



The role of Ukrainian zemstvos in the formation of their public library space

Iryna Verkhovtseva*

Doctor of History, Associate Professor
State University of Information and Communication Technologies
03110, 7 Solomyanska Str., Kyiv, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5682-993X>

Abstract. This research into the participation of local self-government bodies in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries in the formation of Ukraine's public library space is crucial given the need to study the factors that influenced the creation of Ukrainian book culture, national consciousness, and state-building. This study aims to characterise the role of Ukrainian zemstvo self-government bodies in the establishment of the Ukrainian public library space during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The research methodology is based on the principles of scientific rigour, historicism, sociocultural and modernisation approaches, as well as general scientific (induction, logic, analysis, synthesis) and specifically historical methods: narrative, historical-genetic, and structural-functional analysis. The cultural and educational development of the Ukrainian village by zemstvos, a component of which was their public library work, from the 1860s until the fall of the Russian Empire, was a major direction of activity of these self-governing institutions, upon whose success the national progress of Ukrainians depended. In this sphere, the foundation was laid for the future public space of the Dnieper Ukraine. The establishment, at the expense of zemstvos and through their organisational efforts, of public libraries with broad, free access for all village residents, alongside the development of rural schools, was the alpha and omega of peasant Ukrainian life at that time. It shaped the region's book culture and elevated the social activity of the largest social class. Thanks to the democratic zemstvo intelligentsia, during the revolution of 1905-1907, demands were made to increase the network of rural libraries, cooperation between zemstvos and Prosvitas expanded, and the Ukrainian printed word became more entrenched. The emergence of peasant republics in 1905, one of which was in Sumy, where peasants published a newspaper declaring the tsarist authority abolished, against the backdrop of zemstvo achievements in expanding the network of public libraries and education, demonstrated that the early 20th century marked an intensification of public library development in Ukrainian villages. This period also saw the maturation of the national consciousness among peasants and laid the groundwork for the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, a pivotal stage in Ukraine's state-building efforts. The study of this topic will contribute to understanding the role of local self-government bodies in the functioning of Ukraine's public library space under modern conditions, national identification among Ukrainians, and their consolidation in the face of hostile invasions

Keywords: public libraries; local self-government; zemstvo self-government; people's libraries; rural libraries

Introduction

The effective operation of local self-government institutions is a realisation of the principles of popular sovereignty and contributes to the strengthening of democratic institutions. In 2022-2024, when Ukrainians are resisting a full-scale Russian military aggression, fighting for their right to a sovereign state and

physical existence, demonstrating loyalty to the values of the Western world, and integrating into the European social and political space, it is extremely important to actualise the roots from which the branches of democracy in Ukraine have grown. At the same time, the significant role of libraries in national progress is

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*Corresponding author



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undeniable, as the communicative environment created by book culture spreads certain ideas and determines public dialogue in solving social problems. Given this, defining the role of local self-government bodies in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, in particular, in the establishment of the Ukrainian public library space serves to understand the achievements of Ukrainian library development, the development of effective local self-government, the national identification of Ukrainians, and their consolidation in the face of Russian military aggression.

Ukrainian library development in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in the realm of public libraries, has not escaped the attention of researchers. However, this topic has not received comprehensive consideration in contemporary academic discourse. The activities of rural public libraries, which were under the jurisdiction of zemstvos, have been highlighted fragmentarily and primarily in regional studies. L. Luchka (2008) devoted attention to the functioning of rural libraries and the participation of zemstvos in this process within the context of Katerynoslav province. In particular, in her article "Libraries of the early 20th century Ekaterinoslav province: History of formation and development (based on "Materials on the history of public libraries of cities and zemstvos of Russia")", the researcher, based on the processing of historical sources, provided a detailed description of the state of library affairs in the region. In another study, "The zemstvo of Katerynoslav region and the filtration of library collections in the second half of the nineteenth and early 20th centuries", historian L. Luchka (2018) characterised the attitude of conservative zemstvo members towards library affairs in her region.

