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## □ Editorial

Dear readers,

Research on reading primers – how is it doing today? Undoubtedly the thematic focus, methodology, disciplinary makeup, role, academic status and, finally, achievement of contemporary research on primers differs greatly between countries. A common feature, however, seems to be that this research is as a rule 'national research' – in terms of research questions, content and methods. While such national orientation may, especially in the area of historical research, in part be justified, there are both internal and external reasons which lead us to argue in favour of a more international approach: For centuries, the development of methods of initial reading instruction and of tools to support instructional and learning processes has been influenced across national and language borders. Moreover, modern research funding agencies tend to see 'internationalisation' as a crucial factor of high quality research. Small wonder, therefore, that research on primers – in contrast to other fields of educational media research – so far has only limited international visibility.

The Reading Primers Special Interest Group continues to function as a network aimed at supporting the exchange of information on primers across countries and academic disciplines, and we trust that this 7<sup>th</sup> edition of our newsletter contributes to this aim.

August 31, 2012

*Joanna Wojdon & Wendelin Sroka*

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- RP-SIG News
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### International Bibliography of Studies on Reading Primers and Basal Readers (IBSP)

The team of editors of IBSP is preparing a second, notably enlarged edition of this bibliography. The editors wish to thank all colleagues who have contributed by providing additional information since this bibliography was first published in May 2011. The launch of the next edition is planned for February 2013.

IBSP Web address: <http://www.schulbuch-gesellschaft.de/en/files/IBSP.pdf>

### Exhibition catalogue "Lesen lernen ... mehrsprachig!"

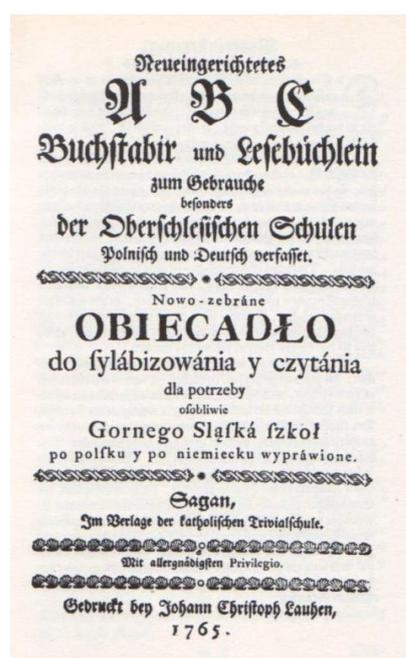
In the context of the conference "Multilingualism and School Textbooks", Brixen/Italy, September 22-24, 2011, RP-SIG had prepared an exhibition of primers and readers from European countries and America. Copies of the exhibition catalogue (in German language) can still be purchased.

Info: <http://www.schulbuch-gesellschaft.de/content.php?contentid=227>

### German-Slavonic Language Contact in Educational Media for Literacy Acquisition: A Bibliography of Plurilingual Primers – with Brief Descriptions of Individual Items (FiDeS)

The corpus of school textbooks for plurilingual written language acquisition, considering two or more languages, is a neglected area in bibliographies and even more so in historical research on educational media. This also applies to the rich tradition of plurilingual primers with German and at least one Slavonic language, ranging from 1569 (*Libellus elementarius in lingua Latina, Boiémica et Germanica pro nouellis Scholasticis*, Prague) to 1953 (*ABC. Slowenisch-deutsche Fibel*, Vienna).

The FiDeS (*Fibeln Deutsch-Slawisch*) project has three main objectives: a) to prepare a bibliography with substantiated information about titles and editions as well as availability of items for research; b) to present criteria-led descriptions of individual items which are available for inspection; c) to outline context factors of the development and use of these plurilingual textbooks by considering sociolinguistic, political and educational conditions of German-Slavonic language contact.



Title page of a German-Polish primer, published in 1765 in Sagan (Silesia)

As of August 2012 the FiDeS database includes 83 titles and 207 editions, among them 39 Polish-German, 9 Polish-German-French and 2 Polish-German-Russian titles, furthermore 14 Slovenian-German, 9 Croatian-German, 3 Slovak-German und 2 Russian-German titles.

FiDeS is a collaborative effort, so far with Gert Geißler, Berlin/Germany (school history), Katarzyna Kochan, Zielona Góra/Poland (history of Polish primers), Jadranka Nemeth-Jajic, Split/Croatia (philology), Wendelin Sroka, Essen/Germany (comparative education) and Joanna Wojdon, Wrocław/Poland (general history) as team members.

Objectives, design and some preliminary conclusions of the project will be presented and discussed in September 2012 at the annual meeting of the Wolfenbüttel Working Group on the History of Libraries, Books and Media at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Lower Saxony/Germany.

□ **New RP-SIG member**

Dr **Katarzyna Kochan** is a lecturer at the Institute of Early Education and History of Education, University of Zielona Góra [*Uniwersytet Zielonogórski*] (Poland), where she teaches early and kindergarten education as well as history of education. She is an interpreter of Polish sign language, and she has taught deaf children. In her research work she is engaged in early education and all its aspects, with a particular focus on primers in a historical and a contemporary perspective. She has analyzed many aspects of primers, including methods of teaching reading and writing, models of letters, contents of texts in the primers, the forms of the used texts and their graphical design. Among others, she has published the monograph *Edukacja elementarna i elementarze porozbiorowe w II Rzeczypospolitej* [Elementary education and post-partition reading primers in the Second Polish Republic], and she has recently finished the book *Elementarze szkole w II Rzeczypospolitej* [School primers in the Second Polish Republic] which will be published later this year. Katarzyna Kochan is also a reviewer of primers for the Polish Ministry of Education. E-Mail: [katarzynakochan@wp.pl](mailto:katarzynakochan@wp.pl)

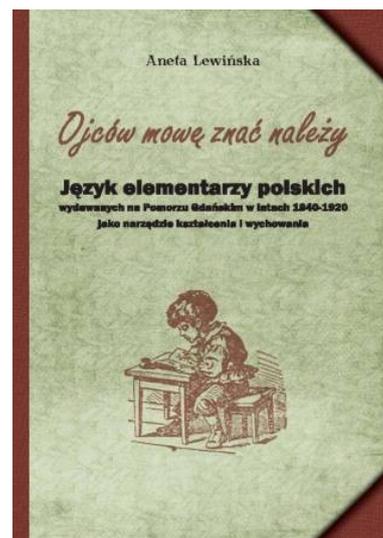
□ **Members' news**

**Carsten Heinze**, Schwäbisch Gmünd (Germany) has continued his research on German primers published under the Nazi regime. Findings of his work are available in English in a new article: Carsten Heinze (2012). The discursive construction and (ab)uses of a 'German childhood' in primers during the time of national socialism 1933-45. // *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education*, 48:1, pp. 169-183.

