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## **Reorienting Library Space and Services of Book Depositories under the Conditions of Martial Law in Ukraine: The Case of the Largest Libraries of Zakarpattia**

**Objective.** The research aims to explore the practical experience of the activity transformation of Ukrainian libraries during the military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. **Methods.** The analysis of world publications allowed: to attempt identifying the specific methods of library work during extreme events; to conduct an analysis of the services of educational and public libraries; to prove the effectiveness of psychological and moral library support to the population; and to identify its most effective forms. **Results.** The substantiation of the obtained results is based on the characteristics of the library of the Uzhhorod National University and the Transcarpathian Regional Universal Scientific Library named after F. Potushniak, aimed at supporting victims of war. The most active methods of library work during the first months of the war between Russia and Ukraine were revealed. Analysis of the provision of library services confirms the importance of book depositories as an important centre for uniting people for mutual support. The paper outlines practical recommendations regarding the active participation of libraries in the lives of people forced to flee from places of active hostilities. There is a burst of creative library changes associated with the reorientation of the library space and services according to the social challenge posed by Russia's military aggression. **Conclusions.** The ability of the largest library institutions in Zakarpattia to provide moral support to people affected by the war has been revealed. The role of library support as an important factor in practical assistance to people has been confirmed.

*Keywords:* libraries of Ukraine; library services during the war; library activities for temporarily displaced persons; library during hostilities; Scientific Library of Uzhhorod National University; Transcarpathian Regional Universal Scientific Library named after F. Potushniak

### **Introduction**

Human consciousness is capable of rethinking extraordinary events and rapidly reacting to them with changes. Our generation has faced terrible trials due to the so-called "state of crisis" and these are the COVID-19 pandemic and the war started by Russia against Ukraine.

Since the Russian aggression against the Ukrainian people, the main priorities in the activities of people, organizations, and institutions, including libraries, have shifted.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, as a direct use of armed force by the Russian Federation against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, began on February 20, 2014, with the capture and temporary occupation of the Crimean Peninsula. This same year, starting from April, Russia's military aggression moved to the east of Ukraine (Donbas) resulting in the creation of the terrorist so-called Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" under the guise of popular actions by the Russian intelligence services. Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine took place on February 24, 2022 and began after a long military build-up and Russia's recognition of its puppet entities DPR and LPR as independent states.

Undoubtedly, this bloody war destroys everything in its path: human lives, buildings, infrastructure of cities and villages, kindergartens, schools, universities, theatres, libraries...

Humanity in general and the population of European countries in particular have already witnessed the most terrible destruction of libraries and archives during crisis situations – armed conflicts or natural disasters. But the threat to the further intellectual development of humanity is also posed by pandemics, which make physical contact between people impossible, for example,

when studying, conducting research, during self-improvement or recreation. That is, all the opportunities that the university library can provide.

### **Literature Review**

The world knows the most dramatic story of August 1992 during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the Bosnian War. The National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was located in the historic Town Hall of Sarajevo, was virtually completely destroyed. Unique historical ancient documents were completely lost, including one of the world's most important collections of medieval Islamic manuscripts (Kossiakoff, 2004; Bakaršić, 2002).

An urgent issue is the need to preserve rare and valuable publications, for example, by creating special electronic collections (document digitization) and displaying metadata in web catalogues.

Libraries became very important during the difficult period of uncertainty faced by society during the viral spread around the world. The contribution of university libraries became particularly significant in combating fake news during crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical visits to libraries were impossible (Bangani, 2021).

Problems of improving the psychological state of the university community have become an important criterion for the work of libraries in educational institutions. Thus, in response to a marked increase in the prevalence and severity of mental health problems among students, faculty and service personnel, universities and their libraries are expanding their wellbeing initiatives and programmes (Bladek, 2021).

Ukrainian librarians (scientists and practitioners) were quick to respond to a situation that needed a change in library priorities, which became the active introduction of new areas of library activities in crisis conditions. After all, the library community needed methodological developments in resetting libraries, a clear definition and characteristics of the organization of remotely working teams of the libraries of higher education institutions (HEI) during the transition phase of library teams to remote work (Kolesnykova, 2020).

