

# Ukraine's Libraries in Wartime: To Save Memory, People, Hope

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## Abstract

This talk shares the history and fruits of the partnership between Ukrainian and American library professionals and scholars on archiving experiences of Ukrainian public libraries during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. As currently envisioned, the archive will have a dual function, to record evidence of crimes against libraries; and to document experiences of librarians facing the conditions of war.

The project commenced in 2023, with the Ukrainian Library Association (ULA) collecting photos and supportive documentation of ruined libraries from public libraries from the regions controlled by Ukraine. In 2024 the American team constructed Omeka-based platform functioning as a foundation, and having shared it with the Ukrainian colleagues continues to build the archive as new photos and documentation arrives.

In the current version of the archive, each of the 26 regions features one library; images are displayed by geographic region, both as individual repository objects and as part of narrative displays for each destroyed or damaged library. Each object, once uploaded, is described using fields defined both by DC metadata standards, but also project-based applications. Metadata in both English and Ukrainian are utilized. Once objects are described individually, they also are utilized in the exhibit pages for the specific region and city in which they are located.

As of January 2025, the project focuses on constructing the archive further and possibly engaging international partners from IFLA and UNESCO.

## About the authors:

**Dr. Rhonda L. Clark** is Professor of Library and Information Science at Penn-West University, Clarion. Dr. Clark holds a doctorate in late Imperial Russian history, and an MSLS. She has published on genealogy, family history, and the value of oral and local history in her co-authored work with Nicole Wedemeyer Miller, *Fostering Family History Services: A Guide for Librarians, Archivists, and Volunteers* (Libraries Unlimited, 2016). Dr. Clark oversees the local and archival concentration in the MSLS program at PennWest.

**Ulita Gosart** teaches at San Jose State University (SJSU) School of Information. She has supported her colleagues in Ukraine since 2022 through fundraising, organizing thematic events, donations and publishing. She leads SJSU's Ukrainian Libraries in Wartime initiative to educate about the impact of the war on civilians. Her works on the subject appeared in Library Journal, Public Library Quarterly and other sources, and in the media. She holds BA from Kyiv

University of Culture and Arts (Ukraine), and PhD from UCLA. She is a big fan of the LA Aviators Ultimate Frisbee team.