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National myths in library space: Case of Ukraine in wartime

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Abstract. Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine actualized the issue of the identity foundations of the people of Ukraine and countering hostile anti-Ukrainian narratives. The purpose of the study was to outline the activities of Ukrainian libraries on countering the spread of Russian national myths and narratives, disclose presented in library space of Ukraine complex of suitable for construction of the Ukrainian strategic narrative key ideas and meanings, which reflect the Ukrainian community's mythologized ideas about itself, its place in the world and its prospects. An anthropological approach, methods of systematization, critical discourse analysis, discussion, external and included observation are applied. Related to the documented historical and cultural heritage key meanings, reflecting the Ukrainian community's mythologized ideas about itself, its place in the world and its prospects, suitable for constructing the Ukrainian strategic narrative and providing the spiritual and value basis of the national idea of the people of Ukraine were defined. It was revealed that decolonization of the library information space, publishing, socio-cultural, and educational activities of Ukrainian libraries in the conditions of the Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine are aimed at debunking such Russian national myths and narratives, as myths about "one people" and "one cradle – the ancient Rus' state", "the Great Victory" and the Great Patriotic War, the USSR as a country of prosperity. It was proved that libraries' efforts are directed to the forming and strengthening the informational resilience of users, establishing nation-affirming values and meanings landmarks related to the struggle of the people of Ukraine for freedom, statehood and independence, to periods of national elevation (the Kyivan Rus' age, the Lithuanian-Polish period, the Ukrainian State of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky), the life-giving force of folk traditions, the pattern of the National Renaissance, the dream of the European future of Ukraine. The obtained results will be useful in the development of state information policy, the politics of memory, and in the practical activities of libraries

Keywords: cultural memory; documented cultural heritage; national narratives; national idea; Russian-Ukrainian war

Introduction

Russia's war against Ukraine, which has acquired the characteristics of a civilizational confrontation, has raised the issue of the protection and stability of the foundations of national identity and value orientations of Ukrainian society. Today, Ukraine is witnessing not only a struggle between two armies but also a clash of two

value and meaning systems – the 'Russian world' and the conditional 'Ukrainian dream' as a Ukrainian worldview system that has not yet been clearly defined at the scientific level but is manifested in communication and socio-cultural practices. It is the national idea, about which L. Nahorna (2020) wrote, that is being born today and is

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capable to unite Ukrainian society and encourage it to defend its future. The national idea is the quintessence of the spiritual and value system of coordinates of national progress, the outlines of which are determined by a set of national myths, that reflect in the symbolic form a historical narrative of the people.

The functioning of national myths is traditionally in the focus of scholars' attention. The specifics of national myths of different peoples of the world in terms of their impact on identity and statehood, transformations and competition of narratives, as well as their contribution to determining the guidelines for community development, are covered in the collection 'National myths: Constructed pasts, contested presents' (Bouchard, 2013). A. Tobolowsky (2022) examines the national myth as the core of national identity based on the myth of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. He proves the crucial role of myth for ensuring national and/or political stability. The role of the national myth in the formation of statehood is analysed by T. Pace (2022). Viewing myth as a sacred narrative that explains the evolutionary path of a community, the author emphasizes that a myth or series of myths can give a community a sense of shared history and embody the ideals and values that define national identity. The political potential of myth is revealed by M. Nartey (2023). E.A. Murphy (2020) emphasizes the interconnected processes of transformation of the system of national myths and the crisis of national identity, while H. Banai *et al.* (2022) elevate the role of myths on a level of interstate conflicts.

Since national mythmaking is realized through information and communication practices, key components of the national myths might be found in the library information space, which typically reflects the community's vision of the world and its place in the world. As institutions of memory integrated into social processes through their communities, libraries cannot avoid remembering and naming these processes and choosing how to remember, with what words and phrases. Intentionally or unintentionally, but choosing what exactly and in what way to present, libraries demonstrate a certain position, that might be different for different institutions. Such differences are seen in the definition of the full-scale war in Ukraine: Some libraries call it 'the Ukrainian conflict' or 'the Ukrainian crisis' (House of Commons Library of the British Parliament, Benedictine University Library), 'the war in Ukraine' (University of Cincinnati Library), others – the Russian-'Ukrainian war' (Arizona State University Library) and 'Russian invasion of Ukraine' (Princeton University Library, University of Michigan Library, Penn State University Library, etc.). The differences in meanings – from full-scale war to conflict – reflect librarians' understanding of causes, consequences and possible solutions. When they talk about the Ukrainian conflict or crises, the roles of the participants in the events are not clearly defined. Referring to Russia's war against Ukraine, they identify the culprit and the responsible party.

Differences in meanings might reflect differences in positions of librarians, who, according to D. Lankes (2022), 'are human, and human beings are driven by conscious and unconscious bias'. Additionally, the library space, focused on meeting the users' needs, is a medium of narratives and meanings demanded by society or the authorities that represent it. In particular, the narratives and meanings that reflect the self-organizing and/or organizational levels of the social system of creating a consolidating national myth.

