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PART I

A SOCIAL MAP OF READERSHIP

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the initial survey of 1992 that opened the series of studies devoted to the social reach of books, the question posed was “Do you read books?”¹ Such a question was rather unambiguous, both in terms of the many ways one can ‘read’ a book as well as the meaning of ‘book’ itself. A book could be described well by simply paraphrasing the saying that *a book is a book is a book*.² Regardless of whether it is Marcel Proust’s *In search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*), a school version of the Polish national epic *Pan Tadeusz*, a dictionary, an atlas or an art album, the mental prototype of a book that the average Pole had in mind was most likely close to the actual bibliological definition of a *book*, namely a hundred or more pages in a hard or soft cover bound on the side.³ But books have always been much more than their physical format. For over four decades books provided the space for the ideological battle over restrictions on “spontaneous forms of culture.”⁴ Books were the tool used by the authorities to force only selected content and a sanctioned and censored product which, to show their high social status, people exhibited in their cabinets and private collections.⁵ Book reading was deemed one of “the integral elements of the par-

1 G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Polacy i książki: społeczna sytuacja książki w Polsce 1992* [Poles and Books: Social Status of Books in Poland 1992], Warsaw 1996. ISBN: 8370091628, p. 57 and next pages., also see p. 288.

2 As explained by Katarzyna Wolff, “in all previous ‘social reach of books’ studies books were considered an obvious item that did not require an additional definition and its understanding was left to the respondents, according to the paraphrased saying that ‘a horse is a horse is a horse’;” K. Wolff: *Dawne i nowe dylematy czytelnictwa* [Old and New Dilemmas in Readership]. In: *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi* [Studies on Books and Historical Book Collections], 2009, vol. 3, p. 150.

3 1964 UNESCO definition of a book: “Bound non-periodical publication having 49 or more pages (not counting the covers) and intended for the public,” in: K. Migoń: *Nauka o książce: zarys problematyki* [Science of Book: Outline of Issues], Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1984. ISBN: 8304017067, p. 18.

4 See: S. A. Kondek: *Papierowa rewolucja. Oficjalny obieg książek w latach 1948–1955* [Paper Revolution. The Official Book Market in 1948–1955], Warsaw 1999. ISBN: 8370093698, p. 206.

5 Although the last two remarks apply to soviet society, it can be assumed that the Polish authorities implemented a similar cultural policy as the one in the Soviet Union – see: J. Zavisca: *The Status of Cultural Omnivorism: A Case*

ticipation in culture,⁶ an attribute of “specialists of non-technical professions” (an official euphemism for the intelligentsia),⁷ and “the source of prestige” which was (theoretically) spreading among new social groups as they attended secondary schools.⁸ Moreover, in 1992 audiobooks, together with books written with the Braille system, were part of typhological collections mainly, with the Internet available only at very few academic centres and very different from the one available today.

The political and economic transformation liberalised the book market. The early 1990s saw the surge of many independent publishers producing books that used to be available on the black market only, books by popular authors which used to be published in insufficient quantities much below the actual demand, and translated versions of popular titles for the mass of readers who used to be either ignored by the former authorities or addressed on a limited scale only (with similar processes applying to the press as well). Unlike before, the easy access and abundance of books which were now being sold not only in book shops but also in open-air stands, marketplaces, kiosks and even supermarkets, resulted in a rising demand and interest in books among various social groups. In 1992, as many as 71% of respondents declared that they had “read a book”⁹ in the past 12 months, and this appears to have been the maximum “social reach of books in Poland,” with no other surveys approximating that level either before or after. However, the level of 71% has been the reference point since then and has provided the key argument behind the theory of a coming crisis in Polish readership. Yet Poland was not the only such case, as a similar decline in readership was observed also in Russia,¹⁰ and in other developed Western countries beforehand as well.¹¹

In a competitive market full of varied consumer products, the significance of books and their prestigious position have clearly fallen. Surveys show that fewer people feel social pressure that reading books is an appropriate activity,¹² and today the size of home book collections is smaller.¹³ Does this mean a true decline in readership and the retreat of written

Study of Reading in Russia, “Social Forces” 2005, vol. 84, no. 2, p. 1233–1255.

- 6 E. Wnuk-Lipińska, E. Wnuk-Lipiński: *Problematyka kształtowania się potrzeb czytelniczych* [Reader Needs and Their Development], Warsaw 1975, p. 9.
- 7 See above, p. 56. In modern times, Henryk Domański treats the size of home book collections as the feature of the intelligentsia that makes it stand out from the other social groups, see: H. Domański: *Dystanse inteligencji w stosunku do innych kategorii społecznych ze względu na położenie materialne, pozycję rynkową, prestiż, samoocenę pozycji i stosunek do polityki* [Distance of Intelligentsia to Other Social Groups Depending on Financial Status, Market Position, Prestige, Self-Assessment and Political Views]. In: H. Domański: *Inteligencja w Polsce: specjaliści, klerkowie, klasa średnia?* [Polish Intelligentsia: Specialists, Clerks, Middle Class?], Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788373881600.
- 8 E. Wnuk-Lipińska, E. Wnuk-Lipiński: *Problematyka kształtowania się potrzeb czytelniczych* [Reader Needs and Their Development], Warsaw 1975, p. 58.
- 9 S. Straus, K. Wolff: *Polacy i książki...* [Poles and Books...], see above, p. 59.
- 10 J. Zavisca: *The Status of Cultural Omnivorism...*, see above.
- 11 Between 1982 and 2002, the declared book readership in the US dropped by 17 percent points from 59.8% in 1982 down to 42.8% in 2002, see: National Endowment for the Arts: *To Read or Not to Read: A question of National Consequence*, Research Report no. 47, Washington 2007. Online: <www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf>.
- 12 In each phase of the reach study, there were respondents who declared themselves to be book readers (usually they “read” the school classics, such as the Polish national authors Adam Mickiewicz (*Pan Tadeusz*), Henryk Sienkiewicz (*Trylogia*), etc.) although other social and demographic parameters showed that reading books is rather an unlikely practice among those respondents (this issue is described in more detail in the next chapter). The group of social conformists who always declare that they read books even if they don’t have been diminishing in size – it appears that reading books is no longer a sign of social prestige.
- 13 Between 1992 and 2002 the number of people who had large collections of books (at least 200 volumes, i.e. 1-2 book shelves) fell from 20% to 9%. In particular, those groups which benefited the most from the transformation

culture, replaced with visual communication (television, movies)? Or perhaps the existing needs which books used to fulfil are now being fulfilled otherwise? Have books been replaced by specialist magazines or the Internet (accessible even with mobile devices) as the source of knowledge? Instead of reading the traditional printed text, have former readers 'emigrated' from the unidirectional communication of 'the Gutenberg galaxy' towards the 'cloud' of multi-directional, interactive, and iterative communication of the on-line blogosphere, Facebook and Twitter? What is the correlation between book reading and cognitive competencies or general literacy? What has replaced books: movies, TV programmes, YouTube, Google, or web surfing, and which social groups choose what?

And finally, what about the book format itself? The free market led to an improvement in graphics and in the quality of print. On the other hand, books became a product that was even tailored to niche segments. On the market, books are looking for buyers (while the fact of reading is a secondary issue for publishers) by attempting to fulfil their needs, accompanying important events and every stage of their lives: from books for toddlers,¹⁴ books commemorating Baptism, First Communion and other events, domestic and foreign *belles lettres*, to an endless array of guides, how-to, and hobby books. At the same time the life cycle of books is becoming shorter and more unstable: there are over 30 thousand publications annually in Poland,¹⁵ and unless a book becomes a success, it means a shorter shelf life in big bookshops, quicker price reductions, a quick withdrawal to the pool of cheap books and replacement with new releases. Also, books are not 'a complete work' of one author but more frequently the result of collective projects of many editors, ghostwriters and celebrities to catch the interest of potential buyers. Books are also deteriorating in quality as they often offer familiar and cliché content in poor language and with bad graphics.

Another area is the digital format of books which are no longer available in traditional form: these include books in PDF format, special formats for e-book devices and tablets, books in the form of mobile applications, and book scans available in official digital libraries¹⁶ or on the informal market of the Internet.¹⁷ Yet another issue is the authenticity of the electronic versions of original books. And it is not only about the sensory experience of readers who can feel the weight of a book, the texture of its cover, see its colour, smell its scent and hear the sound of pages turning. According to studies,¹⁸ a text which is read from

of the system were the ones to get rid of the most books (people with higher education: a fall from 60% to 31%, and residents of the biggest cities: a fall from 38% to 15%). G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Książka na początku wieku. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2002 roku* [Books at the Start of the Century. Social Reach of Books in Poland 2002], Warsaw 2004. ISBN: 8370094481, p. 183.

- 14 G. Lewandowicz-Nosal: *Książki dla najmłodszych. Od zera do trzech* [Books for the Youngest. From Zero to Three], Warsaw 2011. ISBN: 9788361464723.
- 15 The 2011 national bibliography featured 31,515 book titles, with a total circulation of 93,747.3 thousand, *Ruch wydawniczy w liczbach 2001* [Publishing Market Data 2001], vol. 57. On-line: <http://www.bn.org.pl/download/document/1342181669.pdf>.
- 16 Such sources allow browsing, for example, through the Polish historic manuscripts available in the National Library at <http://www.polona.pl/dlibra>.
- 17 The authors of *Obiegi kultury* [Circulation of Culture] report included public libraries in the informal circulation category, see: M. Filiciak, J. Hofmókl, A. Tarkowski: *Obiegi kultury. Społeczna cyrkulacja treści* [Circulation of Culture. Social Movement of Content], Warsaw 2012. On-line: http://creativecommons.pl/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/raport_obiegi_kultury.pdf.
- 18 See for example: J. Wojciechowski: *Odbiór komunikatów z Internetu i druku* [Perception of Internet and Printed Communication] In: *Przegląd Biblioteczny* [Librarian Review] 2011, book 3, p. 305–340; B. Agger: *The Book Unbound: Reconsidering One-Dimensionality in the Internet Age*. In: T. W. Luke, J. W. Hunsinger (eds.): *Putting Knowledge to Work and Letting Information Play*, Blacksburg 2009. ISBN: 9781933217000.

a screen is perceived differently by the mind and engages other areas of the brain than a traditional printed sheet of paper. Moreover, the majority of content published on the Internet is not of the same quality as traditional publications released by reputable publishing houses. YouTube's *broadcast yourself* philosophy, transposed to *publish yourself*, has caused an excess of on-line content which resembles literature, essays and scientific publications. However, the reality is that online texts only imitate professionally edited hardcopy books and press articles while being discretionary, personal, emotional, poorly formed and structured, and often with errors as to merits, spelling, inflection and syntax.¹⁹

Is the reading of such texts as valuable, enriching and desirable for society and for education as reading traditional books? Is it a better option to read just anything, even such texts, than to “stay outside the culture of the printed text” as the earlier studies described the phenomenon?²⁰ Is it still possible today to “stay outside” and what should be the actual subject matter of study today? All the changes occurring since 1992 in the area of books, reading and the readership require that we restate the question about reading and adjust other questions to ensure that they describe the studied phenomena better. The detailed methodology and the course of the 2010 study are described in the next chapter.

19 B. Agger: *The Book Unbound...*, see above; also see: L. Gołębiewski: *Śmierć książki. No future book*, Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788361154037.

20 See: S. Wierny: *Co czytają Polacy, czyli uczestnictwo w kulturze druku w Polsce na progu XXI wieku* [What Poles Read – Participation in the Culture of Printed Text, Poland on the threshold of the 21st century]. In: G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Książka na początku wieku...* [Books at the Start of the Century...], see above, p. 21.

THE SOCIAL REACH OF BOOKS – STUDY METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

CHAPTER II

To begin with, it must be stated explicitly what the study of the social reach of books certainly is not. It is not a research of TV or radio audiences, or a study based on using the diary method. The respondents do not wear any dedicated goggles to verify the actual number of words read or the source (although the authors of the study wish they could do that), and are not forced to make daily reports on the number of pages or titles of books read partially or wholly (although the authors again wish they could do that). The study does not research the depth of the book market or the structure of the market demand (there are more reliable methods for this based on sales data). Nor does the study research the press.²¹ It is a study of readership. As mentioned above, from the perspective of commercial publishers it is the purchase that is most important, not whether a book was or was not read - although the opinions and recommendations of happy readers certainly help drive sales. It should be strongly emphasised that books which have been read outnumber books that have been sold. The study by the National Library focuses on what is being read and the readership itself. All the data and information about the readership of books, the press, texts, the Internet and about book shopping, which were collected during the recent phase of the study, provide indicators showing general attitudes towards reading: groups include *'heavy readers'* who consume large amounts of text from various sources, *'selective readers'* who read on a regular basis but usually one type of text only (such as books or the press), *'occasional (accidental) readers'*, and people who declare they have read nothing at all (*'non-readers'*).

The expression 'to declare' is an important characteristic of the study. The study method developed by the National Library is based on a cross-national survey that has both advantages as well as certain limitations. The questions help to obtain *declarations* from respondents concerning their past activity (or inactivity). The respondents' declarations given in the survey may however be different from the facts. This could be caused by both the defective memory of humans and the social context of the questionnaire-based interview. However,

21 Reliable data on the press market is available from the Press Supervision and Circulation Association (ZKiDP) and Polish Readership Research (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa).

declaration-based surveys of readership covering a certain time range are the main tool of readership research (popular also in comparative studies).

Certainly, the periods of 30 days and 12 months as used in the questions are only symbolic and in fact mean periods corresponding to such expressions as '*recently*' and '*as far as I can remember*.' As book reading practices can vary over time, the study method assumes that the period of 12 months is appropriate to minimise the impact of seasonal fluctuations. Certainly, unless there is a book log maintained regularly for use whenever a pollster might come by,²² the telescopic nature of the human memory makes it hard to separate books which one had read 11-12 months ago from those read 13-14 months ago. A similar case concerns the question about '*any longer texts*,' which was asked in the recent phase of the study – it is presumed that few would remember the actual amount of text read in the most recent month. An affirmative answer would be most likely given by those for whom reading is an obvious everyday activity, just like a habit. Furthermore, the respondents are assumed to have listed such book titles as they remember best and can easily recall during the limited time of the interview. Thus, the list of items which were read or at least browsed through is most likely longer than the actual items recalled. Also, it is likely that the list would have a different structure. Thick novels with a hard binding are the form closest to the mental prototype of '*a book*,' and as such the respondents would more easily recall long readings which struck their emotions (ideal examples are works by J. K. Rowling or Stieg Larsson) than short encounters with technical publications which they needed to read for work or school. Also, the term '*to read*' could be understood by the respondents to be more like '*reading*' – an activity performed with pleasure during one's free time. As such, they would exclude books that were read as homework or other assignments. However, such fully inclusive definitions of '*a book*' and '*reading*' have always been the core of this reach study and must be continued in order to ensure the comparability of study results.

There is an opposite group, too. Certain respondents can be assumed to declare themselves as reading because they are social conformists, and believe that they should portray themselves as readers because it is appropriate even though they have not read a single book. Such respondents are presumed to be within the social reach of books, as they believe that declaring themselves to be book readers improves their position within their social context.

A more intriguing case is the people who openly and without hesitation admit to having read no books, press, texts or anything at all. However, it can be assumed that in fact not all of these are functionally illiterate. Most likely some of them did read something in the past year but simply have not recognised it as significant enough to recall. Reading, knowledge from reading, information processing skills and erudition are clearly not an important component of their personal identity and they do not perceive themselves as, for example, lovers of novels, *Harry Potter* fans, press and news readers, '*cognitaries*,' '*symbolic analysts*' or of '*the creative class*.'

For the above reasons, namely the fact that the change in readership is assessed based on personal declarations of the respondents rather than unbiased facts, and as such could be either underestimated or overestimated by the respondents themselves, a certain reserve must be held towards the obtained results. Without the proper context, the results can tell us very little. Only the bigger picture and a longer time frame can show the actual direction

22 Or, if reading a certain book was not accompanied with any memorable and date-specific events (for example, "I got a book for my recent birthday" or "I read it when I heard about the plane crash in Smoleńsk", etc.).

of development and allow us to distinguish between minor fluctuations of a few per cent around the main trend and actual change which is significant in statistical terms.²³ This study observes the changing attitudes and social climate surrounding books and readership, i.e. ‘the social reach of books,’ which translates over time into actual actions. In that regard, the significant drop in declarations concerning book readership and shopping observed in the 2008 study somewhat anticipated the difficulties which Polish publishers had to face in the following years. The study is unique because of its regularity and the cyclical nature of its research, continuing since 1992: it has always been conducted on the last weekend of November using the method of a direct questionnaire-based interview, in the even-numbered years only. In other counties, readership surveys are not carried out regularly, or the intervals are much longer.

As the group of readers has been dwindling, in 2010 the random sample was doubled to two thousand. Among the questions asked every year of the study, the fundamental one concerns the fact of reading and the number of books read in the past year. It is significant that the study asks “have you read any books within the past 12 months” rather than “how many books have you read within...” – the latter question would produce a greater number of readers.²⁴ The available options for the range of books which were read are: 0, 1–2, 3–6, 7–11, 12–23, 24 and more books. Although the number of books is an estimate only, it reflects the overall intensity of the reader’s activity based on the pre-defined scale (and his/her belief that book reading is appropriate in their social context). The declared readership is verified in the next open-end question, asking the respondents to list all the books that they read in the past year, including their authors and titles or at least genres or topics.²⁵ Next, the respondents are asked for the source of books they read, and then the same three questions are repeated for books which they bought.

The books listed by the respondents are verified (for errors or misspellings occurring in book titles and author names) and then classified by the experts of the Readership Research Lab of the National Library – this is yet another significant aspect of the reach study, whereas in other surveys the respondents usually choose the genre themselves. However, for some respondents Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* is a romance while for others it is a psychological novel, and there are others still who would say it is a historical book. The coding of their answers by experts allows for the reduction of discrepancies in book genres declared by laypeople. Nevertheless, some respondents leave only the most general descriptions of books, such as ‘historical,’ ‘romance’ or ‘for work.’

In 2010, the questions about book reading and shopping were supplemented with more questions about the new media which either complement the paper format or are its alternatives, such as the press, the Internet, and other longer texts. The core question about book reading indicated clearly that it is about all books, regardless of whether they were read entirely or partially only, or perhaps browsed through: “we ask about every book you have

23 For a sample of 1,000, the maximum statistical error is 3.1%, and 2.3% for a sample of 2,000 people. It means that any change below 3% in 1994–2008 (and 2% for 2010) should be interpreted with caution as it may be an artefact of measuring errors. However, such change should be treated differently if there is a trend over several studies.

24 In the case of such a formulation, the respondents who are more conformist could conceal the fact of not having read any books and so results for such a question will always be higher. According to the results of the Word Internet Project of 2011 (respondents were asked how many books they have read), book readers achieved a score of 77%. In a similar time (November 2010), the results obtained by the National Library (“Have you read any books?”) showed only 44% of book readers.

25 In every study, there is a group of people who declare they have read many books even though they are not able to recall them at all. That group makes 1–2% usually.

read, including albums, guides, encyclopaedia, dictionaries” and (for the first time) “books in an electronic version.” Such a general expression was used on purpose to catch the illegal copies and text files available on the unofficial market (in addition to e-books, which were not as popular yet in 2010). Audiobooks have not been mentioned, even though they were fast picking up in popularity in selected readership segments, yet on the nation-wide scale audiobooks remained a rarity. The authors of the study assumed that listening to a text, even a splendid piece of literature interpreted by an outstanding actor, is very different from modern ways of reading. Our study was and is devoted to the reception of typographic communication.

Certainly, the deployed study method has its limits: not all groups of readers can be covered or methods of reading investigated. There are certain reader communities that stand out, even though they are too small to be included in the survey. With over 30 thousand publications released every year, the titles listed by the respondents are far from being a representative sample. However, reliable conclusions still can be drawn concerning certain mass trends, reading fashions, breakthrough books which stayed in the memories of readers, and the upcoming changes caused by the today’s liberation of the text and its content from the hard paper format.²⁶

26 M. Góralska: *Książki, nowe media i ich czasoprzestrzenie* [Books, New Media, Their Time and Space], Warsaw 2009. ISBN: 9788361464112.

REGULAR READERS

CHAPTER III

In current times, it appears rather difficult not to read anything when faced with advertising signs in the underground or buses and news tickers on TV. One must read to use a mobile phone, timetables, or to get money from a cash machine. Text is everywhere and, as such, is independent of the traditional media: books and the press. Today, one can read texts in many formats without touching a book or reading a newspaper. In fact, 30% of the respondents who have not read any books and 13% of the respondents who do not read the press declared that they had read 3 pages within the past month. Thanks to the public system of schools, the rate of literacy in Polish society is almost 100%. In many occupations, reading or preparation of texts is either a key or a standard part of everyday duties. In that context, it seems interesting to investigate which social groups can manage without regular contact with texts.

