# Digitisation and public accessibility of old Polish guides on self-treatment and quality-of-life improvement

## Digitalizacja i udostępnienie staropolskich poradników służących samoleczeniu i poprawie jakości życia

Joanna Nowak

The University's Library, Jan Kochanowski Uniwersity, Kielce, Poland Head: Henryk Suchojad PhD

Medical Studies/Studia Medyczne 2017; 33 (2): 161–167 DOI: https://doi.org/10.5114/ms.2017.68713

Key words: health, self-treatment, guides, old Polish literature, digital libraries.

Słowa kluczowe: zdrowie, samoleczenie, poradniki, literatura staropolska, biblioteki cyfrowe.

#### Abstract

This letter to the Editor can prove useful as a mini-guide. Interest in health and quality of life is continuing to grow in the second decade of the 21st century, both among professionals actively involved in giving advice to others and among diverse social groups, as well as individually, among those sick and those healthy. Along with recent novelties, traditional Old Polish methods also feature prominently in discussions, but those interested know relatively little about how to access source materials. This letter therefore describes the possibilities for open access to Polish-language health guides from the Renaissance and Baroque era, whose authors included medical doctors and which focused on describing food and herbs used in self-treatment and promoting the healthy life style of the period. The works of Andrzej from Kobylin, Zawacki, Śleszkowski, Olszowski and Haur are briefly described and information is given about their availability in full-text on-line data bases.

#### Streszczenie

Ten list do Redakcji może spełniać funkcję miniinformatora. W drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku wciąż wzrasta popularność tematyki związanej ze zdrowiem i jakością życia, zarówno wśród profesjonalistów czynnie udzielających porad (dyskusje, fora, publikacje naukowe i popularne), jak i wśród zróżnicowanych grup społecznych oraz indywidualnie wśród ludzi chorych i zdrowych. Oprócz nowinek często omawiane są tradycyjne, staropolskie metody, jednak wiedza o sposobach korzystania z materiałów źródłowych jest stosunkowo uboga. Zaprezentowano więc możliwość powszechnego dostępu do polskojęzycznej literatury poradnikowej z epoki renesansu i baroku, tworzonej m.in. przez lekarzy, a opisującej pożywienie i zioła stosowane w procesie samoleczenia oraz promującej zdrowy tryb życia charakterystyczny dla epoki. Krótko przedstawiono (wraz z informacją o lokalizacji w internetowych bazach pełnotekstowych) dzieła Andrzeja Glabera z Kobylina, Teodora Zawackiego, Sebastiana Śleszkowskiego, Hieronima Olszowskiego i Jakuba Kazimierza Haura. Opis ten poprzedzono dygresją na temat samoleczenia i informacją o polskich bibliotekach cyfrowych.

#### Self-treatment: past and present

Taking care of the quality of life at society level is invariably linked to the individualised process (skill) of self-treatment of each member of that society. Globally, self-treatment is an ever-present phenomenon. Methods for fighting fever or pain, alleviating the results of poisonous bites, improving sexual potency, birth control and remedying many other health problems have been passed on from generation to generation. However, self-treatment is an ambiguous concept. In present-day literature, according to a definition from the World Health Organisation, two types of self-treatment are distinguished, namely: self-medication and self-care. The former term describes the use of medications to treat self-diagnosed symptoms

or conditions without prior consultation with a medical professional. In practice, it also encompasses mutual treatment by family members or friends. Self-care involves the self-administration of simple diagnostic procedures and treatment by an educated patient, e.g. with diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, allergy or following a stroke [1]. While self-treatment in Poland had existed before the end of the 20th century, it became "institutionalised" and developed rapidly in that period, in the wake of sociopolitical changes, the institution of a free market and the introduction of many over-thecounter pharmaceutical products, pharmacies and herbal shops advertising cure-alls in fabulously colourful packaging, and bookshops showcasing a large variety of relevant publications. If not your local shop,

