

NOTES ON THE SENATE



**SENATE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND**

The Sejm Library

THE SEJM LIBRARY IS A SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY. Its main purpose is to serve the needs of the Sejm and the Senate, parliamentary clubs, deputies and senators, parliamentary research services as well as the needs of other employees of the Chancelleries of the Sejm and Senate. The Sejm Library is also open to scientists and to all those who are interested in Parliament-related issues. It is an organisational unit of the Chancellery of the Sejm. The Library also comprises the Sejm Archives and the Museum Exhibits Department.

The establishment of the Sejm Library is connected with the restoration of Poland's independence in 1918 and the 1919 parliamentary elections. The Sejm Library was set up at the end of 1919 and, after many organisational changes, it came to incorporate the Sejm Library and the archives of the Sejm and the Senate.

By 1939, the library's collection consisted of 78 thousand volumes, including materials of the Sejm and the Senate, official documents, as well as books and journals on law and social, economic and historical sciences. In September 1939, a fire destroyed a part of the collection. The remaining 62 thousand volumes were taken by the Germans to Berlin where they disappeared in circumstances that have never been explained. Only a small part of the collection, hidden before the end of the war in Castle Houska in Czechoslovakia, returned to Poland.

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The reading room of the Sejm Library (© Biblioteka Sejmowa)

AFTER THE WAR, as a library of the then single-chamber Parliament, it was named the “Sejm Library”. It had to rebuild its collections almost from scratch. **THE LIBRARY’S COLLECTION** (with over 580 thousand volumes) consists of two separate parts; they differ in terms of their origin, nature and location. The first part is the main collection of the Sejm Library. It consists of materials related to the primary role of the Sejm Library as a parliamentary library, which have been gathered since the very beginnings of its existence. The core of the second part is the book collection of the former Archives of the Polish Left, incorporated into the Sejm Library in 1991 (previously stored in the Central Archive of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party “PZPR”). It comprises 157 thousand volumes and is stored and made available to the public at the Social History Collection Department of the Sejm Library.

THE SEJM ARCHIVES were established as a separate State archive in 1991. Following the reorganisation of the Sejm Chancellery in 1993, they were incorporated into the Sejm Library as one of its Departments. The Sejm Archives comprise archival documents generated in the course of the work of the Sejm and its bodies, i.e. minutes of sittings of: the Sejm, Presidium of the Sejm, Sejm committees and sub-committees, records of issues agreed by the Council of Seniors, documentation of acts and resolutions of the Sejm, interpellations and questions of deputies, parliamentary forms, stenographic records of the Sejm sittings etc., as well as audio and video recordings of sittings of the Sejm and its Committees. Archival documents produced by parliamentary clubs and deputies’ groups, deputies’ offices and teams as well as by the Polish Group of the Interparliamentary Union are treated as deposits. The Archives also function as an institutional archive of the Sejm Chancellery. The Sejm Archives are also tasked with collecting and editing archival sources on the history of the Polish parliamentary system.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS DEPARTMENT – museum exhibits connected with the history of Polish parliamentarianism have been systematically collected since 1985, following the resolution of the Presidium of the Sejm on the creation of the Polish Sejm Museum. In 1990, the idea of creating the Museum was abandoned and the team which had worked for several years towards its organisation moved to the Library and was transformed into the Museum Exhibits Department. The collections of the Department contain artefacts (paintings, graphics, drawings, posters), documents (old prints, manuscripts, electoral flyers etc.), numismatic items depicting the history of Polish parliamentarianism since the 15th century; it also includes a rich collection of photographs from the interwar and post-war period. These collections are presented at theme exhibitions organised in the Sejm buildings; individual items are also lent to other institutions.