O.B. Ajvazian (2014) dedicated a study to the Podillia region. In her research "Public libraries of Podillia province in the late 19th and early 20th centuries", the author analysed the activities of rural libraries in this region from the late 19th to the early 20th century and characterised the contribution of zemstvos to their establishment. In a more extensive and detailed study created in collaboration with O.B. Ajvazian & V.S. Prokopchuk (2016), the evolution of library affairs in the Podillia region is presented within a longer period – throughout the second half of the 19th century until the beginning of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921.

The development of rural libraries in Southern Ukraine and the participation of democratically-minded zemstvo activists in this process has become the subject of study by N. Khersonets (2012). O.V. Volos (2010) highlighted the contribution of zemstvos to rural library development in the Kherson part of southern Ukraine. K.S. Buhaienko (2021) focused on rural libraries in the Cherkasy part of this region. In particular, she demonstrated the number of rural libraries in the counties of this governorate based on statistical data.

N. Prots (2020) examined the assistance provided by Kharkiv zemstvos to the establishment of rural libraries. She focused on the problems of financing and supplying rural libraries in this region and their cooperation with public organisations.

Overall, researchers have given insufficient attention to zemstvo self-government as a factor in the formation of rural public library spaces. In light of this, there is a pressing need to synthesise the experience of zemstvos in shaping the public library space of Ukraine during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

This research aims to determine the impact of zemstvo self-government bodies on the formation of Ukraine's public library space in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Scientific novelty – for the first time in historiography, the role of zemstvo self-government bodies in Dnieper Ukraine in shaping its public library space in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries is characterised in the context of Ukrainian library development and the creation of preconditions for the development of a national public space.

Materials and Methods

The methodological foundation of this research was based on a comprehensive combination of various approaches and methods, allowing for a deep and comprehensive study of the topic. The principles of scientific rigour ensured objectivity and accuracy throughout the research process, helping to avoid subjective judgments and speculation while guaranteeing that the results aligned with historical facts. The principle of historicism involved consideration of historical evolution and context, which was crucial for understanding the changes in library development in Ukrainian villages during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This approach also facilitated an analysis of how historical events influenced the development of libraries and their role in the lives of local communities. The sociocultural approach enabled an analysis of the relationship between library development and the sociocultural environment in which they operated. This helped to understand how libraries impacted the cultural and educational life of Ukrainian villages, and how societal changes were reflected in library activities. The modernisation approach allowed for an evaluation of the impact of imperial policies of social and economic modernisation on library development, particularly the formation and growth of rural libraries. This approach also revealed how modernisation processes affected the functioning of libraries and their ability to adapt to new conditions. The application of general scientific methods, such as induction, logic, analysis, and synthesis, ensured the systematic nature of the research. The inductive method allowed for generalisations based on the study of individual cases, which is

crucial for constructing a comprehensive picture of library development in Ukrainian villages. Logical methods helped structure the research, ensuring a coherent presentation of the material, thereby facilitating its understanding and interpretation. Analysis and synthesis enabled a detailed examination of specific aspects of library activities and the consolidation of the results, contributing to a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter. Specialised historical methods, such as narrative, historical-genetic, and structural-functional analysis, played a key role in the research. The narrative method helped reconstruct the history of library development by recounting significant events and facts from the second half of the 19th to the early 20th centuries. The historical-genetic method traced the origins and evolution of library activities, which is essential for understanding the role of zemstvos in the establishment of rural libraries. The structural-functional analysis method enabled the examination of libraries as part of a broader socio-cultural system, revealing their functions and significance within the context of social life. Thus, the combination of various methodological approaches and methods allowed for a comprehensive and impartial study of zemstvo self-government's role in rural public library development. It also facilitated the assessment of the achievements and challenges in this sphere, as well as the identification of its significance in laying the groundwork for the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921.

