

Iconography, Knowledge and Entertainment. Charles de Montalembert's collection of prints

The Krakow Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences houses a collection of prints by the 19th-century French writer and politician Charles de Montalembert. Described as a 'friend of the Polish cause', the statesman sympathised with Polish efforts to regain independence and donated his collection to the Polish Library in Paris a year before his death in 1869. After the First World War, the collection was transferred to a library in Krakow.

The collection contains prints from the 18th and 19th centuries in various techniques and is arranged according to the subject matter of the prints. It includes religious scenes, historical subjects, images of architectural monuments, portraits of famous historical and contemporary figures.

The aim of the project is to analyse Charles de Montalembert's collection and, on this basis, to develop a method for researching iconographic collections of the 19th century. Montalembert's life and work as a writer and politician means that the context for his collecting must be sought in France and the United Kingdom (where his mother was from and to which he liked to return throughout his life).

The result of the research will be a proposal for a new perspective on the phenomenon of collecting iconographic images in the nineteenth century. Importantly, it will be a pioneering work, as iconographic collecting has so far been neglected in research on collecting, including internationally.