



Digital Humanities: An Opportunity or a Challenge When Dealing with Cultural Heritage and Memory? Reflections on the Project “Cultural and Intellectual Geography of the Former Polish Lands after the Partitions, 1865–1918: A Digital Vademecum”


Elżbieta Nowosielska 

Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences 
Lenkijos mokslų akademijos Tadeuszo Manteuffelio istorijos institutas
enowosielska@ihpan.edu.pl

Michał Raczkowski 

Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences 
Lenkijos mokslų akademijos Tadeuszo Manteuffelio istorijos institutas
mraczkowski@ihpan.edu.pl


Adrianna Sznepik 

Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences 
Lenkijos mokslų akademijos Tadeuszo Manteuffelio istorijos institutas
asznapik@ihpan.edu.pl

Abstract. The article reflects on the opportunities and challenges that tools of the digital humanities pose for researchers in the field of cultural heritage and memory. The reflections are based on the project “The Cultural and Intellectual Geography of the Former Polish Lands after the Partitions, 1865–1918: A Digital Vademecum” (hereinafter, the Vademecum Project). The project’s goal is to collect and share data on selected aspects of broadly defined cultural heritage from the multi-ethnic territory of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the period 1865–1918. The article has shown that the Vademecum Project interacts with memory institutions. On the one hand, it draws upon their heritage and resources and on the other hand, it complements their mission (based on historical sources, it provides information about missing publications, destroyed monuments, or lands long since confiscated). The project has also revealed that the use of digital tools in heritage and memory studies poses many challenges—ranging from assembling an interdisciplinary team and organizing its effective work to finding suitable methodological and technical solutions where two such distinct fields as the humanities and computer science intersect. However, the opportunities and prospects offered by this type of collaboration outweigh risk factors. Amid the many threats that the modern world poses, the Vademecum Project (and other similar projects) has the task of preserving cultural heritage and creating memory. Constantly evolving digital tools and technological advances are indispensable in this mission.

Keywords: digital humanities, digital Vademecum, digital history, landed gentry, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Countries.

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Skaitmeniniai humanitariniai mokslai – galimybė ar iššūkis tyrėjams? Apmąstymai apie projektą „Buvusių Lenkijos žemių kultūrinė-intelektualinė geografija po padalijimų 1865–1918 m.: skaitmeninis vadovas“

Santrauka. Straipsnio tikslas – pateikti keletą apmąstymų apie galimybes bei iššūkius, kuriuos kultūrinio paveldo ir atminties srities tyrėjams kelia šiuolaikinės skaitmeninių humanitarinių mokslų priemonės. Svarstymuose remiamasi projektu „Buvusių Lenkijos žemių kultūrinė-intelektualinė geografija po padalijimų 1865–1918 m.: skaitmeninis vadovas“ (toliau – projektas „Skaitmeninis vadovas“). Projekto tikslas – rinkti ir dalytis įvairiais duomenimis apie daugiatautės buvusios Lenkijos ir Lietuvos valstybės teritorijos 1865–1918 m. laikotarpiu pasirinktus plačiai apibrėžto kultūros paveldo aspektus. Straipsnyje parodama, kad projektas „Skaitmeninis vadovas“ sąveikauja su atminties institucijomis: viena vertus, naudojamos jų paveldu ir ištekliais, antra vertus – papildoma jų misija (remiantis istoriniais šaltiniais, įtraukiama informacija apie dingusius žurnalus, sugriautus paminklus ar seniai atimtas žemes). Taip pat atskleidžiama, kad skaitmeninių priemonių naudojimas paveldo ir atminties tyrimuose kelia daug iššūkių – nuo tarpdisciplininės komandos subūrimo ir efektyvaus jos darbo organizavimo iki tinkamų metodologinių ir techninių sprendimų paieškų ten, kur susikerta dvi itin skirtingos sritys – humanitariniai ir informatikos mokslai. Tačiau galimybės ir perspektyvos, kurias suteikia tokio pobūdžio bendradarbiavimas, nusveria rizikos veiksnius. Visų pirma, tarp daugybės grėsmių, kurias, deja, kelia ir nūdienos pasaulis, projektu „Skaitmeninis vadovas“ (ir kitais panašiais projektais) siekiama išsaugoti kultūrinį paveldą ir kurti atmintį, o nuolat tobulėjantys skaitmeniniai įrankiai ir technologiniai pasiekimai šioje misijoje yra nepakeičiami.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: skaitmeninė humanitarika, skaitmeninis vadovas, skaitmeninė istorija, dvarininkai, Abiejų Tautų Respublika, Lenkijos karalystės ir kitų slavų kraštų geografinis žodynas.

Introduction

The goal of this article is to share some reflections on the opportunities and challenges provided by modern tools of digital humanities to the researchers when dealing with cultural heritage and memory.¹ The article is based on the main assumptions and the first outcomes of the project “Cultural and Intellectual Geography of the Former Polish Lands after the Partitions, 1865–1918: A Digital Vademecum” (hereinafter, the Vademecum Project), which has been carried out at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (hereinafter, the Institute) since June 2024 (expected to end in 2029).²

For many decades, the Institute has been implementing long-term documentary teamwork, resulting, among others, in bibliographies, dictionaries, and geographical atlases.³ Despite their substantive value, the studies are not always easily accessible or user-friendly. Meanwhile, quick and easy access to information and historical sources is very important in the work of contemporary historians and representatives of other humanities. Such situation has inspired us to develop the concept of our digital Vademecum Project. The main objective of the project is to collect and compile a variety of information, concerning selected aspects of a broadly defined cultural heritage from the multi-ethnic area of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (hereinafter, PLC) within the borders before its first partition (1772) during the period of 1865–1918,⁴ and make it available to the public.

¹ Some of the ideas presented in the introduction have already been discussed by one of the authors of this article. See Sznapiak, A. Gdzie kończyła się I RP 100 lat po zniknięciu z mapy? Wpływ narzędzi cyfrowych narzędzi cyfrowych na badania i dyskurs historyczny na przykładzie projektu “Geografia kulturowo-intelektualna dawnych ziem polskich pod zaborami 1865–1918—cyfrowe vademecum.” *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 2025, Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 271–295, <https://doi.org/10.12775/SDR.2025.2.13>.

² The project is led by Prof. Maciej Górny.

³ See, e.g., Mission of the Institute. *Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History Polish Academy of Sciences*. Retrieved from <https://ihpan.edu.pl/en/about-us/mission-of-the-institute/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

⁴ See Funded by the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities: “Cultural and intellectual geography of the former Polish lands under the partitions 1865–1918—digital vademecum” (no. NPRH/F/SP/0070/2024/13, funded: 2 054 656,80 PLN), 2024–2029, project manager: Professor Maciej Górny. *Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History Polish Academy of Sciences*. Retrieved from <https://ihpan.edu.pl/en/research/research-projects/funded-by-the-national-programme-for-the-development-of-the-humanities/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

In this context, we are interested in tangible as well as non-tangible cultural heritage as defined by the two UNESCO conventions.⁵ When defining cultural heritage, an active approach to the past and its current interpretation is often emphasised, therefore it is associated not only with concrete objects but also with their symbolic layer, which is directly related to memory.⁶ However, such projects as ours would be impossible without the previous input of memory institutions, which are the depositories of historical sources. Memory institutions, such as archives, libraries, museums, or art galleries, not only store documents or objects, but also enable their reinterpretation in the changing historical reality.⁷ Most memory institutions have been making efforts to digitise their collections, which on the one hand, contributes to greater accessibility and preservation of cultural heritage, and on the other hand, leads to the disconnection of the content from its physical medium, creating new links between the documents.⁸ The digitisation as such should be considered. Although it has been carried out in memory institutions for years, it invariably brings many challenges, such as financial, legal, or organizational ones. There are also often no clear criteria for the selection of sources to be digitised and no long-term strategy for their preservation.⁹ The research projects, similar to ours, have been facing, in part, related challenges; however, they can also be an opportunity to make available to a wider audience not only the sources themselves but also historical research based on the analysis of big data, thus greatly facilitating the use of already existing digital repositories created by memory institutions.

