



## **International cooperation of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine: Development of socio-cultural and scientific communication**

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**Abstract.** The relevance of this study is defined by the need to highlight the pivotal role of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine as a key scientific-methodological centre within Ukraine's library and information complex, particularly in fostering international interaction under crisis conditions. The purpose of the study was to explore changes in the aspects of international communication actualisation at Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine during 2022-2023 and to elucidate the main areas and forms of international interaction. The research methodology employed systemic and structural approaches, incorporating methods of logical and structural and functional analysis, underpinned by scientific objectivity. The main aspects, areas, and forms of international cooperation and their role in the library's system of international relations were characterised. The findings indicated that the international scientific cooperation system of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine has entered a new phase of development and has become a key lever in ensuring effective socio-cultural and library-information activities under martial law conditions. It has been determined that in the context of Russian aggression, a need has arisen for Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine to adapt to new conditions of existence, while also finding mechanisms to counter disinformation, develop "survival" strategies, and formulate development vectors on the international stage. To achieve these objectives, library has actively worked on strengthening its own status as a reliable partner on the international arena, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage, and advancing scientific research through professional international relationships, collaboration, and humanitarian assistance. This study provided key insights for national libraries and cultural institutions on navigating crisis conditions through strategic management and international cooperation. It illustrated the development of national library in the period of 2022-2023, offering a blueprint for maintaining operations, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing information accessibility under adversity. The study will contribute to further library and information science research

### **Suggested Citation:**

Demianiuk, L., Matviychuk, L., & Horieva, V. (2024). International cooperation of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine: Development of socio-cultural and scientific communication. *Library Science. Record Studies. Informology*, 20(3), 8-20. doi: 10.63009/lrsi/3.2024.08.

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focusing on crisis management, international cooperation, and the evolving role of libraries in society, making it a valuable resource for library professionals, policy makers, and academic researchers

**Keywords:** international activities of the national library; library development strategy; international collaboration; library activities under martial law conditions; humanitarian aid initiatives

## Introduction

In the context of globalisation, international cooperation in culture, science, and education is essential, particularly in library activities. Such collaboration opens new opportunities for knowledge exchange and enhances access to information, improving the quality of services and strengthening intercultural dialogue. The full-scale military invasion by Russia on February 24, 2022, has highlighted the need for strategic international library communication and strong global partnerships. The Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (VNLU) plays a vital role in the national and international information space, preserving and disseminating knowledge. Amid Russian aggression, VNLU must adapt and develop strategies to ensure its survival and continued international collaboration. Strengthening its status as a reliable global partner, VNLU focuses on preserving cultural heritage and fostering scientific research. It is crucial to analyse VNLU's international cooperation strategies to guide library and information institutions during crises, particularly in Ukraine.

Among VNLU scholars whose work has been foundational notable contributors include L.A. Dubrovina, Yu.S. Kovtaniuk, K.V. Lobuzina, L.M. Demianiuk, O.M. Vasylenko, whose scholarly efforts have notably shaped the initiatives and strategies within which VNLU operates internationally. It is also important to mention the document "Strategy for the development of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (VNLU) for 2022-2025" (2022), developed by VNLU specialists, which outlines the institution's strategic directions and initiatives on the path to sustainable development, thereby reinforcing its academic and operational goals, particularly pertinent under the current challenging conditions.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) in June 2023 at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, L.A. Dubrovina (2023) presented a report. In her address, she acknowledged the critical support from various European national libraries since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, emphasising CENL's enhanced role in fostering cooperation and partnerships. The author underscored the positive impact of European solidarity and strategic shifts that continue to inspire confidence in the library's future. She emphasised VNLU's strategic push towards European integration, highlighting its involvement in the European scientific infrastructure as a priority. This effort positions the library as a pivotal element in Ukraine's digital knowledge infrastructure, underscoring its dedication to enhancing its international presence and advancing its scientific endeavours.

In addition, L.A. Dubrovina & Yu.S. Kovtaniuk (2024) from VNLU examined the significant support extended by European libraries amid martial conditions. The study highlighted the indispensable role of international cooperation in maintaining library services through crises, focusing on VNLU's strategies to preserve cultural and scientific assets, advance electronic services, and safeguard national memory via active participation in European open science projects. The collaboration with the European library community, particularly through organisations such as the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), is credited with not only preserving but also bolstering VNLU's operational capabilities. The researchers detailed how this international support has been crucial in sustaining library operations, promoting cultural continuity, and facilitating intellectual exchange during tumultuous times.

K.V. Lobuzina (2023) emphasised the critical role of international collaboration in enhancing scientific cooperation across Europe. The researcher detailed how the integration of VNLU's library resources into the broader European scientific data framework, facilitated by active participation in the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), has significantly bolstered Ukraine's electronic research infrastructure. This development is particularly crucial amid the ongoing conflict, as sustained support from CENL has elevated Ukraine's capacity to develop and enhance digital repositories and electronic resources, thereby preserving and disseminating its rich scientific and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the author highlighted the CENL Dialogue Forum "National Libraries as Data Infrastructures" as a pivotal initiative promoting sustainable development with a focus on data preservation and accessibility. She underscored that this forum exemplifies the importance of steadfast international cooperation and knowledge exchange in advancing the capabilities of libraries in the digital era.