The purpose of the article was to consider the information space of Ukrainian libraries in wartime as an environment of protecting and promoting of Ukrainian national idea, narratives and myths and to identify nation-building meanings in the Ukrainian library space which reflect the mythologized perceptions of the Ukrainian community about itself, its place in the world, and its prospects.

The defined purpose included the following tasks:

- 1) to reveal Ukrainian libraries' approaches to debunk Russian imperial myths;
- 2) argue libraries' promotion of nation-building Ukrainian meanings in the framework of Ukrainian myth creating.

■ Literature Review

The research is based on the study of two groups of publications: works on the problem of Ukrainian national mythmaking, and those that analyse the libraries' position in political and socio-cultural processes, in particular, the issue of library spaces' neutrality and the community support by libraries.

O. Hrytsenko (1998) and M. Holovaty (2006) researched the issue of national myths in the Ukrainian dimension in the context of statehood development and the search for identity. They considered theoretical aspects of national myths – the concept, context, language, manifestations, and influence on processes of nation- and state-building and laid the theoretical basis for the further study of Ukrainian political myth. Iu. Shaihorodsky (2013), H. Surina (2016), and O. Salata & Y. Kovbasenko (2021) focus on mythologizing of history and the instrumental potential of myth, its subordination to ideology, as well as the role of different social institute, in particular, science, publishing, and media, and state politics of decommunization and decolonization in the process of demythologizing. O. Korobanova (2016), based on the ability of myth to construct a 'communicative system of meanings, values and goals', studies myths in a context of social behaviour and expectations of the youth and emphasizes the inspiring and motivational influence of the myth. From the position of the choice of the vector of social development, myths became O. Andriienko's (2007) subject of research, who discussed classification and main functions of social myths in this context. An important contribution to the development of the subject field was the dissertation by N. Shpylova-Saeed (2022), who, based on the study

of epistolary heritage, examines the issue of contested memory as a result of myth-making and, in turn, a tool for (de)constructing myths, and integrates it in the modern Russian-Ukrainian war context.

S. Hrabovsky (2011), V. Kravchenko (2015-2016), and M. Riabchuk (2022) outlined and discussed such widespread in the Ukrainian information space colonial or crisis myths about Ukraine and Ukrainians, as about the origin of Ukrainians, about the common with the Russians state Kyivan Rus', the division of the Ukrainian community within two civilizations – Russian and Western, Ukrainians as faked nation, the USSR as a 'Golden Age', stressing the importance of historical research and the dissemination of science-based information to counter hostile narratives.

Many works have been devoted to the mythologization of individual historical events and figures. In particular, O. Hrytsenko (1999) and V. Shkola (2013) analysed mythologization of Taras Shevchenko's image with an emphasis on its symbolic meaning, R. Pyrih (2010) raised up the issue of the mythologized image of the Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky, a whole series of mythologized images of Cossack leaders – Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Ivan Sirko – and Ukrainian writers and cultural figures – Vasyl Stus, Mykola Khvylovy, Lesya Ukrainka, Volodymyr Ivasiuk, etc. – from the standpoint of social archetypes are considered in the collective monograph 'Heroes and Celebrities In Ukrainian Culture' (Hrytsenko, 1999). Nevertheless, these and other thorough works still do not form a holistic picture of the national mythos system that could become the basis for a strategic narrative and to outline the national idea of Ukrainian society.

Studies devoted to the presentation of national myths in the library space are also absent. At the same time, the question of the neutrality of the spaces of memory institutions such as libraries and the possibility of shifting the balance of representation of different ideas in the interests of the community is analysed directly and indirectly by both scholars and library practitioners.

On the one hand, technological aspects are considered, or, as F.X. Blouin & W.G. Rosenberg (2007) explained, how documents 'are selected, described, or preserved', maintaining neutrality and fully representing a diversity of views. In this context the authors mention even possible 'archival intervention', in which 'the processes of selection, access, and even description are increasingly structured by particular cultural values, social biases, and political inclinations' (Blouin & Rosenberg, 2007).

On the other hand, K. Mercer *et al.* (2022), discussing the idea of libraries' neutrality, rise up such important questions, as: How do libraries communicate accurate information to patrons? How do they remain safe? How can libraries support local communities? What are their ethical responsibilities around sharing information, and how does these compete with formal library stances on information neutrality and intellectual freedom? From the library perspective they examine the issue of access

to proven scientific knowledge and information security of patrons.

Searching for answer to these questions regarding archives, R. Rydén (2023) considers the modern archives' vision of their priorities in preservation of national memory and providing a source base for building a national meta-narrative that connects 'the nation's present to its mythical origin and defines its most important events, historical persons, and enemies'. I.S. Buenrostro (2015), in turn, contributes to a subject field by focusing attention on not so much vision, but the ability of libraries and archives to construct and shape social memory.

Particular attention is paid to maintaining a balance in representing the plurality of opinions in wartime. Yu. Oliinyk (2008) argument that in such circumstances, 'to hide behind the idea of "neutrality" is to be party to promulgating misinformation or worse' seems quite logical and well-considered.