162 Joanna Nowak

then on-line websites offer medicaments from all over the world and claim their guaranteed efficacy (sic!). In this context, due attention should be given to one more source of information, namely local publications written by specialists (16th and 17th century guides were often compiled by medical doctors and promoters of astrology and economic knowledge), based on literature previously published in Europe (Latin sources) as well as the authors' original research and experience gained among the Sarmatians, as Polish gentry and nobility liked to style themselves in that period. Reading these guides should be regarded as an opportunity to enrich one's knowledge. A smirk of superiority on the reader's face while reading these Old Polish recommendations (sometimes really obsolete or just linguistically convoluted) will disappear only following a moment's reflection. An example of valuable knowledge about the health priorities of a specific historical period that can be relished by reading those health compendia is that those books, generally addressed to the privileged layers of society, that is gentry, the burghers and the clergy, generally warned against eating larger quantities of vegetables and fruit, particularly raw, as this could "rodzi grube humory"/engender thick humours/, i.e. was hard to digest (Haur, Olszowski, Zawacki). While no culture, past or present, has ever found a cure that would make humans physically immortal, it is still worth supplementing the now sought-for advice regarding healthy living with advice that served our predecessors. Old medicine relied on elements of astrology, philosophy (religion) and natural science, that is knowledge about the composition of animate and inanimate matter from the surrounding world and its effects on the human body. Interestingly, the rarer, more expensive and more exotic paramedications that are becoming increasingly more popular nowadays include shilajit (mumiyo), myrrh, kamala (Mallotus philippensis) and saffron, of which as many as three, with the exception of kamala, were also described in the popular health guides from the 17th century presented below.

#### Polish digital libraries and repositories

Project Gutenberg, commenced in 1971, was an early effort to digitise printed paper books. Popular recent initiatives include the Google Books project, where one can also find copies of Polish books stored at American libraries. The first Polish digital libraries (Wielkopolska BC and Polska Biblioteka Internetowa/ Polish Internet Library/, the latter already defunct) opened in 2002. Within a decade, their number grew rapidly, moving past the 100 mark a long time ago, but the number of volumes made available in particular projects varies widely, from a dozen or so titles to more than 300 thousand. "The practice of creating domestic digital resources has produced two visibly different models of the organisation and management

of e-collections, where digital libraries are mainly affiliated with institutional libraries and e-repositories originate both within and beyond the library system. Repositories are almost exclusively concerned with scientific literature, while digital libraries, along with academic publications, contain archival, historical and literary materials" [2]. When distributed collections are integrated in a coherent search system, users can access e-documents that they need considerably more quickly and easily. That was the main assumption of the Federation of Digital Libraries (Federacja Bibliotek Cyfrowych), established in 2007 with the aim to unite all collections developed with dLibra software (including all those listed in this paper). Access to its resources does not require a visit to the institutional library, specialised equipment, library card or access code. All that is needed is a computer with on-line access and the awareness that such collections exist. The Federation's search engine is available at http://fbc.pionier.net.pl. Importantly, the collections can also be accessed directly from the website of any digital library that is a member of the Federation or the Distributed Catalogue of Polish Libraries (KaRo - http://karo.umk.pl/Karo). Thanks to co-operation within the framework of "open science" projects, the collections hosted by Polish digital libraries are indexed by similar international and global websites and catalogues, and the items discussed below are visible in the EUROPEANA European Digital Library (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/pl), Virtuelle Fachbibliothek Osteuropa (https://www.vifaost.de) and OCLC WorldCat (http://www.worldcat.org).