L.M. Demianiuk (2023) discussed the substantial challenges of maintaining international relations amidst the ongoing crisis triggered by a full-scale war, characterised by frequent power outages and constant air raid alerts. The researcher emphasised the need for effective time management and proactive communication to sustain international relationships, especially during turbulent times. She noted that Russian aggression has led to a reassessment of values within the library, influencing employees' roles and reshaping operational strategies. This reassessment fosters a resilient and adaptive model, focusing on preserving

cultural and scientific heritage while ensuring continued international collaboration. The researcher highlighted the library's pivotal role in adapting to new challenges and maintaining its contribution to the broader cultural and scientific community.

It is worth noting the studies by other Ukrainian researchers that touched on important issues concerning library resilience and development of such areas as socio-cultural, and information and communication directions in library activity under contemporary challenging times. The role of Ukrainian libraries as centres of national resistance and psychological support during the Russian military aggression was discussed in the research by N.A. Korzhyk (2022). She emphasised the need to enhance the informational, recreational, and culture-forming functions of libraries, and to diversify the communication methods and tools for their implementation.

Among other relevant documents and scientific editions, it is crucial to highlight the publications of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), of which VNLU has been a member since 1998. Particularly significant CENL documents, reflecting and responding to the current situation in Ukraine, include the "CENL Strategy 2023-2027" (2023) and the publication "All Roads Lead to Rome or: National Libraries on Their Ways to Sustainability" (Oehlschläger, 2024). These documents define key priorities, provide clear visions, missions, and values, and articulate specific goals and initiatives for their achievement by member national libraries at this stage and on the path to sustainable development. Additionally, the Survey on European national libraries' support for Ukrainian libraries and Ukrainian cultural heritage (2023) provided statistical data on the support extended to the Ukrainian library sector and the level of participation by CENL member national libraries.

The contemporary development of international partnerships at VNLU, especially within European national libraries, is marked by intensified connections across various sectors. This interaction is crucial both for VNLU's information and communication system and the global framework. The strong interconnectivity within the European library community, where CENL plays a key role, significantly enhances the European scientific space.

The purpose of this research was to explore the main aspects and areas of international cooperation at Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, emphasising its contribution to enhancing socio-cultural and scientific communication within the global library community during the period of 2022-2023.

## **Materials and Methods**

This research effectively employed systemic and structural approaches, complemented by methods of logical and structural and functional analysis, all grounded in scientific objectivity, to thoroughly characterise the

key aspects, areas, and forms of international cooperation within the context of a library's international relations system. By integrating these methodologies, the research provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the library's global interactions, highlighting both the significance and the multifaceted nature of these activities. The systemic approach enabled a holistic examination of the library's international cooperation, treating it as an interconnected and dynamic system. This perspective was crucial in understanding how various components of the library's international relations are interdependent and how changes in one area can influence others. The structural approach further facilitated a detailed exploration of the organisational and operational frameworks that underpin these international activities, ensuring that all relevant factors were considered in the analysis. In combination with these approaches, the application of logical and structural and functional analysis provided a robust framework for dissecting the library's international cooperation. Logical analysis ensured that each component of the library's international activities was examined in a rational and coherent manner, allowing for the identification of underlying patterns and relationships. Meanwhile, structural and functional analysis focused on the roles and functions of different elements within the system, highlighting how they contribute to the overall effectiveness of the library's international relations. Through these methodological lenses, the research was able to view the library's international activities as a sophisticated communication system. This perspective was instrumental in identifying the priority tasks for international cooperation, as it emphasised the importance of effective communication and information exchange in fostering successful global partnerships. By treating international cooperation as a communication system, the research also shed light on the channels and mechanisms through which the library engages with its international counterparts, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how these interactions can be optimised. Moreover, the research considered the current global realities that shape international cooperation in the library sector. This included an analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation, technological advancements, and shifting geopolitical landscapes. By doing so, the study not only identified the current priorities but also outlined potential future areas for the development and optimisation of the library's international relations. This forward-looking approach ensured that the library remains responsive and adaptable to the evolving demands of the global information landscape, ultimately enhancing its role in the international community. The analysis of the recent research and publications was based on an examination of the reporting documentation of VNLU's scientific activities for 2022-2023, the current contractual framework for scientific

cooperation between VNLU and foreign libraries, information available on the official VNLU portal and websites of international library organisations, communities, library-information institutions, agencies, and associations that have contributed to the preservation of the cultural heritage reflected in VNLU's collections. Scientific explorations of VNLU specialists were investigated within the framework of the scientific research work "Theoretical and Applied Aspects of the Organisation of Library and Information Complex Activities in Modern Conditions", particularly within the section "Interlibrary Cooperation and Interaction of Ukrainian Scientific Libraries at the International Level in the Conditions of War in Ukraine". Additionally, attention was also focused on foreign studies related to this stage in the history of Ukrainian libraries.

### Results and Discussion

International cooperation has always been considered a priority area of activity for VNLU and is carried out in accordance with the current legislation of Ukraine, strategic areas for the development of the library sector defined by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, resolutions of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, under which the library operates, the Charter of VNLU, and internal scientific and methodological documents that regulate the institution's activities. At the national level, the implementation of international relations by any library in Ukraine, including VNLU, is regulated by the existing legislative base, which includes: the Law of Ukraine No. 33/95-VR (1995); the Law of Ukraine No. 2778-VI (2010); the Law of Ukraine No. 848-VII (2015). Also important is the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 219-r (2016). Notably, in the sections of these documents where the definition of international cooperation is interpreted, there are no special provisions explaining the specifics of its implementation during military conflicts or crisis situations caused by military aggression from a foreign state.

