

MODERN LIBRARY MANAGEMENT IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION - FROM A CULTURAL INSTITUTION TO A KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION CENTER

Justyna KRAWCZYK

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach, Wydział Zarządzania, Katedra Marketingu;
justyna.krawczyk@ue.katowice.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-8699-3020

Purpose: The aim of the article is to analyze the transformation of public libraries in Poland in the context of digital transformation, using the Mediateka - the main branch of the Municipal Public Library (MBP) in Tychy - as a case study. The author seeks to illustrate the transition from a traditional cultural institution to a modern center of knowledge and innovation. The article also aims to highlight the changing role of libraries in the knowledge society and the importance of concepts such as the “third place” and the hybrid library, as well as the role of modern technologies (book dispensers, return boxes, self-check machines, RFID systems) in expanding access to resources and services.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employs a qualitative approach based on the case study method. The subject of analysis was the Municipal Public Library in Tychy, selected for its implementation of innovative technological solutions. The research included an expert interview with the institution’s director and an analysis of secondary data, encompassing internal documents, professional publications, reports, and online sources. The case study method enabled an in-depth examination of the library’s operational context, its relationships with the local community, and the impact of implemented technologies on its functioning and public perception. The scope of the study includes both theoretical aspects (knowledge society, hybrid library, “third place” concept) and practical dimensions (modernization, digitization, new roles of librarians).

Findings: The analysis showed that the Municipal Public Library in Tychy has evolved from a traditional book-lending institution into a modern center of knowledge, culture, and social integration. The implementation of RFID systems, book dispensers, return boxes, and self-check machines has improved user service and increased access to library services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The library effectively combines informational, educational, and cultural functions, fulfilling the role of a “third place” - an open, neutral space for meeting and cultural participation. The Mediateka case confirms that combining the library’s educational and cultural mission with modern technological solutions enables libraries to effectively meet the needs of contemporary users and strengthen their position as local community hubs.

Research limitations/implications: The study is qualitative and based on a single case - the Municipal Public Library in Tychy. This approach allowed for an in-depth analysis but limits the generalizability of the findings to all public libraries in Poland. Another identified limitation concerns the dependence of libraries on local government budgets and the

infrastructural disparities between large cities and rural municipalities, which influence the pace and scope of modernization. Future research should extend the analysis to multiple institutions to compare the effectiveness of technological implementations and different management models in libraries of various sizes and profiles.

Practical implications: The findings indicate that implementing modern technologies - such as book dispensers, return boxes, self-check machines, and RFID systems - significantly improves user service quality and library work efficiency. The example of the MBP in Tychy can serve as a model of good practice for other local government units and cultural institutions planning infrastructure modernization and digital service development. The implemented solutions enable better resource utilization, reduced queues, process automation, and increased accessibility to cultural offerings. These results can also support policymakers in developing library development strategies and planning public investments in culture and digital education.

Social implications: The transformation of libraries into centers of knowledge, culture, and social integration has a significant impact on building social capital and combating digital exclusion. The example of the Mediateka in Tychy demonstrates that a library can function as a “third place” - a neutral space that fosters meetings, education, and cultural participation. The technological solutions and educational programs introduced increase service accessibility for various social groups, including seniors and people with limited mobility, promoting equal opportunities and strengthening social bonds. The study confirms that the modern library supports the development of digital and cultural competences, thereby contributing to the improvement of local community quality of life.

Originality/value: The article provides new insights through a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of a public library in Poland within the context of digital modernization, based on an empirical case study of the MBP in Tychy. It demonstrates how combining traditional library functions with modern technologies and a user-centered approach can transform a cultural institution into a center of knowledge and innovation. The study offers value for academic communities focused on cultural institution management, for local governments responsible for cultural policy, and for practitioners - library directors and staff - seeking inspiration for implementing modern technological and organizational solutions.

Keywords: public library, Mediateka Tychy, knowledge society, third place, hybrid library, technological innovations, digitization.

Category of the paper: Case Study.

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1. Introduction

„One does not need to be a book lover or a reader to use a library nowadays”, notes Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library (Kapla, 2023). Today, public libraries are discussed not only in terms of readers but, above all, users. The modern public library has become an innovative, active, and multifunctional institution - both in Poland and in other countries. It is a place open to children, adults, and seniors, and its role goes far beyond traditional book lending. A contemporary library is a space that meets broadly understood cultural, educational, and social needs. As Wolf (Wolf, 2009, p. 51) emphasizes, the public

library is an institution around which there exists a broad social consensus and which does not provoke controversy, as it is perceived as a natural common good.