The level of literacy in a strict sense cannot be implied from responses to the question “have you read any books” (and how many), even if the press should be included, unless *literacy* is used interchangeably with *readership*.²⁷ After all, it remains unknown whether the respondents have understood the texts which they read, and even if so, whether they understood them correctly. Neither is it known whether the respondents have the competencies required to critically analyse the contents of the texts or evaluate their formal attributes, cliché matter versus originality, and elegance. However, it can be presumed that the practice of reading (especially if frequent and covering various types of communication) correlates in statistically significant terms with high-level literacy. Vice versa, the high rate of literacy cannot be achieved without first acquiring high reading skills, possible only after long-term training, such as thousands of pages read. Only then, as Jacek Dehnel once said, “text starts flowing ‘through’ a person without any mental effort which is otherwise required when reading a foreign text, even in a language spoken fluently.”²⁸

27 See: G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Książka na początku wieku...* [Books at the Beginning of the Century...], see above.

28 Speech by Jacek Dehnel, during a discussion among experts which took place in the National Library on 7 November 2011.

The question was phrased using the expression “any texts” for the first time in 2010. Before that the study used to ask about books that the respondents had read. This time, the authors of the study wanted to find out about the readership of “all” texts, meaning the fact of the respondents participating in “the culture of printed text” rather than indulging in “the culture of image” and the television. Certainly, the readers of texts (books and the press in particular) cannot be assumed to avoid radio and television, even though there is a noticeable trend in big city communities to get rid of television sets.²⁹ However, this relation is rather intransitive since skilful recipients of typographic communication will most likely be quite successful in decoding and interpreting visual and iconographic messages, contrary to compulsory TV-watchers who might lack the cognitive skills necessary to understand written content of greater complexity and abstraction.

The authors of the study are also aware that the question “have you read any books?” does not provide information about the acquisition of any competencies that might be required to understand text. Nor would a negative response to that question mean the lack of such competences.³⁰ However, the authors assume that literate respondents have the habit of reading, which is manifested in the frequent practice of reading texts, either because they have to, for work or school, or for pleasure in their spare time. Therefore, the threshold value was set at the level of at least one text of 3 pages once a month. The respondents who reported reading less or who did not remember whether they had read such a text within the past month are not obvious and everyday readers and, as such, are not pooled in the group of regular text users.

The limit of 3 pages was necessary (before, respondents were asked about reading books - and books are long, complex and bound texts printed after editing and proof-reading, often accompanied by reviews). The authors of the study assumed that such an approximate quantity enables differentiation between texts that require certain cognitive competencies related to a high level of literacy, or at least the skill of concentration when facing a linear text. Such a quantity is approximate from the perspective of the respondents, as few would count the pages or characters in the texts they actually read (unless they are a printer, editor, publisher or author). For a better understanding, the respondents were provided with sample texts and the suggestion that the text could be obtained from various sources. The respondents heard the following question: “Please recall whether, in the past month, you have read any text longer than 3 typed pages (similar in volume to a longer article in the press or on an Internet portal, a short story, a chapter of a book, etc.)?”

It is hard to evaluate whether the result obtained is surprising, as 52% of the respondents declared they had read such a quantity of text. 27 people (1%) were not able to recall reading such a text, which means that the practice of reading is neither obvious nor habitual in their everyday life. 46% of the respondents clearly declared that in the past month they did not need or had no opportunity to read such a quantity of text. As a reminder, in this study the question about books has always covered the period of the past year, while the question about longer texts concerns one month prior to the study. As such, the responses to those questions cannot be compared. In this context it appears important to find out what could

29 M. Lemańska: *700 tys. polskich domów bez telewizora* [700 Thousand Polish Households Without TV], *Rzeczpospolita*, 5 October 2011. Available on-line at <<http://www.ekonomia24.pl/artykul/728133.html>>.

30 Such questions can be addressed by dedicated test tasks that are scaled appropriately (used in e.g. PIRLS, PISA and PIAAC studies).

or should be expected and how this result corresponds to current knowledge on the frequency and intensity of book reading in the various social groups.

1. REGULAR TEXT USERS IN THE SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

The first interesting finding is the fact that there are no differences between women and men, since the variation of only one per cent (higher for women) is not significant in statistical terms. Most book readers are women (53% vs. 52% of men), but gender is not a differentiating factor in the data on people who read texts.

Age is only a minor differentiating factor in the declarations of text readers. Except for the youngest group (15-19), of which 73% are relatively regular readers, in the remaining cohorts the rate is around the average result (53-51%). This means that every second respondent has contact with a text during the years before and after adolescence. This rate is somewhat lower but remains statistically significant in the oldest group (above 60 years of age), of which 48% has regular contact with texts.

The higher share of regular text users in the younger age group and the drop observed in the older cohorts is most likely a result of the set readings during the school years. It is surprising, however, that almost one fourth of students, both in secondary and tertiary education manage to get by without reading texts. The study does not determine whether they read nothing (not even textbooks), or whether the volume of text read is less than the 3 pages mentioned in the question.

In the group of respondents who finished their education at the level of primary school or middle school (*gimnasium*, either in its current or former format), there are 28% of people who declared they had read a longer text within the past month. A somewhat larger number of respondents (35%) in the group of graduates of preparatory vocational schools maintain contact with texts, however it is only one in every three persons.

The proportion of text users differs at the higher levels of education. In the case of graduates of general and technical secondary schools and post-secondary schools, 59% read at least "something," and 80% did so in the case of graduates of bachelor's and master's studies. Apparently, it takes time to ingrain a habit of reading – therefore graduates of tertiary education benefit from an extended period of obligatory reading. Last but not least – insufficient literacy skills correspond with a negative auto-selection process predetermining one's choice to pursue higher education.³¹

The achieved level of education is an important factor impacting the type and complexity of future work. It is an obvious expectation that managerial functions or self-reliant work in specialist positions require a constant processing of information which includes the use of texts. In that group, there are 72% of people who read texts, which is as high as in the group of students. Private entrepreneurs (68%) and white-collar workers in administration and services (62%) are not as frequent readers as students. But the lowest number of text readers among the employed groups can be found in blue-collar workers (44%) and farmers (28%). In the case of the farmers, they are a relatively older and less educated group of people in Polish soci-

31 See. Z. Kwieciński: *Nieuniknione? Funkcje alfabetyzacji w dorosłości* [Unavoidable? Literacy Functions in Adulthood], Olsztyn–Toruń 2002. ISBN: 8323114498; I. Białecki: *Alfabetyzm funkcjonalny* [Functional Literacy], *Rzeczpospolita Nowa* 1996, No. 6, p. 68–76; R. Dolata: *Szkola – segregacje – nierówność* [School – Segregation – Inequality], Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788323504344.

ety, while books and the press are less accessible for them because farms are often scattered in the countryside. What is interesting, however, is the relatively low share of regular text users in the unemployed group (a mere 41%), which seems to correlate with the highest risk of long-term unemployment in the group of people with the poorest qualifications.

| Readers of texts longer than 3 typed pages (volume similar to a longer article in the press or the Internet, a short story, a chapter of a book) | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|-----------|
| | N= | Yes | No |
| Total | 2008 | 52 | 46 |
| Managers/professionals | 181 | 72* | 26* |
| Private entrepreneurs | 64 | 68* | 31* |
| Administration and services | 346 | 62* | 36* |
| Blue-collar workers | 281 | 44* | 55* |
| Farmers | 87 | 28* | 70* |
| Housewives/ unemployed, taking care of house | 99 | 41* | 57* |
| Retired/Pensioners | 573 | 44* | 55* |
| Students | 216 | 72* | 27* |
| Unemployed | 161 | 41* | 59* |

* p = 0.05

Category "do not remember/hard to say" was omitted – the aggregate score may not sum to 100.
Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 1. SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF LONGER TEXTS DURING ONE MONTH BEFORE THE STUDY, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

In all the groups of people who remain unemployed there is a similar share of those declaring themselves to be readers, however the share is below the overall average. A somewhat greater number of respondents (44%) in the group of pensioners declare they have read texts, compared to the group of people running households (41%). However, if the different level of education is taken into account, then people of higher education tend to maintain their reading habit or needs regardless of their current occupational status – 75% of pensioners with a higher education declared they had read at least one text of 3 pages. A similar case is that of the unemployed (seven out of ten people with higher education read) and housewives (all respondents with a higher education read). In summary, the fact of being employed results in statistically significant differences in terms of contact with texts, as 56% of employed people declared they had read a longer text within the past month as compared with only 49% of people who were not employed (either by choice or otherwise).

The gap is even bigger between cities and villages when the size is taken into account. The results are clearly bipolar because the least readers (46%) are among villagers, while the most regular text users can be found in cities of 100-500 thousand residents (61%) and in the biggest metropolitan areas of over 500 thousand (66%). In the two remaining categories (small towns of up to 20 thousand people and cities of 20-100 thousand people), the share of people who declared they had read a longer text in the past month was close to the national average (50% and 51% respectively).

**Readers of texts longer than 3 typed pages
(volume similar to a longer article in the press or the Internet,
a short story, a chapter of a book)**

| | N= | Yes | No |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Total | 2008 | 52 | 46 |
| Cities vs villages: | | | |
| cities | 765 | 46* | 53* |
| villages | 1243 | 56* | 42* |
| Size of the place of residence: | | | |
| village | 765 | 46* | 53* |
| city up to 20 thousand | 259 | 50 | 48 |
| city 20–100 thousand | 392 | 51 | 48 |
| city 100–500 thousand | 353 | 61* | 38* |
| city above 500 thousand | 239 | 66* | 32* |

* p = 0.05

Category "do not remember/hard to say" was omitted - the total score may not sum to 100.
Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

**TABLE 2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (CITY/VILLAGE)
VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF LONGER TEXTS DURING ONE MONTH BEFORE THE STUDY,
POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)**

Small towns and villages seem to be in a similar situation in terms of both access to culture as well as other resources, such as jobs, and the local quality of life. A greater supply of vacancies and a higher diversity of job offers lead to better employment rates than observed in big cities. Employment, especially in highly skilled positions, is a factor that forces workers to stay in regular contact with text.

From that point of view, the correlation between regular reading and the self-assessment of one's financial status appears to be significant in statistical terms. 68% of those who evaluate their own financial situation as good read longer texts regularly, as opposed to only 38% persons who think of their financial situation as poor (and 50% who evaluates their financial situation as average). That correlation is not as strong for the question regarding the income of the entire household – the group with the lowest income (below PLN 1,250 monthly) contains the least regular readers (44%). Certainly, a good financial situation facilitates shopping for books, the press and other texts. Also, the financial success which most achieve due to well-paid jobs appears to be associated with both compulsory and habitual reading, in the case of the employed and unemployed members of households alike.

2. LONG TEXTS VS. INTERNET, PRESS AND BOOKS

A different group of variables concerns the frequency of behaviours similar to reading a text, such as the use of the Internet, the press, and books. As is the case with reading texts, the press, and books, the frequency depends on one's social status rather than predetermining it. Reader behaviours are very coherent internally and therefore the reception of certain texts (such as books) is often a good predictor for reading other texts (such as the press).

Theoretically, the textual nature of the Internet requires reading and literacy.³² To use the

³² See. S. Wierny: *Co czytają Polacy...* [What Poles read...], see above, p. 8.

Internet (and the computer), one needs to be skilled in writing and understand information in a graphical form. E-exclusion (i.e. no Internet access or no computer/web browser skills) is more frequently correlated to other forms of social exclusion, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness and poor living conditions, disability, limited access to education, jobs, health care, information, etc.³³

With that in mind, it is not surprising that there are few regular text readers (33%) in the group of people who do not use the Internet and lack access to it. The most intriguing result, however, is 33% of Internet users who do not regularly read any longer texts. It seems obvious that readers of books and the press (especially intensive readers) regularly read texts, as we used the examples of a longer press article or a chapter of a book to visualise the volume of text being asked about. 90% of regular readers of the press declared that they read longer texts regularly (and 63% said they read longer texts occasionally). 81% of people who declared they had browsed through or read at least one book in the past year declared so – 16 percentage points more than is the case with users of the Internet, which is (theoretically) a source of texts.

Book reading appears to be associated more with regular frequency of contact with texts than with the fact of purchasing them. Certainly, among the buyers of books there are twice as many text readers as there are in the group of people who have not bought any books in the past year. It is interesting that the difference in the number of the text users is only two percentage points between those who buy relatively few books and those who buy relatively many books. Most likely such results are related to the high share of textbooks and children's books in the total number of books bought (compare the Chapter *Individual Book Shoppers in 2010*). There are many more text users in the group of heavy readers of books.

Almost every tenth respondent who declared that they regularly read the press (9%) and/or higher quantities of books during a year (8%) admitted that they have not read any text longer than 3 pages in the past month. In the case of readers of the press, our requirement as to the volume of text could exclude them because of their particular reading behaviours (scrolling, headlines only, selected sections only) or the volume of text appearing in certain types of publications (such as TV programming magazines, tabloids and the regional press). In the case of book readers who do not read regularly, the results could be caused by the highly seasonal nature of their behaviours (elaborated in the next chapter).

33 E. Tarkowska: *Ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne. Koncepcje i polskie problemy* [Poverty and Social Exclusion. Concepts, Issues in Poland]. In: J. Wasilewski (ed.): *Współczesne społeczeństwo polskie...* [Polish Society Today...], see above, p. 343–344.

INDIVIDUAL BOOK READERS IN POLAND IN 2010

CHAPTER IV

Reading books has always had a special place among all other forms of text reading. Books were idealised and their extraordinary value was deemed to be dogma.³⁴ Books were assigned the role of a universal socialising force (“Books develop and educate all the noble sides of young hearts and minds by rooting out weeds that hinder the good seed and everything else that takes one from the path towards the Good, Truth, Beauty...”) ³⁵ and a liberating force (“Books accompany the human across almost all disciplines of life, are the source of information and advice, inspire, educate, entertain, [...] are needed by those who want to know their rights and obligations, and find the right place in the world” [...]), and last but not least an antidote for a destructive mass media (“[Books] overcome the evil which results from the passive submission to the press, radio and the cinema”).³⁶

Book reading provides clear advantages, as well. A positive correlation was proved between voluntary reading in one’s spare time and better grades in school tests.³⁷ Psychologists stress that reading books (in high quantities only) exposes one to a greater number of words, expressions and terms than one could encounter directly in spoken language or via television, or even the press. In addition to a richer vocabulary, heavy readers have better general knowledge in many areas, are better able to identify errors in communication, and process information more effectively.³⁸ In contrast, occasional and infrequent readers usually read at a slower pace, and reading is more difficult for them, and for children this

34 K. Wolff: *Dawne i nowe dylematy czytelnictwa* [Old and New Dilemmas in Readership], see above, p. 132.

35 J. Borkowski: *Rola książki i czytelnictwa w szkole i społeczeństwie* [Role of Books and Reading in Schools and the Society], “*Życie szkolne*” magazine, 1935, book 1, p. 9, cited from I. Michalska: *Wychowanie do czytelnictwa uczniów szkół powszechnych w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Education of Future Readers in Public Schools in the Second Republic of Poland], Łódź 2011. ISBN: 9788375255959, p. 36.

36 H. Radlińska: *Książka wśród ludzi* [Books and People], Warszawa 1948, p. 15, cited after K. Wolff, *Dawne i nowe... Dawne i nowe dylematy czytelnictwa* [Old and New Dilemmas in Readership], see above, p. 133.

37 *Wyniki badania 2009 w Polsce* [2009 Study Results in Poland]. Programme for International Student Assessment of the OECD. Available on the Internet at www.ifispan.waw.pl/pliki/pisa_2009.pdf.

38 A. E. Cunningham, K. E. Stanovich: *What Reading Does for the Mind*, in: *American Educator* 1998, vol. 22, no.1–2, s. 1–8.

could impact their future path in the educational system. According to the principle of St. Matthew, such advantages gained thanks to reading accumulate over time and increase the cognitive and intellectual gap between the heavy readers, the occasional, infrequent readers and the non-readers.³⁹

The question about the social reach of books in Poland was posed for the first time in 1972 during the trial run of a national census (23,304 people). At that time, 60.5% of the population declared that they read books. In the following years the size of the reader group shrank and the intensity of reading deteriorated, however the structure of the group has remained similar. Even today, there are three main groups of readers, in addition to the non-readers: occasional readers, heavy readers, and moderate readers. However, as the intensity of reading has been diminishing, the limits for the today's groups are much lower than in the past. The division that reflects the current diversification of reading intensity seems to include: occasional readers who read 1-2 books per year, moderate readers who read 3-6 books per year, and heavy readers who read 7 or more books per year (approximately one book every two months).

| 2010 | % | % | 1972 |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|-------------------------|
| Did not read any books | 56 | 39,5 | Did not read any books |
| Read 1-2 books during the year | 18 | 11,1 | Read 1-2 books |
| Read 3-6 books during the year | 14 | 14,6 | Read 3-6 books |
| Read 7-11 books during the year | 4 | 11,9 | Read 7-12 books |
| Read 12-23 books during the year | 3 | 9,4 | Read 13-24 books |
| Read 24 or more books during the year | 5 | 6,5 | Read 25-50 books |
| | | 6,9 | Read more than 50 books |

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library and E. Wnuk-Lipińska, E. Wnuk-Lipiński: *Problematyka kształtowania się potrzeb czytelników* (Reader Needs and Their Development), Warszawa 1975.

TABLE 3. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE STUDIES OF 1972 AND 2010

In view of the general decline of reading and its intensity, special attention should be paid to the group of moderate readers who take books into their hands with the purpose of reading them (they read more frequently than occasional readers) and most likely for pleasure and in their spare time (respondents who read for work usually declare a higher intensity). As demonstrated in the following sections, the purpose of separating the moderate group from the occasional readers⁴⁰ has been to provide a good perspective on the various nu-

39 K. E. Stanovich: *Matthew effect in Reading: Some consequences of individual differences in acquisition of literacy*, in: *Reading Research Quarterly* 1986, vol. 21, no. 4, p. 360-406.

40 K. Wolff: *Czytelnictwo książek w Polsce w 2008 roku* [Book Reading in Poland 2008] In: I. Koryś, K. Wolff: *Wybieram książkę. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2008 roku* [I Choose Books. Social Reach of Books in Poland, 2008], Warszawa 2010. ISBN: 9788370096342.

ances in the reading behaviours of the sub-groups that were distinguished based on social and demographic variables.

1. BOOK READING VS. SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The gender of a reader becomes a statistically differentiating factor in the case of books, although it has almost no impact on how regularly the reader has contact with texts. Every second woman (50%) declared they had read or browsed through at least one book in 2008, compared to one in every three men (38%). However, in terms of the total quantity of books read throughout the year, while women do read more frequently and more than men, at the same time they are a more polarised group of respondents – women prevail among occasional readers and readers who read 24 and more books every year.

| Gender of respondent | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Men | 958 | 62* | 38 | 15* | 12 | 10 |
| Women | 1050 | 50* | 50 | 20* | 14 | 13 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted. Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 4. GENDER VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

The age factor impacts both the fact of reading and its intensity in a similar way as regular contact with texts does. Most book readers (75%) can be found in the youngest group (15-19 years of age). This is the only group that stands out in terms of the intensity of reading – the share of moderate readers (35%) and heavy readers (17%) is much above the overall average of the population.⁴¹ In the next age group (20-29 years of age), there are slightly more book readers than non-readers. However, the intensity of reading is smaller: there are 14% of moderate readers and 12% of heavy readers, a result that is equal to the overall average. Only the occasional readers have a significantly higher share (23%).

41 4% of respondents in that age group were not able to tell how many books they had read throughout the year. In their case, it is most likely due to the high intensity of reading in various genres of books.

| Age of respondents | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| 15-19 | 157 | 25* | 75 | 20 | 35 | 17 |
| 20-29 | 388 | 49* | 51 | 23* | 14 | 12 |
| 30-39 | 351 | 57 | 43 | 18 | 15 | 10 |
| 40-49 | 301 | 57 | 43 | 21 | 9 | 12 |
| 50-59 | 359 | 63* | 37 | 13* | 13 | 10 |
| 60+ | 452 | 65* | 35 | 13* | 9* | 12 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 5. AGE VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

In the two age groups that follow, there are 43% of readers and 57% of non-readers, a level similar to the national average. A clear fall in book readership is observed in the group of 50-year-olds and results mainly from the diminishing number of occasional users (from 21% of 40- to 49-year-olds down to 13% of 50- to 59-year-olds and above 60 years of age).

