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## Provenance as a bibliophilic value (case study)

### Introduction

Among bibliophiles, booksellers and antiquarians it is generally agreed that signed prints are of particular value. Provenance makes them attractive, as well as being sought, collected and purchased on auctions<sup>1</sup>. Numerous examples confirm that higher attractiveness of such copies causes higher prices, which suggests that they are subject to the traditional rules of the market (supply and demand). However, it is worth noting that the valuation of antiquarian objects is a complex process and the test factor “provenance” is only one of the components affecting its value. The estimation of property takes into account a variety of factors: *substantive factors* (the historical, scientific, artistic value), *factors of bibliophilic nature* (bibliophilic qualities), *technical factors* (condition), *spiritual factors* (the emotional value, prestige)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is difficult to accurately separate the impact of bibliophilic values from the other components of the price.

Auction value is difficult to operationalize. In the case of antiquarian market it is even more complicated because of various motives which bibliophiles are guided by. They gather books from a variety of reasons. Items of their collector’s passion – notes Grzegorz Nieć – “can be ‘beautiful books’, masterpieces of the seers, but also works of scribblers, examples of kitsch, and a variety of ‘rara et curiosa’, which for centuries have been a kind of quintessence of sophisticated collecting”<sup>3</sup>. It is worth adding that the bibliophilia does not need to be accompanied by intense reading of purchased works. Bibliophiles can complete works in a languages they do not know and draw knowledge on their interest areas mainly from the subject literature. Many times bibliophilic passion is irrational and transforms into bibliomania. Such customers – as we read – “undertake intensive and systematic purchases, often taking

<sup>1</sup> See: J. Miliszkievicz, A. Osełko, *Ceny zabytkowych księzek na aukcjach bibliofilskich*, „Rzeczpospolita”, suppl. „Tygodnik Plus Minus” (12 July 2012), [online] <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/958479-Ceny-zabytkowych-ksiazek-na-aukcjach-bibliofilskich.html> [accessed 21.05.2016].

<sup>2</sup> G. Nieć, *Wtórny rynek książki w Polsce. Instytucje, asortyment, uczestnicy*, Kraków 2016, p. 313. Translated by the author of this article.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 314–315.

serious, sometimes alarming and worrying proportions, which are beyond the common sense"<sup>4</sup>. Aside from the observations, it is difficult to deny that provenance is an attractive bibliophilic advantage and affects the decisions of the auction.

In the wake of these findings appears a question whether the impact of provenance on auction decisions is objective in nature, whether bibliophiles are consciously guided by this advantage, and, finally, are these decisions meaningful. If in fact provenance is an important bibliophilic value, these theses can be verified empirically.

This study is an attempt to confirm these hypotheses. It was assumed that the provenance, which manifests itself in the form of bookplates, supralibros, stamps, notes etc., is an important element of attracting attention of book collectors, affects their purchasing decisions and is measurable. In order to verify the validity of this assumption, was made the analysis of the assortment (auction catalogues) of one of the largest Polish antiquarian bookshops – Cracow's Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop, which has been operating continuously since 1992, and regularly organizing auctions. Due to the large size of the offer (more than 77 thousand prints, which were exposed on 109 auctions organized in years 1992–2014), non-random test research which covered 30 557 descriptions – approx. 41% of the whole assortment – was examined in detail.

A big challenge was posed by the selection of research methods and techniques. Difficulties arose at the stage of the analysis and concerned unambiguous determination and qualifications of units. The main problem was to determine the typological affiliation, which was not facilitated by the material itself (descriptions were created according to different methods and in varying degrees of detail), as well as subject literature where different types of values were defined too generally.

A relatively sparse literature did not facilitate the research. Particularly problematic was the shortage of studies on the analysis of the modern antiquarian market. The only major Polish-language scientific paper on this subject is a monograph by Grzegorz Nieć entitled *Wtórny rynek książki w Polsce (Secondary book market in Poland)*, in which one section is devoted to the problems of bibliophilic values<sup>5</sup>, where the author makes their general classification, emphasizing the important role they play in making purchase decisions. The second important paper is the work of Frederick B. Adams, *The Uses of Provenance* (Berkeley, 1969)<sup>6</sup>. It has a highly educational and practical value, as it outlines a typology of values and research methods. Its particular usefulness to this research results from the recognition of the subject, as provenance was characterized there from the bibliophile's point of view.

In these studies extremely useful was also a monograph by John Carter *Taste & Technique in Book Collecting* (London 1938 and others)<sup>7</sup>, containing, among others, in-depth definitions and an original typology of bibliophilic values. In addition to these works appeared a wide variety of papers and monographs relating to, among others, selected types of provenance (e.g. dedications)<sup>8</sup>, forms of the functioning

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 348.

<sup>5</sup> G. Nieć, *Wtórny rynek książki...*, p. 284–289.

<sup>6</sup> F. B. Adams, *The Uses of Provenance*, Los Angeles 1969.