### **Printed and electronic guides for the Sarmatians**

The rich resources of publications stored at e-libraries include Old Polish guides (called, by convention, home & economics guides), which printers were eager to print in the centuries gone by and our ancestors were eager to read. Their reception in terms of informative value was mixed. Some enjoyed several impressions as the information they contained was up to date for a long time (such as works by Haur), but others, whose first editions were devoured so avidly that not much was left of them, are known to us through reprints (ordinary photo-offset copies, but also critical editions) from the 18th or 19th century, or even later, when they were perceived as cultural curiosities for bibliophiles. The content of the guides was also made available in the form of excerpts and encyclopaedia/dictionary-type publications, such as that compiled by Józef Rostafiński in the late 19th century [3]. Rostafiński used herbals, guides and compendia from the years 1542–1778 as his source materials. As the purpose of this communication is to provide information about the possibilities of accessing old prints afforded by e-libraries, a historiographic analysis of such publications is not attempted; however, they have been extensively discussed in the literature [4–9] and continue to inspire scientists.

Back to our e-library bookshelf, one may take a nostalgic look at one of the oldest guides for women, written in Polish by Andrzej Glaber of Kobylin (approx. 1500-1555), a humanist, Roman Catholic priest and medical doctor) published in 1535 and then updated by Józef Rostafiński in 1893. While it is probably not an original work, but a translation of the German "Problemata Aristotelis" (Ulm, 1500) [10-11], an interesting aspect of the book is the amalgamation of ancient thought with Middle Ages order, where the human body was described according to a particular order, starting with the head (hair, forehead, eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, nose, mouth, teeth, chin), followed by the trunk and the legs, and ending in a description of the clothing. The 16th century edition is available at Dolnoślaska BC and Mazowiecka BC (under the title: "Problemata Aristotelis. Gadki z pisma wielkiego philozopha Aristotela, y też inszych mędrczow tak przyrodzoney iako y lekarskiey nauki z pilnoscią wybrane Pytanie rozmaite o składnosci człowieczich członkow rozwięzuiące, ku biegłosci rozmowy ludzkiey tak rozkoszne iako y pożyteczne...")/Problemata Aristotelis. Stories selected diligently from the work of the great philosopher Aristotle and other sages of both natural and medicinal science to solve various questions about the composition of human body parts for the ease of human conversation delightful as well as useful/, while the 19th century "Gadki o składności członków człowieczych z Arystotelesa i też inszych mędrców wybrane"/Stories of the composition of human body parts from Aristotle and also other sages selected/can be viewed at Wielkopolska BC.

This latter collection (as well as CBN Polona and BC Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej) contains another guide for land owners revised by Rostafiński (published in 1891), but postdating Glaber's work and representing a different type of guide. "Memoriale oeconomicum" by Teodor Zawacki was first released in 1616 and was followed by several editions before the 17th century had come to an end (1620, 1637, 1643, 1647). The book is concerned with the management of a gentry estate (providing, among others, dates for sowing, swathing and harvesting, breeding domestic birds, slaughtering cattle, hunting, picking herbs and employing domestic workers), but ample space is also devoted to manners advice, healthy diets and life style. "Między inszemi rozmaitemi potrawami, nic pożyteczniejszego człowiekowi, jako chleb a wino"/ Among various other foods, there is nothing more useful to man than bread and wine (1891 edition) is a remark made by the author in an extensive section on food. This recommendation was well known in European Roman Catholic societies in the Middle Ages (it was promoted, among others, by Hildegarde of Bingen). Health recommendations in the guide derive from the knowledge of Hippocrates, Galen and, particularly, medical teachers from Salerno. The layout is as follows: "O pierwszej rzeczy, powietrzu"/On the first thing, pestilence, "O wtórej rzeczy, pokarmie i napoju"/On the second thing, food and drink (with subsections: "O chlebie"/Bread, "O mięsie"/Meat, "O jarzynach"/Vegetable/, etc.), "O trzeciej rzeczy, napełnieniu abo tuczeniu i purgowaniu"/On the third thing, filling or fattening and purging (that is, on satiety and purification), "O czwartej rzeczy: poruszaniu ciała i odpoczywaniu"/On the fourth thing, moving the body and resting, "O piątej rzeczy: śnie i nie spaniu"/On the fifth thing, sleep and not sleeping, "O szóstej rzeczy i ostatniej: przypadkach abo poruszeniu zmysłów dusznych"/On the sixth and last thing: cases or agitation of the soul's senses.