In response to the challenges of World War II the American Library Association Council adopted a policy statement and a national platform to publicize the Association's commitment to the war effort and to provide general guidelines for librarians, which emphasized that 'the nation's libraries would serve a vital social purpose by concentrating their efforts on meeting "the necessities of a nation at war"'. As P.C. Becker (2005) noticed, each library activity, according to the statement, had to withstand "a triple scrutiny": if it did not "contribute to victory", or "help to make a better America", or "help to make a better world", then it "must yield to things more urgent". P.C. Becker (2005) emphasized that librarians should "disseminate authentic information and sound teachings" on political, economic, and ideological issues.

In Ukraine, the priority of library activities is determined by the Strategies for the development of library affairs for the period until 2025 'Qualitative changes in libraries to ensure the sustainable development of Ukraine' (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 219-p, 2016), according to which the memorial, socio-political, cultural, educational and other activities of Ukrainian libraries are aimed at preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage, the consolidation of society, the observance of European values, the integration into the European community. Therefore, in the conditions of war, it is logical for the libraries of Ukraine to present in the library space ideas aimed primarily at the protection and consolidation of the Ukrainian nation as a political entity.

Materials and Methods

The problem-centred interview of the second stage helped to test the credibility of the conclusions about the possible outlines of the Ukrainian national myth. Interviews were held with six scholars from different fields of knowledge (history, cultural studies, social psychology, and social communications). The interview aimed at revealing of how unanimous the experts' perception of the identified myths would be.



At the third stage, the preliminary results were verified during a three-day (3-5 May 2023) focus group of 14 librarians from Kyiv, Khmelnytsky, Zaporizhzhya, Mykolaiv, Vinnytsia, and Lviv regions. The research was conducted in compliance with ethical norms and anonymity, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research and gave their consent to the processing of personal data. During this stage, the adapted to the objectives of the study methodological approach tested by O. Lozova *et al.* (2014) during the identification of value-semantic and subject-effect components of student youth's ethno-cultural myth-making was used. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and agreed to participate in it and disseminate its results. According to the national legislation of Ukraine, this study does not require an ethical review. At the preparatory stage, the group participants were given an explanation of the concepts of 'narrative' and 'grand narrative', the differences between history and historical memory (day 1), conducted narrative-building exercises (day 2), and examined cases of mythologisation of history using examples of specific historical events (the Battle of Kruty, the Pereyaslav Council, the founding of Kyiv, etc.) and personalities (Taras Shevchenko, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Princess Olga, the Heavenly Hundred, cyborgs, etc.), the cases of mythologising of history were considered (day 3). After that, the group members were asked to build a narrative about Ukrainians according to the scheme: Beginning – Golden Age – Struggle and Heroes – Renaissance – Happy Future.

The focus group results were intended to demonstrate mythologized perceptions of the past of the Ukrainian people by ordinary librarians and outline the national myths presented in the library professional environment. At the last stage a discursive analysis of the content of official websites and accounts of libraries (5 national-level libraries and ten regional libraries from different regions of Ukraine) allowed us to prove the presence of identified meanings in the library space. The libraries selected for the analysis are leading methodological centres, so the results reflect the general trends and are presentative.

■ Results and Discussion

Debunking myths – protecting library space

A political myth can be defined as a symbolically constructed representation of reality that people believe in, an ideologically coloured story about the events of the past, present and projected future (Holovaty, 2006). There are various classifications of political myths (Topolsky, 2012; Smith *et al.*, 2017; Rudolf, 2022). One of the most common contains five types of myths – the Beginning (origin myth), the Golden Age (the prosperity), the Myth of Struggle and Heroes, the Renaissance, and the Bright Future as a conditional national dream.

There are several prominent narratives within this classification are clearly visible in the library space of

Russia (Hranchak, 2015) and projected on Ukraine. The first one, the 'Beginning', is about 'common cradle – Kievan Rus' and 'single people', or as a variant – 'brotherly peoples'. According to this myth, Russia is a descendant of Kievan Rus, an early feudal state within which the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian ethnic groups were formed. The 'single cradle – Kievan Rus' myth has long been propagated in the Ukrainian information space and has influenced academic discourse (Hrabovsky, 2011; Zaliznyak, 2013; Riabchuk, 2022). Defining a 'single cradle' myth as imperial, L. Zalizniak (2018), emphasizes its inconsistency with the norms of modern ethnology and calls it a typical Soviet ideological construction. He enters into a lengthy academic discussion on this matter and consistently substantiates Rus' as Ukrainian historical heritage. S. Hrabovsky (2011) in this context emphasizes the fascination with the myth of the 'single cradle' of the Western academic environment and the Ukrainian political and media space, in which the narrative about the 'young Ukrainian state' was promoted. M. Riabchuk (2022) in his turn emphasizes the illegitimacy of assigning the name Rus' by the Muscovite kingdom, supporting the statement that Russia uses the myth of the common origin of Ukrainians and Russians to legitimize its claim to the lands of former Rus'. At the same time, M. Riabchuk (2022) draws attention to the flip side of this myth – the delegitimization of the existence of Ukrainians and Belarusians, 'now reduced to the level of regional subgroups and dialects of the great Russian nation'.

