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The controversial books and Polish librarians

The controversies around children's literature are being created by the adults fulfilling their different roles connected with creating, reviewing, mediating, and advocating children's books (Doyle, 2017). The group with a quite high acknowledged impact in the mediation process are librarians. The issue of „banned/challenged books" in libraries is not new, it already has its quite rich and differentiated literature both professional and academic (Downey, 2013; Kuecker, 2018; Lester, 1953; Molz, 1990; Nye & Barco, 2012; Oltmann, 2016; Taylor & McMenemy, 2013). What should be stressed is the fact that the vast majority of „banned books" are children's ones. The proposed paper discussed the design as well as the results of the preliminary empirical study (CAWI) realized among the Polish public librarians at the turn of 2019 and 2020. Our main research question is **how librarians perceive their roles as mediators in the context of reading practices of children up to 12 years old**. We assume that these roles include both the attitudes and a willingness to take the behavior or behavior itself. The other issue conveyed by the presentation are the attitudes: catalog of professional reactions and/or activities stemmed from the phenomenon of "controversial books". We stay open to the fact of how our respondents define controversy and what attributes (subject, titles' list) they assign to "controversial books". As researchers, we were inspired by a semiological and discursive concept of controversy as an **effect of cultural contradiction** (vs cultural norm) perceived in a communication (Stasiuk-Krajewska, 2019). In the study, we refer in particular to the **theory of gatekeeping by Kurt Lewin in relation to the library environment** (Steele, 2018). The proposed presentation will refer to the dimension of the controversial role of mediators between the text and the child audience.

Keywords: banned books, children literature, gatekeepers, libraries for children and young adults, quantitative research

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Michał Zając, PhD, he graduated from the Institute of Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw he has been employed at the same institute (now part of the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies). He was a visiting scholar at Kent State University

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