The heavy reader category is very interesting. This group of readers shrank to 10-12% in all cohorts even though not so long ago, namely at the beginning of the decade, there were twice as many heavy readers from 30 to 60 years of age. Occasional readers tend to abandon reading as they get old, with moderate readers following that trend on a smaller scale. True "book lovers,"⁴² which in 2010 included every tenth Pole, still read books regardless of the inconvenience of old age and the poor financial situation of pensioners (see Table 5).

The structure of reading intensity confirms that regular readers are becoming more significant in the older cohorts (above 40 years of age), which are the groups experiencing diminishing readership. People who like to read books tend to read relatively more in their older years, because there are fewer obstacles in everyday life which otherwise occur due to work and children.

Once the readership data is correlated to the various levels of education, reading books gains a very unique perspective. Except for students below the higher education level, who are motivated and to an extent "forced to" read books, people with higher education are the only social group reading books (see Table 7). People who finished their education at the level of primary or vocational school tend to read books at a marginal level only. 20% of respondents with primary school education and 25% of respondents with preparatory vocational school education declared they had browsed through or read at least one book in the past year, however they were mostly occasional readers only. Every three out of four graduates of higher education declared they had read books (75%), including mostly moderate and heavy readers (see Table 6).

42 The expression was coined by Katarzyna Wolff, who argued that book reading is evolving towards a type of cultural activity that is practiced by a group of loyal followers, similar to the lovers of ballet, opera or jazz, see K. Wolff: *Czytelnictwo książek w 2008* [Book Reading in 2008] In: I. Koryś, K. Wolff: *Wybieram książkę...* [I Choose Books...], see above, p. 73.

| Level of education | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| primary/middle | 445 | 68* | 32 | 13* | 12 | 6 |
| vocational | 508 | 74* | 26 | 15* | 6* | 4 |
| secondary/post-secondary | 746 | 49* | 51 | 20* | 14 | 15 |
| college/university | 310 | 25* | 75 | 23* | 27* | 23 |
| Not including respondents still in school | | | | | | |
| primary/middle | 327 | 80* | 20 | 11* | 4* | 4 |
| vocational | 503 | 75* | 25 | 14* | 6* | 4 |
| secondary/post-secondary | 660 | 51* | 49 | 21* | 13 | 13 |
| college/university | 302 | 25* | 75 | 23* | 27* | 23 |
| Still in school | 216 | 33 | 67 | 17 | 27* | 19 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 6. LEVEL OF EDUCATION VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

On the borderline between readers and non-readers, and between occasional and relatively regular contact with books, there are graduates of secondary and post-secondary schools. Although readers are in the minority in this group, still their structure is different than that of primary and vocational school students. The total share of moderate and regular readers who have contact with at least three books every year is above the share of occasional readers. Also, the profile of readings is different compared to graduates of primary and vocational schools – people after secondary schools tend much more to read *belles lettres*. It can be said that an appropriately long path of education (12 years at least) allows people to acquire the competencies that are needed to understand lexicographic contents and to enjoy the act of reading itself.

Although books and school textbooks continue to be integral component of the educational process, still one third of students⁴³ manage to get by without them (see Tables 6 and 7). Book reading is associated with social and professional status more than is the regular use of other textual forms (see Table 7) – it confirms that reading books is one's autonomous cultural choice more than in the case of the other textual forms. In addition to the students referred to above, book readers are a majority in the groups of managers and specialists, private entrepreneurs, and white-collar workers (administration and services). Such results correspond to the relatively higher level of their education.⁴⁴ In other social and professional groups (blue-collar workers, unemployed, pensioners, housewives, and farmers), book readers are the minority, or even a rarity in the case of farmers.

43 The "I am still in school" category in Table 6 and "students" in Table 7 cover the same group of respondents.

44 In the studied sample there were 18% of people with higher education, with 71% being in the group of specialists, 46% in the group of managers, 30% in the group of private entrepreneurs, 33% in the group of blue-collar workers, and a mere 4% in the group of retail workers (author's own calculations).

| Social/occupational groups | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Managers/professionals | 181 | 36* | 64 | 20 | 22* | 19 |
| Private entrepreneurs | 64 | 44 | 56 | 21 | 11 | 24 |
| Administration and services | 346 | 50* | 50 | 22* | 17* | 10 |
| Blue-collar workers | 281 | 61 | 39 | 22 | 9* | 8 |
| Farmers | 87 | 84* | 16 | 11 | 5* | 0 |
| Housewives/ unemployed, taking care of house | 99 | 56 | 44 | 30* | 11 | 4 |
| Retired/Pensioners | 573 | 66* | 34 | 13* | 10* | 10 |
| Students | 216 | 33* | 67 | 17 | 27* | 19 |
| Unemployed | 161 | 68* | 32 | 10* | 7* | 14 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 7. SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

It is interesting that there are twice as many heavy readers of books in the group of entrepreneurs compared to the national average, even higher than in the group of managers and specialists. At the same time, there are relatively few moderate readers – it demonstrates a strong division among entrepreneurs between those who read a lot and others who read relatively little. A similar dichotomy is observed in the unemployed group, where readers hold the lowest share (32%) compared to the other groups. However, within that group most readers (perhaps unemployed graduates of universities? People with higher education who want to catch up with literature or improve their qualifications during an idle time in their lives?) have rather frequent contact with books (43% are heavy readers – see Table 6). Housewives present a different profile: although they are usually occasional readers only, the nominal share of readers in that group is higher than in the group of the unemployed (44%). In summary, similarly to the case of regular contact with a text, book reading is associated with personal competencies, needs and motivation rather than the available time. An interesting variable that well describes the reader's behaviour in terms of occupation, is whether respondents are 'primary breadwinners' of their families or whether other family members have that role (see Table 9). Except for the core group of heavy readers (always around 11-12%), jobs that generate higher income leave less time for reading books, require more involvement and are more tiring. Another issue is the fact that, regardless of the causes, men earn more than women and read less.⁴⁵

45 See A. Matysiak, T. Słoczyński, A. Baranowska: *Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy* [Women and Men in the Job Market] In: M. Bukowski (ed.): *Zatrudnienie w Polsce w 2008. Praca w cyklu życia* [2008 Employment in Poland. Work vs. Life Cycle], Warsaw 2010. ISBN: 9788361638100.

| Employment | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Employed | 958 | 53* | 47 | 20* | 14 | 11 |
| Unemployed | 1050 | 59 | 41 | 15* | 13 | 12 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 8. EMPLOYMENT VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

| Largest contribution to household budget | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Respondent | 934 | 61* | 39 | 15* | 12* | 11 |
| Other person | 1074 | 52* | 48 | 20* | 15* | 12 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 9. CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD BUDGET VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

The difference of 30 percentage points between book readers in the group of people who are satisfied with their financial situation (57% of readers) and those unsatisfied (27%) is identical in the case of regular contact with texts (68% vs. 38%). It is interesting that in the groups with the lowest incomes (based on subjective and objective evaluations), the group of "book lovers" is not much smaller than the national average, with a difference of 8-9% (see Tables 10 and 11). However, the share of occasional and moderate readers is much below the average among the other income groups.

| Evaluation of financial status | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Good | 465 | 43* | 57 | 19 | 18* | 18 |
| Average | 1245 | 57 | 43 | 19 | 13 | 10 |
| Poor | 298 | 73* | 27 | 11* | 8* | 8 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 10. SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF FINANCIAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS WHO READ BOOKS, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

| Household income (monthly) | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Below 1,250 PLN | 132 | 71* | 29 | 8* | 11 | 9 |
| 1,250-1,999 PLN | 236 | 63* | 37 | 16 | 12 | 9 |
| 2,000 PLN and more | 717 | 53* | 47 | 19 | 15 | 13 |
| Declined to answer | 922 | 55 | 45 | 18 | 13 | 11 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 11. HOUSEHOLD INCOME (MONTHLY) VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

It is not surprising to see that moderate and heavy readers prevail in the group of people who are satisfied with their financial situation. After all, higher education, a better job and a flat in a big city correlates with book reading, one's satisfaction with one's own income, and tiring work, even though regularly practiced literacy skills that lead to better cognitive competencies may be the latent variable interfering with satisfaction with one's financial situation. The positive correlation between the presence of children in households and book reading is a less intuitive one (see Table 12). It seems that single people

and DINKs⁴⁶ have more time and other resources at hand to devote to reading, while more books are read more frequently in those households which have children (49% vs. 42% of book readers). Such a result may be influenced by one's age, as young people tend to read more than older ones, and it cannot be assumed that this group has more readers because of reading to and together with children. Looking into the internal structure of readers, there are more heavy readers in the group of childless people or people whose kids are adults and live separately, compared to the group of respondents who are still burdened with parental duties.

| Children in household | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| None | 1315 | 58* | 42 | 16* | 12* | 12 |
| One or more | 693 | 51* | 49 | 21* | 16* | 10 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 12. CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

As already stated above, residence in a big city is correlated with the regular reading of texts, the fact of reading books and the intensity thereof (see Table 13). The unfinished process of urbanisation which was being implemented in communist times in Poland,⁴⁷ and today's suburbanisation,⁴⁸ have led to a situation where villagers are not exactly the same as farmers (this group is discussed separately and distinguished based on responses concerning the main source of income in the household). However, the share of book readers and the intensity of reading remain on a very low level among villagers. In fact, the correlation between reading books and the size of the place of residence is not as linear as in the case of regular text users (see Table 14).

46 DINKs means *double income no kids*, i.e. childless households where both partners work.

47 M. Okólski: *Demografia: podstawowe pojęcia, procesy i teorie w encyklopedycznym zarysie* [Demographics: Basic Terms, Processes and Theories – Encyclopaedic Outline], Warszawa 2005. ISBN: 8373831428; E. Jaźwińska-Motyłska, M. Okólski: *Migracja niepełna ludności Polski: różnicowanie międzyregionalne* [Partial Migrations of Poles: Differences Between Regions] In: E. Jaźwińska, M. Okólski (ed.): *Ludzie na huśtawce: migracje między peryferiami Polski i Zachodu* [Fluctuations: Migration Between the Periphery of Poland and the West], Warszawa 2001. ISBN: 838849564X.

48 B. Jałowicki: *Przemiany miast i zbiorowości miejskich* [Transformations of Cities and Urban Communities], see above.

| Place of residence | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Village | 765 | 66* | 34 | 15* | 11* | 7* |
| City | 1243 | 50* | 50 | 19* | 15* | 15* |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

**TABLE 13. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (CITY/VILLAGE)
VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)**

The share of book readers among the residents of small towns (up to 20 thousand residents) is five percentage points higher than in mid-size cities (20-100 thousand residents). Compared to villagers and inhabitants of mid-size cities, the residents of small towns stand out with a markedly larger group of moderate readers (20% vs. 11% in villages and 9% in mid-size cities). We must remember that moderate readers pursue books with the purpose of reading them in their spare time rather than for work. The significantly higher share of moderate readers in small towns was observed also in the previous study phases (2008, 2006) and, as such, appears to be a lasting trend associated with certain structural factors. There are more readers than non-readers among residents of big cities (100-500 thousand residents) and the biggest cities (above 500 thousand residents): 55% and 58% respectively. In the biggest metropolitan areas there are relatively more readers of books and the group of moderate readers stands out most among them. However, there are a somewhat larger number of heavy readers in big cities (100-500 thousand residents).

| Place of residence | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Village | 765 | 66* | 34 | 15* | 11* | 7* |
| City up to 20 thousand | 259 | 52* | 48 | 17 | 20* | 10 |
| City 20-100 thousand | 392 | 57 | 43 | 20 | 9* | 13 |
| City 100-500 thousand | 353 | 45* | 55 | 19 | 16 | 18* |
| City above 500 thousand | 239 | 42* | 58 | 21 | 18* | 16 |

* p = 0.05

** Category "hard to say" was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

**TABLE 14. SIZE OF THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE
VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)**

2. BOOK READING VS. THE INTERNET, PRESS AND TEXT

Book readers are the majority within the group of Internet users (58%, including 15% of heavy readers), however this statement from 2006 can hardly be maintained today: “books are popular much above the average among Polish users of the Internet”⁴⁹ (see Table 15). This demonstrates the more egalitarian and mass nature of the Internet today, rather than simply a decline in book reading. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), the Internet is accessible from computers in 79% of households of workers, 89% of households of entrepreneurs and the self-employed, 62% of households of farmers, and only 26% of households of pensioners.⁵⁰ With the high accessibility of the Internet due to the services offered by many providers, web surfing – just like books – seems to be more a question of one’s needs and cultural competencies than an attempt to demonstrate a certain financial status.⁵¹

Book reading also follows other reader behaviours that are characteristic for people of high literacy skills. Both the share of book readers and the structure of that group (occasional, moderate and heavy readers), among those who do not read the press or have the habit or need to regularly read texts, are much lower than the national average (see Table 16). Likewise, among those people who declare they have read texts and regularly browse the press, the share of book readers is much higher than the national average.

| Use of the Internet | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually:** | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Have access and use the Internet | 1136 | 42 | 58 | 21 | 19 | 15 |
| Have access but do not use the Internet | 156 | 69 | 31 | 17 | 6 | 8 |
| Have no access and do not use the Internet | 716 | 75 | 25 | 12 | 7 | 6 |

* p = 0.05

** Category “hard to say” was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 15. INTERNET USE VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

- 49 S. Wierny: *Użytkowanie Internetu i czytelnictwo książek w Polsce w 2006 roku* [Internet Use and Book Reading in Poland 2006] In: G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Czytanie, kupowanie, surfowanie. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2006 roku* [Reading, Buying, Surfing. Social Reach of Books in Poland, 2006], Warszawa 2008. ISBN: 9788370096175, p. 137.
- 50 Main Statistical Office (GUS): *Kultura w 2010 r.* [Culture in 2010], Warszawa 2011. ISSN: 15064360. Available on the Internet at www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/kts_kultura_w_2010.pdf.
- 51 According to “*Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce*” [The Information Society in Poland], the Main Statistical Office report for 2010, the following were the key reasons why the Internet was not installed in households lacking Internet access: “no such need” and “no appropriate skills.” At the same time, compared to the studies for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, the importance of the following causes diminished: “excessive costs of equipment” and “excessive costs of access” – see Chart 9, Main Statistical Office: *Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań statystycznych z lat 2008–2012* [The Information Society in Poland. Statistical Data for 2008–2012], Warszawa 2012. ISBN: 18987583. Available on the Internet at www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/.

It is important to note that buying books is a strong predictor for book reading, as readers are mostly also the buyers of books (clearly observed in the case of heavy readers). Among those who do not buy any books, only 28% declared they had read at least one book in the past year, including 12% of people who read more than three books. On the other hand, a great majority of the group of buyers – 90% of respondents who bought 1-4 books in the past year – also read at least one book.

It is surprising to see that in the group of heavy buyers there are relatively fewer readers, however that group contains not only “book lovers” or people who use books for work, but also parents buying books and school textbooks for their children - see the Chapter “Individual Book Buyers in 2010.” The latter do not read books because they do not need to, while the fact of having purchased at least one set of school textbooks for a child means an automatic classification with the group of heavy buyers of books.

| | N= | Non-readers | Readers | Including readers who read annually** | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | occasional 1-2 books | moderate 3-6 books | heavy 7 and more |
| Total | 2008 | 56 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 12 |
| Read a text longer than 3 typed pages during the past month: | | | | | | |
| yes | 1052 | 32* | 68 | 24* | 21* | 20* |
| no | 929 | 82* | 18 | 11* | 5* | 2* |
| Read the press during the past 12 months: | | | | | | |
| no | 697 | 83* | 17 | 7* | 5* | 4* |
| yes, occasionally | 826 | 49* | 51 | 25* | 16* | 9* |
| yes, regularly | 485 | 29* | 71 | 20 | 22* | 27* |
| Bought books during the past 12 months: | | | | | | |
| 1-4 books | 327 | 10* | 90 | 32* | 38* | 19* |
| more than 4 books | 227 | 18* | 82 | 15 | 20* | 46* |
| none | 1455 | 72* | 28 | 15* | 7* | 5* |

* p = 0.05

** Category “hard to say” was omitted.

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 16. REGULAR READERSHIP OF LONGER TEXTS, THE PRESS AND BOOK BUYING VS. DECLARED READERSHIP OF BOOKS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

It should be stressed that among regular users of texts and regular readers of the press, almost one-third declared they had not read any books (32% and 29% respectively). Again, it confirms the already formulated thesis that reading books is not just a matter of training reading and other cognitive competencies that are required for the relatively effortless decoding of textual communication. Leisure-time book reading is a kind of cultural choice,

depending on one's lifestyle, one's personal taste, and the subtle pleasure provided by literature. However, recently some '*new players*' are successfully competing with books for the time share and attention of potential users.

3. BOOK SOURCES

Readership researchers are interested not only in the sole fact of who reads books and how frequently. Equally appealing issues are: how readers find books, what books are better bought than borrowed from libraries, which books are shared and, last but not least, what books can be found in private collections.

When asked: "How did you obtain books you read or browsed through?" (this question was posed to those respondents who declared they had read at least one book in the past year), 38% indicated "individual shopping," and 28% "had a book at home," which implies that the book was either bought very long ago or by another member of the household. 2% indicated the Internet as the source of the books (see Table 17). 30% of book readers borrowed them from family and friends – an equal number to libraries. School libraries were used by 8% of all readers in 2010 (this is quite a good result, considering that school libraries are open to authorised students and teachers only), and 4% used other types of libraries (educational, scientific, church and other libraries). 5% indicated other sources of books, including perhaps gifts and prizes that were books.

| Sources | N=884 | % |
|--|-------|----|
| Had in home | 48 | 28 |
| Purchased | 335 | 38 |
| Borrowed from family, friends, neighbours | 266 | 30 |
| From a public library | 269 | 30 |
| From a school library | 75 | 8 |
| From other libraries (e.g. scientific, educational, church) | 31 | 4 |
| From the Internet | 21 | 2 |
| From other sources | 45 | 5 |

Answers "do not remember" and "hard to say" were omitted – the aggregate scores may not sum to 100 because the respondents could choose multiple answers.
Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 17. SOURCES FOR BOOKS READ

Over two-thirds of readers (68%) declared that they obtained books from one type of source only. Two different sources were used by 22% of readers, and 10% used three or more sources. More sources are chosen by residents of the biggest cities (above 500 thousand residents) and big cities (100-500 thousand residents), which is not surprising considering the different cultural infrastructure (bookshops, libraries, etc.) available in suburban communities and the metropolitan zones, and the higher intensity of reading among residents of bigger cities.

Such results provide information only about the popularity of the respective methods of finding books and as such should be treated with due caution. There is no data on the

actual proportion of books per given source. It is likely that books which are borrowed from friends (and are therefore interesting and enjoyable enough to be borrowed) constitute only a fraction of the books which are read by secondary school students, who usually borrow set readings and textbooks from school and local libraries (unless parents buy books for them). Similar is the case of specialist libraries, which are used by few readers of books even though those readers read much more than any other readers do.

The analysis of the actual sources where respondents find their books allows us to distinguish three strategies for the acquisition of books.

The first strategy is shopping for books which are interesting or otherwise needed. The readiness to buy books is part of a lifestyle and a certain system of values where books are considered valuable things. However, it is also associated with the level of income in the household. There is a statistically significant difference in the frequency with which books are bought by people of higher education, aged 30 to 39, in high positions (managers and specialists), satisfied with their own financial situation, declaring a household income above PLN 2,000 monthly, and those who are 'primary breadwinners' – persons contributing most to the budget of their household (likely those who also decide on the household expenses).

The fact of children being present in the household limits the ability to buy books and increases the likelihood of becoming a user of public and school libraries. Books are not bought as frequently by people aged 15-19, in their school years, possessing primary and vocational education, or residing in villages and the smallest towns (up to 20 thousand residents).

People who are ready to buy books that are of interest to them are more frequently readers of the newest releases, modern literature (including high literature), scientific and popular science books, guides, economy and finance books, or health and nutrition books. They also like fantasy, action and thrillers. It seems logical since public and school libraries should be buying books based on the needs and preferences of their widest target groups, while enthusiasts of the latest titles, ambitious literature and professional books will need to buy them. Their case is similar to those who suffer from time restrictions in their life and are not able to follow the rules of local libraries and deadlines for book returns – this is most likely the cause of the statistically significant drop in "public libraries" as the source of books for people 30-39 year of age.

Borrowing books from public, school and specialist libraries, or from friends and relatives, is the prevailing strategy practiced by the younger generations (15–19 and 20–29 age groups), as well as by those who do not earn (especially school and university students). Those are the age cohorts with the heaviest readers, which would spend the most if they were buying all the books they read. Libraries play a special role for them, in particular in the countryside where people demonstrate a very low degree of willingness to buy books.⁵²

School libraries are an important source of books for readers who live in the countryside. It is not surprising, as the public library network is relatively less developed there and school students are the primary readers, with farmers being the group showing the least interest in books. In small towns (up to 20 thousand residents), public libraries are the main source of books.

