

Director Magdalena Hajduk on the use of artificial intelligence in the field of history

Director of the Office of New Technologies of the Institute of National Remembrance, Magdalena Hajduk, took part in the debate entitled “Algorithms of truth, algorithms of falsehood. Artificial intelligence in the field of history. Opportunities and threats”, which took place on 26 August 2023 at the Belweder Palace in Warsaw.

The main goal of the “Future/Past” scientific review – organised by the Janusz Kurtyka Foundation – is to create a platform for meetings for scientists, historians, technology experts, and a broad spectrum of history enthusiasts. This year’s event took place on 26 August at the Belweder Palace and was intended, among other things, for the discussion on how modern tools, such as artificial intelligence, can be used in historical research, analysis of archival resources, and in searching for valuable historical sources. Meeting participants had the opportunity to learn how modern technologies can support the analysis of historical documents, speed up the search process, and facilitate the identification of hidden patterns and dependencies.

As part of the Review, a very interesting debate took place, led by Paweł Kurtyka, titled “Algorithms of truth, algorithms of falsehood. Artificial intelligence in the field of history. Opportunities and threats”, which gathered experts in the field of technology and history: Leszek Bukowski, PhD, a specialist in the field of natural language processing, Jan Barbacki from the AGH University of Science and Technology, and Magdalena Hajduk, Director of the Office of New Technologies of the Institute of National Remembrance. In her speech, Director Hajduk emphasised that the growing influence of artificial intelligence on historical research and document analysis brings both unique opportunities as well as new challenges. On the one hand, algorithms based on artificial intelligence significantly accelerate the process of analysing huge data sets, making it easier to identify patterns and hidden dependencies. However, on the other hand, we must remember to be careful when using algorithms. Director Hajduk agreed with the opinion that there is no turning back from artificial intelligence and therefore the Institute of National Remembrance must take part in epochal changes, bearing in mind the implementation of its statutory mission, i.e. promoting reliable knowledge about the past and shaping civic attitudes among young people. In the context of the development of artificial intelligence, she mentioned the need for dialogue between institutions such as the Institute of National Remembrance and technology companies, being cautious about the results obtained by IT systems, the need to develop appropriate legal regulations, and investing in the popularisation of verified historical information.

During the discussion, speakers drew attention to many uncertainties resulting from the fact that artificial intelligence technology is in a phase of very dynamic development. It seems that the right approach is to follow two principles used in exact sciences with respect to all search systems: distrust of the results obtained and awareness that the results obtained depend on the data used as well as on the intentions of the system creator.

One of the most important tasks carried out by the Foundation is rewarding initiatives related to the promotion and commemoration of Polish history.

On that day, the Janusz Kurtyka Award was granted. The winner of the 7th edition of the competition for the book titled *From Tsar to “Tsar”. A Study of Russian Historical Policy* was Prof. Wojciech Materski.

Then, an awards ceremony took place in the "Future/Past" Award Competition, the winner of which last year was "Cyphers Game". In this year's edition of the competition, the following categories were awarded:

"Innovative forms of historical education" – Pilecki Family House Museum, Karolina Kolbuszewska for the multimedia exhibition about Witold Pilecki.

"Commemoration in the field" – Beauty of Life Foundation, awarded for erecting the first monument in Poland in Sokoły, Podlasie, commemorating the victims of the Polish NKVD operation of 1937-1938.

"Guardians of the Books" – Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance for the "Archive Full of Memory" project.

"Public diplomacy and care for Poland's good name abroad" – Stichting Driel-Polen Foundation promoting Polish history abroad.

"Polonia and Poles abroad" – Social Committee for the Care of Old Rasos for the initiative to clean and renovate the cemetery.

In the non-competitive "Friend of the Foundation" category, journalist and director Alina Czerniakowska was awarded for the production of the documentary film "Persevere! Janusz Kurtyka" dedicated to Janusz Kurtyka.