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Higher Education Institution Libraries: Development at the Crossroads of Predicted Transformation and Turbulent Reality

The authors of the articles in this issue of the journal, answering the question: ‘Can the future of HEI libraries be predicted, or will it remain turbulent and uncertain?’, undoubtedly add intrigue and interest for colleagues from different continents with their reflections, facts and predictions. A thematic analysis of the articles allows us to identify seven clusters with different content focuses: (1) Open science, open education and research data; (2) Digital transformation of libraries and infrastructures; (3) Libraries in times of war and crisis; (4) The educational and pedagogical role of higher education libraries; (5) Communications, social media and user behaviour; (6) Cultural heritage, collections and periodicals; (7) Management, policies and inter-institutional cooperation. An analysis of the publications presented in issue No. 10 of the journal ‘University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development’ (UniLibNSD 2025) suggests that the transformation of higher education libraries in different countries during this turbulent time of change is twofold. On the one hand, it is predictable: in terms of open science, digitisation, repository development, research data management, information and digital literacy. These areas are shaped by international policies, technological trends and the expectations of the academic community. On the other hand, the transformation is taking place in conditions of turbulent uncertainty caused by war, crises, resource inequality, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, and changes in users' information behaviour. Thus, the modern library of a higher education institution in any country is developing at the intersection of predictable transformation and turbulent reality, where its stability is determined by its ability to simultaneously: first, systematically implement changes and integrate them into the institutional model; second, respond quickly to unpredictable challenges.

Keywords: libraries of higher education institutions; librarians; cluster analysis of articles; turbulence; predicted transformation; UniLibNSD conference; Ukraine

Dear readers, authors, and colleagues!

At the end of each year, it is natural to take stock of what has happened, look ahead and imagine a recipe for future success. Usually, despite the turbulence of world events, most people in different countries who are involved in the library and information sphere look to the coming year with optimism (often cautious).

The realities of new political landscapes, compounded by crisis situations around the world (economic crises, natural and man-made disasters, armed conflicts, the Russian-Ukrainian war, social transformations, etc.) have cast a shadow over the future of academic circles, testing the resilience of educational and scientific institutions, including libraries, on a daily basis.

What does such turbulent uncertainty mean for library professionals from different corners of the globe, and is it possible to predict the future of HEI libraries?

It is no coincidence that in this 10th (2025) issue of UniLibNSD (<https://unilibnsd.ust.edu.ua/>), we offer you a wide range of diverse expert views on the crisis from specialists in international library and information science (LIS) on the topic ‘Libraries of HEIs: Predictable transformation or turbulent uncertainty?’

This topic was the focus of the 10th annual International Conference ‘University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development’ (UniLibNSD 2025), which took place

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on 9-10 October 2025 (https://conflib.ust.edu.ua/Conf_univ_Library_2025) and, for the first time, was held exclusively online.

The forced reformatting of the 10th anniversary UniLibNSD 2025 conference (Dnipro, Ukraine) was due to security considerations, as Dnipro is currently a frontline city, living and working persistently under air raid sirens, rocket attacks by Russian troops, constant threats to the health and lives of civilians, destruction of residential buildings and critical infrastructure, and frequent power, heat and communication outages. (Kolesnykova, Corti, & Buist-Zhuk, 2022).

Despite the current crisis, the main organiser of the conference, the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies (USUST), was able to provide high-quality communication (Zoom) and safe working conditions for the USUST scientific library team, which carried out the administration, support, moderation, coordination, and high-quality English-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-English translations for this transnational event.

The professional, friendly, positive, optimistic and relaxed atmosphere of the event was made possible thanks to the long-standing co-organisers of UniLibNSD: the Library of Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) and the Library of the University of Perpetual Help System LAGUNA (Philippines).

Thanks to the well-coordinated international team of organisers, 370 participants from 16 countries focused their presentations, discussions and articles on the dynamic (not always expected and positive) surge of changes in the activities of higher education libraries, related organisations and communities as a reflection on various types of crises.

It was from these full-length papers that the international editorial board selected, reviewed and recommended 32 articles for the 10th issue of 'University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development. Conference Proceedings'.

The authors of the articles in this issue of the journal, answering the question: 'Can the future of HEI libraries be predicted, or will it remain turbulent and uncertain?', undoubtedly add intrigue and interest for colleagues from different continents with their reflections, facts and predictions. The authors explore not only changes in libraries themselves, but also trends in the broader information and knowledge environment, recognising that libraries are not only structures of their HEIs, but also part of a larger ecosystem. Such professional publications are part of the mission of the professional community, which aims to increase the resilience and sustainability of the library and information industry in times of change, and thus our ability to fulfil our missions.

According to IFLA: Trend Report 2025 (IFLA, 2025) global trends are not showing a 'calm evolution' but rather a paradigm shift. We are witnesses and participants in the formation of a new paradigm of library activity in the 21st century (especially in conditions of war and global uncertainty), and the dominant themes in it are digital transformation, openness, new professional roles, and international integration.

This is also clearly evident from the analysis of the works presented in this issue of the journal, which gives readers an understanding of how university libraries operate at the intersection of predicted institutional transformation and turbulent reality, combining strategic planning with an adaptive response to multiple crises.