However, examples describing the response of university libraries to the challenges that arose during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war (fakes, substitution of notions, cyber-attacks, terror and intimidation of Ukrainian citizens, etc.) are still scarce.

Therefore, the **objective** of this study is to analyse the changes in the activities of the two largest libraries of Zakarpattia under the conditions of martial law in Ukraine.

### **Methods**

The research presents actual data collected for the period from 24.02.2022 to 01.08.2022, based on the analysis of the work of two major libraries in Zakarpattia: the educational – Scientific Library of the Uzhhorod National University (hereinafter – UzhNU Library), and the public – Transcarpathian Regional Universal Scientific Library named after F. Potushniak (hereinafter – TRUSL).

The research focused on changes in the reorientation of library space and services, in accordance to the social challenge of society caused by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. It also includes the analysis of the upsurge of creative library changes related to the specific location of the Transcarpathian region and to the sheltering of internally displaced people and refugees there.

The author collected relevant data for further analysis, preparation and planning of the work of the UzhNU library in case of natural disasters. And this remains an essential criterion in

operational and strategic planning for libraries in case of a crisis situation in Zakarpattia (pandemic, natural disaster, war).

### **Results and Discussion**

Like many other libraries of Ukraine, the largest book depositories in Zakarpattia are united by a single decision - to help people in the difficult period of displacement in order to save their lives. According to official UN data, only in the first month of the war – 3.9 million Ukrainians became refugees, and another 6.5 million – temporarily displaced persons. During the first month of the war, about half a million people moved to the territory of Zakarpattia. As of August 2022, about 380,000 internally displaced people remain temporarily in Zakarpattia Oblast, according to mobile operators in Zakarpattia. What kind of help was waiting for people who fled from the war and left their homes? Already in the first days of the war, Uzhhorod volunteers organized appropriate help points for people at the city railway station, from which thousands of people were coordinated daily to the volunteer centre - the "Owl's Nest" Humanitarian Aid Centre, which, in cooperation with city council workers, redirected people to temporary accommodation.

Within a month, some 60,000 people had already moved into the small town of Uzhhorod, although the city has a population of only 110,000. First of all, people were accommodated in all student dormitories of the Uzhhorod National University, in 12 schools of the city of Uzhhorod and the largest sports complex "Yunist". Every day, twice a day, humanitarian aid started to be delivered from the "Owl's Nest" to almost 30 settlements where displaced persons temporarily lived. Having barely recovered from the horrors of the war, people slowly began to return to life, as Zakarpattia became their only safe haven.

Since the first days of the war, the two largest libraries of Zakarpattia have actively transformed their library services to meet the needs of those who left home, jobs and relatives. Despite the fact that each of the mentioned libraries differs in its user audience and purpose, it was their prerogative to help those affected both financially and psychologically. Librarians immediately joined the volunteer movement in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and war-weary people. Fundraising for the AFU, helping to resettle people, distributing humanitarian aid, and providing psychological support became the priority steps of assistance. These steps, while not purely librarian in nature, were a manifestation of humanity and mutual assistance.

#### **Scientific Library of Uzhhorod National University**

Just hours from the declaration of war with Russia, Uzhhorod University extends a helping hand to anyone in need. Uzhhorod National University is the largest educational institution in Zakarpattia. More than 16,000 students, including 1,200 foreign students studying at the medical faculty, receive their education at 22 faculties. From the first days of the hostile attack on Ukraine, the university's leadership has directed its policy towards supporting those affected by the war. UzhNU has become a refuge for three thousand internally displaced persons, a third of whom are children. Already after a month of martial law in the country, the university begins to accept internally displaced students under the academic mobility programme. In addition to education, the university offers library services to every displaced student, from textbooks to electronic databases.

Since March 2022, the UzhNU library has transformed its largest reading room of 430 m<sup>2</sup> into a special workspace for faculty and library colleagues from other Ukrainian HEIs who had to move from Kiev, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Sloviansk, Dnipro, Kropyvnytskyi, Odesa, and other

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locations. All of them continued to support distance learning for students and the provision of online library services to their university communities. Escaping from the war, most teachers and scholars did not have their own laptops, internet access, teaching guides or lecture notes. The university library cheerfully offered the displaced teachers a location with high-speed internet, provided them with access to workplaces, set up facilities for online lectures, and opened all of its two million book collections, including 800,000 pieces of scholarly literature. Even aware of the migrant parents' concerns for their children, the library created a separate children's area, keeping an eye on the children during the lectures given by their parents.

