**Country Name: POLAND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looted Judaica and Judaica with Provenance Gaps in Country</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Projects</strong></td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
<td>Central Database of Judaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Looted Cultural Property Databases</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources:</strong></td>
<td>(1) <a href="http://judaica.jewishmuseum.org.pl/">http://judaica.jewishmuseum.org.pl/</a>, last accessed on 28 February 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Information provided by Nawojka Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 11 March 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Email exchange with Renata Piatkowska, Curator, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, April 2015.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The newly established Museum on the History of Polish Jews, alongside the Jewish Historical Institute, maintain the “Central Database of Judaica”: the database maintains information on 3,424 objects, most of these objects are held by the Jewish Historical Institute (1,153), followed by the Museum for the History of Polish Jews (1,858). Artifacts include works of art, historical memorabilia and synagogalia. The database does not provide any provenance information on any of the listed objects.

In an email exchange with Renata Piatkowska in June 2015, the curator noted that the first phase of the project consisted in digitizing selected items from the records of the Museum on the History of Polish Jews and the collection of the Jewish Historical Institute, the first project partner. However, cooperation is planned with other institutions and museums whose collections include Judaica, including: Regional Museum in Łęczna (Muzeum Regionalne w Łęcznej), Muzeum Historyczno-Archeologiczne in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, National Museum of Archaeology in Warsaw (Państwowe Muzeum Archeologiczne w Warszawie) and the Museum of Independence in Warsaw (Muzeum Niepodległości w Warszawie).

As of October 2015, the database provides information on Judaica objects for other museums, such as the National Archeology Museum in Warsaw, Historical Museum of Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski or the Regional Museum in Łeczna, a branch of the Lublin Museum.

The database can be accessed at: [http://judaica.jewishmuseum.org.pl/](http://judaica.jewishmuseum.org.pl/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Publications</strong></th>
<th>Jewish Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Email exchange with Marek Sroka on 6 January 2007.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the outbreak of World War II, Poland was home to 251 Jewish libraries.
with a total of 1,650,000 books. Many of the smaller libraries had been established by organizations such as labor unions, cultural societies, and youth associations. Some of the more famous Jewish libraries were the Library for Jewish Studies of the Great Synagogue on Tlomackie Street in Warsaw (which in 1940 contained more than 40,000 volumes), the Strashun Library in Vilna (which held 35,000 volumes in 1937), and YIVO (which in 1939 listed 85,000 in its collection). In addition, many secular libraries in Poland had large collections containing Jewish material. Included in these were the National Library of Warsaw, the library of the University of Poznan and the library of the University of Krakow (Biblioteka Jagiellońska).

Krakow in particular was home to one of the more important centers of Jewish life. Almost every Jewish organization had a library or an archive. Krakow was also home to the first ever public Jewish library, the “Ezra Judaic Library,” which existed between 1899 and 1939. The Library’s holdings consisted of 6,000 volumes.

In addition, most synagogues held libraries as well, such as the Rema Synagogue in Krakow, with a collection of valuable medieval Hebrew manuscripts and the Seder Haftarot from 1666. Moreover, Krakow was also the seat of a number of Jewish political organizations, all of which had libraries and archival holdings (i.e., the Isaac Leib Peretz Jewish People’s Library, or the B’nai B’rith Library).

By October 1939, the “Kommando Paulsen” started confiscating a number of archival records and libraries in Warsaw (i.e. 30,000 volumes from the Library of Jewish Studies at the Great Synagogue in Warsaw). By January 1940, most confiscated material was in Berlin at the “Reichssicherheitshauptamt” (RSHA). It is likely that the “Kommando Paulsen” also started looting Jewish library and archival holdings in Krakow.

In January 1940, Hans Frank, Governor-General of occupied Poland, issued a decree clearly outlining that cultural looting was also to include libraries, in particular rare manuscripts and archival holdings.

At the end of the war, it was estimated that Jewish collections as a whole suffered about 70% losses, though some libraries - especially those in private schools and religious libraries - were completely destroyed.

Today, remnants of Krakow’s Jewish libraries and archives can be found at the Jagiellonian University Library (Biblioteka Jagiellońska; http://www.bj.uj.edu.pl), which functioned as the former Staatsbibliothek; in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw; as well as in the Museum of the Old Synagogue in Krakow.

