

“Pieśni za grosze” - a catalogue of polish leaflets with religious songs and broadside ballads.

For over a hundred years, starting from the second half of the XIX century, leaflets with songs played an important role in polish culture among lower social classes. Although being a commodity for such a long period of time, they were forgotten after nationalisation of printing houses in the 1950s. Here we report on efforts and challenges to create the first catalogue of leaflets produced by printing houses between the 1830s and 1950s in Galicia Region of Poland.

This initiative started in 2016 as a catalogue of leaflets, deposited in Ethnographic Museum in Rzeszów. Later, the scope of the research was extended to other institution's collections. Having no background and established methodology to use, a new one, similar to the ones used for Czech or German leaflets, was developed from scratch. The methodology used by us also includes analysis of typesetting and graphics, which reveal additional information that is not obtainable directly, e.g. identifying anonymous leaflets.

This research meets many challenges, such as geographical and institutional distribution of existing collections. Furthermore, the institutions themselves are often not aware of possessing this kind of publications. They also tend to catalogue them with a very generic description, e.g. “document of social life”, since leaflets usually lack information about the date, author or printing house.

As of the time of writing, the detailed catalogue in a form of digital database contains approximately 1500 unique leaflets. It allows searching for specific leaflets based on title, content, printing house, year and other parameters. The database may be a helpful tool for specialists in literature and culture, art historians or linguists, as it combines three aspects of information: leaflets' technical details, textual content and graphic form.