Innovative activity and transformational processes in development of public libraries in Ukraine under the influence of world trends of digital society and current realities

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to highlight the peculiarities of innovative changes in the activities of contemporary public libraries in Ukraine, related to the digitalisation of society, and to identify the main trends of their development considering domestic realities such as full-scale military actions, information, and cyber warfare, reforms in the provision of cultural services. The research methodology involves the application of general scientific and special methods, namely, methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalisation, as well as the method of documentary and content analysis, which allows for achieving the stated goal. The scientific novelty of the work. The study identifies the main trends in the development of public libraries in the digital age, specifically in the context of domestic realities, and substantiates the peculiarities of innovative changes in public libraries in Ukraine, both during the state of war and as trends of post-war revival and modernisation. Public libraries in this context are considered socio-cultural institutions that contribute to community and individual development, providing informational, educational, and cultural-artistic services. Conclusions. Despite active combat actions, missile threats, and the destruction of library premises as well as critical infrastructure of regions directly affecting the activities of all institutions and the livelihoods of citizens, public libraries in Ukraine continue to operate with a focus on global trends, particularly by utilising the opportunities of information and communication technologies, creating internet resources, and implementing digital services. Analysis of the websites of regional universal scientific libraries has allowed determine the level of digitalisation development of leading public libraries in Ukraine and the direction of their further development

Keywords: public library; innovative library activities; digital society; libraries during RF military aggression against Ukraine

Relevance of the research topic

The digitalisation of society, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the implementation of artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and other cutting-edge advancements in all spheres of human life highlight the question of library transformation, the integration of technological innovations into their activities, and the development of innovative products and services. However, in contemporary realities, libraries in Ukraine are facing not only challenges determined by the digital age but also external threats such as physical destruction (complete or partial ruin) due to combat actions, terrorist attacks, vandalism, and marauding by occupiers (RF), and others. Military actions have led to significant migration processes, impacting the composition of library users and their needs. Public libraries, as social institutions, have become hubs and co-working spaces for internally displaced persons and volunteers. "Invincibility Centres" have been established in libraries, and training sessions on medical and first aid assistance are conducted. Libraries have intensified their activities in digital education, media literacy, information hygiene,

cybersecurity, bibliotherapy, and art therapy. All these events are currently unfolding and require tracking, documentation, and analysis. Thus, the relevance of the research is further reinforced by its chronological boundaries. We examine innovative activities and transformational processes in the development of public libraries in Ukraine in the 2020s (2020-2024) and attempt to identify the main trends in the development of public libraries in Ukraine under the influence of global trends in the digital society and domestic military and post-war realities.

Analysis of research and publications

Research on this topic involves analysing scholarly investigations related to its components, among which it is worth highlighting: innovative activities of libraries in the conditions of society informatisation in the digital age; transformation and reorganisation of public libraries as socio-cultural institutions; the activity of libraries in Ukraine in the conditions of Russian armed aggression.

Works by domestic researchers are dedicated to innovations in the library sphere: O. Voskoboinikova-Huzieva & A. Brovkin (2003; 2005), O. Voskoboinikova-Huzieva (2014), I. Davydova (2008; 2010), T. Vilehzhianina (2009; 2018), O. Isaienko (2009), Ya. Khimich (2012), V. Medvedieva (2015), O. Skachenko (2015), N.V. Kovalchuk (2019), and others.

Libraries in the digital age have been examined in the works of O.Y. Maryina (2017), V.O. Kopaniova (2020), O. Kobeliev (2020), K.V. Lobuzina *et al.* (2020), O. Onyshchenko (2021), S. Denbovetzkyi (2022), V. Dobrovolska & L. Cherednik (2023), N. Senchenko (2023). Thus, characterising the level of development of the problem, it can be argued that the issue of innovative activities of libraries in Ukraine remains constantly in focus both for library science theorists and library practitioners. Research into the specifics of library activities in the digital age is also relevant. However, and this is justified by the essence of "innovation" itself, which over time loses its relevance and novelty, library innovations constantly evolve in response to external challenges, thus requiring continuous research, description, analysis, and forecasting. This is especially true when we talk about innovations related to digital technologies.