Public libraries today offer not only access to traditional books but also to audiobooks, e-books, periodicals, the Internet, films, music, computer programs, and a wide range of cultural events. They are becoming centers of local social activity - places for workshops, meetings, clubs, and events, as well as sources of information about the region and the everyday life of residents (Wolf, 2009, p. 52). As Kalinowska notes (Kalinowska, 2009, p. 35), modernizing libraries and adapting them to users' expectations is crucial for attracting new audiences.

Therefore, the contemporary library is not a mere repository of books but an information hub where tradition meets modernity. Although - as Cicero reminds us - "a book is a man's best friend, and a library is the temple of his thoughts", in the 21st century the library also serves as a laboratory of technology and a space of digital culture. As Gmiterek emphasizes (Gmiterek, 2012, p. 99), these institutions not only accompany the transformations of the information society but actively co-create the resources of the global network.

The aim of the study focuses on the analysis of the transformations of public libraries in Poland in the context of digital transformation, showing on the example of the Mediatheque in Tychy the transition from a traditional cultural institution to a modern center of knowledge and innovation. The study aims to indicate the changing role of libraries in the knowledge society, the significance of concepts such as "third place" and hybrid library, as well as the role of technological innovations – book dispensers, drop boxes, self-checks or RFID systems – in broadening access to resources and services.

The results may be useful for local governments and public institutions, which are responsible for the development of cultural infrastructure and counteracting digital exclusion, as well as for directors and employees of libraries as a source of good practices in the field of modernization of services and implementation of new technological solutions. They are also important for creators of cultural and educational policies, who, on the basis of the experiences of the Municipal Public Library in Tychy, can shape programs supporting libraries as local centers of social life. The study is also significant for library users, as it shows how contemporary libraries can respond to their diverse cultural, educational and social needs.

2. Modern Technologies in Mediatekas - Theoretical Approach

Contemporary libraries operate within the framework of the knowledge society, where access to information constitutes the basis for the development of individuals and communities. UNESCO emphasizes that libraries, alongside schools and academic institutions, are "a fundamental infrastructure of the knowledge society" (UNESCO, 2025, p. 34).

Oldenburg (1989), in his concept of the “third place,” indicated that cultural institutions can serve as neutral social spaces that promote integration and dialogue. Library studies (Aabø, Audunson, 2012, p. 139) adapt this idea to library practice, noting that in Central and Eastern Europe libraries have begun to fulfill the role of a “democratic agora” (Audunson, 2005, p. 429).

Another concept is the hybrid library - combining traditional and digital collections, enabling remote access to catalogs, databases, and educational services (Pinfield, 1998, p. 34). In Poland, the process of hybridization is uneven, depending on the wealth of local governments and available EU programs (Koryś, Chlebicka, 2021, p. 57).

Equally significant is the theory of information literacy, which considers libraries as key institutions in the education of critical information consumption (Eisenberg, 2008, p. 45; IFLA, 2017, p. 7).

The transformation of public libraries in Poland toward modern centers of knowledge and innovation faces numerous financial, organizational, and social barriers. An analysis of modernization processes shows that, although many infrastructural and digitization investments have been implemented over the past two decades, the pace of change remains uneven, and libraries continue to struggle with systemic problems. Polish public libraries are largely dependent on local government budgets, which often treat them as secondary institutions compared to schools or cultural centers (Majewska, 2017). Although ministerial programs - such as the National Reading Development Program (NPRCz, 2016-2020; 2021-2025) - provide funding for the purchase of new publications and infrastructure modernization, they do not solve the problem of chronic underfunding for ongoing operations. According to GUS data (2022), average financial expenditures on a library in a rural municipality are several times lower than in large cities, perpetuating inequalities in access to modern library services.

Technological transformations have necessitated a redefinition of the librarian’s role - from a custodian of collections to an educator, cultural animator, and guide to digital resources (Derfert-Wolf, 2019). However, research shows that in many libraries, especially in smaller towns, there is a lack of systematic training in new technologies, media pedagogy, or social animation (BN Report, Public Libraries in Numbers, 2021). The problem is exacerbated by an aging workforce - the average age of librarians in Poland exceeds 45 years, limiting adaptive flexibility to new work models. In recent years, the Municipal Public Library in Tychy has undertaken intensive training activities aimed at developing the professional competencies of its staff and aligning their qualifications with changing legal, technological, and social conditions. In 2024, employees participated in courses covering, among others, issues related to management control in cultural institutions, electronic deliveries, amendments concerning the Company Social Benefits Fund, as well as the organization and maintenance of institutional archives. An important component was also participation in the 9th Forum on the Responsibility of Heads of Public Finance Sector Units and in workshops devoted to communication and leadership in the context of the challenges of the VUCA reality. In 2023, staff members also