The challenges that the research teams face in this type of project start much earlier—already at the stage of creating a structure, which should, by definition, take into account their interdisciplinary character. According to researchers, who specialise in digital humanities, the interdisciplinarity or even transdisciplinarity is this discipline's immanent attribute, as it brings together not only specialists from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences but also computer scientists and programmers. While domain scientists are required to have at least some basic knowledge in programming and mathematics, data scientists should have an understanding of the data they are going to process.¹⁰ However, in practice, forming a team that meets such requirements and does not face initial problems in developing harmonious collaboration still seems to be a challenge, even in countries where the digital humanities have been developing rapidly for many years. “Living with Machines,” one of the largest United Kingdom's digital humanities projects, concerning nineteenth century history, serves as an interesting example. The creators of the project also decided to share the backstage of their work, which does not happen often in this type of venture.¹¹ The different working styles of humanists and programmers caused problems in understanding each other in the project. Historians mostly use a narrative form of expression when analysing and interpreting sources, while data scientists use numbers, algorithms, and statistical models, therefore, they are used to a certain formalisation and standardisation. However, the authors of the project decided to treat all disciplines and professions equally, encouraging all participants to learn from each other and cross the boundaries of their specialisations, which they called the ‘radical collaboration.’¹² That is an

⁵ See Galusek, Ł.; Jagodzińska, K. Dziedzictwo. In: *Modi memorandi: leksykon kultury pamięci* / Eds. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2014, p. 106–107.

⁶ See *ibidem*, p. 107–108.

⁷ Cf. Byrne, A. Institutional Memory and Memory Institutions. *The Australian Library Journal*, 2015, Vol. 64, No. 4, p. 260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049670.2015.1073657>.

⁸ See Kurz, I. Digitalizacja. In: *Modi memorandi: leksykon kultury pamięci* / Eds. M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2014, p. 91.

⁹ See more, Evans, T.; Hauttekeete, L. Challenges of Digital Preservation for Cultural Heritage Institutions. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 2011, Vol. 43, No. 3, p. 157–165, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000611410585>.

¹⁰ See more, Pawłowski, A. Humanistyka cyfrowa: geneza, zakres, cele i perspektywy. In: *Od Gutenberga do Zuckerberga: wstęp do humanistyki cyfrowej* / Ed. A. Pawłowski. Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2023, p. 24–25. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/universityofwroclaw/docs/od_gutenberga_do_zuckerberga [accessed 11/02/2025].

¹¹ See Ahnert, R.; Griffin, E.; Ridge, M.; Tolfo, G. *Collaborative Historical Research in the Age of Big Data: Lessons from an Interdisciplinary Project*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009175548>.

¹² See more, *ibidem*, p. 56–66.

interesting approach to the management of the grant. However, in the context of Polish science, especially the humanities (where it is still difficult to receive funding for large, team-based interdisciplinary and, more importantly, long-term projects, which would allow not only to achieve the research goal but also to build a team), such ideas are difficult to implement.

Our project also faces the challenge of interdisciplinarity. Although historians constitute the majority of the project participants, there are also bibliographers, specialists in historical geography, cartographers, computer scientists, and programmers. The research team is organised into several sections, namely the Periodical Publications Section, the Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Countries Section (Pol. *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*,¹³ hereinafter, SGKP; one of the project's key sources, therefore its processing is carried out by a separate section), the Great Landed Property Section, the Historical Geography and Cartography Section, and the IT Section. In practice, it is not a strict division, because the fields of activity of various sections sometimes overlap.

The data that our team plans to collect and extract from, in addition to the already-mentioned SGKP and other documents, dictionary, or statistical sources, concern, among other things, the settlement network of the state and church administration, the economic and social structure, demography, education, monuments, art collections (public and private), libraries, etc. We also use the results of the long-term documentation work carried out by the Section for the Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries concerning the periodicals of former PLC¹⁴ and the Department of Historical Atlas, which form the cartographic basis of our application.¹⁵ In both cases, the collected data will still be completed and improved according to the current needs. In our project and final application, we plan to include all national, ethnic, and religious groups that lived in the territory of our concern. The collected data will be harmonised and compiled into a georeferenced database and made available as an interactive and multifunctional application. A map will be at the centre of the application, and information from the previously mentioned sources will be assigned to individual settlement points on the map.

The project's tasks and goals would be impossible to achieve without the digital tools. Many research problems in the humanities (including history) have remained unchanged for years; however, without the use of modern technology (e.g., machine analysis of big data), many new research subjects would not have originated at all. The result of this approach is that it is mostly the currently available digital tools that create, in a sense, the object of research in digital humanities.¹⁶ These changes have also significantly affected the historical research. One of the scholars, who in his research uses digital methods, emphasizes that it modifies the way of looking at a source, because the historian is required to structure the content it provides without giving up on solving all substantive or IT problems that may arise in the process.¹⁷

¹³ Cf. *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 1–15 / Eds. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa 1880–1902.

¹⁴ See *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 1 / Eds. A. Brus et al. Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Historii: "DiG," 2000; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 2 / Eds. A. Brus et al. Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Historii: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2010; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 3 / Eds. U. Ściegosz-Karpińska et al. Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 2017. See also, Section for the Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries. *Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla PAN*. Retrieved from <https://ihpan.edu.pl/en/structure/department-of-the-bibliography-of-polish-history/section-for-the-retrospective-bibliography-for-the-19th-and-20th-centuries/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

¹⁵ See, e.g., Atlas Fontium. *Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences*. Retrieved from <https://atlasfontium.pl/> [accessed 11/02/2025]; *Mapy z przeszłością. Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla PAN*. Retrieved from <https://atlas.ihpan.edu.pl/pastmaps/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

¹⁶ See more, Pawłowski, A. *Humanistyka cyfrowa: geneza, zakres, cele i perspektywy*, p. 26–28.

¹⁷ See Szady, B. *Technologie cyfrowe w badaniach historycznych*. In: *Od Gutenberga do Zuckerberga: wstęp do humanistyki cyfrowej* / Ed. A. Pawłowski. Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2023, p. 313–314. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/universityofwroclaw/docs/od_gutenberga_do_zuckerberga [accessed 11/02/2025].

The rapid development of digital technologies also affects historical research. For example, an article published ten years ago on the new challenges and opportunities of digital history defined its main areas of application as databases and source editions, full-text databases, textual content analysis, historical statistics and demography of history, digitisation and networked source sharing, and using the information potential of visual.¹⁸ It could be discussed whether all of the above-mentioned areas of application of digital tools in history are all equally still relevant, but the most up-to-date ones, related to the use of artificial intelligence (hereinafter, AI) with the potential to revolutionise the historical research, have been missing. In particular, machine learning and natural language processing have found their applications in digital history.¹⁹ For example, in our project, we will be using the processing of large source corpus by the use of large language models (hereinafter, LLM), which will allow us to automate some of the data extraction process. The rapid development of AI has produced a tool that we had not considered when preparing the grant application. It is not only accessible but is also, hopefully, potentially crucial in the overall success of our venture.

The first two chapters of the article discuss the main opportunities and challenges associated with a project such as ours, particularly considering its digital and interdisciplinary character. The following two chapters present case studies based on two selected sections of the Vademecum Project, each drawing on different types of historical sources. Chapter three (case study I) focuses on periodicals, as compiled in the *Bibliography of Polish History*, and examines both the challenges and advantages of their use in digital humanities context. Chapter four (case study II), in turn, is devoted to the section of landowners in the Vademecum Project and explores the opportunities and concerns related to the application of digital tools to the various types of sources used in research on the landed gentry.

1. The Opportunities of the Vademecum Project

The realisation of any large scholarly venture always comes with opportunities and hopes about the end result as well as challenges and risks that need to be taken into account. We started our work in June 2024 by preparing a description of each section. The section coordinators described what type of sources and resources they intended to process and the final outcome they expected. This brought us closer to discussing the end result of the entire project, i.e., the application. In order to conceptualise the application, we had to answer the question of what functionalities it should have and who should be its end-user. Trying to identify the questions of competency of the imagined future users of the application also allowed us to think about its future functionalities and the possibilities that this digital tool will provide to the researchers using it. We assumed that first it is intended to serve users to search and collate a variety of data, facilitating the analysis of mass sources specific to the period of interest.

The digital humanities tools implemented into the research of the turn-of-the-century history will open up new fields of inquiry, and the users of the app will be able to use it for both synthetic and cross-sectional research. With the help of data visualisation and search engines, a historian will be able to ask very specific research questions (e.g., quantitative: How many women magazines were in Galicia before World War I in Polish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish? Or how many numismatic collections were in the Kingdom of Poland?), as well as more general ones, allowing a bird's-eye view of the issues, using data scaling in the final application (e.g., How many state and private libraries existed in the whole territory under consideration?). Qualitative research questions will also be possible, (e.g., comparing the

¹⁸ See Narojczyk, K. W kierunku historii cyfrowej: nowe możliwości—nowe wyzwania. *Res Historica*, 2016, No. 42, p. 344–346, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/rh.2016.42.329-350>.