Borrowers are less willing to buy books,⁵³ however they do buy them from time to time. School libraries are the principal source for school literature and the classics written before

52 For example, the average share of book expenses per one person in a family of farmers increased from 2001 to 2010: from PLN 2.00 to PLN 4.00 annually (Main Statistical Office: "Culture in 2010" and earlier studies).

53 Phi -0.188.

1945, with this category including the majority of school literature which is rarely read in one's spare time.

An interesting sub-group is the users of specialist libraries – usually 20-29 years of age, in their school years, or higher education graduates. They appear to be the most active 'book hunters' who use all sources at hand (university and teacher libraries along with public and school libraries, book borrowing from friends, home collections), and compared with other readers they also read the most books every year.⁵⁴ The choice of literature borrowed by the users of specialist libraries is slightly different – they read more outside the *belles lettres*, in particular “books for school” and “scientific and popular science books,” including books on psychology, health and nutrition.

Borrowing books from the family and friends appears to be a universal strategy deployed by both heavy readers who use various types of libraries as well as occasional readers. It is difficult to point to any group that would stand out in statistically significant terms in that area, except for women, who borrow books more frequently than men, people of ‘moderate’ financial situation, and family members who contribute to the household budget less than others (younger generations and women). Informal book sharing in social networks is a phenomenon observed more frequently in big cities (100-500 thousand residents) and less in the biggest cities (above 500 thousand residents). Shared books are usually modern literature and *belles lettres* (there is a negative correlation with books published before 1945), in particular the romance and action genres.

| Sources for books | Book readers | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2000 N=534 | 2002 N=561 | 2004 N=585 | 2006 N=498 | 2008 N=380 | 2010 N=884 |
| Libraries, including: | 45 | 51 | 45 | 40 | 40 | 42 |
| public | 34 | 38 | 33 | 26 | 27 | 30 |
| Own collection | 38 | 44 | 40 | 33 | 36 | 28 |
| Friends, family and others | 34 | 39 | 36 | 32 | 35 | 30 |
| Purchased | 46 | 50 | 38 | 40 | 33 | 38 |
| The Internet (incl. digital libraries, portals) | –* | –* | –* | 3 | 2 | 2 |

The aggregate scores do not sum to 100% because only the most important sources for books were presented and respondents could choose multiple answers.

* Before 2006 there was no question about the Internet as a source for finding books.

Source: National Library study

TABLE 18. MAIN SOURCES FOR BOOKS IN 2000-2010, POLAND (PERCENTAGES)

Another category is readers who declare their home collection as the chief source of books. It is the choice of men rather than women. Home collections are also more important

54 The users of public libraries were ranked second in terms of the number of books read in the past year, with the third rank occupied by buyers of book.

for older people (50-59 years of age) and the group of higher education graduates who are more willing to buy and collect books as a diminishing echo of the ethos of the *intelligentsia*. Home collections are the likely source for respondents who do not use libraries and residents of eastern and central parts of Poland. Similarly, home collections are relatively less important for residents in those regions where public libraries are the traditional source of books (Katowice Voivodship and Lesser Poland Voivodship).⁵⁵

Data for 2000-2010 shows a decreasing use of home collections and collections of friends and relatives (by 10 percentage points from 2000 to 2010 in the case of home collections, and by four percentage points in the case of collections belonging to friends and relatives). The institutional forms are regaining popularity, in particular public libraries, which are experiencing a growth after the temporary decline of 2004-2006 (see Table 18).

4. BOOK READING IN 2000-2010

As mentioned in the introduction, recent years have shown a decline in the social reach of books and a deteriorating intensity in book reading. A similar change was observed in other countries, both developed ones which have high literacy rates (for example, France and the USA) as well as countries which, like Poland, are facing transformations and a communist heritage (for example, Russia). How has this process been developing in Poland? Is there any clear moment when the readership experienced a decline? What are the exact causes? There is no simple explanation and no clear interpretation of this situation. In the previous decade of 2000-2010 we had already once observed a slight decline followed by an increase in the readership in certain groups. Today's trend may also reverse itself.

| Years | Total N= | Declared having read books during the year | | | Non-readers |
|-------|----------|--|------------|------------|-------------|
| | | at least one | including: | | |
| | | | 1-6 | 7 and more | |
| 1994 | 1035 | 56 | 33 | 22 | 44 |
| 1996 | 1051 | 58 | 34 | 24 | 42 |
| 2000 | 1000 | 54 | 32 | 22 | 46 |
| 2002 | 1008 | 56 | 32 | 22 | 44 |
| 2004 | 1005 | 58 | 33 | 24 | 42 |
| 2006 | 1003 | 50 | 32 | 17 | 50 |
| 2008 | 1005 | 38 | 25 | 11 | 62 |
| 2010 | 2008 | 44 | 31 | 12 | 56 |

^a Answers "hard to say" were omitted
Source: National Library study

TABLE 19. ATTITUDE OF RESPONDENTS 15 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER TO BOOK READING, 1994-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

55 Also, in the lower Silesia (Dolnośląskie: 19%) the structure of book sources is not very different, except for noticeably fewer users of home collections.

From the very beginnings of the reach studies, the group of people who declared they had read at least one book every year outnumbered those who openly said they had read no books at all. Also, the level of reader commitment was distributed evenly. People within the reach of books who nevertheless were only moderate readers (1-6 books annually)⁵⁶ constituted 32-34% of the population, with the core group of heavy readers (7 and more books annually) making up approximately 22-24% of the population or over one fifth of the nation (see Table 19). Subject to minor fluctuations, the trend remained stable for 10 years between 1994 and 2004, with two periods of spontaneous increase in 1996 and 2004.

A noticeable drop occurred in 2006. In that year, for the first time the number of readers was level with the number of non-readers (experiencing a drop of 8 percentage points compared with the previous study phase of 2004), with the proportion of heavy readers falling by as much as 7 percentage points. The group of moderate readers maintained a similar level, however this was most likely due to structural relocations, gaining the former heavy readers who started reading less for whatever reasons, and the occasional readers who ceased to read at all and moved beyond the reach of books.

The later study phase of 2008 brought alarming results – the share of people who declared they had contact with books dropped by 12 percentage points down to 38%, with the group of heavy readers diminishing even more (by another 4 percentage points down to 11%). Such data caused a widespread controversy, however such fluctuations can appear within a time series.

2010 marked an increase in the overall number of readers, up to 44% (from 38% in 2008). It must be stressed that this increase occurred mainly in the group of moderate readers of 1-6 books annually. The share of heavy readers has been at an almost identical level for the past four years, with the most recent data showing an increase from 11.3% in 2008 up to 11.9% in 2010. Such a minor rate of growth in the heavy reader group seems to be the most disturbing symptom of the qualitative change in the model of readership up to this point. According to respondent declarations, only one in every ten Poles reads, scans or browses through more than one book every two months, either for their own pleasure or for work or school.

Let us investigate that change from the perspective of the key social and demographic parameters. We will exchange the previous tables for charts to better envisage the exact moment and the direction of the change. Most charts will omit the 2008 results for a better overall view of the trend – a method acceptable in time series analysis.

4.1. GENDER

Women have always read more books than men, however Chart 1 shows that in 2000-2004 the difference between the genders was a mere 3-4 percentage points. The rise of readership in 2004 is barely visible: in that period there were only 2 per cent more male heavy readers than in 2002 and 4 per cent more moderate readers. Popular literature was gaining in favour thanks more to men than to women (such as Dan Brown's books, the Tolkien trilogy revived by Peter Jackson, the full series of Agatha Christie's detective stories, and the success of Harry Potter).

Although the share of heavy female readers increased in that period by 2 percentage points, the share of moderate female readers dropped by the same rate, as though female readers had decided to read more, while gaining no new readers from the non-reader group.⁵⁷

56 T. Szelendak: *Aktywność kulturalna* [Cultural Activity] In: *Kultura miejska Polsce* [Urban Culture in Poland]. Warszawa 2010. ISBN 9788361587330.

57 This study is not a panel study and therefore such a hypothesis is rather speculative and cannot be verified.

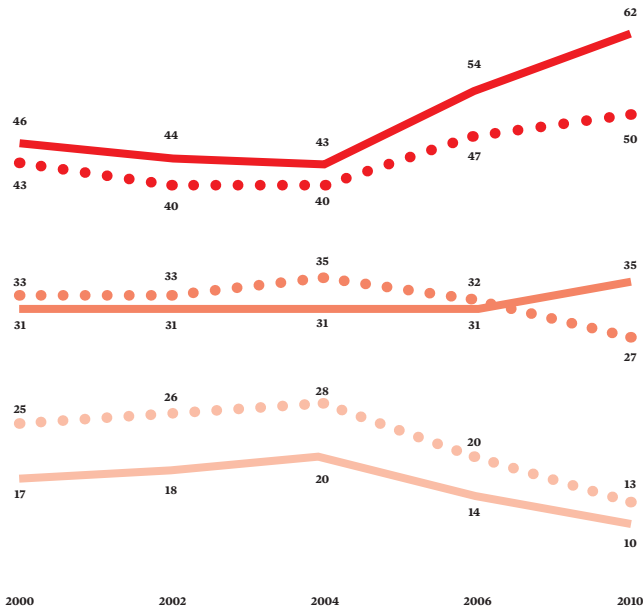


CHART 1. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG WOMEN AND MEN, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

- M - non-readers
- F - non-readers
- M - moderate readers
- F - moderate readers
- M - heavy readers
- F - heavy readers

The gap between women and men began to increase in 2006 when, for the first time, over half of all men declared they had read no books at all (from 2004 to 2010 the difference between male and female non-readers rose from 3 to 12 percentage points). At the same time, the difference in the intensity of reading diminished – in 2000 there were 25% heavy female readers and 17% heavy male readers. The difference of 8 percentage points remained constant in the three consecutive studies of 2000, 2002 and 2004, and then started to diminish in 2006, due mainly to the declining intensity of reading among women. The simultaneous increase in the group of moderate female readers implies that women pursue books less often now, yet continue to remain within the reach of books. Compared with women, men are vanishing from both groups: most likely some heavy readers become moderate readers while even more moderate readers stop reading books completely. Such a situation could be called a masculinisation of the non-reader group and a feminisation of the moderate reader group, with an intriguing balance between the two genders in the group of heavy readers.

4.2 AGE

The changes in the intensity of reading observed in the respective age groups show that the last peak was in 2004, followed by a steeper decline than previously experienced. However, two age groups are an exception: the youngest group of 15- to 19-year-olds and the group of 50- to 59-year-olds. All other age groups experienced a falling rate in non-readership with the lowest point occurring in 2004, accompanied by a clear increase in the number of moderate readers (see Charts 3, 4, 5). The literature available on the market in that period was enticing enough to attract those who used to read occasionally, moderately or not at all. However, in the case of 40-year-olds the number of readers began to rise from 2002, with a peak in 2004 (Chart 5).

In the 50-59 age group (Chart 6), the increased intensity of reading seems to have occurred earlier (2002), when the share of non-readers dropped to the lowest level. In 2006, the share of non-readers fell again, while the moderate reader group clearly increased. However, at the same time the number of heavy readers fell noticeably. A similar process can be observed in the oldest age group of people above 60 years of age. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of heavy readers increased by 10 percentage points compared with 2002, but later returned to the 2000 level. At the same time, the moderate reader group remained relatively fixed, with a maximum variation of 4 percentage points. People above 60 years of age are the only group that demonstrated a slightly increasing number of readers over the entire decade (see Chart 7). This situation is most likely caused by the dominant share of people passing through secondary and higher education who joined this group, and also those who benefit from elderly activation programmes that universities of the third age⁵⁸ and public libraries⁵⁹ offer to this group.

An intriguing issue is the 2004 peak in the youngest group of people (15- to 19-year-olds). On the one hand, 2004 marked a record-breaking intensity of reading with heavy readers totalling 39%. On the other hand, it was a year of clear polarisation in the group of young readers who either read much more (with the group of heavy readers rising by 9 percentage points) or read much less (with a fall of 22 percentage points in the group of moderate readers). The outcome was an increasing number of non-readers (from 14% to 25%). However, the adolescent group did not remain enthusiastic about books for very long, as the subsequent decline has been a consistent and stable trend. In 2006, the share of heavy readers dropped by 17 percentage points to 18% and has been at a similar level since. Compared to 2004, the number of young moderate readers increased, but not above the level of 2000 (after the rise of 2006).

In summary, over the last decade from 2001 to 2010 the number of young people who, after completing primary school (around 15 years of age), cease to read any books increased by 9 percentage points, while the number of 'book-lovers' fell by 13 percentage points from 30% to 17%. Still, over a half of all young people remain within the reach of books as they continue their education beyond the primary school level, however their number diminishes as they complete their education and move to the next stages of life. A similar process can be observed in older age groups, where after the peak of 2002-2004 the number of heavy readers has been declining and the number of non-readers rising.

58 M. Dobrowolska, *Seniorzy w bibliotekach publicznych* [Seniors in Public Libraries], Warszawa: SBP, 2012 ISBN: 9788361464587.

59 See for example J. Wojciechowski: *Odbiór komunikatów z Internetu i druku* [Perception of the Internet and Printed Messages], see above; B. Agger: *The Book Unbound...*, see above.

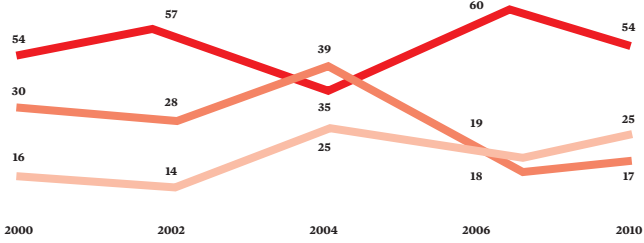


CHART 2. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 15- TO 19-YEAR-OLDS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (15-19) moderate readers ■ (15-19) heavy readers ■ (15-19) non-readers

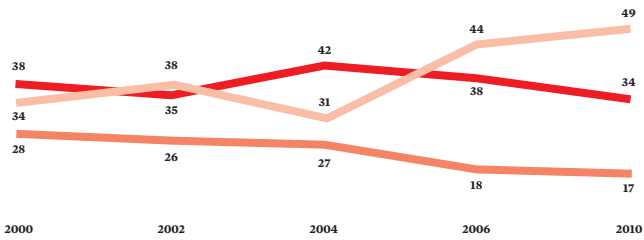


CHART 3. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 20- TO 29-YEAR-OLDS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (20-29) moderate readers ■ (20-29) heavy readers ■ (20-29) non-readers

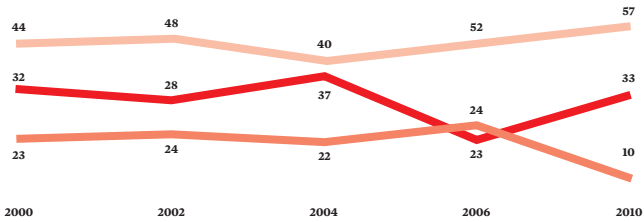


CHART 4. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 30- TO 39-YEAR-OLDS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (30-39) moderate readers ■ (20-29) heavy readers ■ (20-29) non-readers

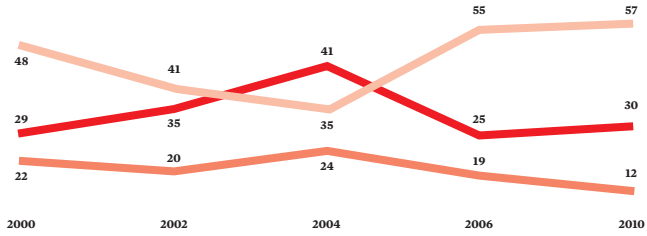


CHART 5. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 40- TO 49-YEAR-OLDS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (40-49) moderate readers ■ (40-49) heavy readers ■ (40-49) non-readers

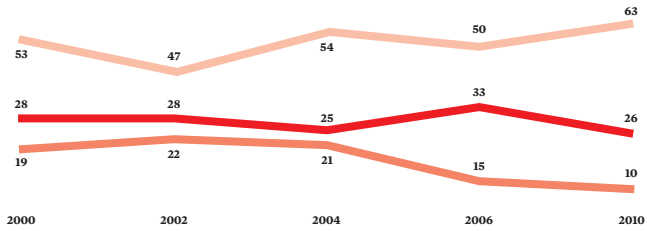


CHART 6. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 50- TO 59-YEAR-OLDS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (50-59) moderate readers ■ (50-59) heavy readers ■ (50-59) non-readers

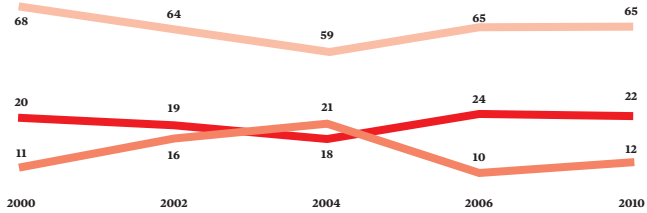


CHART 7. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 60-YEAR-OLDS AND OLDER, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (60+) moderate readers ■ (60+) heavy readers ■ (60+) non-readers

The group of moderate readers has remained on a similar level, most likely after being joined by former heavy readers who kept up their reading habits but, after 2006, started reading less than they used to 10 years before.

4.3. EDUCATION

Certain social trends, such as fashions, are like waves that penetrate deeper into social groups over time, like rings from a stone thrown into still water. An analysis of the educational structure allows us to pinpoint the exact moment when that stone was thrown into the relatively still water of the old world of readers. The expanding rings of growing readership became weaker as they travelled away from the epicentre of reading trend setting.

Chart 8 leaves no illusions – the ‘stone’ was thrown as early as 2002, rather than 2004, according to the aggregate data and age group cohorts. The wave of intensified readership started from the group of readers with a higher education. This was the time when the market offered new and appealing titles that attracted the educated readers first, and with quite an effect – in 2002 they were reading much more than before. As the share of non-readers in that group was similar or even slightly higher than in 2000, the stepped rise in the heavy reader group observed in 2002 was caused by the much higher activity of moderate readers. The approximate scale of the flow in readership confirms the above – the moderate reader group diminished by 21 percentage point, with the majority of those readers becoming heavy readers (resulting in a rise of 17 percentage points) and the rest ceasing to read any books at all. According to 2004 results, the majority of new and noteworthy books of that period had already been read by then (see the chapter “*Free Reading: Two Decades of Reading in Free Poland*” by Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska) – books which were talked about by ‘influential’ people and which educated readers felt were appropriate to know. Both moderate readers and heavy readers returned to the levels of 2000. At the same time, between 2004 and 2006 a new factor caused heavy readers to cut down on their books and to migrate to the moderate reader group (with a drop in heavy readers by 13 percentage points), while other readers stopped reading books altogether (with a gain in non-readers by 18 percentage points). Between 2006 and 2010, the group of non-readers with higher education slightly increased its size and the intensity of reading books continued to fall. People with higher education still read books, however not as frequently – 47 percentage points down from a peak in 2000 to the lowest point in 2010.

The farther we go from the reading epicentre of the early years of the 21st century, the weaker the rise in the intensity of reading, with the waves clearly diminishing among the group of people with secondary and post-secondary education (2002-2004, Chart 9), and barely visible in the group of preparatory vocational school graduates (the slight rise in 2004 among heavy readers is the delayed symptom of the fashion for reading, see Chart 10). Among graduates of primary and post-primary schools (Chart 11), a gently rising intensity in reading was observed in 2002 and 2004. However, between 2004 and 2006 all groups (as distinguished based on the level of education) tended to have fewer heavy readers and more non-readers (23 percentage points more in the group with higher education, 20 percentage points more in the group with secondary and post-secondary education, and 14 percentage points more in the group of graduates of preparatory vocational schools). In the group of people with primary education, the total number of readers increased slightly by 3 percentage points compared to 2000, while the group of heavy readers decreased also by 3 percentage points. At the same time, more moderate readers appeared (6 percentage points higher).