A separate electronic reader database was created for the migrant teachers, through which the library targeted these scholars with information about new professional periodicals with scanned content pages, in order to introduce them to new scientific publications. The Library's Centre for Scientometrics and Information Support for Education and Science offered the researchers who moved to Uzhhorod free access to use influential global scientometric databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science. Scientists who received the status of internally displaced persons received a number of other free services in the university library, such as:

- UDC indexing and author cutter number;
- In-depth thematic selection of literature;
- Editing of the bibliographic description by: DSTU / international standards;
- Checking texts for borrowing;
- Consultation on the acquisition of informational competencies;
- Preparation of factual references;
- Preparation of thematic references;
- Electronic document ordering, etc.

The university library offered informational assistance to its new users, because the library's website provides free access to all digitized library collections, the electronic catalogue, the university repository, and offers online services. The scientific library has intensified support for people through social media. Its Facebook page has constantly featured advice on coping with panic attacks, first aid for wound and life protection. It presents a number of in-house developed information products created by the library staff. These include virtual exhibits such as "First Aid Instruction", "Online Guides", how to protect yourself from chemical and nuclear attacks and many other useful information offered by the library online.

The library staff joined a volunteer gathering to provide humanitarian aid (clothes, medicines, hygiene products, etc.) for the territorial defence of our capital, which at the time was under the enemy's greatest attack. Almost all of the library's workers donated the funds received from the state, due to the covid disease, to the military needs of the AFU.

The university library widely promoted the involvement of its users in a First Aid workshop by the Red Cross Society, organised by the university association "UzhNU Volunteerism".

The library, when needed, directed its internally displaced users to the office of the Centre for Legal Support of Persons Affected by the Military Invasion, which operates successfully under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and UzhNU and is housed at the university's Faculty of Law. This Centre is the base for organisational and advisory support to persons affected by the military invasion of the Russian Federation. The Centre assists in:

- Providing organisational and advisory support to persons who intend to or have already obtained refugee status outside Ukraine;
- Providing legal assistance to internally displaced persons;
- Collecting and documenting the facts of human rights violations as a result of the military invasion;

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- Creating favourable and effective conditions for the realisation and restoration of violated human rights, especially those of the socially vulnerable strata of population (elderly people, women and children);

- Providing legal advice to representatives of relocated businesses.

Over 400 internally displaced persons benefited from this legal assistance during their six-month stay in the city of Uzhhorod.

The Scientific Library informed the refugees at UzhNU about the free dental services they could receive at the university dental clinic.

The book depository engaged its new users in a training session of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, which took place on 4 May 2022 within the walls of UzhNU.

The university library involved its users in regular trainings with psychologists, which were performed by the best scientists of UzhNU, and even offered its own photo-relaxation called "Sakurotherapy in the Library Courtyard".

From the early days of the war, all employees of UzhNU, including the considerable staff of the Scientific Library, participated in the weaving of camouflage nets on a daily basis. In one of the library premises, a training point for weaving techniques and collecting fabrics for masking was created. The motto, under which all those willing to help the AFU worked conscientiously, was "A camouflage net a day for the military". For example, only the last weekend of February was spent in active work. Over a hundred people of all ages and occupations, including many university librarians, in 20 hours of coordinated work produced 80 meters of protective netting for the military, such a pace of work was the beginning of important support and assistance to the defenders of Ukraine.

The UzhNU library hospitably invited temporary displaced people to take advantage of its many thousands of fiction books for all tastes, from historical subjects to the most popular Ukrainian prose. Library desks were available in all university dormitories where internally displaced people lived.

The Uzhhorod University library team hospitably invited guests of the city to "Backstage Library Tours". The guests were delighted to look at the old books, marvelled at the miniature books, and were impressed by the scale of the library's book storages, which store its million strong collections.