¹⁹ See more, Zapała, A. Wpływ narzędzi cyfrowych na badania historyczne: wprowadzenie. In: *Człowiek twórcą historii*. Vol. 5, Warszawa: nowocześnie humanisty historyka na progu XXI w. Part 1 / Eds. C. Kukło, W. Walczak. Białystok: Uniwersytet w Białymstoku Warszawa: Edyta Wojciechowska-Jadczak E-BIT: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne. Zarząd Główny, 2024, p. 15–17.

development of education in the Russian and Prussian partitions or finding out which governorate of the Kingdom of Poland had the most museums and art collections). The potential research problems mentioned above are only examples, and many more could be listed. What they have in common is that without the use of digital tools it would be difficult to solve them comprehensively and competently within the framework of a single researcher's work.

Although the final product of our project is supposed to serve historians, we assume that the application can also be useful for a wide range of representatives of other humanities and social sciences, who are interested in the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and cultural heritage in its broadest sense. It can also be helpful in education (especially higher education), contribute to the popularisation of research and inspire new ones. Furthermore, such approach is what has distinguished digital history from the digital humanities as a whole for years already. Indeed, digital history projects are more often also dedicated to non-academic user (e.g., teachers, students, pupils, or interested amateurs), which goes in line with the public history trend.²⁰

Another aspect that distinguishes digital history projects from other fields of the humanities is the tendency to map source data using geographic information systems tools, with the visualisation of spatial data in the form of a map being the frequent end result.²¹ However, in Polish historical research, such projects are still somewhat an innovation, especially in the research of the turn of the twentieth century. A part of our research team already has some experience in participating in a similar project, “The Online Atlas of Independent Poland.”²² Although the project involved staff from two different institutions, the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Geodesy and Cartography of the Warsaw University of Technology, it seems to be less complicated in its assumptions and organisation of the team work than the Vademecum Project. In “The Online Atlas of Independent Poland,” the SGKP was also used; however, the authors of the project were only interested in locating on the map the place names that a source contains, without diving deeper into the content of individual entries, unless they contained clues to the location of a given settlement point.²³ Therefore, the current project provides much better research opportunities for the users of the future application, even though its implementation involves many challenges that we could not fully predict at the grant application stage.

2. The Challenges of the Vademecum Project

The first challenge, arising from the project itself, is the need to process a large amount of data. For example, one of the primary sources of our project, the previously mentioned SGKP, consists of 15 volumes (14,787 pages). When we indexed all the entries, the number reached more than 200,000, with about 150,000 localities concerned.²⁴ Although, processing large amount of data is nothing new

²⁰ See for instance, Robertson, S. The Differences between Digital Humanities and Digital History. In: *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016* / Eds. M. K. Gold, L. F. Klein. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 292–293, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1cn6thb.28>.

²¹ See more, *ibidem*, p. 293–296.

²² See Internetowy Atlas Polski Niepodległej. *Instytut Historii im Tadeusza Manteuffla PAN i Wydział Geodezji i Kartografii Politechniki Warszawskiej*. Retrieved from <https://atlas1918.ihpan.edu.pl/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

²³ For more information, see Sznajik, A. Online Atlas of Independent Poland—a Joint Project of The Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History and The Warsaw University of Technology's Faculty of Geodesy and Cartography. In: *Studia i materiały z historii nowożytnej i najnowszej Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej = Studii ta materiali z rann'omodernoii ta novoi istorii Central'no-Shidnoi Ėvropi*. Vol. 2 / Eds. T. Kargol, W. Michałowski. Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Historia Iagellonica”—Kijów: Wydawnictwo Tempora, 2021, p. 141–151.

²⁴ See more, Sznajik, A. Sprawozdanie z realizacji projektu “Internetowy Atlas Polski Niepodległej”—i perspektywy badawcze. In: *Od “Słownika geograficznego Królestwa Polskiego” do map topograficznych Wojskowego Instytutu Geograficznego* / Ed. T. Epsztein. Warszawa: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk: Neriton, 2021, p. 292–294.

in digital history projects,²⁵ in the case of our project, we wanted to extract detailed information from the entries of the SGKP, which was often presented in a non-structured way. This would require a query of all material and then manually entering the data into a database, which is a very time-consuming task. Therefore, taking the advice of our IT Section, it was decided to try to semi-automate the process using AI and to analyse the SGKP content using the LLMs. The team decided to select one volume of the SGKP for test processing. However, before the first results could be achieved, a data scientist from our research team faced some issues, such as getting the right quality of scans, OCR errors or problems arising from complicated and irregular structure of the entries. Close cooperation between him and the members of the SGKP Section (historians familiar with the source and specialising in the period under study) was necessary. In the end, a working version of structured data from the SGKP was successfully obtained, which allows for the identification of a given entry (name, volume number, page number, type of entry, and name aliases), the determination of the administrative affiliation of the localities described in the SGKP (district, commune, or governorate), and the attribution to ecclesiastical structures (e.g., parish, deanery, or diocese). Also statistical information (e.g., number of houses and number of inhabitants) as well as other miscellaneous information included in the entries (e.g., historical monuments and archaeological artifacts, industry, schools, institutions, etc.) were extracted.

At present, the model is being improved, requiring close cooperation between historians and the programmer. The process will also probably involve manual verification of certain errors or problematic cases, which is a standard procedure in any digital history.²⁶ The benefits of using AI tools in the project seem to be significant, even though it does not solve all challenges related to big data processing in the project. For example, the Periodicals Section of the Vademecum Project (discussed later in the article as one of the case studies) has its own separate large database and the issue of visualising the information, which will appear in the final application, can be quite a challenge.

Another challenge the team will face at further stages of the project will be the harmonisation of data from different sources on the same issues. For example, one of the goals of the project is to reconstruct the structure of the Roman Catholic Church on the territory of the former PLC. Some of the SGKP entries contain information on the affiliation of a given locality to parish; however, some areas have been missing this kind of data. Therefore the project team is considering supplementing or spot-checking this data based on schematisms (a type of ecclesiastical directory), which are a completely different type of source. The problem of harmonising data from different types of sources will also concern the Great Land Property Section of the Vademecum Project. For the most part of the territory we are interested in, the structure of land ownership will be reconstructed on the basis of available lists of landowners, which varied in form depending on the partition and the area concerned. Only in the case of the Kingdom of Poland, it will be reconstructed based on data obtained from the SGKP (see chapter “Case Study II”). The challenge here will be the unification of the data structure. In the final phase of the Vademecum Project, we will be faced with the harmonisation of data produced by all sections of the project. The project team will make every effort to ensure that the final data is produced in accordance with the Linked Open Data (hereinafter, LOD) concept and in accordance with the principles of Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable²⁷

²⁵ See, e.g., Elo, K. Big Data, Bad Metadata: A Methodological Note on the Importance of Good Metadata in the Age of Digital History. In: *Digital Histories: Emergent Approaches within the New Digital History* / Eds. M. Fridlund, M. Oiva, P. Paju. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2020, p. 103–112, <https://doi.org/10.33134/HUP-5-6>. The author focuses on the issue of uniform and valid metadata, which is essential when processing big data in digital history projects.

²⁶ See, e.g., Jarlbrink, J. All the Work That Makes It Work: Digital Methods and Manual Labour. In: *Digital Histories: Emergent Approaches within the New Digital History* / Eds. M. Fridlund, M. Oiva, P. Paju. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2020, p. 113–126, <https://doi.org/10.33134/HUP-5-7>.

²⁷ See more, FAIR Principles. *GO FAIR*. Retrieved from <http://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/> [accessed 11/02/2025].

(hereinafter, FAIR). Nowadays, such data management is slowly becoming a standard in digital humanities projects, which seems to be crucial for the sustainability of the results.²⁸

The last challenge we would like to discuss is the need to develop methods of communication between the humanists (the substantive team members of the project) and the computer scientists and programmers. It could be argued that without solving this issue, the successful implementation of the project could be in question. One of the problem was to unify the terms used among the team members, so that the two groups of project participants understood each other, and for historians to clearly define their needs and expectations. The team meetings were very important, as they allowed for a free exchange of ideas among the participants, and the interdisciplinary nature of those meetings made it possible to look at research problems from different points of view. The meeting minutes, prepared after each meeting, summarising key findings and defining the division of further work, also proved useful. It seems that proper communication cannot be neglected, as it is a key challenge in managing a project of this type.

