

IRYNA ZHURAVLOVA
cnb@karazin.ua

Central Scientific Library of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University
ORCID 0000-0002-4891-3269

THE CENTRAL SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY OF THE KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY UNDER RUSSIAN ATTACK

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ABSTRACT

This communication presents the damage of Ukrainian national library heritage resulting from the invasion of Ukraine carried out by Russia since February 2022 and lists the important facilities and priceless collections that are still in severe danger because of the Russian attacks. The text is illustrated with photographs documenting the scale of destruction.

KEYWORDS: librocide, bibliocide, Central Scientific Library of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Russian aggression on Ukraine

A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WAR

On the morning of February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin's troops launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. So began a war - a war that should never have happened in the 21st century. As a result of the barbaric rocket attacks, air strikes and shelling of Ukrainian cities, civilians, including women and children, are being killed and residential buildings, schools, universities and architectural monuments destroyed. This is not just a war crime - it is a genocide of the Ukrainian people and a crime against humanity.

The Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, located 40 km from the Russian border, is the intellectual capital of Ukraine, a city of universities and talented, creative, freedom-loving people. In just one month of war, more than one and a half thousand buildings have been destroyed in Kharkiv alone: 1,292 residential buildings, 76 schools, 54 kindergartens, 15 hospitals and 239 administrative buildings.

As a result of the Russian aggression against the Ukrainian people, Karazin University, founded in 1804, is being ruthlessly destroyed. Day-to-day shelling has damaged or destroyed all the University's buildings: the Main and the Northern buildings, the building of the School of Physics and Technology, the Karazinsky Sports Complex (destroyed by a direct hit), student dormitories, the University Clinic, the Museum of Nature and the historical building of the Central Scientific Library. The buildings where the university professors and staff reside are located in areas subject to constant severe shelling, where they are being damaged and becoming increasingly unfit for habitation.

On the second day of the Russian invasion, the building of the **School of Physics and Technology** on Akademika Kurchatova Avenue 31, in the Piatykhvatky area close to the Russian border, was damaged. This is one of four physics and related faculties that specialise in nuclear physics. The façade was damaged and the rooms inside suffered fire damage. The School's library contains 80,000 books on its specialist area.

On March 1, 2022 at 8 a.m. Russian aggressors bombed Maidan Svobody (Freedom Square) in the centre of Kharkiv. The explosion and following shock wave damaged two university buildings, blowing out the windows of the façade.

The Central Scientific Library is located in the Main building of the University, its book depository, reading rooms and library cards on the first floor and the seventh to fourteenth floors. The Library has two and a half million items of scientific literature, doctoral theses, periodicals, literary works (including 19th-century foreign language works), textbooks, documents and microforms.



FIG. 1. The Karazin University School of Business, affected by the war
/ 30.03.2022 / Photo Viktoriya Yakymenko

The shock wave damaged or blew out completely a large number of windows. The electricity, heating and water supply systems were also partially damaged, resulting in destruction of the heating pipes. As a result of leaks from the pipes, the central book depository, the reading rooms with their book stores and the computers were flooded and buried under pieces of the damaged ceiling. In addition, there is the extremely dangerous issue of mould and fungus.

On March 2, 2022 a direct missile strike on the university building in Myronosytska Street destroyed the building of Karazin University where the Economics Faculty and Karazin Business School were based. The building was completely destroyed.

On March 2, 2022, in another missile strike on the Maidan Konstytutsii (Constitution Square), rockets hit Palats Pratsi (the Palace of Labour), the Dormition Cathedral (one of the oldest cathedrals in Kharkiv, founded in 1657) was shelled and the historical building of the Karazin University Library and St. Antony's University Church were damaged. A hundred windows were blown out, the book depositories were covered with shattered glass and internal doors

were destroyed. The furniture, which was original, was damaged. As a result of the destruction of the windows, the temperature and humidity levels of the book depository, which holds a collection of unique publications, were compromised. Based on a preliminary inspection, the valuable book collections stored in this building appear to have been damaged by fragments of shells, shattered glass from windows and pieces of broken window frames and furniture. The water pipes have been destroyed, and with them the heating system. Given the weather conditions (frost, snow and rain coming in through the broken windows), the temperature and humidity fluctuations will strongly influence the preservation of the collections and could lead to mould and fungus. There is still a threat of new shelling. The building, which is an architectural monument, is in need of restoration. The interior decorations need to be assessed for damage and restored, including the unique stained-glass windows which were almost completely destroyed. The windows, which have unique frames, also need to be restored.