Possessing a unique fund of manuscripts, old prints and rare publications, the Scientific Library of the Uzhhorod National University is creating their online catalogue. It has developed and is implementing a strategy of digitizing rare editions, as this collection of remarkable manuscripts and printed objects of the 15th–19th centuries is represented by valuable editions and individual unique examples of both domestic and foreign book printing and manuscripts. The total collection of rare books is more than 20,000 items, among which more than 10,000 are old prints in 18 languages of the world, and over 500 manuscript books. The collection of rare books of the University library can be considered as a unique source of information about the world, European and national history, history of culture, linguistics, history and art of book. The unique collection of incunabula of the UzhNU Scientific Library includes 32 items in 25 storage units of the Library's collection. The martial law situation in the state did not stop the library research and the creation of the electronic thematic catalogue "Incunabula and Paleotypes from the Collection of the Uzhhorod University Library".

### **Transcarpathian Regional Universal Scientific Library named after F. Potushniak**

The work of the largest public library in Zakarpattia - TRUSL named after F. Potushniak - was no less creative in its solutions. It launched a new project "TATOHUB", whose main mission

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was to support families during the war in Ukraine. It has become the best art centre in the city for displaced children.

The regional public library stepped up activities that offered the temporarily displaced people useful employment tips and CV writing skills. The library offered them several ongoing conversation clubs, with the Ukrainian and English language clubs being particularly popular. Classes were held three times a week, according to age and level of proficiency. It is an encouraging fact that the free conversation club "Ukrainian for Life" was run by Sofia Kitseliuk, a Ukrainian language teacher who also moved to Uzhhorod from Zaporizhzhia.

Library support brings together those in dire need of moral support, and these are such library events as the women's meeting "Proud of the AFU". Wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, nieces, friends, fiancées, with the aim of supporting each other and the defenders of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, rallied through stories, discussions, experiences and moral support. The meeting-discussion "How to live on?" was special for internally displaced people, at which they talked about overcoming the psychological consequences of the war with Yevhen Kyrbaba, a practical psychologist, psychosomatics specialist from Kharkiv. To maintain mental balance and improve emotional well-being, morning yoga was offered by volunteers of the "Tsinnist" Reset Space at the library.

The users met with interest the information event "Information Wars: How to Counteract Disinformation" covering the discussion on popular Russian narratives, creation of collective information immunity of Ukrainians, manipulation of public opinion, spread of fakes, fact-checking and other important aspects during the information war.

The Public Library organised the premedical aid training adapted to the present and delivered by professional trainers engaged in military training (the training is presented on YouTube).

Three times a week, TRUSL n. a. F. Potusniak hosts educational classes for children who found themselves in Uzhhorod, fleeing the war with their parents. It was at the regional public library that NGO Ecosphere launched a new project for displaced children called Green Vacation. The programme included trainings, workshops, quests, research, watching informative films, and holding discussions, games, quests or research in the city park.

A fun biblioquest and bubble flash mob were organised for 20 children from Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Kharkiv and Uzhhorod in the Potusniak library on Children's Day. The children performed various tasks, and at the end drew pictures for the defenders of Ukraine and sculpted patriotic compositions. The event was held with the support of the VilnoHub project, implemented as part of the "Dream and Act" programme. Within the framework of the same programme, on Vyshyvanka Day, the library conducted a master class on embroidering amulets in national colours for about 30 participants from Kramatorsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Dnipro, Bakhmuth, Chernigiv, Zaporizhzhia and Uzhhorod. Adults and children embroidered the national symbols of Ukraine, angel talismans and the famous dog Patron.

The library successfully held a charity exhibition and sale of photographs in support of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The funds raised during the photo exhibition and sale were donated to the volunteer organization Movement to Support the Transcarpathian Military.

The art therapy by the local theatre for children "Bavka Puppet Theater" and the event supported by the Department of Culture, Nationalities and Religions of Zakarpattia Regional Military Administration "BOGRACH-party", which provided a free family excursion to learn about the history of Uzhhorod, were undoubtedly successful. The most famous researcher of the regional city, Tetiana Literati, talked about new aspects of Uzhhorod's history.

