrzejów, Pińczów, and Kazimierza Wielka left the most lasting impressions. The past 75 years have undoubtedly been a period of achievements for the Końskie Library, as evidenced by the Honorary Diploma awarded to the Library by the Minister of Culture and Art. During the jubilee year, the Library was able to modernize its facilities and enhance their aesthetics, providing better conditions for readers to use the resources.

In 2003, **Dariusz Kowalczyk** became the Library Director. Thanks to his efforts, the Public Library in Końskie acquired an additional room to serve as the main Reading Room, improving the working conditions for both the Reading Room and the Children's Branch. At the initiative of Director Dariusz Kowalczyk, the Library has undertaken and successfully implemented new projects such as the Environmental Education Center, the Arslibris Gallery, the Public Library Publishing House in Końskie (Arslibris), and the Municipal Information Center, which formed the basis for a computer reading room. During this period, the Library saw a dynamic increase in its inventory of modern computer equipment, significantly enhancing the quality of its services.

In December 2006, Director Dariusz Kowalczyk was appointed Deputy Mayor of the Town and Municipality of Końskie for the 5th term of local government (2006–2010). During this time, the role of director was fulfilled by **Jolanta Milczarek**, the former deputy director of the Library. Significant events of this period included the major renovation of the former Palace of Weddings and its transfer to the Library for the establishment of a Tourist Information Center and new spaces for the Arslibris Gallery.

After Dariusz Kowalczyk's return to the Library at the end of the 5th term of local government, efforts were intensified to fully automate library processes—the Public Library in Końskie is currently implementing the SOWA2 library system, raising service standards and the quality of reader service. The Library achieves good results in reading, organizes various forms of work promoting books and reading, and also highlights the achievements of the local artistic community. It initiates numerous projects and ideas that have proven successful in the town, municipality, and county. It actively participates in community life, taking part in regular, prestigious events such as: Kuźnice Koneckie, Końskie Days, Konecki Wrzesień, County Harvest Festival, and the Fish Festival, all initiated by the local and county authorities.

The Arslibris Gallery, operating under the Library, regularly organizes exhibitions of photography, painting, sculpture, and folk crafts. The Gallery promotes local artists but also hosts exhibitions of works by artists from other communities. The photography exhibitions and multimedia presentations combined with travelers' accounts of expeditions to various countries are particularly popular. The Gallery is also a place where the works of talented amateur finalists from photography competitions organized by the Library and the Municipality of Końskie are displayed. The BPMiG Końskie, through the Arslibris Gallery, promotes the town, municipality, and the Świętokrzyskie region. The professionalism and artistic quality of the events earn recognition from the public, collaborating artists, and institutions. The Arslibris Publishing House, established by the Library and based here, is also well-received by readers. Its primary focus is publishing books on regional topics (history and culture of the region) in editions tailored to the flexible needs of the local community.

Between 2004 and 2011, the Arslibris Publishing House of the Public Library in Końskie published 21 titles (each with an ISBN). These books have been met with great interest, not only within the local community but also across the country. The successful publishing activity allows the Library to expand and enhance its offerings with new and more interesting publications, as well as contribute to raising the quality of all promotional, educational, and artistic activities undertaken by the Library. The Library's publishing offer is a valuable supplement to school education, especially in the area of regional education.

The activities of the Public Library of the Town and Municipality of Końskie are highly regarded by the local community and the library environment, not only within the province but also nationwide. This is evidenced by the fact that BPMiG Końskie's projects were awarded three times in four consecutive editions of the national competition "At Home with Economics," organized by the National Library and the National Bank of Poland (2002–2005).

Further awards and recognitions confirm the recognition for the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie (BPMiG Końskie):

2005 - "Biblioman" statuette and the title of Librarian of the Year awarded by the Provincial Public Library (WBP) in Kielce to the Director of the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie, Dariusz Kowalczyk.

2006 - Medal "In Recognition" for contributions to librarianship awarded to the Public Library in Końskie by the Main Board of the Polish Librarians Association.

2009 - Awarded by the Chapter of the 4th edition of the "Library of the Year" Competition, the "Biblioman" statuette and the title of Library of the Year 2008 for BPMiG Końskie for the entirety of its activities.

2011 - Awarded by the Chapter of the 6th edition of the "Library of the Year" Competition, the "Biblioman" statuette and the title of Librarian of the Year 2010 for Jolanta Milczarek, Deputy Director of BPMiG Końskie.

2011 - Awarded to the Public Library in Końskie and the Tourist Information Center operating at the Library with the "Nail of the Season 2010" award. /The award was introduced by the County Office in 2011 for companies and institutions promoting the Konecki County/. The Tourist Information Center and the Library were honored for organizing a photography exhibition titled "Antoni Borowiec - A Forgotten Artist."

2011 - Awarded by the Regional Tourist Organization of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship a DISTINCTION for the Tourist Information Center operating at BPMiG Końskie in the category of Best Tourist Information Center in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship in 2011.

2011 - Awarded by the Regional Tourist Organization of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship the TITLE of Best Tourist Information Employee of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship in 2011 to Magdalena Weber from the Tourist Information Center operating at BPMiG Końskie.

In May 2012, the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie celebrated the 90th anniversary of its activities.

2014 - As part of the celebrations of "Konecki Wrzesień," the Public Library of the City and Municipality of Końskie was officially named after **Cezary Chlebowski**. The ceremony was attended by the writer's family - his wife Grażyna Ciszewska-Chlebowska, daughter Weronika Chlebowska-Dziadosz with her husband, son Tomasz Chlebowski with his wife, as well as the writer's grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

2016 - As part of the project "Improvement of the aesthetics and functionality of BPMiG Końskie through the purchase of new equipment," co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN) under the National Reading Development Program, Priority 2: Library Infrastructure 2016-2020, the Library purchased furniture, electrical appliances, and electronic equipment worth 320,000 PLN, and renovated all rooms. This allowed for the enhancement of the aesthetics of all spaces and the modernization of BPMiG Końskie.

Źródło:

Historia - Biblioteka Publiczna Miasta i Gminy Końskie (konskie.pl)