took part in a particularly broad range of training activities, which addressed such topics as planning, reporting, and management control, inventory processes, and regulatory changes concerning the CSBF. Special attention was given to the development of digital and creative skills through workshops in programming, comic and board game design, as well as media training in photography, film, and public speaking. Equally important were sectoral initiatives, including librarian forums and study visits to the Jagiellonian Library and the National Ossoliński Institute, along with activities directed at working with seniors and enhancing computer and language proficiency.

Such a wide-ranging training policy demonstrates that the Municipal Public Library in Tychy consistently undertakes efforts to reduce competency deficits resulting, among others, from the aging of staff, while at the same time strengthening employees' potential in the areas of law, public finance, information technology, and cultural animation. These initiatives have a direct impact on the quality of services provided and on the library's ability to respond effectively to the needs of contemporary users.

While modern mediatekas and hybrid libraries have emerged in large cities, in many rural municipalities libraries still operate in outdated buildings without adequate computer equipment or access to high-speed internet (GUS Report, 2020). This deepens the so-called digital divide between users from metropolitan centers and residents of peripheral areas.

The phenomenon of mass digitization of content, the development of streaming platforms, and commercial knowledge providers place libraries in competition for the attention of audiences. BN reports on reading (2022) indicate that only 38% of Poles read at least one book in a year. For libraries, this means the need to expand their offerings to include multimedia, cultural events, and coworking spaces in order to remain attractive compared to other forms of leisure.

The mediateka, referred to as a multimedia library, is a modern institution whose aim is not only to collect materials but also to support education, social integration, and participation in digital culture. This is particularly important for younger generations, for whom contact with technology is a natural part of daily life. The contemporary public library becomes a "first-contact institution", offering residents various forms of participation in culture and digital education (Koryś et al., 2019, p. 28).

Modern libraries in Poland - including the Mediateka in Tychy - perform not only informational functions but also integrative and recreational roles. Research by Dąbrowska emphasizes that the role of libraries in small and medium-sized towns increasingly includes bridging the digital gap through access to technology and media education (Dąbrowska, 2013, p. 119). Similar conclusions are drawn from the NIK report, which indicates that public libraries, through the introduction of digital services, strengthen social cohesion and facilitate access to culture for people at risk of exclusion (NIK, 2018, p. 44).

Modern library systems are today one of the key solutions supporting the functioning of contemporary libraries. Several such programs are already available on the market, offering

a wide range of tools tailored to the current needs of institutions and their users. Software producers - including PROLIB, SOWA, MAK, LIBRA, ALEPH, and VIRTUA - emphasize that they continuously develop their products in cooperation with librarians and readers, while also monitoring developments in information technology. As a result, library systems not only use modern solutions in integration and communication but also genuinely support the daily work of libraries.

Such software enables full automation of library processes - from serving users and managing loans, to collecting and processing documents, as well as providing online catalogs and enabling the search for specific resources. Built-in multifunctional search engines allow full-text searches, the use of headings and keywords, and the application of preset filters, significantly facilitating access to information (<https://sygnitysbs.pl/rozwiazania-dla-bibliotek-prolib-system-biblioteczny/>, 8.08.2025).

Contemporary libraries increasingly adopt modern technological solutions, among which book lockers deserve special attention. These innovative devices, operating similarly to popular parcel lockers, are steadily gaining recognition among Polish libraries and their users. Thanks to book lockers (produced by Arfido Sp. z o.o.), a reader can conveniently order a selected item via the online catalog and then pick it up at a convenient time - even outside library opening hours. The device is fully integrated with the library system in use. The first implementations of this solution, carried out by Sygnity Business Solutions SA in cooperation with Arfido Sp. z o.o., took place at the Municipal Public Library in Tychy, followed by Sosnowiec (<https://sygnitysbs.pl/ksiazkomaty-zintegrowane-z-system-prolib-rosna-jak-grzyby-po-deszczu/>, 7.08.2025).