Staying within the myth of 'one nation' leads to another anti-Ukrainian myth of "Ukrainian nationalism" with its modern variant "Ukrainian Nazism" concerning any manifestation of Ukrainian independence aspirations and, logically, in this context, the demonization of everyone associated with the struggle for the liberation of Ukraine, such as S. Bandera or earlier I. Mazepa, or Ukrainian creative intellectuals, with the appropriate labels.

The "Golden Age" for Russians is identified partly with the USSR, what, in particular, testified by V. Kravchenko (2015-2016) who mentions in this context Brezhnevite historical legacy of stability and prosperity for ordinary people, and partly with the Russian Empire (18th-19th centuries), what has been shown by M. Aleksandrova (2021) on the example of the attitude to the Russian classic literature. For Ukrainians, the message is about the attractiveness of joining Russian 'greatness' (Great Russian victories, culture, science, sports) and Ukrainian provincialism, "second among equals" next to ethnic Russians in the unofficial hierarchy of the Soviet peoples' (Kravchenko, 2015-2016).

The Russian myth of Struggle and Heroes is represented by "victorious" and "just" wars, "great" and "heroic" commanders, and a pantheon of heroes, who gave their lives for the Motherland. J. Brunstedt (2021) and M. Domanska (2019) confirmed that a special place in Russian's conscience is occupied by the Great Patriotic

War. In the context of this myth, Ukrainians are assigned the role of traitors and collaborators.

The myth of "rebirth" is embodied in the idea of "Russia rising from its knees", restoring its former greatness with appropriate mentions of great Russia and a great country concerning modern Russia in the discourse of libraries (such as "My Motherland is Great Russia", "And to Your Memory, Great Peter, Great Russia is Faithful!", "We Need Great Russia!", "Great Russia is a Great Country", "Shine Through the Ages, Great Russia!", "Great Russia Lives, a Country with a Special Destiny", etc.). Against the background of Russia's revival, Ukraine is seen as an anti-Russian technology of the West.

As for the last myth, Russians have a rather vague vision of the future, which is expected for a country with social nostalgia. However, one can still find references to Eurasia or the project of the Eurasian Empire (such as the collection "Eurasia – Our Home" of the Presidential Library, 2023, the exhibition "Eurasianism: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" by the Scientific Library of the Chelyabinsk State University (5 April 2022), the bibliographic index "About Eurasia and Eurasians" by the Scientific Library of the Petrozavodsk State University (2000), or information about plans to create a Eurasian Library in Bashkiria, which could become a symbol of the unity of Europe and Asia. In this picture of the future, Ukraine is crossed out. Ukrainian libraries are challenged to debunk these myths.

One of the most straightforward tools became the renaming of libraries to demarcate Ukrainian informational and symbolic space from that of the Russians. The case of the libraries named after Maxim Gorky is prominent. A Google search for the keyword 'Gorky library' gives a long drop-down list of Russian libraries named after the famous Soviet writer. There were many such libraries in Ukraine, one of which was of a national level – the Odesa National Scientific Library. Because of the same name, Ukrainian libraries seemed to be integrated into the common cultural space with Russian, sharing the same values. The renaming and the naming of libraries after prominent Ukrainian cultural figures, as well as the promotion of the Ukrainian book, work on the idea of the existence of an original Ukrainian culture, which is possible only in the case of the separate Ukrainian people.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning library resources dedicated to Ukrainian cultural heritage, such as the electronic library "Ukrainica" by the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, the electronic libraries "Culture of Ukraine" by the Yaroslav Mudryi National Library of Ukraine and "Historical Heritage of Ukraine" by the National Historical Library of Ukraine, as well as collections and events dedicated to outstanding personalities of Ukraine. Devoted to such historical figures as Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Stepan Bandera, or Ivan Mazepa libraries' products not only prove the nation-building potential of Ukrainians but also help to clear their names, overcome stereotypes and labels of "bourgeois

nationalists", "Nazis", and "traitors" produced by Russian imperial myths.

At the same time, numerous events and resources, including oral history records, organized by Ukrainian libraries to commemorate the victims of the Holodomor, those who died during Stalin's repressions, and the Chernobyl tragedy are breaking the groundwork for another myth – that of the USSR as a Golden Age, while the restoration of the truth about the Second World War is destroying the constructed image of the liberator country concerning the USSR.

The projects and resources of local history libraries are also essential in debunking Russian myths and narratives. Such library projects as "Historical Volyn", "Local History of Tavria", "Prybuzhzhia" and others not only reveal the wealth of cultural achievements of specific regions, but also extend their historical exploration beyond the Russian sphere by integrating it into a European historical narrative. The resources present information regarding political, educational, and cultural connections with other European nations and the fact that these territories were settled long before Russia. This information serves to contradict the myth that these territories were originally Russian.