National libraries, whose status entails a high level of responsibility for the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of the library field, are key players in international cooperation processes. They act as centres of competence and innovation, capable of developing and implementing strategies that facilitate effective interaction with foreign partners. Resource exchange, joint scientific research and projects, development of library policies, scientific and methodical recommendations, training and staff development, and maintenance of standards are just some aspects of their activities. N. Petrenko & K. Viriutina (2023) conducted a historical tour of international relations of the Kharkiv State Scientific Library named after V.G. Korolenko since 1901 and presented the experience of international cooperation, grant activity until February 24, 2022 and new realities during the period

of armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Ya. Bondarchuk (2022) was engaged in researching the work and functioning of national libraries during the war years. In particular, the researcher investigated the activities of the Scientific Library of the Vinnytsia National Medical University named after M.I. Pirogov. Yu. Navalska (2023), in turn, investigated the methodical activities of libraries under martial law.

It is worth noting, that A.T.S. Ahmed (2002), based on the results of his dissertation study, determined that the development of international information cooperation is an objective regularity reflecting the tendencies of contemporary socio-economic relations: integration, international specialisation, and cooperation. Among the key factors for the successful adaptation of Ukraine's library and information resources to the global communication space, the researcher emphasised the active development of international cooperation in the library and information field. Collaboration in the library sector is a fundamental prerequisite for the continued development of nations, especially against the backdrop of growing economic, cultural, political, and educational ties. International cooperation serves as a catalyst for comprehensive and transformative changes, making it essential for the state to actively encourage the expansion of international partnerships within the library and information sphere. In D.V. Nikolaiev's (2012) view, international interaction is the process of establishing, consolidating, and supporting partnerships, coordinated cooperation between libraries of different countries, which influences the development of the library-information sphere and strengthens professional communications among library specialists. Researchers O.Z. Klymenko & O.L. Sokur (2020) stated that the development of open and equal cooperation of national libraries with libraries of other countries, which is an integral part of their information and communication activities and carried out on the principles of independence, equality and mutual benefit, in the conditions of digitalisation – an important component of strategic communications for the expansion of interstate and intercultural exchange social experience and the promotion of universal values, the development of world cultures and civilisation as a whole. The researchers V.M. Medvedieva & O.O. Shendryk (2020) emphasised the scientific comprehension of the international cooperation of Ukrainian libraries, which has become a dominant tendency in global societal development, and its impact on librarianship through the strengthening of international ties between individual library institutions from different continents, and between libraries and international institutions. Broad information exchange, facilitated by the implementation of advanced electronic technologies across various sectors of society, has become a key issue for libraries. This involves the need to choose paths for adapting to

modern requirements, introducing new services, and providing access to national and global information networks and databases.

The role of national libraries in formulating scientific and methodical recommendations for implementing international information and communication activities, creating models of behaviour and patterns for effective communication with foreign partners, deserves special emphasis. Maintaining a high level of professional exchange and reinforcing the international image of national culture and science is a direct result of these efforts. L.A. Poperechna & O.Y. Matviichuk (2022) studied library pedagogy as a branch of librarianship, which is aimed at theoretical substantiation of the pedagogical foundations of librarianship; regularities of librarian-pedagogical influence on the reader's consciousness. In modern conditions, the tasks, and functions of VNLU in all areas of library activity, especially in the sphere of international communication, are significantly expanding. VNLU becomes a stronghold of cultural heritage preservation under the conditions of military actions and an active participant in international solidarity and support, demonstrating resilience and commitment to its mission.

The military conflict has radically altered the political, social, and cultural landscape of Ukraine, creating new challenges and tasks for the library sphere. Preservation of cultural assets, digitisation of resources, and their integration into both national and global spaces has become key activities for VNLU. In 2022-2023, fulfilling these tasks required intensified efforts in collaboration and coordination with foreign partners, international professional organisations, academic communities, donors, and sponsors. The importance of cooperation with international library organisations was emphasised by L.S. Prokopenko (2017). She asserted that collaboration with such organisations, based on equality, fairness, democracy, and respect for national interests, is of paramount importance, as their positions largely determine the current state and future prospects of Ukraine's library sector. The researchers H.I. Soloidenko & T.L. Kulakovska (2023) from the VNLU noted that, despite full-scale Russian aggression, the library and information complex of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, including the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, the Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library, and 94 scientific institution libraries, not only continued operations but also mobilised all resources to preserve collections. They maintained access to national and global information resources, supported scientific knowledge, and advanced innovative and integrative processes in library activities. Attracting attention to the challenging crisis conditions faced by VNLU and securing material and technical support became a necessity, especially critical in the context of war and limited state funding due to the urgent needs for national defence.

M.B. Kushnarova (2023) revealed the significance of Ukrainian cultural diplomacy during the ongoing war, emphasising its role as a component of strategic communications and a means of "soft power" to enhance the state's attractive image and increase its international support. The support initiatives from European partners and real assistance that have become a powerful contribution to the activities of VNLU are described in the article by L.A. Dubrovina & Yu.S. Kovtaniuk (2024). For example, it was noted that VNLU received servers, scanners, computers, fire extinguishers, and other essential equipment necessary for the preservation of cultural heritage. This support has been crucial in enabling the library to maintain its operations and safeguard its collections during challenging times. The issue of solidarity with Ukraine and the support of foreign libraries amidst Russian aggression, particularly in the context of the threat to memory institutions that preserve evidence of national identity and cultural heritage, is analysed by S.V. Spirina (2023). According to the researcher, a key task for library science is the comprehension of library activities during wartime. Ukrainian scholars are actively exploring the specific challenges faced by libraries in Ukraine, including the preservation of cultural heritage, legal aspects of its protection, and the use of electronic resources for organising work. A major focus is on the solidarity shown by global libraries with Ukraine, manifested in support actions, collection development, and exhibition activities during the Russian aggression. These practices emphasise the crucial role of libraries in cultural preservation and resilience during times of Russian aggression.

