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SHEMAIEV O. O.

V. I. Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine),

e-mail: shemaev@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-8843-0245

University Library as a Health Promotion Centre in Ukraine

Objective. The article presents the potential of the university library to promote health in Ukraine. The article aims to highlight the features and opportunities of the University library's activities aimed at promoting health and well-being in conditions of uncertainty. **Methods.** To achieve this goal, the methods of analysis and synthesis, web monitoring, and the basics of the socio-communication approach were used. **Results.** At present, university libraries have not realised significant opportunities to promote the spiritual, mental, physical and social health of the university community both offline and online. The premises of university libraries, which can combine the functions of a reading room, a health promotion centre and a safe place, a bomb shelter, remain underutilised. **Conclusions.** There is an urgent need to develop an appropriate strategy for university libraries to implement a programme to promote the health and well-being of the educational community, which will have a long-term positive effect.

Keywords: libraries; public health; health promotion

Introduction

In today's world, university libraries are becoming not only educational centres, but also important centres for promoting healthy lifestyles among students and staff. However, many university libraries have traditionally functioned as information resource centres without a proper focus on health and wellbeing. This limits their potential as platforms for supporting key components of health. At the same time, university libraries have unique opportunities for health promotion due to their resources, access to information, spacious premises, and offline and online interaction with users. However, there is currently a lack of integration of health and wellbeing into the functioning of libraries, which necessitates research into the possibilities and strategies for implementing this function.

Justification of the prospective role of the university library as a health promotion centre is extremely relevant and can provide new approaches to health promotion in the educational environment. Among the most important factors of relevance are: the prevalence of health problems among students and staff associated with significant workload, stress, poor nutrition and insufficient physical activity; limited existing research on the role of libraries in health promotion; potential opportunities for university libraries to support health and well-being through educational resources, programme activities and socio-cultural initiatives.

In order to identify some of the problems that need to be addressed, it is necessary to refer to the latest research and publications and analyse them:

The study by S. Molchanova (2018) considers the role and place of the library of a higher education institution as a centre for the formation of students' healthy lifestyle skills. At the same time, the emphasis is on the physical components of health and spiritual development of young people, which left out mental, social and other health factors, as well as health promotion among the staff of the educational community.

The scientific publication by K. Martzoukou (2021) highlights the problems, challenges and potential opportunities for academic libraries in the educational environment under the influence of COVID-19 and directions for further development of library activities. In particular, the researcher focuses on the information health of students and improving their digital literacy through the updated mission of educational libraries.

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The article by B. Tringali (2021) is devoted to the issues of organising health promotion and outreach to raise health awareness in a specialised academic research library. The author provides examples of health promotion for the library audience, focuses on the cooperation of research library staff with health experts, and justifies the transformation of the library into an environment that encourages the development of health literacy skills.

The role of libraries in preserving and promoting the health of communities during the war is demonstrated in the publication by L. Shum and K. Aleksieienko (2023) on the example of the Healthy Libraries project. It is noted that the project should be implemented through cooperation with medical professionals, through the use of information materials on health promotion with a Ukrainian context, and through the arrangement of health corners in libraries.

The socio-information project of the National Scientific Medical Library of Ukraine “Psychological Assistance” is presented in the article by S. Kyrii (2023). The author highlights the promotion of mental health and psychological assistance in wartime through the organisation of information events involving practical psychologists, psychotherapists, scientists, medical students, teachers, and librarians.

The results of a cross-sectional study on the promotion of health and well-being by public libraries were presented by a group of researchers from England (Karki, El Asmar, Sasco El-Osta, 2024). The researchers' work was aimed at exploring the potential of libraries as community centres to promote the mental and physical health and well-being of adults living in the community.

The issue of effective cooperation of public libraries in public health is raised by M. Karki and co-authors (2024). They focus on the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and the community itself by libraries. Ukrainian authors L. Shum and K. Aleksieienko (2023) also provide examples of cooperation between public libraries and relevant professionals to promote health and well-being. At the same time, university libraries have certain advantages in engaging specialists from different fields in health promotion, given the peculiarities and multidisciplinary nature of the university community. These features are emphasised by foreign and Ukrainian authors. In particular, S. Samo and M. Agcito (2024) suggest giving priority to comprehensive library services. They point out that academic libraries should use existing spaces for collaboration and create a “therapeutic landscape” for all participants in the educational process. B. Tringali (2021) insists on active collaboration not only with departmental specialists and experts in health promotion and health education, but also with students.

Thus, the analysed publications indicate the interest of scientists and librarians in highlighting health promotion as a direction of library activity. However, the issue of ensuring the support of health and well-being by university libraries remains insufficiently covered.

Therefore, **the objective of the paper** is to highlight the potential opportunities for university libraries to promote health in the educational environment of Ukraine in the face of uncertainty.

