

The aim of the project is to study and describe community archives that currently exist in Poland – which are historical archives (storing their holdings eternally) that were created from below, on the grass-roots level, most commonly set up by foundations and associations, but also by private persons and informal groups. Through multiple case study these archives will be described mostly from the view of archival science – how they collect their holdings, how they store it, describe and arrange it, and how they provide access to them; with what institutions they cooperate, how they fund their actions, what problems they have and what are their plans for the future; do they identify themselves with the movement of community archives; but also – why people decide to set up such initiatives, why they want to document the past (or the present). The main aim of the project is description of the chosen archives and implementation of the information into circulation in the scientific world.

The research concerns empirical study on activities of chosen community archives – using interviews with representatives of these archives, observations (of e.g. techniques of storing materials or organization of reading rooms) and documents analysis. Fieldwork will be preceded by initial studies. Information collected during studies will be analyzed and compared (using professional software).

Currently, there are several hundreds of community archives in Poland, many of them store very precious archival collections; many actively cooperate with local societies and officials, they are open to groups of supporters and volunteers. In the last years community archivists started active cooperation with each other, and the issue of community archives is more and more common to be a topic of works and talks on scientific conferences of Polish archivists. But we still lack an extensive, professional description of this type of initiatives from the point of view of archival science – the objective of the study is to fulfill this gap.