**Aneta Lewińska**, Gdansk (Poland) has written a new book, entitled *Ojców mowę znać należy. Język elementarzy polskich wydawanych na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1840-1920 jako narzędzie kształcenia i wychowania* [The mother tongue should be known. The language of Polish primers published in Pomerania 1840-1920 as a tool of education and training]. Pelplin: Wydawnictwo "Bernardinum" 2012, 326 p.

In her monograph Lewińska considers, among others, the Pomeranian edition of the bilingual Polish-German primer, published in 1878 in Pelplin, compiled by Anton R. Onderka (see pp. 13-18 of this newsletter). For the table of contents, see

[http://www.polonistyka.fil.ug.edu.pl/upload/files/1396/spis\\_tresci.pdf](http://www.polonistyka.fil.ug.edu.pl/upload/files/1396/spis_tresci.pdf)



Complying with a Cooperation Agreement recently signed by the *Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research* in Braunschweig and the MANES Research Centre, located in the Faculty of Education of UNED, in Madrid, **Kira Mahamud** has been invited to carry out a research stay in Braunschweig in October 2012. The Assistant Lecturer will be defending her PhD Thesis in September, and she will continue her line of research with European countries' school textbooks as historical documentary primary sources under dictatorial and authoritarian regimes. She will also be collaborating in the Institute's Research Project entitled *Euroviews. Europe in Textbooks*, and she will be visiting the *Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung* of the *German Institute for International Educational Research* in Berlin.

**Wendelin Sroka**, Essen (Germany) has been invited speaker at the international conference *Plurilingualism and Multilingualism: Problems and Strategies of its Development*, organized by the University of Tyumen, Russia, May 17-18, 2012. His talk there was devoted to the history of reading primers for plurilingual literacy acquisition.

□ **Obituary**

**Marjan Marinšek (1941 – 2011)\***

Born in 1941 in Kozje (Slovenia), Marjan Marinšek was a man of many talents, and throughout his life he pursued a great number of interests. One area he focused on for decades was old school equipment: school benches and tables, school bags, calculators, inkpots, pencil boxes, school crucifixes, wall-mounted displays – and primers.



Marjan Marinšek with one of his favourite items of school equipment; photo: [www.marjanmarinsek.com](http://www.marjanmarinsek.com) [02.03.2011]

he stayed there for more than forty years, until his retirement in 2007. Far from limiting himself to the role of a cultural manager Marinšek was also a passionate collector, writer, photographer and musician. Through his enthusiasm for the work of Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren he became one of the founders, in 1990, of the Velenje-based "Pikin festival", an event which continues to attract each year thousands of admirers of *Pika Nogavička* [*Pippi Långstrump*], and the books he wrote include a biography of Astrid Lindgren. He was also a devoted player of the zither and became co-founder of the Slovenian Zither Society [*Citrarsko društvo Slovenije*].



Part of Marinšek's collection of primers, now on permanent display in Kozje (Slovenia); photo: Branko Šuštar

and Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 1987, in Zagreb (Croatia) in 1990 and in Maribor (Slovenia) in 2000. Also in 2000, at the occasion of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Slovenian primer compiled by Primož Trubar, Marjan Marinšek published the monograph *Moje prvo berilo* [My primer]. The main part of this book gives an excellent overview of the history of Slovenian primers.

Marjan Marinšek died on November 15, 2011 in Žalec (Slovenia). His efforts to preserve testimonies of Slovenia's school history have left many traces, not least those in the permanent exhibit *Šola moje mame* [My mother's school] he had initiated in Kozje, his place of birth.

\*Many thanks for providing additional information go to Branko Šuštar, councillor of the Slovenian School Museum, Ljubljana (Slovenia).

This interest in such artefacts was anything but self-evident. His professional background was law, with a law degree earned in 1968 at the University of Ljubljana. He passed the bar exam in 1970, and in 1974 he became Vice-Chairman of the Executive Council of the Municipality of Velenje. Yet what made him known to a larger public in Slovenia and abroad were his numerous and enduring activities in the area of culture. In 1975 he was appointed as a senior executive of Velenje's newly established Cultural Centre, and

Marinšek dealt with primers from Slovenia and from countries all over the world as a collector, exhibitor and author. In the 1970s he began to create a collection which now comprises more than 1,000 books, among them Slovenian primers from 1819 to 2000 and textbooks for beginning reading instruction in a great number of languages from all continents. This collection served as a basis for various exhibitions in Slovenia and abroad, e.g. in Graz (Austria) in 1984, in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Cambridge (United Kingdom

□ Research

□ Primers in Russia **Colloquium on the history of primers, Moscow, February 2012**

*By Vitaly Bezrogov, Moscow*

On February 28, 2012, a one-day colloquium was held at the Ushinsky Library in Moscow on the history of reading primers and other textbooks for primary schools in Russia («Аз да Буки, книга в руки. История учебников для начальной школы»). The colloquium was organized by Russian members of our RP-SIG, with 27 institutions and around 50 persons involved: representatives from



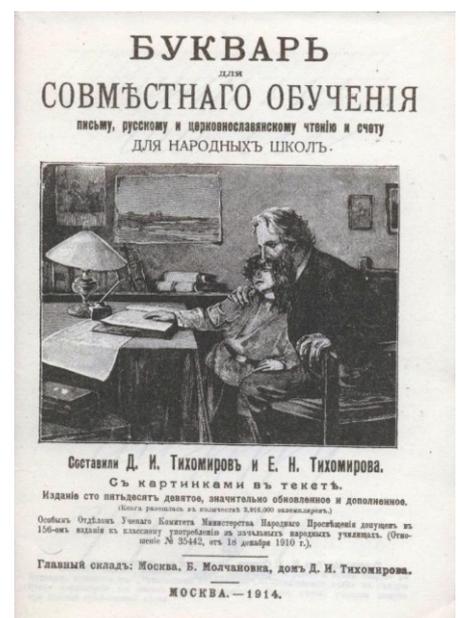
*Participants of the colloquium at the Ushinsky library, Moscow, February 28, 2012*

school and college libraries, several universities and other establishments of higher education, and also from research libraries. The organizing committee included colleagues not only from the Ushinsky Library but also from the Institute of Theory and History of Education and the Post-Doctorate Seminar "Childhood Studies: Norms, Values, Practices" of the Russian State University for the Humanities. For detailed information about the event in Russian, please see <http://gnpbu.ru/index.php?file=event2012-6.htm>.