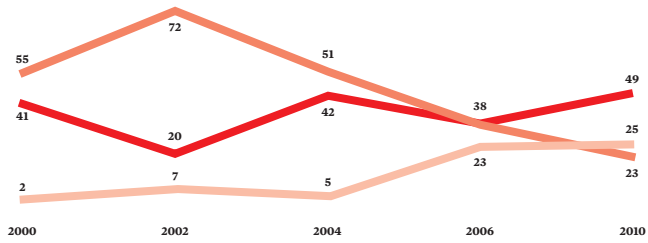


CHART 8. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ (40-49) moderate readers ■ (40-49) heavy readers ■ (40-49) non-readers

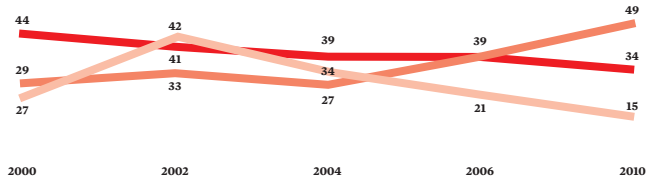


CHART 9. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

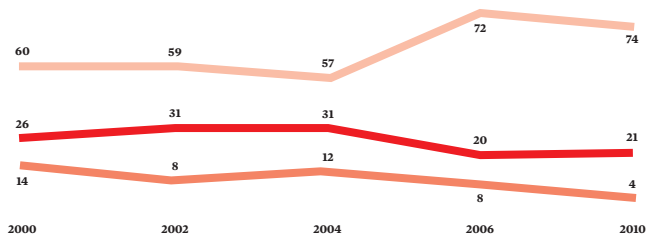


CHART 10. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG VOCATIONAL SCHOOL GRADUATES, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

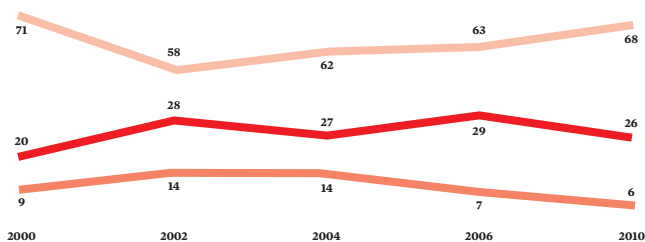


CHART 11. VARIATION IN BOOK READING INTENSITY AMONG PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADUATES, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

The decline in readership was observed particularly in those groups that used to read the most books and with the highest intensity. The impact is lower among people who are occasional readers only (a similar process was previously observed also in the 60+ group).

4.4 CITIES VS. VILLAGES

Around the year 2006, a new factor came into play regarding the level of readership in Poland, and was strong enough to bring about a decline in the former growth of readership observed in 2002-2004. An analysis of trend changes based on the division of villages, towns and various sizes of cities, allows us to note how the concentric ripples of the new reading model spread and diminished among the more remote groups of readers.

The group that started the trend has already been described above (people with higher and secondary education). Now, a division by the centre and its peripheries will help demonstrate the location of the change. According to Chart 12, the biggest metropolitan areas (above 500 thousand residents) experienced a sudden fall in the intensity of reading by 22 percentage points in the group of heavy readers and by 4 percentage points in the group of moderate readers, during the two years between 2004 and 2006, after the period of apparent interest in books. The size of the non-reader group increased proportionately to this by 23 percentage points. It is interesting to see that after the peak of 2006, the number of non-readers in the biggest cities stopped rising and even fell slightly, as though certain people returned to reading after a certain period, however with less intensity in reading than before (with a further decrease in the heavy reader group by 6 percentage points and a simultaneous increase in the moderate reader group by 8 percentage points between 2006 and 2010).

A similar ripple showing a rise in the intensity of reading followed by a drop can be observed spreading outwards to further suburban and rural areas – starting from the biggest metropolitan areas of over 500 thousand residents, through big (Chart 13) and mid-size cities (Chart 14), small towns (Chart 15), and villages (Chart 16). The rate of decline in the intensity of reading is the same, including the accompanying rise in the non-reader group. However, in the biggest and big cities the trend started earlier (between 2004 and 2006),

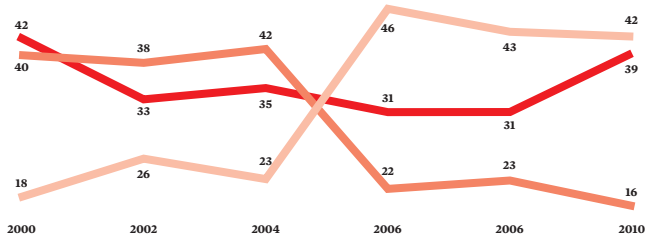


CHART 12. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG RESIDENTS OF CITIES WITH POPULATIONS ABOVE 500 THOUSAND, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

only reaching villages and small towns two years later. Another difference is the fact that the migration of readers in the biggest cities was a one-time situation, occurring between 2004 and 2006 when approximately 20% of former readers distanced themselves from books. After that period, the overall number of readers reached and remained at a new level, and even slightly increased accompanied with a simultaneous fall in the intensity of reading. This trend was maintained through the next two studies of 2008 and 2010. Outside the biggest metropolitan areas, the process of spontaneous departure of readers has been continuing ever since.

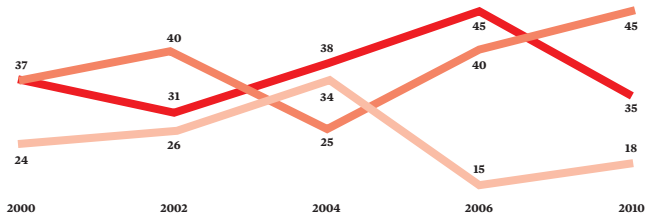


CHART 13. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG RESIDENTS OF CITIES WITH POPULATIONS OF 100-500 THOUSAND, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

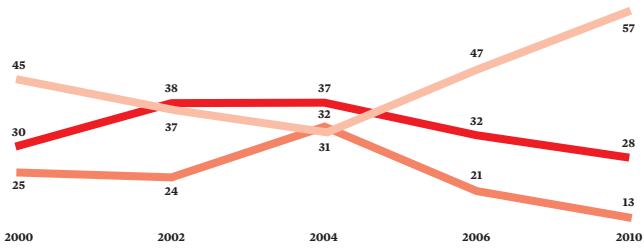


CHART 14. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG RESIDENTS OF CITIES WITH POPULATIONS OF 20-100 THOUSAND, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

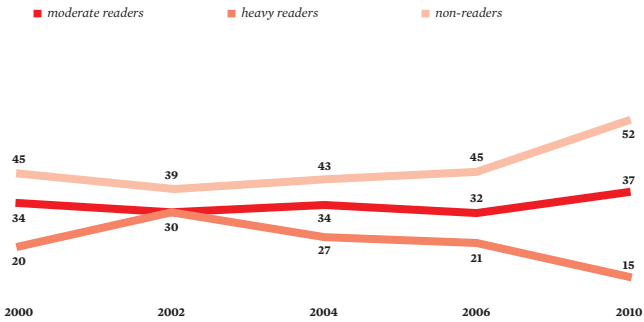


CHART 15. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG RESIDENTS OF CITIES WITH POPULATIONS UP TO 20 THOUSAND, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

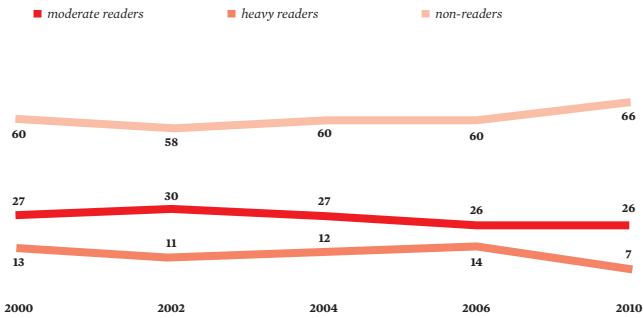


CHART 16. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG RESIDENTS OF VILLAGES, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library



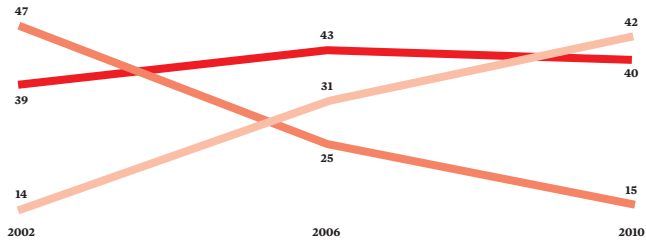


CHART 17. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG INTERNET USERS, POLAND, 2002–2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

4.5. THE INTERNET

Finally, let's investigate the transformation of the readership in the group of Internet users (Chart 17) and people without Internet access (Chart 18).

As the questions about Internet access have not been asked regularly but in selected study phases only, the charts do not show the effect of the peak in reading which occurred in 2002–2004. However, the sudden decline that followed is noticeable regardless of the fact that Internet users have easier access to books – either in the form of e-books or text files available legally on the Internet and on the informal market – compared with traditional readers who use the paper format only.

Between 2002 and 2010, the share of heavy readers of books among Internet users dropped by as much as 32 percentage points – in 2002, there were 47% of them and in 2010 only 15%. Accordingly, the share of non-readers in the group of Internet users increased by 28 percentage points, with a relatively fixed number of moderate readers. Little change was observed in the reading behaviour of people who do not use the Internet (Chart 18). As early as 2002 it was the group showing a low intensity of reading and barely within the reach of books, with that trend strengthening even more as the reach of e-exclusion started to approximate the range of social exclusion.

The declining reach and intensity of book reading among Internet users proves that a facilitated access to books does not necessarily translate into intensified reading. The digitisation and general access to the national heritage collections, which is stipulated in the national strategy for the development of the human capital, does not necessarily mean that such national collections will be used by readers. Likewise, the sole fact of students being given tablets does not guarantee that they will use them for reading school literature or any other books.

Obviously, in recent years 'something' has started to hinder the reading of books, even in the case of Internet users. Or was it a series of factors?

4.6. NEW COMPETITION FOR PAPER BOOKS

In 2006, when the first symptoms of a clear decline in the intensity of reading appeared, Grażyna Straus and Katarzyna Wolff seek an explanation to that phenomenon in the mass '*post-accession emigration*' – a wave of emigration ignited by Poland's accession to the EU

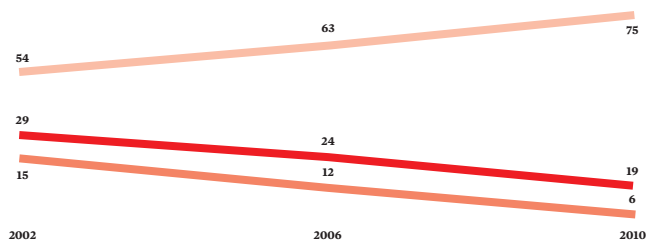


CHART 18. VARIATION IN BOOK READERSHIP AMONG PEOPLE WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS, POLAND, 2002–2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on TNS OBOP for the National Library

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

in 2004 and the opening of foreign job markets in several EU countries. In fact, unlike the previous emigrants, who left for financial reasons, the 'post-accession emigration' featured a relatively high share of people with higher education who tended to read more and with higher intensity than the rest of the population. Certainly, that sole cause is not enough because, as shown in the previous charts, the rise and the following decline in readership spread concentrically across all social groups regardless of the level of education, although with different strength and in different years in each of the groups.

For the first time in 2006, the final secondary school exam (*matura*) was administered in the new format: the traditional essay in Polish was replaced with a test and a concise written commentary to be scored according to 'keyword' usage. According to critics of that format, such an exam promotes passive and imitative memorisation of selected key words for the respective works being analysed in school. The knowledge of a given work itself is no longer required, as a general familiarity with it is simply sufficient, while an independent interpretation of literary works is rather risky. Again, even if the new format of the exam ending secondary education had discouraged secondary school students, it could not have discouraged 30-year-olds or graduates of preparatory vocational schools from reading books.

It appears that the causes of the decline in readership should be looked for deeper, as an effect of profound transformations which Richard Florida observes not only in the innovations of the technical revolution (although personal computers, mobile phones, pay cards and e-banking have indeed changed our lives profoundly), but also in the deeper layers of employment structures, income distribution and in the erosion of old principles of social equality and order.⁶⁰

According to Tomasz Szlendak, in summarising conclusions from his qualitative studies:

*There is no such thing as spare time today. Especially not for those employed in cities. Spare time exploded and shattered into small bits, spread across the entire day and the week. In those bits of time people manage to drink a cup of coffee and talk over the phone, but not read a book.*⁶¹

60 R. Florida: *Narodziny klasy kreatywnej...* [Birth of Creative Class...], see above, p. 157 and earlier pages.

61 T. Szlendak: *Aktywność kulturalna* [Cultural Activity], see above, p. 123.

However, Szlendak believes that the situation is different in rural areas:

[P]eople in villages and small towns look for “entertainment and relaxation” in cultural productions and products. Book reading is rarely associated with entertainment and relaxation. Rather, books are associated with the large amount of spare time required in order to read them. And spare time is not in abundance in the countryside or in small towns, certainly there is not enough spare time to read a book. Such mindsets and poor motivation, which one often explains on the grounds of too little time available, lead to a situation where “texts on the Internet” become the most popular type of reading, for example the news provided by general portals, such as Wirtualna Polska. [...] The Polish villages and small towns listen to whatever is on the radio, watch whatever is in the television or can be bought with a DVD insert in a newspaper, and read nothing unless it is lifestyle magazines (as in the case of women) or literature borrowed from the school library (as in the case of students).⁶²

Data obtained in the research which was conducted by the Polish National Centre for Culture (NCK) are similar to the results of the reach study referred to above: in the economic and cultural ‘centre’ (i.e. the biggest cities), people read less frequently than before (with a rising proportion of moderate readers), however they still do read ‘something’ at least. In the social and economic suburbs of Poland, more and more people tend to quit reading books. What has taken the time and attention that they used to devote to books?

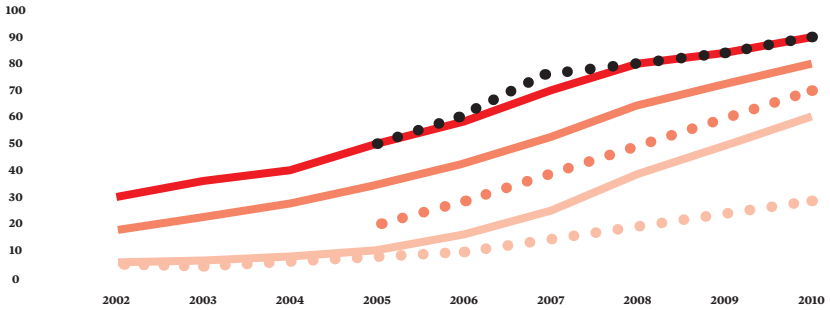


CHART 19. HOUSEHOLDS WITH COMPUTERS WITH INTERNET ACCESS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS, POLAND, 2002*-2010

Own study based on GUS study: *Kultura w 2010 r.* (*Culture in 2010*) and earlier studies

* It was only in 2002 that GUS began collecting data on personal computers in households.

■ entrepreneurs and self-employed ■ employed (total) ■ farmers
● white-collar workers ● blue-collar workers ● retired/pensioners

62 T. Szlendak: *Nic? Aktywność kulturalna na wsi i w małych miastach* [Nothing? Cultural Activity in Villages and Small Towns], In: I. Bukraba-Rylska, W. Burszta (specialist ed.): *Stan i zróżnicowanie kultury wsi i małych miast w Polsce: kanon i rozproszenie* [Cultural Status and Diversification in Polish Villages and Small Towns: Standards and Distribution], Warszawa 2011. ISBN: 9788361587507, pp. 78–79.

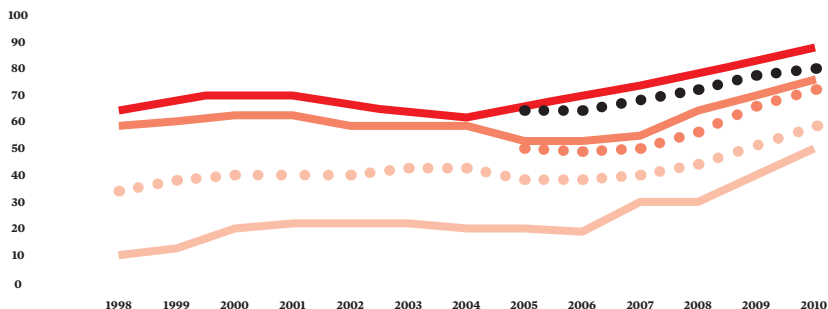


CHART 20. HOUSEHOLDS WITH COMPUTERS WITH CABLE/SATELLITE TV DECODERS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS, POLAND, 2002-2010

Own study based on GUS study: *Kultura w 2010 r.* ("Culture in 2010") and earlier studies

■ entrepreneurs and self-employed ■ employed (total) ■ farmers
 ● white-collar workers ● Blue-collar workers ● retired/pensioners

The analysis of the data provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) concerning the structure of average expenses for culture per one member of the household and for equipment in Polish households (computers, decoders of satellite and cable TV) shows a striking coincidence: the period of abrupt decline in the intensity of reading books overlaps with the stepped rise in the number of personal computers present in households (playing computer games has become the most popular form of spending free time in the USA), access to the Internet on a mass scale (see Chart 19), and the availability of cable and satellite TV decoders (Chart 20). The expansion of the Internet, which used to be available mainly in work and in schools, is a new phenomenon, among other things resulting from the promotional pricing of the *Neostrada TP* broadband connection available at the turn of 2005/2006. It impacted the decision-making process in the mid-income households of blue-collar workers, pensioners, and farmers. Private entrepreneurs, self-employed and white-collar workers were ready to pay for Internet access even though it was relatively expensive for the average user. Chart 19 shows the dynamic spread of the Internet in the groups of farmer households. The only group for which penetration of the Internet has remained on a relatively low level – while also showing a slight decline in readership – is that of people above 60 years of age (i.e. pensioners).

The share of fees for cable and satellite television confirms what Milton Friedman once said: "*There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch.*"⁶³ The changes observed between 2004 and 2010 in access to satellite television and the attractiveness of its programming caused a

63 Original in English.



CHART 21. CABLE TV FEES VS. AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENSES FOR CULTURE PER 1 PERSON IN HOUSEHOLD (PERCENTAGES)

Source: Own study based on GUS study: *Kultura w 2010 r.* ("Culture in 2010") and earlier studies

- white-collar workers
- blue-collar workers
- retired/pensioners
- employed (total)
- farmers

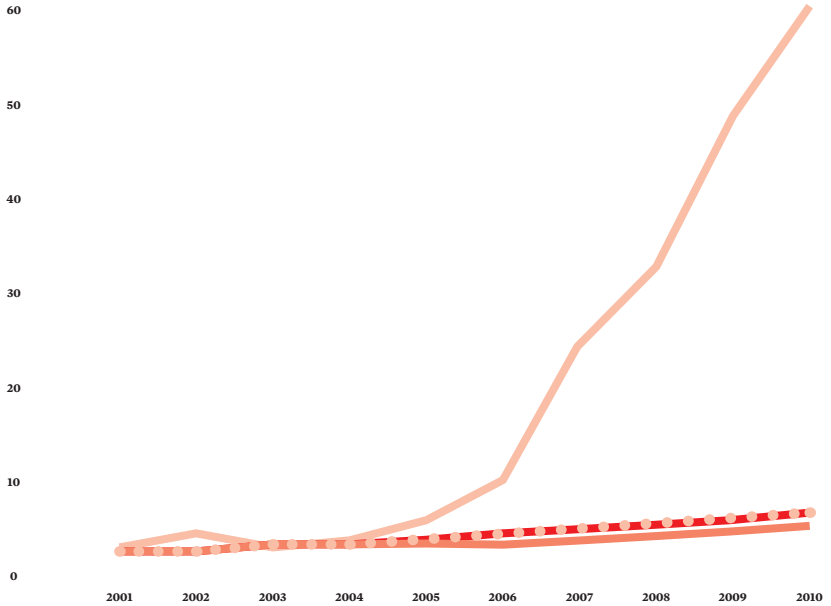


CHART 22. VARIATION (%) IN INDEXED AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENSES³⁷ FOR CABLE/SATELLITE TV FEES PER 1 MEMBER OF HOUSEHOLD IN VARIOUS SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS (YEAR 2001=100 %)

Source: Author's calculations based on GUS data

- private entrepreneurs
- farmers
- employed (total)
- retired/pensioners

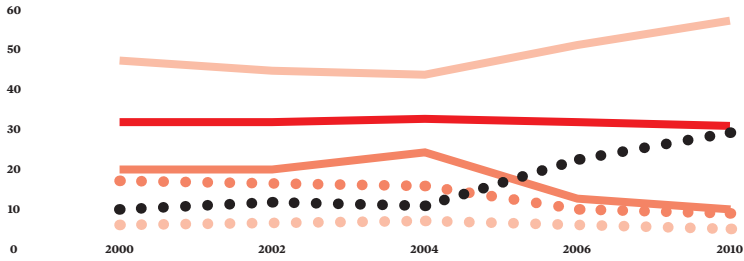


CHART 23. READERSHIP VS. AVERAGE EXPENSES FOR CABLE/SATELLITE TV, THE PRESS AND BOOKS IN THE AVERAGE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR CULTURE PER ONE MEMBER OF HOUSEHOLD, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: National Library study, GUS annals: *Kultura w 2010 r.* (Culture in 2010), *Kultura w 2007 r.* (Culture in 2007), *Kultura w 2004 r.* (Culture in 2004), *Kultura w 2003 r.* (Culture in 2003)

- moderate readers
- Expenses for cable TV*
- heavy readers
- Expenses for the press**
- non-readers
- Expenses for books ***

* Expenses for cable TV compared to the average annual budget for culture per 1 person in household.