Methods

Achieving the objective is based on the use of analysis and synthesis methods, the main provisions of the socio-communication approach, as well as web monitoring of university libraries in Ukraine. The method of analysis and synthesis was used to study publications that cover various aspects of library activities related to health promotion, as well as to analyse the content of university libraries' websites. To assess the level of involvement of university libraries in Ukraine in these types of health and well-being promotion activities, web monitoring was conducted of:

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The Scientific Library of Kharkiv National Medical University, the Central Scientific Library of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, the Library of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University, and the Scientific Library of Uzhhorod National University. The choice of these libraries was based on the fact that, firstly, their activities are the most relevant to health promotion, and, secondly, this choice provides an idea of changes in library activities under martial law in frontline Kharkiv and safer Ternopil and Uzhhorod.

Taking into account the main provisions of the socio-communication approach allowed us to emphasise the important role of university libraries in organising events to promote all types of health based on interaction, partnership, and cooperation. This aspect is noted by S. Molchanova (2018). She emphasises the rich experience of university libraries in shaping students' healthy lifestyles through partnerships with departments, public health organisations, educational organisations and other institutions.

Unlocking the potential health promotion capabilities of university libraries requires addressing this concept. Scholars have proposed several definitions of health promotion. Some authors propose to consider health promotion as the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle (Edelman & Kudzma, 2021). Others draw attention to the practical aspect and define health promotion as effective practices in the field of preserving and maintaining the health of an individual and empowering people to take responsibility for aspects of their lives that can improve their well-being and quality of life (Hubley, Copeman, & Woodall, 2021). The Glossary of Health Promotion Terms 2021 defines health promotion as a process that enables people to take control of and improve their health (Nutbeam, 2021). At the same time, the very term health, as defined by the WHO, implies that it is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization, 2016, 2021). Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Like health, it is a resource for everyday life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions (Nutbeam, 2021).

Thus, it is necessary to take into account such components as physical, social and mental health, as well as spiritual health. Each of these types of health should be covered by promotion. That is, the promotion of health and well-being should be aimed at encouraging, promoting and improving spiritual, mental, physical and social state, as well as environmental and economic conditions of life at the individual and societal levels. In this connection, university libraries have a significant potential for systematic promotion activities in all these components of health and well-being.

Results and Discussion

An important aspect of health promotion by a university library is the development of interaction with all possible participants in this process. It is worth noting that the modern approach and strategies of public health, in particular, "*Health for all and all for health*", involve intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation. In many countries of the world, libraries are partners of the National Health Services, and in Ukraine, librarianship is also developing in this direction. For example, the Public Health Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the Library Country Charitable Foundation, and the Ukrainian Library Association signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to promote healthy lifestyles and health consciousness through the library network of Ukraine. The purpose of the Memorandum is to coordinate efforts to prevent infectious and non-communicable diseases, promote healthy lifestyles and form a conscious and responsible attitude of the population to their own health as a basic value of life (Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, 2020).

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The communication component of university libraries is the basis for promotional activities in all areas of health.

Firstly, it is spiritual health, which covers the spiritual world of the individual and the perception of the spiritual culture of mankind, education, science, art, religion, morality and ethics. That is why university libraries have historically been centres of spiritual health and the formation of a broad outlook, especially in times when contradictions and challenges related to religious views are exacerbated, when the norms of morality and ethics are devalued. This aspect is emphasised by S. Molchanova (2018). She notes that, first of all, university libraries, using all their resources, should pay attention to the problem of spirituality and spiritual healing, spiritual development of young people, which is a prerequisite and basis for health.

Secondly, mental well-being is an important component of health. Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which a person realises his or her capacities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and can work productively and contribute to the community. Mental health is the foundation of human well-being and the effective functioning of communities (PHC). The mental component of health requires special attention in times of crisis and uncertainty. In such periods, the educational environment, as well as society as a whole, is under a state of powerful and prolonged stress. In order to normalise the mental health of the university community, restore and maintain a state of harmony, strengthen the ability to cope with stressful situations and life difficulties, it may be effective to promote psychohygiene practices, namely mental psychohygiene, communicative and informational psychohygiene, recreational practices (Hundertailo, 2022).

University libraries can either participate in existing mental health events or organise their own, inviting practical psychologists, psychotherapists, researchers, students and teachers.

Thirdly, the physical component of health depends on the physical, bodily state of a person's well-being. In order to strengthen and improve physical health, in addition to using health information materials and medical publications with a Ukrainian context, university libraries can be equipped with health corners with sports equipment, massage mats, blood pressure monitors, glucometers, scales for measuring body mass index, etc. This is described in the publication by L. Shum and K. Aleksieienko (2023).

When providing online services, it is appropriate to remind people of the importance of physical activity and breaks from working with e-books and documents, which will help them to better process and remember the knowledge they have gained, and also prevent visual impairment and other physical health problems. Links to relevant resources and videos on physical exercises that allow for recovery from concentrated work and study, videos and resources on good health and hygiene practices supported by evidence-based medicine will be helpful.