The year 1620 brought the first edition of a guide written by an Italian called Alessio Piemontese. Its Polish rendition is owed to Sebastian Śleszkowski (1569-1648) [12], a well-known humanist and valued medical doctor, secretary to king Sigismund III Vasa. Zachodniopomorska BC "Pomerania" has made available a digitised version of the book's 1758 edition, titled "Alexego Podemontana medyka y filozofa taiemnice; Wszystkim Oboiey Płci, nie tylko ku leczeniu rozmáitych chorob począwszy od głowy, áż do stop, bárzo potrzebne; ále y gospodarzom, rzemieslnikom, zwłászcza przednieyszych y subtelnieyszych robot, do ich rzemiosł náleżących y innym wielce pożyteczne"/Secrets of Alex Podemontano, medicus and philosopher; very necessary to Everyone of Both Genders, not only for the treatment of various diseases, starting from the head down to the feet, but also to land owners, artisans, especially of the more exquisite and subtle work belonging to their trades, and for others, too, very useful. It is a voluminous book of 406 pages (not counting an index). Let's enjoy the following two pieces of advice for improving the beauty of hair (both feasible, but perhaps too complicated for contemporary man). Here is "rzecz pewna y doświadczona"/a sure and lived thing/ to promote hair growth: "Weźmi ośrzodkę chleba Jęczmiennego, spalże ją na węgiel, utrzy ono na węgle z solą, y z niedźwiedzym sadłem, a tą maścią namazuy gdzie chcesz, aby włosy rosły. - Aby długie włosy rosły. Weźmi korzenia wysokiego ślazu, wierć go z sadłem wieprzowym, a day pospołu w winie dobrze wrzeć: potem przyłoż kminu tartego, mastyki, żołtkow iaiowych twardych trochę, gdy uwre, przecedź przez chustę, a day ostygnąć potem zbierz tłustość, która się na wierzchu ustoi, a zmywszy głowę dobrze, tym ią pomazuy"/Take a centre of barley bread, char it, grind the charred bread with salt and bear's fat, and apply this ointment where you want hair to grow. - For long hair to grow, take the root of a tall malva, mix it with pig fat and heat both in wine until it boils well: then add a little crushed caraway, mastick, hard egg yolks, when it is ready, strain through a headscarf and

164 Joanna Nowak

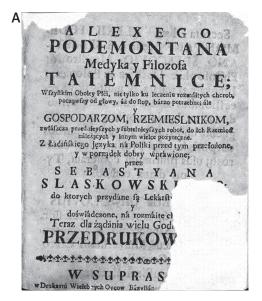




Figure 1 A, B. "Alexego Podemontana medyka y filozofa taiemnice" – selected pages of a book

leave to cool, then remove the fat that has gathered at the top, wash your head well and apply the mixture/ (1758 edition) (Figures 1 A, B).