Results and Discussion

The institutionalisation of the term “public library” dates back to the 1990s, although the first such libraries spread across Europe and the world from the 18th century thanks to international organisations like IFLA and UNESCO. These libraries are considered to be a vital tool and bastion of democracy, serving as centres of social and cultural life for local communities. By developing various communication channels and collaborating with local authorities on the development and implementation of socio-cultural programmes, these libraries meet the educational, professional, recreational, and other needs of local residents, providing broad access to information sources (Official website of The Great Ukrainian Encyclopaedia, 2024).

The emergence of the first public libraries in Ukraine dates back to the 1830s and 1850s. They were established based on collections from private individuals, state-provincial institutions, commercial entities, and educational establishments. I. Pryjmak (2015), T.R. Karoieva *et al.* (2015), and V. Sokolov (2020) point to the emergence of such libraries in Odesa, Kyiv, and Zhytomyr. Authors I.P. Stepanenko & L.F. Iziumova (2015) highlight the city of Zaporizhzhia in this regard. K.S. Buhaienko (2021) mentions the cities of Cherkasy, Kaniv, Chyhyryn, and Uman. V. Doroshenko (1949) notes that it was precisely in the 19th century that the first true

libraries appeared – organised collections of books that became accessible to a wider range of people.

The introduction of zemstvo self-government in 1864, which extended its jurisdiction over rural areas, created conditions for the formation of public library spaces in villages. At that time, 90% of the population of Dnieper Ukraine resided in rural areas, which were home to the primary producers of goods and the main taxpayers whose labour significantly contributed to the income of this agrarian country. As zemstvo self-governing bodies were formed (both the deliberative (assemblies) and executive (boards)), these structures were based on a multistate principle. Zemstvo representatives included elected delegates from village councils – alongside representatives of the nobility, urban classes, clergy, and officials – who were often village elders, but potentially any member of the rural community (a self-governing entity within the volost) could become a leader of the volost. The direct functions of the zemstvos encompassed the management of local affairs shared by all residents of the districts and provinces. Democratically inclined representatives, along with hired employees of zemstvo structures such as hospitals and schools (the so-called “third element” of the zemstvo), actively promoted the democratisation of districts and provinces, primarily seeking to meet the needs of the peasantry. The level of education and organisation of the rural population was crucial for intensifying agricultural production and the success of modernisation measures, which the ruling class undertook on an empire-wide scale at the start of the era of the so-called “Great Reforms” (Verkhovtseva, 2011; 2018).

The active involvement of zemstvos in library development began in the 1870s, following a period of organisational consolidation and experience in local governance. A significant boost was provided by the government's 1871 authorisation for literate peasants to use school libraries and the publication in 1873 of the “Catalogue of books for use in primary public schools” (Khersonets, 2012; Karoieva, 2021). This catalogue included 91 theological works, 42 loyalist historical texts, and 59 fables, novellas, and stories. However, the 1876 Ems Ukaz, which prohibited the inclusion of books in the Ukrainian language in library collections, hindered the widespread development of rural libraries. Concurrently, libraries were being opened at zemstvo primary schools, initially funded by village communities. Gradually, the zemstvos assumed a significant portion of these costs. From the late 1870s, the zemstvos began organising a new type of rural library – public libraries – characterised by their universal accessibility and free services. Depending on whether books could be borrowed for home use or were only available for reading on-site, these institutions were referred to as either public libraries or public library reading rooms (Official website of Municipal Institution..., 2023; Zemlyaivolya.net..., 2024). As with zemstvo activities in general, their

involvement in libraries was overseen by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Permission to open a library was granted by the local governor, who also approved, together with officials from local structures of the Ministry of Education, the charter of each library. The initiative to open a specific rural library was taken by the powiat zemstvo, while the governorate zemstvo supplied each library with sets of books (a government-approved selection) and funds for the initial furnishing of the premises. Powiat zemstvos were responsible for the day-to-day management of libraries, providing them with equipment, and paying librarians' salaries, while governorate zemstvos purchased books and periodicals, and compiled library catalogues. Libraries were often located in schools, volost councils, or the homes of doctors or teachers. Teachers typically became the first librarians. To oversee public libraries, boards were established, headed by representatives of local nobility, clergy, and doctors. Local zemstvo commissions also provided oversight for the libraries (Prots, 2020).