An essential document defining VNLU's international role since 2022 is the "Development strategy of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine for 2022-2025" (Strategy for the development..., 2022) crafted by the institution's specialists. This strategy aims to delineate priorities, tasks, and primary actions in VNLU's library and scientific endeavours, considering the shifts in the political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and financial environments due to the state's development challenges, wartime conditions, and post-war reconstruction plans. Given these circumstances, there was an imperative need to optimise the library's core operations, including selecting strategic priorities and enhancing methods for forecasting and planning. The strategy's specificity arises from the current wartime status in Ukraine, reductions in budget funding, and risks to the preservation of library collections. It also aligns with global trends in setting the operational directions for leading national libraries and international bodies in education, science, and culture. Section 8 of the Strategy emphasises expanding cooperative and partnership relations with other libraries, archives, museums, educational and research institutions, media, and publishers, both internally and internationally. It advocates for the development of international book exchanges and

communication, and participation in global scientific projects and cultural events, to foster development and socio-cultural unity among global and local communities. In light of these priorities, VNLU has significantly intensified its international cooperation efforts, with a particular focus on library diplomacy, which has gained paramount importance for Ukraine amid Russia's full-scale invasion of its sovereign territory.

Thus, the international activities of VNLU are focused on strengthening effective and mutually beneficial relationships with the international library community, emphasising the reliability and steadfastness of partnerships and dedication to common goals. Special attention is given to the development of international scientific projects, exchange of experience in digitisation, and collaborative projects in library resources, as well as to enhancing the skills of professionals. Simultaneously, VNLU demonstrates its resilience and ability to adapt and evolve under the extremely challenging conditions of martial law in Ukraine, presenting unprecedented challenges to both the library sector and the library itself.

VNLU's development strategies during this period include a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at building strong partnership ties and enhancing the influence and positive image of VNLU on the international library stage. The primary goal of these efforts is to ensure that the voice of Ukrainian librarians, who continue to perform their duties despite the conditions of Russian aggression, is heard by an international audience. Effective leadership and coordination of VNLU actions, along with the cohesive operation of all components of the institution's library-information complex, play a crucial role in this process. VNLU has emerged as a prominent advocate in representing the interests of Ukrainian librarians at the international level. Ukrainian librarians have notably showcased advancements in library science, bibliography, archival management, and library and information technology. Demonstrating unwavering resilience and dedication amid the harsh conditions of Russia's military aggression, they have drawn global attention to the need for supporting Ukraine and preserving its independence and cultural heritage. These efforts have significantly enhanced international awareness of VNLU's role in supporting cultural, educational, and scientific endeavours during the outlined period 2022-2023. In 2022, VNLU staff participated in 92 international scientific and practical conferences, seminars, and other scientific-organisational events, with 35 occurring abroad (Report on the library and information activities..., 2023). This activity intensified in 2023, with participation in 181 international events, 42 of which took place in foreign countries. The voices of VNLU professionals resonated among international attendees in countries such as Argentina, the United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Germany, Poland, the USA,

France, Switzerland, Sweden, and Japan. This underscores VNLU's robust international library communication and its proactive role in global cultural and scientific exchanges (Report on the library and information activities..., 2024).

The international library community has not remained indifferent, demonstrating comprehensive support for Ukraine's library sector, including VNLU, under extremely challenging and adverse conditions. Following February 24, 2022, authoritative library organisations such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL), the American Library Association (ALA), the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL), the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH), EBLIDA, NAPLE, and Public Libraries 2030 began issuing statements condemning the actions of the Russian Federation and affirming their support for Ukrainian libraries (Demianiuk, 2023; Turovska, 2023). It is important to note that VNLU is a member of some of these international organisations.

Furthermore, the stance of CENL members regarding the actions of the Russian Federation is noteworthy. CENL published a news item titled "Membership of Directors from the Russian Federation expired" (2022) on its website, stating that following the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe on March 16, 2022, the directors of the Russian State Library in Moscow, the National Library of Russia, and the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library in Saint Petersburg are no longer members of the Conference of European National Librarians. According to the foundation's statutes, CENL membership is only open to members of the Council of Europe and the Vatican. Since the Russian Federation is not a member of the Council of Europe, the basis for the membership of the directors of Russia's national libraries no longer applies. Currently, CENL is focusing on exchanging specific proposals for assisting Ukrainian colleagues and on preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage in both physical and digital forms" (Official website of CENL, 2022).

In 2022-2023, VNLU significantly intensified its collaboration with CENL, focusing on initiatives that promote global information accessibility and knowledge dissemination. At the annual directors' meetings held in Ankara (June 19-21, 2022) and at the National Library of France (June 18-20, 2023), VNLU's Director General L.A. Dubrovina presented impactful reports. Her speeches, titled "V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine in a state of war" and "Strategic changes in V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine during wartime" emphasised how the war has fundamentally changed the operational environment of libraries, disrupting traditional activities and necessitating new forms of resistance to adverse informational impacts. The reports highlighted that one of the most pressing

and current issues for Ukraine's library-information complex remains the problem of saving and preserving the historical and cultural and scientific heritage of library collections and resources, the loss of which is irreversible. Recognition was given to the international community for their indispensable support and solidarity in preserving Ukraine's cultural heritage amidst war (The Director General..., 2022).

