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UNIVERSITY LIFE

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FROM AMU TO SPACE!

p. 40

IN THIS ISSUE

IN THIS ISSUE

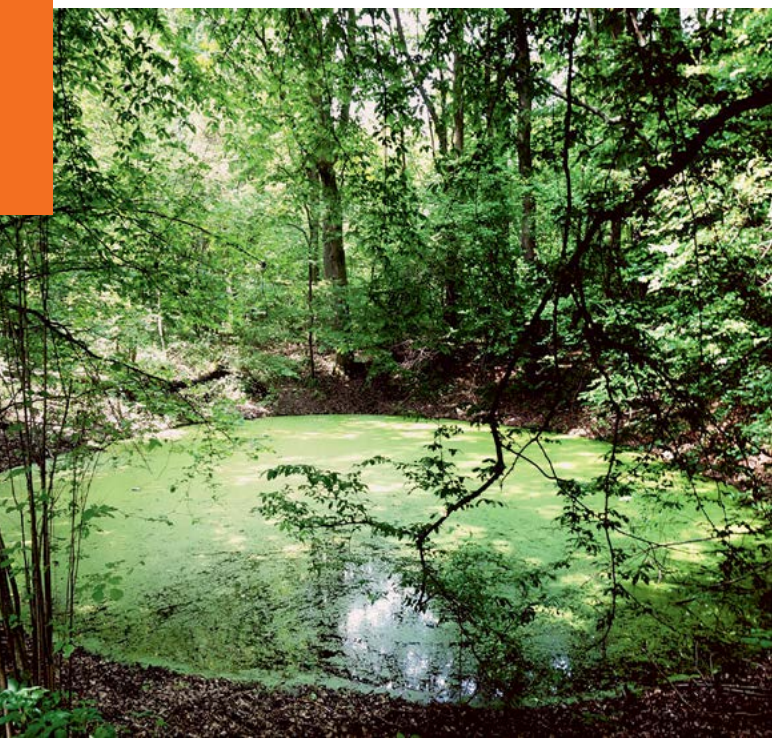
COVER:
Polish astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski with the payload of the Yeast TardigradeGene experiment on the International Space Station (ISS) during Axiom Mission 4.

Photo: European Space Agency

Success of Our PhD Student

Antonina Tosiek won the 2025 Wisława Szymborska Award for her poetry collection, *Żertwy* (Burnt Offerings). She is a Polish philology graduate who specialized in arts and literature. She is currently a PhD student at the AMU Doctoral School of Languages and Literatures.

Antonina Tosiek previously received the Warsaw Literary Award and was nominated for the Stanisław Barańczak Award and Scholarship in Poznań.



When Space Met Earth

Scientists from Poznań want to create the Morasko Impact Science Centre – a unique facility that will show how space meets Earth.

Why Morasko? It is here that **Europe's largest cluster of impact craters** can be found, formed after an asteroid struck Earth around 5,000 years ago. The largest of them is 100 m in diameter and 11.5 m deep! The center will not only present information about meteorites and geology, but also show how cosmic phenomena affect our planet: from floods and tides to global warming. It will also have an archaeological and technological section, with the history of people who may have witnessed the asteroid impact, and stories about the latest scientific discoveries.

Many scientists are already working on and supporting the project. The estimated cost of the center's construction is approximately PLN 100 million.

The Most Talented Scholars Under 30

The Foundation for Polish Science announced a list of the 100 most talented Polish scientists under the age of 30 (START Program). Ten AMU academics are among them. They are: **Dr. Jessie Josepha Foest**, Faculty of Biology; **Mateusz Gołębiewski** and **Martin Solar**, Faculty of Physics and Astronomy; **Dr. Michalina Kowala**, Faculty of Law and Administration; **Dr. Dariusz Lewandowski** and **Daria Nowicka**, Faculty of Chemistry; **Dr. Michalina Kowala**, Faculty of Law and Administration; **Dr. Gerard Ronge** and **Małgorzata Nowak**, Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology; **Alexandra Staniewska**, Faculty of Anthropology and Cultural Studies; and **Dr. Jakub Szewczyk** from the NanoBioMedical Center. Winners of the 2025 START program will receive an annual scholarship of PLN 30,000.

Photo: Adrian Wykrota

AMU Is a Beneficiary of TELME

Adam Mickiewicz University has received €3,756,000 in funding from the European Commission under the Erasmus Mundus — Joint Master (KA2 — Partnerships for Excellence) program for the project "Teaching Foreign Languages in a Multicultural Environment" (TELME). As part of the project, AMU will launch a new graduate program, "Teaching and Learning in a Multicultural Environment."

TELME is an international educational initiative aimed at training foreign language teaching specialists in culturally and linguistically diverse environments. The project is the result of a collaboration between five renowned European universities: Université Rennes 2 (France, project coordinator), Åbo Akademi (Finland), Universidad de Burgos (Spain), University of Limerick (Ireland), and Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

The new program will be taught in English and will include an interdisciplinary curriculum combining linguistics, foreign language teaching, and information and communications technologies (ICT). A key feature of the program is mandatory academic mobility; students will spend part of their studies at partner universities, gaining international experience and earning a joint degree. This will significantly increase their competitiveness in the job market.

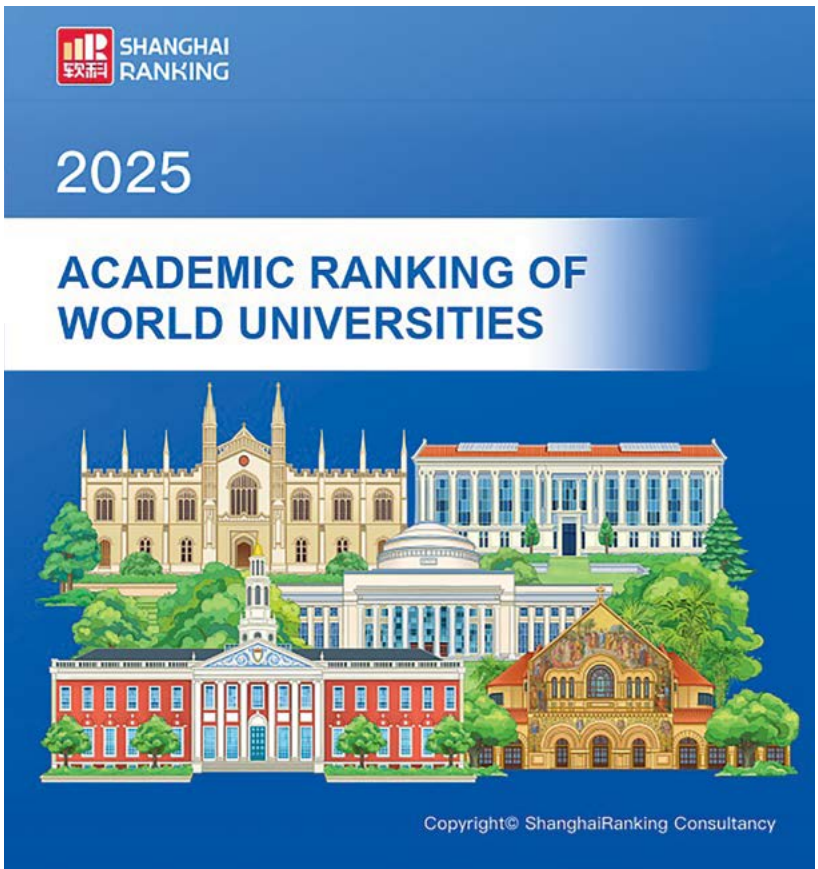


Photo: Maciej Męczyński

Steady and Forward

The 2025 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) has been released. Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań was ranked between 901st and 1,000th place. This result confirms AMU's stable position in the ranking, which has remained at the same level as in previous years. Globally, AMU advanced 29 positions, and within the national ranking, it moved up one position to secure the 4-7th rank in Poland.

PROFESSOR FRANCIS FUKUYAMA RECEIVES HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY

"The laureate is one of the most frequently cited, and above all, influential intellectuals of the 21st century. For years, he has inspired researchers, students, and political decision-makers to reflect on key challenges of global governance, such as the construction of political institutions, social trust, and threats to democracy," said **Professor Szymon Ossowski**, Dean of the AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, during the ceremony awarding the honorary title to Professor Francis Fukuyama.

KRZYSZTOF SMURA

The ceremony attracted large crowds. This is hardly surprising, as the awarding of an honorary doctorate is always an important event for AMU — even more so when the recipient is a world-renowned political scientist, political philosopher and economist. In her opening remarks, Rector **Bogumiła Kaniewska** thanked Professor **Tadeusz Wallas** for his contribution to bringing the laureate to AMU.

Professor **Radosław Fiedler** delivered the laudation, stating that Francis Fukuyama's works had revolutionized the approach to politics, and that the formulation of the concept of "the end of history," permanently enshrined in intellectual history, had been a breakthrough moment. According to Prof. Fiedler, *The End of History and the Last Man*, published in 1992, enriched not only the scientific canon but also permeated public consciousness, becoming a symbol of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

"The community of Poznań's Alma Mater is delighted to announce that Professor Francis Fukuyama will be inducted into the ranks of its Distinguished Honorary Doctors on 16 May 2025, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the development of the social and political sciences. His work transcends disciplinary and national boundaries, building bridges of understanding and opening spaces for dialogue," said **Rector Bogumiła Kaniewska** in her opening speech in the Lubrański Hall. She added, "May this distinction be a symbolic expression of gratitude for your invaluable contribution to the development of political thought; for your courage in asking important and often uncomfortable questions; and for your insightful analyses; and for your constant search for answers to fundamental questions about the future. It is also an expression of gratitude for reminding us that the struggle for freedom, dignity, and democracy never ends."

"I still remember reading, or rather absorbing, Professor Fukuyama's most famous book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, as a student of political science at the AMU Institute of Political Science and Journalism," said **Prof. Szymon Ossowski**, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, welcoming the guest. "More than thirty years after its publication, this book remains a point of reference for any serious discussion on the state and future of democracy. At the time, I could not have dreamed that I would have the honor of meeting its author in person..."

"This remarkable success brought the author worldwide recognition [publication of *The End of History and the Last Man* - ed.] and sparked a debate about the fundamental principles of liberal democracy that continues to this day. Inspired by Hegel, its premise that the fall of communism could mean the end of great ideological conflicts provoked both enthusiasm and criticism, establishing a point of reference for thinkers, politicians, and public opinion," said **Prof. Radosław Fiedler** from the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism. "Today, that earlier optimism seems distant. Liberal democracy, once seen as the crowning achievement of human endeavor, is struggling and is threatened by populism, polarization, and authoritarian tendencies — including in the United States, where it may soon become nothing more than an echo of its former glory. Aware of these changes, Professor Fukuyama remains hopeful. In his later works, he emphasizes that, although history is marked by the return of the demons of the past — nationalism, intolerance, and chaos — it does not have to end in collapse. After a period of turbulence, efforts can be renewed to rebuild liberal democracy, the only system capable of ensuring global peace and predictability. This evolution of views — from a vision of triumph to a reflection on the fragility of ideals — testifies to intellectual honesty and the ability to adapt to a changing reality."

Francis Fukuyama was born on 27 October 1952 in Chicago. He studied political philosophy at Cornell University under Allan Bloom and went on to complete a doctorate in political science at Harvard University. He has taught at both Johns Hopkins and Stanford universities, and is currently an Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow at the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at the latter institution. Fukuyama's career also includes roles at the RAND Corporation and as Deputy Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the US Department of State during the pivotal period of the end of the Cold War. He is the author of the critically acclaimed book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), which sparked an international debate on the future of liberal democracy. His works, which have been translated into many languages, combine philosophy, history, and political science to offer an insightful look at contemporary social and political challenges. In *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (2002), Fukuyama addresses the impact of biotechnology on human nature, democracy, and political stability. He analyses how developments in the biological sciences, including genetic engineering and neuropharmacology, could influence individual identity and social relations, prompting reflection on the boundaries of technological progress and ethics. This work, one of the first comprehensive studies of the subject, established his reputation as a visionary thinker who combines the humanities with reflections on the consequences of the biotechnological revolution. He has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the Johann Skytte Prize in Political Science (2015), the Book Critics Award (1992), and the Riggs Award for Lifetime Achievement in International and Comparative Administration (2024). Francis Fukuyama's reflections on institutional stability, democratic processes, and identity politics establish him as one of the most significant intellectual figures of the 21st century. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

PROF. BOGUMIŁA KANIEWSKA

RECTOR OF ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ

EVALUATION: WHAT IS IT? WHAT SHOULD IT BE?

Photo: Adrian Wykrota

2026 is the year of the ministerial evaluation of the quality of scientific activity. We already know that it will be conducted according to the existing rules and that the list of journals will not change. We are still waiting for the final regulations to be published, which will set out the conditions for next year's evaluation. Consultations on the draft regulations have already been completed.

BEFORE THE SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE EVALUATION

It seems that everyone agrees that the current evaluation model should be replaced by the end of the evaluation period. There is widespread agreement that several changes need to be made to improve the effectiveness of the evaluation process. The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) has proposed these changes, which should minimize the most harmful effects of the current evaluation model.

In accordance with this proposal, the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education submitted a draft regulation amending the regulation on the evaluation of scientific activity for consultation on 14 March this year. The draft authors proposed a number of amendments aimed at improving the evaluation process. These include clarifying the method of assessing the third criterion ("impact"), taking the scientific achievements of doctoral students into account, specifying the rules for evaluating new disciplines and recognizing the value of monographs. This last point is of particular importance for the humanities and social sciences.

While these are steps in the right direction, there are still too few of them. That is why, during the consultation period, we asked the ministry to introduce further changes. The aim is to move as far away as possible from "point picking," which has little to do with scientific activity and more to do with picking mushrooms in autumn. The evaluation process must be free from distortion, and its results must provide an accurate and impartial representation of scientific reality. However, even if it were improved, the current evaluation model has already been discredited and is widely perceived as ineffective. This was clearly demonstrated during the discussion about whether to abandon or postpone the evaluation for another year. So why was the evaluation not abandoned, despite the important and rational arguments put forward? Legal considerations prevailed: abandoning the evaluation would require an amendment to the Law on Higher Education and Science, while extending the evaluation period would condemn the scientific community to another year of the old regulations. For these reasons, the CRASP proposed that the results of the 2022–2025 evaluation should not affect subsequent years' subsidy amounts determined by the algorithm, nor should they limit rights to conduct studies, doctoral schools, promotion procedures or the possibility of applying for research university status. The last evaluation in its current form would therefore aim to show the state of Polish science. However, due to the imprecision of its results, these should only be used for informational purposes, as unadulterated and undistorted as possible. The abolition of sanctions is not the only change we are calling for. The evaluation of universities should be separate from the evaluation of research institutes and Polish Academy of Sciences institutes. The CRASP proposes that the Science Evaluation Committee adopt different reference units for different scientific institutions. University employees are required not only to conduct research, but also to perform time-consuming and engaging teaching duties, which are no less important from a social perspective. Comparing them with scientists, who can devote all their time to research, condemns research and teaching staff to poorer results and places universities lower in evaluation rankings.

The objective should therefore be to develop an evaluation method that provides an accurate representation of Polish science and its true potential.

It is also absolutely necessary to introduce a rule whereby the number N (number of employees of the evaluated entity conducting scientific activity in a given discipline) used in calculation methods is averaged over the four years under evaluation (in the case of new disciplines, the evaluation covers only the period during which the discipline has existed). This is essential to prevent the manipulation of employment and other forms of so-called optimization that distort the true picture of a scientific discipline. It is also a way to prevent an entity that has gained the right to award academic degrees from being unable to "consume" them due to insufficient representation of the discipline.

Other proposals submitted to the ministry involved revising the rules so that staff members on long-term leave would be excluded from statutory sanctions and the N number would no longer be factored in. The number of the so-called slots would also be differentiated between employees in research only and research and teaching positions. Another important proposal was to

introduce a rule whereby field 3N would be filled with the highest-scoring publications (200 points) without restriction, and completed with lower-scoring publications taken from the slots.

These proposals were not devised specifically for the purposes of the draft regulation. The discussion on how to evaluate scientific activity has been ongoing for years. We took it up in the previous term, repeatedly submitting our proposals and ideas to the ministry. There are many differences in the details of articles, positions, declarations and discussions on the evaluation, and a variety of opinions are presented. The extent of these differences was revealed during the aforementioned heated debate on the purpose of evaluating the period 2022–2025: some called for the evaluation to be abandoned, some for it to be extended, and some for it to continue under the same rules. Regardless of the positions presented, the academic community agrees on several points. Firstly, evaluation is unavoidable and it is an essential tool for managing science. Secondly, no evaluation model will satisfy everyone, nor can any be considered a perfect tool. However, some models are better than others. The objective should therefore be to develop an evaluation method that provides an accurate representation of Polish science and its true potential. Thirdly, therefore, evaluation after 2026 should change completely.

Why is it necessary to depart from the current model? Its numerous flaws have been discussed many times, with the most important being its susceptibility to manipulation and encouragement of ethically questionable actions. The Jagiellonian University Rector's Council presented a list of shortfalls in its statement of 6 February this year:[1]

Disadvantages of the current evaluation model include:

1. Preference for scientific disciplines for which N, i.e. the number of scholars conducting research, is low (e.g. 20), compared to disciplines represented by a large number of employees (e.g. 300) [...]
2. Failure to take into account the differences between research-oriented institutions (e.g. the Polish Academy of Sciences institutes) and institutions with a mixed research-teaching profile (e.g. universities).
3. Standardization of requirements for research staff and research and teaching staff, despite their responsibilities being significantly different [...].
4. The evaluation system's susceptibility to the artificial optimization of results, which is a consequence of its algorithmic nature and mechanical data conversion. This is manifested in:
   - stimulating unethical behavior aimed at "optimizing" indicators at the expense of research integrity, as exemplified by the recently described practice of so-called paper mills;
   - promoting so-called job optimization, i.e. the 'transfer' of non-publishing academic teachers employed in research or research and teaching positions to teaching positions, leaving only those employees who demonstrate high scientific activity in these positions [...]
   - favoring disciplinary optimization, which involves transferring employees between disciplines or "artificially" creating categories of dual-discipline researchers, with the aim of increasing "gains" or reducing "losses" for a given discipline [...]. Depreciation of the role of natural teams conducting research in a single discipline and rewarding their fragmentation [...].
5. The flawed linking of the results of the evaluation, which is based mainly on the assessment of employees' average scientific effectiveness, and the rights of separate discipline councils to award academic degrees. This flaw is related to the lack of direct correlation between the assessment of all employees within a discipline and the competence of the scientific discipline council, which usually comprises the most recognized scientists in a given research unit.
6. The use of a list of scored journals in the evaluation process, against which numerous well-founded objections have been raised [...]
7. Maintaining so-called predatory journals on the list of journals [...]
8. The imposition of unnecessary administrative duties on academic teachers, such as the requirement to regularly submit statements regarding the inclusion of publications in the evaluation process. This obligation may also expose universities to losses. For example, if a publication is the result of research financed by the university and the relevant statement has not been submitted due to the death or illness of an employee, the university may be liable.
9. A significant discrepancy between the evaluation results and the university's position in international rankings [...].
10. A mechanical approach to assessing scientific activity, which results in a lack of rewards in the evaluation system for above-average achievements that constitute evidence of scientific excellence. Examples include publications in the most prestigious journals, obtaining the most valuable research grants (e.g. ERC, Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence) and high citation indices. These are

[1] https://www.uj.edu.pl/wiadomosci/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_d82lKZvhit4m/10172/157866739

"lost" in averaged and point-based criteria [...].

11. The excessive production of scientific publications results in the unnecessary expenditure of public funds on the publication process, particularly in the case of poor quality open access journals.
12. The exceptionally high cost of the evaluation process at both the central and unit levels. This is particularly related to multi-parameter optimization of evaluation results, which is time-consuming and costly. It requires the employment of "experts" in result optimization and the purchase of computer software for this purpose. This has little impact on improving the quality of research.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Reflection on the new evaluation model should start with the purpose of evaluation. In my opinion, the answer is quite simple: the fundamental purpose of evaluation is to provide a reliable and impartial overview of Polish science and its institutions. This information is required by all universities and should be used to develop and improve the quality of their research. At a systemic level, these findings should be used to grant authorizations. Ultimately, it should contribute to shaping the state's science policy, including the allocation of financial resources. However, it should not generate a race for points (and their financial and prestigious consequences) in the form of a ranking list. Rankings serve other purposes and these purposes limit their objectivity, or even prevent it entirely.

Expert institutional evaluation should be a tool for implementing state science policy.

Experience in other countries, such as France and Sweden, shows that the most effective evaluation model is the expert model, which I would call "accreditation." It follows a pattern familiar from many accreditation processes:

1. A university prepares a self-assessment report containing strictly defined data;
2. Experts evaluate the report and visit the university;
3. The expert team then prepares a report evaluating the university's activities positively or negatively.

This resembles the model used by the Polish Accreditation Committee, which is preparing to introduce comprehensive unit evaluations to replace time-consuming, field-specific evaluations. The European University Association's Institutional Evaluation Programme (EUA-IEP) follows a similar pattern. Adopting a comparable approach to assessing the quality of scientific activities would be a significant step towards subjecting universities to a uniform, comprehensive evaluation encompassing research, education and the so-called "third mission," i.e. community outreach. The "accreditation" in the institutional model should also mean departing from the parameterization system, whereby a university either receives accreditation or does not. The same should apply to a positive evaluation. If a university is accredited, it would be granted the right to award academic degrees by the Council for Scientific Excellence upon request.