The starosta of Wieluń, Hieronim Olszowski (approx. 1622-1676), translated from Latin to Polish a collection of poems about health and medicine that became popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The poems were well-known in Poland (among others, Zawacki quoted them amply still in the original Latin version), and the title of the book suggested a link with the famous School of Doctors in Italian Salerno (Schola Salernitana). Historians emphasise that the creation of this centre of professional education is shrouded in mystery. As early as the Roman empire, Salerno was the seat of eminent doctors and their students whom they taught [13]. It is possible that the original rhyming guide was written in the Middle Ages. The full title of the translated 48-page collection was "Szkoła Salernitańska, To iest Nauka Doktorow Salernitańskich, o sposobie zachowania zdrowia dobrego: z dawna Krolowi Angielskiemy przypisana. [...] Doktorom, Cyrulikom, Aptekarzom, y wszystkim zgoła ludziom tak zdrowym aby nie chorowali, iako y chorym, aby do zdrowia przyść mogli, dziwnie potrzebna. Przydane y Sposoby pomiarkowania Zdrowia y Apteka lubo nauka rozeznania cnoty rożnych zioł y materyi które w Aptekach przedaią. Y Species simplices zowią"/School of Salerno, that is Teaching of the Salerno Doctors on the way of maintaining good health: for a long time ascribed to the English King [...] strangely necessary to Doctors, Barbers, Pharmacists and actually all people, both healthy, so that they would not fall ill, and sick, so that they could recover health. Giving both Ways to improve Health and Pharmacy or the science of identifying the virtue of various herbs and substances that are sold at Pharmacies and called Species Simplices/. The copy scanned and made available at Wielkopolska BC is the property of Kórnik Library and is a copy of the first edition in Cracow from 1640. The next edition in 1645 was probably published in Lublin, and that version is stored by Warsaw University Library (a digitised version is available from UofW e-library). Bibliographies list one more edition, from 1684. The simple style and associations combined with apt observations served to systematise pharmacological knowledge (certainly not being the only source of that knowledge) and, even more so, to facilitate memorising and improve rhetorical skill. Below are given examples (from the 1640 edition) of short rhyming poems about butter, cherry and aloe:

#### O Maśle

"Trzy znajdujemy w maśle przymioty właściwe, Bóle uśmierza w ciele, odwilża szkodliwe. Znosi przez laracye prędkie wilgotności. W gorączce nie zażywaj, zażyjesz przykrości". /On butter In butter we find three proper attributes It alleviates body pain, dries the harmful

#### O Wiśniach

"Wiśnie trzy te za sobą dary pociągają, Purgują, jądro kamień łamie, krwie dodają". /On cherries

And abolishes short-lived wetnesses

Don't take it in fever or you'll be sorry/

Cherries bring three gifts

They purge, the core breaks stone, and they add blood/

Aloes

"Kto Aloesu chce uznać cnotę,
Naprzód uważy jego kruchotę.
I ciemną barwę, i smak gorzkości.
Przy tym gęsty sok nie bez ciężkości.
Drogie to drzewo, nie tu zrodzone,
Twarde, i zdrowiu złotem ważone".
/Aloe
Who wants to recognise the assets of aloe
Will first note its brittleness
And the dark colour and the sour taste
With a dense juice that is also heavy
Expensive is this tree that is not grown here
Hard and as heavy as gold for health/

The year 1675 saw the publication of the original edition of a monumental encyclopaedia and guide titled "Oekonomika ziemiańska generalna"/General economics for landed gentry. Its author, Jakub Kazimierz Haur (1632-1709), was born to a burgher family (entering gentry in the 1660's, according to historians), studied at Cracow Academy, travelled educationally abroad, spoke foreign languages (French, German, Italian), worked as a steward at magnate estates in Małopolska for several years and as a treasury commissioner, later to become secretary to king John III Sobieski [14]. He set out to transmit his agricultural and administrative experience and information gained from the literature or gleaned from people he met in Poland and abroad to Polish landed gentry and their administrators, that is scribes, stewards and village leaders. The second edition came out as soon as 1679. It was considerably expanded and came with a royal privilege (of 16 March 1676) granting Haur copyright for 20 years. "Pirating" would entail a fine of one thousand Hungarian zlotys. The popularity of "Economics" (which was bought by Muscovite envoys while German, Silesian, and Prussian readers placed orders for it with libraries in Cracow) encouraged the author to continue his work. In 1689, he released, richly illustrated with woodcuts, "Skład abo skarbiec znakomitych sekretów oekonomiey ziemiańskiey"/The store or treasury of excellent secrets of land economy. The totality of this very extensive text, divided into 30 treatises, is a real treasure trove of knowledge, where economic issues are the writer's main, but not only, interest. Of importance are also presentations giving information or describing customs and also those serving to distract readers and, importantly for this letter, those concerned with promoting health [15–19]. "Oekonomika", which enjoyed many reprints, had updates added to it in the 18th century to keep pace with the advances of science and technology. In the 1790's, an extract of Haur's treatises on medicine and treatment was published in a new volume titled "Ekonomika lekarska albo domowe lekarstwa"/ Medicinal economics or home remedies. A subtitle read "Dla publiczney wiadomości ku zaratowaniu

