

The research project „**Beyond Propaganda: Polish Publishing Programme in Königsberg as a Project of Religious and Cultural Education (ca. 1544–1575)**” aims to investigate the vernacular publishing endeavours of Königsberg-based religious activists. The chosen period was an outstanding outburst of humanist enthusiasm and optimism, by which a group of vernacular editors, translators and authors were driven. It led to an unprecedented emergence of books and pamphlets published in Polish beyond the actual borders of the Kingdom of Poland. At that time, a relatively new technology of printing was just newly applied to the medium-range vernacular languages such as Polish. From this perspective, the efforts of Königsberg editors are a vital component of the pioneering enterprises of the sixteenth-century book-related actors.

For that reasons, Polish-language publishing in the Duchy of Prussia of that time is seen as a prominent factor enhancing the development of Polish literary style and, speaking more generally, Polish vernacular literature in the early modern period at large. However, in the research performed hitherto on the phenomenon of Prussian printed books in vernacular languages was never approached from a perspective of the publishing strategy targeting a Polish-speaking reader. I argue that applying the concept of a coherent publishing programme will lead to an in-depth understanding of the objectives motivating sixteenth-century Prussian editors and will reveal the mechanisms of transferring the vernacular language into a new printed medium, what resulted in the new manners of book and text usage. Only observing the Königsberg publishing dedicated to the Polish-speakers as an integral entity can unfold the significance of this endeavour in its entire variety subordinated to the primary ideal – shared by the editors and other actors – of the complex religious and cultural education of the society. I propose to follow several research hypotheses that are to frame the scope of the research in the course of the project:

1. Publishing programme in Polish was part of a broader **project of religious and cultural education** inspired by prince Albrecht, Duke of Prussia, and was intended to apply humanistic ideals in the local society.
2. Undertakings of the Polish-speaking editors based in Königsberg were primarily affected by the two factors: **demands of the patrons** (incl. prince Albrecht) and the **technical capabilities of the printers**.
3. Königsberg-based editors were testing the means of expression in printed Polish. Moreover, their endeavours were actually a **laboratory of vernacular literary genres** as their attempts were to check how efficient had been their choices in light of their primary goal of religious education.
4. To achieve the above-mentioned, they needed to develop a **long-term strategy of communication with their readers**. Paratexts (i.e., side-texts that accompany the main literary work, such as foreword, dedicatory letter etc.) were the main channel of that communication.
5. Apart from the paratexts, the book itself as a material artefact enhanced the communication due to its **physical features, such as format, typesetting, layout** etc. These were to guide the readers properly through the pages of the book, emphasizing strategic information.

The hypotheses will be verified through examining the corpus of ca. 70 early printed books and pamphlets in Polish, published in Königsberg in the period of ca. 1544–1575 by the three typographers: Hans Weinreich, Aleksander Augezdecki (Aujezdecki) and Hans Daubmann. The bibliographical data need to be revised and the historical artefacts, namely sixteenth-century books preserved in Polish and German libraries, need to be examined. All the observations will be confronted with other historical sources, both already edited and still to be found and analysed in the archives. The methodological framework of the project is based upon the literary studies and book history, but it also derives from linguistics, communication studies and history of theology.

The project will shed new light on the complicated relations between various actors of early modern publishing networks: editors and printers, editors and patrons, translators and editors, editors/translators and readers, as well as other potential configurations. However, it aims not only contribute to the knowledge about the past publishing endeavours, but also to answer the tackling questions on the more general mechanisms shaping literature and culture as reflections of the technical development enhancing their dissemination. How such a disruptive technological turn, which was the invention of the printing press, affected the development of vernacular languages? How did the book editors use the new possibilities to achieve their goals? How creative were they when it comes to searching for new means of expression in the newly invented medium of printing? How were they communicating to the recipients of their work? What was the role of religion in that undertaking?

The research results will be disseminated through research papers in scientific journals, conference papers and research data published in open source repositories. Conclusions of the project will find its application in the literary studies and history of book and culture but will also remain an important reference for the historians of religion, language and regional history, as well as the sociology of culture. It is vital to stress that the research planned will not only bring new knowledge from the local perspective, but also will inform on the printing and publishing strategies for medium-range vernacular languages in the early modern Europe.