



**THE POEMS OF CHILDHOOD...”, AS THE WAY TO GET
ACQUAINTED AND TREASURE ONE’S REGION, BASED AT
THE EXAMPLE OF COOPERATION OF POETS WITH THE CITY
PUBLIC LIBRARY IN MOŃKI”**

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REFERAT

The subject of the presentation II.1 and the workshops and tomes of poetry which accompany it is the variety of topics and forms of knowledge presented to children by the Children's and Teenagers' Department of the Polish Public Library in Mońki. The work refers to the Polish borderland region of Podlasie, especially the Biebrza river region, renowned in Europe for its marshlands and unique bird habitats.

The aim of the presentation is to share the experiences and reflections of both an author of regional poetry and a librarian caring for the regional and media education of children, which applies to methods of the dissemination of knowledge and the partaking of Internet users in creating WWW content.

The modern world is dominated by audiovisual transmissions. In the times of mass-media and the children's fascination with them, a public library has a particular role to play. It has to promote the need to read in youngest children. Polish public libraries have long been using various methods and teaching aids to promote themselves and their collections in their community³⁰. Currently, thanks to new attractive communication tools it creates, the Internet may play a major role in the promotion of books. The Public Library in Mońki has created a website of the Children's and Teenagers' Department [<http://www.bpmonki.webpark.pl/>], which is an example of a small library working towards an "information society", in order to allow users (both active and potential) to become acquainted (whenever and wherever they want) with its activities. Because it assumes the task of being with the child here and now, as well as observing its interests and fascinations, the Children's and Teenagers' Department makes increasing use of new technology, including the Internet, to promote literature. Children are specific readers. Their choices, because of their age, knowledge, life experience and emotional development, cannot be a factor in the selection of forms and methods of work in the library.

Children's poetry contains a multitude of various forms. There are difference in more than just the text, creation or intent³¹. They can also be seen in the use of literary means, which determine the form of a literary work and therefore its perception. Among many means used by contemporary poets, I have selected four which seem to have the strongest influence on a child reader and are also available to a child's expression. These are: melody, rhythm, image and meditation. Thus we can distinguish four types of poetry for children: melodic, rhythmic, imagery and meditative texts.

³⁰ There are numerous Polish publications on the forms and methods of promoting libraries and bookreading. Some important works are: J.Andrzejewska: Bibliotekarstwo szkolne: teoria i praktyka, T.2 : Praca pedagogiczna biblioteki. Warszawa 1996; J. Wojciechowski: Praca z użytkownikiem w bibliotece. Warszawa 2000; M. Zając: Promocja książki dziecięcej. Warszawa 2000.

³¹ R. Waksmund: Wstęp. IN: R. Waksmund Poezja dla dzieci. Antologia form i tematów. Wrocław 1987.



Contact with art is an important way of developing the esthetic and moral values in children and teenagers. A child's imagination, essential for an active and creative life, develops along with its knowledge. The education system can take two roads leading to the development of a child's imagination through art: direct contact with the values in a work of art and a child's own artistic expression. In contact with poetry children always adds something to it, something personal, usually creative expression.

The Children's and Teenager's Department of the Public Library in Mońki, having seen the value of poetry in forming a child's esthetic sensitivity, cooperates closely with poets as part of its book promoting activities. This cooperation takes the form of: meetings with authors, competitions, poetry readings, drama, co-creating websites and books. These activities not only present poetry to children, but also increase their sensitivity to the beauty of their native language, introducing them to the world of literary fiction and fantasy. Meetings with poetry facilitate the children's expression: visual (drawing, painting), kinesthetic (dancing, improvisation with the text), musical (singing poems), theatrical (inspiration, drama). One effect of joining poetry with children's expression are books (published by the Public Library in Mońki) co-created by poets, librarians, teachers and children. The children's public library in Mońki cooperates with writers and schools to present network communication (interactive and hyper-textual) to young readers (both active and potential) and forms their ability to use this system for managing information through: meetings with authors, competitions, poetry readings, drama, children learn to use the world wide web to edit books in cooperation with poets, the public library and schools. The Library is a meeting place, a place of inspiration and mobilisation for artistic expression. Both children and adults, who take part in the education process, are constantly adjusting to each other. Only the creative and thoughtful librarian can convince a child to search and enjoy gaining knowledge.

Deciding to cooperate with writers the children's library in Mońki also had in mind regional literature – the achievements of local authors and their works connected with the region. Taking part in regional education of children the library strengthens their connections to the place they live in and identify with, which they consider their own, where they feel safe. It is in the local environment that their everyday needs are fulfilled.

Franciszek Kobryńczuk and Zofia Olek-Redlarska, are authors of poems about a world closest to the children, about the beauty of the little motherland.