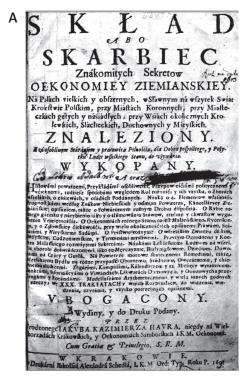
zdrowia ludzkiego wynaleziona, która okazuie znaki wszelkich chorob ludzkich i skuteczne lekarstwa na tez podaje. Z przydatkiem sekretow lekarskiej Hirneysa (niegdyś sławnego Doktora)"/Invented for public knowledge to save human lives, presenting signs of all human diseases and giving effective medicaments for these. With the addition of medical secrets of Hirneys (once a famous Doctor)/. This book was printed is a smaller format than "Oekonomika" and "Skład abo skarbiec" in a legible font and contains no illustrations. It has 229 pages and an 11-page index. Paper versions of Haur's books can be browsed at academic and specialised libraries, but also public libraries. Scanned copies have been made available by the following digital libraries:

- "Oekonomika ziemiańska generalna" (Kraków 1675)
- CBN Polona, Dolnośląska BC, UofW e-library;
- "Ziemianska generalna oekonomika" (Kraków 1679)
   Rolnicza BC, UofW e-library, RCIN;
- "Skład abo skarbiec znakomitych sekretów oekonomiey ziemiańskiey" (Kraków 1689) Małopolska BC;
- "Skład albo skarbiec znakomitych sekretow oekonomiey ziemianskiey" (Kraków 1693) CBN Polona, Rolnicza BC, BC Regionalia Ziemi Łódzkiej [fragments], UofW e-library (Figures 2 A, B);
- "Oekonomika ziemiańska generalna" (Warszawa 1744) – CBN Polona, Rolnicza BC, Małopolska BC, Zielonogórska BC;
- "Oekonomika ziemiańska generalna" (Warszawa 1757) – ARMARIUM Dominikańska BC;
- "Ekonomika lekarska albo domowe lekarstwa" (Berdyczów 1793) – CBN Polona.

In early modern times, guides, though frequently read, were not the only source of such information. Among the most popular and avidly bought books were calendars. While calendars were functional publications, helping to divide and manage time during the year (among others, by listing dates of movable church feasts), their authors and publishers were relatively quick to appreciate the benefits of those regular and indispensable publications and began supplementing the core informational content with multifaceted advice phrased, as was customary at the time, as astrological predictions. Their wealth of thematic areas naturally included medical science and practice as well as healthy life style advice [20–21]. The evidence comes from existing copies of such calendars, but we need to be aware that what has survived is a small percentage of what was actually published in that period. Many calendars have also been digitised and are available from digital libraries and repositories.

All the publications listed above addressed the general reader, who was more or less educated and used guides as a source of literary and scientific inspiration in daily life. The realisation that among the authors of such publications were medical doctors [22, 23] brings them somewhat closer to the genre of specialised compendia describing the benefits and harms accruing