Naturally, this project requires further refinement and discussion within the academic community. Rather than eliminating disciplines, it proposes a shift from disciplinary evaluation to university evaluation. An evaluation designed in this way should take place much less frequently — preferably once every six years. However, according to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, this will probably be a five-year cycle. The format of the self-assessment report is yet to be decided, but from a university rector's perspective, I would prefer a concise document containing select data. Universities could report their greatest achievements, limited by a number N (2, 2.5 or 3?). The information obtained in this way would enable those responsible for state science policy to identify the strengths and weaknesses of research in Poland. The assessment carried out by experts, whether national or international, would not be limited to scientific categories such as A+, A or B, which contribute little beyond frustration. Instead, it would verify the university's self-awareness through description and thus stimulate its development.

Is this an ideal model? Certainly not, as "ideal evaluation" seems to be an oxymoron. Although expert assessment generates higher costs, if it were conducted every five or six years and relieved of bureaucracy (with no slots, only the best achievements in the first criterion, and a reasonable scope for the self-assessment report), it would save time and effort, and the real costs would not exceed those of the current model. Questions also arise about the credibility and objectivity of experts. This requires the development of a robust selection process and fostering trust within the academic community. It is worth working on this for the benefit of us all.

Expert institutional evaluation should be a tool for implementing state science policy, including stimulating research development and the entities that carry it out. Such a system would free us from ranking lists and lists of publishers and journals (which do not exist in other countries), and above all, it would free us from unhealthy competition that leads to ethically questionable activities. ■

PROF. RAFAŁ WITKOWSKI

AMU VICE-RECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

ONE HUNDRED AND TWO THANKS!

For a historian, the experience of war is particularly significant, given that it has been a constant presence throughout human history since the earliest recorded events. It has also been a frequent topic of conversation within my family. However, what happened after 24 February 2022 brought a completely different kind of experience — a personal and direct one — that will be recorded in history books.

When I took over coordination of a special team by the AMU Rector's decision, I was unaware of what this responsibility would entail. I quickly learned, however, that my phone battery would not last a day. I knew Ukraine well, having visited the country before, collaborated with Ukrainian universities and represented AMU at numerous events. For instance, in autumn 2021, the Faculty of Philosophy organized the "Polish-Ukrainian Summer School: Freedom and Politics," which included a study visit to the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk.

From the very beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, we witnessed AMU employees embodying the spirit of solidarity. Everyone got involved voluntarily, devoting their time, energy and money. Regardless of our position at AMU, we came up with all the ideas for activities. Requests for substantive support from the university administration, local authorities and other institutions were always met with a positive response. We had no problem finding help to implement AMU initiatives from private individuals and organizations, foreign entrepreneurs (e.g. a transport company from Italy) and partner universities (e.g. in Taiwan). Unfortunately, the war is still ongoing, and our solidarity is needed more than ever.

None of this would have been possible without the harmonious and fruitful cooperation of the many wonderful people from various AMU units who prepared and carried out these activities with great commitment. One hundred thanks would not come close to expressing my gratitude, so as coordinator of these activities at AMU, I would like to thank you one hundred and two times! ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

AMU for UKRAINE

170 - page report documenting AMU's activities in support of Ukraine after February 24, 2022

560 entries describing specific actions

AMU's Support for Reforming Higher Education in Ukraine:

50 events at AMU

52 Ukrainian universities involved

1357 participants in meetings at AMU

3,913,549 PLN received in support from NAWA, NCBiR and AMU

Prof. Marta Krenz-Niedbała and Dr. Sylwia Łukasik

THE SCYTHIANS WERE NOT SO SCARY

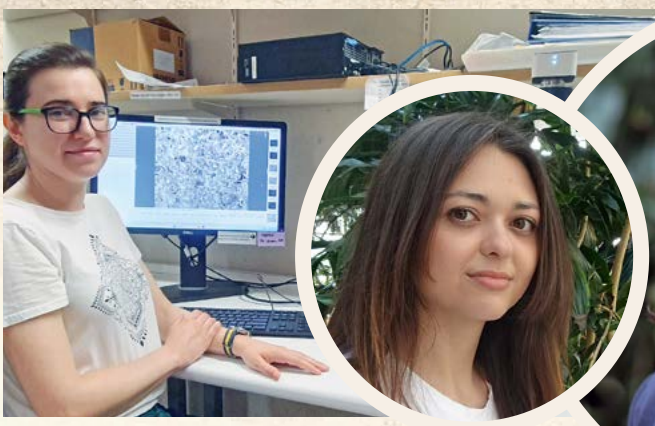
Professor Marta Krenz-Niedbała leads a team at the AMU Institute of Human Biology and Evolution. Collaborating with leading anthropologists from around the world, her team has produced notable research as well as publications in *Science* and *Nature*.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

The team consists of young scientists: **Dr. Sylwia Łukasik**, the professor's long-standing and closest collaborator; and three PhD students: **Wiktoria Woźniak**, **Anna Walczak**, and **Marta Gratkowska**, who is currently on a scholarship at Stockholm University. There, she is exploring the secrets of archaic DNA at the Centre for Palaeogenetics under the supervision of Dr. Maja Krzewińska.

The anthropologists study biological phenomena based on human skeletal remains from around the world, from prehistory to the present day. Their interests include health, demography, and microevolutionary changes in the skeleton. The researchers treat biological and cultural traits as manifestations of adaptation to the environment. They are curious about how the human body responds to living conditions.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz, Archive



Wiktoria Woźniak

Anna Walczak

Prof. Marta Krenz-Niedbała

Marta Gratkowska

Dr. Sylwia Łukasik

"We formulate hypotheses and test them using model populations," explains Prof. Krenz-Niedbała. "For instance, we have demonstrated the impact of the early stages of urbanization in Poland on human populations, particularly with regard to children's remains. Children react very quickly to favorable and unfavorable changes in their environment. We have shown that respiratory diseases were more prevalent in fortified settlements than in rural areas."

IT ALL STARTED WITH THE SCYTHIANS

The researchers have enjoyed considerable success, including publishing in *Nature* and *Science*. The team's origins date back to when Dr. Łukasik was a student. Professor Krenz-Niedbała immediately recognized her potential. "She turned out to be the ideal researcher," she says. "She met all the criteria I could think of. Substantive knowledge is important, but the right personality traits and commitment to work are qualities that are difficult to acquire later in life."

Years ago, when the opportunity arose to collaborate with Moldova, specifically with Professor Vitalij Sinika — the current head of the Archaeological Laboratory at Pridnestrovian State University in Tiraspol — Sylwia Łukasik was just starting her doctoral studies. The collaboration focused on studying the Scythians, a population that inhabited the Black Sea region in ancient times. The young anthropologist took up the challenge, which turned out to be the beginning of a wonderful scientific adventure. The research topic concerned a key area that attracts the attention of scientists from all over the world. Around 4,000 years ago, a population speaking Proto-Indo-European dialects expanded from the Pontic Steppe, which includes the Black Sea region. These languages are now the most widely spoken on all continents. It was these migrants who shaped the gene pool of the Eurasian population.

"Studies on the Scythians, led by Dr. Łukasik, sparked interest in the scientific community," reports Prof. Krenz-Niedbała. "We have become internationally recognized in the field of research on nomadic populations from the Black Sea region. This has led to us being invited to collaborate with Professor David Reich from Harvard University, a specialist in paleogenomics — the study of the human genome based on ancient DNA. He runs one of the world's largest research centers of this type," she says.

THE KEY DISCOVERIES

In 2018, Prof. Krenz-Niedbała and Dr. Łukasik joined an interdisciplinary team of over 200 scientists from around the world, including archaeologists, anthropologists, and palaeogeneticists. Their collaboration resulted in three publications in *Science* in 2022 and one in *Nature* in 2025. The first article demonstrated that the Anatolian region played a significant role in the introduction of agriculture, challenging the previous belief that this was primarily confined to the Fertile Crescent. The second paper addressed migrations 5,000 years ago and the spread of the Indo-European language, while the third focused on Mycenaean culture in ancient Greece. It emerged that this population was not genetically homogeneous, with admixtures of steppe peoples' genes found among both ordinary inhabitants and the elite. The researchers concluded that the people who left their genetic signatures did not conquer the land by force, but through assimilation. The *Nature* publication indicates that nomads from the Pontic Steppe employed a similar strategy. They conquered territories and assimilated with the local population simultaneously.

"This sheds completely new light on the migration of steppe peoples," explains Dr. Łukasik. "Previously, they were considered brutal invaders who wreaked havoc

The Past Shapes the Future

The 50th National Scientific Conference of the Polish Anthropological Society (PAS), "The Past Shapes the Future: Humans from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene," will take place at AMU Collegium Minus and the Faculty of Biology. This will be a particularly significant event, as 2025 marks the centenary of the Polish Anthropological Society. The PAS was founded at the University of Poznań by **Prof. Adam Wrzosek**. It currently has around 200 members across 10 branches.

"This conference is very prestigious for us, "says PAS Vice-President Prof. Marta Krenz-Niedbała. "We are organising it in such a way that it will be of interest and of great importance to our discipline. We have invited some excellent speakers, including Prof. Robert Sapolsky from Stanford University, who is an expert in the field of stress; Prof. Piers Mitchell from the University of Cambridge, who is the editor of the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* and studies the phenomenon of parasitic infection in humans throughout history; and Prof. Ewa Sikora, who is a renowned researcher of human ageing processes.

The conference will reflect on anthropological achievements to date and highlight inspiring prospects for the future. It is being held under the honorary patronage of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, the Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, the Mayor of Poznań, the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań."

and subjugated the population through violence, almost wiping them out completely. It turns out that they had a different, more effective strategy."

Most importantly, Prof. Reich's team proved that the homeland of the people who spread Indo-European languages across Eurasia was the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga regions. The genomes of the Pontic Steppe population contain a mixture of genes from European farmers, Balkan hunter-gatherers, and people from the Caucasus and the East.

"This contradicts the common belief that the people living in a given area today are descended from a single, 'pure' group of ancestors. It turns out that we have been exchanging genes throughout history. This should make us think again about national identity," comments Prof. Krenz-Niedbała.

THE LIFESTYLE OF THE STEPPE PEOPLES

It is worth remembering that the Scythians were nomadic horsemen who were among the first to travel on horseback. They led a warlike lifestyle and were distinct from other groups. "We decided to check whether they differed biologically from other peoples, as they have mainly been known from a cultural perspective until now, thanks to archaeological data," says Sylwia Łukasik. "Our research showed that they were in good health, but died young, which is consistent with historical descriptions of their lifestyle. It can be assumed that they took part in warfare, which contributed to higher mortality rates among young adults."

It is most likely that the Scythians maintained their dominance by recruiting people from conquered populations into their army, as indicated by non-metric dental trait studies. Exchanging genes and cultural elements facilitates adaptation to the environment and expansion.

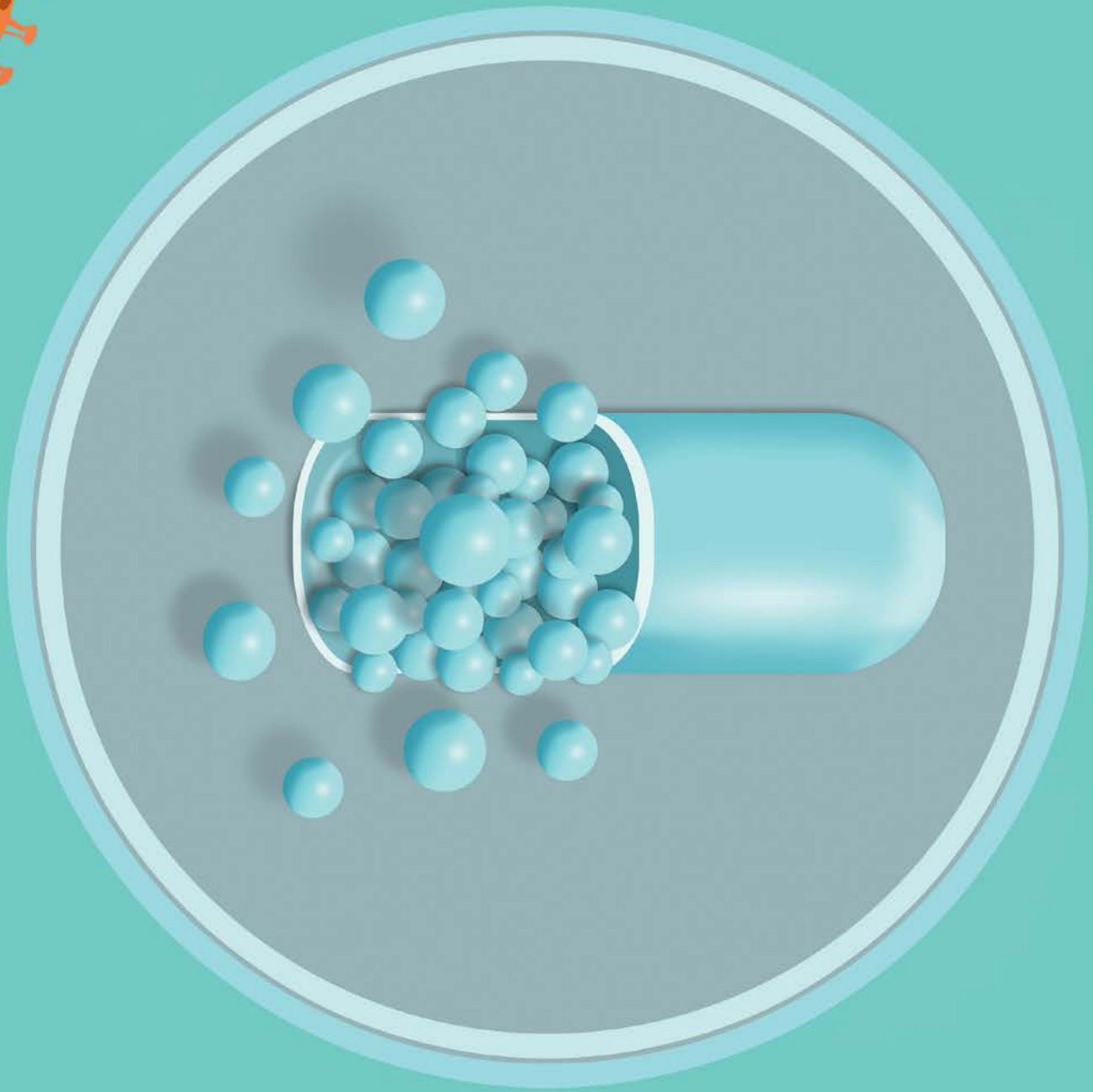
Anthropologists are currently investigating whether the Scythians were biologically similar to other human groups. Together with Dr. Cristina Tica, formerly of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Arizona State University, and now at the University of Copenhagen, they are studying their diet and mobility. Funding is also being sought to continue comparative studies of the Scythians and other nomadic peoples, such as the Cimmerians from Moldova, the Sarmatians from Hungary, and the Saka from Kazakhstan. The aim is to establish how similar or different the lifestyles of these groups were.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND MEDICINE

Another area of interest for Prof. Krenz-Niedbała's team is collaborating with the medical community. Anthropologists analyze minor changes to the human skeleton that may be caused by genetic and developmental factors. They compare bones from hundreds or thousands of years ago with modern human skeletons to determine the changes that have occurred. They use anonymous CT scans in their research. Anna Walczak studies changes in the skull, while Marta Gratkowska focuses on the spine.

The researchers are also preparing case studies of individuals with rare diseases. They have developed 3D models of a man with achondroplasia and other genetically determined skeletal dysplasias. Materials posted in the open repository are particularly popular among social media users. Together with Brazilian graphic designer Cicero Moraes, the team has even reconstructed the appearance of a resident of early medieval Poland. "The 3D methods we use allow us to collaborate with researchers from all over the world," says Sylwia Łukasik. "For example, we collaborate with Dr. Alexandros Karakostis from the University of Tübingen in the field of physical activity reconstruction. Thanks to a high-resolution scanner, we can take measurements that would not be possible on real bones," she explains.

Current research is being conducted in collaboration with Prof. Jane Ellen Buikstra, one of the world's most renowned biological anthropologists at Arizona State University, on the skeleton of a mature woman with severe deformities of the clavicle, scapula, and humerus. "We believe that this is an example of a perinatal complication. Such advanced changes have not yet been documented in paleopathological literature," concludes Marta Krenz-Niedbała. ■



NANOCAPSULES FOR CANCER

A team of scientists from the AMU Centre for Advanced Technologies, led by **Professor Artur R. Stefankiewicz**, is conducting preliminary research on a new generation of coordination cages. These structures could potentially serve as nanotransporters in the future, enabling the targeted delivery and controlled release of drugs in cancer cells. While the project is still in its infancy, its success could significantly reduce therapy-related side effects and improve patients' quality of life.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

Prof. Artur R. Stefankiewicz, Dr. Venkateswarulu Mangili (second from the right), PhD students: Agnieszka Bajer, Sidharth Walia (first from the right)

Our project combines supramolecular chemistry with enzyme-activated drug delivery methods," says project manager **Dr. Venkateswarulu Mangili**. "Unlike traditional approaches, which often rely on passive targeting or involve systemic toxicity, our planned solution will use specially designed nanocapsules that surround the anti-cancer drugs and react to enzymes present in the tumor microenvironment. These capsules will remain stable in healthy conditions but will disintegrate in the presence of specific tumor enzymes, enabling precise drug delivery. This approach will reduce toxicity while increasing the effectiveness of treatment," he explains.

In simple terms, coordination cages are small, hollow structures made of metal ions and organic molecules. They are intended to act as molecular containers, capable of transporting and protecting drugs. As part of a project at the AMU Centre for Advanced Technologies, the researchers are planning to design capsules that remain closed while circulating in the body, opening only in response to specific enzymes present in the tumor microenvironment to allow the drug to be released at the optimal location.

This research forms part of the "Enzyme Responsive Nanoscale Supramolecular Capsules with Application in Anticancer Drug Delivery" project, which is funded by the POLONEZ BIS 2 grant from the National Science Centre and the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions).

Prof. Artur R. Stefankiewicz is leading the entire project, focusing his research on controlling and utilizing molecular recognition and self-association processes to obtain functional and complex nanostructures. The strategic use of dynamic covalent and non-covalent bonds plays a key role in this process.

Professor Stefankiewicz has numerous publications in renowned scientific journals to his name, including *Science*, *Nature Chemistry*, *Nature Communications*, *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, *Chemical Science*, *Advanced Science and Chemical Reviews*. He has participated in and been awarded many prestigious research programs, including the SONATA BIS 8, LIDER, and OPUS grant projects. Since 2020, he has also been the faculty coordinator for the European EPICUR grant.

Prof. Stefankiewicz is currently supervising the scientific progress of Dr. Mangili's project. Dr. Mangili is a postdoctoral researcher with over twelve years of experience in supramolecular chemistry, organic chemistry, and materials synthesis. Dr Mangili has gained experience at the University of Ulsan (South Korea) and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, among other institutions. He specializes in designing

Fot. Władysław Gardasz, Unsplash

and synthesizing functional molecular systems, particularly self-assembling structures, for use in drug delivery, detection, and materials science.

The project is being carried out in collaboration with two PhD students. Agnieszka Bajer is synthesizing and characterizing cobalt-based coordination cages, and Sidharth Walia is obtaining new platinum-coordinated structures for potential use in catalysis and molecular recognition. Dr. Mangili is overseeing all research work, including the coordination of the doctoral team.

"In the long term, I would like to establish my own research group specializing in bio-inspired supramolecular chemistry at the intersection of chemistry, biology, and materials science. In the near future, I intend to apply for funding under the OPUS and SONATA BIS programmes," explains Dr. Mangili.

The team faces several challenges. One of the biggest will be ensuring that the designed coordination cages respond only to enzymes specific to the tumor microenvironment, without activating in healthy tissues. Another important challenge will be finding a balance between the stability of the capsules in the bloodstream and their rapid and selective degradation in the presence of the selected enzyme. The team also plans to focus on ensuring the biocompatibility of all components of the system — the metal ions, organic linkers, and drugs — as well as developing effective encapsulation methods and controlled, long-term release.

Our project combines supramolecular chemistry with enzyme-activated drug delivery methods.

The research is still in its early stages. "We have successfully synthesized and characterized water-soluble coordination cages, and we are currently working on optimizing their capacity for encapsulating drugs and their release mechanisms," explains the project manager. "The next step will be to conduct research on drug release in response to enzymes. Working on this project has given me valuable insight into the design and synthesis of coordination cages that could be used for controlled drug delivery in the future. I have also learned about the importance of precise molecular architecture and how to translate laboratory results into practical applications," concludes Dr. Mangili. ■

Prof. UAM Łukasz Kaczmarek

TO REJOICE IN THE TRUTH

We climb a narrow staircase of about a dozen steps, knock quickly on the door, and enter the AMU Psychophysiology Laboratory: Gaming & Streaming. The laboratory is headed by **Professor Łukasz Kaczmarek**, an extremely positive and experienced researcher who specializes in the psychophysiology of positive emotions. He studies their structure and functions in various areas of life, such as intimate relationships and gaming.