** Expenses for the press compared to the average annual budget for culture per 1 person in household.

*** Expenses for books (without textbooks and other books and magazines for educational purposes) compared to the average annual budget for culture per 1 person in household.

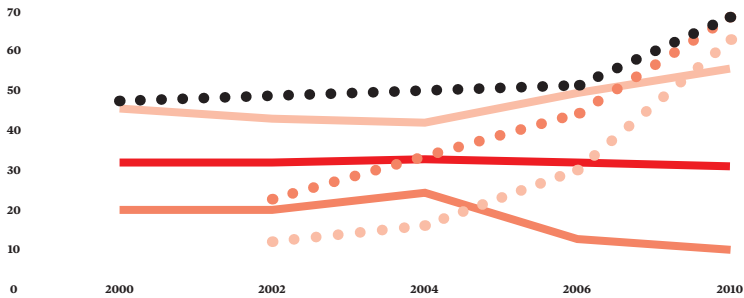


CHART 24. READERSHIP VS. HOUSEHOLDS WITH COMPUTERS WITH INTERNET ACCESS AND CABLE/SATELLITE TV DECODERS, POLAND, 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: National Library study, GUS annals: *Kultura w 2010 r.* (Culture in 2010), *Kultura w 2007 r.* (Culture in 2007), *Kultura w 2004 r.* (Culture in 2004), *Kultura w 2003 r.* (Culture in 2003)

- moderate readers
- TV decoder
- heavy readers
- Internet
- non-readers
- computer

change in the structure of expenses which households were willing to pay for (as converted to a measure per one member of the household). Chart 21 demonstrates that between 2004 and 2006, expenses increased in all social and occupational groups, however fees for cable and satellite television⁶⁴ 'stole' proportionally the largest share of funds that used to be devoted to culture beforehand in the case of households of people who are traditionally 'further' from books: blue-collar workers, pensioners, and farmers. Television fees caused the least 'destruction' in the households of white-collar workers – the successors to the former intelligentsia: managers, specialists, office and administration staff who also earn relatively more, live in urbanised areas of larger size, and are willing to participate also in forms of cultural activity other than watching television, even if such activities are "erratic" and "incidental"⁶⁵ only.

The turning point, when use of the latest generation digital television became widespread, can be readily noticed, if the indexed year-average expenses (in Polish zlotys) are analysed instead of the distribution of household expenses. A rise in expenses in 2001 can be noticed in all social groups (prior to 2005 the Main Statistical Office did not differentiate between blue- and white-collar workers), however in the households of farmers the rise is unprecedented – by almost 30 times within five years (Chart 22).

Although it is a risky methodology (it covers variables expressed in various scales and collected with varying accuracy),⁶⁶ let us look again at the dynamics of the decline in readership in the context of the changing structure of household expenses for culture (Chart 23), and for household equipment (computers, Internet access, satellite television decoders – Chart 24).

Regardless of the fact that the share of expenses for books remained stable at the level of 5% (with a minor increase during the reading peak of 2004), a clear decline can be observed in the share of year-average expenses for the press, with a simultaneous increase in expenses for satellite television and cinema (excluded to ensure better clarity in the chart). In fact, the only group which continues to regularly spend more for the press is pensioners, when compared with the group of workers.⁶⁷ Perhaps pensioners buy the press so eagerly because most of them lack the opportunities and competencies to achieve the same ends via the Internet. The expansion of computers and the Internet which was observed between 2002 and 2010 in the rising level of household equipment, was accompanied with a double-digit growth in the popularity of cable and satellite television decoders as observed between 2006 and 2010 (at some point the decoders were bundled with the Internet).

The changes that took place in the programming of Polish commercial TV channels must not be ignored, including in particular the new formula of TV drama series⁶⁸ which gained mass popularity and became so influential that even writers had to adapt the method of narration and storytelling in their books to reflect the new public expectations caused by the TV series (higher volume, plot redundancy), and their changed analytical and cognitive

64 The fees exclude the annual radio and television fee, which was included in a separate category.

65 T. Szlendak: *Aktywność kulturalna...* [Cultural Activity...], see above, p. 123.

66 The accuracy of even the best survey cannot approximate the large panel study of a few thousand households which the Main Statistical Office conducts.

67 The author's calculations for the period from 2000 to 2010 (workers=100).

68 *Desperate Housewives*, *House MD* and *Lost* premiered in the U.S.A. in 2004. In Poland, the series became unofficially available in 2004 and debuted on Polish TV channels in 2005.

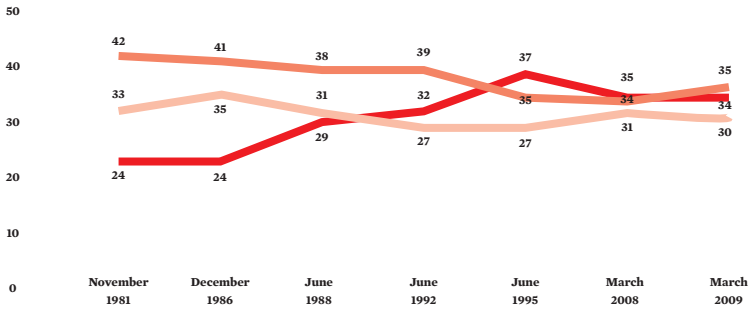


CHART 25. HEAVY READERS (MORE THAN 5 BOOKS PER YEAR), MODERATE READERS (1-5 BOOKS PER YEAR) AND NON-READERS AMONG FRENCH ADULTS, 1981-2009 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: LES FRANÇAIS ET LA LECTURE, TNS Sofres, 2009 [translated by author]

■ moderate readers ■ heavy readers ■ non-readers

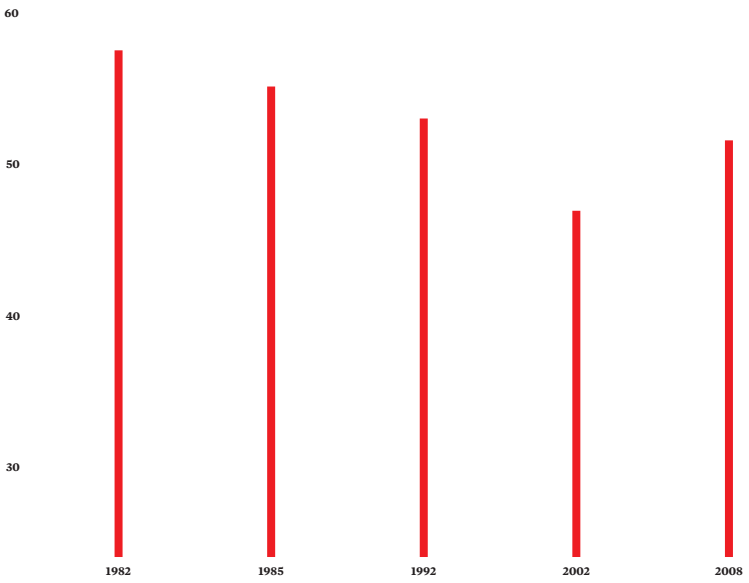


CHART 26. ADULT READERS OF FICTION IN THE USA (NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, POETRY AND DRAMA) IN 1982-2008 (PERCENTAGES)

Source: National Endowment for the Arts: Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy. Available on-line at www.nea.gov/research/readingonrise.pdf

competencies as modified by the Internet⁶⁹ (associations instead of implications), in particular by Internet browsers like Google.

The changing structure of the daily time budget seems to be the key to understanding the decline in readership which took place in the second half of the last decade in Poland, in particular in those groups which used to read most and with the highest frequency. It is rather difficult to watch television or play computer games while reading books. The time devoted to web surfing, Facebook, e-mailing, TV, DVDs or even a visit to the local cinema theatre is time 'stolen' from books, even if one carries books on one's mobile telephone at the same time.⁷⁰ Reading is hard to do in spare time, because new methods of employment blur the difference between work time and time of relaxation, while "mobile telephones, laptops and the wireless Internet enable work duties to follow us wherever we might be [...] at any time of the day and night," stay in our heads and "never leave us even for a while."⁷¹

The changes occurring in Poland were observed in other countries as well and had similar effects on the level of readership. However, the authors of the study remain optimistic. Every new type of mass media, whether it has been the press, the cinema, the radio or television, has been considered a threat to books. History repeats itself. The latest gadgets, TV series, computer games become boring after some time while writers find new formats to maintain contact with readers, even in those bits of time scattered across the day, like the few minutes we have when travelling in the underground.

The above-mentioned applications which feed longer texts onto the screen of a mobile telephone are the best proof that books are colonising areas of the new technology, while films are not able to substitute for "the pleasure of reading." It seems that the process has already begun in the biggest cities of Poland where, after an interim decline in the readership, the number of readers is stable and even rising slightly, even though they no longer read with the same intensity as before – similar to the case in France (Chart 25).

However, the authors of the study are more sceptical when it comes to the chances for a spontaneous growth of interest in books, like the one observed in the U.S.A. after 20 years of decline (Chart 26). It is hard to clearly assess whether Poland is experiencing a true decline or rather a return of older trends. Not so long ago, at the beginning of the 1920s, one third of Polish society was illiterate. It is not certain whether the 50 years of widespread mass educational efforts which followed World War II were enough to give rise to and ingrain mass reading habits, such that after finishing one's education one would read for pleasure or knowledge rather than by external compulsion. However, it does not mean that we should be silent and simply acknowledge the decline in readership.

A similar or higher share of illiteracy in the early 20th century was observed in Spain (46.7% illiteracy), Greece (51.4% illiteracy) and Portugal (67.7% illiteracy).⁷² In that pe-

69 Writer Jacek Dukaj presented it in the most interesting way in his essay entitled "Za długie, nie przeczytam" [Too long – I can't read it], in: *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 August 2010.

70 Zofia Zasacka proved a negative correlation between the time which post-primary school students spent on television every day and the number of books they read (Z. Zasacka: *Nastoletni czytelnicy* [Teenage Readers], Warszawa 2008. ISBN: 9788370096960). Similar conclusions were drawn by U.S. researchers: even if today's children/readers use different media simultaneously (i.e. read a book while watching TV), it is an effect of poor supervision by the parents - previously parents used to require that kids focus on one activity only (National Endowment for the Arts: *To Read or not to Read*, see above).

71 R. Florida: *Narodziny klasy kreatywnej...* [Birth of the Creative Class...], see above, p. 157.

72 All data in this paragraph is according to I. Michalska: *Wychowanie do czytelnictwa uczniów szkół powszechnych w*

riod, the issue of illiteracy was long over in England, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. Finland had only 1% of illiterate adults; the U.S.A., 6%; Czechoslovakia, 7%; Belgium, 7.5%; and France, 8.9%. The above shows that the profound division of society that used to be visible as exclusion from education and literacy has not been erased, even after 100 years. The latest financial crisis which deeply touched the PIGS countries shows that the old exclusion from “the culture of the printed word” returns in today’s form of exclusion from the job market and the world of consumption. Certainly, Poland should learn from that lesson.

INDIVIDUAL BOOK BUYERS IN 2010

CHAPTER V

It is difficult to make reliable judgements on book shopping based on the personal declarations of respondents, especially declarations covering the long period of one calendar year. There is a considerable gap between respondent declarations (the buyers) and the data from publishers and distributors (the sellers): significantly more books are bought yearly than the reader declarations imply.

According to the 2010 study of the National Library, 533 people (28%) out of the sample of 2008 declared they had bought at least one book in the past year (see Table 20). The 2011 research called *Obiegi kultury (Circulation of Culture)*⁷³ provided results that are even worse: a mere 10% of respondents declared they had bought books. At the same time, approximately 30 thousand books are published every year, with the Polish book market being estimated at hundreds of millions of zlotys.⁷⁴

Such a disproportion can hardly be explained based solely on the activity of institutional buyers, such as libraries and companies buying books for work (e.g. interpretations of laws, databases, pharmaceutical guidebooks, legal handbooks, accounting instructions, etc. – professional textbooks and similar literature which are easily forgotten as ‘books’ yet generate the majority of turnover on the book market). We can assume that individual buyers (especially frequent buyers and readers) remember books that they bought and read (*belles lettres* usually) better than those that they browsed through only, bought as a gift or bought for their children, etc. In official terms, ‘books’ include brochures that accompany CDs and

73 M. Filiciak, J. Hofmokl, A. Tarkowski: *Obiegi kultury...* [Circulation of Culture...], see above, p. 33.

74 According to the Polish Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK), the book shopping market in Poland was worth PLN 848.5 million in 2009 (see UOKiK: *Raport z badania rynku sprzedaży książek, muzyki i multimedialnych w Polsce* [Report on Book, Music and Multimedia Market in Poland], June 2011. Available on-line at www.vokik.gov.pl), estimates by Biblioteka Analiz mention PLN 145 million in 2008, and the National Library PLN 85 million in 2008 (see R. Mendruń: *Nieuchwytny mianownik – czytelnictwo książki a rynek* [Hidden Denominator – Book Reading vs. Market] [manuscript] Warszawa 2009). According to Biblioteka Analiz, there were 24,380 titles published in 2010 (including 13,400 premieres) with an average circulation of 5,710 copies. The turnover from book sales was PLN 2.94 billion (see Ł. Gołębiowski, P. Waszczyk: *Duży spadek i złe prognozy* [Big Decline and Bad Forecast], in: *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 May 2012).

DVDs (a lower VAT rate applies to such publications), or colouring books for children – publications that the more advanced book readers would not associate with *books* at all.

For that reason, the book shopping data is reported as it was in the previous years and using a comparable method. However, as in the case of the press and the Internet, we treat such information as supplemental to the main object of our interest, namely the behaviour and practices that are related to the reception of books in the various social groups.

Unless books are bought because of compulsory requirements (e.g. textbooks for school), book shopping is more a symptom of the reader being ready to allocate certain funds towards books, which implies that a given book (once read or available at home) gives a certain value to its buyer. The purchase of a book that could be borrowed from a library, family or friends, obtained on the informal market or simply passed on (roughly speaking) is an action of high semiotic relevance.

However, reading books does not necessarily mean that the books read were actually bought. Nor does buying books mean that the books are read. In 2010, 13% of book buyers had not read a single book within a year, even though they had bought books. The group of *readers-not-buyers* is even bigger (46% of book readers). Although book reading is strongly associated with book buying, still the correlation is neither simple nor determined.

| Book buying in 2010 | N= | % |
|---------------------|------|----|
| Non-buyers | 1455 | 72 |
| Buyers | 553 | 28 |
| incl. | | |
| 1 book | 110 | 5 |
| 2 books | 102 | 5 |
| 3–4 books | 115 | 6 |
| 5–6 books | 58 | 3 |
| 7–11 books | 50 | 2 |
| 12 and more books | 92 | 5 |
| hard to say | 27 | 1 |

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 20. BOOK BUYING IN POLAND, 2010

1. BOOK SHOPPING VS. SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The differences in book readership between women and men are reflected in the way they buy books. However, in the case of book buying practices the disproportion between the two genders is narrower, in particular if adjusted for the books bought for schools and children. In 2010, 24% of men and 31% of women declared they had bought at least one book during the year (7 percentage points difference), and 38% of men and 50% of women declared they had read books (12 percentage points difference). The surplus of female buyers over men is much lower when we subtract books related to children, which women tend to buy more frequently than men because of their social role as mothers and grandmothers. As in the case of book reading, women prevail in the group of occasional readers, with the proportions of moderate and heavy readers being similar in men and women alike (or even exactly the same if books bought for personal use only are considered). In terms of the buyer

profile, women statistically stand out as buyers of romance books (which are bought most frequently by people over 50 years of age). Men more frequently buy action books and thrillers, historical books, and books on nature and the environment.

The analysis of book reading behaviours demonstrated that the number of book readers diminishes within subsequent age groups. Readers are less eager to reach for books as they grow older, even though the share of regular readers was at the same approximate level of 10-12% in all age groups. In the case of book shopping, the division is bimodal – there are two age groups that tend to buy many more books than the others: the respondents 15-19 years of age, and 30-49 years of age (the latter stage of life, however, is also influenced by the needs of children). After reaching fifty, respondents become less eager to buy books (and read them), with that trend becoming stronger in the 60+ age group. Late adolescence (20-29) is the age when respondents buy the most books *‘for reading,’* even though book shopping is occasional only (most likely for financial reasons). Excluding the respondents who bought books only for their education and their children, the level of book buyers is similar in all age groups: 18-23%.

There are 46% of book buyers in the youngest age group, however only 18% declared they had bought anything other than textbooks and school readings. The group of people 15-19 years of age contains the most buyers of books other than *belles lettres* and books bought for educational reasons. The next group (20-29) stands out as the readers of scientific and popular science books, and surprisingly modern literature and Polish authors. As analysed above (see the sub-chapter *Book Sources*), younger readers frequently borrow books whenever possible, particularly in the case of school readings. Book shopping becomes a more popular practice among the older groups and self-employed readers.

The other groups that buy the most books are 30- to 40-year-olds, who buy the most books for children (though not exclusively). Those 30 years of age are the most frequent buyers of fantasy, action books and thrillers. Meanwhile, 40-year-olds are relatively more frequent buyers of high literature and historical books.

Older respondents are somewhat less eager to buy books, even though they are still a potential target group. The 50-year-olds stand out as buyers of action books and thrillers, in addition to books they buy for children and grandchildren. The respondents from the oldest group clearly prefer books on history, cooking, health and nutrition.⁷⁵

In terms of education, book shopping data confirms the same thesis which has been repeated in the previous analyses of the study: people with primary and vocational education are mostly beyond the social reach of books. Only 13% of the respondents who finished their education prior to the final secondary school exam (*matura*) buy books, and even if they do, it is usually for their children. Respondents with a poor education very rarely (if at all) buy new releases, modern literature, high literature, or even fantasy stories.

Unlike respondents with primary and vocational education, graduates of secondary education are genuine book readers. However, the proportion of book buyers is at the sample average (28%), and they shop either occasionally or moderately: still, the profile of purchased books shows clearly that they buy books for own personal use. Respondents with a higher education stand out due to their preference for popular literature, which they buy (and read) for pleasure in their spare time (compared with the other groups they buy significantly more *belles lettres* than other books). They are statisti-

75 Another group that declared a greater interest in books of that genre were people of 50-59 years of age, however the correlation is not statistically significant.

cally significant buyers of modern literature, mainly action books, thrillers, romance and drama.

Respondents with a higher education are the sole group that buys more. It is the only one with more book buyers (55%) than non-buyers (45%) - even without books bought exclusively for children's use, the sizes of the three sub-groups (occasional, moderate and heavy buyers) remain similar. They like to buy modern literature (38%) and popular fiction (they are the largest group of *belles lettres* buyers), however the profile of chosen books is much more diversified compared to respondents with lower levels of education. The well-educated group provides potential shoppers of a wide range of books: the latest releases, high literature, fantasy, popular science, geography and travel, psychology, economics, law and business management. Further proof for the wide choice of books that educated respondents buy lies in the fact that they declare having bought the most books that did not fit the pre-defined genres.

Students of schools or universities tend to buy a relatively large amount, however they allocate funds mostly for books needed for their education. They buy much fewer 'non-compulsory' books such as the latest releases, *belles lettres* (high literature, action and romance books), 'spot' readings and guides (they read these too, but not as frequently).

Similarly, farmers and villagers are also very economical in their choice of books, or perhaps pragmatic and rational. A mere 9% of farmers and 19% of villagers declared they had bought at least one book during the year. In general, the bigger the place of residence the more likely the respondents were to buy books, except in the case of small towns of up to 20 thousand residents, where there are more respondents (33%) who bought at least one book than in the medium cities with populations of 20-100 thousand (28%). However, the small-town readers buy books with a lower intensity. The residents of big cities with populations of 100-500 thousand (34%) and the biggest cities with over 500 thousand (39%) buy the most, even though the books bought for personal use contribute a significant share only in the case of the latter.

