

## The Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences

**PAN Archive possesses a well-stocked library and collections of old maps and medals, which are situated in the Staszic Palace in Warsaw**



Krzysztof Kalinowski

## Preserving the Heritage

**HANNA KRAJEWSKA**

PAN Archive  
Polish Academy of Sciences  
archiwum@apan.waw.pl

**Since its inception in 1953, the PAN Archive has served scientists and researchers, and also, by means of its publications and exhibition activities, all those interested in the history of Polish science**

The Archive's chief tasks involve gathering and preserving source materials for the history of science in Poland. Such documents are of varied provenience, including both archival materials from scientific institutions and the records of private individuals. As a result, the resources of the PAN Archive are divided into 3 sections. The first encompasses the records of scientific societies and various scientific institutions, including the Józef Mianowski Fund (1881-1952), whose chief task was to provide assistance to individuals engaged in scientific activity, the Polish Historical Society (1896-1968), and

the full documentation of the Warsaw Scientific Society (1906-1953). This archive section also encompasses the scientific archives of specialized societies subsidized by PAN during the period 1951-1990. The second section encompasses the acts of the Polish Academy of Sciences itself and its institutes, while the third includes the documentary legacies of Polish scholars. The latter materials were contributed to the Archive in the form of gifts and depositions or were purchased (prior to 1991). In its 50 years of existence, the Archive has collected more than 500 archival sets of private origin. A large portion of them are described in inventory-lists, while some have been indexed. A Methodical Commission has been at work since 1979, assessing the value of such inventories.

### Private documents

Keeping such documentary heritage in order has required special descriptive methods. The PAN Archive has developed such methods over the course of its years of experience, publishing *Guidelines for the Archival Preparation of Manuscript Legacies - A Draft* in 1959. A new, expanded version, this time entitled *Guidelines for Preparing the Archival Legacies of Scientists*, appeared in 1992. These instructions,



employed by all the archives, represent the PAN Archive's considerable contribution to archive science in Poland.

Each archive handles unique documents. The exceptional nature of the PAN Archive's collections flows above all from the legacies of Poland's greatest scientists, such as philosopher Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, linguist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, doctor Tytus Chałubiński, designer Stefan Drzewiecki, historian Aleksander Gieysztor, immunologist Ludwik Hirszfeld, chemist Włodzimierz Kołos, librarian Stefan Rygiel, mathematicians Waclaw Sierpiński and Hugo Steinhaus, physicists Ludwik Wertenstein and Mieczysław Wolfke, and writer Stanisława Przybyszewska.

Such archival legacies encompass not just personal documents and scientific notes (including copies of official records later lost), but also extensive correspondence with well-known individuals. Thus the PAN Archive also houses letters by Maria Curie-Skłodowska and Albert Einstein, as well as many other, equally famous personages.

The tasks of the Archive are not limited to gathering paper documentation. Also of great interest is its photographic collection, with more than 27,000 items, as well as its collections of medals (ca. 1,000 items) and maps (ca. 1,200 items). These collections pertain chiefly to issues associated with science and scientists.

Information about the Archive's sets and collections are chiefly included in the *Guide to the Resources of the PAN Archives* (third edition, 1999). *Biuletyn Archiwum PAN*, the Archive's periodical bulletin, has been in publication since 1959.

An important role in the institute's activities is played by cooperation with other institutions, as well as international contacts. The archive holds a seat on the board of the Section on University and Research Institution Archives (SUV) of the International Council on Archives. It acts as organizer and co-organizer of international conferences devoted to archivist issues.