The book locker allows not only collection but also the return of previously ordered items. The process is fully self-service - the reader places an order via the library website, and when the book is prepared, the librarian places it in the device and marks it as ready for pickup. The system sends a notification to the user, who identifies themselves at the locker using their library card and then retrieves the book from the assigned compartment. Returns are equally smooth - it is enough to place the item in a free locker, which opens after scanning the card. The device is equipped with lockable compartments, a touchscreen, and a library card reader, ensuring safety and intuitive operation. This solution, as part of a comprehensive IT system, has become a kind of technological standard in libraries. Growing usage statistics confirm that readers are increasingly adopting book lockers, including those previously attached to traditional service (<https://sygnitysbs.pl/ksiazkomaty-zintegrowane-z-system-prolib-rosna-jak-grzyby-po-deszczu/>, 7.08.2025).

Another convenience introduced in libraries is book drop boxes, which enable quick and contactless return of borrowed items. They allow readers to return books at any time by following instructions displayed on the screen. It is enough to scan the barcode of each returned item, and the information is immediately updated in the library system. Although a library card is not required for the return itself, scanning it allows printing of the current account status.

These devices are available in several language versions, including Polish, English, and German (<https://bs.katowice.pl/dla-czytelnikow/czytelnie-i-wypożyczalnie/wypożyczalnia/ksiazkomat-i-wrzutnia/> 7.08.2025). In libraries where efficient return processing is a priority, RFID drop boxes are increasingly used. They recognize books through RFID tags attached to items, and books go directly to a special cart with a moving bottom. Advanced RFID systems may also be equipped with sorters, which direct returned items to appropriate containers according to established criteria (<https://www.arfido.com/wrzutnia-rfid.html>, 8.08.2025).

It is also worth mentioning Selfcheck devices, which allow readers to borrow and return books, audiobooks, or films independently, without staff assistance. The operation is very simple - the library card is scanned to access the user account and register the transaction. Information about the loan or return appears immediately in the system, and the user can print a confirmation and account status. Thanks to Selfchecks, the library can offer efficient and modern service while relieving staff of some routine tasks.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted deficiencies in libraries' digital services. Some facilities quickly implemented remote e-book lending systems or online meetings (e.g., Legimi, Empik Go in cooperation with public libraries), but many institutions – especially smaller ones - lacked the infrastructure or staff prepared for such solutions. This experience pointed to the need for a long-term digital strategy encompassing not only the largest centers but also small municipal libraries. The pandemic significantly changed the way residents of Tychy use the library. The Municipal Public Library developed its digital offer to compensate for the closures of traditional branches. Since 2022, readers have had access to paid e-book services – Legimi and Empik Go – and the library issues free codes for both platforms as well as lends e-book readers. Thanks to this, it is easier for the residents of Tychy to reach for literature without the need to visit the library. Interest in this form of borrowing is growing – codes are distributed very quickly, and readers use the rich digital offer, including over 50 thousand publications. Although budget constraints reduce the number of traditional book purchases, the library tries to balance these shortages with a strong digital offer. In 2024, 11,083 new titles were purchased for 289,917 PLN, which meant 3656 fewer copies than in the previous year. This difference is offset precisely by access to e-book services and scientific e-libraries such as IBUK Libra or Academica.

After the reopening of the facilities, residents also willingly began to use self-service solutions. The number of visits and borrowings carried out through the book dispenser increased during the pandemic by 190% and 151%, respectively. While before 2020 only about 12% of readers used this form, after the lockdown this percentage increased significantly, especially among older people seeking safe ways to access books. All this shows that the development of digital and self-service offerings effectively compensated for the temporary closures of the library.

3. Institutional Support: National and Local Programs

The transformation of libraries has been supported by cultural policy and public funding. Long-term ministerial programs played a key role, such as the National Reading Development Program 2016 - 2020 and its continuation 2.0 (2021-2025), which treat public libraries as “local centers of social life” and access points to culture (<https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/nprcz>, 8.08.2025). Within the NPRC framework, libraries were awarded grants for the purchase of books (including remote access to e-books) and the modernization of infrastructure. Particularly, Priority 2, “Investments in Library Infrastructure”, enabled local governments to co-finance the construction, expansion, and equipping of library facilities (<https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/nprcz>, 8.08.2025). EU programs (especially between 2007-2013) and national initiatives such as “Library Infrastructure” or “Library+” also supported the modernization or renovation of facilities. As a result, many cities and municipalities now have new library buildings and mediatekas designed as open, multifunctional spaces (including multimedia rooms, conference halls, galleries, or cafés) that align with the “third place” concept for local communities (<https://www.nprcz.pl>, 8.08.2025). Infrastructure funding was complemented by training and animation programs. Priority 4 of NPRCz 2.0 includes enhancing librarians’ competencies in understanding community needs and promoting local partnerships for reading promotion (<https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/nprcz>, 8.08.2025). Consequently, library staff received support for acquiring new skills (technological and pedagogical), essential for working with diverse and active audiences.