The colloquium was divided into three sessions, all of them with four presentations. The first session focused on Russian schoolbooks printed before 1917. *Lyudmila Moshkova* (Institute of Theory and History of Education, Moscow) spoke about the abecedaries for ordinary people printed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. She demonstrated that this kind of printed matter became popular at that time but very few copies survived. Nowadays, new discoveries allow us to look at that period of history as a time of more active training to read than we did think about before.

*Galina Kondratyeva* (Moscow State Open University) delivered a paper about the Tikhomirov family, a couple who authored one of the most popular Russian primers published before 1917 – with numerous reprints since the 1990s. She made several conclusions about the reasons of such popularity.

*Olga Ilyukha* (Institute of Karelian Language, Literature and History) presented her recent investigations about the interplay of Finnish and Russian reading primers in the Karelia region (the North-West part of Russia close to the Finnish border) during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She demonstrated how the Russian government in those years tried to defend the Karelian people from the influence of primers made for them by Finnish-oriented authors.



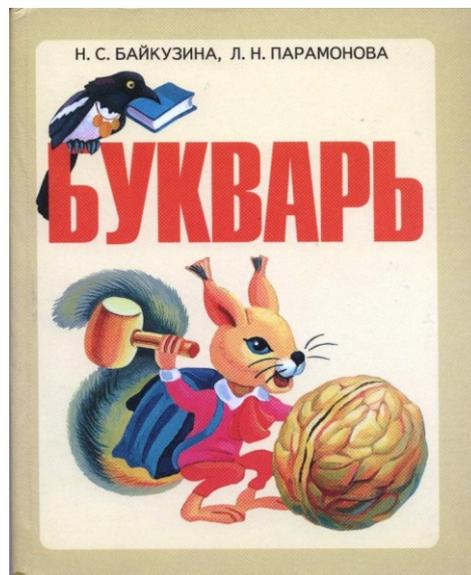
*Title page of the primer by Tikhomirov and Tikhomirova, Moscow 1914*

*Olga Kabasheva* (Ushinsky Library) made a presentation of the database of digitalized editions of Russian reading primers, printed in 1900-1930. The originals are kept in the Rare Books Department of the Ushinsky Library. For more information see <http://gnpbu.ru/index.php?file=abc-book.htm>.

The second part of the colloquium was devoted to the history of schoolbooks printed in the time of Soviet Russia. *Catriona Kelly* (Oxford University, UK) presented the school editions about Leningrad city printed before and after WWII. She spoke about the ways how the pre-revolutionary past and architectural environments were depicted in the local history lessons in the Leningrad schools.

*Galina Makarewich* (Ushinsky Library) made a presentation about flyleaves' design in the first readers printed in the Late Soviet and Post Soviet periods (1980s – 2000s). She identified three different periods in the evolution of this aspect of schoolbooks. *Sergey Rykov* (Institute of Theory and History of Education) spoke about gender stereotypes in Russian reading primers of different historical epochs. He created a repertoire of such stereotypes. *Alexey Nikitchenkov* (Moscow State Teachers University) presented the status of folklore in Soviet reading primers, demonstrating that it was not too easy to include achievements of the previous culture into the Soviet educational paradigm.

The third part of the meeting was devoted to the schoolbooks which are currently in use. *Mariya Kozlova* (National Research University – Higher School of Economics) discussed the levels and ways of ecological reflections in the Late Soviet and Post Soviet textbooks for primary schools. She identified some important shifts in widening the ecological information in Russian schoolbooks for reading and environmental studies. *Yan Gymaev* (High School, Murikovo village, Moscow region) spoke about the concept 'Home/motherland' in the contemporary elementary reading primers. He defended the idea that it is a natural and not an ideologizing language using this concept.



Front cover of an Udmurt primer, Ishevsk 2008

*Tatyana Vlasova* (Udmurt State University, Ishevsk) delivered the results of her study on recent Udmurt primers and the old-female-like nation symbol used in the editions printed in the 2000s.

*Anna Ozhiganova* (Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology) discussed the paradigms used in the schoolbooks for the new course on "Basics of religious cultures and secular ethics" introduced into Russian primary schools a few years ago on an experimental basis and this year as an obligatory course for the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The author reconstructed different methodologies used in textbooks for this course offered for primary schools.

The meeting was finished by a general discussion on several issues, including the development of studies on reading primers as an interdisciplinary research area and the role of play and games in reading primers. The materials of the colloquium will be printed (in Russian with short English resumes) in two volumes of different Russian periodicals (*Russian and International Educational Practice* and *Theory and Problems of the Recent Education*). Colleagues interested in subscribing for these issues should feel encouraged to write to Vitaly Bezrogov ([v\\_bezrog@rambler.ru](mailto:v_bezrog@rambler.ru)).

□ Croatian primers,  
20<sup>th</sup> century

Nemeth-Jajić, Jadranka (2011). Jezikoslovna obilježja hrvatskih početnica u 20. stoljeću [*Linguistic characteristics of Croatian primers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*]. // Bežen, Ante; Majhut, Berislav (eds.): *Redefiniranje tradicije: dječja književnost, suvremena komunikacija, jezici i dijete*. Zagreb: Učiteljski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu i ECNSI - Europski centar za sustavna i napredna istraživanja, pp. 337-352.