Another important event demonstrating enhanced cooperation with CENL, which took place with VNLU's participation under the auspices of this organisation, was the international scientific conference "Social resilience and stronger professional networks as preconditions for peace" (2023), held on October 9-10, 2023, at the National Library of Moldova. At the conference, representatives from Ukraine provided an in-depth overview of the current state of the library sector within the country, discussing its operations, ongoing challenges, and strategic development amidst the crisis. They shared insights on their initiatives in digitising and creating electronic resources, and elaborated on building international partnerships during the crisis caused by Russian aggression. Gratitude was extended to CENL, foreign partner libraries, and donors for their unwavering support and solidarity with Ukrainian libraries, including VNLU. Furthermore, participants underscored the critical importance of integrating Ukrainian library resources into the European information environment. This integration is viewed as a pivotal element in fortifying European solidarity and cooperation, essential in addressing the present challenges (Dubrovina, 2023; Lobuzina, 2023).

A significant aspect of CENL's activities in the context of the war in Ukraine was the launch of the "Stand with Ukraine" section on the organisation's official portal, which highlights initiatives supporting Ukraine and its cultural institutions. The international library community's assistance has been a key factor in preserving library resources and ensuring the operation of Ukrainian libraries through the provision of humanitarian aid, which included technical equipment (servers, scanners, computers). CENL has provided substantial support to VNLU and actively facilitated initiatives aiding Ukrainian colleagues, with special attention focused on preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage in both physical and digital forms. Real donor support was provided for digitisation, ensuring the preservation of digital memory and the system of national scientific electronic resources, unique book and manuscript monuments, and scientific resources of Ukraine, which represent a significant intellectual potential of knowledge, enhancing safeguards against the threat of destruction during the war (Official website of CENL, 2022).

From January to March 2023, the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) conducted a survey among its members titled "Survey on European national libraries' support for Ukrainian libraries and Ukrainian

cultural heritage". The survey aimed to obtain an overview of measures taken by European national libraries to support Ukraine, its libraries, and cultural heritage, and to further coordinate efforts effectively in line with the current needs of Ukrainian libraries and librarians (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Engagement of CENL members in supporting Ukraine

Source: based on Official website of CENL (2022)

Figure 1 demonstrates the active engagement of CENL member libraries in supporting Ukrainian libraries and promoting Ukrainian culture and library-information resources. The most substantial contributions include informational materials about Ukraine on the websites of European libraries – 13; exhibitions in public areas of libraries – 11; excerpts of Ukrainian literature from catalogues – 7; other (blogs, social networks, events) – 4 (Survey on European national libraries..., 2023).

Integration into the European and global scientific, informational, and professional space remains one of the most crucial components of VNLU's international cooperation, as stipulated by the provisions of current agreements signed by the Library. In 2022-2023, during the martial law, VNLU adhered to the execution of bilateral agreements on scientific and information cooperation and cultural collaboration with partners from such foreign institutions as: Ilia Chavchavadze National Parliamentary Library of Georgia (NPLG); the Library of the Chinese Academy of Social Science; the National Library of Latvia; the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania; The National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" of North Macedonia; the Central State Library of Mongolia; the National Library of the Republic of Poland; the King Jan III Palace Museum at Wilanów (Republic of Poland); the National Library of Hungary; the National Library of Uzbekistan; the Fundamental Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan; the Central Library of the National Academy of Science of the Kyrgyz Republic; the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences; the Mirza Fatali Akhundov National Library of Azerbaijan; the Ukrainian Free University (Munich, Germany); the National Library of the Republic of Moldova; the National Library of Israel; the Municipality of Dhour Shweir (Lebanese Republic); the Royal Castle Museum in Warsaw; the Royal Residence of the Kings of Poland (Republic of Poland); the Cyprus Institute

(Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus). International cooperation with these institutions is aimed at developing and deepening collaboration in the fields of library science, bibliography, archive studies, library and information technologies, conducting scientific research in the field of manuscript heritage, book studies, and book printing, implementing joint projects in the area of library and information technologies, including digitisation initiatives and providing access to electronic resources, participation in joint scientific projects, enhancing professional qualifications through the exchange of experience and knowledge in all areas of library science, and cultural and educational events to strengthen professional connections and expand cooperation.

In 2022-2023, despite challenging conditions, VNLU participated in organising several international exhibitions under existing agreements. These activities played a crucial role in advancing the socio-communication component of VNLU, demonstrating the library's commitment to fostering international relationships through cultural exchange. Notably, at the Royal Castle Museum in Warsaw (Royal Residence of Poland), a ceremonial presentation of the "Splendor and Knowledge: The Royal Library of Stanisław August" catalogue took place, alongside the opening of the exhibition "Polonia, Lithuania, and Ukraine". This exhibition, prepared jointly by the teams of the Royal Castle Museum and VNLU for almost two years, was initially planned to open under different circumstances and timelines. Due to Russia's aggression and the declaration of martial law in Ukraine, the actual opening of the exhibition was postponed to a later date, after the end of the war. Meanwhile, since a representative two-volume exhibition catalogue was prepared, it was decided to present it to the academic and cultural community. On this occasion, VNLU's Director General, L. Dubrovina, noted that this project demonstrates the commitment of Ukraine and Poland to the fundamental principles of humanitarian policy, showing respect for their shared historical past, and indicates significant scientific and cultural prospects for cooperation (Presentation of the catalogue..., 2022).