The imperial myth that Ukrainian lands are originally Russian and another that Ukraine is a failed project is debunked by the bibliographic and publishing activities of the libraries. Vivid examples are the materials for the bibliography "East and South of Ukraine: Time, Space, Society" (Popyk, 2016) by the V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine together with the Institute of History of Ukraine, in which the history of modern Southern and Eastern regions and Crimea is revealed based on bibliographical information, as well as a bibliographic index "30 Years of Ukraine's Independence: Scientific Understanding. Bibliography" (Boriak & Holovko, 2021) by the National Historical Library of Ukraine.

Bibliographic indexes dedicated to the history of Ukraine, including state formation, political, legal and cultural traditions, and notable historical and cultural figures provide a comprehensive range of sources revealing the state-building potential of Ukraine.

Libraries' activities to promote national ideas

Along with the destruction of Russian political myths, in the space of Ukrainian libraries, we see meanings associated with Ukrainian mythmaking, which, unlike Russian mythmaking, is not as reflected today. We can talk about the existence of a heroic myth related to the phenomenon of the Cossacks and the liberation struggle of Ukrainians, particularly in the early 20th century and during the Second World War, represented in Ukrainian libraries. The formation of the Ukrainian heroic myth has been noted earlier by O. Hrytsenko (1998), R. Pyrih (2010) and L. Ivannikova (2016), who outlined the pantheon of heroes, including those who armed themselves to defend the right of Ukrainians to independent existence, as

well as representatives of the cultural, artistic, scientific, and educational spheres – the “rebellious intellectuals”, to which today we include the figures of the Ukrainian national and cultural Renaissance of the 19th century, representatives of the “Executed Renaissance”, and dissidents of the sixties of the second half of the 20th century.

In this context, it is noteworthy that as of 2016, from one-third to one-half of the events of leading national libraries of Ukraine were dedicated to famous Ukrainian writers, poets, artists, and scholars (Fig. 1), many of which are related to issues of national identity and the struggle for Ukraine’s independence (Hranchak, 2016).

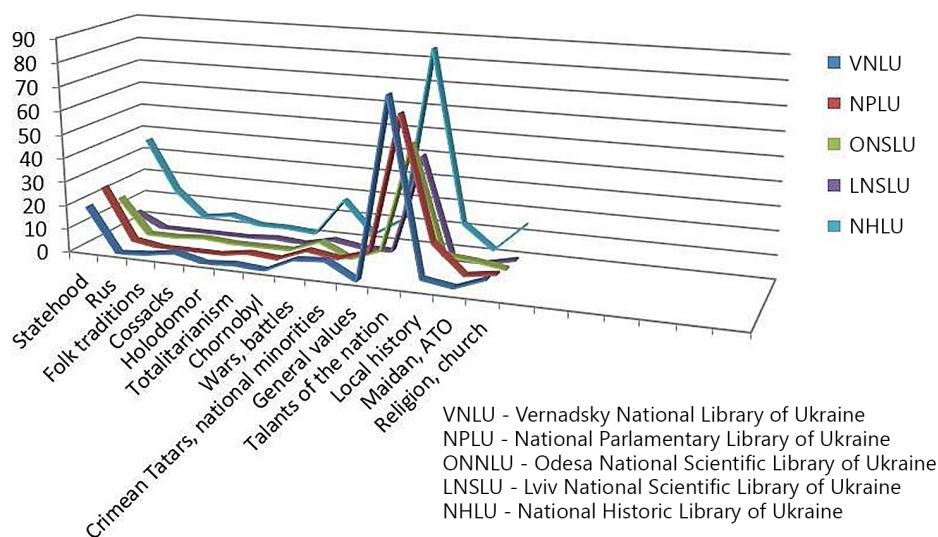


Figure 1. Quantity of events on various topics in the National libraries of Ukraine (2015-2016)

Source: based on data obtained earlier (Hranchak, 2016). Data used in compliance with copyright

Today, the heroes of the Revolution of Dignity – the Heavenly Hundred – and the current Russian-Ukrainian war, including the defenders of the Donetsk airport – the famous “cyborgs”, Mariupol and Bakhmut – are organically integrated into the Ukrainian heroic myth.

These conclusions are confirmed by the findings of the focus group, whose participants unanimously included in the heroic myth the Cossacks, symbolically embodied in the image of Cossack Mamai, the leaders of the rebel movements Oleksa Dovbush, Ustym Karmeliuk, Ivan Honta, Maksym Zalizniak, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Heavenly Hundred and the ‘cyborgs’. In the context of the struggle for the right to full national, cultural and political development, opposition and opposition to the policy of oppression, the activities of representatives of the Ukrainian creative intelligentsia were also considered.