*Research by RP-SIG member Jadranka Nemeth-Jajic (University of Split, Croatia) has more recently focused on Croatian primers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author summarizes a new paper she has published on linguistic characteristics of Croatian primers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

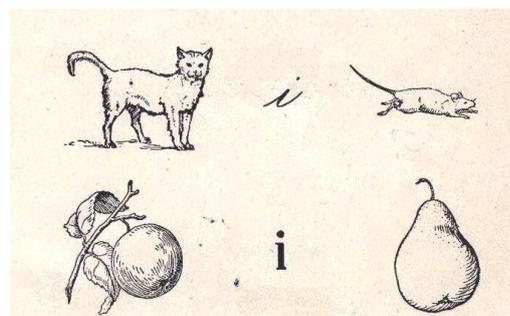
The paper, published in the proceedings of a conference on the "re-definition of traditions", presents results of my research on linguistic features of Croatian primers published and used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With this research, I have continued studies on 19th century Croatian primers (see Nemeth-Jajic 2010), and the methodology used in this previous studies has also been applied in my research of 20<sup>th</sup> century primers. Accordingly, attention has been given to elements comparable to modern primers and, among other things, the following factors have been analyzed: the purpose of the primer, that is, whether it was intended for learning to read or write or for mastering both of these skills (reading and writing); the quantity of reading or writing pre-exercises; the quantity of visual elements and lines and the way they were designed; the order and slope of letters; the orthography and content of the selected texts.

The aim of this research was to determine the dominant trends in the analyzed features and the time at which they appeared in the primers. Methodological consistency in describing linguistic characteristics of 19th and 20th century Croatian primers at the same time offers a reliable starting point for future research, conclusions and decisions, which, for various reasons, require familiarity with them.

The research sample is made up of twenty five (N=25) Croatian primers published from 1900 to 2000. The sample was composed according to what was available in libraries. Reprinted editions of the same primer were considered as single units. The sources are primary ones, i.e. original documents, and the originals are held in the Croatian School Museum [*Hrvatski školski muzej*], Zagreb, and in the National Library and University Library [*Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica*], Zagreb.

The place of publication reflects the socio-political circumstances in a way that the great majority of the 20th century primers were published in Zagreb as becoming the cultural and educational centre, except for one *partisan*-released primer published in exile in Kairo. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century two of them were published in Vienna and one in Győr.

As a rule, the 20th century primers were intended for teaching how to read and write with their phonological system identical to that of the present time. The exception is *Početnica za katoličanske, hrvatske škole va ugarskom kraljevstvu, 1908*, which still uses the phonic system of the Zagreb Philology School. This 20<sup>th</sup> century source is in fact the eleventh edition of a textbook originally published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it resumes phonemic traditions of this period.



*Početnica za I. razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Priručnik Fran Baf i Rudolf Saršon, Zagreb 1927, detail, p. 3*

The linguistic features of the primers of the first two decades of the 20th century strongly concur with those from the second half of the 19th century. It means that the syllabic methodology was used, the words chosen for reading were split up into syllables, small letters or simultaneously small letters and lower case prints, capital letters being taught afterwards while the sequence of individual letters was determined primarily according to typographical criteria.



Zlatko Špoljar: *Početnica za prvi razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, Zagreb, 1933, p. 7*

followed by the written letters. That reader had introduced the global method, too.

A dominant feature in all the primers published in the 20th century was a monographic letter design (with the letters introduced one by one) except in the readers by Edo Vajnaht where an aggregate formation (of four, three or two letters) was applied. A design with pairs of letters was used in the last decade of the 20th century in the primer by Lucia Puljak. As a rule, in the primers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the vowels and the consonants were quoted alternately.

Pre-reading and -writing drills became an integral part of the readers starting from 1947, whereas detaching of letters and bold lettering as visual learning support occurred in almost all the 20th century first readers. The slanting handwriting to the right was abandoned in the primer by Cvitan and Vajnaht published in 1962 and in later readers edited by Vajnaht, which meant the abandonment of the up-to-then established practice. However, the tradition of slanting handwriting was re-established in 1994 by Ana Gabrijele Šabić' primer. The set of mainly four lines became part of the first reader in the second half of the century.

As for the contents of texts in the primers at the end of the second and the beginning of the third decade of the 20th century, a major challenge was to provide an answer to the question of what was appropriate to the age of the children. It was stressed that the children were not to be offered reading they could not understand, the first reader having to be looked at as the first book for children to catch the child's imagination. To a limited degree there was some ideological subject matter in the readers like photos of current rulers or occasional texts in favour of the constituted authority.

During the last decade of the 20th century the following standards were established: the first reader was intended for simultaneous teaching how to read

The new views on elementary reading and writing are reflected in the primers published at the end of the second decade and in the third decade of the 20th century when the syllabic principle was abandoned. Splitting words into syllables was considered unnecessary, priority being given to printed and then written letters, and in the sequence of individual characters to phonetic and frequency criteria. In the primers of that time, a sound analytic-synthetic method was introduced, aimed at finding as many examples as possible for applying phono-graphic methods. These primers also reflected phonomimic methods and those of normal (genuine) sounds.

Yet the beginning of teaching to read and write in written letters had remained until the 1970s, i.e. up to the first reader *Naš Put* by Edo Vajnaht (1970) with the capital and small prints

and write with emphasis first on reading and learning printed letters, and then on writing and learning written letters. This was pointed out in the 1952 primer by Mihaljević-Kolarić, with a well-established analytical-synthetic approach as the principal method. Moreover, phonographic and phonomimic methods and the method of natural sounds were retained. The sequence of letters followed the principle of first teaching the vowels and then the consonants, an approach which was already common in the second half of the 19th century, thus combining phonetic, phonemic, and frequency criteria. The visual support, set of lines, and pre-drills were part of the reader. The most common style was that of slanting handwriting to the right. The reader covered diverse genre-defined and thematic texts with an insistence on being suitable for the children, whereas the selection of literary texts was subject to their artistic merits. The readers also included linguistic curriculum-based subject matters in the first grade of the primary school.