Following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the government intensified its surveillance of zemstvo activities and rural education in general. Restrictions became more stringent as the authorities sought to prevent the spread of revolutionary propaganda in the countryside. From 1884, the operation of rural libraries was regulated by the "Temporary Rules" and "Alphabetical Lists of Printed Materials Allowed in Public Libraries". In 1890, the "Rules on Free Public Reading Rooms and the Order of Supervision Over Them" were issued, which strengthened the control of officials and clergy over these libraries, particularly in terms of their collections. Library collections were restricted to educational, didactic, "monarchist", and religious literature, as well as publications from the "cheap library" series (Khersonets, 2012; Sharoshkina, 2017). However, works of a belletristic nature, which typically made up nearly half of a library's collection, as well as historical, agricultural, and natural science publications, were also permitted. Democratic-minded public figures condemned this selective distribution of literature in the countryside, advocating for the experience of European countries where there was freer access to the printed word (Prots, 2020).

The development of rural libraries was significantly impacted by their funding. Libraries were initially allocated a fund of 100 karbovanets (krbs), but subsequent funding could be significantly reduced or even cut entirely. For instance, in Chernihiv province in 1894, the zemstvo spent 60000 krbs on maintaining 247 reading rooms across all districts, but this figure dropped to just 15000 krbs in 1897. This lack of consistent funding adversely affected the quality of library collections and made it difficult to maintain adequate staffing. Inconsistency in funding and maintenance between powiat and governorate zemstvos further hindered the development of rural libraries. Often, they could not agree

on the division of responsibilities and funds (Official website of Municipal Institution..., 2023; Zemlyaivolya.net..., 2024). As noted by I.P. Stepanenko & L.F. Iziumova (2015), in Katerynoslav province in 1897, there were heated discussions between powiat and governorate zemstvos regarding the maintenance of rural libraries. The governorate zemstvo rejected requests from powiat zemstvos for funding from the governorate budget, arguing that it was the responsibility of the district structures. Another problem was the dependence of zemstvos on rural communities in this area. These communities were expected to provide premises for the library, heat it if necessary, and pay the salary of a custodian. For example, in 1897 in Katerynoslav powiat, the local zemstvo abandoned plans to open reading rooms in its villages because no rural community provided suitable premises. For similar reasons, the development of public libraries in Zaporizhzhia was slow: between 1897 and 1898, such libraries were established in only 11 out of 22 villages in the Melitopol volosts.

A characteristic feature of rural library development was the cooperation between zemstvos and state, particularly educational, structures, as well as public societies. In 1888, at the request of the director of folk schools in Katerynoslav province, the local governorate zemstvo allocated 2000 krbs to fund rural libraries, which were distributed among all libraries in the region according to each powiat. In Kharkiv province, the governorate zemstvo actively collaborated with the Kharkiv Society for the Dissemination of Literacy among the People, as noted by researchers O.B. Ajvazian & V.S. Prokopchuk (2016) and N. Prots (2020). Researcher V. Siedykh (2019), analysing the activities of Committees for the Care of Public Sobriety in Kharkiv province in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, noted that libraries were used not only as a tool for providing information but also as a means of addressing social issues, such as promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Thanks to the work of libraries, zemstvo self-government had a significant impact on the cultural and educational development of rural areas. Zemstvo spending on these needs increased, and the range of activities diversified. In addition to traditional and, at the time, quite effective methods (such as homeschooling for children and adults, self-education groups), new initiatives were introduced. For instance, the organisation of zemstvo agricultural warehouses was initiated, which procured and distributed agrarian and educational literature, as well as instructional materials for schools among the peasants. This initiative was spearheaded in 1868 by the prominent scholar, Professor Mykola Beketov from Kharkiv University, who also served as a member of the Kharkiv powiat zemstvo. Between 1879 and 1890, powiat zemstvos purchased literature worth over 157800 krbs through this depot and subsequently opened their own warehouse (Prots, 2020). The adoption of this experience by zemstvos in other

