

Remarks by Ambassador Lee Feinstein at Opole Library
April 12, 2012

Panie prezydencie

Pani dyrektor

Drodzy nauczyciele i uczniowie

Muszę przyznać, że biblioteka robi wrażenie! Wow! Na pewno miło spędza się tu czas. Można nawet napić się smoothie. I wszystko jest bardzo nowoczesne. Gratuluję!

[I just finished a quick tour of the library and let me just say “wow.” This is a great library. You’ve even got a smoothie stand, what a great place to come and spend an afternoon.]

I am pleased to start my trip to Opolskie province here. Democracies are built by informed citizens and even in the age of the Internet, there is still no better place to get information than from a library. This building reflects how libraries have worked to keep up with new needs and new ways of being informed. I just saw the fantastic computer lab and the “mediateka.”

I’ve told the story before, but when I left for college, I lugged a milk crate of records, we called them albums then, and yes they are much cooler and sound much better than CDs or MP3s, but they are so much heavier to carry. I brought along a manual Underwood typewriter, which was also very cool, but incredibly impractical. The stuff I lugged to my college dorm room was more or less what my oldest brother took with him to college in the black and white era of 1965. Cell phones, the internet, IPODS, and laptops were only in science fiction movies and my university library certainly didn’t have any of that cool stuff.

In fact, one of the reasons I am here today is to launch formally our America@your library® program in Opole. This is the first America@your library® to open in Poland. Within the next several weeks, we will establish have several more such partnerships at public libraries in cities around Poland, which will complement our Information Resource Centers in the Embassy and in the Consulate in Krakow and our American Corner network. By June, the number of America@YourLibrary partnerships in Poland will expand to six cities, and it will grow to twelve by the end of the year. You can find out more about this program by visiting our website or becoming a fan of the Embassy or Consulate on Facebook. *[NB – the 6 cities include: Opole, Olsztyn, Kielce, Bydgoszcz, Gorzow Wielkopolski and Zielona Gora]*

To create these America@Your Libraries collections we have worked with the Information Society Development Foundation (FRSI) affiliated with the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. FRSI is the organization developing internet capacity in regional libraries throughout Poland through a grant given by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. While America@your library® includes a modest donation of books, the truly exciting and innovative part of this project is the access that library users will receive to *elibrary USA* thanks to the partnership and the commitment on behalf of the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow to provide programming, such as exhibits and speakers.

Elibrary USA will give Opole residents access to a collection of more than 30 electronic databases. These databases include access to documentary films, interactive educational materials for children, resources for teaching English and literally thousands of sources for conducting research on the United States, tracking public policy issues and keeping up with new developments in American society. It is really a cutting-edge 21st century tool, which will be perfectly at home in this amazing building and in the hands of the wonderful library staff. After I have to leave this afternoon, some of my staff from the Consulate will give you a hands-on tour of *elibraryUSA*.

But seeing is believing, so Pani Director, please accept these books and this card representing access to the database and now, I'd like to invite the director, the mayor and these students to work with me on one of the databases for young learners of English, as we get ready together for the 21st century.