4. Research Methodology

The empirical study conducted for the purposes of this publication employs qualitative research methods, specifically the case study approach. Qualitative research is one of the fundamental scientific research methods, alongside quantitative research. It is widely used across various academic disciplines, including marketing research. Marketing research involves diagnosing an organization’s informational needs, selecting variables, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to support marketing decision-making (Komor, 2011, p. 224).

Sources indicate that case study research is defined as an intensive and detailed examination of a particular case, as well as an analysis of its real context and the relationships occurring among its various elements. There are numerous definitions of case study research; it can be described as an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not entirely clear. The study is conducted using evidence from multiple sources to confirm the consistency of

information through triangulation, while data collection and analysis refer to pre-established theoretical assumptions (Komor, 2011, p. 224). Such an analysis focuses on the actual context of the phenomenon under study and allows researchers to gather extensive information and analyze numerous data related to management in a modern cultural institution.

In the literature, empirical research is described as research that utilizes evidence and knowledge collected through observation and experience, satisfying the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding of the subject under study. For the purposes of this study, research questions were formulated and an interview was conducted:

- What role do modern solutions play in a public library?
- What motives guided the institution in deciding to implement modern technological solutions in a cultural institution?
- What solutions have been introduced into the operations of the public library?
- What is the significance of modern technology used in the library?

To prepare the case study project, a single cultural institution was selected: the Municipal Public Library in Tychy, which met the research criteria. It was decided to conduct an expert interview with the library's director, who possesses knowledge and information about the library's operations. For the purposes of this interview, appropriate questions were prepared, and secondary sources were used, including internal data, the MBP Tychy profile, brochures, industry press publications, and information from websites.

Case Study of a Local Government Cultural Institution - Municipal Public Library in Tychy

The Municipal Public Library in Tychy is a local government cultural institution established in August 1956. Its structure includes the Main Library and 12 branches located throughout the city. Under the Library Act, it operates as a public institution with legal personality. Its organizer is the local government, and it is supervised by the city mayor, who is legally obliged to provide the library with suitable premises and fund staff salaries. The MBP is headed by a director, and the primary role of the library is to meet the educational, informational, and cultural needs of residents. Today, the institution also plays an important role in cultural animation, integrating the local community around culture and knowledge.

The library's mission guides its activities. The Tychy library offers readers a wide range of educational, informational, and animation services. To meet user expectations, it regularly updates its collection with new publications and considers suggestions and requests submitted by readers. It also carries out numerous activities aimed at enhancing the cultural engagement of residents.

For years, the library has placed strong emphasis on service quality and implementing modern solutions. MBP in Tychy was the first in Poland to introduce a book locker, a device that allows 24/7 pickup of books ordered online. This equipment, operating similarly to parcel lockers, has gained immense popularity among users. In addition, the library is equipped with

self-service lending and return stations (selfchecks), a 24-hour drop box, an RFID system, as well as access to computers with Internet, tablets, e-readers, audiobooks, board and strategy games, DVDs, Blu-rays, and virtual reality. Readers can also borrow e-readers with active codes for Legimi or Empik Go platforms. All these services are entirely free, and the modern Mediateka building encourages use by entire families.

Technological development has enabled contemporary libraries, including MBP Tychy, to use the MARC21 format. This allows not only efficient cataloging of collections but also global exchange of bibliographic data. A librarian processing a book in Tychy can check how the same publication has been cataloged, for example, in the Library of Congress in Washington.

This connectivity integrates catalogs into a worldwide network, making information about major institutions' collections widely accessible.

It is difficult to imagine a library today without modern ICT tools. Technology forms the foundation of its development and service quality, supporting collection, processing, and sharing of resources. As Gmiterek (Gmiterek, 2012, p. 99) notes, the introduction of innovative systems increases productivity, streamlines scholarly communication, and enables better response to the diverse needs of users. Jacek Wojciechowski (Wojciechowski, 2017, p. 108) emphasizes that the 21st-century library should function as a super-technical organism creatively responding to the challenges of modern media.