3. Case Study I: The Periodicals

One type of data that will be presented in the Vademecum Project is information on periodicals, pamphlets, and calendars published in the territory of the former PLC in 1865–1918. Fasciculi 1–3, volume 3 of the *Bibliografia Historii Polski XIX i XX w.*²⁹ (Bibliography of Polish History of the 19th and 20th Centuries; hereinafter, BHP) will serve as the main resource. The bibliography is a long-term project, which started in 1953 and was compiled by the team of the Section for the Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries. The volumes in question are primary bibliographies, which means that the description of a particular periodical was mainly based on available sources (newspapers, calendars, and pamphlets). Other bibliographies or library catalogues were only used as ancillary resources.³⁰ The primary criterion for the selection of titles in this project was the place of publication and not the language or nationality of the editors or publishers. At present,³¹ the database prepared for the Vademecum Project contains about 5,231 titles from the Russian Partition, 1,351 from the Prussian Partition, and 3,258 from the Austrian Partition.³² These figures should not be regarded as final. Some changes will occur, especially, because of the data update in the older volumes from the series. Fasc. 1 in particular, published in 2000,³³ has missed out about a quarter of a century of digitalisation of sources, development of the Internet as well as research and publications related to the changes.

Counting the number of periodicals and comparing the state of the press in different regions is not a new phenomenon in historiography. The first attempts to summarize Polish periodicals appeared

²⁸ See, e.g., Backman, A.; Smith, M. Sustainability and Best Practices for Linked Data Heritage Resources: Some Case Studies from Sweden. In: *Digital Spatial Infrastructures and Worldviews in Pre-Modern Societies* / Eds. A. Petrulevich, S. Skovgaard Boeck. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023, p. 159–183, <https://doi.org/10.17302/CDH-9781802700794>. In this article, the authors discuss the application of the LOD concept, FAIR standards, and the problem of sustainability of the results of digital endeavors based on two Swedish projects: “Swedish Open Cultural Heritage,” a national platform for collecting data on Swedish cultural heritage, and “Norse World,” which is based on medieval Danish and Swedish literature.

²⁹ *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 1; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 2; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 3.

³⁰ Each volume also contains a list of bibliographies, monographs, and periodical studies from the partition in question, up to date at the time of publication.

³¹ Status on 6 March 2025.

³² The printed volumes also contain information on Polish periodicals published in Russia, Germany, and Austria–Hungary. See *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 1; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 2; *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 3. Therefore, the numbers provided here refer only to the lands covered by the Vademecum Project.

³³ *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 1.

as early as the 1870s thanks to the works of Karol Estreicher.³⁴ Later, bibliographies devoted to periodicals in various cities or regions were also published. There are also bibliographies covering the press of the former Russian Empire. Numerous authors have made attempts to describe the Jewish periodicals (in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish).³⁵ Regarding the references to Lithuanian periodicals, Edvardas Vidmantas's bibliography on the workers' press³⁶ and Jadvyga Kazlauskaitė's work on the Vilnius press are worth mentioning.³⁷ Recently Mariâ Vasilivna Galuško and Miroslav Mikolajovič Romanûk published valuable bibliographies on the Ukrainian press.³⁸

The rapid development of mass press and high circulation of periodicals during the early twentieth century in many areas coincided with the development of national identity (in the modern understanding of the term). Particularly in the areas where various nationalities lived side by side, the demonstration of cultural achievement by pointing to numerous and thematically diverse periodicals published by one of the ethnic groups could be seen as an argument for the right to control the entire territory. The suppression of the press of national minorities was one of the pillars of Germanization or Russification. One of the striking examples of the latter was the total ban on the reproduction of printed matter in Latin characters, which was in place in Lithuania until 1904. This restriction, intended as an element of repression following the January Uprising and a measure against the Polish influence in the region, had the opposite effect and highly contributed to the growth of Lithuanian national consciousness.³⁹

Regarding the impact of Russification on the level and number of the Polish press, the researchers note that there was no unified and organized plan to eradicate Polish newspapers in the Kingdom of

³⁴ Estreicher, K. Spis alfabetyczny czasopism i dzieł zbiorowych od najdawniejszych czasów. In: *Bibliografia polska. 120,000 druków*. Part. 1, Stolecie XIX: katalog 50,000 druków polskich lub Polski dotyczących od roku 1800, ułożony abecedowo według autorów i przedmiotów, z wyrażeniem cen księgarskich / Ed. K. Estreichera. Kraków: w Drukarni Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego pod zarządkiem Konst. Mańkowskiego, 1870, p. 240–266.

³⁵ See, e.g., Rajzen, Z. *Le 'qsiyqo' n pwn de' r yiydiyše' r liyte' ra' twr pre' se' 'wn piylo' lo' gye.* Bd. 1, (A–Y). Wwiyłne': Wwiyłne' r Pa' rl. pwn B. Qle' sqiyn, 1926; Rajzen, Z. *Le 'qsiyqo' n pwn de' r yiydiyše' r liyte' ra' twr pre' se' 'wn piylo' lo' gye.* Bd. 2, (K–P). Wwiyłne': Wwiyłne' r Pa' rl. pwn B. Qle' sqiyn, 1927; Rajzen, Z. *Le 'qsiyqo' n pwn de' r yiydiyše' r liyte' ra' twr pre' se' 'wn piylo' lo' gye.* Bd. 3, (P–Q). Wwiyłne': Wwiyłne' r Pa' rl. pwn B. Qle' sqiyn, 1929; Rajzen, Z. *Le 'qsiyqo' n pwn de' r yiydiyše' r liyte' ra' twr pre' se' 'wn piylo' lo' gye.* Bd. 4, (R–T). Wwiyłne': Wwiyłne' r Pa' rl. pwn B. Qle' sqiyn, 1929; Kiržnic, A. *Di jidiše prese in der gewezener rusiŕer imperie (1823–1916)*. Moskwe-Charkow-Minsk: Centraler Felker-Farlag fun FSSR, 1930; Glikson, P. *Preliminary Inventory of the Jewish Daily and Periodical Press Published in the Polish Language, 1823–1982*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Institute of Jewish Studies, Center for Research on Polish Jewry, 1983; Cała, A. *Żydowskie periodyki i druki okazjonalne w języku polskim: bibliografia*. Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2005; *Studia z dziejów trójjęzycznej prasy żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich (XIX–XX w.)* / Ed. J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, cooperation G. P. Bąbiak, A. J. Cieślukowa. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Nerition: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012.

³⁶ Vidmantas, E. *Lietuvos darbininkų periodinė spauda, 1895–1917*. Vilnius: Mintis, 1979.

³⁷ Kazlauskaitė, J. *Vilniaus periodiniai leidiniai, 1760–1918: bibliografinė rodyklė*. Vilnius: Mintis, 1988.