On March 18, 2022 a missile strike resulted in partial destruction of the Karazin University Institute in the State Administration building. Its library contains 80,000 volumes. The building is now in need of major repairs, restoration of the façade, new roofing and new windows. Currently it is impossible to assess the overall state of the collection and the damage it has suffered.

The Central Scientific Library of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University is one of the oldest and biggest libraries in the east of Ukraine. It has a total area of 10,164 m², including:

- Depositories (7,309.5 m²)
- Customer service area (1,123.3 m²)

Since February 24, 2022 the city of Kharkiv has been under round-the-clock shelling. Russian missile strikes have resulted in large-scale fires. Fighting is taking place near Kharkiv, and it is currently impossible to assess and document the damage due to the highly dangerous situation.

Ukrainian cultural heritage is under threat. Measures aimed at assessing the true state of the buildings' façades, interiors, book



FIG. 2. Institute of Public Administration of Karazin University, affected by the war / 30.03.2022 / Photo Viktoriya Yakymenko



FIG. 3. The library of the Karazin University, which suffered from the war. Photo by Victoria Yakymenko



FIG. 4. The Karazinsky Library, which was damaged by the war.
Photo by Iryna Zhuravlyova

collections and facilities for the maintenance, preservation and use of the collections will only be possible once the situation in Kharkiv stabilises and military activity ends.

The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine records online all war crimes against the Ukrainian cultural heritage committed by Russian troops. As of October 2022, 500 objects of Ukrainian cultural heritage were damaged or completely destroyed, and this number is increasing with each Russian missile fired reaching Ukrainian cities and villages.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine created an interactive map *Education under Threat* to track the destruction caused to Ukrainian educational institutions as a result of Russia's aggression on Ukraine.



FIG. 5. Historical building of the library. Photo by Vyacheslav Litvinov

It is not currently possible to assess the level of damage, destruction and loss of premises, collections, technical facilities and furniture, as Kharkiv and the Kharkiv Oblast remain in the combat zone. The following are just some examples of the damage and destruction caused:

1. Main building of the Library,

- Damaged and destroyed windows
- Destroyed ceiling in book depositories and reading rooms
- Disrupted water supply
- Books damaged with water (to be removed from the Library)
- Disrupted heating system
- Breakdown of temperature-humidity controls, resulting in mould on walls and books
- Partially destroyed computers in reading rooms and departments

2. Historical building of the Library,

- Damaged and destroyed windows (approximately 100)
- Destroyed heating system, damaged water pipes and radiators (100 radiators)

- Valuable book collections in the building damaged by shell fragments, shattered glass from windows and fragments of broken window frames and furniture as a result of a missile attack
 - Risk of mould on walls and rare books due to breakdown of temperature and humidity controls. Need for antifungal treatment of the basement, book depository walls and reading rooms
 - Damaged interior doors
 - Destroyed stained-glass windows
3. The building of the **School of Physics and Technology**, needs major repairs, restoration of the façade, new roofing and new windows. **It is not currently possible to assess the overall state of the collection and the premises and the damage to them.**
 4. The building of the **Educational and Scientific Institute of the State Administration**. **It is not currently possible to assess the overall state of the collection and the premises and the damage to them.**

Damages caused to the Karazin University by Russian aggressors amount to approximately 100 million euros. In order to support the university during the war and facilitate its rapid reconstruction, the Kharkiv Karazin University Foundation was established. Its purpose is to help the academic community preserve the intellectual potential of Ukraine and rebuild the university's infrastructure. Funds will be raised to provide humanitarian aid and carry out digitization, including the creation of a university data center ensuring safe space for students and university staff.

The preservation of library collections and buildings needs financial and material support. The first aid came in May from the Centre for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Ukraine through the National Library of Poland in Warsaw and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI), a complex of cultural, educational and scientific U.S. institutions that works with the government of Ukraine to help protect Ukrainian cultural heritage.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Library of Karazin University opened on January 30, 1805, two days after the Imperial University of Kharkiv was opened at the initiative of the prominent citizen, scientist and educator of the first half of the 19th century Vasyl Nazarovych Karazin (1773–1842). At the first meeting of the University Council, the French Professor Jacques Nicolas Belin de Ballu (1753–1815) was elected the first Librarian of the University Library.

The rare books collection of the Library is of great value for academics and researchers, be they historians, culture scholars, philologists or ethnographers. It is one of the biggest collections of any Ukrainian university library and has supplied a basis for many modern academic works. It is used not only by academics in Kharkiv but also by experts from various Ukrainian cities and from abroad.