Judaica in Ghettos:
Judaica was often destroyed; only if the objects were deemed precious or antique were they valued, inasmuch as they could be sold or otherwise used. Judaica found in ghettos was equally destroyed, or if found to be of monetary value, shipped off. In March 1941, before the ghetto in Krakow was sealed off, the Jewish Community successfully bribed Nazi officials at the Trustee Office to transfer some synagogue furniture (including Torah arks), prayer books, and about 150 Torah scrolls to the Judenrat’s building in the ghetto. There they were packed and catalogued. In terms of the Torah scrolls, it was ultimately decided to wall them into the building used for funeral services at the Plaszow Jewish cemetery. There they were later discovered by Amon Goeth, the commander of the Plaszow concentration camp. While some scrolls were simply burned, others were shipped...
This catalogue represents the results of the current best efforts research of the Claims Conference and is based upon information obtained by the Claims Conference to date. The Claims Conference makes no representation as to its accuracy or completeness and the catalogue should not be relied upon or used as proof, legal or equitable, as to current or past ownership of the items described within.

### Jewish Book Collections in Warsaw

#### Source:

On January 1, 1930, the Polish Ministry of Religious Creeds and Public Education made a survey of all public libraries in Poland. The survey established that Poland was home to 748 Jewish libraries (that is, libraries in which the majority of books were in Yiddish or in Hebrew) with a combined collection of 860,806 books.

In the case of Warsaw, a survey conducted in 1934 established that over fifty Jewish libraries (owned by Jewish individuals or organizations) existed. The most important public library in Warsaw was the Grosser Library of the Kultur-Lige; by 1936 it had amassed some 30,000 volumes and 4,580 readers.

#### Book Collections of Jewish Libraries in Warsaw, 1934

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number and Type of Libraries</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yiddish</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 private lending libraries</td>
<td>152,500</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>103,950</td>
<td>22,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Judaica libraries</td>
<td>34,700</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>18,460</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>9,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 labor libraries</td>
<td>48,500</td>
<td>29,100</td>
<td>15,900</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 libraries of professional societies</td>
<td>18,436</td>
<td>5,697</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>10,576</td>
<td>2,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Zionist libraries</td>
<td>6,325</td>
<td>2,010</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ‘Hamizrachi’ libraries</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ‘Agudah’ libraries</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 other</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the German invasion, all Jewish libraries were closed in Warsaw. Some libraries were permitted to open again after a couple of months, only to shut down again when the Jews were forced into the Ghetto. However, two public libraries operated in the Warsaw Ghetto: the Schor library, operated by Leyb Schor in his apartment, and the CENTOS library (the National Society for the Care of Orphans). Since it was an illegal library, it was called the “Committee for Children’s Toys” of CENTOS. In 1941, the library was permitted to function again in the Ghetto. However, by July 1942, there were no more children in the Ghetto, and the library stopped functioning. In May 1943, the Warsaw Ghetto was liquidated.

In the case of Lodz, the most significant libraries were the library of the B’nai B’rith Lodge, the Ivriah library of the Tarbut organization, and the A.D. Gordon library. Each of these libraries had several thousand volumes.
Within the Lodz ghetto, the biggest library was the Zonenberg library: it existed until the final liquidation of the Lodz ghetto in August/September 1944. Smaller ones were already liquidated earlier.

Vilna had two major libraries: the Mefitse Haskalah, the library of the Association of Spread Enlightenment, which belonged to the Jewish Community. Before the war, the library held 45,000 books. Since Vilna came under Soviet occupation in 1939, the Soviet authorities tried not only to standardize and centralize all libraries, but also to get rid of “reactionary” material that was contrary to Soviet ideology, such as books in Hebrew. The Mefitse library was nationalized in November 1940 and renamed Public Library No. 5. After the library fell under German control once again, the Mefitse Haskalah was situated within the boundaries of the Vilna ghetto. In September 1942, the Vilna library had 39,000 volumes. As Sahvit noted, “By September 1943 the Vilna ghetto was liquidated and with it its libraries, its books, and all its readers.”

Sources:

Some of the Masonic book collections which were looted by the RSHA in Silesia are now to be found in Poland.

In November 1944, a freight train arrived in Krakow filled with Judaica. There is no provenance available on the content of this transport.
[Regarding the preparations for shipment, see information on the Amt IVB report to Eichmann (7 January 1944), RGVA, 500k/3/427, fol. 14. Shipping papers are preserved for at least one wagon from Krakow, along with the SD report from Krakow to Burmester in Berlin (1 November 1944), RGVA, 500/3/320, fols. 104–105]

Sources:

Grimsted notes that part of the Vienna Jewish Community’s manuscripts that had ended the war in the RGVA archive in Moscow as well as in the Lenin State Library were subsequently transferred to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

Please see section on Russian Federation for Jewish Archival holdings at the
**Information from Other Sources**

**Judaica Holdings in Poland’s Museums**

**Sources:**

1. Information provided by Yale J. Reisner.
3. Email exchange with Nawojka Cieslińska-Lobkowicz, 3 September 2008 and 19 March 2014.
4. Presentation by Eleonora Bergmann of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, at the Meetings of the Association of European Jewish Museums in Amsterdam, November 22-26, 2008.
9. CC internal report on Jewish Historical Institute prepared by Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, June 2015.