Surprisingly, the size of the place of residence is not a strong differentiating factor in the choice of literature. The biggest difference is observed between residents of villages and the biggest cities with populations of over 500 thousand. Villagers are willing to buy books as long as they are needed for educational purposes, and rarely for pleasure in their spare time. Such genres as fantasy (3%) and 'spot' reading (5%) are least popular among villagers. Most buyers of *belles lettres* live in big metropolitan areas, especially lovers of fantasy and romance books.⁷⁶

The following statistically significant correlations observed in the 2010 study appear to be the most interesting:

1. The statistically significant correlation between the willingness to buy books (and the intensity of book buying) and the number of children in the household. Among childless people and respondents whose adult children have left the household, there are a mere 23% of respondents who declared they had bought at least one book, but 33% in households with one child, 37% in households with two children, and 47% in households with three or more children. In large families with many children books are bought more frequently, however the choice of books is connected with the most immediate needs: 83% of the respondents who have three or more children bought books for educational pur-

76 Certainly, one of the factors is the higher rate of employment among women, who as a result have their own money and can afford books easily.

poses (compared with 7% of those who have no children, and 25% of households with one child only). Similar is the case of the unemployed and those in financial hardship – the few people who declare they have bought more books usually choose textbooks or other literature for the education of their children.

2. In large families with many children, the average income per one member of the household is lower, and that fact impacts the structure of expenses. The people earning most are the ones who buy ‘non-compulsory’ books for the personal pleasure of reading *ludic* books in their spare time, not necessarily to educate themselves or for work. They buy significantly more books by Polish authors, modern and high literature, geography and travel publications, *belles lettres*, action and thrillers, and fantasy books, compared to those who evaluate their financial situation as average or bad.⁷⁷

3. The correlation of the income and the age of respondents with the willingness to buy books can be explained by the strong correlation between the use of the Internet, book shopping and its intensity. The group of Internet users includes 37% of book buyers, compared with only 14% among those who do not use the Internet. The fact is that Internet users buy books on-line, although it is not the only source of books for them (they also use chain and traditional bookshops). It seems a more important point that the Internet is used at home and at work mainly by people who are young (buying books for educational purposes), employed, educated, and in a good financial situation.

4. Books are bought most frequently by well-educated managers and specialists, even though private entrepreneurs are the group that buys relatively the most. Such a conclusion receives further proof in a very different study of the Main Statistical Office. In the structure of cultural expenses in the households of workers, the annual amount devoted to books (excluding textbooks) increased by 41.5% between 2001 and 2010, from PLN 16.00 to PLN 22.00. At the same time, in the households of entrepreneurs and the self-employed, the annual amount spent on books increased by 60% from PLN 19.00 to PLN 30.00⁷⁸ (the consumer price index was 31.2% in that period).

5. Buyers of religious books. It is interesting to observe that pensioners are the only group that stands out statistically as buyers of religious books. These buyers can be distinguished based on their professional status rather than on gender, education or age, even though they can be expected to be above 60 years of age and have preparatory vocational education, according to the biggest group of religious readers. However, such variables are not significant in the case of buyers. Another category of books which pensioners tend to buy more frequently is books on health, nutrition and fitness, however the two buyer groups have nothing in common. This means that the buyers of the religious literature ignore publications related to the human body, while the lovers of “health and youth” remain indifferent to the religious offerings on the market (and only esoteric books can attract them).

77 A subjective evaluation of the financial situation in households allows a better division of the book shopping declarations than the three income thresholds which is the method used by TNS OBOP. It appears that books are luxury goods and people find it easy to stop buying them whenever other economic needs are at risk. The personal evaluation of a financial situation as “good” or “very good” implies that such cases where other needs are at risk are rare or the risk is not significant, and it correlates with book shopping and its intensity.

78 Based on *Roczniki Statystyczne GUS* [Statistical Annals of Main Statistical Office]: *Kultura w 2010 r.* [Culture in 2010], see above, and earlier years.

| Books bought this year | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| Years | Total 100% | Number of books: | | | |
| | | None | 1-4 | 5-11 | 12 and more |
| 2000 | 1000 | 56 | 24 | 11 | 5 |
| 2002 | 1008 | 63 | 17 | 12 | 7 |
| 2004 | 1005 | 63 | 22 | 11 | 4 |
| 2006 | 1003 | 67 | 20 | 10 | 3 |
| 2008 | 1005 | 77 | 15 | 5 | 3 |
| 2010 | 2008 | 72 | 16 | 5 | 5 |

Source: National Library study

TABLE 21. BOOK BUYING IN 2000-2010 (PERCENT)

2. BOOK SHOPPING

Along with the questions about the sources of books, it was reasonable to ask also about the most popular methods of shopping for books. Book buyers appear to be rather conservative customers: as many as 70% out of 553 respondents who declared they had bought at least one book in the past year indicated only one form of purchase, 19% indicated two forms, and 8% indicated three or more forms of purchase.

The main source of books remains the “traditional bookshops,” which were used by 58% of buyers in 2010 (and 16% of the overall sample). The term ‘*traditional*’ was used on purpose to differentiate these bookshops from the big multimedia supermarket chains like Empik or Traffic, where 22% of buyers purchased books in 2010.

The third most popular place for buying books is the Internet (15% of buyers), which has clearly won out over mail-order book clubs (12% of buyers). Surprisingly, second-hand bookshops remain quite stable regardless of the deep changes which have occurred in the publishing market. However, in 2010 only 7% of buyers went to second-hand bookshops, although their number has been on the rise in the recent years (see Table 22). Kiosks and newsstands are on a similar level (6%), together with bargain book stands (6%) and supermarkets (4%).

As we cautioned above, the survey data is not enough to draw conclusions on the actual volume of sales or shares of the market, however the declarations imply that the ‘*traditional*’ bookshops have managed to find their spot in the competitive market along with the big chain bookshops. The first decade of the 21st century was primarily the moment of the Internet’s expansion into the market of new and used books, and the decline of mail-order book clubs. Other changes were not as spectacular. After 2004, the popularity of kiosks, bargain book stands and supermarkets fluctuated around a similar level of 3-7%. Books were sold even by food discount chains (Biedronka) and chemist supermarkets (Rossman, Hebe). It

was the end of the direct selling of books. The old stands with 'books and bits of everything'⁷⁹ have vanished or taken the form of *bargain book stands*. Schools and churches also continue to sell books, but to a negligible extent only.

| Source | Book buyers in | | | | | |
|--|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2000 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 |
| Conventional bookshops | 69 | 74 | 70 | 65 | 57 | 58 |
| Empik chain | - | - | - | - | 23 | 22 |
| Book clubs (e.g. Świat Książki, Klub dla Ciebie, etc.) | 18 | 18 | 17 | 17 | 12 | 12 |
| Internet, on-line bookshops (e.g. Merlin.pl) and on-line auctions (e.g. Allegro) | 1 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 15 |
| Street kiosks (Ruch, Kolporter or other distributors) | 7 | 4 | 16 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Supermarkets | 3 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| Second-hand bookshops | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Bargain book stands | 3 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Other | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

Source: National Library study

TABLE 22. SOURCES FOR BUYING BOOKS IN 2000-2010 (PERCENTAGES)

As such the publishing market has penetrated various book distribution channels and reached different groups of buyers.

Customers of the traditional bookshops include mainly villagers, young people, students, and – last but not least – people with children. It appears that textbooks and school literature are an important part of bookshops' offerings. The customers of typical small bookshops are rarely visitors in big bookshop chains – easily explained by the fact that the big chains can be found where the *foot traffic*⁸⁰ is, namely shopping centres in big cities. Villages and small towns cannot provide such locations, which gives an advantage to the small bookshop. On the other hand, Empik or Traffic chains are popular among those respondents who are also the target group of modern shopping centres: residents of cities with over 500 thousand inhabitants, private entrepreneurs, managers and specialists, people with higher education, 40-49 years of age, relatively wealthy and not burdened with children. For the reasons already given, Empik-type chain bookshops were chosen much less by the residents of villages, small towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants, students and the youngest age group (15-19).

Both the traditional and modern bookshops are dedicated to books, which means that

79 G. Straus, K.Wolff: *Polacy i książki...* [Poles and Books...], see above.

80 Locations where many people pass every day.

customers go there with the specific *purpose* of buying books. However, kiosks and supermarkets offer books ‘*on the side*’ as a supplement to the general assortment of products. Certainly, one could find a sought-after book in a discount food shop or a kiosk, perhaps as an insert in a magazine, however such a find would be accidental and the effect of a one-time marketing campaign. Such purchases cannot be planned in advance.

The older generations and pensioners are the groups who most frequently choose to buy books in kiosks and newsstands. Surprisingly, the same two groups of somewhat accidental buyers eagerly shop for books from mail-order book clubs. However, these are fully distinct target groups because the statistics show that they never buy books from these places at the same time (perhaps the oldest respondents buy few books and one source is enough to meet their needs). Also, the people with the lowest level of education are the most susceptible to the marketing efforts of mail-order book clubs. Unlike the group of the youngest customers, who are far beyond their reach.

The people who buy books incidentally to other purchases (e.g. in a supermarket) sometimes buy books in cheap book stands (Phi -0.220). However, without in-depth research it is hard to judge whether they do this for economical reasons (lower prices) or because they fit the psychological profile of an impulsive buyer who decides to buy whenever there is anything of interest. On the opposite side from the impulsive buyers, there are the customers of second-hand bookshops who tend to seek very specific types of books, such as textbooks, second-hand (cheaper) *belles lettres*, popular ‘*readings*,’ valuable publications and rare prints. The profile is similar in the case of on-line shoppers. It is not a surprise that some buyers use both sources.

Second-hand bookshops are used much more frequently by young people who are still in school. Also, second-hand bookshops are more popular among users of libraries and bibliophiles who tend to buy a lot of books. Second-hand bookshops go side by side with cheap book stands in cities with population of 20-100 thousand. The Internet is also used for ‘*googling*’ specific books or works related to a specific topic, author, genre, etc. However, this is a popular method for a different group of buyers - in particular older men who are employed (20%), *urban professionals* who are well educated (28% with higher education) and well off,⁸¹ managers and specialists (36%), and residents of cities (in particular with populations of 100-500 thousand - 21%). The Internet is used least for shopping by those respondents who are not familiar with it and usually buy books from time to time only, namely people over 60 years of age, those with preparatory vocational education, and villagers. Another group worth mentioning is the relatively small but interesting category of book buyers who indicated “other sources.” That option was selected significantly more by people with preparatory vocational education and residents of villages, which are often the groups beyond the “reach of the printed text.” As demonstrated, books reach their buyers via other channels in places lacking big bookshop chains, small traditional bookshops and even on-line shops. Let us hope that there are readers there as well.

81 This can be implied from the fact that on-line shoppers are 23% of the respondents who evaluate their financial situation as good and 20% of respondents from households with incomes over PLN 2,000 monthly (the average is 15%).

THE PRESS AND THE INTERNET AS ALTERNATIVE TEXT FORMS FOR BOOKS

CHAPTER VI

Reading books is an important form of reading, but it is not the only one. Despite the lower complexity of communication and smaller pool of words compared with scientific texts and literature, reading the everyday press and magazines is a much better enabler of cognitive competences than the use of visual and verbal formats only (radio, television and oral speech).⁸² However, the question remains whether the press complements or rather replaces books. In other words, do certain social groups read the press instead of reading books? Or would they be non-readers anyway? Or is reading either the press or books a behaviour typical of people who have high-level reading competencies and practise both? A true alternative to non-reading (books/press/Internet) seems to be watching television.

In this context, the results concerning the press and the Internet (presented below) can be treated as a supplement to the overall image of reader behaviour and areas of interest that are characteristic for the social groups under analysis. The authors of the study do not analyse the popularity of any specific press titles or websites. The division of the press into dailies and weeklies is also a secondary factor. The respondents were given the freedom to evaluate themselves as either occasional or regular readers of the press because it is difficult to cross-reference the data on daily newspapers, monthlies and quarterly magazines. The authors of the study assumed that the question about reading books and longer texts is answered mainly according to parameters of personal identity (depending on the frequency of reading and whether it is seen as an obvious practice). A similar assumption should be made in the case of the press.

Non-readers give rise to the least doubts – people who declared they had not read or browsed through any newspapers, weeklies, or magazines in the past year (including their on-line versions). However, the difference between regular and occasional readers is not as obvious. A person who evaluates his/her contact with the press as occasional can be assumed to think that such contact is more infrequent than it could potentially be. A person who perceives himself/herself as a regular reader, even without fulfilling the objective cri-

82 Anne E. Cunningham, Keith E. Stanovich, *What reading does...*, see above.

teria (reading the press a few times every week or browsing through at least every second issue of the same title) is acceptable as such based on his/her identity and self-evaluation as a reader. In fact, the most interesting aspect is the social use of text and printed formats, even if more is declared than is actually practised.

By analogy, it is more interesting to observe the structure of communication needs that the press and the Internet satisfy rather than the popularity of any specific titles or websites. For those reasons, the study results do not provide grounds for conclusions concerning the overall press market in Poland (or the popularity of any specific internet domains), but they provide a perspective on the different needs that the Internet fulfils in the broad context of readership.

The question concerning reading the press was stated as follows: “In the past 12 months (from November 2009 to November 2010), have you read or browsed through newspapers, weekly magazines, periodicals (including their on-line versions)?” 35% of respondents said “no,” 41% declared they had read the press on occasion only, and 24% read it regularly. The latter group was asked an extra question about specific titles. In the subsequent questions, some of the respondents who declared they had read the press revealed that they read the press on the Internet. This provided further grounds justifying the analysis of both the press as well as the Internet in the broad context of information needs.

| During the past 12 months (November 2009 - November 2010), did you read or browse through any dailies, weeklies, magazines (incl. on-line versions)? | N= | % |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| No | 697 | 34.7 |
| Yes, occasionally | 826 | 41.1 |
| Yes, regularly | 485 | 24.1 |
| Total | 2008 | 100.0 |

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 23. DECLARED READERSHIP OF THE PRESS, POLAND, 2010 (PERCENTAGES)

According to their declarations, readers read mainly daily newspapers and weekly magazines which discuss social issues, politics and the economy (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Polityka*, *Newsweek*, *Wprost*), and which are published on a national scale (43% of regular readers). As a sort of refutation of the social and global issues of such press, 28% of respondents declared they had read local and regional press. Perhaps these two categories of the press are targeted at different groups of readers, because they barely overlap – 208 respondents read the national press and 134 read the regional and local press, with a mere 41 people reading both.

Another category that was selected by 25% of regular readers of the press is tabloids (*Fakt* and *Super Express* dailies): 13% of respondents declared they had read these. Another 6% declared they had read magazines containing TV programming (*Tele Tydzień*, *Moje Imperium*, etc.). The religious press (e.g. *Nasz Dziennik*, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Strażnica*, etc.) was chosen by 4% of regular readers of the press, and 1% indicated the anti-church press (*Nie*, *Fakty i Mity*).

A third category (18%) was made up of readers of press titles that are overtly aimed at one gender or the other. This category includes women's magazines (both premium and the most popular titles), tabloids (*Party, Show*), men's magazines (*Playboy, CKM*), and shopping magazines (either dedicated to men, such as *Logo, Stuff*, or women, such as *Avanti, InStyle*).

The last category (but with 18% of responses) comprises magazines which are for specialists and those aimed at narrow target groups, such as magazines devoted to certain hobbies (*Wędkarstwo, Łowiec Polski*), interior design (*Dobre Wnętrze, Ogrody, Cztery Kąty*), automotive interests, computers (*Komputer Świat, Chip*), geography and travel (*National Geographic, Podróże, Żagle*), business (*Forbes, Sukces*), adolescents (*Bravo*), etc.

The study results do not provide a representative outlook on the overall press market, because they concern a narrow group of people who declared they had read the press regularly. As such, the results certainly underreport the group of readers reached by the various titles and types of the press. The four main analytical categories of the press, as employed in this analysis, are used mainly for the purpose of reconstructing the areas of interest for the respondents in view of the overall readership, and in particular the readership and areas of interest related to the Internet.

1. THE PRESS

Readers of the press include mainly adults and professionals (specialists and managers), with at least a secondary education, living in big and the biggest cities. By analogy, regular readers are hardly to be found among villagers, farmers, the unemployed, retail workers, or unskilled labourers. Neither the gender nor the age of the respondent are factors that would have a significant impact on the readership of the press or its frequency.

The lowest share of regular readers is in the 15-19 age group, while the highest is in the group over 60 years of age. The youngest respondents are relatively active readers, as they read a lot of books and texts. As citizens, however, they seem to be very little concerned with the broader state of affairs. This age group contains the least regular readers of the social press (readers who browse through the news on Internet portals and use the Internet to seek current information on the world and on people).

The youngest respondents devote the most time and attention to school and their own education: they use the Internet to find educational and scientific content and are the biggest users of Wikipedia and on-line dictionaries. With slightly more frequency than the readers of the next two age groups, they also read tabloids (possibly 'borrowed' from their parents whom they live with), and the specialist press dedicated to adolescents, computers, automotive interests, sports, etc. Their high level of digital competency and active use of the Internet does not restrict them from having an interest in the specialist press, which is most popular among the younger age groups (15-39 years of age) and starts declining to 12% at the age of 40, remaining at that level in the older groups.

Less than half (46%) of the people who finished education at the level of primary or post-primary school read the press, and 57% of respondents who finished preparatory vocational schools. 73% of the respondents with secondary and post-secondary education declared that they read the press, and 82% with higher education (including 47% of regular readers). In the case of students, the share of regular readers is only slightly higher than in the group of people with primary and vocational education (18%). Many students read the press occasionally (46%). Perhaps this is caused by the prices of newspapers and

magazines, which few young people can afford to buy on a regular basis. They are still interested in the press and browse through it whenever they get a chance to do so.

Respondents with secondary and higher education are more frequent users of the national and specialist press than the local/regional press and tabloids. People with primary and vocational education show other preferences: they like local and regional magazines (men), tabloids, men's/women's magazines, and shopping magazines (women) much more than the national and specialist press.

A degree in higher studies eliminates the differences between men and women that result from cultural factors causing (among other things) disproportions in the readership of the social and political press. Men appear to be more interested in the outside world (in the broad sense), as 49% of them (vs. 37% of women) declare that they read the national press (and more men declare that they read the press on the Internet). The areas of interest for women are effectively addressed by the women's press, providing plenty of advice on '*how to care for the home*.' Only women with higher education seem to be interested in the issues of *politis* on a similar level as men. It should be stressed that an equally indifferent group of respondents who stay away from global and national issues are the people with primary and vocational education.

Let us remember that the declarations of the regular readers of the press overlap to a significant degree with the declarations on reading books other than non-*belles lettres*, economy, law and business management books, and modern and high literature.⁸³ The declared frequency of reading the press is positively correlated with the regular readership of longer texts, the use of the Internet, and book buying and reading (however, the correlation with the readership of the press is weaker in the case of heavy readers of 7 and more books annually).

2. THE INTERNET

Despite in-depth analysis of the 2010 data, we have found no empirical evidence for the commonly-held intuitive notion that Internet access, as it becomes widely available in households, could weaken interest in book buying and reading, or at least in the case of certain book genres. The recent phase of the reach study included two questions about the use of the Internet. The first question asked about the type of content which respondents seek on the Internet (based on the following categories: current information, education and science, professional, practical, hobby, literature). The other question asked which genres and types of Internet texts are most liked (news portals, on-line versions of newspapers, on-line dictionaries and encyclopaedia, blogs, forums and discussion groups, books and e-book which can be read on the screen or downloaded).

An intriguing correlation has been observed: the respondents who declared themselves to be the most active users of the Internet and its resources for various needs are also the respondents who tend to read much more outside the Internet. Their cognitive motivation and reasons for reading contribute to a relatively coherent profile of interests and readership.