In 2004 Franciszek Kobryńczuk was a guest in the Children's and Teenagers' department of the Public Library in Mońki. A scholar and naturalist from Warsaw, a professor and veterinarian, whose specialty is the anatomy of animals, he is also a poet writing stories and poetry for children. He cooperates with many magazines for children and teenagers. The Library made its best to prepare the children for the meeting with

this author³². Library lessons were organised at the Children's and Teenagers' Department for younger primary school students. During these lessons librarians used multimedia presentations to tell children about the life and work of the poet and read his poetry. Afterwards students made illustrations to selected poems by Franciszek Kobryńczuk.

During the meeting the poet talked about himself, presented his works, asked children riddles and gave them sweets. He answered the children's questions. He easily guessed which of his poems the children had illustrated. As a reward the children presented him with figures made from chestnuts and acorns. Finally he was given flowers and signed his books.

A few days after the meeting Franciszek Kobryńczuk sent, by e-mail, his thanks for a his pleasant and special stay in the library in Mońki. Later he sent a poem about Mońki, which was posted on the Department's website [<http://www.bpmonki.webpark.pl>]. This was the beginning of a permanent cooperation between the Public Library and the poet, who wrote verse about Mońki, which the Children's and Teenagers' Department presented - via Internet - to readers. The poems drew the attention of the town's inhabitants. They felt honoured by the fact that the poet chose the small, young town in Podlasie as a setting for his verse. An idea was born, to publish them in book form.

In the middle of 2005 the book was published by the Public Library in Mońki. It was titled "Mońki Fables" (pol. "Monieckie Baśnie") and financed by the author and the local authorities. The text was accompanied by beautiful illustrations made by the town's youngest inhabitants. They were the result of a competition (organised by the Children's and Teenagers' Department). One of the aims of the competition was to induce the feeling of belonging to the local community.

Thanks to the teachers, who helped spread the poetry among their students, the library received a great number of illustrations. The jury evaluated them based on their concept, esthetics and colour. Authors of the best illustrations received rewards. One illustration was selected from all those illustrating each poem. Selected works were published along with the poems. This was the only book containing poetry for children, about Mońki and the surrounding region. The story of this little town is a bit of a fable itself. A large village, seat of a local authority body, surrounded by fields was transformed, as if by magic, into a town. Currently this little, slightly sleepy town is surrounded by lovely countryside, forests, meadows and marshlands frequented by

³² According to a literary critic Joanna Papuzińska from the Warsaw University meetings with authors are a great opportunity for promoting literature and book reading among children, reaching out to those children with a book, enriching and developing their reception, and leaving a permanent mark of that reception. Therefore they should become at least once in a lifetime a part of every student's reading education. [J. Papuzińska: Czy warto? (1). Guliwer . 2004 nr 1 p. 45.]



animals. The poems in the book speak of a world close and well known to local children. The poet however – thanks to the beauty of his poems and observations – rediscovered the beauty of their hometown and the secrets of the surrounding nature, creating wise animals, giving them specific colours, sometimes unseen, under the cover of everyday troubles. The mission of this poetry is to raise the children's feeling of local identity and belonging to the "little motherland" – loving it and caring for it³³.

Preparations for the promotion of the book opened with developing its programme and preparing, together with local teachers, the artistic presentation of the poems by F. Kobryńczuk. Posters were prepared later and displayed in the library, in schools, in the town hall and on the library and town websites. Invitations were sent and handed to readers.

The promotion event organised by the Public Library in Mońki gathered the author, representatives of the Main Library in Białystok, local authority, children and teachers from local primary schools, inhabitants of Mońki, representatives of local media and public institutions. Guests of honour included prof. Anna Sitarska (a university lecturer and an authority in library and information science), Eugenia Meresch (a guest from London – physicist, scientist from the Polish-British Historical Committee) and Jan Leńczuk (director of the Main Library in Białystok, poet and translator).

The event had a friendly, festive atmosphere. There were thanks and flowers. The artistic achievements of the author were presented by the director of the Main Library in Białystok – Jan Leńczuk. Our readers, danced, sang, and recited during the artistic presentation. All the young illustrators received from the author a rose, a diploma and the book with the author's dedication, signature and a poem written for each of them as a token of gratitude. The author also thanked all the teachers who took part in the creation of the book handing them books with a dedication. [Information about the promotion event, as well as the texts of poems written for the illustrators are available in WWW - <http://www.fk-wiersze.webpark.pl/poeta.html>].

In 2006 the Public Library in Mońki published again the book "Mońki Fables". On this occasion the poet visited Mońki again. The Library organised three meetings with him – two in local primary schools and one in the Children's and Teenagers' department for the students of junior high school. In 2008 is planning to publish a tome of poetry by Franciszek Kobryńczuk "A selection of Mońki Fables" in English, which will include selected poems from the book "Mońki Fables".