KRZYSZTOF SMURA

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

Three rooms that were once used as apartments have been handed over to researchers of emotions, thanks to the Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science, **Prof. Mariusz Urbański**. During the experiments, participants' average blood pressure can reach 150 mmHg! To help the scientists learn about and understand human emotions, the entire facility has been equipped with state-of-the-art technology to support their research. Prof. Łukasz Kaczmarek's laboratory is regularly visited by doctoral students, graduate students, and interns. The core team currently consists of **Dr. Michał Kossakowski**, who according to Prof. Kaczmarek is one of the most experienced psychophysiology researchers, and **Patrycja Chwiłkowska, M.A.**, a doctoral student with extensive experience of conducting experimental research. Without them, this level of work in the lab would not be possible. The team is currently investigating the emotional and social aspects of gaming. Researchers are observing what is really so appealing about playing games with other people. And there is a lot to learn...

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

A MOBILE LABORATORY

"I have been researching positive emotions for over twenty years. I came here from Łazy near Mielno with no idea what to expect. Fortunately, I found some really great mentors," says **Prof. Łukasz Kaczmarek** with a smile. At first, his workplace resembled a mobile laboratory. In 2003, **Prof. Jerzy Brzeziński**, who was then head of the AMU Institute of Psychology, told him, "You are in your first year of doctoral studies, which means you are capable. Apply for grants." And so it happened. He wrote a grant proposal for psychophysiological research. This was essentially a novelty, as the Institute of Psychology did not have any experimental laboratories at the time. Questionnaire-based methods were standard practice. However, Łukasz Kaczmarek was interested in experimentation and moving beyond the subjective beliefs of research participants. He believes that the results of observations and physiological measurements often contradict self-reported statements by research participants. These measurements are therefore an essential source of knowledge about human beings.

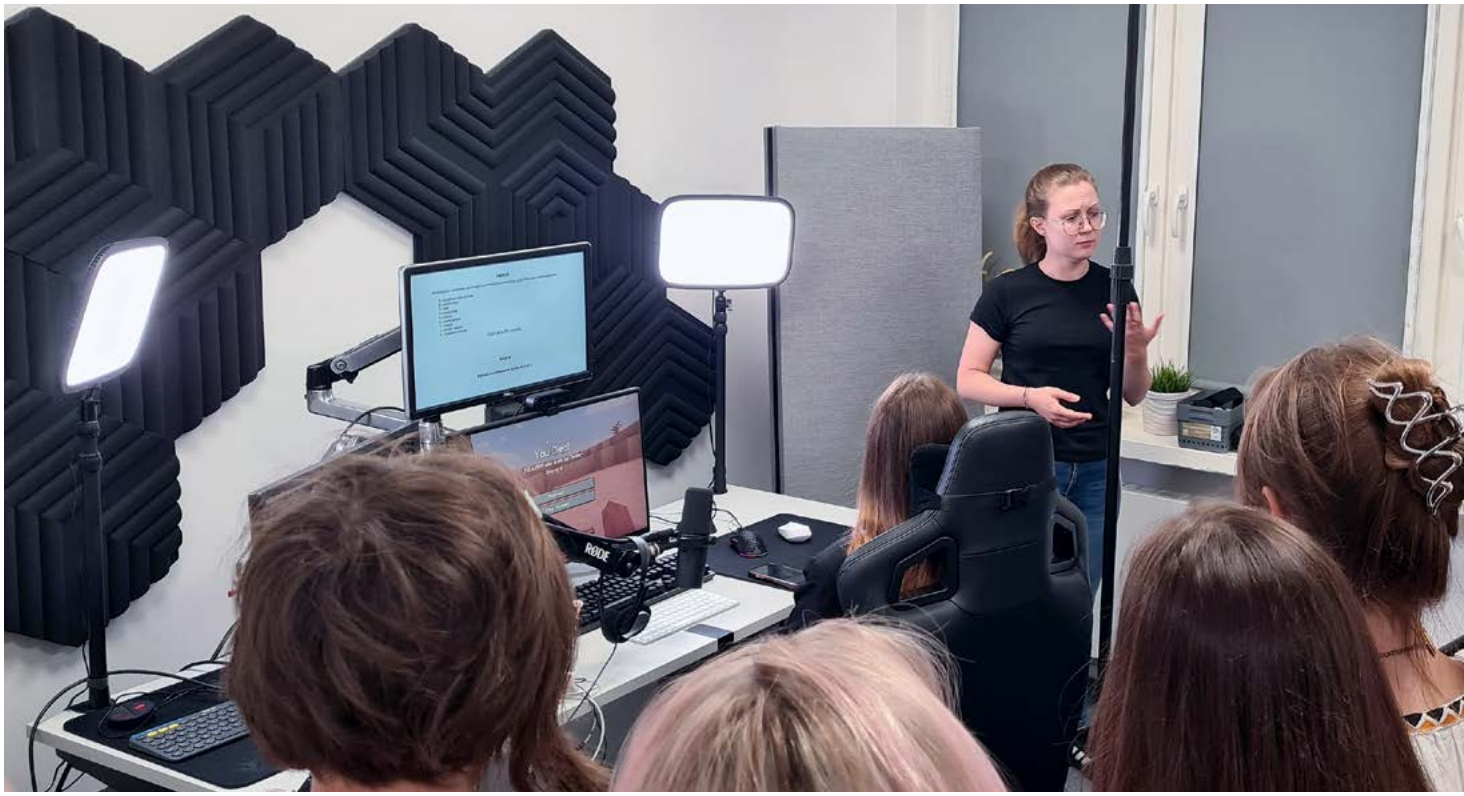
"I carried out the first part of my research grant outside AMU. I rented premises from a private company to conduct three psychophysiological experiments. My research equipment was stored in a single box, which contained items of extreme value to me. I then moved to other AMU locations. Initially, I benefited from the help and generosity of **Dr. Dawid Wiener**, who set up a proper laboratory for me at the Institute of Psychology. Later, I received help from **Prof. Grzegorz Króliczak**. Eventually, however, we ran out of space. So, when I obtained another OPUS grant, I was delighted to accept Prof. Brzeziński's offer to convert a room into my own laboratory. I was 33 years old and in my element. Within a decade, we conducted psychophysiological research involving over a thousand participants; six doctoral dissertations were completed; and we obtained three OPUS grants, three PRELUDIUM grants, and one Diamond Grant. Dozens of interns were also trained, including students financed by the Excellence Initiative – Research University programme (IDUB), the Erasmus+ programme, and faculty internships at the AMU Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science. Thanks to our current dean, who strongly believes in us, we have managed to expand the laboratory and modernise the equipment after ten years. We have literally and figuratively moved to a higher level. We are now developing completely new methodological and technological solutions. To use gaming terminology, we are really *levelling up*."

MOBILE GAMING IS BOOMING!

The lab's current work focuses on new technologies, such as gaming, streaming, and interacting with AI chatbots. The research explores their socio-emotional potential, particularly in terms of identifying sources of positive emotion. This is an innovative approach, as most psychologists study negative emotions. Furthermore, researching social processes in laboratory conditions is extremely difficult and therefore rare.

"In the first decade of our operation, we were mainly playing catch-up. Now, however, we are trying to achieve things in the laboratory that no one else has done before," says Kaczmarek. "We have just entered a pioneering area of research into mobile gaming. We are studying gamers who use mobile phones. To do this reliably, I created an app that allows emotions and behavior to be studied while disrupting the game as little as possible. Participants also take part in innovative outdoor research. Equipped with measuring devices and software, they set off on a journey with their smartphones acting as portable research laboratories and play Pokémon Go. When they return, we can analyse their behavior, emotions, and social interactions in a natural environment. This provides researchers with highly realistic data."

According to Prof. Kaczmarek, incorporating gaming into research on emotions and social processes has been highly successful. This is particularly evident when compared to traditional methods of evoking emotions, which primarily



involve showing exciting video clips. The intensity of the emotional responses achieved in streaming research now rivals that previously only dreamed of in experimental psychology.

LET'S NOT BE AFRAID OF GAMES!

"Traditionally, psychology has focused on the negative aspects of everything, which is why most research on gaming has concerned the rare cases where games are harmful, such as addiction. However, recent studies show that games are primarily a positive part of human life," says Łukasz Kaczmarek. "Without delving deeper, we might get the impression that games cause social isolation, addiction, depression and anxiety. Nothing but bad things. Meanwhile, hundreds of studies have already examined issues such as how many people become addicted to games and whether games significantly increase aggression. The results are optimistic, showing that computer games are no different from other popular activities. Video game addiction is a real issue, but it only affects about 2% of the population. This means that 98 out of 100 gamers play safely. In contrast, shopaholism is a much bigger social problem that is rarely discussed, affecting around 7% of people. While some computer games may increase aggression, this is only in a 'statistically' significant way. These differences are mainly apparent on researchers' computers and in publications, but not in everyday life. According to Christopher Ferguson, a researcher of aggression in games, based on the data we have, in order for a clinically significant change in behaviour to occur, you would have to play the most violent games for... 27 hours a day."

Professor Kaczmarek considers himself fortunate to have been born in a world without computer games, and he remembers what it was like. "It was not a world without aggression or addiction. People used to escape from everyday life and get a kick by sniffing glue or getting into fights. Aggression among children was certainly no less prevalent back then, and all of this took place in the analogue world, before computer games existed. There were no first-person shooters like *Call of Duty* or *Counter-Strike*, yet playing war was still the favourite game to play in the backyard. So, while we shouldn't ignore the dangers of gaming, we should also allow people to play when it's beneficial for them. In this busy world, we need an escape that helps us unwind and relax. Often, it is in the digital world that we can meet up with friends, sometimes from other cities or even distant corners of the globe, if only for a moment. According to research and the views of most experts, regularly experiencing positive emotions is one of the most important factors in maintaining mental health."

TO REJOICE IN THE TRUTH

When asked if he has any mentors outside his faculty, Prof. Kaczmarek immediately mentions Todd Kashdan and James Gross. In his opinion, Professor Kashdan from George Mason University is a pure genius whose mind works completely differently. "I met him at a time when there was increasing pressure to share the results of Polish research with the world. In other words, to publish in Western journals. At the time, many scientists felt that their efforts were futile. Kashdan taught me how to write and improve scientific articles, formulate my thoughts,

Photo: Private archive; Władysław Gardasz

DR. MICHAŁ KOSSAKOWSKI

The most fascinating aspect of psychophysiology for me is the opportunity it provides to observe how the mind and body influence each other. For example, we can see how emotions affect our behaviour and decisions, even when we are not aware of it. While every research method has its advantages and disadvantages, people are rarely as engaged in research as when they can play computer games in a laboratory.

PATRYCJA CHWIŁKOWSKA, M.A.

Good organisation is essential for effective research. The role of a lab manager is to translate research ideas into specific processes and tasks that must be completed to achieve set goals. Creating a work schedule and responding to changes when unforeseen situations arise are indispensable parts of everyday work. Well-planned activities enable the team to concentrate on conducting research, thereby minimising chaos and potential delays.

respond to reviews and manage the entire publication process. Most importantly of all, he taught me not to give up. Sometimes a manuscript has to circulate among various journals for a long time before finding its place. I also learned to focus more on demonstrating the strengths of our research. I learned to write about people rather than 'variables'. To this day, I say that we write papers in the Kashdan style. He is the most important figure on my scientific journey as I venture out into the international arena," says Prof. Kaczmarek.

Professor James Gross of Stanford University is currently the most prominent scientist in the field of emotion regulation. "I had the opportunity to meet Professor Gross in person at Stanford and visit his laboratory, which is conveniently located in the same building where the famous Zimbardo prison experiment took place. I was delighted to see that our laboratory operates to the highest global standards. Professor Gross is in a class of his own." Kaczmarek argues that it is worth listening to every word he says.

Kaczmarek also mentions Prof. Helena Sęk as someone who should be included in any discussion of his laboratory and his entire scientific career. "She supervised my master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. She laid the scientific foundations on which I am now building my work. She is not only a great teacher, but also a great motivator and source of inspiration. Her attitude showed me that science is important and worth devoting your professional life to. She particularly valued experimental research and always emphasised that it must be deeply rooted in theory — integrated with decades, sometimes even centuries, of research and reflection on a given issue."

Lab managers work closely with the laboratory head and act as a liaison between management, researchers and junior team members. They support interns in acquiring practical skills, such as operating research equipment, reading and interpreting data, solving technical problems, and understanding experimental procedures. They streamline processes, organise work, and communicate technical knowledge in an accessible manner to ensure it is applied in the laboratory's day-to-day work.

Professor Łukasz Kaczmarek is a positive and enthusiastic individual. "I have always been curious about the world," he says. "I became fascinated by science at an early age. Perhaps it was thanks to an encyclopaedia that I once found on a shelf, which I enjoyed leafing through even before I started school. At first, I just looked at the pictures. There were no comics at the newsagent's and no cartoons on TV, so I 'had' to browse through the encyclopaedia and watch educational programmes. I didn't know there was any other way, so I really enjoyed it. That was in the 1980s. At university, I enrolled in the Faculty of Psychology, which was excellent in terms of methodology. Our lecturers, including Prof. Jerzy Brzeziński and **Prof. Ryszard Stachowski**, had an optimistic approach to psychology and a curiosity that I still share with them today. It is the joy of discovery. It was in Prof. Brzeziński's textbook on psychological research methodology that I came across the words of St. Augustine: "True happiness is to rejoice in the truth." ■

Photo: Private archive; Władysław Gardasz

Prof. Marek Kwiek

QUANTITATIVE SCIENCE STUDIES IN A BROADER CONTEXT:

HOW TO INCREASE THE GLOBAL VISIBILITY OF PUBLICATIONS

Global, networked science can be analyzed using various methodologies, but quantitative science studies are probably best suited to examining the scale of the globalization of science in spatial and temporal terms, both individually and collectively, as well as nationally and transnationally.

PROF. MAREK KWIEK

Today, the global science system has a larger, more competitive, multicentric core than it did twenty years ago. The former bipolar world of science, mainly driven by English-speaking countries, is gradually being replaced by a tripolar world that includes Europe, North America, and a third major player: Asia and the Pacific.

Over the past three decades, a "global" science system and a "multipolar" world of science have emerged in which scientists are distributed differently. New trends in international collaboration are emerging, and the distribution of publication impact between traditional scientific powers and new participants in global science changes from decade to decade. Traditional American scientific hegemony is being challenged by new participants, such as China, in an increasing number of disciplines. The emerging picture of global science differs significantly from the traditional image. In particular,

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

global, networked science challenges the traditional relationship between science and the nation-state.

From a global perspective, the most important factor contributing to the systematic development of research on the globalization of science is the growing availability of data on scientific inputs and outputs; research funding; productivity; research collaboration; citations of scientific works (i.e., their impact on science); and academic mobility. This new data offers unprecedented opportunities to study the structure and evolution of science over time.

Without access to global data, it would be impossible to study global networks of researchers, institutions, and ideas; innovation in science; the dynamics of academic careers; the role of team science; or the dynamics of citations from a global perspective within individual disciplines.

Quantitative science studies address all aspects of science and scientists, including publications, citations, impact on the scientific community, patterns of scientific collaboration, and publication patterns. The unit of analysis can be an individual publication, as in traditional scientometric research, or an individual scientist, as in the latest research in the field.

The key to the global visibility of publications from a peripheral science country, such as Poland, seems to be presence in the most prestigious journals. Polish scientists are increasingly entering the elite of international journals; however, since they have only recently begun to do so, access is still difficult in most cases. This is evident in the slow growth (though rapid at AMU!) in the number of publications in the top 10% of journals listed in the Scopus database. This list is compiled annually and is relatively objective. It forms the basis for the IDUB project at AMU in terms of publication quality.

In the face of widespread access to open-access journals, does publishing in prestigious journals today have a broader meaning and influence on long-term presence in international publication circulation? Is interest in publications in prestigious journals greater than in non-prestigious journals on average? Quantitative science studies have definitive answers to these questions, confirmed by patterns from hundreds of thousands of publications. However, as long as we are talking about the undefined prestige or elitism of a journal, the answers may be inconclusive.

For decades, the common opinion of academics in a given discipline determined the standard lists of the best journals, answering the question of the ranking of journal prestige in archaeology (or cardiology). Therefore, what mattered was the broad, global consensus of scientists. For example, for decades, two journals topped all lists in higher education research: *Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education*, as confirmed by numerous surveys.

However, the current global circulation of journals (with over 40,000 indexed in the Scopus database alone in 2025) necessitates clear definitions and unambiguous responses. It should be noted, however, that these answers always refer to averages, medians, and general trends. For instance, prestigious journals in the Scopus database are often assumed to be those ranked in the top 10 percent. This ranking is calculated annually and publicly announced based on the ratio of citations obtained in the previous year to the number of documents published in the previous four years.

The prestige of journals is algorithmized: the more citations, or references to documents, a journal has, the greater its prestige, always calculated within the narrow framework of individual disciplines. Nevertheless, the prestige traditionally attributed to select journals over the years is often reflected in today's algorithmic approaches.

We found that, after ten years in science, only 50% of scientists continue to publish.

Citations are widely recognized as the most important measure of a publication's impact in science. More widely cited works are considered to have a greater impact on the development of global science. No other common measure of publication impact has been devised besides the influence on individual scientists who cite (or do not cite) a given work. Researchers are extensively studying altmetrics, or the impact of publications measured by their influence on the internet and social media. However, the results so far are inconclusive. Ultimately, mentioning an article in a social media post is not the same as citing it in a scientific paper. The articles' metadata and their citations since publication constitute the primary data sources for quantitative science studies.

Of course, not all articles published in prestigious journals receive many citations. However, it is generally assumed that articles in these journals are cited more frequently than articles in non-prestigious journals. The key to understanding the logic governing global visibility and recognition is precisely the category "on average." Different rules apply to world-renowned scientists and those from the best research centers. In other words, the magic of names and places works in science. The fortunate few can afford to publish in

The 37th CHER Annual Conference

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

more random journals and achieve comparable results in terms of their impact on science.

However, a major limitation of quantitative science studies is the Scopus database's focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) journals, similar to the Web of Science database. Large databases also omit books, which are important for assessing the impact on the development of science in the social sciences and humanities. Generally, the best journals employ the best reviewers, so the papers in them are revised and edited with greater care. The reason is simple: reviewers form a community around the best journals because they often publish in them.

Finally, I would like to mention research conducted with Dr. Łukasz Szymula from the AMU Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science. It is devoted to global patterns of scientists leaving the field. Our multifaceted research used a longitudinal approach to academic careers. We examined the entire publishing careers of scientists, from their first to their last publication, in 38 OECD countries over the course of their lives. We found that, after ten years in science, only 50% of scientists continue to publish. Our study was innovative in that it used new data and methodologies and attracted a great deal of interest around the world from the beginning. Ultimately, the results were published in the highly prestigious journal *Higher Education* in August 2024 as "Quantifying Attrition in Science: A Cohort-Based, Longitudinal Study of Scientists in 38 OECD Countries." Various activities undertaken before and after publication increased its visibility, making it the most downloaded work in the journal's history.

About a year earlier, the paper was published as a preprint on the arXiv open-access platform and discussed by me at many invited seminars around the world. Each seminar was attended by several dozen participants, sometimes even over 100. I conducted seminars at renowned research centers, such as the DZHW in Berlin and the CWTS in Leiden, as well as at universities in Hong Kong, Oxford, and Stanford. Following the seminar in Hong Kong, the first discussion of our research was featured in the renowned global higher education magazine *Times Higher Education*. This occurred more than six months before the work was published in print. We focused our promotional efforts on this study, recognizing its great potential. One month after publication, we achieved the highest altmetric scores, indicating the level of interest in our work online and on social media. The number of downloads of our paper from the journal's website quickly reached 35,000.

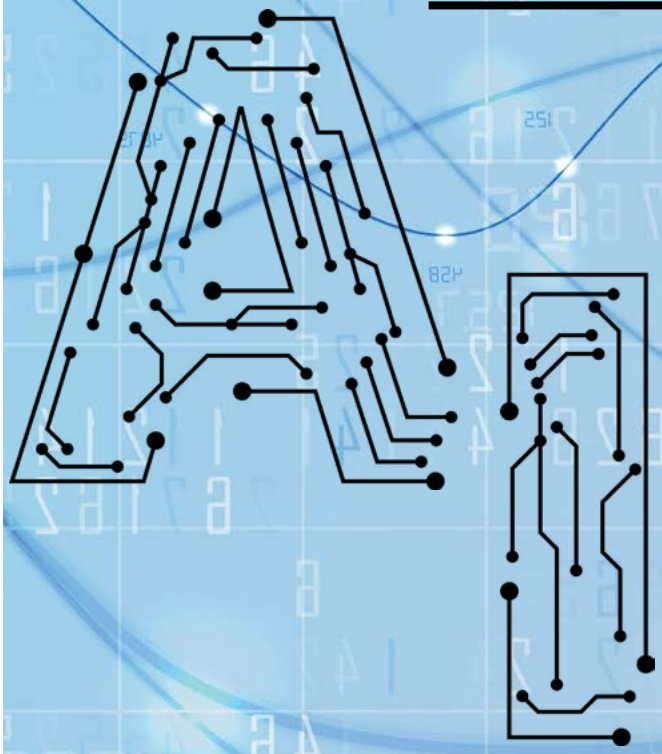
Following the publication of the paper, an unexpected avalanche of discussions erupted around the world. Within two

months, the publication was discussed or mentioned in over 50 international scientific and popular media outlets, including *Nature News*, the *American Chemical Society*, the *Royal Society of Chemistry*, *The Scientist Magazine*, *La Repubblica*, and even *Harper's Magazine*. The article immediately achieved an extremely high position in the Altmetrics rankings, placing in the top 1% (99th percentile) of the most commented articles on the internet.