Fourthly, the social component of health defines the effective interaction of a person with the social environment. The conditions for the formation of a healthy environment and health promotion depend on a person's satisfaction with his/her social status, social fulfilment, and ability to communicate with society. In this sense, university libraries can successfully promote healthy lifestyles on the basis of information exchange and communication both within the library and through its systemic communication links with the external environment (Mukhamediarov, 2010).

A review of the websites of the selected libraries revealed that, except for the Library of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University, there are no special pages dedicated to health and wellbeing promotion on their websites. However, each library informs about relevant health promotion activities and provides links to other resources on health issues.

The website of the Scientific Library of Kharkiv National Medical University presents the library bulletin "Bibliotherapist", published under the slogan "Medicine heals the body, and a book

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heals the soul” (Scientific library of Kharkiv National Medical University, 2024). Students and other library users are actively involved in publications in this bulletin. They share their creative works, achievements on health and well-being. In addition, using the search engine tools, it is possible to read the promotional publications of the Department of Public Health.

The website of the Central Scientific Library of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (2024) has links to sources on health protection and promotion. The library holds remote events aimed at restoring and maintaining the health of the educational environment. In particular, to cover mental health issues, the library organises online meetings with experts and staff of the Department of Psychological Counselling and Psychotherapy of the Faculty of Psychology. These meetings discuss how to avoid stress during the war, ways to overcome it and prevent its occurrence.

The website of the Scientific Library of Uzhhorod National University (n.d.) has an advanced search engine that allows access to a large database of publications and materials of the Faculty of Health and Physical Education.

The webpage of the library of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University (n.d.) provides links to resources dedicated to health protection and promotion in a compact and informative way. The library holds thematic virtual exhibitions that disseminate knowledge about health and encourage its preservation. The exhibitions include: “The Art of Being Healthy”, “Stress and Overcoming It”, “Psychological Health and Human Rights”. However, there is no data on the effectiveness of these exhibitions on the website.

These results are certainly not representative. However, their results suggest the need to optimise health promotion activities in university libraries (and not only medical ones). It is necessary and urgent to implement a comprehensive health promotion that combines all the above types of health. This requires the development of the following areas:

1) Provision of offline and online access to resources that encourage spiritual, mental, physical and social well-being, as well as address environmental and economic living conditions at the individual and community levels. Creation of a special health promotion page or section.

2) Organising lectures, seminars, trainings and workshops on topics related to health and well-being with the participation of invited specialists and experts, as well as university staff and students.

3) Active cooperation with medical faculties, departments and centres of public health, medical and preventive institutions, and other organisations to hold joint events, provide consultations on health and prevention issues.

4) Promoting consultations on health information resources, assistance in finding scientific articles, studies and reports related to health and its components.

5) Creating comfortable spaces for rest, meditation, relaxation, physical activity and health promotion.

6) Maintaining a blog, interactive chatbots, newsletters or social media channels that provide health tips, news and resources to support a healthy lifestyle.

Maintaining and strengthening all components of health is directly related to creating a safe environment. Therefore, it is important to find a way to combine the functions of a reading room, a health promotion centre and a safe place, a bomb shelter. This is especially important for the frontline regions of Ukraine.

Conclusions

Main conclusions, recommendations and prospects for using the research results. In view of the above, university libraries as health promotion centres can provide a comprehensive approach to health promotion through educational resources, programme activities and social initiatives. The actualisation of their role in the field of health is in line with the trend of expanding their functionality. Support of the health of students and staff will improve their academic performance and overall productivity. Integrating health promotion aspects into university libraries can help reduce common problems and create a healthy environment in the learning conditions, especially in times of uncertainty.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for further research and practice efforts concerning the topic of libraries and health in Ukraine, which will contribute to the development of a strategy for implementing a health promotion programme that will have a long-term positive impact on the university community.

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SHEMAIEV O. O.

Національна бібліотека України імені В. І. Вернадського (Київ, Україна),
e-mail: shemaev@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-8843-0245

Університетська бібліотека як центр промоції здоров'я в Україні

Мета. В статті представлено потенційні можливості університетської бібліотеки щодо промоції здоров'я в Україні. Мета полягає у висвітленні особливостей та можливостей діяльності університетської бібліотеки, спрямованої на зміцнення здоров'я та благополуччя в умовах невизначеності. **Методика.** Для досягнення мети застосовано методи аналізу та синтезу, вебмоніторингу, основ соціокомунікаційного підходу. **Результати.** На даний час університетськими бібліотеками не реалізовано значні можливості промоції духовного, психічного, фізичного та соціального здоров'я університетської спільноти як у форматі офлайн, так і у форматі онлайн. Залишаються недостатньо використаними приміщення університетських бібліотек, що можуть поєднувати функції читального залу, осередку промоції здоров'я та безпечного місця, бомбосховища. **Висновки.** Існує нагальна потреба у розробці відповідної стратегії для університетських бібліотек щодо реалізації програми промоції здоров'я та благополуччя освітньої спільноти, що матиме довгостроковий позитивний ефект.

Ключові слова: бібліотеки; громадське здоров'я; промоція здоров'я

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