Providing access to historical collections through digitization

Digital Library of Warsaw University, so called e-bUW, was established in 2007. Currently it hosts over 100 000 documents, the majority of which are XIXth century periodicals. The collection is growing fast thanks to the cooperation with the NUKAT project – the highway of digital information. This project is being sponsored by the European Union, within the European Regional Development Fund.

One of the aims of establishing e-bUW was to enable access to less used documents or to the historical documents that can no longer be presented to the users easily. Documents chosen to be included into the collection should also be useful for the current research processes at the University, for the education processes as well, in particular distant learning. At the launch of e-bUW the decision was made to use already existing tools, that were at the library’s disposal, such as: cataloguing standards worked out while cooperating with union catalog of Polish academic and research libraries NUKAT, or subject headings LCSH entries applied in our library for the collection items in open stacks.

Internet users, apart from accessing the content directly from the library’s home page, also have other possibilities of reaching the e-bUW collection via access point such as KaRo – a Polish catalogue of scattered libraries, or via foreign web sites such as BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine). All documents in the e-bUW are formatted with OCR.

Fair visibility of such catalogue records is possible while the Library of Warsaw University is a member of Digital Libraries Federation (Federacja Bibliotek Cyfrowych). The federation provides web access to about one million of documents. The members of the federation are not only the libraries, both academic and public, but also various Polish cultural and scientific institutions.

Each digital library is a separate project, a different way of management and different ways of functioning. Still they all have the same goal – to provide the researchers with high quality source material. Since 2007 the collection has been visited by over 5 million readers.