Innovative research does not require significant marketing expenditures because interest in it arises somewhat naturally. While promotional efforts such as trade fairs and conferences have their place, the most important thing is to first create high-quality research that can "promote itself" with the help of others. The work was quickly discussed in international media outlets in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Italy, Estonia, Finland, Romania, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In China alone, it was discussed more than 20 times, including in several important social science journals.

One thing is certain: our study provided unprecedented free promotion for our university and Polish science as a whole. The AMU affiliation appeared worldwide. The global reception of our work demonstrates, on a small scale, what quantitative science studies demonstrate on a large scale: the prestige of a journal is still extremely important, and it is worthwhile to publish in the highest-ranking journals. In practical terms, we have once again learned that a clear title, concise thoughts in the abstract supported by data, and numerous seminars devoted to the research results are also significant for promoting visibility.

Lastly, researchers of higher education and science systems from around the world recently met at their annual conference, which was organized by Dr. Marcin Byczyński and me. The 37th CHER Annual Conference, which took place in Poznań from September 3 to 5, was organized by the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER), of which I am a member of the Board of Directors. Over 200 researchers from several dozen countries discussed the future of higher education and how it can adapt to a changing environment. Scientific conferences are always a great opportunity to promote our universities! ∎



DISCLAIMER: THIS TEXT WAS WRITTEN BY A HUMAN

Two years ago, while preparing for a discussion on artificial intelligence, I asked ChatGPT to generate and answer questions within a pre-set character limit, just for fun. I shared my observations from this experiment with my interlocutor, who said, "Oh, you don't need me anymore then." At that time, it was a joke, but today... well, not necessarily. More and more articles on the internet are accompanied by the disclaimer, "This article was not generated by AI." Perhaps this is naive, but despite the many positive aspects that artificial intelligence brings to my work, I hope that it will be a human who talks to me, authorizes my articles and reads them.

MAGDA ZIÓŁEK

However, the world seems to be rushing in a completely different direction. Even a cursory analysis of the state of reality before and after AI can be alarming. Chatbots send taxis, answer emails, make doctor's appointments, monitor social media posts, and even track your route from home to work and document traffic violations, and that's just my personal experience.

Just a few days ago, the world was shocked by the tragic news of a plane crash in Washington, D.C. One expert blamed AI, as well as the widespread practice among pilots of handing over control of the aircraft to autopilot, for what happened. It seems that our greatest fear is losing control over what is to come. Should we fear or not fear? In one of the previous issues of *Życie Uniwersyteckie*, **Professor Zygmunt Vetulani**

addressed this question, with which I fully agree: "Under the threat of apocalyptic self-destruction, it is becoming clear that humanity must not grant war robots decision-making autonomy combined with self-awareness and a self-preservation instinct. Meanwhile, in some parts of the world, there have been vague discussions about incorporating artificial intelligence techniques into official military doctrine. In light of the above considerations, should we be afraid of artificial intelligence? I have repeatedly stated that the threat does not come from technology itself, but from the people who control it. And I stand by this view."

We are pleased to present the latest issue of *Życie Uniwersyteckie*, which is devoted to the topic of artificial intelligence. We have tried to ensure that our experts' opinions cover various areas of life, including education, photography, and literature. Most of these opinions are positive, and **Professor Krzysztof Jassem's** recurring thought can be summarized as follows: "Artificial intelligence will force people to be even more creative, thereby raising our expectations. When setting tasks for students, we will expect them to demonstrate greater creativity than artificial intelligence. After all, ChatGPT can already compile sources for them quite easily. We must change reality, not reproduce it."

Reading on the Nauka w Polsce (Science in Poland) website about the first book in history to be translated entirely by AI reminded me of AMU **Professor Arkadiusz Żychliński's** opinion: "AI is already largely replacing translators of short articles, with good results. But when it comes to artistic expression, fortunately, AI is not yet hot on our heels. However, the situation is paradoxical in that every failure of AI and every success of a translator potentially works in AI's favor. After all, artificial intelligence feeds on human achievements and successful translations, basing itself on what is statistically available. So, the more good translations there are, the better AI's future results will be."

Tools are only as good as their ability to help us fulfil our tasks. In editorial work, it is useful when software transcribes a long interview or ChatGPT suggests how to make the next social media post interesting. It can be a little intimidating to feel that knowledge about the world is closer than the tip of your finger (or a tap on a smartphone screen), and it can be so difficult to say something original. Every sentence I say or write could be improved. Does this mean that the era of mistakes resulting from ignorance is coming to an end? Will we soon see disclaimers under articles in major magazines saying, "This text was created by a human and is therefore subject to error?" We'll see. ∎

Depositphotos

EASIER TO GRASP

Dr. Maja Stańko-Kaczmarek, a psychologist, and a team of students conducted an interesting study on readers' perceptions of a poem attributed to artificial intelligence. The results of the AMU psychologists' research were published in the *Journal of Creative Behaviour*.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

Dr. Maja Stańko-Kaczmarek, a psychologist, and a team of students conducted an interesting study on readers' perceptions of a poem attributed to artificial intelligence. The results of the AMU psychologists' research were published in the *Journal of Creative Behaviour*.

One hundred and twenty-three adults of various educational backgrounds took part in an online study, evaluating the poem "Everyday Life," which was written by an amateur poet. The poem was not created specifically for the study. It was characterised by simple language and conciseness, and was randomly attributed to a human, an AI, or an unspecified author.

The assessment metrics comprised five categories: originality, aesthetic appeal, emotional engagement, coherence, and interpretive difficulty.

"The results showed that poems attributed to an AI received lower scores for originality, aesthetic appeal and emotional engagement. This suggests that respondents perceived these poems as less innovative, lacking in beauty of form and message, and evoking fewer emotional responses. This perception may stem from the belief that AI is based on existing data and is unable to create anything new or fully capture human experiences or emotions, which are often considered to be the essence of creativity," comments Dr. Maja Stańko-Kaczmarek.

At the same time, AI-attributed poetry was considered more complex and difficult to interpret. According to Dr. Stańko-Kaczmarek, however, this contradiction is only apparent, as interpretative difficulty does not necessarily correlate with originality, beauty, or emotional engagement.

"AI-generated content tends to be more analytical, which requires more intellectual effort from the reader to understand the message," explains Stańko-Kaczmarek. "In addition, the inability to empathise with the author — in this case, the algorithm — may hinder a fully engaged interpretation of the literary content, leading to the poem being considered less understandable and more difficult to interpret. This contrasts with the more direct and empathetic engagement of readers of works created by humans."

The results showed that poems attributed to an AI received lower scores for originality, aesthetic appeal and emotional engagement.

Participants who did not know the author of the poem gave it an even rating: there were similar numbers of negative, positive, and neutral opinions.

Interestingly, a study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh has shown that, when it comes to professional poetry, texts generated by artificial intelligence are considered easier to grasp. The study participants rated these poems higher than those by renowned artists. At the same time, however, the readers had difficulty distinguishing the authorship of the works, which demonstrates that artificial intelligence is capable of producing texts of a very high standard.

Researchers emphasise the need to educate the public about the role of AI in creative processes, in order to reduce prejudice against it. They believe that new technology and human creativity can coexist and complement each other. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

LESZEK WALIGÓRA
Editor-in-Chief of *Głos Wielkopolski*

WE HAVE AN ADVANTAGE OVER AI

AI hallucinates. Any reasonably intelligent journalist who has asked one of the language models, "Hey, AI, write me a text about...," knows this. The more savvy ones also know that verifying information that artificial intelligence can fabricate often takes more time than writing a reliable article "by human means." The problem is that some journalists trust AI products, either out of laziness or poor judgement. They publish these products under their own names. There are examples of this.

Can AI be more than a toy or a substitute for lazy journalists? Yes, but only if it is supervised by wise and well-trained people, as is the case in aviation, mechanics, or medicine. AI can successfully perform the work of a researcher and instantly search not just individual books, but entire libraries for associations, names, and facts. It can act as an assistant, filtering emails, although it won't make coffee. But wait – it can. All it needs is a network-connected coffee machine to suck up to its supervisor by sending a command at 7 a.m. to brew a double espresso for the boss.

Above all, however, AI is already capable of performing some of a journalist's work.

At this stage of its development, however, it requires a great deal of caution. At least as much as a journalist would exercise when dealing with a newly met informant who claims to have evidence that JFK was killed by aliens. Yes, AI can write grammatically correct texts. Linguistically, at least, but not factually. It can rewrite an article if we set strict parameters and choose a low "temperature" for editing. The latter determines how much the AI should "spice up" the text. Otherwise, it can veer towards the territory of a sleazy tabloid.

Will AI replace journalists? I'm afraid I'm going to disappoint all those who say no. It will replace lazy journalists. Those who already write articles without leaving their desks will soon be replaced by AI. Attempts to do so have already been made in many editorial offices. These attempts have been unsuccessful because, for now, AI is merely reproducing what has already been written. It cannot call or email interviewees, even though it already has the capability to do so. However, it can generate speech, write emails and even send them - a method relied upon by legions of journalists and press officers.

Therefore, AI is already capable of conducting telephone or email interviews. I am not aware of any cases where this has happened, but there is nothing technologically to prevent it, given that the call centers of many banks and retail chains are already operated by artificial intelligence. So why don't media outlets do it? Perhaps it's because journalists are still cheaper.

So where is the advantage for journalists over AI? For now, it lies in their brains.

So where is the advantage for journalists over AI? For now, it lies in their brains. But not for long. Soon, the advantage will be represented by something much more primitive: the body. Until AI can attend the scene of an event, it will not be able to communicate with witnesses in a human way, focusing not only on questions and answers, but also on empathy, emotion, trust and sometimes arousing and recognizing other feelings. It will not replace journalists. At least not the ones who report on events from behind a desk and discover and describe everything that has not yet been discovered or described.

AI will replace journalists who "process" the internet. It won't need a desk, coffee, a keyboard, sick leave, or 26 days' holiday a year. If the editorial team's approach is based on rewriting other sources, then voilà — we have the perfect employee. But who will create the first piece of original news? Who will get to the scene of an accident or fire, or the president's inauguration? AI will not replace people who use their hands, feet, eyes and tongues as well as their brains. At least, not yet. ■

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Photo: Archiwum

AI AND STUDENT GRADING SYSTEMS

Artificial intelligence is already having a significant impact on education, and it may radically change grading systems and curricula in schools and universities in the near future.

PROF. NATALIA WALTER
AMU Faculty
of Educational Studies

In the context of assessment, one of the key difficulties identified by research is detecting whether students have completed their work and assignments independently or with significant assistance from tools such as ChatGPT. These technologies can generate high-quality content rapidly, thus undermining traditional assessment methods based on written assignments or tests.

In view of these challenges, researchers argue that the approach to assessing and validating learning outcomes needs to change. Kasneci and colleagues (2023), for example, suggest placing greater emphasis on assessing students' thought processes and their contributions to projects, rather than solely on the final product. Oral exams, in which teachers can assess logical thinking and reasoning in real time, may become more common (and probably should). Additionally, the importance of assessment through team projects may increase, as these require not only substantive knowledge, but also empathy, creativity, and co-operation skills, which are more difficult to replace with technology.

However, the impact of artificial intelligence on education extends beyond the assessment system itself. Alshater (2022) demonstrates that AI has the potential to significantly influence the design of educational programs in light of the need to develop new competencies. The traditional approach to education, which remains primarily focused on acquiring factual knowledge, may be replaced by an emphasis on developing skills such as critical thinking, assessing data quality and selecting information. In a world where AI can easily generate content, the ability to assess its reliability and usefulness in a given context is paramount.

Teachers, schools and universities will need to adapt their assessment methods to a reality in which AI plays a key role.

Furthermore, over-reliance on technology raises concerns about stifling creativity and analytical thinking among students. As I mentioned earlier, the study by Kasneci et al. clearly articulates the concern that if students use AI tools too often to solve tasks, they may gradually lose their ability to think independently and solve problems creatively. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Alshater's aforementioned study, which highlights the need to incorporate AI ethics into curricula to ensure students are aware of the technology's associated opportunities and risks.

It is also worth noting that future study programmes are likely to include new subjects related to the fundamentals of artificial intelligence and machine learning (at least, I hope so!). These changes will not only prepare students for work in an automated world, but also develop their digital competencies, enabling them to work effectively with technology rather than using it passively. These skills are essential for shaping technologically aware citizens who can take a critical approach to AI solutions.

Clearly, the development of artificial intelligence presents both opportunities and challenges for the education system. Teachers, schools and universities will need to adapt their assessment methods to a reality in which AI plays a key role. Research shows that the future of education will require striking a balance between using AI to support learning and developing unique human abilities, such as creativity and ethics. AI can also significantly assist teachers in preparing teaching materials and personalizing tasks and assessments for individual students. This is precisely the kind of teacher we train at our university. But that is a topic for another conversation. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

THE USE OF AI

The world of artificial intelligence can be divided into three main regions: the USA, China, and the European Union. These are the regions where the largest investments in AI are made. According to data from the European Parliament, the US was the leader in private AI investment in 2023 (€62.5 billion), followed by China (€7.3 billion) and the European Union (€5.2 billion). Those interested in the development of AI, including its legal regulations, should focus on these areas.

DR. MARIA JĘDRZEJCZAK
AMU Faculty of Law and Administration

The European Union has adopted Regulation 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024, which lays down harmonized rules on artificial intelligence and comprehensively regulates the AI sector. A draft legislative act on AI systems is currently being processed in the Polish parliament. It aims to establish a supervisory authority for the Polish AI market, namely the Committee for the Development and Safety of AI. The EU's primary objective is to ensure the safety of AI system users. One of the most important aspects of the EU regulation is the categorization of AI systems according to their risk level: (1) minimal risk, e.g. AI-based computer games; (2) low risk, e.g. chatbots; (3) high risk, e.g. biometric systems; and (4) unacceptable risk, e.g. real-time remote biometric identification. Systems posing minimal or low risk can be implemented without additional obligations, unlike those posing high risk, which must meet specific requirements, including a conformity assessment prior to implementation. AI systems posing unacceptable risks, i.e. posing a threat to EU fundamental rights, have been banned (with some exceptions).

China has adopted a different perspective on the use of AI systems, especially those that pose unacceptable risks according to EU regulations. One example is social scoring, which is banned in the EU but used in the Chinese Social Credit System. This system involves adding or deducting points from citizens based on their socially approved or undesirable behavior. China's legal system contains selective regulations focusing on moderating AI-generated content, protecting personal data and managing algorithms, including conducting security assessments and reporting to the Cyberspace Administration of China.

The legal situation in the US is similar in that there are no comprehensive federal regulations directly governing AI. Some states have adopted such regulations (e.g. the Colorado AI Act). Federal regulations on AI adopt a "soft" approach to the subject, e.g. by proposing the development of voluntary guidelines for AI systems. This approach is influenced by concerns about stifling technological progress and maintaining competitiveness, particularly in relation to countries such as China.

One of the most important aspects of the EU regulation is the categorization of AI systems according to their risk level.

The debate on regulation in the AI sector is essentially a debate about values, not legal provisions. The final legal framework will depend on which values the legislator prioritizes. In the EU, these values undoubtedly include civil rights, which are given priority over the free development of AI systems. This significantly limits the development of AI, which is why some are already describing Europe as a "technological museum." Barriers to entry into the European market for AI start-ups are so high that founders are expected to choose countries with more favorable legal regulations, such as those in Asia. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

Artificial Intelligence for Adults

DR. FILIP BIAŁY
Collegium Polonicum, AMU

Since 2019, I have been teaching classes on the ethical, social, and political implications of AI, becoming increasingly pessimistic over time. During this time, AI has become a tool primarily used to expand and consolidate the dominance of digital capitalism, which feeds on not only the fruits of our labor and minds, but also our data. Might this trend change if we start to talk about AI in a more mature way?

Currently, social perceptions of AI are based on narratives produced in Silicon Valley. Oligarchs such as Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and Sam Altman have convinced the public and politicians that AI is a force for progress and productivity growth that will benefit humanity. Sometimes they go further, painting transhumanist visions of AI-enabled human colonization of space.

Many of us are seduced by the more modest promise that AI will boost our productivity, provided we learn to use tools such as ChatGPT efficiently. Unfortunately, the reality is more complicated, and the complexity of these tools is such that they can be perverse. Firstly, they are created as a result of intellectual property violations, despite capitalism proclaiming that property is sacred. Secondly, their creation consumes vast quantities of energy, exacerbating the climate crisis. Thirdly, the supposed increase in productivity does not mean we have fewer tasks because completing them faster simply means we get more of them. Furthermore, the more we interact with AI, the more data we provide to digital corporations, thereby increasing our own enslavement.

There is plenty of research demonstrating the consequences of uncritically implementing AI, including these and others. Notably, the most important books on this subject have been written by women: Cathy O'Neil's *Weapons of Math Destruction*, Virginia Eubanks's *Automating Inequality,* and Shoshana Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* are all essential reading. However, even these authors are guilty of obligatory optimism; in their books' conclusions, they propose hopeful alternatives that could make AI serve entire societies.

I remain pessimistic. In its current form, AI is a technology that only exists as a result of intellectual property theft, energy consumption that is catastrophic for the climate, and data exploitation. AI cannot be fixed in this sense; the socio-economic system that created it and which currently serves the interests of techno-oligarchs must be reformed. Any meaningful conversation about AI must begin with an awareness of this fact. ∎

HARD LANDING

DR. ADRIAN WYKROTA
AMU Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts in Kalisz

On 6 June 1944, the legendary photojournalist Robert Capa (born Endre Ernő Friedmann) took part in Operation Overlord alongside the Allied troops. Instead of carrying a rifle, Capa landed in Normandy with his photography equipment, including his trusty Contax camera. Amidst the rapid action, he took photographs that would go down in history. However, it was a really close call. The exposed film was sent by express mail to London so that it could be published as soon as possible in *Life* magazine, with which Capa collaborated. However, due to the incredible rush, a lab technician working in the editorial darkroom overheated the negatives while drying them, damaging the photographic emulsion. Only eleven photos survived (known as "The Magnificent Eleven"), bearing witness to the sacrifice and victory of the Allied forces, which came at a heavy cost. Also surviving was the clear image of a reporter shaped by such attitudes, which is still encoded in our minds. It is the image of a fearless man reporting from the front line, facing all the consequences. It is also the image of a professional we trust, despite the claims that the myth of Robert Capa and the fearless photojournalist has been embellished over the years. However, the black-and-white frames showing the darkness of those events have survived in the history of photography and in people's minds, blurred, emotional, and dynamic.

In 2024, conceptual artist Phillip Toledano used AI to create his interpretation of Capa's supposedly destroyed photographs. He emphasized that the focus is not on the lost record of D-Day itself, but on our ability to recreate the past and the implications of this for the present. The series of AI-generated images, titled *We Are at War*, was published as a newspaper styled to resemble a 1944 edition, complete with AI-generated articles and advertisements. The newspaper comes with a card resembling a contact sheet containing photos from Capa's destroyed film roll.

Toledano's work can be treated as a fictionalized account of this historical event, akin to the film *The Longest Day*, produced by Darryl F. Zanuck and directed by Bernhard Wicki. However, we can also ask ourselves: What does it actually mean? How does it affect our perception of photographic images, which we still implicitly trust and treat as mirrors of reality, even when we are not entirely certain that what we see and know is true?