<sup>7</sup> J. Carter, *Taste & Technique in Book Collecting*, London 1970.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. E. E. Śmiłek, *Dedykacje – proveniencje – bibliofilia: o dedykacji rękopiśmienniczej*, „Gazeta Antykwaryczna” 1997, no. 1/2, p. 7–8.

of antiquarian objects (e.g. auctions)<sup>9</sup>, their circulation (e.g. underground prints, works of prominent writers etc.)<sup>10</sup>, and papers treating bibliophilia on a high level of abstraction<sup>11</sup>. Definitely different is the state of research on provenance *sensu largo* (including its methodology), and with using provenance methods to research historical collections. When we think of the first one, very useful turned out to be classic articles of Kazimierz Piekarski<sup>12</sup>, Bronisław Kocowski<sup>13</sup> and a methodological study of Maria Sipayło<sup>14</sup> and Maria Piđłypczak-Majerowicz<sup>15</sup>. When analyzing various narrower problems, also works of bibliophiles, collectors and lexicographical publishers turned out to be helpful<sup>16</sup>. These works were primarily used to construct a catalogue of bibliophilic values (typology) and to define them.

### Taxonomy of bibliophilic values and types of provenance

In order to confirm the hypotheses posed at the beginning it is necessary to establish a catalogue of bibliophilic values, as well as their definitions. Because there is no full agreement in this field among authors<sup>17</sup>, a review of stances was made and dominant categories were created. The starting point were John Carther's statements contained in the frequently reprinted monograph *Taste & Technique in Book Collecting* (1948, 1949, 1950, 1970, 1972, 1977, 2014), where he included an original classification of bibliophilic values (rarity)<sup>18</sup>.

According to Carther, the main bibliophilic value of a book is artistry which manifests itself in three areas: a *typographic form* (ornamentation, layout of the columns, type of font), the *material medium* and *external layout* of the book (a kind of

<sup>9</sup> D. T. Dziuba, *Handel aukcyjny. Rynki, metody, technologie*, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>10</sup> G. Nieć, P. Podniesiński, *Druki zakazane i bezdebitowe jako atrakcja bibliofilska (na polskich aukcjach antykwarycznych lat 1994–2014 i w bieżącej ofercie rynku)*, [in:] D. Degen, G. Gzella, J. Gzella (eds.), *Zakazane i niewygodne: ograniczanie wolności słowa od XIX do XXI wieku*, Toruń 2015, p. 275–295; G. Nieć, P. Podniesiński, *Sienkiewicziana na współczesnym polskim rynku antykwarycznym*, [in:] T. Bujnicki i J. Majchrzyk (eds.), *Henryk Sienkiewicz w szkole, bibliotece i muzeum*, Warszawa 2015, p. 307–325.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. J. Dunin, *Bibliofilstwo – perspektywa środkowoeuropejska*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Librorum” 2003, vol. 11, p. 203–208.

<sup>12</sup> K. Piekarski, *Książka w Polsce XV i XVI wieku*, [in:] *Kultura staropolska*, Kraków 1932, p. 350–382; idem, *O zadania i metody badań proveniencyjnych. Marginalia do pracy R. Kotuli „Właściciele rękopisów i starodruków zbiorów Z. Czarnieckiego”*, „Przegląd Biblioteczny” 1929, vol. 3, iss. 3, p. 388–415.

<sup>13</sup> B. Kocowski, *Zadania i metody badań proveniencyjnych w zakresie starych druków*, „Przegląd Biblioteczny” 1951, no. 1/2, p. 72–84.

<sup>14</sup> M. Sipayło, *O metodzie badań proveniencyjnych*, „Z Badań nad Polskimi Księgozbiorami Historycznymi” 1975, iss. 1, p. 9–30.

<sup>15</sup> M. Piđłypczak-Majerowicz, *Polska literatura bibliologiczna na temat badań proveniencyjnych w zbiorach starych druków. Zarys problemu*, „Kraków – Lwów: biblioteki XIX i XX wieku” 2014, vol. 13, p. 7–21.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. M. J. Wojciechowski, *Exlibris, godło bibliofila*, Wrocław 1978; A. Kempa, *Bibliofilskie silva rerum: szkice, notatki, wypisy*, Warszawa 2002; A. Znamirowski, *O współczesnym ekslibrisie*, „Konspekt” 2004, no. 19, [online] <http://www.wsp.krakow.pl/konspekt/19/znamir.html>, accessed 20.05.2016.

<sup>17</sup> W. Kaczorowski, *Polskie druki bibliofilskie. Broszury i druki ulotne*, Wrocław 1996, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> See: J. Carter, *Taste & Technique in Book Collecting...*, p. 137–170.

paper used in the production, shape and form of the binding). The factor that strongly amplifies these advantages is also the unique nature of the publication which is a result of the limited edition<sup>19</sup>. In the literature one can identify many examples confirming this statement. There are in fact groups of collectors favouring only books of specific eras or printing offices (e.g. only 18<sup>th</sup> century prints or publications of a particular publishing houses), others pay special attention to the type of paper and its filigree, there are also collections where the most important role is played by a specific year of publication (to honor, for example, a collector's birthday).

This view is shared in the most general outline by Andrzej Kępa, who, however, expands the typology with the geographical factor. There is no doubt that certain bibliophilic qualities have only a local, regional range, they are meaningful in a particular, specialized community (there are examples of graphomaniac collections, pulp fiction, publications with printing errors that for other collectors are a completely absurd set)<sup>20</sup>. Grzegorz Matuszak emphasizes in turn, that an important element increasing the value of specific issues or particular units is their history. Particularly desirable objects are, therefore, first editions of works important for the national culture, and issues overgrown by legend, such as the ones damaged because of censorship actions, pirated reprints made without the author's knowledge, underground, conspiratorial and emigrant issues, translations into foreign languages<sup>21</sup>.