The purpose of the article is to highlight the features of innovative changes in the activities of modern public libraries of Ukraine, which are related to the digitisation of society, and to determine the main trends of their development, taking into account the challenges of today.

Presenting main material

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Innovative Activity" – "innovations are newly created (applied) and (or) improved competitive technologies, products or services, as well as organisational and technical solutions of a production, administrative, commercial or other nature that significantly improve the structure and quality of production and (or) social sphere" (Law of Ukraine No. 40-IV, 2002).

Innovative activity in libraries has its own history, which covers stages and various technological changes. Library innovations emerged, were introduced, and changed (became habitual, traditional components of activity, or were replaced by other innovations) especially rapidly in the last two decades.

If we analyse the main theoretical studies in library science and the practical activities of libraries today (early 2024), we can identify the key directions of innovative development for libraries in the digital age. In our view, modern public libraries are evolving as socio-cultural institutions aimed at providing users with free access to information and creating conditions for learning, research, creativity, and civic engagement. The use of modern information and communication (digital) technologies in libraries contributes to ensuring the accessibility of information, convenience in its retrieval and utilisation, the development of digital literacy among the population, and overcoming digital inequality. Considering the main trends in the development of public libraries in the digital age, such general trends can be identified as:

- creation of library electronic resources and digital collections;
- provision of remote access to resources and virtual services;
- interactive interaction with users through social networks;
- use of web 2.0 and artificial intelligence technologies;
- work on improving digital (information, media) literacy of the community and library users;
- preservation of cultural heritage.

Intending to confirm or refute our views and as part of conducting a certain experiment, we turned to artificial intelligence – "ChatGPT" – an artificial intelligence model by OpenAI, with a question regarding its characterisation of the current state of innovations in libraries, and obtained the following theses. Firstly, as an introductory or initial statement, the chat proposed the following – "the current state of innovations in libraries involves the use of advanced technologies and strategies to ensure access to information and convenience for users" (Characteristics of the Current…, 2024). We believe that it is impossible not to agree with him. And this thesis is content-wise quite close to the one we mentioned above. Secondly, the chat offered 6 directions and their concise characteristics to the "main aspects of modern innovations in libraries":

1. Electronic access to resources: Libraries provide electronic access to their book collections, journals, scholarly articles, audio, and video materials through online catalogues and digital resources.

2. Open access to information: The use of open-source software and free technologies helps make access to knowledge free and maximally open.

3. Digital literacy: Training programmes and courses in digital literacy help users acquire skills in working with electronic resources and information technologies.

4. Remote services: The use of video conferencing, online consultations, and other remote services allows libraries to provide services to users who cannot physically visit the library.

5. Digital collections and interactive services: Creating digital collections, multimedia materials, interactive exhibits, and services (such as virtual tours) expands users' possibilities in perceiving and using information.

6. Community and collaboration: Using social media, forums, and other online platforms fosters the formation of user communities and collaboration with other libraries and cultural institutions (Characteristics of the Current…, 2024).

As we can see, artificial intelligence's understanding aligns closely with ours. Moreover, analysing the internet resources of libraries, including library websites, blogs, and social media pages, will allow us to substantiate these characteristics with specific examples. In this publication, we will limit ourselves to examples taken from the official websites of Regional Universal Scientific Libraries (RUSL), which, according to Ukrainian law, are the main libraries of the region. We will rely on the trends we have identified and verify the theses proposed by ChatGPT.

We have reviewed and analysed the websites of all RUSLs; however, a detailed description of each website according to each criterion should be the subject of separate research and corresponding publications. We will only summarise and identify the main trends. Additionally, since we are interested in the issue of "transformational processes in the development of public libraries in Ukraine" not only "under the influence of global trends in the digital society" but also in the context of "domestic realities" of the russian armed aggression against Ukraine, special attention should be paid to RUSLs in regions that have suffered the greatest losses due to occupation, bombardment. As examples for this publication, we will characterise the websites of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Sumy RUSLs.

Regarding the Donetsk RUSL website, the Google search engine and other internet resources that provide access to Ukrainian library websites indicate the web address https://library.donetsk.ua/. This is the website of the Donetsk RUSL before the occupation. Since Donetsk has been temporarily occupied since 2014, the library's website exists in its then-current version, making it informative only for studying the history of the library's development rather than its current realities. However, it is worth noting that as of 2014, it was a powerful, innovative library that offered its users electronic services, including "virtual exhibitions"

and "virtual reference services", a "virtual new arrivals hall", and the "Electronic Library of Donetsk Region" (a digital full-text database of printed works by authors from Donetsk region and books about Donetsk region, as well as periodicals, analytical-methodological, and bibliographic publications), the creation of which began in 2007, electronic document ordering, and more (Official website of Donetsk…, 2024).

The website of the Luhansk RUSL, along with its recent history (2014-2022, 2022-2024), deserves separate research. The Luhansk Regional Universal Scientific Library, or the "Good Library", has been evacuated twice: from Luhansk to Starobilsk, and from Starobilsk to Cherkasy. "In addition to offline work in the centre of Ukraine, part of the team implements the project of a travelling library and works in a hybrid format in Dnipro, Kyiv, and Transcarpathia" (Official website of Luhansk…, 2024).

The "Good Library" is a truly innovative library institution that promotes books and reading without a physical library collection, offering "litohliadky" (literary reviews), author streams, and interactions with writers. The Luhansk RUSL is part of the project "Libraries – Hubs of Digital Education" with its own project, the "Mobile Digital Hub of the Travelling Library" in Cherkasy. Among the library's services are training sessions on media literacy and cybersecurity, a "Media School" (a series of educational workshops: copywriting, SMM management, graphic design, copyright, cybersecurity, inclusive language), and the "Code Club" – a programming club for children and youth. Registration for services is done online through Google Forms. Becoming a library member is also possible online (Official website of Luhansk…, 2024).

The library's presentation on the Internet is aptly described (in the library's style) and clickable (with hyperlinks) on the "First Travelling Library" page. There, in particular, it is stated that "all the assets of the Good Library over the past years are presented on its main Internet resources", namely: "the official website, the Library community on Facebook, We hang out on Instagram, We tweet on Twitter, We accelerate on YouTube, We create on Telegram, We communicate from the heart on Anchor" (The First Travelling…, 2020). So, despite the physical destruction of the library by the military aggression of the Russian Federation, thanks to the professionalism and creativity of its leadership and librarians, we can say that the Luhansk Regional Universal Scientific Library, or "Good Library", or "The First Traveling Library", meets the criteria of a library of the digital age. As a methodological centre for libraries in Luhansk, it is already shaping primarily an ideological and philosophical platform for the post-war reconstruction of libraries in the Luhansk region.

The website of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Universal Scientific Library (2024) features a modern design and offers services such as "virtual reference", "electronic document delivery", "pre-ordering literature from the

electronic catalogue" (via phone or email), and "virtual exhibitions". Among the library's resources are an electronic catalogue and local history materials titled "About Zaporizhzhia Region" (including, for example, Galleries of Stories – materials posted on YouTube). Regarding the current realities, although part of the region's territory is still occupied, and some parts have been liberated, no information regarding the full-scale invasion was found during the website review. There is no informational page for internally displaced persons, nor information about the library's operation during air raid alerts. Upon reviewing the website, it was also noted that in some sections, the website switches to the Russian language, which is unacceptable and requires correction and continuous monitoring. It is also necessary to conduct a review of the quality of the library's collection. For example, in the "E-library" section, under the "Audiobooks" subsection, books of a religious nature are presented in the language of the aggressor country. The same language is used for electronic books in other sections (Official website of Zaporizhzhia..., 2024). Therefore, in this case, digital "preservation of cultural heritage" turns into the preservation of "colonial dependency". We can only speculate about the challenging conditions under which the librarians of the Zaporizhzhia RUSL work. There may be issues with staffing, including IT specialists. However, it is impossible to confirm or refute these assumptions with the available information on the website.

The website of the Mykolaiv Regional Universal Scientific Library (2024) has numerous sections and subsections rich in information. The site features a visitor counter, a calendar, links to the library's presence on social media, and users can rate and share each article on Facebook. In the context of our research, we focus only on some sections/subsections of the site. In the "Activities" section, the following subsections are of interest to us: "Directions of the Mykolaiv Regional Universal Scientific Library's Work" (including "providing free access to information through the library's collections and the global Internet network, organising library-bibliographic and information services", "technical and methodological support for the functioning of the regional library computer network, the integrated corporate catalogue of libraries; introduction of advanced computer technologies into the practice of libraries in the region; implementation of cultural, educational, and publishing activities; implementation of information and library projects and programs; studying and disseminating innovative experience in library work, organising continuous professional education for library personnel in the region"). In the "Library Publications" subsection, full-text electronic documents are presented, including "Local History Publications", "Bibliographic Indexes", "Methodological Materials", and "Information Publications". In the "Scientific Publications" subsection, full-text articles by library staff

in professional periodicals are provided. The "Projects" subsection contains information about library projects, but only from 1996 – from "Creation of the Local Library Computer Network" to 2011 – "Introduction of Internet Services using Wi-Fi technology". The section concludes with a subsection that characterises modern realities, "How to Act in the Event of Terrorist Threats". In the "Events" section, you will find "News", "Event Calendar" (currently featuring the library's event programme for January 2024, divided into offline format, online format, and book exhibitions), "Event Archive", and a separate subsection labelled "Relevant (for library users)", which covers topics such as how to use the "virtual reference" service or information about "Paid services provided by the Mykolaiv Regional Universal Scientific Library starting from February 1, 2023", and "Electronic document delivery", among others. In the "Chronicle of Cultural Life in the Mykolaiv Region" subsection, a monthly digest is provided (starting from March 2012 up to the present). In the "Resources" section, the following subsections are presented: "Collections", "Electronic Catalogue", "Electronic Databases 'Virtual Library', "Virtual Exhibitions", "Electronic Library of Local Publications" (including "electronic museum of pre-revolutionary local publications"), "Inclusive Library" ("Audio Library of Recordings Dedicated to Our State", "SoundedBook Inclusive Library Project"), "Prybuzhzhia Portal" (regional information portal), and "Web-library 'Arkasy Heritage' (a comprehensive electronic information resource project supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation). In the "Services" section, there are subsections for "Virtual Assistance" and "Paid Services". The "Media/Interactive" category includes "Guides" (Video guide to the library), "Blog" (Mykolaiv RUSL Blog 'Book Continent' (2011-2021)), "Guest Book" (interactive communication with users, feedback), "Photo Gallery" (Photo Museum of MRUSL), "Video Gallery" (videos about the library from the media), "Honorary Readers of the Library" (interactive presentation "Gallery of Honorary Users 'Golden Names' with the ability to download individual pages), and "Useful Resources Inet" (search engines, official information resources). In the "Libraries of the Region" section, there are two subsections: "Library of Mykolaiv Region" (currently, generalised information as of 01.01.2023) and "Black Album of Affected Libraries of Mykolaiv Region", which provides information and photo materials about the destruction of libraries (Official website of Mykolaiv..., 2024).

Analysing the website of the Sumy Regional Universal Scientific Library (Official website of Sumy..., 2024), it is worth noting that on its main page, in addition to the main menu, which we will return to later, there is a "Temporary operating mode (during martial law)" with a comment stating that "in case of an air raid alert, services are suspended. Users should proceed to the nearest bomb shelter", and a link to an interactive map of bomb shelters in Sumy. Additionally, there is a

banner link to the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme "How are you?" and a section "For Internally Displaced Persons" with interactive sections: Regulatory documents, Hotlines, Addresses of territorial executive authorities, Free legal aid, International assistance, What is needed to obtain a certificate of internally displaced persons, How to receive housing subsidies for internally displaced persons, Conditions for assisting with accommodation to internally displaced persons among minors who have moved without parental supervision, Volunteer assistance, Search for missing persons, Humanitarian aid centres. This list of literature for improving well-being characterises the current domestic realities and the relevance of the library's resources and its communication with website visitors. Advertising banners (images) at the top of the website draw attention to the "Mobile Literacy Course for Seniors" called "Smartphone for Everyone", as well as to the library's Telegram channel "We're on Telegram", which can be accessed via QR-code. Illustrated is also the section "New Arrivals", where visitors can not only get information about a book and see its cover but also have the option to share this information to their social media accounts or email, as well as access the library's podcast channel, the library's YouTube channel "Library's Latest Videos", library blogs – "About the Most Interesting from the Library's Life" and "Practical Guide", and view the "archive" of arrivals. From the main menu sections/subsections, we note the "Publications" of the library (the electronic newspaper for book lovers "In Focus" (pdf), Calendar of Significant Dates, and more). In the "Local History" section, we highlight the "Historical Studies – Media and Educational Project" (9 videos created by the RUSL in 2023). The remaining sections, traditional for the RUSL, include "Useful Pages", "For Specialists", "Electronic Catalogue", and "Virtual Bibliographic Reference" (Official website of Sumy..., 2024).

The general analysis of the websites of regional universal scientific libraries confirms that all these libraries have electronic catalogs and also create their own digital collections. Among the digital collections of the RUSLs, there are often library's own publications in various formats – from PDF documents to multimedia presentations posted on YouTube, as well as regional historical materials and unique collections. Among the virtual services of the RUSLs, commonly found are "virtual reference" and "virtual exhibitions", "virtual tours of the library". However, "online library booking", "electronic document delivery", "RSS" feed distribution' still remain "innovative services", as well as online streams of library events, library podcasts.

RUSLs are represented on social media, and websites provide links to these pages. We do not conduct a detailed analysis; however, it can be noted that the vast majority of RUSLs have their own pages, and pages on Facebook and YouTube, and presence on other social media platforms varies. Libraries also have their own

blogs. As for the use of artificial intelligence in libraries, directly such information was not found on the websites.

Regarding the work on "enhancing digital (informational, media) literacy of the community, library users", RUSLs have Internet centres and regional training centres in their structure, which provide training on digital literacy. The announcement of such training sessions is posted on the website. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing war, some training and internet centres in certain regions are temporarily closed.

"The preservation of cultural heritage" as one of the main trends in the development of public libraries in the digital age is presented in RUSLs through its local history activities: creating electronic databases, digitising existing and publishing new full-text materials of various formats. Scientific novelty lies in identifying the main trends in the development of public libraries in the digital age within the context of domestic realities, and in substantiating the peculiarities of innovative changes in public libraries in Ukraine, both during wartime and as trends in post-war revival and modernization. Public libraries are considered in this context as socio-cultural institutions – "multifunctional public cultural spaces" that contribute to community and individual development, provide informational, educational, and cultural-artistic services, and integrate users into the digital society.

In conclusion, despite active military actions, rocket threats, and the destruction of both library premises and critical infrastructure in regions directly affecting the activities of all institutions and the livelihoods of citizens, public libraries in Ukraine continue to operate with a focus on global trends. They utilise the opportunities of information and communication technologies, create internet resources, and implement digital services. Currently, RUSLs have their websites and are present on social media, maintaining professional thematic blogs. All RUSLs websites contain information about their digital resources, including electronic catalogues, collections of electronic publications, their own publishing activities, virtual exhibitions, virtual reference services, user training in digital literacy, and more.

However, most RUSLs have not yet fully utilised the opportunities of the digital society such as artificial intelligence, and virtual and augmented reality. Ukrainian public libraries, including RUSLs, should pay more attention to digitising their resources, updating information on their websites, and implementing new digital library products and services.

Comprehensive practice-oriented library research, summarising existing library practices, and project (grant) activities of library institutions should contribute to the development of new adapted and in-demand models for domestic public libraries that meet the requirements of the time and the needs of users.

It is also worth remembering that innovative changes in libraries are carried out by their staff, so

the issue of professional library education, training, and professional development of librarians, as well as the formation of their professional self-awareness, becomes relevant.

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