„Croat, Serb and Slovene“. *Početnica za I. razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*. Priredili Fran Baf i Rudolf Saršon, Zagreb 1927, detail, p. 40

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□ Austrian primers,  
1945-1970

Göttlicher, Wilfried G. (2010). „Maiandacht und Sommergäste“. *Ländliche Lebenswelt und Modernisierung in österreichischen Erstlesebüchern, 1945-1970* [„May devotion and summer guests“. *Rural living environment and modernisation in Austrian first readers 1945-1970*]. Diploma work. Vienna: University of Vienna 2010, 237 + II p. Online: <http://othes.univie.ac.at/11329/>

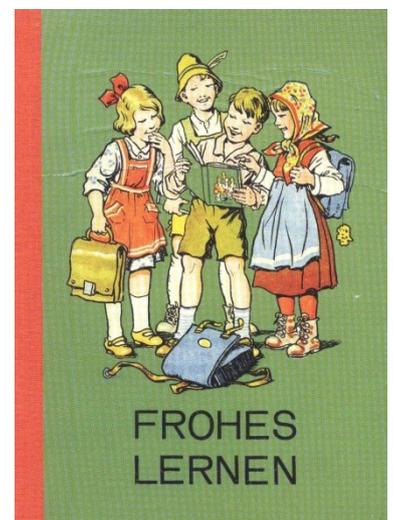
*A review*

(W.S.) As part of his teaching assignment, Walter Kissling, assistant professor at the *Institut für Bildungswissenschaft*, University of Vienna, has some years ago started to give courses on Austrian first readers in a historical perspective. This initiative has raised deepened interest of students in this matter, and in the meantime a number of degree theses have been written, considering various aspects of the history of Austrian primers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wilfried Göttlicher's diploma work on first readers in post-war Austria (1945-1970), finalized in 2010, is one of them, and it is a work which for a number of reasons deserves to be noticed by the international community of primerologists.

Göttlicher's study is the first to cover the corpus of German language primers for general schools in the first quarter of Austria's 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, i.e. 18 titles. The study's focus on modernisation meets a dimension which is crucial both for the development of textbook content and of schooling in general, and the consideration of rural living environment responds to an important aspect of social reality. What makes Göttlicher's work particularly noteworthy is the level of reflection as demonstrated by the way he approaches the object of his study: It is only on p. 86 (that is in chapter 5) that textbooks really come into play. Up until then, the author presents an outline of his interest into the subject of his work (chapter 1), a discussion of the concept of "modernisation" (chapter 2), a social history of Austria 1945-70 with a focus on the general dimensions of the study (chapter 3), and finally an overview of the history of the primary school in post-war Austria (chapter 4). All this provides theory- and research-based context, laying the ground for the analyses to come.

The methodology is explained in great detail in chapter 5. Here, Göttlicher precisely defines *Fundstellen* [i.e. sources of information], which if appropriate include both texts and illustrations as the basic units of his analysis, and he argues in favour of hermeneutic interpretation as the appropriate approach to analyze first readers. The author presents a sorting pattern distinguishing primers for use in rural and in town schools as well as allowing to structure the period of investigation in chapter 6, and the next two chapters are devoted to two major topics of his analysis: modernisation as technological innovation and as change of value orientations, identified primarily in such thematic fields as tradition, religion, concepts of family and intergenerational relations. Finally, the study offers 'profiles' of the primers characterised in light of the underlying research questions (chapter 9) and a brief summary (chapter 10).

As elaborated by the author, in the 1940s distinct primers for use in rural and in urban areas were produced, with specific features assigned to two quite different patterns of living environment. But already twenty years later 'rural primers' [*Landfibeln*] had disappeared in Austria's school textbook market, in favour of primers which reflect all-encompassing 'modern' industrial or even post-industrial models of society.



Title page of 'Frohes Lernen'. Ein Lesebuch für Schulanfänger. Vienna 1948

□ Letter to the editors

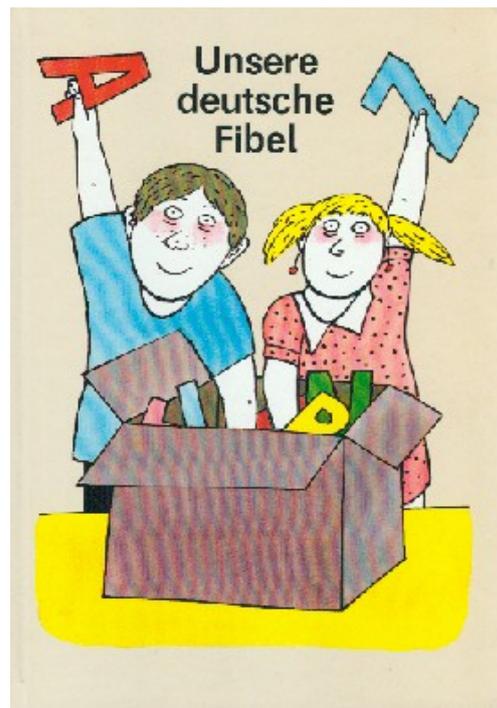
**On primers and readers**

By Wolfgang Fickert, Erlangen (Germany)

When the Reading Primers Special Interest Group (RP-SIG) was founded in 2009, it was intended to be "an international network of individuals with an interest in a specific kind of textbook: the reading primer (*aabits, aapinen, bukvar', Fibel, silabario ...*)". Potential members were told: "The purpose of the SIG is to provide a truly international forum for the exchange of ideas and information on reading primers".

Since these aims met my own interests as a collector of international reading primers looking for partners for exchanging information and duplicates I joined RP-SIG. In September 2011 members were invited "to debate – and participate in – an RP-SIG project" entitled "Primers and basal readers for plurilingual reading instruction (PLURES)". More detailed information explained that PLURES is intended to focus on "bilingual primers, readers and similar texts for elementary instruction", "other primers and readers in lesser used languages" etc. Accordingly, when introducing PLURES to its readers, Reading Primers International Newsletter No 6 used the title page of a Sorbian-German reader ("Lesebuch") as an illustration. In case no appropriate reading primer was at hand, I can help out.

The book "Unsere deutsche Fibel" [Our German primer], published in the 1990s, is intended to be used by bilingual Sorbian pupils. After alphabetization in their Sorbian mother tongue they find in this book the familiar letters used in an unfamiliar way for the representation of phonemes.