166 Joanna Nowak



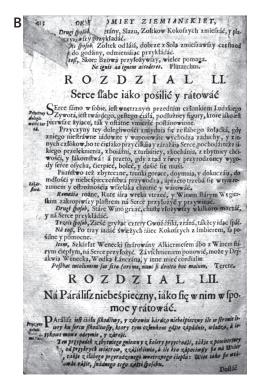


Figure 2 A, B. "Skład albo skarbiec znakomitych sekretow oekonomiey ziemianskiey" – selected pages of a book

from elements of nature (mainly plants, but also minerals and materials obtained from the available fauna). Old Polish herbals demand a separate discussion on account of their position and thematic scope. Here, we shall but mention that there are preserved copies of works by Stefan Falimirz, Hieronim Spiczyński, Marcin Siennik, Marcin of Urzędów and Szymon Syreński (Simon Syrenius) [24]. Feliks Bentkowski [25] described herbals in a bibliographic and historical study. Volume 2 Chapter 5 (entitled "Umiejętności przyrodzenia czyli różne części historii naturalnej z zastosowaniem do użytku towarzyskiego"/The skills of nature, or various parts of natural history with applications for social use) lists in chronological order relevant books by Polish authors written in the universal (Latin) and national language, together with brief descriptions. However, an on-line reference work aspiring to capture the entirety of Old Polish literature is the monumental "Karol Estreicher's Polish Bibliography" (http://www.estreicher.uj.edu.pl/staropolska). Those looking for on-line versions of herbals will find it convenient to start with the HINT - Historia. Nauka. Technika. Polska klasyka naukowa i techniczna w sieci /History. Science. Technology. Polish sci-tech classics on-line/ (http://hint.org.pl) catalogue, where a thematic index contains the categories "Medycyna"/ Medicine (original works concerning old epidemiology, i.e. "przymiot"/malady and "morowe powietrze"/ pestilence) and "Przyrodoznawstwo (historia naturalna)"/Natural history/ with the subcategory "Staropol-

skie zielniki"/Old Polish herbals/ (as of December 2016, this section contained links to full-text versions of books by Falimirz from 1534, Spiczyński from 1542, Siennik from 1568 and Syrenius's monumental work from 1613).

#### **Conclusions**

With this presentation of the opportunities for open access to Polish publications from the periods of Renaissance and Baroque advertising healthy life styles as promoted in those periods, one can but hope that this news will be of interest to many health care professionals and will prompt readers to carry out further search on their own. A few more remarks are in order now in anticipation of possible criticism upon the author for bringing up this topic or for not discussing it at length. E-libraries are a booming "business" and so the list of digitised health guides compiled for the purposes of this letter will probably be out of date by the time this text is published. The guides may prove difficult to those looking for easy reading and short texts as the quality of the preserved originals (and, consequently, also the quality of the electronic copies), the font shapes (Schwabacher, Gothic) and the phraseology require an intepretive effort. The computer screen is also not a convenient medium for reading larger texts and not all digital libraries mentioned here allow documents or their fragments to be printed. Sometimes, it is instead possible to export the text to a PDF file. Newer versions of Internet browsers

(Java) cannot always handle the DjVu format, which is commonly used in on-line libraries. This problem can be remedied by the installation of a dedicated plugin or using an on-line file converter (such as https:// www.djvu-pdf.com/pl, where the DjVu file containing an electronic document needs to be downloaded and saved to a local disk and subsequently uploaded to the converter). Practice shows the latter option to be more user-friendly. Content-wise, the contemporary reader, accustomed to pharmaceutical accuracy, may be shocked to discover the lack of precise dosages and ratios in recommendations. Are these books ultimately worth looking into? The answer is provided by the words of an ancient thinker: "Históriam nescire hoc est semper púerum esse" /Not to know history is to remain a child forever/.

#### Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

#### References

- Szafarska D. Samoleczenie. Bezpieczeństwo stosowania; http://www.farmacjaija.pl/poradnik-farmaceuty/akademia-farmaceuty/samoleczenie-bezpieczenstwo-stosowania.html.
- Moskwa K, Rossa P. Rozwój bibliotek cyfrowych i repozytoriów elektronicznych na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 2004–2008; www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/Content/34385.
- Rostafiński J. Zielnik czarodziejski to jest zbiór przesądów o roślinach. Akademia Umiejętności. Kraków 1893 [reprint: Grafika Usługi Wydawnicze. Warszawa 2012].
- Giedroyć F. Źródła biograficzno-bibliograficzne do dziejów medycyny w dawnej Polsce. Warszawa 1911 [reprint: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe. Warszawa 1981].
- Lachs J. Krakowskie księgozbiory lekarskie z XVII wieku. Towarzystwo Naukowe, Lwów 1930.
- Piotrowski W. Medycyna polska epoki kontrreformacji (1600–1764). Towarzystwo Miłośników Jawora, Jawor 1996.
- Płonka-Syroka B. Problem przemian w medycynie europejskiej XVI–XIX w. w świetle wybranych koncepcji z zakresu metodologii historii nauki. Medycyna Nowożytna 1997; 4: 5-38.
- Szostak J. Farmakognozja, farmacja galenowa i aptekarstwo w renesansowych zielnikach polskich. Wydawnictwo Lekarskie PZWL, Warszawa 2006.
- 9. Drobnik J. Zielnik i zielnikoznawstwo. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.
- Ziomek J. Renesans. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012.
- 11. Migdał J. O języku Andrzeja Glabera z Kobylina studium normalizacji polszczyzny wczesnorenesansowej. Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 1999.
- 12. Pielat B. Dur plamisty w poglądach Sebastiana Petrycego i Sebastiana Śleszkowskiego w I połowie XVII wieku. Archiwum Historii Medycyny 1980; 43: 393-406.
- Drygas A. Matka europejskich uniwersytetów; http:// www.swiat-zdrowia.pl/artykul/matka-europejskich-uniwersytetow.
- 14. Haur Jakub Kazimierz. In: Bibliografia Literatury Polskiej "Nowy Korbut". Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1964; 2: 249-51.

- Kowalski P. Theatrum świata wszystkiego i poćciwy gospodarz – o wizji świata pewnego siedemnastowiecznego pisarza ziemiańskiego. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2000.
- Partyka J. "Skład abo skarbiec..." Jakuba Kazimierza Haura jako źródło do badań nad społeczeństwem staropolskim. Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce 1996; 40: 81-91.
- 17. Partyka J. "Skład abo skarbiec..." Jakuba Kazimierza Haura sylwa czy encyklopedia? Napis 1998; 4: 37-44.
- 18. Zuba K. Sprawy zdrowia i medycyny w "Mercuriuszu polskim" Jakuba Kazimierza Haura. Barok 1999; 2: 145-57.
- 19. Haur Jakub Kazimierz 1632–1709. In: eZBB Indeks Literariów Staropolskich [Database the index author; See also the index thematic password: Medycyna]; http://bar.ibl.waw.pl/cgi-bin/makwww.exe?BM=2.
- Syroka A. Problematyka medyczna w śląskich kalendarzach z XVII i XVIII wieku. Medycyna Nowożytna 1995;
   49-69.
- 21. Medycyna. In: Krzysztofik M. Studium z dziejów krakowskich kalendarzy astrologicznych XVII wieku. Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2010: 347-413.
- 22. Sondel J. Słownik historii i tradycji Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2012.
- 23. Kośmiński S. Słownik lekarzów polskich. Warszawa 1883.
- Zemanek A. Z dziejów botaniki renesansu padewskie inspiracje polskich zielnikarzy. Kwartalnik Nauki i Techniki 1996; 41: 31-58.
- 25. Botanika, Zoologia, Mineralogia. In: Bentkowski F. Historia literatury polskiej wystawiona w spisie dzieł drukiem ogłoszonych. Warszawa Wilno 1814; 2: 388-423.

#### Address for correspondence:

#### Ioanna Nowak

The University's Library Jan Kochanowski University ul. Świętokrzyska 21e, 25-406 Kielce, Poland Phone: +48 41 349 7155

E-mail: joanna-no@wp.pl