

History

The Silesian Library is the oldest library in Upper Silesia. It was established between the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923 as the Library of the Silesian Sejm and since then has become one of the most resilient institutions promoting culture in the region. The 1930s saw its transformation into a public library with a scientific profile. It continues to perform this function to this day. Initially, the library's collection was limited to a small law collection (about 1000 volumes in the first year of operation). Over time, the resources of the library have grown and changed their character entirely. Today, books from every field of knowledge, the latest periodicals, but also an extremely interesting collection of old prints can all be found here. The latter are gathered in a special collection, next to particularly valuable incunabula, manuscripts, iconographic and cartographic materials.

In 1934, the Silesian Library moved to its current home at ul. Francuska in Katowice. The building – very beautiful in itself – did not meet the needs of such a huge library from the very beginning. The needs grew, especially after the Silesian Library started to receive so called legal deposits (1969) and every year the number of readers increased (not only the students of the newly opened faculties of the Silesian University but also the inhabitants of the region). There was no space to store valuable collections in a dignified manner, and there were no possibilities to preserve old books, which were particularly vulnerable to damage. The 1980s caused mining damage and the destruction of old buildings. The warehouses located at ul. Francuska were calculated to hold 100,000 volumes, whereas the needs were five times (!) greater. Discomfort was also felt by readers. The books were scattered around four different places, and one of the warehouses was in Bytom. In June 1989 a competition for the

design of a new library building was settled, two years later the cornerstone was laid for the foundations of the building. Prof. zw. dr hab. Jan Malicki became the director of the library. The building was designed by the ARAR group (composed of Marek Gierlotka, Jurand Jarecki, Stanisław Kwaśniewicz).

On 28 February 1991 the Social Committee for Support of the Silesian Library was established, whose task was at least partly to obtain funds for carrying out the project, and also to spread the idea of building a building for such a necessary institution. On 24 October 1998 there was a ceremonial opening of the new building of the Silesian Library at the Council of Europe Square in Katowice.

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