Georg Kubasch, Hans Dybek et al.: *Unsere deutsche Fibel / Naša němska fibla* [Our German reading primer]. Illustrations: Manfred Bofinger. Bautzen / Budyšin: Domowina, 2nd edition 1992; front cover and page 10

Page 10, as an example, deals with German "sch" (pronounced like "sh" in "shoe"). The translation of the text with the headline „The difficult word“ reads: The teacher wrote something on the blackboard. He asks the children: "Which word is on the blackboard?" Nobody knows it. "Is the word then difficult?" the teacher asks. "Yes" shout the children. "But it is simple, children. The sch means š !" Now it is simple: Schule [= school].

Hoping that RP-SIG will remain a *Reading Primers* Special Interest Group, best regards,

Wolfgang Fickert, Erlangen (Germany)

□ In profile

**Anton R. Onderka – 19<sup>th</sup> century advocate of bilingual schooling in Upper Silesia and author of a Polish-German primer**

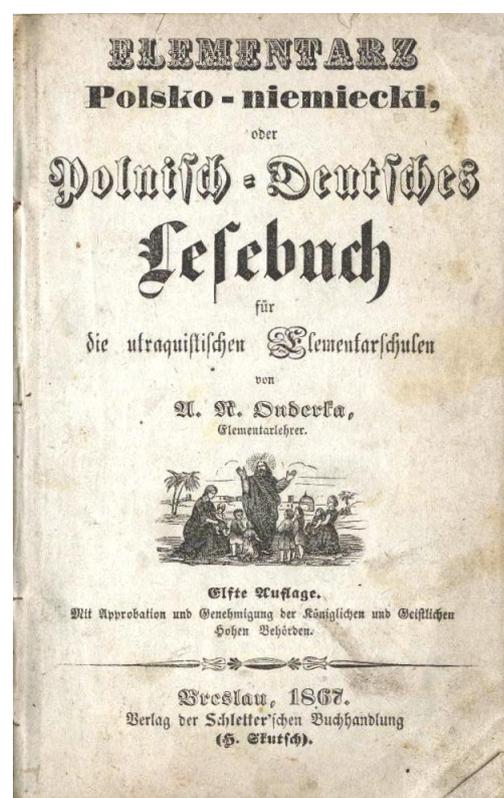
*By Katarzyna Kochan, Zielona Góra (Poland) and Wendelin Sroka, Essen (Germany)*

In 1845, the *Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung* [publishing house of Schletter's bookshop] in Breslau/Wrocław (Silesia) released the first edition of a bilingual Polish-German primer: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki, oder Polnisch-Deutsches Lesebuch für die utraquistischen Elementarschulen. Mit Approbation und Genehmigung der Königlichen und Geistlichen Hohen Behörden* [Polish-German primer, or Polish German reader for utraquist elementary schools. Qualified and approved by Royal and Clerical High Authorities]. As the author states in the preface, his intention to compile this textbook was guided by the belief "that the mother tongue has to be a valuable inheritance for everyone, that it must not be robbed from the child, and that – enriched and refined – it has to pave the way for all knowledge" (p. IV, all quotes translated and, if not indicated otherwise, based on the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the primer, 1867).

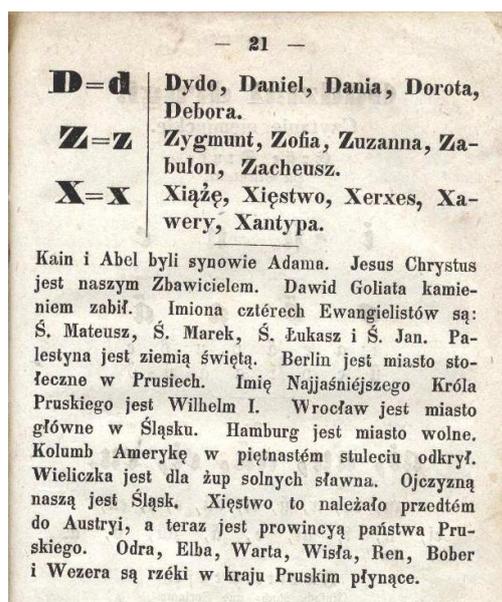
In those years, such advocacy of the Polish language – the mother tongue in question – as part of the curriculum of schools in Silesia was not undisputed. Silesia had been a part of Prussia since 1763, and a province of the Kingdom of Prussia since 1815. In Upper Silesia, then the Government District of Opole/Oppeln, with its predominantly Catholic and Polish speaking population, "utraquist schools" overseen by the Roman-Catholic authorities had been introduced to serve children with non-German mother tongues.

These schools, though nominally using Polish and German – in some instances Czech and German – as school languages (*utraque* = both), were primarily regarded by the government as institutions to raise loyal – and to some degree German-speaking – subjects [*Untertanen*] of the Prussian state. According to a contemporary German encyclopaedia entry on utraquist schools in Moravia and Prussia, "the states take care that the young subjects learn the elements of the German language as well, qualifying them to understand the public newspapers, to express themselves clearly, and particularly to enable them to use the language later in the military, in communication with German soldiers and in German garrisons" (Rolfus & Pfister 1866, p. 534).

The man who was in favour of Polish mother tongue instruction in utraquist schools and compiled the bilingual textbook was Anton R. Onderka. Nearly all information we found out about him is related to his primer. Polish sources, especially articles with a focus on regional history, mention him as "the author of a tremendously popular Polish-German primer" ["*autor niezwykle popularnego elementarza polsko-niemieckiego*"], and indeed, this textbook reached at least 13 editions, printed between 1845 and 1878.



Onderka: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki ...*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1867, title page



Polish reading exercises, with "Elba" – instead of modern "Łaba" used as the term for the Elbe river. Onderka: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki ...*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1867, p. 21

Anton R. Onderka was born in the 1820s in Lubowitz/Łubowice, a small village at that time owned by the von Eichendorff family, located in the district of Ratibor/Racibórc in Upper Silesia. He came from a family of teachers. His father Johann was appointed in 1820 by Baroness Caroline von Eichendorff as teacher of the local parish school, and in 1836 Anton started his teaching career at this school, supervised by his father (ZSO Grzegorzowice 2012, p. 1). In 1840 he became a teacher at the elementary school in nearby *Belschnitz/Belsznica*. According to a note in the preface of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, he had to give up this post in 1855 (p. VIII): "I cannot pass without comment that I am no longer part of the active teacher workforce, as I had to resign from my independent teaching position in Belschnitz four years ago due to my sickness which was caused by a very unhealthy official residence".