A red light should perhaps go off in our heads, given how easy it is to create such images today and use them to construct an alternative reality, form a new "historical policy" with little connection to the truth, or spread disinformation through fake news. This will bear little resemblance to the account of the front-line reporter or the work of the artist we trust, despite our doubts. ∎

Photo: Archiwum

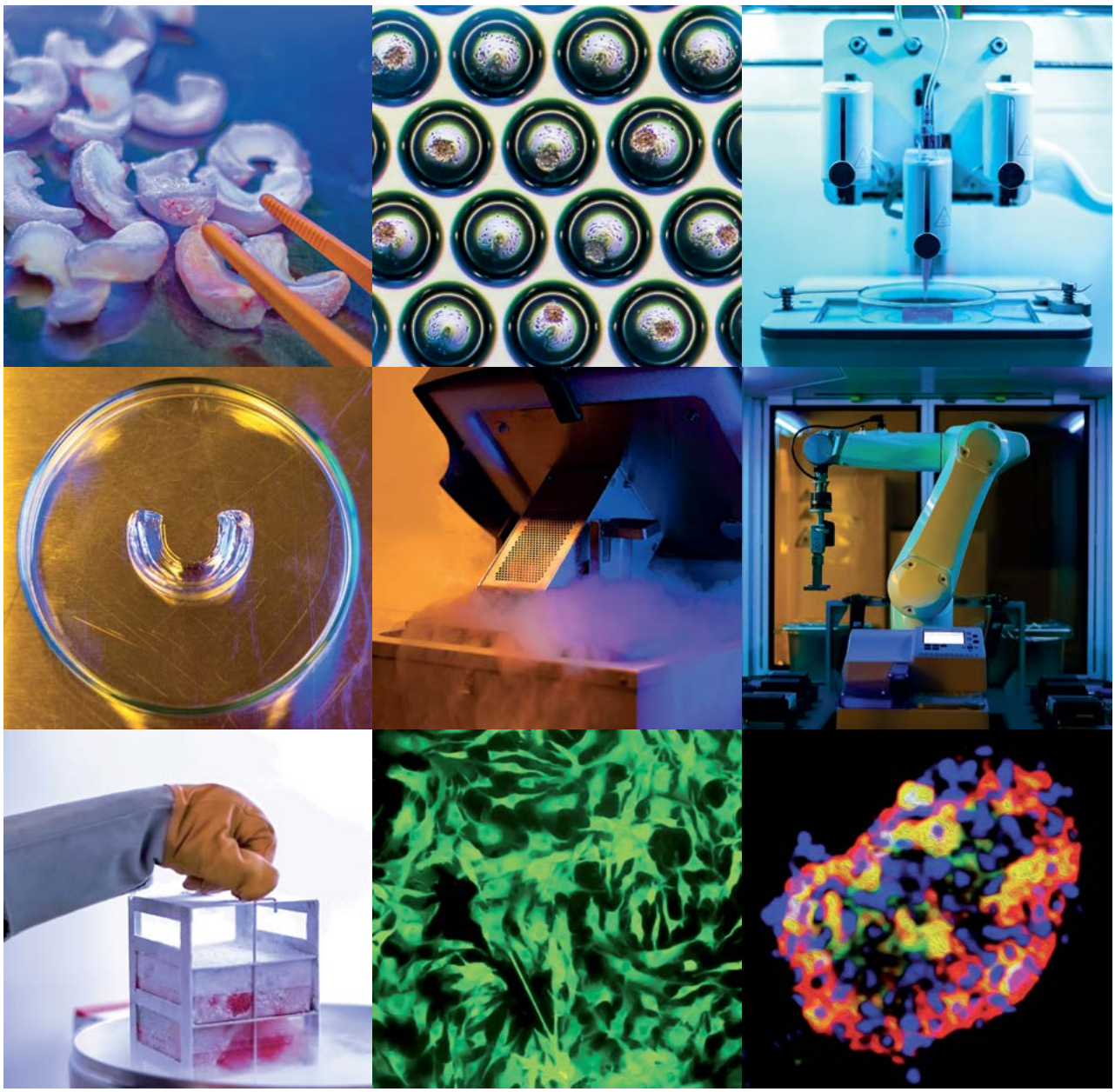


PHOTO LAB

PHOTOS BY **JULIA KRĘGIELSKA**
COORDINATORS: **PROF. RAFAŁ WITKOWSKI, PROF. JAKUB RYBKA**

We all have different ideas about what a real scientific laboratory looks like. Some imagine scientists in futuristic suits, locked in sterile rooms, while others envision a mad scientist with disheveled hair, surrounded by intricate glass structures filled with colorful liquids that bubble or smoke.

However, as real researchers know, everyday life in a laboratory is, unfortunately, less spectacular. Or is it?

The scientists at the Applied Biotechnology Laboratory had lived with this (un)awareness for days and months, until one day when Julia, a Liberal Arts & Sciences student, knocked on their door. Fascinated by what she had seen in class, she had decided that she definitely wanted to develop her skills there. However, instead of using a laboratory notebook, Julia wandered around with a photo camera.

What did she see? Something a little different from what the scientists see there every day.

ENDOMETRIOSIS DESTROYS WOMEN'S LIVES

March is Endometriosis Awareness Month, raising awareness of this incurable, hereditary disease. It affects approximately 180 million girls and women worldwide, including two million in Poland. Experts estimate that two-thirds of those affected are unaware of their condition. One of women affected by endometriosis is Dr. Marlena Kaźmierska, from the AMU Faculty of Educational Studies.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

In her doctoral dissertation, "The Experience of Endometriosis as a Chronic Disease in the Biographies of Female Students," which will soon be published by the AMU Publishing House, Dr. Kaźmierska argues that, despite the increased discussion of endometriosis, awareness of the disease in society remains low.

"The topic of endometriosis has only been studied by scientists for thirty years," notes Dr. Kaźmierska. "Unfortunately, both endometriosis and menstrual health continue to be taboo subjects. The level of knowledge is also low among medical staff and patients themselves. This is confirmed by my research and that of other scholars in Poland and around the world. This disease affects not only physical health, but psychosocial functioning, too. Healthcare professionals require in-depth training because myths such as "It's just the way you are", "Menstruation has to hurt" and "You're exaggerating your symptoms" continue to persist, as does the idea that the woman experiencing symptoms is a "hypochondriac."

Even though the disease was first noted by the ancient Egyptians, its cause is still unknown. The fact that each case is different can lead to delays in diagnosis. So, what is endometriosis? It is a condition involving the presence of endometrial tissue, which should naturally be expelled from the uterus with menstrual discharge. However, endometrial tissue found outside the uterus cannot be cleared away. As a result, the cells

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

grow, leading to chronic inflammation and lesions that threaten various organs. The main symptom is pain around the time of menstruation, which can be very severe and turn into chronic pain. If left untreated, endometriosis can lead to infertility and, in some cases, even be life-threatening.

"Endometriosis can occur anywhere in the body. While it most commonly occurs in the lesser pelvis, e.g. in the intestines or ureters, in the form of dangerous tumors known as chocolate cysts, it can, in rare cases, also be found in the eye, brain or lungs. Advanced forms of the disease may not cause any pain, but microscopic changes can irritate nerves and cause terrible suffering that prevents normal functioning. This is the case in several instances that I included in my dissertation," explains Dr. Kaźmierska.

"I have been struggling with endometriosis for twenty years, ever since my first period," she continues. "My mother and her younger sister also have it. I realized that there were no studies on how endometriosis affects young people. When I came across online support groups, I realized how big the problem is. Why is a disease that affects almost as many people as diabetes not discussed in scientific literature, culture, or social dialogue? It has a destructive impact on people's entire lives, as well as on their families, society, and the state," says Dr. Marlena Kaźmierska.

Research has shown that people are more willing to provide care and support to those affected by endometriosis if they have the right knowledge about the condition. The problem is that knowledge levels are too low, even among gynecologists. Patients wait an average of eight to twelve years for a correct diagnosis and are often referred from one specialist to another during this time, allowing the disease to progress. Marlena Kaźmierska, who is a member of the Council of the Polish Endometriosis Foundation knows women who were only diagnosed after 20–30 years!

"When these women meet others with the same condition, they feel less alone. An untrained doctor does not notice endometriosis foci, fails to conduct a detailed interview with the patient and plays down her symptoms. The girls and women I interviewed rarely found support from their peers, teachers or family before they were diagnosed. They began to question whether there was something wrong with them, which had a very negative impact on their mental health," reports Dr. Kaźmierska.

The treatment of endometriosis requires a holistic approach. This includes not only tumor excision and drug therapy, but also diet, urogynaecological physiotherapy, osteopathy, and psychotherapy. Multifaceted measures and strict adherence to guidelines often bring relief, but not always. The results of both Dr. Kaźmierska's research and that conducted by Karen Plotkin in Australia in 2004 show that the earlier endometriosis disrupts daily life, the greater the toll it will take in subsequent years.

"One of the students we surveyed had to give up her PhD studies due to illness, surgery, a long recovery period and subsequent complications," said Kaźmierska. "In other cases, relationships broke down. Treatment for advanced endometriosis is only available through private health insurance. Surgical care is very complicated and expensive, costing as much as 80,000–100,000 Polish zlotys. This does not include the additional costs of supplements, physiotherapy, and very expensive consultations with specialists, of whom there are only a few dozen in Poland. Patients have problems paying off loans for the operation," she explains.

Non-governmental organizations and activists are campaigning for a system in Poland that can diagnose and treat endometriosis effectively. The Polish Endometriosis Foundation initiated this campaign. In 2020, a Parliamentary Team for Endometriosis was established, and three years later, the Minister of Health's advisory body created a Team for the Development of Proposals for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Endometriosis. In March, the Polish Minister of Health, Izabela Leszczyna, announced a project that culminates in the establishment of endometriosis treatment centers. These centers are due to open on 1 July and will treat advanced forms of the disease under the Polish National Health Fund (NFZ).

Patients wait an average of eight to twelve years for a correct diagnosis.

"American researchers have calculated that women with endometriosis are less productive because they take more sick days. This disease affects society as a whole. Decision-makers should be keen to combat it effectively, especially as it reduces the fertility rate," argues Kaźmierska.

In addition to lobbying politicians, the foundation runs a wide range of educational initiatives. These include social campaigns among doctors and medical students, and free medical conferences for women where they can meet leading national specialists. The foundation also organizes workshops with dieticians, physiotherapists, and psychologists. Volunteers and local ambassadors invite women to special meetings ("endo meets" or "endo talks"), thereby building a support network for women. Marlena Kaźmierska creates educational materials for teachers and schools herself. As a menstrual educator, she participates in a ministerial pilot program overseen by the Polish Red Box Foundation and the Kulczyk Foundation. These organizations provide education on menstrual health and combat period poverty in 500 schools nationwide. Dr. Kaźmierska distributes information materials on endometriosis and organizes information meetings for teachers, parents, and schoolgirls. "I make them aware that they should not ignore the fact that girls do not go to school during their periods because of pain. If this is the case, they should see a gynecologist." ∎

Prof. Emilia Soroko, Prof. Lidia Cierpiałkowska and Dr. Dominika Górska

BE PROACTIVE!

Studying at university is always associated with many challenges, including emotional ones. Research conducted by a team from the AMU Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science explores how university students approach mental health and their education, and whether they demonstrate proactivity in these areas.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

WHY IS PROACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Proactivity is a relatively consistent tendency to take action to acquire resources and develop skills in various areas of life. Proactive individuals set goals for themselves, show perseverance in achieving them and treat successes and failures as learning opportunities, taking responsibility for both. Unlike a reactive attitude, proactivity involves actively shaping one's own future rather than passively adapting to circumstances. Our university is interested in fostering a proactive attitude among both students and staff. It is worth noting that seeking help for mental health problems is an important manifestation of health proactivity.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY?

Last academic year, a research team from the Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science **(Prof. Lidia Cierpiałkowska, Prof. Emilia Soroko and Dr. Dominika Górska)** conducted a study on the determinants of proactivity among AMU students, examining their commitment to studying and willingness to seek psychotherapeutic or pharmacological help. It was assumed that such readiness was an important manifestation of health proactivity. A total of 1,597 students participated in the study (74% female, 18% male, 6% other genders and 2% gender not specified). The majority were full-time (85%) and undergraduate (63%) students. 45% of participants were in a relationship, while 49% were single. Among the participants, 3.3% had a disability certificate, 6% suffered from chronic somatic diseases and 44% had used psychological services. Around 44% of respondents lived with their parents or a partner, while 45% lived independently or with fellow students (8% lived in halls of residence). The study used questionnaires to assess mental health, including well-being, the severity of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and interpersonal and self-functioning issues, as well as mental health literacy.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

WHAT DETERMINES THE DECISION TO SEEK PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP?

The researchers defined health proactivity as the conscious actions taken to improve well-being, including the willingness to seek specialist help in the form of psychotherapy or pharmacological treatment. Based on the participants' statements, the researchers identified three groups.

The first group (42.7%) are determined to seek help in the event of mental health problems. They stand out from the other groups due to their high level of knowledge about mental health and first aid in mental health crises. However, they are characterized by lower well-being, as well as greater anxiety, depression and identity disorders. They are less involved in their studies and less likely to change their study program. However, they are more likely to explore other educational options, indicating their proactivity in this area.

The second group (33.4%) are undecided about seeking help. They have more profound identity disorders and lower self-management skills (e.g. setting goals, planning how to achieve them and persevering in the face of frustration) than the other groups. Although they are adequately aware of mental health, they have limited knowledge of the various forms of assistance available and are less able to cope independently in difficult situations. They are also less proactive in their education and less involved in studying than those determined to seek help, suggesting that their indecision may extend beyond health issues to education.

Those not planning to seek help (23.5%) are characterized by better well-being and lower levels of distress than the other groups. However, their knowledge of mental health and ability to seek help are similar to those who are undecided. This suggests that they may not have the skills to effectively seek help in a crisis situation.

CONCLUSIONS

A greater willingness to seek help is associated with more intense experiences of suffering and a better understanding of the support available.

Indecision and a lack of plans to seek help may result from limited knowledge of mental health issues and lower support-seeking skills.

WHAT DETERMINES EDUCATIONAL PROACTIVITY?

Educational proactivity comprises three main dimensions: engagement in study, seeking new knowledge, and taking action to change one's choice of study program. Research indicates that a higher sense of well-being and greater skills in providing and seeking psychological first aid encourage engagement in study. A decline in engagement is observed alongside the intensification of depressive symptoms and a decrease in self-management skills. Seeking and exploring knowledge within the major increases with self-management skills and an integrated sense of identity, as well as with more severe somatic symptoms (often associated with unrecognized anxiety). Conversely, revising decisions about one's major is more prevalent among students with higher self-management skills and more pronounced generalized anxiety (linked to distress).

CONCLUSIONS

Symptoms of mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and identity issues can significantly hinder educational proactivity, including engagement in study and the pursuit of new knowledge.

The ability to self-manage — allowing for goal setting, planning and stress management — plays a key role in maintaining educational proactivity.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Mental health support should recognize the high level of psychological distress experienced by those seeking help, focusing on providing knowledge about mental health problems and developing skills to seek help for oneself and others.

Interventions that strengthen self-management and improve access to primary care, with a focus on reducing anxiety and depression, can effectively promote educational proactivity. ∎

Mental Health Days at AMU

is an annual event aimed at raising awareness of mental health and well-being among the academic community. It is a response to the growing need for mental health support among AMU students, staff, and graduates.

The fourth Mental Health Days events will take place on 23 and 24 October 2025. The first day will be held online. It will be opened by **Rector Bogumiła Kaniewska**, followed by an introductory lecture from **Professor Lidia Cierpiałkowska**, the Rector's Representative for Psychological Support. This will be followed by a Q&A panel where the speakers will answer questions about the mental well-being of AMU students and staff. All events on this day will be broadcast on the university's media channels.

The second day will comprise a variety of lectures and workshops for the entire Adam Mickiewicz University community. As in previous years, these will take place on two university campuses: Ogrody and Morasko.

"All classes will focus on topics related to mental health and well-being, giving participants the opportunity to expand their knowledge in these areas," says Maria Zienkiewicz from the AMU Education Quality Assurance Office. Activities open to all members of the AMU community are planned for the end of the event, for which no registration will be required. More details will be available on the AMU website. Please follow the event information.

FROM AMU TO SPACE!

Scientists from the AMU Faculty of Biology prepared genetically modified yeast for a mission into space by adding a tardigrade gene. Polish astronaut Dr. Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski took the yeast on a spaceflight. Forty vials containing the yeast returned to Earth after the experiment. Now, a team of scientists from two academic centers is studying the vials.

KRZYSZTOF SMURA

The Yeast TardigradeGene experiment, conducted on the International Space Station (ISS), involved testing genetically modified yeast with a tardigrade gene incorporated into its genome. This gene is responsible for synthesizing a mitochondrial protein called alternative oxidase (AOX), which is associated with tardigrades' resistance to extreme environmental conditions. The scientists investigated the effect of tardigrade AOX on the survival of yeast cells in the microgravity conditions of the ISS. These results will be important for determining whether such modified yeast could be used as biofactories on Mars, the Moon, or during space travel.

The vials sent into space were divided into several sets. One set contained ordinary baker's yeast; another contained yeast enhanced with the tardigrade gene. Another set contained yeast enhanced with a jellyfish gene, and a fourth set contained a weakened strain of yeast. The fifth set contained a different weakened strain of yeast with the tardigrade gene added.

Tardigrades are highly resistant to extreme environmental conditions, so it is assumed that some of this resistance can be transferred to other organisms through their genome, including yeast.

The project team included **Prof. Hanna Kmita, Dr. Andonis Karachitos, Prof. Nina Antos-Krzemińska, and Prof. Łukasz Kaczmarek from the AMU Faculty of Biology; Prof. Ewa Szusz-**

After the launch, DR. SŁAWOSZ UZNAŃSKI-WIŚNIEWSKI SAID:

Dear Poles,
Today, we are taking a huge step towards Poland's technological future. A Poland based on science, knowledge, and vision. This mission marks the beginning of an era in which our courage and determination will shape the future. Space has always brought people together. Today, I am bringing part of each one of you with me from Earth. Your strength, hope, and trust. In space, I am not alone.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

EWA MARTA WACHOWICZ
President of the Polish Space Agency

The Ignis mission marks a significant milestone for Polish scientists, the space sector, and businesses, providing a powerful technological impetus. The mission has given us space heritage by confirming that Polish instruments and technologies can operate in space. This will create new opportunities for international cooperation.

kiewicz (project coordinator) and Prof. Franco Ferrari from the Institute of Physics at the University of Szczecin; and Prof. Izabela Poprawa from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Silesia in Katowice.

"A few years ago, together with scientists from the University of Silesia, we decided to investigate how organisms, tissues, and cells function during spaceflights," said Prof. Łukasz Kaczmarek. "We prepared and submitted a project to the National Science Center to send various biological materials - cultured cells, tissues as well as entire organisms - into space using suborbital rockets. Unfortunately, the project did not receive funding for a variety of reasons, ranging from financial to technical," he explains.

Later, a new research opportunity arose for the scientists. Thanks to collaborations with NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), Axiom Space, and the Polish Space Agency (POLSA), serious negotiations began on sending Dr. Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski, a Polish astronaut, to the International Space Station, as well as designing experiments for the Polish space mission Ignis (Latin for "fire").

"Our experiment on genetically modified yeast was approved as one of only thirteen experiments selected from sixty-six proposals. Yeast containing a tardigrade gene paved the way to space," says Prof. Kaczmarek. "This time, funding was provided by the Polish Ministry of Economic Development and Technology in cooperation with the ESA and the POLSA." All the research materials were sent to the United States and then flown to the International Space Station, where Dr. Uznański-Wiśniewski supervised an experiment involving the exposure of yeast to microgravity.

The next stage of the AMU yeast's journey was its return to Earth. Detailed research will now be carried out, and the results are expected to be published in about a year. Many variables will be taken into account, including the viability and energy status of the cells resulting from mitochondrial function. Similar studies will be carried out on cells grown on Earth.

As previously mentioned, the project involved an interdisciplinary team from three Polish academic centers. Prof Kaczmarek was the lead tardigrade expert. Professors Ewa Szuszkiewicz and Franco Ferrari were responsible for preparing and integrating the experiment components for spaceflight. Dr. Andonis Karachitos, a yeast genetic engineering specialist from the Department of Bioenergetics, developed all the yeast strains used in the study. Professors Hanna Kmita and Nina Antos-Krzemińska, also from the Department of Bioenergetics, specialize in cell viability, mitochondrial DNA mutations, and mitochondrial function. The team prepared the yeast cultures that were sent to the ISS and counterpart centers on Earth. Professor Izabela Poprawa will study the ultrastructure of yeast cells, paying particular attention to mitochondria. This research, which includes control cultures, will allow the analysis of changes that occurred in the yeast cells during their time on the ISS.

Preparing the research material required extra work, as everything had to be transported in special containers made from materials approved for space missions. "Additional restrictions resulted from the fact that we were sending live fungi, which can be problematic on a spacecraft, even with the air conditioning," says Prof. Łukasz Kaczmarek. "The yeast was placed in vials on a special nutrient medium. Everything had to be documented and accompanied by a safety certificate to ensure that our material would not affect the air quality of the space station in any way," he explains.

The scientists hope that the tardigrade gene helped the yeast cells function under the stress of space or microgravity. However, this will only be confirmed once the planned research is complete.

"Is it worth spending a lot of money to find out how yeast with the tardigrade gene functions in space?" Prof. Kaczmarek asks, then immediately answers his own question, "Of course it is. Although we can conduct research on Earth in conditions similar to those in space, the word 'similar' is crucial here. It is simply impossible to maintain such long periods of microgravity on Earth."

This project is part of a larger initiative called "Before We Fly to Mars," which assumes that if we want to travel to places like the Moon, we must learn to produce food and fuel on site. Our focus is on using yeast as bioreactors to produce food and biofuel. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

PELASIA'S COSTUME: NOT YOUR TYPICAL LITTLE BLACK DRESS

Professor Anna Weronika Brzezińska from the AMU Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology designed and sewed a traditional costume from Poznań, similar to the one worn by her great-grandmother, Marianna.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

This costume was worn by women domestic servants, known as "pelasias" (a diminutive of the Polish name Pelagia), who worked in Poznań homes in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They came from nearby villages and moved to the city in search of work.

"Pelasia" was a collective term, and a rather pejorative one at that, stripping the women of their individuality. It was similar to today's stereotypical "Karen." Regardless of their own names, all the girls were referred to as "pelasias," says Prof. Brzezińska.

The "pelasia" phenomenon was first identified by Dr. Zofia Grodecka, an Ethnographic Museum employee in Poznań and AMU ethnographic studies graduate. Sources indicate that the pelasia community formed during the interwar period, a time associated with rising women's awareness and integration opportunities. Many of the pelasias belonged to Catholic organizations and were often educated by nuns, participating in informal embroidery and housekeeping courses. The last of those women died in the 1970s and 1980s.