Thematic analysis of the articles allows us to identify seven clusters with different content focuses:

(1) Open science, open education and research data. The content focus is on: Open science ecosystems, FAIR, RDM, publication and data repositories, ETD (Electronic Theses and Dissertations), libraries as infrastructure and policy actors.

(2) Digital transformation of libraries and infrastructures. The content focus is on: Digital library ecosystems, AI, open APIs, cloud services, automation, usability.

(3) Libraries in times of war and crisis. The content focus is on: War, forced mobility, inclusion, crisis preparedness, cultural and institutional resilience.

(4) The educational and pedagogical role of higher education libraries. The content focus is on: Information, digital, media and AI literacy, librarians as educators and tutors.

(5) Communications, social media and user behaviour. The content focus is on: Social networks, political and information awareness, digital and entertainment practices.

(6) Cultural heritage, collections and periodicals. The content focus is on: Archives, rare collections, regional studies and art collections, periodicals.

(7) Management, policies and inter-institutional cooperation. The content focus is on: Regulatory framework, library consortia, coordination and sustainability.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the articles share common thematic vectors that combine research in different areas: War as a catalyst for transformation (digitalisation, openness, international cooperation); Changes in the professional identity of librarians (from intermediaries to educators and data experts); The growing role of libraries in open science policies; Technological shift (AI, clouds, automation, new competencies); User-centred approach (behaviour, engagement, experience, trust).

Summarising the contexts of the authors' works devoted to the topic 'Libraries of HEIs: Predictable transformation or turbulent uncertainty?', it can be stated that the transformation of higher education libraries in different countries in turbulent times of change is twofold. On the one hand, it is predictable: in terms of open science, digitalisation, repository development, research data management, information and digital literacy. These areas are shaped by international policies, technological trends and the expectations of the academic community. On the other hand, the transformation is taking place in conditions of turbulent uncertainty caused by war, crises, resource inequality, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, and changes in users' information behaviour. In this context, higher education libraries are emerging not only as adaptive institutions, but also as active actors in managing uncertainty, capable of combining strategic planning with flexible, situational decisions.

Thus, modern libraries in higher education institutions in any country are developing at the intersection of predictable transformation and turbulent reality, where their sustainability is determined by their ability to simultaneously: firstly, systematically implement changes and integrate them into the institutional model; and secondly, respond quickly to unpredictable challenges.

We sincerely hope that issue 10 (2025) of UniLibNSD, published on the eve of the new year 2026, demonstrates the intellectual and practical maturity of the LIS community and the effectiveness of editorial and peer review practices, creating a solid foundation for further development in this field.

The international editorial board highly appreciates the contribution of each author. We sincerely thank our readers for their interest in UniLibNSD, and our reviewers for their competence, sensitivity and kindness.

We sincerely wish our authors, partners and readers confidence in themselves and in the power of community in the new year, the ability to dream even in difficult times, and the resilience and inspiration to turn dreams into achievements step by step.

We invite you to collaborate with us!

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Бібліотеки ЗВО: розвиток на перетині прогнозованої трансформації та турбулентної реальності

Автори статей цього номеру журналу, відповідаючи на питання “Чи можна передбачити майбутнє бібліотек ЗВО, чи воно залишиться турбулентним і невизначеним?”, безсумнівно, своїми роздумами, фактами й прогнозами додають інтриги та зацікавлення для колег із різних континентів. Тематичний аналіз статей дозволяє виділити 7 кластерів із різними змістовними фокусами: (1) відкрита наука, відкрита освіта та дослідницькі дані; (2) цифрова трансформація бібліотек та інфраструктур; (3) бібліотеки в умовах війни та криз; (4) освітня та педагогічна роль бібліотек ЗВО; (5) комунікації, соціальні медіа та поведінка користувачів; (6) культурна спадщина, колекції та періодика; (7) управління, політики та міжінституційна співпраця. Аналіз публікацій, представлених у № 10 журналу *University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development* (UniLibNSD 2025), дозволяє стверджувати, що трансформація бібліотек закладів вищої освіти в різних країнах у бурхливий час змін має подвійну природу. З одного боку, вона є прогнозованою: у вимірах відкритої науки, цифровізації, розвитку репозитаріїв, управління дослідницькими даними, інформаційної та цифрової грамотності. Ці напрями формуються під впливом міжнародних політик, технологічних трендів і очікувань академічної спільноти. З іншого боку, трансформація відбувається в умовах бурхливої невизначеності, зумовленої війною, кризами, нерівністю ресурсів, швидким розвитком штучного інтелекту та зміною інформаційної поведінки користувачів. Отже, сучасна бібліотека ЗВО в будь-якій країні розвивається на перетині прогнозованої трансформації та турбулентної реальності, де її стійкість визначається здатністю одночасно: по-перше, системно впроваджувати зміни з їх інтеграцією в інституційну модель, по-друге, оперативно реагувати на непередбачувані виклики.

Ключові слова: бібліотеки закладів вищої освіти; бібліотекарі; кластерний аналіз статей; турбулентність; прогнозована трансформація; конференція UniLibNSD; Україна

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