A man with a declared "love for the ill-paid teaching profession" (p. VIII) in the Prussian school system, Onderka is a self-conscious bilingual, able and willing to compile a textbook serving the needs of bilingual elementary instruction. He agrees that "the cultivation of the state language" – i. e. German – is an important task "in our Polish schools" (p. III), but he also confesses his "predilection for the Polish language" (p. IV). In the preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition he once again emphasises the role of the mother tongue (p. VI):

The mother tongue alone is the proper key to the heart, it is the most powerful guide of the will and the best creator [*Bildner*] of the intellect; the word of God is announced in the mother tongue, and in this tongue it is that the chants and prayers resound to God almighty. Therefore, if one really wishes to completely fulfil the task of a Christian school, one has to foster and bring forward there primarily (!) the mother tongue of the people.

From this background, his position concerning the curriculum in *utraquist* schools is very clear: It must provide truly bilingual school education in general and integrated Polish-German language instruction in the first years of schooling in particular. But this is far away from what he observes in the mid 1840s (p. Vf.):

In the Polish schools of Upper Silesia, mother tongue instruction is neglected nearly everywhere, and this neglect is a main reason for the phenomenon that public education [*Volksbildung*] there does not progress as desired." (p. V)

One reason of this grievance is the lack of appropriate textbooks, a desideratum he wants to overcome. In 1845 a German journal for Catholic educators publishes Onderka's outline of the planned textbook, entitled *Über die Nothwendigkeit eines ersten polnisch-deutschen Lesebuches für die utraquistischen Elementarschulen* [On the necessity of a first Polish-German reader for the *utraquist* elementary schools] (Onderka 1845), and the first edition of the textbook is published in Breslau later that year.

Onderka's *Elementarz/Lesebuch* consists of a short preface in German (with further prefaces added to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> edition), a main part with three sections [*Oddzialy/Abtheilungen*] (pp. 1-122) and an appendix (pp. 123-133). The first section (pp. 1-21) is aimed at basic reading proficiency in Po-

lish, and it presents, in nine „steps” [stopnie], phonemes, syllables, words and short sentences, only in Polish. The second section (pp. 22-43), entitled *Czytanie niemieckie* [Reading in German], has 10 steps [Stufen], and it introduces vowels, consonants, syllables, words and sentences in German.

The third section, *Das Lesen der Sätze/Czytanie składow* [Reading of sentences] occupies nearly two thirds of the book (pp. 44-122), and it contains what Onderka really cares about: material for bilingual written language acquisition. Its content is consequently arranged in two languages, with the Polish text verso and the corresponding German text recto. This is except for pp. 120-123, where short sections in German and Polish are arranged one below the other: on punctuation marks, abbreviations, parts of speech, alphabets in small and capital letters, numerals and a multiplication table. In most cases, the content of the reading exercises is related either to children’s experience of the world or – even more so – to nature. Religious content is included from time to time, side by side with more secular subject matter, e.g. on p. 60/61: *Kain erschlug den Abel aus Neid. Das Messer braucht man zum Schneiden. / Kain zabił Abła z zazdrości. Noża używamy do krajanía.* [Kain killed Abel out of envy. The knife is required for cutting.]

The appendix of the book (pp. 123-133) consists of three parts: A short excerpt from the Roman-Catholic catechism [*Krótki Wyjątek z Rzymsko-katolickiego Katechizmu*], only in Polish, calligraphic patterns [*Vorschriften/Wzory kaligraficzne*] in German and Polish, and finally, numerals.

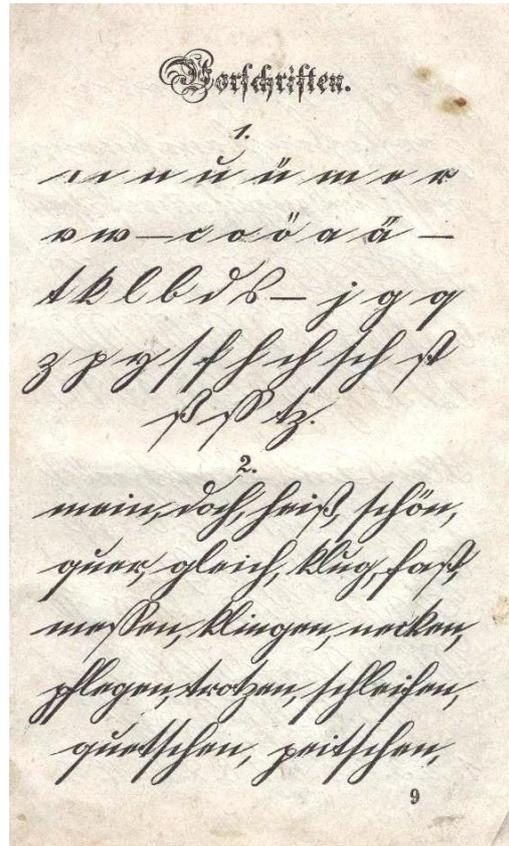
Onderka’s primer is very much text-laden, and there are only a few small illustrations, all of them with religious motives. Nevertheless the book became a success on Upper Silesia’s school textbook market: A second edition appeared two years later, and in 1867 the book had reached its 11<sup>th</sup> edition. It is with satisfaction when, in 1852, Onderka notes, that “my reader has been introduced in a great number of utraqvist elementary schools” (p. VII). Among others, up to the late 1860s the political conditions were supportive for a textbook which gave much room to Polish mother tongue instruction. Still in 1867, the Royal Government in Oppeln/Opole issued *Grundzüge für Unterrichts-Pläne ein-klassiger katholischer Schulen des Regierungs-Bezirks Oppeln* [Main features for curricula for Catholic schools of the Government District of Opole], which determined that in schools for children with non-German mother tongue (= utraqvist schools) the regular 26 lessons per week had to be arranged as follows (Königliche Regierung 1867, p. 305):