Young girls, either alone or sent to the city by their families, most often took up the profession of domestic servant. They worked until they got married and sometimes continued working if they needed money. Their duties included looking after children, doing laundry and helping with family events. One such woman was Marianna Brzezińska (née Ratajczak), the professor's great-grandmother. She came from a village near Oborniki.

"I have only just started to discover her story. I am reaching out to family members I haven't been in touch with for years — some of whom I didn't even know — to find out more," says Prof. Brzezińska. "I combined my interest in the traditional Poznań clothing with fragments of family memories about Marianna. I decided that this was a good personal lead to follow. My grandfather recalled that, when she was a young girl, his mother worked as a kitchen maid and dishwasher at the Bazar Hotel in Poznań. It was in Poznań that my great-grandmother met her husband, Jan, who was a laborer. They lived in Winiary, which was then a village. When my great-grandfather found a better job on the railway, they moved to Gniezno. My extended family gave me two photos showing my great-grandmother in traditional Poznań folk dress. It was amazing! It was the first time I had seen her as a young woman. In one photo, she is a young married woman with her daughter. In the other, she is with her parents and siblings. I think she may have been of an age when she was about to be sent to the city to work.

Photo: Jędrzej Szygula

The term "Poznań rural costume" is internally contradictory, but it clearly shows who the pelasias were: girls from the countryside who worked in the city and helped shape its culture. Dr. Grodecka coined the term while researching the costume of the Bambers, when she came across women wearing folk-style costumes in the city. "It must have been a strong group of women who often spent time together and were able to create something of their own," emphasizes Prof. Brzezińska.

The outfit was a combination of traditional costumes from the Wielkopolska region, as the pelasias came from different places and each contributed something of her own. This can be seen in the decorative elements, which feature patterns from Szamotuły, Kościan, Śrem and other places.

The Poznań rural costume exhibits all the defining characteristics of traditional folk attire in Wielkopolska, featuring a simple and austere design, a pleated skirt, a jacket with puffed sleeves, a stand-up collar, and contrasting accessories. The festive version includes white aprons made of batiste, adorned with machine-made or hand-embroidered lace and ruffles. Additionally, the ensemble is completed with white caps and, of course, strings of beads. The attire was elegant and combined dark colors (black, navy blue, dark brown) with white.

"During the project, I was approached by friends whose great-grandmothers were also domestic servants. Both Dr. Grodecka's research and their accounts show that the employers of pelasias often required them to dress differently from their mistresses," says Prof. Brzezińska. "There are photos of maids dressed in traditional Poznań rural attire, as well as photos of girls wearing urban outfits on their days off. At work, the rural nature of the clothing emphasized the prestige of the household – we have a maid, a hard working girl, who can do everything. In my opinion, it was also a class distinction, indicating that we came from two different worlds. My friend's great-grandmother, who was actually named Pelagia, could wear whatever she wanted in Poznań, but when she accompanied her employers to the spa, she was instructed to wear traditional rural attire. The maid either followed her employers or looked after the children. My friend's great-grandmother hated this because it was a form of violence and an attempt to emphasize status by force.

Thanks to a scholarship from the "Programme for supporting the activities of cultural and creative industries to stimulate their development," Professor Brzezińska created two pelasia's costumes: a light-coloured summer outfit for the Corpus Christi procession, and a standard dark outfit. She not only sewed them by machine and by hand, but also made the individual elements of the costume herself.

"The difficulty was that I didn't have access to the original items, which are in the Ethnographic Museum in Poznań that is currently closed for renovations," explains Anna Weronika Brzezińska. "At first, I was disappointed because I couldn't create something based on an existing pattern. But then I told myself that it was just a sewing challenge and an opportunity to customize the costume. I sewed comfortable clothes tailored to my size so that I could feel good in them. I didn't make them myself, but took part in a sewing and design course at the Akademia Żółta Szpilka (Yellow Pin Academy) in Poznań. Together with the designer, Marzena Kubiak, I broke the design down into its constituent parts based on photos. Sometimes I felt tempted to take shortcuts, but Marzena, my teacher, said, 'No, we hand-stitch the lining in accordance with the rules of tailoring.' I really liked that. The result was a traditional garment sewn using modern tailoring techniques, but with respect for the craft. I chose a pattern from around 1914, the period of my great-grandmother. I decided that I wanted to identify more with Marianna," says Prof. Brzezińska.

Last year, Prof. Brzezińska received a grant from the National Institute of Music and Dance as part of the National Recovery Plan for Culture. The competition was tough. Her project underwent a rigorous selection process and was highly rated, coming in fifth place. Prof. Brzezińska used the funds to pay for a sewing and pattern-making course, to purchase materials and to carry out promotional activities, including taking photos of the finished costume. The project aimed to support local manufacturers, which proved difficult as Poland no longer produces high-quality textiles such as cotton tulle, jacquard, and linen. Some of the fabrics were purchased in the Czech Republic.

Although the project ended last year, the pelasias continue to live their own lives. Professor Brzezińska wanted to raise awareness of them and their significance for Poznań culture. To this end, she presented her project at a meeting of the Museum of the Poznań Bambers and at the library in Nowy Tomyśl, and has since been invited to speak at other events. The response has been great and positive.

"The pelasia is reaching a wonderful community of dedicated women searching for their memory and identity. This story has fallen on fertile ground, sparking an interest in the past of their families with the publication of Joanna Kuciel-Frydryszak's books *Chłopki* (Peasant Girls) and *Służące do wszystkiego* (Women Servants for All Purposes). I think of Marianna not only as my great-grandmother, but also as a girl who had to make life-changing decisions," says Anna Weronika Brzezińska.

Prof. Brzezińska is now creating decorations for the pelasia costume, including embroidering a bonnet, and plans to sew a set of underwear. She wears the costume during celebrations in Poznań and at university meetings and conferences. "The pelasia costume emphasizes where I come from," concludes Prof. Brzezińska. ∎

POLAND WAS MEANT FOR ME

Dr. Sanjay Sahare has been conducting research on perovskite solar cells at the AMU Faculty of Physics and Astronomy. He talks about his first experiences of living in Poznań and studying at Adam Mickiewicz University. He moved to Poland from India with his wife, who is a scientist currently employed at the Poznań University of Medical Sciences (PUMS). Last year, their family welcomed a baby boy, Vedswarnam.

INTERVIEW BY **MAGDA ZIÓŁEK**

Please tell us about where you come from.
I grew up in Nagpur, a city located in the very centre of India. It is often referred to as the geographical heart of the country. Nagpur is known for its historic Zero Mile Stone, from which all distances in India are measured. I was born into a very poor family. Until I was 23, the four of us lived in a 10 m² room. In order to continue my education, I worked as a nurse at night and attended university classes during the day. Thanks to my hard work and determination, I managed to complete a master's degree in electronics. My family encouraged and supported me in pursuing my dreams. Their unwavering faith in me is an endless source of motivation.

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a scientist. I liked the idea of being able to contribute to the development and progress of the country through this particular profession. I decided to follow my dream, passed the state exam, and was accepted onto the PhD programme at the Defence Institute of Advanced Technology in Pune, which is part of the Indian Ministry of Defence. In March 2018, I finally defended my doctoral dissertation.

The journey from India to Poland must have been a long one. What made you choose Poznań?
Before that, I was in China, where I was doing a postdoctoral internship. I first learned about Poland and grant programmes during a meeting with Prof. François Béguin at a conference in Montpellier, France, in 2016. From then on, I started looking for opportunities to come here. Fortunately, I was successful in my application for the POLONEZ BIS grant competition. I then started looking for a mentor who specialises in perovskite solar cells and ultrafast laser spectroscopy. That's when I came across Prof. Marcin Ziółek from the Faculty of Physics and Astronomy at Adam Mickiewicz University. I contacted him to ask about mentoring, and he agreed. In short, I put a lot of effort into coming here, and it paid off. I think Poland was meant for me.

It seems that you did not know much about Poland or its people. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in Poznań?
To be honest, I had limited knowledge about Poland. Of course, I knew it was a beautiful Central European country with a relatively low cost of living compared to the rest of Europe. I also knew that it gets cold in winter and it snows, but that's all. It was only when I arrived in Poznań that I had the opportunity to learn more about its rich history and culture, and the hospitable nature of the Polish people.

In my opinion, the advantages of living in Poznań far outweigh the disadvantages. This vibrant city has a lot to offer visitors. I like that there is always something going on. From a practical point of view, I appreciate that so many people speak English. Public transport is convenient and inexpensive, and you can

Photo: Private archive; Władysław Gardasz

reach even the furthest parts of the city. Since our son was born, we have also come to appreciate the numerous parks in the city where we can go for walks. One downside is the healthcare system: the facilities are fantastic, but you have to wait months for an appointment with some specialists. I also feel a little depressed sometimes, especially in winter when the days are short. Overall, though, my experience has been good.

Do you remember your first day in Poznań? What surprised you the most?

Professor Ziółek welcomed us at the airport and took us to our hall of residence on Nieszawska Street. We were surprised by how quiet and peaceful the area around the dorm was, as it felt far from the city, even though it is not. We were delighted to find a fully furnished flat waiting for us. However, we were concerned about the bed, which looked like two separate sofas! We had no idea how to put it together, so we ended up sleeping on separate sofas that first night. We were also perplexed by the toilet, which had no sink or bidet but a supply of paper tissues. Overall, we experienced a mixture of excitement, stress, and surprise.

Professor Ziółek kindly took the time to show us around the area, gave us maps of the city and accompanied us on our first shopping trip to a nearby grocery store. We were surprised to see familiar products on the shelves, such as bread and ready-to-eat pasta.

The second day in Poznań was quite an adventure. We set off in search of a shop where we could buy SIM cards. Much to our surprise, we discovered that we had to go to the city centre. This was complicated by the fact that we didn't have any Polish money, meaning we couldn't buy tram or bus tickets. With no other option, we jumped on a random tram without tickets, not knowing where it would take us. While exploring the city in this way, we were lucky enough to meet Piotr, who gave us tickets and showed us a shop where we could buy a SIM card and exchange money. That day, we experienced the warmth and helpfulness of Poznań residents.

You are carrying out a project at AMU as part of the POLONEZ BIS grant programme. What does it involve?

It focuses on developing flexible and semi-transparent perovskite solar cells, with a particular focus on exploring different heterojunction configurations in complete solar cells. The aim is to create innovative, sustainable solar cells that use flexible, biodegradable nanocellulose as a substrate in order to meet environmental standards and modern printing technology requirements. Additionally, using lead-free (non-toxic) perovskites combined with innovative two-dimensional materials such as MXenes for device engineering can improve the overall performance and stability of perovskite solar cells. Furthermore, studying the interaction of light with matter using ultrafast laser spectroscopy provides valuable information on charge dynamics in new materials and interfaces. This project has the potential to lead to a breakthrough in the performance and stability of translucent solar cells, which could be used on any surface — from window facades and IoT devices to clothing and backpacks. Our research also contributes to our understanding of the fundamental photophysical mechanisms occurring at the junctions of new materials. ∎

POLAND IS IMPORTANT TO ME

Dr. Prachi Ghoderao-Sahare, wife of Dr. Sanjay Sahare, is conducting a POLONEZ BIS research project as a postdoctoral fellow at the Poznań University of Medical Sciences (PUMS) under the supervision of Prof. Hanna Dams-Kozłowska. She previously had the opportunity to work in a research group led by **Prof. Emerson Coy** at the AMU NanoBioMedical Centre.

"Poznań is a fantastic place to live and work," says Dr. Ghoderao-Sahare. "I really appreciate its natural beauty, the abundance of greenery, and the clean air, which I find energising. When I was pregnant, I experienced snowfall for the first time, which was magical. My mother, Jayashree Ghoderao, was visiting us at the time to help look after the baby. I largely view Poznań through the prism of my pregnancy and motherhood. I am grateful for the medical care I received during my pregnancy and after giving birth. I am glad that we found doctors who could communicate with us in English. Poland will always hold a special place in our hearts because our son, Vedswarnam, was born here and now attends an English-speaking nursery. He already knows a few Polish words and has grown fond of the Polish food served at nursery."

THERE IS ALWAYS SUNSHINE ABOVE THE CLOUDS

"The most important thing is to enjoy what you do and be useful to the world, to change it," says **Hatice Kübra Öz**, a student at the AMU Faculty of Anthropology and Cultural Studies, and winner of this year's Special Award in the Interstudent 2025 competition.

INTERVIEW BY **DARIA SVETLICHNAYA** AND **MAGDA ZIÓŁEK**

Did you choose Poznań, or did it just happen?

My adventure began with the Erasmus programme. I studied early childhood education in Ankara, focusing on children's sexual development. I received an Erasmus scholarship and started looking for internship opportunities in Europe. Then one of my Turkish friends recommended Poznań, where he had also studied. He said it was a student-friendly place, not too big and not too small, which suited me perfectly because I don't like big cities. I also found out that Poland was affordable, and that the Erasmus programme offered 400 euros per month at the time. This gave me hope that I would be able to manage financially.

That's how I came across an announcement by **Dr. Monika Zielona-Jenek** from the Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science. I decided to apply there, and was successful, as you can probably guess. In Poznań, I began pursuing my dream of conducting research on children's sexual development. Dr. Zielona-Jenek was very supportive, for which I am very grateful.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

Despite being a popular tourist destination, Turkey continues to attract interest with its diversity.

I come from Kahramanmaraş in south-eastern Turkey. It's not a well-known tourist destination, but if you've ever seen videos featuring Turkish ice cream sellers performing tricks like handing out ice cream and taking it back, they're most likely from my town. I grew up in Göksun, a small town that I really like. However, for as long as I can remember, part of me has always wanted to leave and discover myself and the world.

My dad is a teacher and my mum is an artist who specializes in traditional Turkish arts. I inherited my artistic and social skills from my mother and my desire to share knowledge from my father. I have a younger sister and brother. As the eldest, I have always felt responsible and have naturally developed leadership skills. Like my mother, my sister is an artist. In 2023, she joined the relief efforts after a major earthquake struck our city. My brother is a lawyer who works for human rights in a more formal way than I do.

What surprised you most about Poland?

I would say that Turks are louder and more demonstrative, and they are more physically affectionate. We kiss each other on the cheek twice when greeting someone, even if we have just met them, and then we hug. With my Polish friends, it takes a little longer to reach the "hugging" stage. Relationships with relatives and neighbors in Turkey are closer and warmer, but they can be tiring.

In the future, I will continue to do what I love: working with international communities.

You have been studying at AMU for four years. Is it a welcoming place for international students? Is there anything you would like to change?

I feel very comfortable in Poznań. After completing my internship, I decided to continue my education by enrolling in a cultural studies program. I meet many students from abroad, including Turks and Azerbaijanis. I particularly enjoy the company of the latter because our languages and cultures are similar.

I took part in many activities organised by the AMU Welcome Centre. I also helped to organize some of them myself. It is a place created for international students where you can get support. The centre's staff are very friendly and helpful, even with complicated issues such as obtaining a residence card. Another thing I really appreciate at AMU is how easy it is to get in touch with faculty members and university authorities. Whenever I have needed help, I have received it. I live in a dormitory, which is comfortable and welcoming. The university also offers scholarships to provide financial support. I have received a lot of support from AMU, for which I am grateful.

I am thinking about the second part of your question. What could be improved? It would be great if medical consultations were available at the university. When I started my studies, I didn't know how to make an appointment with a doctor. Although health insurance for students is affordable, the application process and making an appointment is difficult for foreigners. I remember lying in bed for three days with a throat infection, not knowing how to get antibiotics. Thankfully, my friends helped me, but it was still one of the worst experiences I've had. Now that I know how the system works, I try to help other students who are less familiar with it.

What does an engaged society mean to you?

It is one in which we show respect and support for one another. We should be aware of what is happening around us, as well as the difficulties faced by people in our community. We should also ask ourselves: who am I, and what are my possibilities and limitations? Do I have the power to make a difference, and if so, how can I use it?

In my workshops, I focus on inclusivity, women's rights, Turkish culture, and integration. My goal? I know I can't change the whole world, but I can influence my immediate surroundings. If ten people take part in my classes and I run them four times, I will reach forty people. If even half of them change their way of thinking or become more aware, I will have achieved huge success.

Will winning the Interstudent Special Award change your social activities in any way? For example, will it make them more intense?

Of course, the award is a great source of motivation for me. It proves that my actions and efforts have not been in vain. I feel recognized for who I am and what I do. This is especially important to me, given that I am working far away from my family and loved ones in Turkey. In the future, I will continue to do what I love: working with international communities and building stronger bonds between people and cultures. Awards are only a material aspect of life. What matters most is enjoying what you do and being useful to the world by changing it for the better. I don't just want to live – I want to experience life to the fullest, discover myself, and inspire others. ■

I LIKE TO SAVOR LIFE

It started with a brief Facebook post about a student of Geoslavic Studies who had been interviewed by Czech television about the Interslavic auxiliary language. Subsequent posts revealed that Roberto is blind, comes from the Czech Republic, and is passionate about the language. In the photo, a friendly young man with an accordion looked back at me.

MAGDA ZIÓŁEK

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

Roberto Lombino was born in Prague, but he is one quarter Italian. His family hails from Palermo in Sicily. In the 1960s, Roberto's grandfather won a trip to Prague at a game of cards. There, he met Roberto's future grandmother, who had been born in the Czech Republic. The couple had a son, who grew up to become a nuclear physicist and spent his free time guiding tours around Prague. It was during one of these tours, at the airport, that he met Roberto's future mother. This is how Roberto and his brother came into the world. "Initially, I had great potential to become bilingual, but unfortunately I didn't make the most of it," says Roberto. "I have a rather complicated relationship with my father, which meant that I wasn't particularly drawn to Italy or the Italian language. I only know Italian at a basic conversational level. I am more attracted to Slavic languages. Including English, Italian and German, I speak ten languages, and Polish is my best," he adds.

THERE IS ANOTHER REMARKABLE STORY CONNECTED WITH THE POLISH LANGUAGE

According to Roberto, Polish opened the way to freedom for him in a tangible way. This is something that can only happen to a person with a disability who dreams of playing football in the yard, going to the park, and feeling part of the crowd — in short, functioning like any other able-bodied person.

Roberto Lombino was born blind. Perhaps that is why he has loved radio shows ever since he was a child. He recalls being particularly attracted to those broadcast in Slavic languages. He was fascinated by the voices speaking words and sentences that were so similar to Czech that he could guess their meaning with a little effort. Roberto's passion for Slavic languages shaped his childhood – while spending his holidays with his grandparents in Cieszyn Silesia, he received language-learning materials from friends. He also brought back recordings of folk bands from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland from these trips – music that still fascinates him today. However, the real turning point in Roberto's life came when he stumbled upon a Polish-language podcast called TyfloPodcast. In this podcast, blind people talk about how to overcome difficulties in everyday life.

"For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of freedom. Even in primary school, I realized that I would have to fight for it. I am grateful to my parents for never restricting me too much. However, it was only when I started listening to TyfloPodcast

that I received specific advice on how to achieve it. I thought to myself, 'If these people can do so many things, why can't I?' I really wanted to meet and talk to them — after all, we had so much in common. In a way, I already knew that we would meet someday. That moment came in 2013 when I joined their voice chat for the first time," he recalls.

For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of freedom. Even in primary school, I realized that I would have to fight for it.

Thanks to the podcasts, Roberto learnt Polish and met several people who are still his friends today. This was probably also the reason why he chose to study Polish at Charles University in Prague, where he completed his bachelor's degree. During the pandemic, he enrolled in an online Sorbian course at the University of Leipzig.

"In Prague, I became friends with a lecturer from Poznań. He encouraged me to study at Adam Mickiewicz University, suggesting that I write my master's thesis on inter-Slavic studies, a subject in which I was already interested at the time," says Roberto.

This is how Roberto Lombino ended up in our city. Initially, he continued his studies at the Institute of Polish Philology in Poznań. However, he says that his inner stubbornness would not allow him to write a master's thesis on anything other than Interslavic. Fortunately, a new field of study had been created at the Institute of Slavic Philology in the meantime: Geoslavic Studies. It is here that Roberto intends to study the Interslavic language.

WE SLAVS UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER IN OUR OWN LANGUAGES

"In my experience, when a Pole or a Czech comes to Croatia, they don't necessarily want to speak English. This is especially true if the topic concerns local traditions or products. In such cases, it is easier to reach an understanding through language analogies. This type of communication helps bridge the gap and allows for more direct contact," says Roberto Lombino.

Interslavic is an artificial language based on existing Slavic languages. The language's creators are the Dutch linguist Jan van Steenbergen and the Czech computer scientist Vojtěch Merunka, who worked independently on the language for many years. The combination of their language conceptions gave birth to Interslavic.

According to Lombino, Interslavic is currently spoken by around 1,000 people. The Interslavic language community meets on Discord, which serves as a hub for the exchange of ideas. There is also an active Facebook profile with nearly 30,000 followers, as well as a YouTube channel. Notably, songs are being written in Interslavic, as well as a fantasy book and a film based on Jerzy Kosiński's novel *The Painted Bird.*

"I dream that, in the future, Interslavic will be taught in primary schools in Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia, and other Slavic countries as an extracurricular activity so that children can become familiar with it. I would also like to share this idea with linguists because teaching Interslavic as an elective would be an excellent addition to Slavic studies," says Lombino.