In the library space, we come across relevant:

- ✓ exhibitions (“Nation of the Unconquered: From the Cossacks to the Present” (dedicated to the Day of the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Day of the Defender of Ukraine), “Executed Renaissance” and ‘Army of the Ukrainian People’s Republic – a look through the years’ (Chernihiv Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Sophia and Oleksandr Rusov), “Carpathian Heroes of the Russian-Ukrainian War: in the Heart and Memory Forever” and “Dialogues about War: the View of Writers” (Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Ivan Franko), “Heavenly Hundred. The Unconquered”, “Baptized by the Maidan”, and “Ukraine,

fight to win!” (Kharkiv Korolenko State Scientific Library) and many others);

- ✓ presentations, lectures, seminars (presentation “On the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine, who died in the struggle for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine” (Yaroslav Mudryi National Library of Ukraine), presentation of the scientific publication “Russian-Ukrainian War: Criminologist’s View”, lecture “Lessons of the Year of the Millennium War” (Odesa National Scientific Library); seminar “Library and Russian-Ukrainian Information Wars” (V.I. Vernadsky National Library) and others);

- ✓ databases, collections and sections in library catalogues (section ‘Russian-Ukrainian War’ of the library’s electronic catalogue (Odesa National Scientific Library), database “Chronicle of War. Mykolaiv” (Mykolaiv Central Library named after Marko Kropyvnytskyi), collections “Chronicle of War” (Dnipro Regional Scientific Library named after the First Slavic Teachers Cyril and Methodius), ‘Unconquered Kherson Region’ (Kherson Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Oles’ Honchar) and others);

- ✓ news information, bibliographic guides (bibliographic guides “Ivan Dmytrovych Sirko – Knight of Cossack Victory (1605-1610-1680)” (Kharkiv Regional Universal Scientific Library), “ATO. Undeclared war. Chronicle of events. 2014-2017: A bibliographic index” (Lviv Regional Universal Scientific Library);

- ✓ the initiative “Library of the Ukrainian Warrior” (all regional universal scientific libraries, coordinated by Yaroslav Mudryi National Library of Ukraine).

In addition, in 2018, the VRUSL librarians participated in the implementation of the project 'Voices of Living History', aimed at collecting oral history narratives, interviews with participants and eyewitnesses (Vinnytsia residents) of the Revolution of Dignity, events that took place in the ATO zone, and life stories of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Vinnytsia region. The created archive will be a valuable source for a comprehensive understanding of the events of the Revolution of Dignity and the Russian-Ukrainian War. Its goal is to neutralize the myth of Maidan as an anti-Russian Western political technology and the myth of the Russian liberating army.

It is also possible to identify a certain mythologization of the European integration movement, which is closely linked to the concept of the "Ukrainian dream" as the European future of the country. In 2015–2018, the Ukrainian Library Association implemented the project 'All about Europe: Read, Listen, Learn at European Information Points in Libraries' and organized many centres of European information in libraries. This conclusion correlates with O. Korobanova's (2016) thesis that 'in the mass consciousness, the European choice acquires a mythical image of paradise and a problem-free life'. There is a certain discrepancy in the data obtained during the interviews with experts and the focus group results. While experts readily accepted the idea of European integration as a prospect for Ukraine, focus group participants defined the future Ukraine as an independent, free, strong, peaceful, open to the world and integrated into the global space, mentioning Europe only in the context of 'European values' on which such a country will be built. In terms of integration, it was not so much about European integration as about the circle of 'Slavic peoples'. Such discrepancies can be explained by the continued existence in the Ukrainian information space of the myths of "fraternal peoples" and "Slavic unity", whose influence is minimized at the scientific level but remains tangible at the public level. At the same time, verification of this assumption requires a deeper study.

There is also no certainty about the "Golden Age", which is associated with at least three periods in Ukraine at the scientific and public levels: The Ukrainian state of Skoropadsky in the early twentieth century, the Ukrainian territories as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Kyivan Rus'. As for the latter, there is a tendency in the library space to call it Rus'-Ukraine or Ukraine-Rus', thus emphasizing the state tradition and restoring, contrary to the Russian myth, the memory of the medieval Kyiv state as a proto-Ukrainian (for example, the exhibition 'The Baptism of Ukraine-Rus and its Historical and Cultural Significance' (Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine)).

The mention of Ukraine-Rus' in the pan-European context is also noteworthy (as, for example, in the title of the book exhibition 'Volodymyr the Great – Creator of the Medieval European State of Rus'-Ukraine', 09 July 2015, Chernivtsi Regional Universal Scientific

Library named after M. Ivasyuk, or greetings of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine "Baptism of Kyivan Rus'-Ukraine as a Basis for the European Choice", 28 July, 2022). Along with these three periods, which were fully recognized by experts as the times of a possible 'golden age' of Ukraine, the focus group participants also mentioned the seventeenth-century Hetmanate, Ukraine as part of the USSR in the post-war period, and even the modern times of independence before the outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine.