³⁸ See Galuško, M. V. *Ukrains'ki časopisi Stanisława: (1879–1944 rr.): istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. L'viv: L'vivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanika NAN Ukraïni, 2001; Galuško, M. V. *Ukrains'ki časopisi Ternopolâ i Ternopil'sini (1886–1944 rr.): istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. L'viv: L'vivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanika NAN Ukraïni, 2008; *Ukrains'ka presa v Ukraïni ta sviti XIX–XX st.: istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. Vol. 1, 1812–1890 rr. / Eds. M. M. Romanûk, M. V. Galuško, L. V. Snicarčuk. L'viv: Vidavnictvo "Oriâna-Nova," 2007; *Ukrains'ka presa v Ukraïni ta sviti XIX–XX st.: istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. Vol. 2, 1891–1905 rr. / Eds. M. M. Romanûk, M. V. Galuško, L. V. Snicarčuk. L'viv: L'vivs'ka nacional'na naukova biblioteka Ukraïni im. V. Stefanika. Viddilennâ "Naukovo-Doslidnij Centr Periodiki," 2009; *Ukrains'ka presa v Ukraïni ta sviti XIX–XX st.: istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. Vol. 3, 1906–1910 rr. / Eds. M. M. Romanûk, M. V. Galuško, L. V. Snicarčuk. L'viv: L'vivs'ka nacional'na naukova biblioteka Ukraïni im. V. Stefanika. Naukovo-doslidnij institut presoznavstva, 2011; *Ukrains'ka presa v Ukraïni ta sviti XIX–XX st.: istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ*. Vol. 4, 1911–1916 rr. / Eds. M. M. Romanûk (project manager), M. V. Galuško, L. V. Snicarčuk. L'viv: L'vivs'ka nacional'na naukova biblioteka Ukraïni im. V. Stefanika. Naukovo-doslidnij institut presoznavstva, 2014; Romanûk, M. M.; Galuško, M. *Ukrains'ki časopisi Lvova: 1848–1939: [istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ]*. Vol. 1, 1848–1900. L'viv: Vidavnictvo "Svit," 2001; Romanûk, M. M.; Galuško, M. *Ukrains'ki časopisi Lvova: 1848–1939: [istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ]*. Vol. 2, 1901–1919. L'viv: Vidavnictvo "Svit," 2002; Romanûk, M. M.; Galuško, M. *Ukrains'ki časopisi Lvova: 1848–1939: [istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennâ]*. Vol. 3, 1920–1939. Chapter 2, 1929–1939. L'viv: Vidavnictvo "Svit," 2003.

³⁹ See Tyla, A. Sprzeciw wobec zakazu druków litewskich w latach 1864–1904. *Almanach Sejneński*, 2004, No. 3, p. 59; Łossowski, P. Problem zakazu druków litewskich 1864–1904. *Przegląd Wschodni: historia i współczesność Polaków na Wschodzie*, 2014, Vol. 13, No. 3(51), p. 749; Staliūnas, D. *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.

Poland. Nevertheless, there were many factors that adversely affected the possibility of the development of the press published in the area: the mention of topics or names, which threatened to shut down the paper; the obedience to write appropriately about the tsar; the exerted pressure by the superintendents of the Warsaw educational district (especially Alexander Apuchtin) to increase the effectiveness of Russification; and the interests of various state bodies responsible for censorship in the Russian Empire.⁴⁰ By contrast, there were a few examples of more benign attempts at propaganda aimed at a Polish-speaking audience. Among them, the periodical *Oświata* (Education), founded on the initiative of the Warsaw governor-general Alexander Imeretinsky, offered ideas and readings approved by the Russian authorities to the rural population.⁴¹

Germanization (especially in the Prussian Partition) had a more direct influence on the number and structure of the press in the former PLC. Its significant impact was felt not only on the cultural development of the Polish–German borderland area but even on its demography.⁴² Even if one ignores the issue of the so-called *Rugi pruskie*, i.e., the deportation of Polish-speaking people, the conflicts that occurred in the area and policies of the German authorities contributed to hindering the development of the area, which was included in the Prussian Partition and, consequently, to the increased emigration of local population to more developed western Germany and further to the North America or Brazil. In such circumstances, the editors of Polish-language periodicals from the areas of the Grand Duchy of Posen or Pomerania were more likely to be arrested and subjected to other repressions.⁴³ Presenting available data on periodicals from the years 1865–1918, published in three partitions, and therefore covered by different legal orders in the Vademecum Project, will lead to new, cross-sectional hypotheses and research questions about the factors that may have influenced publishing markets.

Counting periodicals may seem like a straightforward task, but while working on the BHP, it became apparent that differences affecting statistics could arise too. For example, can the change in a title be considered as the start of a new periodical, or merely an internal change within a particular publication? For instance, in Cracow between 1869 and 1870 a satirical periodical known collectively as *Abecadlnik* (The Alphabet) was published, and each issue came out under a different title (*Armata, Bambus, Cyprys, Dukat*, etc.).⁴⁴ Similarly, in Berezhany in 1900, the students of the Ukrainian secondary school published a newspaper under different titles (successively: *Muha, Mitla, Baba, Cigan, Bżola, Osa*, and *Komar*)⁴⁵ due to the fear of confiscation by teachers. There were not many periodicals published in this town, so whether this newspaper is counted as a single or many newspapers would appear in the statistics. The supplements could also be counted as separate publications or an integral part of the newspaper. One of the main advantages of using the BHP as a primary resource (albeit not without minor errors) is access

⁴⁰ See Bałabuch, H. Cenzura a rusyfikacja—tożsamość czy podobieństwo celów i metod?: (uwagi na przykładzie polskiej prasy prowincjonalnej końca XIX wieku). *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*. Sectio F, Historia, 1997 / 98, Vol. 52 / 53, p. 191. Retrieved from https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/texts/none/19971998-tom-5253/annales_universitatis_mariae_curie_skłodowska_sectio_f_historia-r1997_1998-t52_53-s177-199.pdf [accessed 11/02/2025]. See more, Bałabuch, H. Uniwersalne i partykularne uwarunkowania biurokracji nadzorującej prasę (na przykładzie cenzury carskiej). In: *Dzieje biurokracji na ziemiach polskich*. Vol. 1 / Eds. A. Górak, I. Łuć, D. Magier. Radzyń Podlaski: Radzyńskie Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Lokalnych: Radzyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe Libra, 2008, p. 363–380.

⁴¹ See more, Przeworska, M. M. Tygodnik ilustrowany “Oświata” jako narzędzie formowania “cesarskiego chłopca” w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1900–1905. *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, 2015, Vol. 46, p. 197–219. Retrieved from https://rocznik.bn.org.pl/upload/pdf/35939_Rocznik_46_s.%20197-219.pdf [accessed 11/02/2025].

⁴² See Eckert, M. Konflikt polsko-niemiecki w XIX i XX w.: aspekt globalny i lokalny. *Studia Zachodnie*, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 68. Retrieved from https://zbc.uz.zgora.pl/Content/45865/PDF/6_eckert_konflikt.pdf [accessed 11/02/2025].

⁴³ See, e.g., Banach, J. Polska prasa pomorska wobec walki o język polski na przełomie XIX i XX wieku w Prusach Zachodnich. *Przegląd Zachodni*, 1990, No. 5–6, p. 61. Retrieved from https://www.archiwumpz.iz.poznan.pl/Content/6875/C_II_472-C_II_473BP-1990_5-6-83.pdf [accessed 11/02/2025].

⁴⁴ *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 3, p. 44–45.

⁴⁵ See *ibidem*, p. 59, 79, 89, 370, 475, 486, 577. See more, Galuško, M. V. *Ukraïns’ki časopisi Ternopolà i Ternopil’sini (1886–1944 rr.): istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennà*, p. 70–74; *Ukraïns’ka presa v Ukraïni ta sviti XIX–XX st.: istoriko-bibliografične doslidžennà*. Vol. 2, 1891–1905 rr., p. 213–213, 221–222, 226, 234.

to data on periodicals from across the project area collected in an orderly form.

Another difficulty in compiling statistics of the press at the turn of the twentieth century is the question of the so-called *jednodniówki* (literal translation: one-day newspapers). The term does not have its equivalent in English, as this specific type of pamphlet was created mainly to meet the needs of ethnic minorities living in Russia, Germany, or Austria–Hungary. The one-off newspapers were published to avoid censorship and repression, and sometimes financial charges.⁴⁶ Particularly in the Russian Partition, entire series of newspapers came out as individual magazines during the periods of increased repression. The reconstruction of the links between the individual titles raises a number of problems, because not all connections are known to a contemporary user. For example, the humorous weekly *Szczutek*, founded by Adolf Starkman, was published in Warsaw from 1 April 1906, and probably ran until 18 December 1915. However, from the very first year of its existence, the editors changed the title several times, published some issues as supplements to other periodicals, or released a series of unrelated one-day issues at weekly intervals.⁴⁷ A full reconstruction of the history of this magazine still poses many problems for researchers who look into the history of the press, as it is possible to identify more than 50 titles from the years 1906–1913 that are in some way connected to the original *Szczutek*.

Another problematic issue is that a number of periodicals from the turn of the twentieth century have not survived to the present day. Nevertheless, the references to such titles appear in the sources, bibliographies, or scholarly articles and are therefore included in subsequent bibliographies and statistical compilations. It is these journals that in particular are the source of the most common mistakes and errors regarding press statistics in academic literature.