Catechism and biblical story .....	5
Mother tongue instruction .....	9
German class .....	5
Arithmetic .....	4
Singing .....	2
Drawing .....	1
	26 lessons



A short excerpt from the Roman-Catholic catechism: Six main truths of faith (I) and the Lord’s Prayer (II) Onderka: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki ...*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1867, p. 123

The success of Onderka's bilingual primer caused other authors and publishers to seek their share in this market niche. Felix Rendschmidt, already a well-known author of German readers, compiled *Nauka czytania dla szkół elementarnych oder Polnisch-Deutsches Lesebuch für utraquistische Elementarschulen*, published in the 1860s by Felix Korn in Breslau (Pilarczyk 2003, nr. 1585 ff.) – a textbook which in contrast to Onderka's primer had numerous illustrations. Another illustrated bilingual primer was *Polsko-niemiecka książka do czytania dla katolickich szkół elementarnych* [Polish-German reader for Catholic elementary schools], written by Johann Besta and Antoni Cygan, teachers at the Catholic teacher training institute in Oberglogau/Głogówek.



German calligraphy for abecedarians with Polish mother tongue. Onderka: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki ...*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1867, p. 129

this reference bore fruits: The primer by Besta and Cygan had at least 17 editions, published between 1860 and 1873 (Pilarczyk 2003).

However, it was less the success of well-illustrated textbooks placed on the market by competitors but rather political decisions which eventually caused the end of the career of Onderka's primer in Silesia: In September 1872, one year after the formation of the German Empire, the Royal Government in Oppeln/Opole issued a decree on the "language of instruction in utraquist schools" aimed at Germanisation of the Polish-speaking population, thus abolishing Polish language instruction in Upper Silesia's elementary schools. As this decree states in paragraph 2 (Königliche Regierung 1872, p. 761):

Right from the lower grade, reading and writing is learnt and practised exclusively in the German language. To get across the understanding of what the children read and write, the mother tongue can be made use of when it seems necessary.

According to the decree, from now on only religious instruction in the lower grade was to be taught in Polish, but even there all text to be memorised had to be in German, with German as the language of religious instruction from the middle grade. Still such "German only" language policy was not that radical everywhere in Prussia in those years: In 1878 a reprint of Onderka's primer was published in Pelplin/Pomerania by the J. N. Roman publishing house which had purchased the rights from Schletter. This re-edition was printed without the author's prefaces, but with the original appendix extended by, among others, a section entitled "old and new measures" (Lewińska 2012, p. 43). The book now was to serve the needs of reading instruction in Catholic schools in that region, with Pelplin as the seat of the Ro-

man Catholic Diocese of Kulm/Chełmno since 1821 and a strong tradition of educational establishments with Polish language instruction. In his study on publications devoted to elementary instruction in the Polish language in Pomerania 1840-1920, Wiktor Frąckowiak states that "it may be that the decision to purchase (the rights of) an edition of Onderka's Polish-German primer was also based on political considerations, in the sense that concessions could be obtained from the Prussian authorities to further publish the (Polish) primer by I. Łyskowski" (Frąckowiak 1977, p. 52).

Soon after, however, Onderka and his textbook really fell into oblivion. Very few copies of his textbook exist today, and information provided in the bibliographies of primers by Pilarczyk (2003) and Teistler (2003), primarily based on data in Karol Estreicher's *Bibliografia Polska*, is incomplete. So far, Onderka's primer has only been considered to some degree by the Polish history of educational media: Credit to the Silesian editions of Onderka's primer is given in Józef Madeja's study, published in 1960, on *Elementarze i nauka elementarna czytania i pisania na Śląsku w wiekach XVIII i XIX (1763 - 1848)* [Primers and elementary teaching of reading and writing in Silesian schools in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century (1763 - 1848)]. Two studies on Polish language instruction in Pomerania make reference to the Pelplin edition: the work mentioned above by Wiktor Frąckowiak (1977) and the new book by RP-SIG member Aneta Lewińska entitled *„Ojców mowę znać należy”: język elementarzy polskich wydawanych na Pomorzu Gdańskim w latach 1840-1920 jako narzędzie kształcenia i wychowania* [The mother tongue should be known: The language of Polish primers published in Pomerania 1840-1920 as a tool of education and training] (Lewińska 2012).

Yet today, in times of controversial debates on the role of mother tongue instruction of linguistic minorities, Anton R. Onderka's efforts to create a textbook for bilingual reading instruction deserve to be remembered at international level.

#### ***Editions of Onderka's bilingual primer***

*Data on editions published between 1845 and 1865 are for the most part originally based on Karol Estreicher's Bibliografia polska, Kraków 1872 ff., vol. III, and considered in the bibliographies of primers compiled by Pilarczyk (2003) and Teistler (2003). Data on the 1867 and 1870 editions are based on copies held by a private collection and by Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin respectively, and data on the 1878 edition are given according to Lewińska (2012).*

Onderka, A. R.: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki, oder Polnisch-Deutsches Lesebuch für die utraquistischen Elementarschulen. Mit Approbation und Genehmigung der Königl. und Geistlichen Hohen Behörden.* Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung 1845

Id., Gleiwitz: Landsberger, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1847, 118 p. [held by Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna i Książnica Miejska im. Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu]

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung 1850, 127 p. [possibly held by Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin]

Id., Breslau/Berlin: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 1855, VIII, 133 p.

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 5<sup>th</sup> edition 1856 (?)

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 6<sup>th</sup> edition 1855, VIII, 133 p.

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 7<sup>th</sup> edition 1860, VIII, 128 p. [held by Biblioteka Uniwersyteku Warszawskiego]

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 8<sup>th</sup> edition 1862, VIII, 133 p.

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 10<sup>th</sup> edition 1865, VIII, 131 p.

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1867, VIII, 133 p. [held by a private collection]

Id., Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen Buchhandlung, 12<sup>th</sup> edition 1870, VIII, 133 p. [held by Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin]

Onderka, A. R.: *Elementarz Polsko-niemiecki, oder Polnisch-Deutsches Lesebuch für die utraquistischen Elementarschulen.* Pelplin: J. N. Roman 1878, 139 p.

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**□ About RPI**

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