Extremely useful (because measurable) is the catalogue of values proposed by Frederick B. Adams<sup>22</sup>. The author draws attention to the fact that for many collectors an overriding feature proving the value of the book are the marks left on it by previous users and libraries. A bibliophile is therefore interested in marks left on the printing which are talking about its fate, previous owners, the reception of the text. This category includes, among others, objects with dedications, marginalias, and particular notes of the author or a reader; not seldom a valuable element is the author's signature itself, rarely the signature of the holder, especially if the name was not known very well. From the inscriptions placed inside and on publications – as Cecylia and Janusz Dunin note – “one can decrypt very interesting information about the fate of a copy and of the people who had it in their hands. However, the greatest importance is attached to dedications of the authors and notes of well-known figures, especially if they relate to the assessment of the work or talk about the people for whom the book was donated”<sup>23</sup>. To be really valuable a dedication must specify the author's relationship with the person for whom he signs, or be an additional commentary on the work, directed to only one person. In addition, bibliophilic evaluation of the object (and its antiquarian price) is also influenced by the presence of any additions, deletions, inserts or glue-liners<sup>24</sup>.

Grzegorz Nieć<sup>25</sup>, in the most general outlines, also agrees with Adams's concept. He divides bibliophilic values into two large groups: self-reliant and added. The first ones (self-reliant values) – are the result of the content of a book or its editorial features, such as the author, illustrator, publisher and its place in the world, national

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 5–6; C. Dunin, J. Dunin, *Philobiblon polski*, Wrocław 1983, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> A. Kempa, *Bibliofilskie silva rerum: szkice...*, p. 133–136.

<sup>21</sup> G. Matuszak, *Różne oblicza bibliofilstwa*, Łódź 2014.

<sup>22</sup> F. B. Adams, *The Uses of Provenance...*, p. 20–26.

<sup>23</sup> C. Dunin, J. Dunin, *op. cit.*, p. 30–35.

<sup>24</sup> F. B. Adams, *The Uses of Provenance...*, p. 14–19.

<sup>25</sup> G. Nieć, *Wtórny rynek książki...*, p. 284–289.

and local culture. Repeatedly the factor which strengthens this type of value is objective rarity, which is the result of a limited edition or area of distribution. The second type (added values) – are different types of elements (added after it has been printed) which make the copy of the object unique. These are all types of notes on documents, autographs, dedications, signatures of owners, official annotations, ownership marks (bookplates/ex-libris, supralibros), authors' dedications and bindings.

For the purposes of this study the term "provenance" requires a separate systematization. Although it is well-known in literature and extensively described, studies on its appearance in antiquarian assortment has not been taken so far. A lapidary, but accurate definition is contained in a note included in the *Encyclopedia of knowledge about a book*, where we read that "provenance is the origin of a book, its ancestry, information about its previous owners or former attachment to a collection, documented by ownership signs"<sup>26</sup>. Throughout the history of books, various ways of documenting their membership have been developed and performed for various reasons. Originally, they resulted mainly from utilitarian reasons (protecting books against loss, theft etc.), however, almost always – as Maria Sipayłto notes – a prestigious function accompanied them. "The owner felt a certain element of pride coming from the fact of possessing an especially rare and valuable book"<sup>27</sup>. It is worth adding that the way of marking a book with ownership signs has undergone various transformations over the centuries. The earliest form was a handwritten note (provenance note, signature) which could be observed at the dawn of books. The custom of placing a miniature of the coat of arms of the owner on the manuscript, called a painted bookplate, spread in the mid-fourteenth century. In turn, a bookplate stamp (woodcut) was already known in the fifteenth century in the West, in Poland occurred at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Signs of ownership can be grouped in many ways, but in the literature prevails a view that four main types can be distinguished<sup>28</sup>: 1. Supralibros, 2. ex-libris (bookplates), 3. library stamps, and 4. handwritten provenance notes. It is worth noting that their analysis is not always easy, as they may appear alone or in various configurations, for example supralibros with a stamp, bookplate with a handwritten note. In addition to these types of provenance marks, one has to mention the specific bookbinding (ancestral, institutional) and other components which can contain information about the origins of the paper, for example spine stickers, signatures on the inside cover and seals of institutions<sup>29</sup>. Cecylia Dunin and Janusz Dunin point out that the factor strongly differentiating ownership marks is the type of a collection from which they come from. Typically, signs on papers that belong to public and private collections are different. In the first case, apart from a normally dominant institutional seal, there are usually other signs of belonging, for example signatures, which appear in different places: on the back cover, on the title page, on the pages of the book block<sup>30</sup>. In the second case – we have the owners' handwritten notes.

<sup>26</sup> *Proweniencja*, [in:] A. Birkenmajer (ed.), *Encyklopedia wiedzy o książce*, Wrocław 1971, col. 2005–2006.

<sup>27</sup> M. Sipayłto, *O metodzie badań...*, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> M. Hilchen, *Tradycyjne znakowanie książek*, „Cenne, Bezcenne, Utracone” 2003, no. 1–2, p. 38–42.

<sup>29</sup> M. Wojciechowski, *Exlibris, godło bibliofila*, Wrocław 1978, p. 31–37.