Three main approaches can be distinguished in terms of Internet content and use. Firstly, there are those who use the Internet to seek current information about the world and about people. Secondly, there are heavy consumers of typographic communication who use the Internet to find educational, professional and literary content. Thirdly, there are practical

83 In the case of other thematic areas and genres of literature, no statistically significant correlations have been observed.

respondents for whom the Internet is a source of practical advice and guidance, and also a place for fulfilling their own areas of interest, hobbies and in which to spend free time. In general, with the exception of the first model above, which is correlated strongly with secondary education, these approaches are exercised mainly by people with higher education.

| When surfing and reading on the Internet, which type of content mainly do you look for? | Responses | % |
|---|-----------|-------|
| Current information about the world and people | 778 | 30.4 |
| Educational content, for school, science | 418 | 16.4 |
| Professional content – for work | 362 | 14.1 |
| Practical advice – guides, recipes, instructions | 441 | 17.2 |
| Hobby, entertainment, interests | 461 | 18.0 |
| Literary works, novels, poems, short stories | 60 | 2.4 |
| Other | 37 | 1.5 |
| Total | 2557 | 100.0 |
| Valid responses | 1136 | |

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 24. AREAS OF INTERESTS FOR INTERNET USERS, 2010

| What did you read in the past 12 months on the Internet? | Responses | % |
|--|-----------|-------|
| I do not read on the Internet, or I read on occasions, | | |
| I use the Internet for other purposes | 232 | 10.9 |
| News, current information on portals | 734 | 34.6 |
| Dailies, magazines, Internet press | 285 | 13.5 |
| Wikipedia, dictionaries, on-line encyclopaedias | 325 | 15.3 |
| Blogs, journals/diaries on the Internet | 167 | 7.9 |
| Discussion forums and/or groups | 298 | 14.0 |
| Books, e-books | 39 | 1.8 |
| Other | 41 | 1.9 |
| Total | 2121 | 100.0 |
| Valid responses (N=) | 1136 | |

Source: TNS OBOP for the National Library

TABLE 25. READER ACTIVITY ON THE INTERNET, 2010

The respondents who browse the Internet for current information about the world and about people visit news portals and on-line versions of newspapers much more frequently,⁸⁴ and as a group they include the more regular readers of the national press as well. They appear to focus on finding current affairs on the Internet (and also most likely outside of it). Their choice of literature includes *belles lettres* and modern high literature. It seems that this model is characteristic of older respondents who use the Internet daily

84 All conclusions were formulated based on statistically significant correlations as demonstrated in the contingency tables showing the discussed variables.

but do it with the older reader's habits (using the Internet as a tool for passively looking things up – there is no correlation with the use of discussion groups or blogs). As regards books, they choose the traditional paper format (there is a negative correlation with reading books on the Internet and reading e-books). They mainly read the press every day – those who declared that they browse the Internet for current affairs about the world and about people are not statistically correlated with regular readers of longer texts and books. They buy books rarely. For such people, the press in its traditional format and in e-versions, and television, appear to be their main point of contact with text, and somewhat of an alternative to book reading.

Another group is respondents who browse the Internet looking for educational, professional and literary content (these areas of interest often overlap in the declarations), although the respective types of content are chosen by slightly different Internet users.

The people who seek educational, school and scientific content are the most frequent visitors of on-line encyclopaedias and dictionaries, on-line versions of newspapers, forums and discussion groups, and blogs, but not of news portals. They are interested in on-line books and e-books. However, the readership declarations of these respondents imply that they seek mainly school readings and books for school (showing a negative correlation with reading romance and action stories). The Internet users who look for educational and scientific content are also regular readers of longer texts, heavy readers of books, and heavy buyers – this is not surprising, considering the fact that this group consists mainly of young people (15–19 years of age) and students. Adults (specialists, with higher education) also declare that they use the Internet for educational and scientific content. They appear to follow the *lifetime learning* model and continue to pursue their areas of interest after formal graduation (only, however, until they reach 50 years of age), although such interests could also result from the need to help their children in school (aided by the greater focus on school success which these social groups demonstrate).

Groups that browse the Internet much less for educational and scientific content include older people over 50, people with primary and vocational education, pensioners, the unemployed, and blue-collar workers (farmers, skilled and unskilled labourers).

People who use the Internet for work also visit Wikipedia and on-line dictionaries, browse the on-line versions of newspapers, news portals and participate in forums: however, unlike the youngest seekers of educational content, they are less interested in blogs and Internet memoirs. In addition to their professional areas of interest, they also seek scientific and educational content, practical advice and guidance, and more rarely information related to their hobbies and to entertainment. Surprisingly, they also look for literature (unlike seekers of educational content), books and e-books. They read the national press and regularly read texts. They buy and read books, however to a smaller degree than the seekers of educational content. They are one of the main groups reading scientific and popular science literature, books other than *belles lettres*, economy, law and finance books. This group is interested in many areas (the readership declarations included many unclassified items).

Content for work is sought most frequently by Internet users 30–39 years of age, those with higher education, residents of cities with populations over 500 thousand, entrepreneurs, and employees (specialists and managers). The Internet is rarely needed for work by older people over 60 years of age, people with a low level of education, retail workers and blue-collar workers.

The area of interest discussed above is associated and co-exists with Internet searches for literature. Users who seek literature appear to be less interested in current information about the world and about people (there is no statistically significant co-existence), or about

advice and hobbies. They are likely to look for information on news portals and blogs (there being no statistically significant correlation with reading electronic versions of the press).

It is not surprising that they seek books and e-books on the Internet. They use Wikipedia, on-line dictionaries and visit Internet forums. They are heavy readers and buyers of books. They regularly use longer texts, however their declarations lack statistically significant correlation with reading the national press. They stand out as readers of fantasy books, followed by economics, law and business management.

Literature is sought on the Internet mostly by young people (20-29), the well educated, and residents of small towns with populations of up to 20 thousand (where the Internet could be very helpful in accessing books of interest). Such a literary focus is rare among labourers and graduates of preparatory vocational schools.

In terms of the content looked for on the Internet, practical advice (the only area of on-line activity where women stand out) co-exists with educational, professional and hobby content, however this grouping does not include current information about the world and people, literature, digital books and e-books. There is a moderate interest shown in blogs, on-line versions of the press and news portals, with a somewhat higher interest in Wikipedia and discussion forums. Books are treated in a utilitarian way as a source of knowledge and expert advice. There is no statistically significant correlation with book reading even though there is a minor correlation with book buying. The declared choice of reading includes psychology, economics, law, technology and IT. It appears that these Internet users rarely read books, while they use the press daily, in particular the women's press. In their case, the Internet could provide an attractive alternative to books as well as the press. In addition to the vast pool of information, cooking recipes and advice, the Internet offers emotional benefits stemming from interactions on Internet forums and discussion groups, otherwise difficult to obtain from traditional media which is capable only of providing a unidirectional path of communication.

The last category consists of respondents who develop their areas of interest and spend free time using the Internet (usually young men, 20-29 years of age, residents of cities with populations over 500 thousand, and rarely farmers and pensioners). They also happen to look for advice, actively participate in Internet forums, search encyclopaedias, read blogs and on-line versions of the press, and rarely visit news portals. Also, in the case of hobbyists there is no statistically significant correlation with reading on-line books and e-books (and buying paper versions of the same). As readers they are a group of infrequent ones. There is a positive correlation with the declared readership of the national press (and a negative correlation with tabloids) and the regular use of text, however book reading is rather moderate⁸⁵ - the declarations mention much more often fantasy, thrillers and action stories. It would be wrong to imply that literature is being substituted with the press or the Internet, because this group shows a low need for literature which is met independently from its Internet activity.

85 A positive correlation between browsing the Internet for hobby content and whether any books have been read in the past year does not exist in the case of the readers of 7 and more books.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER VII

The previous chapters have discussed the readership in practice as it falls into respective groups based on social and demographic variables. A question arises: what is the readership (or non-readership) of the various forms and carriers of text like on the level of the individual?

1. HEAVY READERS AND NON-READERS – TWO OPPOSITES OF READERSHIP

First and foremost, as individuals, readers are polarised. On the one hand, there are people who manage to live without text (at least according to their declarations): in the past month they have had no opportunity or need to read any longer texts, nor have they read newspapers or books in the past year. The size of that group has been growing regularly (see Table 26). They were 8% in 1992, 10% ten years later, and as many as 27% in 2010. Such a significant rise within one group results not only from the decline of interest in book reading, but also from a drop in the readership of the press, which is associated with the expansion of the Internet.⁸⁶ However, the latest study by the National Library revealed that only one per cent of respondents (33 people) declared they had read a longer text in the past month while not reading any books or the press. Clearly, contact with text is achieved mainly using traditional forms, and the Internet along with other modern media can substitute for that function to a limited extent only.⁸⁷

In contradistinction to the non-readers, there are the heavy readers. The ideal heavy

86 P. Kossowski: *Od kultury masowej do e-kultury. Nowe konteksty, wyzwania i zadania dla pedagogiki mediów* [From Mass Culture to E-Culture. New Contexts, Challenges and Tasks for Media Education] In: A. Przeclawska, A. Wilkomirska (ed.): *Między nieuchronnością a możliwością – wychowanie w warunkach zmiany* [Between the Inevitable and the Possible – Upbringing in Times of Change], Warszawa 2010. ISBN: 9788323506898.

87 No equally strong correlation has been revealed when analysing heavy readers and Internet users. 15% of heavy readers declared they had no access to the Internet and 7% of heavy readers with Internet access stated that they “rarely read but use the Internet for other purposes.” By analogy, only 38% of the respondents classifiable as ‘*typographic non-readers*’ (based on the study criteria) declared that they use the Internet for purposes other than reading.

reader is a person for whom reading is a natural and compulsive behaviour, which means being a regular reader of the press and books (at least 7 books annually), and regular user of texts (at least one longer text in the past month). Such criteria were fulfilled by a mere 6% of all respondents. There were previously 13% of heavy readers in 2002, and 36% in 1992. The question is, what elements in modern life enable non-readers to live without regular reception of longer texts in a world so overflowing with various bits of text? How and with what are they satisfying the needs which used to be fulfilled by the press and books? The Internet uses an extensive iconographic language based on texts (short and long alike), while its most intensive users are highly literate people with good cognitive competencies. The true food for non-readers appears to be multi-channel digital television, which is capable of satiating an array of needs for entertainment, information, knowledge, hobbies, advice, etc. Furthermore, television is often combined (and sold) with the Internet, and even incorporates it (e.g. live TV shows that use on-line posts of their real-time viewers).

The space between the two opposite sides of the readership is filled with various combinations of reader preferences and commitments. Some heavy readers can absorb a wide variety of genres and printed sources while others fancy only one form of text. Book lovers frequently read books but skip the press: heavy readers of books are those respondents who read with relatively high intensity (at least 7 books annually), while having only occasional contact with the press (or no contact at all). That group has always been small and dominated by women. It is also the group that has experienced the least impact from the decline in readership. In 1992 there were 8% of book lovers, 9% in 2002, and 5% in 2010 (or 4% if regular contact with longer texts is considered necessary to qualify).

As opposed to the heavy readers of books, heavy readers of the press ‘consume’ the press regularly while staying away from books.⁸⁸ Surprisingly, men are not the predominant gender among heavy readers of the press – there is no statistically significant difference between the two genders. There are 17% of respondents in that group. In 2002, there used to be 24%, and 29% in 1992.

The largest group (42%) consists of the occasional readers, namely people who read the press from time to time or not at all while reading books with moderate or minimal intensity (max. 6 annually). It is interesting that from 2002 to 2010 that group has not changed in size, although it is likely that formerly heavy readers have joined the group. Most fluctuations have occurred in the groups of non-readers and press readers (see Table 26).

| Attitude | 1992 | 2002 | 2010 |
|---|------|------|--------------|
| Non-readers (no books, no press) | 8 | 10 | 29 27 |
| Occasional readers (some books and/or the press on occasion) | 18 | 42 | 42 |
| Heavy readers of the press (no books or some only, but the press regularly) | 29 | 24 | 17 15 |
| Heavy readers of books (many books but the press on occasion or not at all) | 8 | 9 | 5 4 |
| Heavy readers of all materials | 36 | 13 | 6 |
| Sample | 1517 | 1008 | 2008 |

*Italic font shows values adjusted for the responses related to reading of 3 pages of text during the month before the study.
Source: Author's calculations and results of earlier readership studies*

TABLE 26. ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING IN POLISH SOCIETY, 1992-2010

⁸⁸ A metaphor by Jacek Dehnel, see above.

Based on the data at hand, it is hard to judge whether the cognitive competencies connected with regular reading have an impact upon the social and professional lives of individuals. Based on the personal data of the respondents, heavy readers (except for students)⁸⁹ appear to cope better on the job market,⁹⁰ in particular when compared with non-readers. The former are more satisfied with their own financial situation: 42% of them evaluated it as being good or very good, versus 14% in the non-reader group. By analogy, 21% of non-readers evaluated their financial situation as being bad (and 5% said “very bad”), versus 8% in the heavy-reader group (where no reader stated it as being “very bad”). Keeping in mind the limitations of such a method, if one considers the scale of one’s professional success as the number of one’s subordinate workers, the heavy readers have more subordinates while the non-readers have fewer of them, even while they do happen to have subordinates. Readers of the press oversee many more subordinate workers, which confirms the earlier observations concerning the significant share of regular press readers among workers of high professional status.

It is interesting that ‘*book loving*’ has no correlation in statistically significant terms with the evaluation of one’s financial situation or one’s place in the professional hierarchy. This could result from the fact that advanced reading competencies are usually manifested in the form of ‘*heavy readership*.’ Intensive book reading (which may be narrowed to certain genres only, such as the compulsive and escapist reading of romance books) does not seem to have an impact on one’s professional life, however this conclusion still requires empirical confirmation.

2. EMANCIPATION OF TEXT, MIGRATION OF CONTENT, DEMOCRATISATION OF READING?

Although the 2010 declarations show a slight increase in book reading and buying compared to the previous study, it is still too early to celebrate a revival of readership. According to an analysis of the trend, the authors of the study believe that the exodus of readers is still continuing. The decline in reading intensity was observed for the first time in 2006. In 2008, the number of people who, according to their declarations, had read anything shrank abruptly. The decline in revenues in the publishing market observed in 2011 confirms that shift in attitudes towards book reading initially revealed in the National Library study, now impacting actual demand in the publishing market.

In Poland, the social map of book readership overlaps with the map of social exclusion. In addition to students, who read books to some extent because they have to, urban professionals are the most frequent readers, that is to say the well-educated and well-off residents of big cities who are employed as specialists and managers. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the occasional readers and non-readers who have a poor educational background, a bad financial situation, and often remain without work, namely the unemployed, pensioners, farmers, villagers, and residents of city suburbs. It should be stressed, however, that having a high income or no income does not have an impact on opportunities to read, as books can be obtained from many sources.⁹¹ Certainly, there are many sources for books, yet one must feel the need to read them. Meanwhile, those without the apparent need to read books seem also to be deprived of

89 On the one hand, they are heavy readers, while on the other, they have not been employed yet – it is too early to judge whether their reading competencies correlate with their financial status.

90 This conclusion matches the results of long-term studies by Kwieciński (see Z. Kwieciński: *Nieuniknione? Funkcje alfabetyzacji w dorosłości...* [Unavoidable? Literacy Functions in Adulthood], see above).

91 See the Chapter “Book Sources.”

other resources that enable active participation in crucial areas of modern society. Assuming that “reading includes” (“*czytanie włącza*”), as the slogan of the National Library’s pro-readership campaign reads, then the lack of cultural competencies or the appropriate training that develops the autonomous habit of reading “excludes” people from culture, while poor literacy may further exclude them from the job market and from general consumption.

The declining reach and intensity of book reading can be observed in both well-developed countries (U.S.A., France) as well as in others which, like Poland, are experiencing tensions from systemic transformations (Russia). The lower intensity of reading traditional paper books is explained on the one hand by digitalisation (initiated by the expansion of personal computers and the Internet, which liberated text from the ‘physical’ book),⁹² and on the other by changes in the structure of employment⁹³ and in general consumption, which have redefined the amount of free time which individuals have during the day. Without a doubt, the decline in readership of traditional books is clear, however it is not obvious whether it will or will not be reversed. Some text and content for which books used to be the medium is now available on the Internet, in the highly segmented market of the press, and on theme-oriented television channels. It is possible that the reception of such ‘scattered’ texts is the same as before or even better, however improved tools must be developed in order to measure it. For that reason, the last study phase included a new question regarding ‘longer texts’ taken in a broader meaning.

The highest decline is observed in those groups that previously read a great deal relatively speaking. Let us hope that this crisis is a temporary one only, and that the “pleasures of the text”⁹⁴ are not to be substituted by those of the cinema, radio, television or computer games. Nor by iPhones, iPads, the Internet or any new forms of customer-tailored television. Rather to the contrary, the increasingly frequent occurrence of people using tablets, e-book readers, and mobile phones with books installed in them proves that books are ‘colonising’ the new territories by adapting to the intensified pace of the day and of work, and to the many gadgets which accompany people today.

When threatened by the overall decline in readership, it is easy to overlook the fact that “books are a commodity and should also be treated as a commodity.”⁹⁵ In the free market economy, books are no longer an object of mythology, a rarity, or a manifestation of political views.⁹⁶ Book readers are also potential book buyers. The ‘Commodification’ of books has largely made them ‘a source of entertainment’ which competes with “the audiovisual area in the broad sense: cinema, television, popular magazines, comic books, and computers.” According to Roman Chymkowski, such a situation impacts expectations towards printed text and shapes reading habits. “Books must be as quick as video clips and generate the least ambiguities possible, just

92 M. Góralska: *Książki, nowe media i ich czasoprzestrzenie* [Books, New Media, Their Time and Space], Warszawa 2009. ISBN: 9788361464112.

93 R. Florida: *Narodziny klasy kreatywnej...* [Birth of the Creative Class...], see above.

94 R. Barthes: *Przyjemność tekstu* [The Pleasure of the Text], Warszawa 1997. ISBN: 8386989211.

95 P. Rodak: *Pismo, książka, lektura. Rozmowy: Le Goff, Charter, Hebrard, Fabre, Lejeune* [Text, Books, Reading. Discussions with Le Goff, Charter, Hebrard, Fabre, Lejeune], Warszawa 2009. ISBN: 978832350574, p. 121.

96 According to historian Paweł Sowiński: “In 1984, the labourers from the Ursus factory were buying Karl Raimund Popper’s *The Poverty of Historicism* not to read it. [...] Today, few of them would buy this work. Books are objects, elements of interior design, a symbol of sympathy for the Solidarity movement, a fetish, not only a reading. Being the emblem of Solidarity it played a vital role in identification. A talk about its purchase, borrowing it or any similar titles was like an ID card and a pass to the underground world.” P. Sowiński: *Zakazana książka: Uczestnicy drugiego obiegu 1977–1989* [Forbidden Books: Underground Circulation in 1977-1989], Warszawa 2011. ISBN: 9788360580783, p. 276.

as video clips do.”⁹⁷ Certainly, it is regrettable that in pursuit of producing a bestseller, the taste of the poorly developed reader is the one sought after. However, it is ‘*the second-grade literature of the first choice*’ that has the best chance of reaching individuals who have not been equipped with enough cultural capital by their families. Especially considering the fact that “reading is a domain of free choice today more than ever before. The free individual decides not only what to read but also whether to read anything at all.”⁹⁸

This is where the trap lies hidden – a true proficiency in reading requires long exercise with very long texts, and books read for pleasure in one’s free time help achieve such proficiency. If students in schools and universities are simply ‘*permitted*’ to use their freedom of choice and become non-readers, then it will irreversibly impact the future chances of selected individuals and social groups. According to psychological research, the role of one’s predisposition and skill set is overestimated in the process of learning to read. What makes the difference is the long and intensive training that is easiest during the school years and early adolescence, when individuals are free of the burden of work and the needs of procreation.

The results of this study also confirmed that a long period of formal education (i.e. a form of reader training) is a good factor in predicting the development and maintenance of reading habits after graduation. Respondents acquire competencies and ingrained reading habits in their years after graduating from secondary school, and such ingrained habits are likely to produce future readers for pleasure. The analysed profile of the declarations implies that graduates with higher education are the first to reach such reading proficiency, which will enable them (in addition to reading popular literature) to improve their own qualifications and develop their areas of interest, leading to the further accumulation of personal advantages (the ‘*St. Matthew effect*’)

The concern of the National Library study far exceeds the problem of book reading itself. The sole fact of a given individual reading a book, browsing through books from time to time or using books instrumentally can be treated as a valid indicator of that individual’s participation in the culture. In that context, the decline in readership is not a problem either, but rather a social process that can be influenced by applying a long-term, uniform and comprehensive policy of education and readership promotion,⁹⁹ because the decline will resist any one-off campaigns regardless of their budget.

Should we accept the declining readership in certain social groups, then how can we build a modern, coherent and knowledgeable society that will be ready to compete with the transforming geo-politics and economy? What will be the common meanings that might be comprehensible and attractive to both non-readers and heavy readers alike? In a time of weakening interest in public debate (as observed in, among other things, the declining readership of the national press and the expansion of tabloids), could public debate be restored using multi-channel digital television, discussions going on in the countless Internet groups, or ‘*likes*’ posted on Facebook? The Arab Spring of 2011 demonstrated how effective social networking systems can be when combined with mobile telephones, if social mobilisation is at stake. However, bringing down old dictatorships appears to be an easier task than building a new order and administering democratic ballots. Similarly, tablets or e-book readers given to children will not automatically provide them with the skills for a knowledgeable use of all the available terabytes of information.

97 R. Chymkowski: *Autobiografie lekturowe studentów* [Autobiography of Student Reading], Warszawa 2011. ISBN: 9788370097547, p. 157.

98 Same as above, p. 153.

99 For an example similar to the one from the interwar period, see I. Michalska: *Wychowanie do czytelnictwa...* [Education of Future Readers...], see above.