regions significantly influenced the supply of books to rural libraries and increased the effectiveness of such zemstvo work. In Katerynoslav province in 1901-1902, there were a total of 2364 readers. Book circulation in this region was almost 13900 volumes. The free library reading room at the People's Reading Auditorium had

about 1000 visitors. The Loshkarivka rural reading library served 649 people in 1901 (Luchka, 2008). In Kyiv province, as of January 1911, the largest number of folk libraries was opened in the Chornobaiv, Zvenyhorod, and Cherkasy powiats, as well as 13 libraries each in the Kaniv, Chyhyryn, and Uman powiats (Fig. 1).

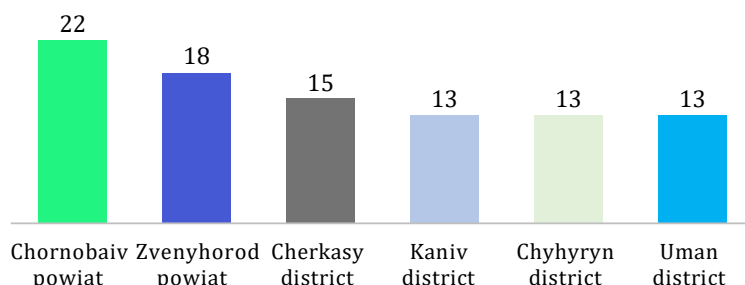


Figure 1. Number of rural libraries in the powiats of Kyiv Governorate as of January 1911

Source: compiled by the author based on K.S. Buhaienko (2021)

There was also progress in the organisation of library services: reader requests were fulfilled using handwritten and card catalogues, with the alphabetical catalogue being the primary one, although systematic and chronological catalogues were also compiled (Luchka, 2008). In addition to book lending, rural libraries engaged in educational activities. For instance, they organised readings that typically covered topics such as history, religion, agriculture, and general culture. For example, in Chernihiv province in 1902, 6000 people participated in 29 readings. In the right-bank governorates and Kherson province, lectures were given to audiences using "magic lanterns with foggy pictures", accompanied by illustrations using a special projector (Volos, 2010).

One stage in the development of public rural libraries was the advocacy of zemstvo members during the revolutionary movement of 1905-1907 for improvements to rural libraries. Zemstvo members championed the "right of citizenship" for the printed word in rural areas. In Katerynoslav province, they demanded the removal of restrictions on the number of periodicals and books in these libraries. Kharkiv zemstvo members proposed in 1906 to increase the annual maintenance of such libraries to 600 krbs (Prots, 2020). The culmination of popular resistance during the revolution was the creation in 1905-1906 of peasant republics – Sorochyntsi in Poltava province, Sumy in the same-named powiat, and others. In the Sumy Republic, in addition to the "abolition" of private land ownership and its transfer to the people, and other measures to democratise life, the "Peasant Gazette" was published, one of the issues of which the tsarist government was declared "outlawed" (Verkhovtseva, 2018). The publication of this newspaper and its transformation into a mouthpiece for the revolutionary peasantry became possible thanks to a certain level of book culture.

Concessions made by the government under pressure from the revolution included the repeal in 1905-1906 of the 1890 rules for rural libraries, which allowed for a greater diversity of books, and the lifting of restrictions on Ukrainian printed materials. Cooperation between zemstvos and Prosvitas, which contributed to the expansion of the rural library network, also increased (Ajvazian & Prokopchuk, 2016). As a result, the number of zemstvo rural libraries in Ukraine increased significantly. In total, 4094 zemstvo libraries were operating in Ukraine in 1910. The largest number of such libraries were in Volhynia province – 999; Kharkiv province – 789; Poltava province – 767; Katerynoslav province – 578; Taurida province – 327; Chernihiv province – 298; Kyiv province – 88; and Podillia province – 49 (Fig. 2). This strengthened the position of Ukrainian print, shaped Ukraine's book culture, and contributed to the national consciousness of the largest social group – the peasantry.

