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[Polish Scientific Publishers PWN S.A.]

Dwie encyklopedie – zdarzenia z przeszłości

Two encyclopaedias – events from the past

SUMMARY

To describe the important work by people connected with PWN [Polish Scientific Publishers] and the role of PWN in the formation of the first professional editorial team for drafting encyclopaedias after World War II. To present facts and events accompanying the drafting of the thirteen-volume “Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN” (PWN Great Universal Encyclopaedia) and the “Encyklopedia Warszawy” (Encyclopaedia of Warsaw). To describe the opportunities and limitations prevalent in that period, and to show how politics affected people, institutions and their work, reminiscences by a witness of and participant in the events described. The reminiscences are based on the authors’ own texts – articles, letters, public statements and reports, but above all on her personal memories of the events described. Use has also been made of statements and press interviews by Adam Bromberg, a long-time head of PWN, and of memoirs by Leon Marszałek, for many years the chief editor of the encyclopaedias department. The paper presents the history of the drafting of two general encyclopaedias published by PWN: the thirteen-volume “Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN” (PWN Great Universal Encyclopaedia), in the 1950s-1970s, and the “Encyklopedia Warszawy” (Encyclopaedia of Warsaw), in the 1970s-1990s. It describes the creation of the first professional encyclopaedic editorial team in Poland after the war, which bore fruit in the publication of several encyclopaedias addressed to different types of recipients, and made PWN a respected publishing house, at one time the largest in Poland and Europe. The paper also mentions the opportunities and limitations that were involved in the task, one which helped integrate the creative milieu, engaging the most eminent personages in science and culture. It points to the unique intellectual atmosphere that prevailed in the publishing house, which helped work on the encyclopaedias, contributed to developing a sense of involvement and provided intellectual stimulation. An important aspect of the paper relates to the influence of politics on the fate of PWN, including its editorial teams and their work. The paper describes the background and some little known facts behind important political events, as well as the effects they had on the people working for PWN. Reality is created by people – individuals and collectives. Under any circumstances there are possibilities for constructive and creative work “pro publico bono”, as long as the goals of such work are clearly determined; the converse is true, as well. It is for such reasons that investment in human potential is the most profitable and satisfactory kind of enterprise.

Analecta – Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki

[Analecta – Studies and Materials on the History of Science]

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