<sup>30</sup> C. Dunin, J. Dunin, *Exlibrisy, książki i ludzie*, Łódź 1974, p. 6–18.

Knowledge of the writing can be invaluable in this case and lead to surprising discoveries, which proved Ludwik Birkenmajer, identifying in this way volumes that belonged to the library of Nicolaus Copernicus<sup>31</sup>.

## Methods. The research sample

Thanks to the arrangements above, one can identify at least seven major categories of ownership marks that may potentially appear in the antiquarian assortment: 1. supralibros, 2. ex-librises, 3. seals, 4. signatures of ownership (author, owner), 5. dedications (of author and others), 6. notes (of the user) and 7. binding. These categories were adopted as a categorization key to analyze the material – auction catalogues of Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop from the years 1992–2014. Only the last category – binding, was not included, because it was analyzed together with supralibros, not separately.

However, already at the designing stage the problem of data overload appeared. In the period of 1992–2014 the examined antiquarian bookshop organized as many as 68 auctions (usually 3 per year) in which a total of 77 778 positions went under the hammer. Nevertheless, a fragmentary analysis of the data allowed to establish that the organization of the majority of auctions was similar (size of auction, assortment, and its diversity), which was confirmed by the vast majority of catalogues that had been constructed according to a similar scheme, and contained repeating elements (the arrangement of contents, illustrations, order of assortment within departments). In these circumstances, it was considered that in order to capture the characteristic phenomena it is enough to apply the research sample. It was selected as follows: the first catalogue of 1992, the second of 1993, the third of 1994, then the first of 1995 etc. The indicated scheme (with a few exceptions)<sup>32</sup> was logically continued until 2014. In the end, the sample was formed by 28 catalogues containing 30 557 descriptions, which represents approx. 41% of the assortment which has appeared in the offer of Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop over 23 years (Table 1).

In a technical sense, analysis consisted of three stages: at first, bibliographic descriptions (especially annotations) were carefully read in search of marked signs of provenance; then categorization was made and compilation was created; at the last stage the statistical analyses were performed. The process of identification was not simple because of at least several reasons. In subsequent years, the methodology of creating descriptions was changing: initially, they were generally short, yet precise, and contained mainly information about the physical condition of the object, edition, the author, traces of provenance, content, potential additives. Nonetheless, with time and with the change in size and volume of directories (particularly from auction no. 92 in 2010), their precision and volume increased, they became fuller, more precise, containing more details concerning the content and authors.

Provenance was a constant element appearing in the Rara Avis catalogue descriptions, and its description was treated with a high care. It was not restricted to

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<sup>31</sup> M. Sipayłło, *O metodzie badań...*, p. 16–17; L. Birkenmajer, *Stromata Copernicana*, Kraków 1924, p. 290.

<sup>32</sup> In the analyzed data set there were a few random catalogues, and catalogue from hundredth, charity auction of 2012.

**Tab. 1.** Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshops auction catalogues in years 1992–2014

Year	All catalogues			Research sample		
	Number of catalogues	Pages*	Number of objects	Number of catalogues	Pages*	Number of objects
	N		N	N		N
1992	1	69	296	1	69	296
1993	3	259	1 489	1	107	630
1994	3	325	2 279	1	106	1 023
1995	3	404	2 980	2	286	1 893
1996	3	508	3 484	1	157	1 086
1997	3	444	3 414	1	148	1 181
1998	3	412	3 318	1	123	918
1999	3	431	3 533	2	300	2 459
2000	3	491	3 887	1	162	1 265
2001	3	492	4 015	1	173	1 450
2002	3	383	2 891	1	124	959
2003	3	416	3 369	1	139	1 219
2004	3	402	3 266	1	145	1 157
2005	3	382	3 462	1	116	920
2006	3	428	3 552	1	156	1 304
2007	3	453	3 715	1	140	1 164
2008	3	478	4 029	1	136	1 108
2009	3	474	3 885	2	317	2 647
2010	3	549	3 787	1	159	1 345
2011	3	834	4 160	2	537	2 693
2012	4	1 063	4 842	2	519	1 155
2013	3	906	4 050	1	296	1 323
2014	3	913	4 075	1	299	1 362
Total	68	11 516	77 778	28	4 714	30 557

Source: own work; \* without unnumbered pages.

mentioning only the mandatory and characteristic elements, such as supralibros, ex-librises, seals and stamps, but it also included information about the less common characteristics which could help to establish provenance (for example information about the library inventory labels, illegible writings, notes plotted in pencil, notes on the content etc.). There has also been a series of useful information on the illegible signs, deleted library stamps and annexes.

Although in the analyzed period the place and method of marking the provenance in the description (including abbreviations) was repeatedly changed, these were never radical changes. Currently (with few exceptions) provenance appears at the beginning of the description, after discussing the physical condition of the object. Ownership signs considered as particularly important (most often supralibros, ex-librises and handwritten dedications) are indicated in bold. The adopted technical and editorial solutions and selected types of description and annotations are illustrated in Fig. 1.

992 BOY-ŻELEŃSKI [Tadeusz] — Piekło kobiet. Warszawa [przedm. 1930]. Bibl. Boy'a. 16d, s. 136, [7]. brosz.

Otarcia okł., blok nieco wygięty. Na s. przedtyt. **Odręczna dedykacja autora** (z mylną datą 15 I 1929) dla Ludwika Szczepańskiego. Ekslibris tegoż. Zbiór felietonów z końca 1929. Ilustr. na tabl. 12.

200.—

579. **BRODOWSKI** Samuel — Żywoty hetmanów Królestwa Polskiego i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Z materyałów po ... w Podhorcach znalezionych wyd. Ż.Pauli. Ozdobione herbami i rytowanymi wizerunkami. Lwów-Stanisławów-Tarnów 1850. Nakł. J.Milikowskiego. 8, s. IV, 314, tabl. 17. opr. wsp. psk. złoc.

E.1, 151. Egz. przeoprawiony, w oprawie Librarium. Podklejony ubytek karty tyt. i narożnik karty następnej, miejscami papier zażółcony i zaplamiony, większość tablic wyraźnie zabrązowana. Ekslibris i skasowane pieczę. Biblioteki Muzeum techniczno-Przemysłowego w Krakowie.

**Portrety hetmanów w stalorytach, w tekście drzeworytowe podobizny herbów.** Życiorysy 66 hetmanów. Wyd.II. 3.600.—

Fig. 1. Exemplary descriptions containing provenance – auctions 87 and 101

Source: auction catalogue. *RARA AVIS Antiquarian Bookshop, auction 87*, Kraków 2009, p. 118; idem, auction 101, Kraków 2012, p. 113

## Provenance of auction objects in the Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop offer

The analysis of Rara Avis auctions offer in the period 1992–2014 has been made in several sections. To confirm the main thesis of the article it was necessary to show that the proportion of objects with provenance is significant and measurable. The compiled data prove that beyond any doubt (Tab. 2). The share of this type in a sample of 31 458 descriptions was 10 084, which means that almost one object in three had information about the provenance (31.2%). In subsequent years the percentage of such facilities was variable, except for two auctions (1 and 10), and always fluctuated in the range of 21.1%–44.2%. This gives rise to the claim that the books with marked provenance are a regular feature in the antiquarian offer.

Tab. 2. Objects with marks of provenance in Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop auctions offer

Auction number	Total number of objects	Objects with provenance Marks								Objects without provenance marks	
		From private collections		From public collections		No data		Total		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1	296	27	9,1%	1	0,3%	0	0,0%	28	9,5%	268	90,5%
3	630	242	38,4%	7	1,1%	0	0,0%	249	39,5%	381	60,5%
7	1 023	343	33,5%	16	1,6%	0	0,0%	359	35,1%	664	64,9%
9	889	270	30,4%	9	1,0%	0	0,0%	279	31,4%	610	68,6%
10	993	164	16,5%	17	1,7%	0	0,0%	181	18,2%	812	81,8%
14	1 086	441	40,6%	12	1,1%	12	1,1%	465	42,8%	621	57,2%
18	1 118	342	30,6%	12	1,1%	0	0,0%	354	31,7%	764	68,3%
20	918	230	25,1%	13	1,4%	5	0,5%	248	27,0%	670	73,0%
25	1 078	247	22,9%	10	0,9%	0	0,0%	257	23,8%	821	76,2%
27	1 138	454	39,9%	10	0,9%	39	3,4%	503	44,2%	635	55,8%
33	1 265	386	30,5%	26	2,1%	49	3,9%	461	36,4%	804	63,6%
35	1 450	409	28,2%	15	1,0%	56	3,9%	480	33,1%	970	66,9%

43	959	209	21,8%	9	0,9%	81	8,4%	299	<b>31,2%</b>	660	68,8%
51	1 219	400	32,8%	20	1,6%	0	0,0%	420	<b>34,5%</b>	799	65,5%
53	1 157	354	30,6%	25	2,2%	0	0,0%	379	<b>32,8%</b>	778	67,2%
61	920	232	25,2%	10	1,1%	0	0,0%	242	<b>26,3%</b>	678	73,7%
69	1 304	205	15,7%	35	2,7%	97	7,4%	337	<b>25,8%</b>	967	74,2%
71	1 164	231	19,9%	15	1,3%	0	0,0%	246	<b>21,1%</b>	918	78,9%
79	1 108	327	29,5%	14	1,3%	0	0,0%	341	<b>30,8%</b>	767	69,2%
83	982	339	34,5%	11	1,1%	0	0,0%	350	<b>35,6%</b>	632	64,4%
87	1 665	342	20,5%	17	1,0%	328	19,7%	687	<b>41,3%</b>	978	58,7%
88	1 345	327	24,3%	18	1,3%	161	12,0%	506	<b>37,6%</b>	839	62,4%
93	1 388	500	36,0%	13	0,9%	0	0,0%	513	<b>37,0%</b>	875	63,0%
95	1 506	307	20,4%	25	1,7%	91	6,0%	423	<b>28,1%</b>	1 083	71,9%
100	1 125	223	19,8%	21	1,9%	0	0,0%	244	<b>21,7%</b>	881	78,3%
101	1 047	220	21,0%	24	2,3%	34	3,2%	278	<b>26,6%</b>	769	73,4%
104	1 323	124	9,4%	94	7,1%	265	20,0%	483	<b>36,5%</b>	840	63,5%
109	1 362	421	30,9%	51	3,7%	0	0,0%	472	<b>34,7%</b>	890	65,3%
Razem	31 458	8 316		550		1 218		10 084		21 374	
Średnia			26,4%		1,7%		3,2%		31,2%		68,8%

Source: own work.

Further aspects of the analysis are detailed and concern narrower issues. The first was to determine which type of ownership (persisted in provenance) finds itself in auction circulation more often. Studies have proven an easy to predict thesis, that the vast majority of offer with marked provenance comes from private collections (including ancestral libraries). In the research sample there were as many as 8 316 objects of this type, compared to 550 coming from public collections, and 1 218 that could not be clearly classified. Books acquired from collectors constituted thus 26.4% of the offer, but among the objects marked with provenance (10 084) they absolutely dominated (82.4%). This type of objects was marked with ownership signs in various forms, ranging from the ornate supralibros and bookplates, to the marginal notes, the signature or initials of the owner. In turn, the positions clearly marked as institutional property (usually library), although they were exhibited regularly (an average of a dozen items per year), constituted only a margin of the offer (5.5%). In this case, the most common type of ownership marks were institution stamps, sometimes bookplates and library stickers. Note that among the objects that were unclassified were mainly notes on the margins (12.1%), which – contrary to ex-libris – rarely contained information on provenance.

Interesting information is provided by pooled analysis of the share of different types of provenance marks in the examined offer (Tab. 3). The largest group of publishing houses with marked provenance was formed by books bearing seals. They appeared on 3 702 objects, which accounted for up to 36.7% of the total works signed by ownership marks. Another large groups were: books containing ownership signatures (other than an author's signatures) – 1 981 (19.6%); various ownership notes (including marginalia) – 1 056 (10.5%); bookplates – 987 (9.8%) and dedications – 875 (8.7%). These five types listed above constituted 85.3% of all provenance characters found in the analyzed set. The share of other signs was

Tab. 3. Typology of provenance marks in Rara Avis offer

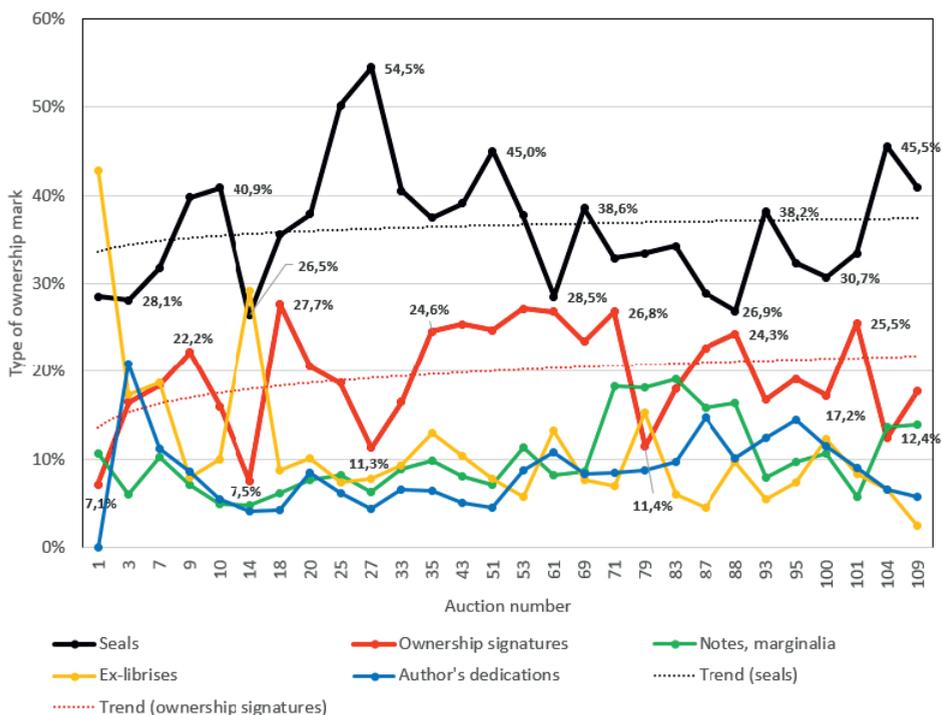
Auction number	Supralibros	Ex-librises	Seals	Ownership signatures	Author's signatures	Author's dedications	Other dedications	Notes, marginalia	Other marks	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	0	12	8	2	0	0	0	3	3	28
3	5	43	70	41	9	52	8	15	6	249
7	9	67	114	66	7	40	7	37	12	359
9	6	22	111	62	6	24	16	20	12	279
10	5	18	74	29	1	10	9	9	26	181
14	107	136	123	35	2	19	5	22	16	465
18	3	31	126	98	0	15	13	22	46	354
20	2	25	94	51	3	21	9	19	24	248
25	1	19	129	48	2	16	10	21	11	257
27	3	39	274	57	39	22	13	32	24	503
33	16	43	187	76	41	30	7	41	20	461
35	0	62	180	118	2	31	13	47	27	480
43	0	31	117	76	0	15	15	24	21	299
51	5	33	189	104	7	19	18	30	15	420
53	2	22	143	103	12	33	13	43	8	379
61	2	32	69	65	2	26	20	20	6	242
69	0	26	130	79	21	28	14	29	10	337
71	0	17	81	66	4	21	8	45	4	246
79	0	52	114	39	21	30	15	62	8	341
83	0	21	120	63	19	34	15	67	11	350
87	1	31	199	156	38	101	27	109	25	687
88	0	49	136	123	34	51	15	83	15	506
93	0	28	196	86	29	64	17	41	52	513
95	1	31	137	81	23	61	12	41	36	423
100	0	30	75	42	13	28	10	26	20	244
101	0	23	93	71	3	25	18	16	29	278
104	3	32	220	60	18	32	21	66	31	483
109	0	12	193	84	47	27	21	66	22	472
Razem	171	987	3 702	1 981	403	875	369	1 056	540	10 084
Średnia	6	35	132	71	14	31	13	37	19	360
%	1.7%	9.8%	36.7%	19.6%	4%	8.7%	3.7%	10.5%	5.3%	100%