The Children's and Teenagers' Department of the Public Library in Mońki also cooperates closely with Zofia Olek-Redlarska from the University in Białystok Faculty

³³ F. Kobryńczuk: *Monieckie baśnie*. Red. Barbara Kuprel. Mońki 2005.



of Pedagogy and Psychology, who is also a poet. She worked for the children's magazine "Świerszczyk". She published two books with her poetry for children: „Portrety imion dziecięcych” (1998), „Dlaczego mam tyle pytań do świata” (2000). She often visits her readers in the Children's and Teenagers' Department of the Public Library in Mońki. These meetings help them not only to get to know the works of a local poet, but also make them more sensitive to the beauty of their native language, taking them to a world of literary fiction and fantasy. The poems draw attention to the problems of human existence and dangers in the child's environment. This poetry is an example of the dissolution of borders between the child and the adult, as its target readers are not only children, but also adults. Nature is the dominant theme of this poetry. The world of nature presented in them is close and friendly towards children. This world seems to wait for attention, acceptance and harmony with the child. Connections with nature are so strong and intensive that they lead to joining with nature, a deep and unusual identification with it. The poet assumes the child's way of thinking, turning to its open imagination and individualism. By finding the child within her she discovers new riddles in everyday life and seeks the rules of a child's logic and perception. Just like the child she creates impressions of the world around her – especially nature. She brings to life a world of a child's imagination, the world of beauty found in things small, banal even, perhaps unimportant for an adult. She tries to grasp the momentary form of nature in full motion and colour, engrave it in poetic vision, of which she was a witness and in which nature took part. This moment of reflection, enlightenment and infatuation with life is visible in her two tomes of poetry. Zofia Olek-Redlarska represents a stream of contemporary poetry making use of modern ways of expression, poetry which opens its eyes to the surrounding world, the charm and uniqueness of moments enriching our lives. The vivid world of nature in her verse makes the child sensitive to pain and suffering, induces empathy to the weak and helpless. The poems emanate goodness and kindness³⁴.

Her poems are presented in WWW, on her personal website [<http://www.zofiaredlarska.webpark.pl/>]. The poet is the author of the page's content, while its architecture, technical edition and updating is the work of a librarian – Barbara Kuprel, head of the Children's and Teenagers' Department of the Public Library in Mońki. The website presents: biography of the poet, selected poems, her bibliography (including books and articles), characteristics of her books and reports of her meetings with children. It is richly illustrated. Navigation around the website is facilitated by laconic links: 'About me', 'Work', 'Publications', 'Poems', 'Book Signings', 'Contact'.

The Children's and Teenagers' Department of the Public Library in Mońki cooperates with poets and schools to not only to teach young readers (both active and potential) about the network communication system (interactive and hyper-textual) and form their ability to use this system for finding and processing information, but also to create together resources of poetry on the web.

³⁴ Z. Olek-Redlarska, *Dlaczego mam tyle pytań do świata?* Białystok 2000.



In 2007 the Public Library in Mońki published a tome of poetry titled “Mońki and Me” (pol. „Mońki i ja”) containing poems awarded in a poetry competition for junior high school students [http://www.bpmonki.webpark.pl/wiersze_monieckie.html]. The main aim of the competition was to increase the students’ interest in local history and their feeling of belonging and love for their home town. The competitors were asked to bring an unpublished poem on the subject “Mońki and Me” to the Children’s and Teenagers Department of the Public Library.

The book was created in cooperation with the Juniot High School Library and poets Franciszek Kobryńczuk and Zofia Olek-Redlarska, who evaluated the poems and helped to select the best of them. These works, along with reviews of selected poems, written by the two poets, were published as a traditional book of poetry titled “Mońki and Me”. The book also included a foreword by Barbara Kuprel – head of the Children’s and Teenagers’ Department of the Public Library in Mońki – and concluding remarks by Zofia Olek-Redlarska, who wrote “Here you were born, here your eyes opened to the world. The gift you received from life – your imagination and writing skills – is precious. You must not waste it. You received it to write, so that others could see the world through your eyes. Protect and nurture your precious seed of poetic talent, until it grows into a wondrous flower of wisdom, acceptance, hope, understanding, listening and watching in wonder.”³⁵ The teenagers’ poetry shows that junior high school students like their town, identify with it and are proud of it. Poems written by students of the Junior High School in Mońki, put on the Internet by a librarian, published as a traditional book, continue to draw the interest of readers and give a lot of satisfaction to their authors, who see their art enriching the Internet and reaching a wide circle of readers.

The students’ poems were first presented in Mońki during the promotion gala of the first “Mońki and Me” book, which gathered: the town authorities, parents and citizens of Mońki. The parents proudly watched their children recite with great emotion their poems about the land close to their hearts.

Libraries must react to the new media preferences of children. Currently they increasingly use the Internet as an attractive source of knowledge about the surrounding world. It is present in their everyday life. This is a new cultural situation. Using the Internet for book promotion the children’s public library increases its influence, as an institution promoting culture. The Internet, because of its dynamic development is becoming and increasingly important intermediary between the reader and the library, which has the task of transmitting knowledge in ways appropriate for the abilities and cognitive skills of the potential recipient.

³⁵ Z. Redlarska: Posłowie. IN: Mońki i ja (wiersze gimnazjalistów). Red. Barbara Kuprel, Franciszek Kobryńczuk. Mońki 2007, p. 23.



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