According to Nawojka Cieslińska-Lobkowicz, it is estimated that Polish public collections have about 70 Torah scrolls, most of them undoubtedly from local synagogues and places of worship.

- **Jewish Historical Institute:**
  The Jewish Historical Institute’s museum in Warsaw holds over 11,000 Judaica pieces, some of which came in the late 1940s from former German territories, such as Lower Silesia, Breslau/Wroclaw and Western Prussia, in addition to objects arriving from Berlin’s Jewish Community. In 1943, objects originally owned by Berlin’s Jewish Community were relocated by the Nazis to Lower Silesia, and from there taken to Warsaw. Moreover, the museum holds items from a number of synagogues, objects from the Jewish Community in Vienna, several hundred objects from Greece, as well as some files from Paris regarding what was taken from people in Paris. In addition objects from Maidanek and Auschwitz are also held by the Institute, all of which were transferred to the Jewish Historical Institute by the Government. Lastly a collection of Jewish paintings, sculptures and graphics and objects of the Polish branch of the Joint, as well as objects that were transferred to ZIH from the Warsaw National Museum (which included fragments of a Torah ark confiscated by the Nazis from one of Warsaw’s synagogues). Some more objects were acquired by donations (by private individuals, including survivors), acquisitions, however other items were lost through illegal transports outside of the country.
  A catalogue of the provenance of books based on the stamps in the books has been completed by the Institute. The Institute’s library not only holds the former Main Judaica Library, which was sent by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, but
This catalogue represents the results of the current best efforts research of the Claims Conference and is based upon information obtained by the Claims Conference to date. The Claims Conference makes no representation as to its accuracy or completeness and the catalogue should not be relied upon or used as proof, legal or equitable, as to current or past ownership of the items described within.
This catalogue represents the results of the current best efforts research of the Claims Conference and is based upon information obtained by the Claims Conference to date. The Claims Conference makes no representation as to its accuracy or completeness and the catalogue should not be relied upon or used as proof, legal or equitable, as to current or past ownership of the items described within.

museum at the Wielkopolska as well as some regional museums in Poznan (which held Judaica objects before the onset of World War II).
(Lobkowicz, p. 133 – 152, 172)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Commission</th>
<th>Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In October 2009, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage set up a Team of Experts to Study Provenance of Post-Jewish Objects in Polish Museums. The Team was dissolved „before the team had actually begun its work.“ (p. 23)

Selected Bibliography → Please note that the general literature may also contain information on the specific country.
- Bienkowska, Barbara. Straty bibliotek w czasie II wojny światowej w granicach Polski z 1945 (Losses of Libraries during World War II within the Polish Borders as of 1945), Warsaw: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, 1994. (Polish)


**Notes**

**Sources:**

(1) Information provided by Nawojka Cieślińska-Lobkowicz on 9 January 2007


Most Polish museums hold Judaica, with the biggest collection located in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, as well as in the Krakow Historical Museum. However, other museums, especially those located in central- and south- Poland, also hold extensive Judaica collections. Among these museums are the National Museum in Kielce, the Historical Museum in Lodz and
regional museums in Lublin, Nowy Sacz, Tarnow, Bialystok, Kazimierz Dolny, Rzeszów, Drohiczn, Wlodawa. Museums in the south of Poland are often connected with former Jewish communities or individuals. This means that the provenance of these collections, in particular from very small museums, can in part be more easily established (or is already known). More Judaica is located in ‘quasi-museums’, in so-called memory rooms of former synagogues, which mostly operate without any professional staff and are not able to conduct research, e.g. in Dabrowa Tarnowska, Lesko, Lancut, Kolbuszowa, Pinczow, Tykocin, Chrzanow. While most museums hold inventories of their collections (which are almost never accessible to outsiders), Judaica is very often not even catalogued.

In addition to museums, some libraries may also hold looted Judaica: On 11 November 1946, Poland sent a delegation to the Mimon Castle in the former Czechoslovakia, which held a large number of looted books, manuscripts, etc., to claim all books labeled as having Polish origin – Jewish and non-Jewish books alike. According to Prof. Shmuel Hugo Bergmann of Hebrew University, who witnessed that transport, Polish officials even claimed books from the library of the Great Synagogue of Warsaw (probably the Great Synagogue on Tlomackie Street in Warsaw).

See also sections on Germany, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine.