

POLONUS PURLS – Portals to Poland

By: Sam Ginsburg

Web portals -- I had run across them before but didn't realize that I was looking at an unfamiliar genre, one that I would never be able to completely explore, nor adequately describe. But they are very useful and important to know about. And I don't mean that popular Portal game, whatever it is. Exploring portals may be familiar territory, because many of the sites mentioned in previous PURLS columns are found on the portals listed below.

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_portal) defines a web portal as "a web site that function[s] as a point of access to information on the World Wide Web. A portal presents information from diverse sources in a unified way." Portals come in several flavors: general- or special-purpose search engines; sites which list a zillion other sites but provide no content of their own; and ones like the latter which also provide their own content. Most of them are ad-supported, but some are sponsored by governmental or educational institutions and don't have ads.

This column lists a few of the English-language Polish portals – web sites that are points of entry for a vast variety of information about Poland and all things Polish. It has language, history, geography, economy, and whatever else you've always wanted and never been able to find. (Well, maybe not quite.)

My newest favorite is **Info-Poland** (<http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/>), sponsored by the Polish Academic Information Center at the University at Buffalo (SUNY-Buffalo), without ads. Bob Ogrodnik, whom I consider a master at finding interesting websites, says "This site is a priceless source of information on Poland in the English language. It is like a 'one stop shop'. It is definitely in my 'Favorites' menu and a frequently used reference. I especially like their annotated links to Poland-related information." The design is pleasant, with plenty of white space to make it easy to read. Its scope can be easily grasped by clicking on site maps (yes, there are several site maps) and scrolling down and across. Almost all

portals seem to have a mode in which it can be hard to find your way back to a particular link or section, and **Info-Poland** is no exception. For example, not all pages have a home link, so you have to use the back button a lot. Nonetheless, I think it's the best-organized and easiest to use of the Polish Portals, although a few links are broken, which is inevitable in such a massive undertaking. (But don't confuse it with the Dutch info-poland.com, which may be a travel site.)

Others portals can be found in **Info-Poland's** search engines or in multi-page guides: **Poland.pl**, **onet.pl**, etc. If you link from **Info-Poland**, these sites all open in Polish. But **Poland.pl** has a convenient British flag to click on and get to an English-language version of the website. At the end of April 2011, Polonus was at the top of a prominent list of new sites in **Poland.pl's** Poland on the Internet section. Like **Info-Poland**, the site map is an easy way to grasp **Poland.pl's** scope. **Poland.pl** is a national portal providing a directory for "Poland on the internet," including stamp collecting. Under "Lifestyle" in the directory, select "Hobby", then select "Stamp Collecting", which links to 16 websites, including Polonus.

The above listings are relatively general-purpose Poland portals. But there are also a variety of special-purpose portals, such as:

- Language: **bab.la**, reviewed in Bulletin 542
- Genealogy: **Poland Gen Web** (rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgv/); **Polish Genealogical Society of America** (pgsa.org); **Jewish Gen** (jewishgen.org). If you try exploring these databases you will find that some (the last two) have member-only restrictions, just like Polonus.

Hopefully, this article will help you navigate the internet. Please send me your favorite websites (samgins1730@yahoo.com) for possible inclusion in a future column and/or on the Polonus website. I'd also appreciate your feedback on any of the sites listed here or names of websites that should be included in this topic. Thanks.