Meanwhile, he is working on a FundAkcja PPNT grant entitled "The Interslavic language in the context of artificial Slavic languages: state of knowledge." This research will form part of his master's thesis. Lombino will collect materials in Poznań, Prague and Zagreb, which he hopes will be very useful. "In June, a conference combined with Inter-Slavic Day is planned in Zagreb. I hope to take part in it — it promises to be an interesting conversation with scholars from Zagreb and Belgrade," he says happily.

I LIKE TO SAVOR LIFE; THAT'S MY APPROACH TO TRAVEL

Roberto has been travelling since childhood. He fondly remembers family trips to Sicily and holidays in Cieszyn Silesia, among many others. For him, travelling is not only about discovering new places, but also about meeting people and experiencing new sounds and tastes. As an adult, he has developed his own style of travel.

"I travel to see people I know who can help me if I need it in a new place. They don't have to be locals, but they do need to be familiar with the area. I sometimes ask passers-by for help, but I'm usually very careful and, as a rule, I avoid discussions with intoxicated people. The key to these trips is my smartphone, which allows me to buy tickets, order an Uber and finally reach my destination using GPS. I learned all this from the people on TyfloPodcast," he says.

Roberto Lombino is convinced that Poland is where he belongs. It is here that he would like to fulfil his dreams of doing academic work and researching the Interslavic language. His stubbornness and fortitude make it highly likely that these dreams will come true.

And if not, Roberto has many other passions. For example, he has been learning to play the piano since the age of three. He does not have very fond memories of those long hours of practice. However, he does like the accordion. He enjoys playing it at faculty celebrations. More ambitious concerts take place in student clubs. Cooking is on his list of things to do. He likes to explore world cuisines, but he cannot cook yet. However, his persistence and strong will guarantee that this will soon change. ∎

Dr. Marcin Wysocki

CHANCELLOR'S VIEW

INTERVIEW BY **MAGDA ZIÓŁEK**

How would you describe the typical AMU administrator? What is he or she like? When asked about this years ago, AMU Chancellor Stanisław Wachowiak said that the average administrator was a woman aged around 42.
This description remains largely unchanged. The average university employee is now a woman aged over 48 (women make up 56% of all AMU employees). The average age of an AMU administrator is 46, and women comprise over 80% of this group. It is a distinctly female-dominated team. Recently, we have recruited a significant number of younger employees. Fortunately, those who start working at the university tend to stay with us for a long time.

How many new employees come to us through referrals when it comes to hiring?
For several years now, all administrative positions have been filled through transparent, official competitions conducted by the Staff Recruitment and Professional Development Section of the AMU HR Centre. Its members are responsible for an initial screening of applications, conducting interviews to assess whether candidates meet the required criteria, and only then forwarding selected candidates to their future supervisors for final interviews. This ensures that no unsuitable candidates are hired for administrative roles.

Which groups of employees are the most difficult to recruit?
Certain groups of employees either prove difficult to recruit or have a high staff turnover rate. Some people acquire skills and knowledge that are in high demand on the labor market after joining our university, and then leave for better-paid jobs. Currently, the biggest problem with recruitment concerns highly qualified technical specialists, for whom the public sector is not a competitive employer. For instance, it took us over a year to find an electrical inspector for the Repairs and Renovations. It is also difficult to recruit specialists for the Project Support Centre or the Real Estate Management Office, and there is high staff turnover in the Bursar's Office.

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

I thought you would answer: IT specialists

Contrary to appearances, no. Our goal is to provide IT specialists with stable and good working conditions. While we may not offer the highest salaries on the market, we provide other benefits, such as flexible working hours. This enables them to balance work with other commitments.

Salaries have also improved over the last few years. All of this means that our IT specialists are happy to stay with us. While it can sometimes be difficult to find the right specialist, those we already have are usually long-term employees with high qualifications.

The most pressing challenge for the AMU IT team is recruiting professionals with unique qualifications, such as in cybersecurity, as well as specialists in access control system management, software development, process modelling and Employee Portal development. There are not many of these professionals on the job market, and their salary expectations are also very high.

I remember your speech at the last Administration Forum. You said that you were proud of the AMU administration. Could you elaborate on what you were satisfied with and what you were concerned about?

The strength of the university administration lies in its competence. We employ professionals who are committed and creative in their fields, giving us enormous potential. However, I also see a certain conservatism and a lack of openness to change. Some of our employees react with dissatisfaction to any adjustments in their duties or changes in their environment. The world is advancing rapidly, with technological progress taking place before our very eyes. This forces us to make many changes, including those relating to professional competencies. We must keep up. However, when these same employees are asked to implement certain measures or consult on issues, they get to work, and I receive excellent, honest and constructive feedback, which is far from critical. Ultimately, therefore, the AMU Central Administration rises to the challenge, because this is where we usually test new solutions, e.g. IT services. I also cooperate effectively with the administration of all AMU Faculties. I believe this is achieved through regular meetings with the heads of the Main and Student Offices, during which we discuss any ongoing issues.

We employ professionals who are committed and creative in their fields, giving us enormous potential.

Can we expect a Q&A session with the Chancellor?

During the last Q&A session with the Rector, many questions were asked about administrative matters. I have taken note of these questions and suggestions and will implement them wherever possible. Some people were dissatisfied with changes that had not been communicated in advance. Having worked at AMU for over twelve years, I know that our community does not like surprises and that employees need time to prepare for changes. Unfortunately, many issues affecting our everyday lives arise unexpectedly. Sometimes, certain actions are delayed and sometimes decisions are made so quickly that there is no time for proper communication. Unfortunately...

And if such a Q&A took place, what questions do you think you would be asked?

Car parks, car parks, car parks. The last Q&A focused largely on car parks, the Employee Portal, work organization systems, days off, and pay rises. The AMU administration comprises employees who are particularly affected by relatively low salaries, despite last year's pay rises. I understand this, which is why I try to secure discretionary pay rises for administrative staff whenever possible. These funds, which are at the disposal of unit heads, are an important mechanism for motivating and recognizing the most dedicated employees. I hope that we will also be able to allocate funds for this type of pay rise this year.

Another key motivating factor is communicating expectations clearly to employees and learning about their expectations and perspectives. The Employee Evaluation System – Development Direction is designed to help us resolve such issues and manage more effectively. If we improve communication, there will be fewer reasons to complain. In March, all administrative employees had the opportunity to talk to their supervisor as part of regular performance reviews, for the second time. I encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to discuss their work expectations.

Finally, I would like to ask about the consultations that took place at our university. What issues did the administrative staff raise during the roundtable meetings?

The overall conclusions of the "Administrative Inspirations: Needs and Good Practices" consultations, which were conducted by the Social and Sustainable Development Initiatives Office in cooperation with the Development Office, will be presented at the Administration Forum in mid-February. However, I am already familiar with some of them. Issues raised included increasing the empowerment of administrative staff in shaping their work environment, and adopting a more partnership-based approach to their treatment. One interesting topic was the proposal for development and career paths, including horizontal ones, and initiatives to strengthen competencies. Several interesting ideas were put forward, such as creating a database of employees' competences, skills, and interests. This would enable our university to make better use of the potential of its administrative staff. ∎

LEAN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: **A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS. REVOLUTION OR EVOLUTION IN WORK ORGANIZATION?**

In a world of constant change, higher education institutions face the need for profound reforms. Traditional structures and management methods often fail to meet the expectations of students, faculty, and the business community. More and more academic institutions are looking for new solutions.

KATARZYNA WALA

One such solution is Lean Management, a concept derived from industry. How did a method from Toyota's production line find its way into higher education? Its enthusiasts say the answer is simple. Lean works perfectly in process-based activities. It reduces bureaucracy, shortens decision-making times, empowers employees, and eliminates wasteful activities. Most importantly, it transforms the organizational culture, turning employees into a community of learners. Lean is an idea of continuous improvement that turns knowledge into action.

See how Lean works at European universities. Experts and participants of the practical and scientific seminar "Lean Transformations" organized by Lean Higher Education Poland and held at AMU, shared their best practices with us. ∎

TOGETHER FOR A CHANGE

JOHN HOGG
Chairperson of Lean HE Global, Director of Continuous Improvement

Over the past 15 years, the use of lean management in higher education has become increasingly popular, but it is still relatively rare and often misunderstood. Lean management can help deliver significant benefits for the higher education sector, especially in administrative and support services, but it requires thoughtful adaptation and collaborative implementation. When aligned with institutional strategy, values and culture, it can significantly enhance effectiveness and efficiency, experience and satisfaction, for the benefit of our students, staff, and all that higher education serves.

At the University of Strathclyde, we launched our programme in 2013. Since its inception, it has helped the organisation achieve significant value and benefits. Founded on the pillar of respect for people, we have put people at the heart of what we do.

The Lean in Higher Education network was also established in 2013 by a group of like-minded Lean enthusiasts in the UK HE sector. Since 2013, Lean in Higher Education has grown to become a global network, with three continental divisions, bring together practitioners from hundreds of universities around the world. As a community of learners, we share knowledge and practices with each other in the spirit of continuous improvement. Our community is more important than ever in such a turbulent world.

LEAN – A GOOD PRACTICE FROM OXFORD

SARA PASSMORE
Director of the Change and Continuous Improvement Team, University of Oxford, UK

Since 2018, our team has focused on winning hearts and minds by embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the university. Initially trained in Lean by external consultants, we began with high-impact projects in areas such as graduate and staff recruitment, and casual payroll. A key feature of our approach has been wide and active stakeholder engagement and visualising processes with process mapping to facilitate collaborative analysis and solution-building. Our early successes laid the foundation for the launch of a broader Continuous Improvement (CI) programme in 2021, aimed at reaching all professional services staff. This programme is built on three pillars: building capability in Lean tools and techniques, supporting the community (now at nearly 1000 members), and encouraging a culture of improvement. To this end, we have created an online repository of tools available to anyone who wants to use them in their daily work, and run a number of training and learning events. Notably, we avoid using the term "Lean management" due to its negative connotations within the university setting, preferring instead "culture of continuous improvement"— a phrase that more accurately reflects our values and our commitment to enhancing services collaboratively.

LEAN DIAMONDS: LEAN AND SUSTAINABILITY

TAMMI SINHA
University of Surrey, UK

Lean in Higher Education is a powerful force for transforming our services for students and colleagues. The approach I took with the University of Southampton was to introduce the toolkits, ways of working, and philosophy as part of our Continuous Improvement Team with iSolutions, the computing services arm of the university. We achieved Lean Competency System accreditation and trained over 150 colleagues as Lean foundations, and 40+ as Lean practitioners. The beauty of this approach built a high level of competency across the professional services of the university, with colleagues using systems thinking and problem solving to solve issues, create robust processes, and ensure respect for people and planet was at the heart of our service excellence approach.

The team was shortlisted for a Lean Diamonds Award for the innovative approach of linking sustainability and lean through our communities of practice. Improvement is a contact sport; it needs to be seen, supported, resourced, and celebrated. We have now moved the approach into the academic disciplines with the School of Healthcare Enterprise & Innovation taking the lead with accreditation for a new suite of master's programmes. Exciting times!

LEAN IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND: A PATH TO EXCELLENCE WITH RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

JUSTYNA MACIĄG
Jagiellonian University in Krakow

Lean has been successfully implemented in education around the world for over 30 years, including at prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. In Poland, however, it is still relatively rare, mainly thanks to the commitment of Lean enthusiasts. However, this is changing. In 2017, we established the Lean Higher Education Poland network to promote a culture of continuous improvement in higher education. We inspire universities to improve. We meet and exchange practices. Our network already has over 300 members.

I have personally been researching, implementing, and promoting Lean in higher education for years. I believe that, in a world where universities are operating under enormous regulatory, economic, and social pressure and traditional management models are failing, Lean offers a modern, value-based alternative that engages the entire community. At the heart of Lean is *kaizen* (Japanese for "improvement"), which is the idea of making small daily and incremental improvements. Change does not come about through revolution but through the involvement of the entire university community in improving everyday processes. Lean enables us to reinvent the university while respecting its mission, people, and academic values.

KAIZEN: THE IDEA OF SMALL STEPS AT AMU

KAROLINA DOMAGALSKA-NOWAK
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

The Lean Transformations seminar, part of the Lean HE Poland network, was held at our university for the first time. Our goal is to promote the Lean philosophy within our community. I have personally participated in Lean Management meetings for several years and strive to inspire others with this concept.

To me, Lean management is primarily about respecting people, their knowledge, and their experience. Since 2019, thanks to the Dean's Offices Forum initiative, we have been able to implement this idea at AMU. Currently, the forum is a celebration of university administration, organized from the bottom up by interested administrative staff for administrative staff, with the support of the university authorities. The event provides an opportunity to test Lean tools in practice. It offers a space for exchanging ideas with front-line employees whose knowledge of processes is invaluable. This year, it attracted 700 people.

I believe that change must start with oneself and that revolutions do not always yield positive results. Small, daily improvements, however, bring lasting value. That is why, in my administrative and teaching work, I practice *kaizen*—the idea of taking small steps—and I am not alone in this. A group of Lean enthusiasts is gaining momentum in our academic community.

AND THE WORLD CONTINUES TO TEMPT ME...

Professor Wojciech Niedbała, from the AMU Faculty of Biology, should be in the Guinness Book of World Records. During his academic career he has described and classified over 900 species of mites from around the world.

INTERVIEW BY **KRZYSZTOF SMURA**

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

You have recently celebrated the 55th anniversary of your doctorate and the 50th anniversary of your postdoctoral degree. Is that possible?

I don't think it's down to me. Perhaps it's just the fact that I'm still alive. However, if you take proper care of your mental and physical health, it shouldn't be a problem. For years, I have followed the rule of never forgetting various forms of physical activity, from recreational gymnastics with Ms Joanna to trekking in the hills of La Gomera. For example, I meet **Professor Mariusz Jaskólski** from the Faculty of Chemistry at our swimming pool. He is probably the first person there at 6 a.m.; I arrive a little later. He has already swum three kilometres, whereas I struggle to swim a third of that distance. Well, but I'm older than him! During the day, I also make sure to get up from my computer and microscope every hour or so. I do a few simple, varied exercises lasting four to five minutes, and somehow I manage to keep going. For now, at least. The need to move is hardly a discovery, but consistency, perseverance and self-discipline are challenging. Nature needs help. Perhaps it is easier for me as I am a taxonomist by profession (laughing). It is funny in a way, but it is also work and a duty to the body.

During an AMU Senate meeting once, I was struck by a remark made by **Rector Stefan Jurga**. In a certain context, he said that he was glad that Providence had blessed him with good health. I thought to myself: "How do you know what lies dormant in your body, Stefan?"

For years, I have followed the rule of never forgetting various forms of physical activity.

I admire you all the more because, in 2024, you were among the 36 AMU scientists in the top two per cent for bibliometric indexing. I also found two of your students on the list. That's nearly ten per cent of the entire AMU!

I am also very proud of my doctoral students, **Professors Łukasz Kaczmarek** and **Krzysztof Zawierucha**, who are achieving great things in the scientific world. They are natural talents. The citations of my research are the result of many years of hard work, and my students have already reached such a high position in this ranking at such a young age. I am very happy.

Allow me to disagree. Every year, I see Prof. Wojciech Niedbała's name in the publication rankings. The latest one is from 2024.

There are four publications in the latest ranking. Research has always been a pleasure for me. It is a hobby to which I have devoted a large part of my life. This is reflected in the 2023 study, which I wrote in collaboration with Prof. D. Liu, a student of mine from China. In it, we presented taxonomic, ecological and zoogeographical information on almost 5,000 mite species from around the world, including over 900 species that I have described.

"Professor Wojciech Niedbała from the Faculty of Biology is a co-founder of the Department of Animal Taxonomy and Ecology, and has been its head for a long time. He is the author of over 300 publications and 15 books, in which he has described over 900 new species of ptyctimous mites. For this, he should be included in the Guinness Book of Records." Why mites?

The Guinness World Records entry was a joke by **Professor Błoszyk**. I owe my passion to my mentor and supervisor, **Professor Jan Rafalski**. During one of my student field trips in the 1960s, I lay on the ground and looked around; there were pseudoscorpions moving around me. They are small creatures that resemble scorpions. I asked my professor if I could study them for my master's thesis. He replied that he had just finished a monograph on Poland's pseudoscorpions. He suggested that I study mites instead, as they were a very neglected group. I knew nothing about mites at the time. At that time, there were great housing difficulties, and after I had completed my master's degree, the professor took me into his office. This gave me constant access to his knowledge, and I quickly learned how to identify mite species. Furthermore, Prof. Rafalski was very interested in mites and would often abandon his duties to identify them with me, enabling me to learn quickly. I should mention that Prof. Rafalski was an exceptional zoologist with extensive knowledge of invertebrates. Interestingly, he was not particularly fond of birds. He even joked that his favourite bird was chicken on a plate. He trained a group of specialists and founded the Poznań acarological school. He did not publish much himself as he was constantly busy helping others and writing opinions and reviews. Regarding my own work, my research initially focused on soil fauna ecology, particularly oribatid mites. However, in the early 1980s, my interests gradually shifted towards the taxonomy of selected mite groups. Firstly, I studied the *Brachychthonidae* family, and then I moved on to the *Ptyctima* group.

Why are mites so interesting?
As arthropods, mites are related to insects, a group comprising around 1.5 million species. It is said that acarology, the study of mites, is a hundred years behind entomology. Some mite groups are completely unknown. So far, several tens of thousands of species have been formally identified, and one day they may equal insects in number. The soil mites that I study play a very important role in nature. They are saprophages that feed on dead organic matter, breaking it down and increasing its surface area. This promotes the invasion of bacteria and fungi, which are the actual decomposers that mineralise matter. This is why raking leaves in Poznań's parks is not ecological, in my opinion. I wrote about this in my master's thesis.

I will soon have worked for 60 years. To be honest, I cannot imagine life without work.

I looked through the list of mites that you have studied. I don't think there's anywhere in the world you haven't been. You are one of only a few acarologists authorised to conduct taxonomic research on Australian mites from the CSIRO collection. Are there any blank spots left on your map?
Well, there are still quite a few places, but thanks to my collaboration with other scientists, I am constantly acquiring samples, including from museums around the world. This, among other things, is what keeps the Poznań centre at the forefront of scientific research in the fields of mite taxonomy, biology, ecology and zoogeography. Having studied mites for many years, I can now identify them and tell you where in the world they come from. My collection of taxa (holotypes and paratypes) is currently deposited in the Natural History Collection at the AMU Faculty of Biology. We also look after a collection of soil and non-durable microenvironment samples started by Prof. Jan Rafalski. The collection is constantly being supplemented by acarologists. Today, it contains over 30,000 samples from Poland and almost 10,000 from elsewhere in the world. This excellent research material can be used in teaching (for bachelor's and master's theses) and academic work (for doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations and professorships).

In which area of Poland do you focus your research?
I primarily describe new species from exotic specimens, most recently from Peru and Uganda. However, I have been participating in observations of invertebrates in Polish nature reserves for over 40 years, mainly in western Wielkopolska. I also conduct research on invertebrates at two unique sites: the Białowieża Forest and the 'Cisy Staropolskie im. Leona Wyczółkowskiego' in Wierzchlas. In short, I am continuing the work of the Polish acarological school.

Professor Rafalski was your mentor. Are there any other scientists whose work you admire?
Certainly — François Grandjean, whose work on mites is unique. I treat the seven substantial volumes he wrote as a kind of acarological bible. Grandjean wrote exclusively in French, but all seven volumes have been translated into English by Americans. This exceptional researcher, who was originally trained as a mining engineer, took up mites in his forties, worked until his nineties and published over 200 sophisticated works on taxonomy. I would love to write just one like that! He should have received the Nobel Prize. Unfortunately, there is no Nobel Prize in this field.

What are your plans for the future?
I will soon have worked for 60 years. To be honest, I cannot imagine life without work; I enjoy being around young people at my home institution. I am still working, though not as intensively as before. Then there's recreation and travelling. I never get enough of that, and the world continues to tempt me.

Where are you going?
I'm planning to go to the Philippines in early spring, the Gorce Mountains in late spring, and La Palma for trekking in late autumn. ∎

Professor Wojciech Niedbała studied biology, specialising in zoology, at the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences at Adam Mickiewicz University. He was employed at the Department of Animal Morphology in 1965, obtaining his doctorate in 1969 and a postdoctoral degree in 1974. He became an associate professor in 1983 and a full professor in 1993. He was Head of the AMU Department of Animal Morphology from 1979 to 1984, a professor at the Institut National Agronomique in Algiers and the Centre Universitaire in Tiaret from 1984 to 1989, and Head of the AMU Department of Animal Taxonomy and Ecology from 1990 to 2013. From 1999 to 2008, he was Director of the Institute of Environmental Biology. Two new genera and twelve new species of mites from around the world have been named after him.

THIS BOOK TITLE SHOULD MAKE YOU THINK AND BE PROVOCATIVE

An interview with **Professor Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany** from the Department of European Tradition Research, Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology

DARIUSZ NOWACZYK

What is the significance of the title of your latest book, *Żydowie polscy, Żydowie nasze* (Jews of Poland, Jews of Ours)?