During this event, the exhibition "Polonia, Lithuania, and Ukraine: Maps from the Collection of Dr. Tomasz Niewodniczański" was opened, vividly representing the reality of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – a coexistence of three nations living across a vast territory in Central Europe. The collection of 40 unique maps from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries bears witness to a world that thrived in harmony for 200 years, creating a distinct cultural quality. The exhibition "Polonia, Lithuania, and Ukraine" was presented as an alternative to a larger exhibition of the royal book collection and serves as an important symbol of a period when different nations, cultures, and languages intertwined peacefully on the same territory. The core of this exhibition thematically unites all the themes of

this ceremonial event and expresses our hope for a future Europe, free from the cruelty of war. This exhibition was also jointly prepared by Polish and Ukrainian colleagues. For the demonstration, 120 books from the collection of King Stanisław Poniatowski at VNLU were prepared, which will soon be presented to the general public at the planned exhibition (Report from the presentation of the publication..., 2022).

In 2022, VNLU enhanced its international collaborations by signing a new agreement for the Ukrainian-Cypriot educational project "18<sup>th</sup> century Cyprus through the eyes of Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky" with the Cyprus Institute. This project aims to digitise and publish the unique manuscript "Travels of Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky to the holy places of the East: 1723-1747", held by VNLU's Institute of Manuscripts. Efforts are underway by VNLU and the Cyprus Institute to provide open access to this manuscript through the Digital Library of Cypriot Culture Edmí Leventis DIOPTRE and VNLU's electronic library UKRAINICA, facilitating international scholarly research. The scientific significance of this international collaboration lies in the planned unique analyses of manuscripts from the VNLU collections by specialists from the Cyprus Institute using non-invasive methods (XRF) to analyse ink composition and check for other components during the "fieldwork" of the Cypriot team. The project is unique in that it brings together researchers from various fields of science, art, culture, and technology with the goal of studying and uncovering a manuscript and rare drawings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its implementation will provide the Ukrainian, Cypriot, and global scientific communities and users with open information and free access to the text of manuscripts and drawings by Vasily Barsky from holy places located in Cyprus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the Cyprus Institute work closely to support further research into the history and culture of Cyprus and Ukraine, disseminating knowledge about V. Grigorovich-Barsky and his activities by incorporating manuscripts and other documents into the global scientific space (Report on the library and information activities..., 2023).

In 2023, VNLU actively pursued both the implementation of provisions from existing bilateral cooperation agreements, in accordance with plans approved by the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and the development of prospects for international cooperation with new partners. A significant step in expanding VNLU's international ties was the initiation of a partnership and the signing of an agreement with the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan on October 9, 2023 (Agreement on Cooperation between the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan and Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine. VNLU, October 9, 2023), which encompasses collaboration in library-information, scientific-organisational,



and research activities, particularly focusing on book culture, publishing, library science, and bibliography. A key aspect of this cooperation is the joint library-information activity, aimed at creating a unified informational and cultural space between Ukraine and Azerbaijan, which includes the exchange of cultural and scientific resources, joint research projects and programmes, and sharing expertise in library science and cultural exchange, which are crucial for deepening mutual understanding and cultural interaction between the two countries.

In addition, proposals for cooperation with national libraries in Turkey, Egypt, Spain, the National Library of Wales, and leading libraries in Canada were developed, along with the review and renewal of existing agreements. It is noteworthy that specific areas of interaction with these countries laid the groundwork for the intensification of international communication. For instance, in March 2023, representatives from the Yunus Emre Institute visited VNLU to discuss prospects for scientific and educational cooperation between the institutions and possibilities for digitising Turkic manuscripts from the "Collection of Manuscripts of the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities 1839-1922". Additionally, there were several meetings between VNLU management and coordinators of programmes from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) in Ukraine aimed at negotiating and developing scientific and information cooperation between VNLU and Nation's Library of Turkey, initiating a Turkic collection at VNLU, and other potential cooperation directions. At the invitation of the Embassy of Turkey in Ukraine, VNLU representatives attended cultural and scientific events, including the concert "Two Nations – One Heart" (June 16-17, 2023), a reception on the occasion of the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey (October 30, 2023), and participated in the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Turkey-Ukraine: Language, Culture, History" on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Republic of Turkey (November 21-22, 2023).

A notable aspect of international cooperation is the direct professional contacts and involvement of foreign colleagues in various scientific and cultural events, including conferences, seminars, and training sessions aimed at enhancing qualifications, preparing joint scientific explorations, and bibliographic works, and organising exhibitions. A particular focus of VNLU in this period (2022-2023), as previously mentioned, was on developing strong partnership relations with the international library community, foreign library-information institutions, and scientific and cultural institutions, both within and outside Ukraine. One form of international cooperation is participation in international events involving library professionals, scientists, cultural figures, and experts. International scientific conferences serve as platforms for discussing contemporary challenges in the library sector, exchanging experiences, and presenting the latest research. In 2023, one of the key

international events organised by VNLU was the annual international scientific conference "Library. Science. Communication. Current Issues in the Preservation and Innovative Development of Scientific Libraries", held on October 3-5, 2023 (Vasylenko *et al.*, 2023). The conference was highly praised by foreign colleagues as a powerful signal demonstrating the resilience of Ukrainian librarians and a unifying factor for librarians during the war, facilitating discussions on current issues in the further development of the library sector. The participation of representatives from leading Ukrainian and foreign libraries, scientific and educational institutions, including the British Library, the National Library of Sweden, the National Library of Germany, the National and University Library in Zagreb (Croatia), the National Library of Poland, the Yunus Emre Institute in Kyiv (Turkey), the Royal Military College of Canada, Vilnius University (Lithuania), etc., ensured significant scientific discussions, effective exchange of experiences, and ideas between Ukrainian and foreign experts. Such active international interaction has become a platform for collaboration in library science research, focusing on the development and refinement of information and communication activities and innovative approaches in librarianship (Vasylenko *et al.*, 2023).