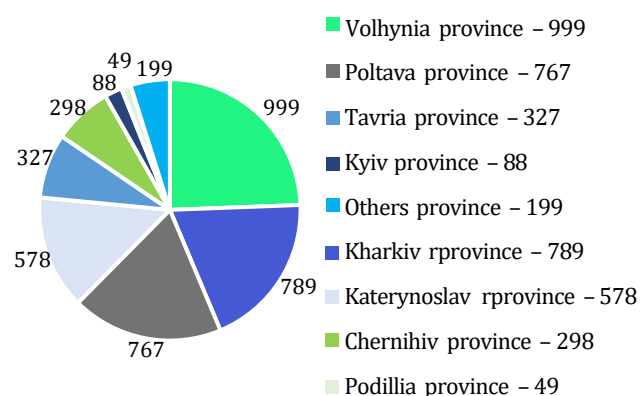


Figure 2. Number of zemstvo rural libraries by region in Ukraine in 1910

Source: compiled by the author based on O.B. Ajvazian (2014)

A negative aspect of zemstvo public library work was the emergence of reactionary zemstvo members who called for suppressing the political activism of peasants, as happened in Kharkiv province in 1912 (Prots, 2020). In Katerynoslav province in 1912, zemstvo members of Novomoskovsk powiat conducted a “filtration” of books, removing from the fund of the Popasnevska library-reading room and destroying as “unsuitable for their purpose” the publication “Moses as social reformer!” by the American publicist H. George and the play “Hedda Gabler” by the Norwegian playwright H. Ibsen (Luchka, 2018).

On the eve of World War I, zemstvos were granted new powers to facilitate the implementation of the government’s project to introduce universal primary education in the country. Zemstvos received significantly increased state subsidies and were provided with favourable conditions for obtaining loans. Within this framework, zemstvo officials paid more attention to public libraries in rural areas. An additional impetus was given to this in 1911 during the First all-Russian Congress on Librarianship. In particular, the section on public and people’s libraries, headed by S. Siropolko, emphasised the need for widespread democratisation of the library movement. This intensified the public library activities of zemstvos in rural areas (Volos, 2010).

The revolutionary spring of 1917 saw zemstvos transformed into organs of local self-government. The national-cultural activities of these institutions were intensified. Leaders of national governments saw zemstvo self-government as the foundation for Ukraine’s democratic progress. Consequently, the role of this institution in developing the socio-cultural life of local areas was significant. Local Prosvita organisations provided substantial assistance, contributing to the establishment of new libraries and the replenishment of existing collections. As a result, the network of rural libraries in Ukraine expanded significantly (Sorochan, 2011). This laid the groundwork for the development of a Ukrainian public sphere in the Dnieper Ukraine, fostered national identity among the peasantry, and contributed to the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 – a pivotal stage in Ukrainian state-building. At the same time, this process was made possible by the preceding, almost half-century-long experience of public library work by Ukrainian zemstvos.

Conclusions

From the 1870s to 1917, zemstvos played a significant role in shaping the Ukrainian public library landscape. As part of their cultural and educational development efforts in rural areas, alongside the establishment of rural schools, they dedicated significant resources to opening public libraries. These libraries were freely accessible to all village residents, who constituted the largest social group in Ukrainian society during the second half