This title has haunted me for a long time. It is not at all obvious; in Polish, it even looks like a grammatical error. Those who have studied Polish literature or are familiar with the Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid will immediately recognize the first part of the title, as "Żydowie polscy" is one of his best-known poems. In it, Norwid attributes royal dignity to the Jewish people while simultaneously depicting them in a dramatic situation. He also speaks of the solidarity between Polish Jews and Poles. The poem's protagonist, Michał Landy, a rabbinical school graduate, takes a cross (here, the cross like a standard symbolizes Polishness) from a dying demonstrator, a Capuchin monk, who has been struck by a tsarist bullet, during a demonstration at the funeral of a Siberian exile, Ksawery Stobnicki. Landy then dies himself. Norwid refers to "a Maccabee on the pavement in Warsaw," emphasizing the radical nature of this courageous act. Before the 1863 January Uprising, Landy became a symbol of Polish-Jewish solidarity. The second part of the book's title is more enigmatic and caught my eye when reading Anna Janko's *A Little Annihilation*. It is a book about the genocide in the Zamość region during World War II. Janko refers to the words of the peasant poet Bronka Szawara: "A oni do lasu uciekli, nasze ludzie i Żydowie nasze" (And they fled to the forest, our people and the Jews of ours). The expression "Żydowie nasze" (Jews of ours) in Polish intrigued me from the outset; it is grammatically incorrect — I would even consider it a solecism. This phrase reveals the underlying attitude towards Jews in Polish consciousness and the collective imagination, raising the issue of pogroms and anti-Semitism. It also has a biblical character, increasing its significance through inversion, similar to Norwid's phrase. However, "Żydowie nasze" is an incoherent expression, even fractured internally. I was fascinated by the fact that these two incompatible components could be brought together to form texts and construct thoughts. I was looking for a binding formula that would make you think and be provocative at the same time.

Professor Jacek Leociak stated that 90% of Norwid's poetic utterances are negative towards Jews, with only 10% being positive.
The poem "Żydowie polscy" does not represent Norwid's general view of Jews, but rather his view of a specific situation. I think the poem evokes different emotions and interpretations depending on whether you consider it in the context of Norwid's entire body of work or in the context of this specific situation. In the title of my book, I used the phrase itself, while Anita Jarzyna and I referred to the poem in our dialogue "Norwid i sztandary" (Norwid and Standards), published in the quarterly *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Memoir). Norwid was such a broad-minded poet that it would be wrong to attribute a very clear intention to him in a poem that describes a complex situation and is a starting point for free poetic reflections. He is simply too wise a poet to be judged anti-Semitic or sympathetic to Jews on the basis of a single work. For me, however, this poem has always prompted thoughts about Polish Jews with empathy.

A great deal has been written about the Holocaust, and fortunately, the quality of writing is improving.

The poem "Still" by Wisława Szymborska is completely different. If I may say so, it contains a lyrical description of the Holocaust.
It is an extraordinary poem in every way, which is why I chose to start my book with it. In my opinion, it is one of the most important poems about the Holocaust that I have read. Professor Michał Głowiński also considers it to be one of the most important Polish poems about the Holocaust. Apart from "Still," his list includes "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto" and "Campo di Fiori" by Czesław Miłosz, and "Ballads and Romances" by Władysław Broniewski. Szymborska strove for the greatest possible precision of poetic expression, and with such an important subject as the Holocaust, she captured the essence of lyricism, as you so aptly put it. It is a very moving poem.

A great deal has been written about Polish-Jewish relations, both positive and negative, in various forms. Many literary analyses have been conducted. Are there still areas that can be interpreted in a novel way, or are we approaching a point where all future interpretations will essentially be epigonous?
I don't think so. A great deal has been written about the Holocaust, and fortunately, the quality of writing is improving. This is partly thanks to the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research in Warsaw and the journal *Holocaust Studies and Materials* that it publishes. Writing about the Holocaust has revealed itself to be a much broader issue because it touches on anti-Semitism, pogroms, and xenophobia. Recall, for example, the anthropological texts of Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, who describes successive pogroms in her monographic studies. In literary studies, significant reinterpretations have emerged, such as Professor **Tomasz Żukowski's** analysis of Zofia Nałkowska's *Medallions*. However, essays and poetry, my primary interests and the focus of my literary thinking, have not received adequate attention. This is why I have devoted separate sections of my book to Julian Tuwim, author of the manifesto *We, Polish Jews*, and Jerzy Ficowski, whose work reacts to the Holocaust with seismographic sensitivity. The issues I address in the book — the relationship between European and Polish Holocaust and labor camp essays, and what I term "comparative discourses on the Holocaust" — have also not been adequately explored. Hence the text on Rwanda. Any genocide can be written about using the literary study tools that emerged from the Holocaust – this borderline discourse has produced such methods of description. This is a very important theme in interdisciplinary studies: writing about the Holocaust serves as a synecdoche for writing about genocide. The Armenian Genocide, which occurred during the First World War, is said to have been a precursor to the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler himself invoked an Armenian quotation to justify the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, arguing that the Armenian massacre had been forgotten. I find these historiosophical issues fascinating, as they often lie on the border between literary texts, specific poems and essays. The books by Zofia Nałkowska, Tadeusz Borowski and Seweryna Szmaglewska are key texts for understanding the Holocaust. However, a fresh approach to reading them can lead to significant shifts in interpretation. Whether this is achieved depends on one's intellectual horizons, writing talent, and research skills.

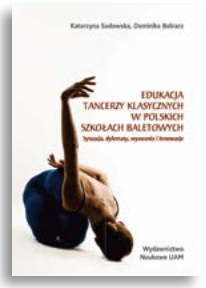
Which works should be included in a second part of your book, if one were to be published?
That is a very interesting question because this year I am, in a sense, preparing the second part of the book. It will be titled *Hassliebe*. This German word cannot be translated into Polish and means love combined with hatred, organically and inseparably. I have been interested for years in the motives that inspired the Nazis to commit their crimes, as well as in the fate of German Jews. We are often unaware of the specifics of the fate of German Jews, beginning with the *Haskalah*, or the Jewish Enlightenment. In the 18th and 19th centuries, German Jews were at the forefront of acculturation and assimilation in Europe, moving away from the traditional understanding of their Jewish identity. They were often outstanding Europeans in various fields. This book will include texts published in magazines, as well as several new essays. These will cover topics such as the dark phenomenon of Hitlerism and Hitler's relationship with German society, which believed that he was a miracle worker and healer. I will examine Hitler's last will and testament and analyze his secret conversations and a critical edition of *Mein Kampf*. I will also explore the phenomenon of Joseph Goebbels. I hope these essays will help us understand how totalitarianism arises. For this reason, I am interested in the war on our eastern border, and I stand unequivocally in solidarity with

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

Ukraine. The attitudes of Putin's decision-makers bear a striking resemblance to those that led to the rise of Nazi Germany and the formation of the Third Reich. When searching for the origins of totalitarianism, I intend to write about the lives of prominent German Jews such as Heinrich Heine, Nobel Prize winner Nelly Sachs, and Karl Kraus, while also exploring the factors that led to the establishment of a totalitarian state in Germany based on consistent anti-Semitic discourse. My next book will discuss the clash between highly educated, pro-European German Jews who were active in the arts, literature and science, and the terrible eliminationist ideology that destroyed not only this minority but also the entire state. This ideology destroys the idea of society as a community. As Heine wrote, "Those who burn books will in the end burn people." This is precisely what happened: first in the square in front of the Reichstag and then in the crematoria of the Nazi death camps. ∎

Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany
(born December 20, 1970)
is a professor, literary scholar, essayist, and poet. She is the author of approximately 350 articles and essays in Polish, English, Bulgarian, German, Russian, and Ukrainian. Her academic publications include *Rilke poetów polskich* (Rilke of the Polish Poets) (2004; 2017), *Rycerz i Śmierć. O „Elegiach duinejskich" Rainera Marii Rilkego* (The Night and the Death: On Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*) (2010; 2015), *Interlinie w ciemności. Jednak interpretacja* (Interlines in Darkness. Nevertheless, an Interpretation) (2012), "Все поэты жиды". *Antytotalitarne gesty poetyckie i kreacyjne wobec Zagłady oraz innych doświadczeń granicznych* ("Все поэты жиды." Antitotalitarian Poetic Acts and Acts of Creativity Towards the Holocaust and Other Borderline Experiences) (2013), *Skąd się bierze lekcja polskiego? Scenariusze, pomysły, konteksty* (Where Do Polish Classes Come From? Scripts, Ideas, Contexts) (2016), *Nikt nie widzi dobrze. Eseje* (No One Sees Right. Essays) (2018), *Tuwim. Pęknięcie (Julian Tuwim. The Rupture)* (2021), *Żydowie polscy, Żydowie nasze* (Jews of Poland, Jews of Ours) (2024), as well as volumes of poetry: *Zielony promień* (A Green Ray) (2006) and *Łania w styczniu* (A Doe in January) (2022). She also edited collections of poems by Anna Pogonowska (2018) and Irena Tuwim (2020). Prof. Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany is the recipient of the Klemens Szaniawski Award for her doctoral dissertation, the Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński Award for prose, and the Polish Society of Authors and Composers ZAiKS/PEN Club Award for essays. She is the supervisor of the Student and Doctoral Research Club for Enthusiasts of Jewish Culture and Literature, "Dabru Emet," and Vice-President of the Committee on Literary Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the 2024–2027 term. She is also a member of the Open Republic Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia and the Polish PEN Club.

NEW RELEASES FROM THE AMU PUBLISHING HOUSE



***Edukacja tancerzy klasycznych w polskich szkołach baletowych. Sytuacja, dylematy, wyzwania i innowacje* (The Education of Classical Dancers in Polish Ballet Schools: State of Affairs, Dilemmas, Challenges and Innovations).**
Katarzyna Sadowska and Dominika Babiarz

This study highlights aspects of ballet education that the authors deem important, such as ineffective calls for arts and ballet education reform, the low social status of ballet dancers, short stage careers, high injury rates, a mismatch between education and labor market requirements, competition from foreign dancers, the abolition of early retirement, and the long-standing marginalization of the arts in public education. These factors result in an unsatisfactory level of social participation in high culture.

***Koronapolszczyzna: Słownictwo czasów pandemii koronawirusa SARS-CoV-2* ("Corona Polish": Vocabulary of the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic)**
Anna Piotrowicz-Krenc and Małgorzata Witaszek-Samborska

This book provides a linguistic and cultural analysis of the lexical changes that occurred in the Polish language during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The authors primarily focus on neologisms: new words, collocations, phraseologisms. They also consider linguistic units that functioned in the medical field but underwent determinologization during the pandemic, becoming part of the general language.

***Ekspresje buntu. O wyznaniach poetek* (Expressions of Rebellion. On the Confessions of Women Poets)**
Agnieszka Czyżak, Beata Przymuszała, Agnieszka Rydz

This monograph is another installment in the ongoing research on contemporary women's literature. The poetic works discussed explore dimensions of female rebellion against reality that, at first glance, do not appear to challenge social order but ultimately reveal its flaws and shortcomings from many perspectives. The confessions of Anna Świrszczyńska, Halina Poświatowska, and Justyna Bargielska—women poets from different periods of contemporary literature who present their rebellious attitudes toward the world at various stages of life—are analyzed in detail.

PROF. KRZYSZTOF ZAWIERUCHA
AMU Faculty of Biology

AMU IN THE POLISH POLAR CONSORTIUM

Thanks to AMU's participation in the consortium and HarSval, AMU academics went on trips to research centers in Ås, Bergen, Tromsø, and Trondheim in 2024 alone.

The year 2025 has been declared the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation. The first World Day for Glaciers, which coincided with the first day of spring, has passed, and the International Polar Year is approaching. Poland is a leader in Arctic research in Svalbard. We have the year-round Polish Polar Station, Hornsund and a network of summer stations. The AMU's Petuniabukta Station conducts interdisciplinary research on the climate and nature of Svalbard. We are delighted that scientists from the faculties of natural sciences and other fields have worked there to this day. To successfully implement research plans, develop young staff, and shape polar policy, we believe that the university requires solid support and a network that provides opportunities for cooperation and logistics development. Polar research is a team effort. Fortunately, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań has been a long-time member of the Polish Polar Consortium (PPC). The PPC consists of Polish higher education and research institutes that are actively involved in polar research. The PPC aims to shape the future of polar research, build a strong position for Poland in international teams and expert panels, and support activities that develop research and logistical capabilities.

Recently, the PPC implemented the HarSval project, a bilateral initiative for the harmonization of Svalbard cooperation. The project involved several working groups that addressed various aspects of scientific research development and staff competencies, including mobility. Thanks to AMU's participation in the consortium and HarSval, AMU academics went on trips to research centers in Ås, Bergen, Tromsø, and Trondheim in 2024 alone. The research topics were diverse and, to our satisfaction, extended beyond the natural sciences. Funding was awarded to researchers from the AMU Faculties of Human Geography and Planning, Modern Languages and Literatures, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, and Biology. Additionally, graduate and doctoral students could apply for research trips and conferences that support Polish-Norwegian cooperation development. Ten applications from AMU students and doctoral candidates were funded for trips related to a wide range of activities, including studying mite specimens at the Natural History Museum in Oslo, attending conferences in Trondheim, and researching Icelandic sagas in Reykjavik. As a member of the PPC, AMU spent a total of 420,811.54 PLN on HarSval alone.

Another significant development for the AMU community was the establishment of the Bera Logistics and Research Center in Longyearbyen by the Centre for Polar Studies at the University of Silesia in Katowice, under the PPC umbrella. During the last summer season, students from the AMU Faculty of Biology, who were enrolled in the BioGeoEco course, were able to use the center's space for lectures, laboratory work, and material storage. This reduced the cost of the trip by eliminating the need to rent space from other on-site establishments. Researchers from Adam Mickiewicz University who received funding through the Excellence Initiative–Research University competition (Research Internships at the AMU Polar Station "Petuniabukta" in Spitsbergen) also had access to the center's infrastructure. The Bera Center can store equipment, especially items containing batteries that require storage in heated rooms. This equipment is part of the Petuniabukta Polar Station's inventory.

What are the next steps for AMU in the PPC? First, we have been involved in preparing Poland's Polar Policy project, planning further strategies, and organizing educational events related to the research of polar regions. Understanding changes in polar ecosystems and describing their impact on the global system is difficult.

Another challenge is emphasizing the presence of Polish scientific institutions and researchers in the north, especially amid discussions about the Arctic's borders and tensions between countries with direct access to the region.

We believe that AMU is well prepared to face these challenges thanks to the Polish Polar Consortium, our interdisciplinary approach, and our experience working in the north. ■

Photo: Władysław Gardasz

PIOTR KORDUBA

COLLEGIUM NOVUM: MODERNISM AND HITCHCOCK

When I started my studies at AMU in 1995, the director of the Institute of Art History welcomed us and apologetically explained that the Institute was only temporarily based in Collegium Novum and that we would soon be moving to a more suitable location. At the time, we too were convinced that this nondescript and rather dilapidated building was not the right place for our field of study. However, art history at AMU has now been based in Collegium Novum for almost three decades and I no longer find the building dilapidated or nondescript. We have become accustomed to modernism.

Behind the rigid, modular geometry of the white and grey façades, a diverse life goes on. Sometimes it is more hurried and active; at others, it seems to slow down and fall asleep. This rhythm is regulated by the university. Every fifteen minutes, life comes to a standstill for almost ninety minutes, only to be filled again with the seemingly chaotic movements of students and teachers. The organization resembles that of an anthill. However, the transition from one stage to another is also accompanied by changes in the intensity and quality of sounds, smells, and light. Sometimes it is these that tell me what time of day it is.

I like the elevators in Collegium Novum. There are several of them – sometimes too few, and sometimes too many. They wait, empty and with their doors open, as if competing with each other for our attention. I enjoy listening to the conversations in the crowded elevators. For those few seconds, I get to overhear snippets of conversations, absorb information taken out of context and share in someone else's joys or fears. I enjoy the brief exchanges about credits and exams, last night's dreams, opinions on good and bad coffee, where to get your nails done and what one's mother or aunt said. These voices have different narrative temperatures and rhetorical power; they spring from different lexicons. The university elevator is a jagged universe.

Renowned Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa says that "the door handle is the handshake of the building." However, I am not particularly fond of the door handles at the entrance to Collegium Novum. Unlike the building's façade, they are bland imitations of poor modernism. For me, Collegium Novum's "handshake" is the porter's booth. It is good that it is there, as it is nice to meet people when entering a building. I know all the Collegium Novum porters. I am more familiar with some and more superficial with others, but I always check to see who is on duty and say a quick hello. We like to chat when I am on my way out. Until recently, there was a porter called Jola. It was different with her. She required more attention than a quick greeting, and would repay it with conversations about important matters, such as politics and health, or completely trivial things seen from unusual perspectives. Jola is an aesthete who is eager to compliment well-chosen outfits and favors extravagance over office correctness. The glass-fronted booth is also a social space. At the end of the day, the cleaners sit there for a moment to chat with the porter.

Sounds of the city center can be heard inside Collegium Novum. The loudest are the ambulances, and when the windows are open, the lecturers fall silent for a few seconds. I know it is possible to lecture while planes are approaching or taking off from Ławica Airport, as we are right on their flight path. Traffic jams on Niepodległości Avenue are not very noisy, but heavy rain drumming on the windowsills is. It never occurred to me that these sounds were particularly annoying. They are part of the rhythm of life in the building. The leaks and porosity of Collegium Novum perhaps convey an illusory sense of interpenetration and coexistence between the university world and the outside world. They suggest that the academic building and its activities are connected to other structures and systems that are necessary for everyday life.

Late afternoon in Collegium Novum is artistic. The sounds of amateur bands and choirs rehearsing can be heard from every corner. It is impossible to tell where they are practicing as the building disperses the sound through its own channels. The choreography of the student Korean fan dance team (*Hae-eo-hwa*) filling the main hall is impossible to miss. We shyly slip to the edge of this brightly colored group. We turn grey next to them.

The most unusual moments sometimes occur at dusk. Crows flock to the park opposite Collegium Novum to roost for the night. Before settling in the tall trees, they circle the area a few more times, perching on the building's roof and carrying on with their lively conversations. They treat us to this visual and acoustic spectacle. I usually witness this when leaving Collegium Novum. One of the porters also enjoys it and knows the crows' rituals well. I like to stop with him in front of the building, tilt our heads upwards and say goodbye to the day with the crows. It is hard not to think of Hitchcock's *The Birds* at this point. But our crows are not scary; they are friendly neighbors from across the street. ■

Fot. Władysław Gardasz

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 9-11

The 50th National Scientific Conference of the Polish Anthropological Society: "The Past Shapes the Future: Humans from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene," celebrating the centennial of the Polish Anthropological Society

The conference will feature reflections on anthropology's achievements to date, as well as inspiring perspectives on the future of this field of research. The organizers intend for the event to serve as a platform for substantive interdisciplinary cooperation and a space for exchanging scientific ideas that will lay the groundwork for the next 100 years of developing new areas and approaches to human research. The conference will feature lectures by invited guests who are experts in human biology and health sciences. World-renowned anthropologist and neurobiologist Prof. Robert M. Sapolsky of Stanford University has confirmed that he will give an online lecture.

- Venue: AMU Faculty of Biology
- More information: ptantropologiczne.pl/konferencja-jubileuszowa/

SEPTEMBER 15-16

International Conference ETHNOLINGUISTIC DEBATES: Language in Cultures, Cultures in Languages

The conference aims to deepen our understanding of the relationship between language and culture. It also aims to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, emphasize the importance of maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity, and explore the impact of technological advances on language and culture.

- Organizers: AMU Faculty of Ethnolinguistics and the Prof. Tadeusz Zgółka Foundation
- More information: etnodebaty.web.amu.edu.pl/

SEPTEMBER 18-20

8th Scientific Symposium ECOSERV 2025 "Ecosystem Services in Transdisciplinary Approach"

The symposium brings together a dedicated community of scientists, experts, and practitioners, providing an excellent opportunity to share experiences in ecosystem services research and applications.

- Organizers: AMU Department of Integrated Geography in cooperation with the National Ecosystem Services Partnership Network and the Society for Urban Ecology – Central Europe Chapter.
- Venue: AMU Faculty of Human Geography and Planning

SEPTEMBER 23-25

2nd Congress of Polish Translation Studies: "The Age of Turns"

The year 1957 is considered the symbolic beginning of modern Polish translation studies because Olgierd Wojtasiewicz published *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczeń* (Introduction to the Theory of Translation) that year. However, the 1st Polish Translation Studies Congress was not held until May 2022, organized by Jagiellonian University, Adam Mickiewicz University, and the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Entitled "Concepts – Methodologies – Actions," the event was a founding moment for the Polish translation studies community. Convinced that the reflection initiated at that time should continue, the AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology is organizing the 2nd Polish Translation Studies Congress. The title, "The Age of Turns," refers to both the current era of research and an object of scientific reflection. The congress will focus on the changes that have occurred since the "cultural turn" of the 1990s and that have marked the successive stages of translation studies' development.

- Venue: AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology
- More information: wfpik.amu.edu.pl/wydarzenia/ii-kongres-polskiego-przekladoznawstwa

OCTOBER 23-25

5th Methodological Seminar on Art History: "The Boundary of the Image"

Speakers representing the Department of History and Theory of Art Studies (AMU Institute of Art History), the National Museum in Poznań, and the Polish Art Historians Association will discuss the concept of "the boundary of the image."

- Venue: Rogalin Palace Museum

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The editors are not responsible for the content of advertisements, announcements, or other notices published in the magazine.
We look forward to working with all interested parties.

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