Source: own work.

significantly lower: the signatures of authors – 403 (4%), foreign dedications – 369 (3.7%); or symbolic: supralibros – 171 (1.7%). In addition, 540 objects were found (5.3%) containing provenance marks of other categories (e.g. the underscore, strike-through, proofreading corrections made with a pencil in the text or in the margin).

All works with marked provenance disintegrate therefore into two large groups. The first consists of: seals, ownership signatures, notes (marginalia), ex-libris and authors dedication (85.5%), second – of other types (14.7%). The advantage of the first one is, however, so large that meaningful statistical conclusions can be formulated only in relation to this group.

By far the largest group of provenance marks appearing on the pages of Rara Avis auction objects were seals (3 702 objects, averagely 132 for one auction). If as the basis for the calculations we set only works marked with provenance (10 084), their average share was 36.7% and remained always at a high level (26.9%–45.2%), occasionally taking higher values (54.4% in auction 27) – see Chart 1. The marks were not difficult to identify because they are durable and produced with a relatively simple technique – normally by impressing a stamp made of metal, wood, rubber, India rubber or polymer, and to make a stamp a printer's ink, paint or ink (natural, aniline) are needed. In the analyzed collection the most frequent were so-called text stamps. Less popular were those, which, apart from the name of the library, bore an element of emblem or coat of arms. Identification was also facilitated by the fact that the seals were meticulously recorded in the auction catalogues. Moreover, in situations where the subject of the auction bore a stamp of the institution, its name was always given in the catalogue description (except for public libraries). However, if on the document selected for auctioning appeared an ownership stamp other than institutional, its presence was marked only with an appropriate abbreviation and a



**Chart 1.** Main types of provenance marks in Rara Avis offer

Source: own work.

name was added only in exceptional cases, e.g. when there was a suspicion that the name of the owner could increase the interest in the object.

The second group of marks in terms of frequency were the signatures of ownership (1981, averagely 71 for an auction). Their average share was 19.67%, periodically taking higher values (24.3%–27.7%), and from 10<sup>th</sup> auction on it showed a steady upward trend – see Chart 1; on a few auctions (35, 51, 53, 87, 88) even more than 100 items signed by owners were exhibited. Similarly, as in the case of seals, bookstore employees issuing descriptions paid great attention to this type of character. It is worth noting, that in auction catalogues an owner's name was given only at certain positions, but the name of the institution that the employee represented and signed in behalf of was always indicated.

Another type of marks, often appearing in auction catalogues, were ownership notes. The research sample included a total of 1 056 (averagely 37 for an auction), which was 10.5% of all marks. Chronological analysis argues that they were a regular part of the offer, periodically even exceeded 10% (15%–18%, auctions 71–88) – see Chart 1. The discussed category is capacious, it encompasses all sorts of owners' notes, usually located on the title page, marked with ink, pencil or crayons. It is worth adding that when a book had several subsequent owners, the new ones showed a tendency to remove information about the predecessor, so the written records were erased, carved, painted over, pasted or even cut out. Data analysis argues that ownership written records could be located in various places of a given work: on the title page, inside the book, on the inside or the outside of the cover, on the front or back of the book, in the text between the lines, on the margins (*marginalia*). Handwritten notes had a specific form: they usually began with the owner's signature, and were often followed by the phrase: "Ex catalogo librorum..." ("From the library of...") and information about to whom the book belonged, when, where and for how much it had been purchased. The handwritten notes included also authors' dedications or dedications of other persons, initials, monograms and combinations of figures, which sometimes constituted a signature.

In the studied set *ex-libris*es accounted for a significant group (987, averagely 35 objects for an auction), only slightly giving way to notes. During the whole research period they were a regular part of the offer (averagely 9.8%), although from time to time they appeared even up to three times more often (29.2% at auction 14). Bookplates (Lat. *ex libris* – "from the books", also called library or bookish signs) are a well-researched and documented category. In the research sample they were usually located on the back of the front cover, or insert, they contained a passphrase composed at the request of the owner, or holder, or the type of the collection with the inscription ("Ex libris..." or "Ex colectione...", "Ex Bibliotheca..."), sometimes more precisely ("Ex musicis...", "Ex eroticis..."). Some of the bookplates from the test offer were only letter typographic marks, with no other graphics embellishment. Note that in contrast to *supralibros*, bookplates are relatively easy to remove or convert to another one (without leaving a trace of modification), which makes an antiquarian never fully certain about the history of a given book. It is worth noting that *ex-libris*es appear in catalogues of antiquarian bookshops as separate categories and are independent objects of bidding.