The work of the libraries mentioned by us also has common ideas and initiatives. Among creative library activities, there are some common ones that each library successfully implements,

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choosing the same main topic. This is the case of the "Take a book you like" action. Caring residents of the city bring publications to the library, and the library uses them to fill the bookshelves, where one may take a book without making a note in the form. Librarians encourage users to borrow books without returning them.

Both the university library and the public library offer temporary displaced people screenings of the best Ukrainian films by famous Ukrainian filmmakers. They are: the film directed by Sergei Paradzhanov "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", Vladimir Denisenko's "Dream", Boris Ivchenko's "The Lost Letter", etc.

Each of the libraries at its location is constantly collecting Ukrainian-language children's books for children who are forced to stay abroad. Books have gone to Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the Baltics.

A vivid example of Transcarpathian hospitality was the "Easter Basket" campaign, through which the collected, traditional Transcarpathian Easter products were distributed to temporary residents of the city's hostels so that they could enjoy the traditional Transcarpathian Easter dishes.

It is impossible not to mention the trainings on the provision of premedical aid, organized in each of the libraries. Such trainings, adapted to the present, were conducted by professional military trainers.

### Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of changes in the activities of the two largest libraries of Zakarpattia under the conditions of martial law in Ukraine proves that the beginning of the Russian aggression was the beginning of trials both for the entire Ukrainian people as well as for librarians in relatively dangerous regions of Ukraine. The ordeal that befell people had an impact on their psychological state, moral endurance and ability to overcome life's problems.

With their significant informational potential, library workers have become a stronghold of support for all segments of the population. Of particular importance are their creative ways of introducing new library services and reorienting the library space as an important location of unity to solve both educational and socio-humanitarian problems for war-affected people.

The two largest libraries in Zakarpattia, the Scientific Library of Uzhhorod National University and the Transcarpathian Regional Universal Scientific Library named after F. Potushniak, have become cultural and spiritual shelter for people in need of support and help. The libraries directed all their efforts to the needs of those who remained with Ukraine in its most difficult time.

Ukraine is bravely marching towards victory. Its people demonstrate endurance and strength, drawn from support and trust. Libraries are the centers that bring people together to help each other and to believe in a peaceful future. The libraries of Zakarpattia are coping with these tasks with dignity.

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## Переорієнтування бібліотечного простору та послуг книгозбірень в умовах воєнного стану в Україні: на прикладі найбільших бібліотек Закарпаття

**Мета.** Дослідження спрямоване на вивчення практичного досвіду трансформації діяльності українських бібліотек в період військового вторгнення російської федерації на територію України. **Методика.** За допомогою світових публікацій здійснена спроба виявити профільні методики бібліотечної роботи під час екстремальних подій, проведено аналіз послуг освітньої та публічної бібліотек, доведено ефективність психологічної, моральної бібліотечної підтримки населенню, виявлені найефективніші їх форми. **Результати.** Обґрунтування отриманих результатів базується на характеристиці роботи бібліотеки Ужгородського національного університету та Закарпатської обласної універсальної наукової бібліотеки ім. Ф. Потушняка, спрямованої на підтримку постраждалим від воєнних дій. Виявлено найактивніші методи роботи бібліотек за період перших місяців війни росії проти України. Аналіз надання бібліотечних послуг підтверджує значення книгозбірень, як важливого осередку об'єднання людей заради взаємної підтримки. Винесені практичні рекомендації щодо активної участі книгозбірень в житті людей, які вимушені втікати з місць активних бойових дій. Характеризується сплеск креативних бібліотечних змін, пов'язаних із переорієнтуванням простору бібліотек та послуг відповідно соціальному виклику суспільства, спричинених військовою агресією росії. **Висновки.** Виявлена здатність найбільших бібліотечних установ Закарпаття надавати моральну підтримку постраждалим від війни людям. Підтверджено роль бібліотечної підтримки як важливого чинника практичної допомоги людям.

**Ключові слова:** бібліотеки України; бібліотечні послуги під час війни; бібліотечні заходи для тимчасово переміщених осіб; бібліотека під час воєнних дій; Наукова бібліотека Ужгородського національного університету; Закарпатська обласна універсальна наукова бібліотека ім. Ф. Потушняка

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