

The aim of this research project is to study a part of the unexamined epistolary legacy of one of the leading intellectuals of the 19th century, the German scholar Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), from the Autograph Collection (*Sammlung Autographa*) housed at the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow.

The Autograph Collection is part of the manuscript collection from the former Prussian State Library in Berlin, commonly known as “Berlinka”, which came to the Jagiellonian Library in 1947 as a result of the events of the Second World War. The collection includes unique manuscripts of individuals who played a fundamental role in the development of European culture, especially in the German-speaking world, from the 15th to the 20th century. From the end of the war until the late 1970s, the Berlin collections were considered lost. They became available to researchers gradually, fully after 1989, resulting in low state of research on the collection.

A large and vital segment of the Autograph Collection is the legacy of Alexander von Humboldt, which encompasses over 1,000 manuscript objects (BJ, SA 86/1-4 Humboldt, Alexander von). These are mainly letters, but also travel journals, scientific treatises, notes, tables with calculations, and maps. The aim of the project is to study selected manuscripts from this legacy. A total of 96 letters from Humboldt to seven correspondents will be thoroughly examined: 33 letters to the Minister of Culture Karl Sigismund Altenstein, 15 letters to the writer, historian, and editor Otto Friedrich Gruppe, 13 letters to the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 5 letters to the philologist and theologian Johannes Schulze, 10 letters to the historian Peter Feddersen Stuhr, 10 letters to the politician Johann Louis Tellkamp, 10 letters to the historian and editor Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen.

The letters will be catalogued and described. They will then be transcribed from the German Neo-Gothic script used until the beginning of the 20th century (*Kurrent*) to the Latin alphabet and annotated with a scholarly commentary. The result will be a German-language critical edition of these letters with a historical introduction which will be published in printed form.

To date, the majority of this correspondence has not been the subject of academic inquiry. It remains still predominantly unpublished and poorly catalogued. The creation and publication of a critical edition of the letters will make the source material, which is currently difficult to access, readily available to the interested parties and will popularize Humboldt's hitherto unexplored epistolary legacy on a large scale.

The research, which will be based on unknown manuscript material, has the potential to add new information to the discipline and may shed new light on previous findings about Alexander von Humboldt's influence on the scientific and cultural life of the period. It will reconstruct Humboldt's network of contacts and connections with representatives of the wider humanities – editors, publishers, historians, writers and politicians – as well as the nature of the relationships between him and his correspondents. The project will partly fill the gap in research on the Humboldt's epistolary legacy, whose letters – unlike his works – have not been published in collected edition and are mostly scattered as manuscripts in various European archives, including those in Krakow, Berlin, Marbach, Merseburg, Dresden and Bonn.

The creation of a high-quality critical edition of Humboldt's letters from the Autograph Collection will show that Polish Germanists, driven by the idea of cherishing a common European heritage, are willing to and are able to compile the Berlin collection reliably. It is hoped that the resulting edition will encourage other Polish scholars, especially young ones, to carry out further editorial research on the Autograph Collection.