During the conference, a series of notable events occurred that were significant at both national and international levels. In 2023, marking the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the horrific tragedy of the Holodomor for the Ukrainian people, Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine significantly intensified its efforts in this area and participated in honouring the memory of the Holodomor victims by organising a series of initiatives dedicated to this tragic page in Ukrainian history. Throughout 2023, one of the directions of the VNLU's international activities included active collaboration on a project to immortalise the memory of Welsh journalist Gareth Jones (1905-1935) – the exposé of the Holodomor and the crimes of the Soviet regime against the Ukrainian people in the Western press. Within the framework of this international conference, a memorial plaque was unveiled in honour of Gareth Jones, and a digital copy of Jones's archive was transferred to the library's department foreign Ukrainica (Zarubizhna Ukrainica). The establishment of the memorial plaque for Gareth Jones and the integration of his archives into the VNLU's collections are significant steps in preserving and disseminating knowledge about the tragedy, underscoring the international dimension of VNLU's activities. The international communication of VNLU involved professors, scholars, and parliamentarians from Canada, Wales, and the Ukrainian diaspora, highlighting its commitment to fostering global dialogue and understanding through its cultural and academic initiatives (International conference on social resilience..., 2023).

As a scientific research institution subordinate to the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, VNLU

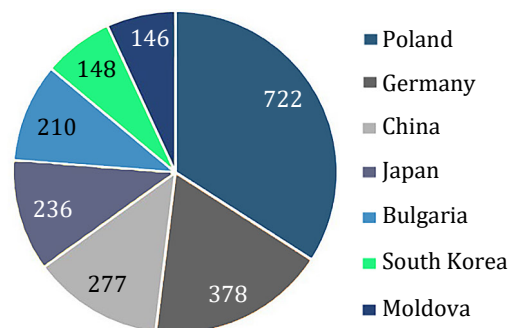
actively participates in academic international events, organises international exhibitions, and arranges meetings with scholars from foreign academic institutions, libraries, and museums. For instance, VNLU hosted representatives from the Polish and U.S. Academies of Sciences. Special guests included Jerzy Duszyński, special advisor on cooperation with Ukraine and former President of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) from 2015 to 2022, Vaughan Turekian, Executive Director of the Policy and Global Affairs Division at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and Franklin Carrero-Martinez, Head of Global Sustainable Development at the same division. They met with S.I. Pyrozhkov, Vice-President of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, L.A. Dubrovina, Director General of VNLU, and Yu.S. Kovtaniuk, Deputy Director General for Scientific Work at VNLU. The foreign scientists expressed great interest in VNLU's unique collections, including extremely rare books and other exhibits. They highly praised the richness and value of the collections and the conditions of their preservation. Discussions also covered the prospects for constructive cooperation in related fields among the academies of sciences of Ukraine, Poland, and the USA (Prospects of international cooperation..., 2023).

In April 2023, VNLU submitted an application for the participation in "Polish Bookshelf in Ukraine" (2023) pilot project, a cultural initiative launched by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine. The project is funded by Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland, and is implemented by the Polish Book Institute, in partnership with the Ukrainian Institute of the Book, and aims to contribute to extending intercultural exchange and cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian institutions by promoting intercultural dialogue and amplifying the presence and appreciation of Polish literature in Ukraine. In December 2023, the first set of 20 books, in three copies each, totalling 60 books, was received by VNLU. This collection comprises translations of Polish classical and modern literature into the Ukrainian language. It features historical novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz, plays by Zbigniew Herbert, children's stories by Janusz Korczak, Dorota Terakowska, Justyna Bednarek, and Katarzyna Ryrych, and is enriched with works of prominent figures, such as Karolina Lanckoronska, Ryszard Kapuściński, Stefan Grabiński, Jacek Dukaj, Tomasz Gźivaczewski, Józef Czapski, and Stanisław Vincenz. The significance of this contribution extends beyond the mere expansion of library resources; it represents a deliberate effort to foster cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and scholarly research between the two nations. By facilitating access to translated works of Polish literature, VNLU contributes to promoting linguistic diversity, cultural dialogue, and intellectual exploration within the

academic community and beyond. This initiative underscores the critical function of national libraries in preserving and disseminating literary heritage across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, it exemplifies the potential of literary translations to serve as cultural ambassadors, enabling the exchange of ideas, narratives, and aesthetic values (Polish Bookshelf in Ukraine, 2023).

It should be noted that Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine has cultivated a tradition of presenting and making accessible foreign nations' book collections to VNLU's readers. It boasts significant collections in foreign languages within its main collection, as well as within the collections of Department of International Information and Foreign Relations of VNLU. Notably, it includes the Austrian Library, operational since 1992, which holds a collection of 16700 storage units. Specifically, within the Austrian Library section, two bookshelves, the "Liechtenstein bookshelf" and the "Switzerland bookshelf" are represented to visitors. The Liechtenstein bookshelf, initiated in 2004, was provided by the Principality of Liechtenstein, with facilitation by the Embassy of the Swiss Confederation. Continuing this practice, the Switzerland bookshelf was launched in 2014 to comprehensively represent Swiss literary culture. Both bookshelves are supported annually by the embassies of Liechtenstein and Switzerland, reflecting a continuous dedication to cultural exchange. Collectively, these collections form a cultural bridge, effectively connecting the literary legacies of Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Ukraine.