of the 19th and early 20th centuries – the peasantry. Despite government restrictions on the dissemination of printed materials in rural areas, including strict control over the book collections and overall activities of rural libraries, the work of zemstvos in this area was democratic in nature. It fostered a book culture in the Dnieper Ukraine, encouraged social activism among the peasantry, and laid the groundwork for the development of a Ukrainian public sphere. The zemstvo self-government’s library-building efforts faced challenges such as insufficient funding for rural libraries from zemstvo budgets, inconsistencies between district and provincial zemstvos in terms of their responsibilities for supporting these libraries, and the refusal of rural communities to provide premises for them. A crucial factor in this development was the cooperation between zemstvos, state educational structures, and public societies. With the onset of the 1905-1907 revolution, thanks to the efforts of zemstvo members, there was a noticeable increase in the network of rural libraries and the initiation of cooperation between zemstvos and Prosvitas in this field. In 1905, numerous state-like revolutionary formations, peasant republics, emerged in Ukraine. In the Sumy district, in such a republic, peasants published their own newspaper, in which they declared the tsarist government abolished. All of this evidence that at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the zemstvos, the intensive process of establishing public libraries in Ukrainian villages influenced the social activism of the peasantry, shaped their national consciousness, and created the preconditions for the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, which was of a democratic nature and became a key stage in Ukrainian state-building in the first quarter of the 20th century. At the beginning of this revolution, there was a rapid surge in library activity in Ukrainian villages. This was made possible by zemstvo’s work in developing the public library sphere in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

A promising direction for further research on this topic is a detailed study of the activities of hired zemstvo employees (teachers, librarians, zemstvo administration officials) in Ukrainian governorates in the context of rural library development, with a focus on the oppositional and anti-imperial nature of this activity in the context of the formation of the preconditions for the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921. Additionally, a deeper study of the cooperation between zemstvo self-government bodies and Prosvitas in rural library development at the beginning of the 20th century would be beneficial.

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None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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Земства України у формуванні її публічно-бібліотечного простору

Ірина Верховцева

Доктор історичних наук, доцент

Державний університет інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій

03110, вул. Солом'янська, 7, м. Київ, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5682-993X>

Анотація. Дослідження участі органів місцевого самоврядування другої половини XIX – початку XX століття у формуванні публічно-бібліотечного простору України є важливим завданням з огляду на необхідність вивчення чинників, що впливали на творення книжної культури України, національну свідомість українців, їх національне державотворення. Мета роботи – охарактеризувати роль органів земського самоврядування українських губерній у становленні українського публічно-бібліотечного простору впродовж другої половини XIX – початку XX століття. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на принципах науковості, історизму, соціокультурному й модернізаційному підходах, а також методах загальнонаукових (індукції, логіки, аналізу, синтезу) і спеціально-історичних: нарративному, історико-генетичному, структурно-функціональному аналізу. Культурно-освітня розбудова українського села земствами, складником чого була їх публічно-бібліотечотворча праця, з 1860-х років і до падіння Російської імперії була магістральним напрямом діяльності цих самоврядних установ, від успіху яких залежав національний поступ українців. У цій сфері закладалася база майбутнього публічного простору Наддніпрянської України. Заснування коштом земств та їх організаційними зусиллями народних бібліотек із широким доступом до них на безоплатній основі всіх мешканців села, разом з облаштуванням сільських шкіл, було альфою і омегою життя тогочасної селянської України, формувало її книжну культуру, підносило суспільну активність найбільшої соціальної верстви. Завдяки демократичній земській інтелігенції під час революції 1905-1907 років висувалися вимоги щодо збільшення мережі сільських бібліотек, розгорталась співпраця земств із Просвітами, вкорінювалося українське друковане слово. Поява в 1905 році селянських республік, у одній з яких – Сумській, селяни видавали газету, якою оголосили царську владу скасованою, на тлі досягнень земств у розбудові мережі народних книгозбірень і освіти, засвідчили: на початку XX століття в українському селі інтенсифікувалося становлення публічно-бібліотечної справи, визрівали національна свідомість селян і передумови Української революції 1917-1921 років – ключового етапу українського державотворення. Студіювання теми сприятиме осмисленню ролі органів місцевого самоврядування у функціонуванні публічно-бібліотечного простору України за сучасних умов, національній ідентифікації українців, їх консолідації в протидії ворожим вторгненням

Ключові слова: публічні бібліотеки; місцеве самоврядування; земське самоврядування; народні бібліотеки; сільські бібліотеки