There are cases where, for instance, an error in a title that made its way into one bibliography is later reproduced in subsequent bibliographies. For instance, *Spis tytułów prasy polskiej 1865–1918*, one of the older registers of press titles, still used by the Polish researchers, mentions the newspaper *Promyk* (The Small Ray),⁴⁸ published in Cracow before 1897, which is probably a mistakenly identified humorous newspaper *Płomyk* (The Small Flame),⁴⁹ published in 1896–1897. The duplication or creation of ‘new’ press titles is also due to various translations or transliterations, e.g., from Hebrew or Yiddish. Data such as the names of editors or years of publication should also be verified.

The number of lost titles varies according to the region, language in which the newspaper was originally published, and its circulation. For example, in the case of the relatively well-preserved press from Galicia, the number of lost titles can be estimated at around 13%.⁵⁰ As was observed by the BHP team during the work on newspapers from the Austrian Partition, the factor that most increased the chances of a given periodical surviving to the present day was its commercial success, which made it possible to increase the circulation and reach the widest possible readership. The existence of well-functioning memory institutions was also important (for Galicia, especially the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow and the Library of the Ossoliński National Institute in Lviv). Less likely to survive were the local magazines, especially those intended for a small and homogeneous audience (e.g., school magazines), the illegal press, and advertising magazines, sometimes considered worthless and, therefore, not worth preserving for the future. Organizing and making available as a complete data, the periodicals that copies have

⁴⁶ For the definition of *jednodniówki* see *Bibliografia polska 1901–1939 = Polish Bibliography 1901–1939 = Bibliographie polonaise 1901–1939 = Polnische Bibliographie 1901–1939 = Polska bibliografia 1901–1939*. Vol. 16, *Jednodniówki A–Ż* / Eds. E. Dombek, H. Machnik. Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2014, p. VII.

⁴⁷ See *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 1, p. 460–464.

⁴⁸ *Spis tytułów prasy polskiej 1865–1918* / Comp. A. Garlicka with the participation of the Pracownia Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego XIX i XX w. IBL PAN’s team. Warszawa: Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1978, p. 282.

⁴⁹ See *Bibliografia historii Polski XIX i XX wieku*. Vol. 3, 1865–1918. Fasc. 3, p. 594.

⁵⁰ See Nowosielska, E. *Zaginione czasopisma galicyjskie z lat 1865–1918*. In: *Bibliografie specjalne: rozwój i otwartość* / Eds. B. Włodarczyk, J. Woźniak-Kasperek. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-Jr, 2018, p. 13. By comparison, in the case of the much less well-preserved periodicals of Polish emigration in North America from the same period, the percentage exceeds 40%. See Nowosielska, E. *Zaginione czasopisma emigracyjne z lat 1865–1918*. *Studia Podlaskie*, 2024, Vol. 32, p. 121, <https://doi.org/10.15290/sp.2024.32.8>.

not survived to the present day and making them available as a complete data is one of the aims of the Vademecum Project. While it can be assumed that the progressive digitisation of libraries and archives and their collections will gradually facilitate better access to data on preserved copies of newspapers, this will not be the case for lost titles. In this respect, the Vademecum Project, therefore, complements the activities of memory institutions by becoming a memory site for publications that have not survived to the present day in their physical form.

Unfortunately, the state of preservation of periodicals, pamphlets, and calendars is also affected by the fact that they have not always been treated as the most valuable collections. Although they are now valued as a versatile source by historians and other researchers alike, they were not always preserved and stored properly. Even today such disasters as floods (e.g., the 1997 flood of Central Europe) can significantly damage delicate library collections. The future Ukrainian bibliographers will have a sad task of assessing the state of library collections in eastern Ukraine after the end of the Russian invasion.

The Vademecum Project offers many opportunities in the study of periodicals and the publishing movement. The map visualization of the most complete possible data on periodicals in the lands of the former PLC will make it possible to show the publishing centres and assess their structure and strength. It will also be possible to trace the development of such centres, the degree of influence of larger cities on smaller ones, etc. For instance, the different regulations and policies towards the non-Russian-language press in different parts of the Russian Empire had an overwhelming impact on the distribution of titles across the land of the former PLC. The relative freedom of the Polish-language press in the Kingdom of Poland, juxtaposed with the repression in the partitioned territories, certainly contributed to the increased hegemony of Warsaw as the largest publishing centre in the region. Zenon Kmiecik estimates that approximately 95% of the Polish-language press published in the Russian Partition was published in Warsaw.⁵¹ Although the capital of the Kingdom of Poland was also an important centre for publishing the Jewish press, its dominance was less noticeable in the case of the publications in Yiddish and Hebrew.

The availability of as complete as possible list of titles is yet another benefit of the Vademecum Project. The digitisation of significant number of journals has a major impact on the current shape of scholarly writing. Even though these are not always the most distinctive or valuable sources for a given topic, faster and easier access to titles enables to use them more readily as the sources for articles and monographs. The Vademecum Project will help researchers to access a wider range of periodic titles.

4. Case Study II: The Great Landed Property

The second case study concerns the Great Land Property Section of the Vademecum Project. In this section, we deal with two different types of sources: the landowners' censuses and the data from the SGKP. Below, we discuss the results of the study based on the second source.

The SGKP is a kind of compendium of information about the territory of the former PLC and neighbouring territories. Published between 1880 and 1902, it contains various type of information about towns, villages, settlements, manors, physiographic objects, lands, etc. One of the categories of information presented is records related to large landed estates. The material in the SGKP on this subject will be presented using the example of the Kingdom of Poland.

Before discussing the scope of the information contained in the SGKP, it is necessary to clarify the term landed gentry (Pol. *ziemiaństwo*). A clearer definition of the landed gentry has yet to emerge. Attempts have been made to distinguish the landed gentry class on the basis of its social origin, offices held before the partitions of the PLC, influence, property ownership, and family history; however, none of

⁵¹ Kmiecik, Z. Prasa polska w Królestwie Polskim i Imperium Rosyjskim w latach 1865–1904. In: *Historia prasy polskiej*. Vol. 2, Prasa polska w latach 1864–1918 / Ed. J. Łojek. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, p. 13.

these criteria are clear and fixed.⁵² Before the partition, only nobles could buy land, but after 1807, the possession of a coat of arms was no longer a prerequisite for the purchase of land.⁵³ The purchasers of estates became people from the outside of the nobility, who had enough money to do so, including industrialists, bankers, and merchants, and who treated the purchase of a land as an investment to secure their capital. None of the above factors can be used to determine who belonged to the landed gentry. The most quantifiable criterion for defining someone as a landowner was the size of the owned property. For statistical and tax purposes, the ownership of at least 50 hectares, or about 100 morgens was considered a minimum.⁵⁴ In the case of the Kingdom of Poland, the SGKP used the *novopolska morga*, which was equal to 56,017 ares.⁵⁵ We can therefore assume that large land estates in the Kingdom of Poland included estates of more than 100 morgens.

The SGKP offers the following information on large estates: the area of the estates with the allotment of the agrarian structure of the estates, including arable land with gardens, meadows, pastures and others, also such assets as forests, wasteland and squares, waters, scrubs, perpetual leases, mill settlements, settlements, waste and boundaries, roads, etc.; the industry that operated on the estates; the number of buildings, divided according to the type of material used in their construction (brick, wood, etc.); the names of the owners; the history of the estates in question, often starting in the middle ages, when they were owned by the nobility; information on animal husbandry and crop cultivation, and information relating to culture (archives, libraries, archaeological collections, etc.).

As previously stated, the SGKP contains diverse information on large estates. For example, Chocień, an estate in Włocławek District,⁵⁶ is described as the estate previously owned by the Bliziński family and from 1880, by Frederick Lange. A cheese factory, which was established in 1876 with an annual value of production of 7,000 silver roubles, operated on the estate. The Chocień estate consisted of two farms: Chocień and Janowo and three villages, two villages of which shared the same name, and Zakrzewek. The total area of the manor was 1,197 morgens, of which 735 morgens belonged to the Chocień Manor and 462 morgens to the Janowo Manor. There were three brick and five wooden buildings in the manor.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the description of Cekowo (Kalisz District), in addition to information about the size of the manor, contains the following: “A spacious brick manor house, a beautiful park and garden; an orangery, a rich library and a collection of archaeological relics, gathered thanks to the efforts of the former

⁵² Cf. Epsztein, T. Wokół definicji ziemiaństwa. In: *O polskich elitach raz jeszcze: studia ofiarowane profesor Janinie Leskiewiczowej z okazji dziewięćdziesiątych urodzin* / Eds. T. Epsztein, S. Górzyński, A. Karpiński. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2007, p. 55–68; Komorowski, J. Ziemiaństwo jako przedmiot badań. *Historyka. Studia metodologiczne*, 2011, Vol. 41, p. 109–135. Retrieved from <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/56496066> [accessed 11/02/2025]; Rychlikowa, I. Problemy pojęciowe i metodyczne w badaniach uwarstwienia ziemiaństwa Królestwa Polskiego w epoce przekształcania się społeczeństwa stanowego w klasowe. In: *Metody i wyniki: z warsztatu historyka dziejów społeczeństwa polskiego* / Ed. S. Kalabińskiego; in collaboration with J. Hensel i I. Rychlikowej. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980, p. 371–392.