The information space of Ukrainian libraries reflects all periods except the Soviet era, which can be explained by the decommunization policy of and the desire to distance themselves from Russian narratives. However, this reflection usually takes place without nostalgic connotations or excessive glorification, which gives grounds to speak of the cultural and educational nature of such messages rather than considering them as manifestations of reflection on a political myth. It confirms V. Kravchenko's (2015–2016) opinion that 'Ukraine is still seeking its 'golden era' and 'usable past' that would provide it suitable symbolic capital for its current nation- and state-building process'.

Even more uncertainty exists in the Ukrainian context of the myths of the Beginning, which is also pointed out by Yu. Oliinyk (2008) and L. Zaliznyak (2013), and the Renaissance.

At the same time, based on the discourse of the Ukrainian segment of social media in 2022 (posts, discussions, comments, congratulations, etc.), we can assume the existence of a self-perception of Ukrainians as a people whose roots go back to 'prehistoric times', which is manifested in the actualization and, as L. Levchuk (2006) noticed, certain mythologization of folk traditions (p. 89) and the play on the idea of a mystical connection with the natural environment. Such notions are an echo of perceptions not so much of an artificial act of 'creation' of a community or state as of a natural way of 'descent' from the World Egg (Prayaitse), which is mentioned by O. Tykhovska (2021), and 'primordial paradise' ('when no one divided the land, no one measured it, and no one counted people' (Kazkar, 2023), in which the earth was the mother-creator of both humans and various natural objects and phenomena (mountains, forests, sea, etc.). Reflections of such ideas can be found in the everyday practice of making wishes 'from dew and water', in examples of metaphorical personification of Ukrainian folklore texts (such as 'the field sees and the forest hears', 'when the leaves turn yellow, the field is sad', 'fire is king, and water is queen', etc.).

In this sense, the attitude to folk traditions is indicative. In some cases, they are sacralised, elevated to the level of sacraments, and even sometimes accompanied by appropriate linguistic accents (e.g., vyshyvanka – an embroidered shirt – is the code of the nation, borshch – "sacred", motanka – amulet). It is a quite ordinary, domestic attitude to the supernatural that runs through the

entire history of Ukraine – starting with the ideas of the ancient Rus' magi, continuing with the Cossacks-characternyky, the Konotop Witch, Mavka, the inhabitants of the Hohol's 'farm near Dykan'ka, and ending with today's "It will be, enemy, as the witch says".

In the library space, there are numerous references to workshops, flash mobs, collections, and exhibitions dedicated to various folk traditions: creating motanka dolls, pysankas, embroidery, etc., which help to actualize this myth, bring it into the framework of intangible cultural heritage and at the same time form a community. Such events include the oral history archive "Pearls of the Native Land" aimed at collecting legends, customs, traditions, and interesting facts of the Bershada region (Vinnytsia region, Bershada Library) and the opening of a new art space for children called "School of Motanka" by the Chernihiv Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Sofia and Oleksandr Rusov). Another striking example is a master class on Ukrainian embroidery held by the Lviv Regional Library for Youth named after R. Ivanychuk, during which participants created an amulet for themselves using the alphabet encrypted in the ornament – their names encrypted in embroidery, and exhibition "The Magical Power of Ritual Song. It is also worth mentioning the Ivan Kupala holiday" and "Mystical holiday of Ivan Kupala" organized by the Chernihiv Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Sophia and Oleksandr Rusov and the Kharkiv Regional Universal Scientific Library, respectively, and many others.

It is noteworthy that the idea of the origin of Ukrainians "from prehistoric times" was fully supported by the focus group, whose participants began their stories with the words "there were different tribes here" and "there was land, rivers and people lived here". When asked where these people came from, where these tribes came from, they replied: "They were born. From God", essentially reducing the origins of the Ukrainian people to the myth of the world creation. And this is a mythologized view. Experts, for their part, were more cautious in their assessments. While noting the originality and credibility of the idea as such, they warned of the need to maintain a clear distance between honoring traditions and following superstition.

As for the Renaissance, we are dealing with the idea of an indestructible nation, which, "like a phoenix", is always reborn "from the ashes". The idea, as in the case of the Beginning, is not fully realized, but it is present in social and informational practices. For Ukraine, the myth of the Renaissance is rather not about a place or a time but about a process (in this context, there are remarkable reflections in Ukrainian literature: "My people exist, my people will always exist!" (Vasyl Symonenko), "I am the people | whose strength of truth | has not been conquered ever | by anyone. What trouble and what plague tried bring me down! – | but strength finds out the way | to blossom every time" (Pavlo Tychyna), "Light, loose ashes will lie down, returning to its native

land, – it will be the beginning, coming from my end" (Lesia Ukrainka). All the experts and focus group participants agreed with the idea of the cyclical nature of the Ukrainian Renaissance. Readiness to accept such an idea can be explained by the vision of several periods of ascent in Ukrainian history, defined as the "Golden Age". Gaps between these periods are the time of decline and subsequent revival.