### Showing off the collections

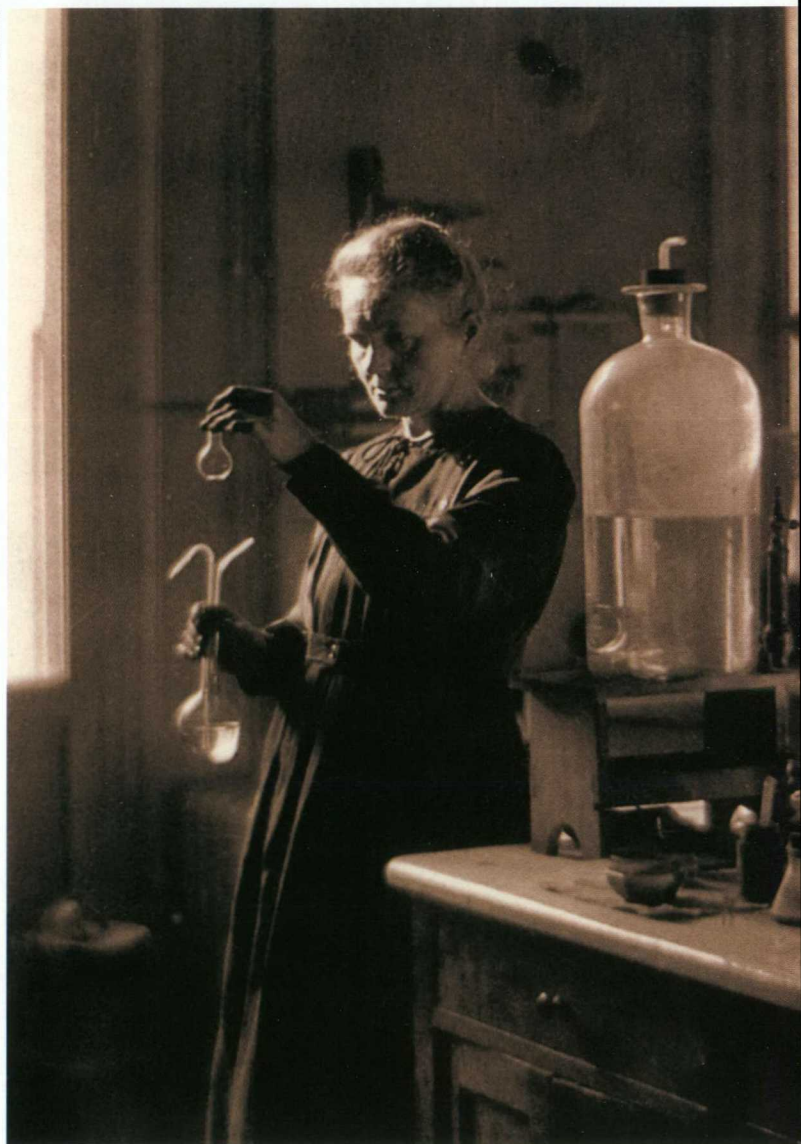
In recent years, the Archive has expanded its exhibition activities. Such exhibitions are chiefly put on display at the Staszic Palace, thus underscoring the significance of this location for Poland's culture and history.

The Archive organizes exhibitions to mark important anniversaries and jubilees, presenting its rich archival resources. The archive organized an exhibition entitled "The Staszic Palace During the Warsaw Uprising" in 1996, it presented its collections at an exhibition entitled "The Life and Work of Stanisław Staszic" in 1998, and an exhibition was devoted to the "Society of Friends of Science" in 2000 (marking the society's 200th anniversary). An exhibition on the writer Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz was put on display in 2002. One important event came with the "Genius loci" exhibition in 2003, which premiered in Berlin. It portrayed the history of Polish science,

which the Staszic Palace acted as a center of, as well as the activities of foreign members of the Society of Friends of Science, including J. W. Goethe and A. von Humboldt.

The PAN Archive has the status of an entrusted state archival institution, and has thereby been vested with the right of perpetual storage for the materials of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which after all represent part of state archival resources. By the same token, the Archive exercises supervision and guardianship over all of the archival materials kept at the offices of PAN's organizational units and institutes. At present, aside from the Archive's central office in Warsaw, there are also branch offices operating in Poznań (since 1956) and Wodzisław Śląski (since 1974). ■

ITD Archives



The Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences has gathered many documents, letters, and pictures of Maria Curie-Skłodowska