This vision is realized by the Mediateka, opened in 2016, which serves as the main branch of MBP Tychy and is located at al. Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego 16. The facility, covering 2700 m², combines the function of a traditional public library with a modern cultural center. The Mediateka hosts author meetings with writers, journalists, and creators, workshops for children and adults, contests, exhibitions, and film screenings. The architecture features a raw concrete-and-glass structure with numerous windows, skylights, and modern spatial solutions.

On the ground floor, there is an adult lending section, a children's department, a fairy tale library, a multimedia reading room, a music and audiobook section, as well as conference rooms and staff facilities. The first floor houses the scientific reading room, press reading room, server room, and IT offices. The second floor is used for computer courses, promotional and methodological activities, and library administration.

The MBP Tychy collection includes over 100,000 volumes. Its rich offerings include books, daily newspapers, periodicals, audiobooks, films, and music collections. The music section is equipped with high-quality audio equipment and a television for concerts and film screenings. The multimedia reading room offers multiple computer stations, board games, VR, and the possibility to watch films and fairy tales. Film screenings under the "Art x Music" series and fairy tale projections in the Fairy Tale Library are particularly popular. Free computer courses for seniors are also organized in a professionally equipped room with 12 workstations.

A milestone in the library's history was the introduction of the RFID system in 2017. The entire collection was tagged, and readers received new library cards with RFID

functionality. Security gates, selfchecks, a drop box, and a book locker - the first such device in a public library in Poland - were launched. The system was fully integrated with PROLIB, ensuring efficient and fault-free operation. Staff emphasize that these solutions not only simplify life for readers but also reduce queues and lighten the workload of librarians.

It is also worth mentioning the self-service lending of new books, "Przystań Książka", located at the PKP train station in Tychy. This is the third such device in Poland and the first fully integrated with the PROLIB system. It operates 24/7, available to all MBP cardholders.

Modern solutions have contributed to the library's growing popularity - today, the number of registered readers exceeds 26,000, placing MBP Tychy among the top municipal libraries in the Silesian Voivodeship. The management emphasizes that a contemporary library cannot afford stagnation. It must actively shape its image, implement innovative methods of promoting reading, and consistently invest in modernity - only then will it be noticed and appreciated by the local community.

In 2025, the Municipal Public Library in Tychy will provide access to library resources both in traditional and digital form, including books, DVDs, as well as modern technologies, including virtual reality (VR). Planned is also the purchase and lending of several e-book readers enabling the use of the Legimi, Empik Go, and IBUK Libra platforms.

The library will continue existing educational and cultural programs and projects, such as the Active Senior Library, Digital Poland Equal Opportunities, Cultural Commentary, and Regional Lessons – Tychy Stop. Furthermore, the project Storyteller in the Library will continue, consisting of individually presenting fairy tales, fables, and therapeutic stories using props, costumes, and musical background in the concert hall of the Mediateka.

The activities of the MPL also include organizing cyclical events, such as Culture Tours, Tychy Literature Days, Academy of All Arts, seasonal workshops, Santa from the Fairy Tale, family festival "With Mediateka towards summer", as well as Fair on the Promenade. On the occasion of celebrating the Year of Fr. Prof. Józef Tischner, Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, and Władysław Stanisław Reymont, planned are library lessons, literary competitions, thematic exhibitions, and special bulletins. Projects Two Hands and Something More and Fun with Art will also continue.

For the implementation of tasks in 2025, the Municipal Public Library in Tychy received a city grant in the amount of 10,237,685 PLN, of which 150,000 PLN was allocated for the purchase of library collections. Forecasted own revenues amount to 300,000 PLN, and the institution also plans to apply for financial support from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

5. Conclusion

The transformations that have taken place in public libraries in Poland - particularly in the Mediateka in Tychy - demonstrate that the contemporary library is no longer merely a repository of books, but a modern center of knowledge, culture, and social integration. Thanks to infrastructural investments, support from national and EU programs, and the consistent implementation of innovative technological solutions, it has become possible to create a space that is welcoming and attractive to all user groups.

RFID systems, book lockers, drop boxes, and selfchecks are today not only convenient service tools but also symbols of the transformation of libraries into places where tradition meets digital modernity. The Tychy library serves as an example of an institution that has successfully harnessed the potential of new technologies to fully fulfill the role of the “third place” - a neutral, open, and inspiring space for the local community.

Although libraries still face challenges related to funding, staff training, and bridging digital divides, the experience of MBP in Tychy demonstrates that modernity combined with an educational and cultural mission allows them to effectively reshape their image. The 21st-century library supports reading, develops digital competencies, strengthens social bonds, and becomes an indispensable element of local life - a place to which people want to return.

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