⁵³ See Rychlikowa, I. *Ziemiaństwo polskie 1789–1864: zróżnicowanie społeczne*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983, p. 8.

⁵⁴ See Epsztein, T. *Wokół definicji ziemiaństwa*, p. 63.

⁵⁵ Chlebowski, Br.; Walewski, W. *Morga*. In: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 6, Mal–Net / Eds. F. Sulimierski, Br. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa: nakładem Władysława Walewskiego, 1885, p. 667.

⁵⁶ More about landed property in Włocławek District see Raczkowski, M. Wielka własność ziemska w powiecie włocławskim w świetle “Słownika geograficznego Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich.” In: *Od “Słownika geograficznego Królestwa Polskiego” do map topograficznych Wojskowego Instytutu Geograficznego* / Ed. T. Epsztein. Warszawa: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk: Neriton, 2021, p. 117–152.

⁵⁷ Chlebowski, Br.; Palmirski, A. Chocień. In: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 1, A–Der / Eds. F. Sulimierski, Br. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa: nakładem Filipa Sulimierskiego i Władysława Walewskiego, 1880, p. 594. About the Chocień estate see Bokota, L.; Bokota, P.; Nowakowski, P. Chocień—dwór. In: *Materiały do dziejów rezydencji w Polsce*. Vol. 1, No. 2: Kujawy wschodnie / Ed. S. Kunikowski. Włocławek: LEGA Oficyna Wydawnicza Włocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 2001, p. 25–46. In 1846–1849, the owner of the Chocień estate was Józef Bliziński (1827–1893), the author of comedies. In 1849, he bequeathed the estate to his mother, who managed until 1854, when was bought by Friedrich Lange, the owner of the Chocień estate; see Raczkowski, M. Józef Franciszek Bliziński herbu Korczak (1827–1893) jako właściciel ziemski. In: *Między edukacją a nauką: memoriale liber ofiarowana profesorowi Mirosławowi Krajewskiemu* / Ed. I. E. Zielińska. Rypin: Dobrzyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2021, p. 559–560.

heir, the late Antoni Celiński.”⁵⁸ However, in the description of Świdno (Grójec District), besides laconic information about the palace and the park on the Pilica River, the author of the SGK entry included the history of the village from the late fourteenth century.⁵⁹ An interesting description concerns the Krośniewice estate, which belonged to Pelagia, née countess Zamoyska (1830–1890), *primo voto* Rembielinska, *secundo voto* countess Branicki, wife of Ksawery count Branicki. It consisted of ten farms with a total area of 324 *włók* (old Polish land measure), i.e., 5,442 hectares. In Ostrowy, which belonged to Krośniewice, one of the largest sugar factories in the Kingdom of Poland operated. There were also a steam mill, a snuff factory, a distillery, and a brewery in Błonie, an estate belonging to Krośniewice.⁶⁰

The records from the SGK presented above show what kind of information can be found in this publication. However, it should be borne in mind that the entries are not uniform, and one does not always find the same information even within one district, let alone the Kingdom of Poland. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including who wrote about a town / village or what information the editors of the SGK received from their provincial correspondents.

The SGK will be processed using digital tools, namely the LLMs. Processing the data, which on the one hand, is of a heterogeneous nature and on the other hand, contains a large amount of information in the entries, will be a great challenge. One of the main problems will be to create a universal form in the database that meets the expectations of historians, i.e., the information they want to extract from the source. In addition, the automatic processing of such a large amount of information will lead to errors that will have to be corrected by a specialist in the field.

In addition to the SGK, the Vademecum Project will also include the work of Edward Chwalewik,⁶¹ the processing of which proved to be a challenge for our team. The copy we have contains valuable annotations by the author. For copyright reasons we cannot share the scans, so it was decided to use AI to extract the data. Due to the presence of annotations, the OCR reading contained numerous errors. Attempts to read the handwritten annotations using HTR-type tools did not produce good results either, so processing Chwalewik’s entire work with the handwritten notes still poses a challenge.

The work is valuable for our research, as it contains information on monuments of the past, e.g., libraries, archives, paintings collections, archaeological relics, etc., located in both state and private institutions. In Marchwacz (Kalisz District), for example, there was a rich archive owned by Wacław Niemojowski. The family archive contained a collection of documents from Wincenty and Bonawentura Niemojowski, well-known politicians in the Kingdom of Poland. The manor also housed a rich library on historical and literary subjects, a gallery of paintings by Polish and foreign artists, and works of art.⁶² On the other hand, in Łoniów (Sandomierz District), the Moszyński family was in possession of a valuable family archive, mainly containing the documents from General Ignacy Prądzyński (1792–1850). After the death of Jerzy Moszyński (24 April 1847, Kraków–24 January 1924, Wola Filipkowska), the library containing historical

⁵⁸ Truskowski, A. Ceków. In: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 1, A–Der / Eds. F. Sulimierski, Br. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa: nakładem Filipa Sulimierskiego i Władysława Walewskiego, 1880, p. 531. The library, located in the Ceków Manor, was partially burnt down during the January Uprising. In 1884, some of the old prints from Celiński’s collection were donated to the Jagiellonian Library. After the owner’s death (14 April 1890 in Kosmov), the library was sold in 1899 and the most valuable books became the property of Szymon Rubinstein, a Warsaw antiquarian. See Jaroszkiewicz, P. *Historia Parafii Kosmów*. Ceków-Kolonia: Gminna Biblioteka Publiczna im. Stefana Floriana Garczyńskiego w Cekowie-Kolonii, 2022, p. 38–39. It is interesting that Antoni Celiński, the owner of the Ceków estate, died in 1890. The information comes from the SGK (Vol. 1), published as early as 1880.

⁵⁹ Chlebowski, Br. Świdno. In: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 11, Soc–Szl / Eds. F. Sulimierski, Br. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa: nakładem Władysława Walewskiego, 1890, p. 648–649.

⁶⁰ Walewski, W. M. J. Krośniewice. In: *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 4, Kęs–Kut / Eds. F. Sulimierski, Br. Chlebowski, W. Walewski. Warszawa: nakładem Władysława Walewskiego, 1883, p. 705–706. More about the Krośniewice estate see Lesiak, H. *Szlakiem dworów regionu kutnowskiego*. Kutno: Agencja Rozwoju Regionu Kutnowskiego, 2007, p. 191–198.

⁶¹ See above all, Chwalewik, E. *Zbiory polskie: archiwa, biblioteki, gabinety, galerie, muzea i inne zbiory pamiątek przeszłości w ojczyźnie i na obczyźnie w porządku alfabetycznym według miejscowości ułożone*. Vol. 1, A–M. Warszawa-Kraków: Wydawnictwo J. Mortkowicza, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze w Warszawie, 1926–1927.

⁶² See *ibidem*, p. 450. See also, Niemojowska, M. *Archiwum Marchwackie*. Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1912.

and political works (15,000 volumes) was donated to the University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin (Pol. *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski*), whereas the foreign prints, acquired in the inter-war period by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, were donated to the Jagiellonian University.⁶³

The information found in the SGKP, as well as Chwalewik's study has not yet been used in the preparation of monographs on the landed gentry in a particular district or governorate of the Kingdom of Poland. One of the reasons for this is the large amount of information they contain, which often exceeds the research possibilities of a single researcher. It is therefore all the more worthwhile to appreciate and show how the Vademecum Project can be useful for the subject under discussion.

