

The goal of the proposed project is to examine the matter of functioning of popular literature in early modern Cracow.

'Popularity' of literary text is always connected with accessibility: structure of said text should not discourage its potential readers with presenting too much of a challenge. Such text should also be available: printed in large number of inexpensive copies and easy to found. Although previous studies of early modern popular literature in Poland contributed greatly to our understanding of the structure and genre of these texts, there is still much to discover about their readers. Project intends to fill this gap in our knowledge by reconstructing its reception by their original readers: inhabitants of Cracow in 16th, 17th and 18th century.

Proposed project poses following questions:

- Did inhabitants of early modern city treated literature as sort of entertainment?
- Which texts were read just for pleasure? What were the reasons behind choosing certain texts over others?
- How did the knowledge of these texts was disseminated? Did one had to read such text in order to know it, enjoy it or to seek similar books? Did reading was really a necessary skill for the consumer of such texts?
- Who were the readers of these texts and where did they came from? How numerous they were? What was their educational, economic and societal background?

Project will supply long and valuable tradition of the popular literature studies with the insight into context of the societal uses of those texts. To achieve that, research will reconstruct the creation of the reading public by employing information and methodologies provided by history of education and schools, history of printing workshops, history of book and book vending. Research will also use methodology provided by modern literacy studies: it will reference the work of such scholars as Jack Goody, M.T. Clanchy or Anna Adamska and Marco Mostert from Universiteit Utrecht. Undertaken by the studies of literacy levels and uses of the scripture in the society will enable author of the project to carry out research of the perceptive skills of the early modern readers (subject never explored before).

Much of the findings of the research will be based on the handwritten documents, stored mainly in National Archive in Cracow. These manuscripts - inventories of printing workshops and bookshops, inventories of private libraries, testaments of townsmen, etc. - were never before used by the investigators of these popular texts.

Research carried out during the project not only will provide us with better understanding of early modern Polish popular literature but will also help verify many still undisputed assumptions about these texts and its readers.