These findings are in line with the research by O. Lozova *et al.* (2014), whose experimental group expressed confidence in Ukrainians that "the people know how to rise from the ashes", "our people do not give up" and "will never give up". It also coincides with the opinion of the focus group participants, who highlighted resilience and indomitability among the qualities inherent in Ukrainians.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that it was in libraries spaces that "Points of Invincibility" were organized in wartime, and the narrative of indomitability is being spread today. It is evidenced by exhibitions, presentations, discussions, and even collections, such as the "Bibliotalk "Unbreakable Library" (30 September 2023) (H.I. Denisenko Scientific and Technical Library of the National Technical University of Ukraine – Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute), "Unbreakable Ukraine Database" (Scientific Library of the Illia Mechnikov Odessa National University). The list continues with "Unbreakable Spirit – to the Relay of Creativity!" (open lesson – social game of press club, 09 March 2023) (Kharkiv Regional Library for Children), "My Unbreakable Ukraine" (book exhibition, 08 February 2023) (Centralized Library System for Adults in Odessa). It is worth mentioning the "Chronicle of Unconquered Kharkiv" (information digest of the Kharkiv Regional Universal Scientific Library), "Unconquered Kherson Region" (collection of the Oles Honchar Kherson Regional Universal Scientific Library), etc.

Conclusions

In the context of the Russian war against Ukraine, libraries of Ukraine make efforts to protect library and information space, debunking Russian imperial myths and promoting the Ukrainian national idea, narratives and life-affirming meanings.

Decolonisation of the library information space through renaming, publishing, socio-cultural and educational activities of Ukrainian libraries in the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine are aimed at forming and strengthening the information resilience of users, strengthening nation-building values and semantic guidelines, countering Russian national myths and narratives hostile to Ukraine, such as the myths about "single people", the "Great Victory in the Great Patriotic War", "Great Russia" with "primordial Russian lands", and "the USSR as a time of prosperity". The information and communication space of libraries of Ukraine reveals meanings related to the struggle of the people of Ukraine for freedom, statehood and independence,

periods of national uplift (the Old Rus' era, the Lithuanian-Polish period, the Ukrainian state of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky), the life-giving power of folk traditions, the pattern of the National Renaissance, and the dream of Ukraine built on European values. These meanings allow us to formulate the idea of an indestructible Ukrainian nation, a 'phoenix', which, thanks to its rich past and the life-giving natural power, has the strength to fight for its future and self-affirmation, 'rising from the ashes' every time and being an organic part of the large family of European nations. The formulated idea can be the basis for strategic narrative development as a framework concept for the socio-cultural activities of libraries of Ukraine in wartime. In the framework of this study, the formulation of such an idea applies only to the library space of Ukraine. However, this result can be used as a basis for research related to other memory institutions

that deal with cultural heritage, such as archives and museums. One of the research limitations was the participation of librarians, mainly from public libraries of Ukraine, in the work of the focus group. Therefore, in the future, it would be advisable to compare the results with the situation in the libraries of higher education institutions. The identified differences in assessments of experts and the focus group make it necessary to further study the impact of education on the transformation of the perceptions of society and individual professional groups about key episodes of national memory.

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■ Conflict of Interest

None.

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Національні міфи в бібліотечному просторі: досвід України у воєнний час

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Анотація. Повномасштабна війна росії проти України актуалізувала питання основ ідентичності народу України та протидії ворожим антиукраїнським наративам. Метою дослідження було окреслити діяльність українських бібліотек з протидії поширенню російських національних міфів і наративів, розкрити представлений у бібліотечному просторі України комплекс придатних для побудови українського стратегічного наративу ключових ідей і смислів, які відображають міфологізовані уявлення української спільноти про себе, своє місце у світі та власні перспективи. Застосовано антропологічний підхід, методи систематизації, критичного дискурсивного аналізу, дискусії, зовнішнього та включеного спостереження. Визначено пов'язані із документованою історико-культурною спадщиною придатні для побудови українського стратегічного наративу і забезпечення духовно-ціннісної основи національної ідеї народу України ключові смисли, які відображають міфологізовані уявлення української спільноти про себе, своє місце у світі та власні перспективи. Виявлено, що деколонізація бібліотечно-інформаційного простору, видавнича, соціокультурна та просвітницька діяльність українських бібліотек в умовах повномасштабної війни Росії проти України спрямовані на розвінчання таких російських національних міфів і наративів, як міфи про «один народ» та «спільну колыску – давньоруську державу», про «Велику Перемогу» і Велику Вітчизняну війну, про СРСР як країну процвітання. Доведено, що бібліотечна діяльність також спрямована на формування та зміцнення інформаційної стійкості користувачів, встановлення націєствердних ціннісно-сміслових орієнтирів, пов'язаних із боротьбою народу України за свободу, державність і незалежність, з періодами національного піднесення (Київська Русь, Литовсько-Польська доба, Українська держава гетьмана Павла Скоропадського), життєдайною силою народних традицій, патернами національного Відродження, мрією про європейське майбутнє України. Отримані результати будуть корисними при розробці державної інформаційної політики, політики пам'яті, у практичній діяльності бібліотек

Ключові слова: культурна пам'ять; документована культурна спадщина; національні наративи; національна ідея; російсько-українська війна