The last category, which was often present at auctions, were authors' dedications. This type of ownership marks appeared in the sample 875 times (averagely

31 for an auction) and represented 8.7% of all objects with marked provenance. These were found in each auction catalogue (in the ratio close to the average), although periodically their share was slightly higher (auctions 87–100) and even very high (52 ones at auction 3). Authors' dedications are a specific type of provenance, and have a high source value. They are therefore extraordinarily treated by specialists preparing descriptions in Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop, especially if the dedication was written by hand. Information about the dedication was usually given in bold, sometimes bigger than the rest of the description, and stressed with an exclamation mark.

Other categories of provenance marks appeared in the analysed offer less frequently (a total of 14.7%). Some of them were a regular part of each auction, for example signatures of authors, while others came up occasionally, for example supralibros. Due to the low representation, they are not a material that would allow to formulate meaningful statistical conclusions. In this group there were mainly the signatures submitted by the authors on copies of their works (without any dedication), which appeared 403 times (averagely 14 for an auction, which gives 4.0% of the sample). In similar number appeared dedications written by people other than the author – 369, which is 3.4% of the sample (usually 13 objects at an auction). Note that this type of dedication (unlike authors' dedications) were not popular at the auction. The reason was simple. There is no need for additional justification for the fact that a hypothetical dedication like “To the beloved grandson – Grandma” has no cognitive value and becomes a plain text which disfigures a book, reduces its aesthetics and, thereby, its value. Of course, not all foreign dedications were of an impersonal nature, and on auctions there were fans of this type of objects.

The least frequent category of ownership marks in the Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop auctions offer were supralibros; they appeared only 171 times (which means 6 times per auction on average), and it was slightly more than 4% of the sample. It should be noted, however, that the average values slightly deformed the image of this category. In fact, over 60% of all supralibros (107) came from one auction catalogue (auction 14), while at other times they appeared occasionally. It is worth making a reference to the case of bindings, which are not reported as a separate category. The reason was prosaic – in Rara Avis offer most of the objects of this type was the same thing as supralibros (hence they were not shown separately). We should recall that supralibros (from Lat. *supra libros* – “on the books”) are marks that are “outside” the book, usually embossed on the binding. They are therefore closely linked with the binding as decorative elements, resulting from the invention (or because of) a bookbinder. Although they rarely appeared in the offer of Rara Avis, the catalogue registered all of their popular types, in particular supralibros bearing the coat of arms of the owner included in staffage inserted in the center of the whole composition. Despite the fact that the objects of this type rarely appear at auctions, it should be emphasized that supralibros are of a great source value, because they are difficult to remove or rewrite. This is, first of all, a result of the creation technique. They require special composition of the binding, and usually appear at the request of the first holder of the book.

Besides the mentioned types of provenance signs, also objects containing other marks belonging to previous owners were found in the analysed offer – underlines, strikethrough, proofreading corrections made with a pencil in the text or in the

margins, and so forth. In total, in years 1992–2014 540 such units were identified (ca. 19 per auction), which was slightly more than 5.3% of the works containing ownership marks in the sample. Due to the diversity and ephemerality of this category, it is difficult to attribute some special features to it.

## Summary

The aim of this study was to confirm the hypothesis that provenance is an important bibliophilic value (attracts the attention of collectors, affects their purchasing decisions) and is measurable. This analysis seems to attest this supposition, though this was not proven in a direct way. For objective reasons, only the assortment (supply) was analyzed, the auction transactions were not, as trade secret protected them. However, this fact did not have a significant impact on the results, because on a free market supply and demand must be similar. In the course of the analysis it was possible to determine that the objects with marked provenance constitute a significant proportion of the auction offer (averagely 31.2%) and are a regular part of each auction (their share ranged 21.1%–44.2%). Among particular types of provenance marks the most frequently offered objects were those with seals (36.7%), bearing signatures of ownership (other than authorial; 19.6%), ownership notes (10.5%), bookplates (9.8%) and authors' dedications (8.7%); far fewer were works containing the signatures of the authors (4%), dedications different than authorial (3.7%); the rarest ones were supralibros (only 1.7%).

The study was conducted on the data of Cracow's Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop, using non-random test data which comprised approx. 41% of the whole assortment. The analyses took the form of a typical case study, however, the results that were found are probably at the same level as in other establishments of this type in the country. It can be argued by a primarily high position of Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop which is, next to Warsaw's Lamus, one of the most important science antiquarian bookstores in Poland.

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## Abstract

The aim of the article was to verify the hypothesis that the provenance, which manifests itself at the antiquarian auctions in the form of bookplates, supralibros, stamps, written records etc., is an important element of attracting attention of book collectors, affects their purchasing decisions, and is measurable. To verify the validity of this assumption, an analysis was made of the assortment of one of the largest Polish scientific antiquarian bookstores – Cracow’s Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop. Empirical base formed a non-random trial research which considered 30 557 descriptions, that is approx. 41% of the whole assortment. The results of the analysis confirmed the established hypothesis, because the proportion of objects marked with provenance was high (averagely 31.2%) and stayed on the same level throughout the studied period (21.1%–44.2%). In the course of the analysis it was established that the test object type most often comes from private collections (82.4%), and the dominant categories of marks are: seals (36.7%), the signatures of ownership other than authorial (19.6%), notes

of ownership (10.5%), ex-librises (9.8%) and authors dedications (8.7%); far fewer works contain the signatures of the authors (4%), dedications different than authorial (3.7%); the rarest ones are supralibros (only 1.7%).

**Key words:** bibliophilia, provenance, Rara Avis Antiquarian Bookshop (Poland)

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