Despite the wartime conditions, VNLU continued its international document exchange (IDE), which the library maintained even in difficult circumstances. According to statistical data from reports for these years, in 2022, VNLU interacted with 539 institutions from 58 countries, through which the library received 3963 copies of foreign documents. The majority of documents were received from Poland, Germany, China, Japan, Bulgaria, South Korea, and Moldova (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Countries from which document annotations were received

**Source:** developed by the author based on Report on the library and information activities of V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine for the year 2022 (2023)

Compared to 2021, when 5014 copies were received, the number of foreign documents decreased by 21%. In accordance with existing bilateral agreements, during 2022, VNLU sent 1990 copies of Ukrainian publications to foreign institutions (Report on the library and information activities..., 2023). By the end of 2023, the number of VNLU's partners in the IDE decreased to 527 institutions in 58 countries. This was reflected in the number of received products, as during 2023, VNLU received 3027 copies of foreign documents. The largest arrivals were from Poland (620 copies), the Czech Republic (327 copies), Germany (276 copies), South Korea (256 copies), the USA (222 copies), China (170 copies), and Bulgaria (160 copies). In return, VNLU sent 3008 copies of Ukrainian publications to foreign partners, continuing to exchange scientific and cultural products at an international level.

The number of foreign documents received in 2023 decreased by 24% compared to 2022. The introduction of martial law in the country, along with other war-related circumstances (such as power outages and lack of internet access), negatively affected the receipt of publications. However, an increase in the number of documents was observed from countries such as South Korea, the Czech Republic, and the United States compared to 2022.

## Conclusions

The system of international cooperation at Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine has continued to develop and expand with new partnerships in the realm of effective sociocultural and library-information activities, despite the challenges imposed by martial law. During 2022-2023, a period marked by conflict and constrained funding, VNLU has significantly enhanced its collaborative efforts with foreign entities, international professional organisations, scientific communities, donors, and sponsors. This strategic engagement ensures the sustained operation and effectiveness of the library's

functions. The reviewed period was characterised by improved international communication and a broadening of collaboration forms. These efforts include exchanging insights, initiating joint projects, digitising cultural heritage, fostering professional growth, and securing international support for the safeguarding of scientific resources. Thus, VNLU's unwavering dedication to its mission of preserving and disseminating knowledge, despite the ongoing challenges of military conflicts, underscores its resilience and ability to maintain critical international connections under adverse conditions.

The findings further indicate that during this period, the international scientific cooperation system of VNLU has advanced into a new phase, becoming a crucial instrument in ensuring effective socio-cultural and library-information activities under martial law conditions. In response to Russian aggression, there has been a pressing need for VNLU to adapt to new circumstances, develop strategies to counter disinformation, build resilience strategies, and outline areas for international engagement. To meet these challenges, VNLU has actively strengthened its status as a dependable international partner, committed to preserving cultural heritage and enhancing scientific research through robust international relationships, collaboration, and humanitarian support. This research provides a foundation for further library science studies of the history of VNLU, comparative analysis of library practices, and the development of scientific and methodical recommendations for the mechanisms of implementation of international interaction and communication of Ukrainian libraries in crisis conditions.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflict of Interest

None.

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## Міжнародне співробітництво Національної бібліотеки України імені В.І. Вернадського: розвиток соціокультурної та наукової комунікації

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**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження визначається необхідністю підкреслити ключову роль Національної бібліотеки України імені В. І. Вернадського як провідного науково-методичного центру в бібліотечно-інформаційному комплексі України, особливо у сприянні міжнародній взаємодії в умовах кризи. Метою дослідження було вивчення змін в аспектах актуалізації міжнародної комунікації Національної бібліотеки України імені В. І.Вернадського протягом 2022-2023 років та виявлення основних напрямів і форм міжнародної взаємодії. Методологія дослідження ґрунтувалася на системному та структурному підходах, включаючи методи логічного, структурного та функціонального аналізу, з дотриманням наукової об'єктивності. Охарактеризовано основні аспекти, напрями та форми міжнародного співробітництва та їхню роль у системі міжнародних зв'язків бібліотеки. Результати засвідчили про те, що система міжнародного наукового співробітництва Національної бібліотеки України імені В. І. Вернадського увійшла в нову фазу розвитку та стала важливим важелем забезпечення ефективної соціокультурної та бібліотечно-інформаційної діяльності в умовах воєнного стану. Встановлено, що в умовах російської агресії виникла потреба адаптації бібліотеки до нових умов існування, а також пошуку механізмів протидії дезінформації, розробки стратегій "виживання" та формування векторів розвитку на міжнародній арені. Для досягнення цих цілей бібліотека активно працювала над зміцненням свого статусу як надійного партнера на міжнародній арені, забезпеченням збереження культурної спадщини та розвитку наукових досліджень через професійні міжнародні відносини, співпрацю та гуманітарну допомогу. Це дослідження надало важливі висновки для національних бібліотек та культурних установ щодо подолання кризових умов завдяки стратегічному управлінню та міжнародному співробітництву. Воно проілюструвало розвиток національної бібліотеки в період 2022-2023 років, пропонуючи модель для підтримки діяльності, збереження культурної спадщини та підвищення доступності інформації в умовах випробувань. Дослідження сприятиме подальшим науковим розробкам у галузі бібліотечно-інформаційної науки з фокусом на кризовому управлінні, міжнародній співпраці та змінній ролі бібліотек у суспільстві, що робить його цінним ресурсом для бібліотечних фахівців, політиків та науковців

**Ключові слова:** міжнародна діяльність національної бібліотеки; стратегія розвитку бібліотеки; міжнародна співпраця; діяльність бібліотеки в умовах воєнного стану; гуманітарні ініціативи