By using the maps of the Vademecum Project and linking them to the SGKP, it will be possible to show the network of landed estates that existed in 1865–1918 but disappeared from the landscape of the Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for various reasons, such as parcelling out.⁶⁴ The user of the final application will be able to see which landed estates had industry and what kind of factories were operating on the estates, such as saw mills, brickworks, distilleries, or mills. This is all the more important as previous publications on manorial industry did not include the information contained in the SGKP.⁶⁵ In addition, the Vademecum Project will enable to show how extensive industrialization was in the estates of the Kingdom of Poland, which districts (governorates) led the way in the development of landed industry.

Thanks to the Vademecum Project, which in the case of the landed estates of the Kingdom of Poland will be based mainly on the SGKP and the work of Chwalewik, it will be possible to show the participation of landowners in the cultural life of the Kingdom of Poland. In the final application, the information extracted from the sources will be linked to specific points on the map. This way, it will make it possible to see which parts of the Kingdom of Poland housed the most archives, libraries, and private collections. We will be able to answer the question of what archaeological and art collections were found in the residences of the landed gentry, and what subject matter dominated their collections. Any historian, art historian, or literary scholar will find in one place a rich source of information. The Vademecum Project will facilitate the work of researchers working not only on large landed estates, but also on other research problems, such as the history of libraries or the problem of cultural patronage.⁶⁶

⁶³ See Chwalewik, E. *Zbiory polskie: archiwa, biblioteki, gabinety, galerie, muzea i inne zbiory pamiątek przeszłości w ojczyźnie i na obczyźnie w porządku alfabetycznym według miejscowości ułożone*. Vol. 1, A–M, p. 434. See also, Cabaj, W. *Darowizna Jerzego Mośzyńskiego dla Biblioteki Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. Teka Komisji Historycznej*, 2005, Vol. 2, p. 42–72.

⁶⁴ In the Grójec District alone, for example, by 1908, 44 estates had been fully subdivided and 122 estates had been partially subdivided, with the majority of the subdivisions in the Grójec District having been subdivided. See Czekanowski, S. *Fragmety z pamiętnika "Roczniki długiego żywota mego" Stanisława Czekanowskiego* / Selection, introduction and footnotes Z. Szelaż. Grójec: Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2004, p. 45.

⁶⁵ See above all, Puś, W. *Przemysł w majątkach ziemiańskich Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1879–1913*. Łódź: Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, 2018; Puś, W. *Przemysł ziemiański w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1879–1913*. In: *Miasto, region, gospodarka w badaniach geograficznych: w stulecie urodzin profesora Ludwika Straszewicza* / Ed. T. Marszał. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016, p. 237–256; Puś, W. *Ziemiańskie gorzelnie w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1879–1913. Zeszyty Wiejskie: pismo naukowe Interdyscyplinarnego Zespołu Badania Wsi UŁ*, 2016, Vol. 22, p. 425–434, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1506-6541.22.32>.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Bąbiak, G. P. *Sobie, ojczyźnie czy potomności... : wybrane problemy mecenatu kulturalnego elit na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010; Jaroszewski, T. S. *Wielki bourgeois—mecenas, kolekcjoner, obiorca*. In: *Mecenas, kolekcjoner, odbiorca: materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Katowice, listopad 1981* / Eds. E. Karwowska, A. Marczak-Krupa. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984, p. 93–111; Kosiński, A. *Dzieje wybranych księgozbiorów ziemiańskich: (z okazji wystawy ekslibrisów)*. *Zeszyty Wiejskie: pismo naukowe Interdyscyplinarnego Zespołu Badania Wsi UŁ*, 2015, Vol. 21, p. 229–242, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1506-6541.21.16>; Kozińska-Chachaj, J. *Księgozbiory ziemiańskie na Lubelszczyźnie w XIX i XX w. Bibliotekarz Lubelski*, 2004, No. 47, p. 59–77, Retrieved from <https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-issn-0137-9895-year-2004-issue-47-article-2243f914-8f12-39a8-bc39-7edaee30bd4b> [accessed 11/02/2025]; Mężyński, A. *Wielkoziemiańskie biblioteki publiczne w Polsce w latach 1772–1918. Roczniki Biblioteczne: czasopismo poświęcone kulturze książki i komunikacji piśmiennej*, 2002, Vol. 46, p. 211–242; Mietz, A. *Portrety i portretowani: z problematyki mecenatu artystycznego Kretkowskich. Rocznik Muzealny [Muzeum Ziemi Kujawskiej i Dobrzyńskiej]*, 1990, Vol. 3, p. 125–145; Rybka, A. *Biblioteka ziemiańska na przykładzie biblioteki Ostrowskich i Potockich z Maluszyna. Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX Wieku*, 2013, Vol. 12, p. 27–39, <https://doi.org/10.18778/2080-8313.12.03>.

Finally, the statistical data presented in the Vademecum Project on large estates in the Kingdom of Poland, namely the total area of the estates with an allotment of the agrarian structure of the estates, e.g., arable land, meadows, etc., will enable the researchers to determine how much land was owned by the landowners in the Kingdom of Poland at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It will also provide information on the agrarian structure of the landed estates.

Conclusions

The Vademecum Project serves as an example of what opportunities and challenges the digital humanities can provide for the researchers in the field of cultural heritage and memory. The goal of our project is on the one hand, to make the results of long-term research projects carried out at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History Polish Academy of Sciences available to a wider range of researchers, and on the other hand, to inspire and facilitate new research through the application we have been developing. The Vademecum Project is, therefore, intended not only to provide answers to the research questions posed by members of our team, but also to inspire future users of the application to ask the new ones. The only limit to the possibilities of using the digital tool we want to create will be the knowledge and creativity of historians and researchers from other related humanities and social sciences.

The Vademecum Project collaborates with memory institutions. We benefit from their heritage collections and resources (including the digitised ones), and we also complement their missions. Memory institutions are the depositories of cultural heritage that has survived in one form or another to our times. In our final application, the user will also find information about the objects that no longer exist, such as lost journals, ruined monuments, or long-divested land estates, the traces of which can only be found in the historical sources.

In the concept of *lieux de mémoire* coined by Pierre Nora, the sites of memory are not only linked to topography, but also contain a metaphorical meaning, referring to events, processes, people, artefacts, symbols, and other historical phenomena that can be considered the quintessence of one's national heritage. It is worth emphasizing that at the same time this idea is not static and has been conceptualised in subsequent projects in different ways over the years. We hope that the Vademecum Project (and other similar initiatives) has the potential to become a digital site of memory, saving for future, more digital-oriented generations our common cultural heritage from extinction.

As we have shown in the article, the use of digital tools in heritage and memory research brings many challenges—from building an interdisciplinary team and organising its work efficiently to finding the right methodological and technical solutions at the crossroads of two worlds as distant as humanities and computer science. However, the opportunities and possibilities that this type of collaboration brings are invaluable and, in our opinion, outweigh the risk factors. Above all, among the many threats that the present day unfortunately brings, the Vademecum Project and other similar projects also have the task of preserving cultural heritage and creating memory, and ever-improving digital tools and technological advances are irreplaceable in this mission.

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Notes on contributors

Elżbieta Nowosielska specialises in bibliography of Polish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, history of medicine, and history of Japan. She is the Head of the Section for the Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, where she oversees the research into the Polish press from 1865 to 1918. In 2018, Nowosielska obtained her Ph.D. from the Faculty of History at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of Prof. Andrzej Karpiński with a thesis “Melancholia, szaleństwo i inne ‘choroby głowy’ w Rzeczypospolitej w XVII i XVIII wieku” (published in 2021).

Michał Raczkowski specialises in history of the twentieth century, regional history (with a particular emphasis on East Kujawy), and history of education. He works at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the Section for Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries. In 2025, he obtained his Ph.D. from the Faculty of History at the University of Gdansk under the supervision of Prof. Krzysztof Lewalski with a thesis “Wielka własność ziemiska w powiecie włocławskim w latach 1864/1866–1945.”

Adrianna Sznapiak's specialisation is in history of Poland at the turn of the twentieth century, its cultural history and social history as well as in history of ideas and digital history. She obtained her Ph.D. at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2017. Sznapiak is the author of two monographs and several articles. She has managed a grant funded by the National Science Centre Poland (2011–2015) and participated in several other research projects. Currently, she works at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of History, in the Section for Retrospective Bibliography for the 19th and 20th Centuries and coordinates a digital humanities project.

ORCID

Elżbieta Nowosielska  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5427-4320>

Michał Raczkowski  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8852-8667>

Adrianna Sznapiak  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6664-4325>

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