In 1824 one of the first systematic printed catalogues in Ukraine was published, the „Cataloqus Librorum Bibliothecae Caesareae Universitatis Literum Charcoviensis” (Catalogue of Books of the Imperial University of Kharkiv, Kharkiv, 1824), compiled by the Rector of the University, Vasyl Yakovych Dzhunkovskiy (1767–1826). The catalogue describes a collection of 16,781 items.

At the end of the 19th century the Library’s collection comprised 150,000 books.

During World War II the area where the University Library was located was in occupied territory. As a result the Library lost over 60,000 academic books, periodicals, maps and related items. The total value of these losses was two million karbovantsi, according to the Nuremberg Trials (1945–1946).

In 1955, in honour of the 150th anniversary of the University’s founding, the building of the House of Projects, restored after the War, was given to Kharkiv University. On September 7, 1963 the Library started operating on nine stories of the new Main building of the University on Maidan Svobody (Freedom Square).

Rare and valuable publications are stored in the historical building of the Central Scientific Library.

As of February 23, 2022, the Library had a collection of 3,521,674 items.

A unique part of the Library's collection, comprising 581,150 items - the earliest being a Greek manuscript of the 12th century - are housed in the Rare and Valuable Books and Manuscripts Department in the historical building of the Library. The Rare Books Collection is listed on the **State Register of Scientific Objects of Ukraine with National Asset status** (by decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 650-r of August 28, 2013). The most valuable part of the Rare Books Collection consists of almost **85,000 items**, including manuscripts, handwritten books, 12th-20th century archives (2,000 items), 15th-18th century early printed works (34,000 items), 19th-20th century rare and valuable publications, including private libraries (24,000 items), and the 17-20th century periodicals collection, including magazines (14,600 items) and newspapers (10,400 items).

The manuscripts collection has been gradually built up throughout the entire existence of the Library. The documents it contains are unique written and cultural items of great historical and cultural value. Most of the texts in the handwritten collections were never printed, so many important Ukrainian written works are only preserved in these manuscripts.

The oldest Slavic handwritten book is a **15th-century Irmologion** - a collection of songs of praise for feasts and saints. Another unique item is the **1534 *Travnyk* from the library of Ivan the Terrible**, which is the first herbarium from a German incunable in translation. The collection of handwritten books also includes official documents by state officials, institutions and organisations (decrees, universals, charters, orders, statutes, certificates, metric books and so on). Among them are universals of Hetman Ivan Mazepa from 1687 and 1704; decrees personally signed by Catherine the Great, Paul I, Alexander I and Napoleon Bonaparte; decrees on parchment signed by the French kings Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI and Henry IV; letters by Ivan Franko, Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi and Mykola Kostomarov; and so on.

The Central Scientific Library's **collection of incunables** includes works only a few copies of which exist worldwide. The oldest include *The Mirror of Nature* by the French scientist and Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvais (Vicentius Bellocensis. *Speculum naturale*. Argentorati, 1473-76), Aristotle's *On Animals* (Aristoteles, *De animalibus*, Venezia, 1476) and Euclid's *The Elements* (Euclides, *Elementa*, Venezia, 1482), where for the first time gold was used in the printing of a book. The Dominican Albertus Magnus's work *On Animals* (Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus*, Mantova, 1479) is considered extremely rare. One of the most highly illustrated incunables is *The Nuremberg Chronicle* by Hartmann Schedel (Schedel Hartmann, *Liber chronicarum*, Nürnberg, 1493).

The collection of **books printed in Europe** (330 items) include works by prominent figures such as Albrecht Dürer, Martin Luther, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Philip Melanchthon and others, published in their authors' lifetime.

The collection of publications by **prominent 16th-18th century Western European typographers** includes works published by the Aldine Press, Elsevier, the Estiennes, Plantin and Foben.

The collection of 16th-18th century **books printed in Cyrillic** includes five copies of books published by the first Russian printer, Ivan Fedorov, among them *Apostolos* (Lviv, 1574) and the Bible (Ostrog, 1581), books by the Ukrainian typographers Mykhailo Sliozka, Fedir Balaban and Spirydon Sobol, books published by the printing houses of the Lviv and Vilnius-based fraternities, by the Ostroh, Kuteinsk, Novhorod-Siverskyi and Chernihiv printing houses, by the printing houses of Maksym Voshanka in Mohyliv and others.

The Library is also home to a collection that is unique in Ukraine: **publications by the Kharkiv University printing house**, which contains over 2,500 copies of works from before 1917. The Kharkiv University printing house was partly responsible for the development of Ukrainian journalism: university professors and students were the initiators, authors, editors and publishers of the first Ukrainian newspapers, magazines and almanacs - the Kharkiv Weekly (1812), Kharkiv Democritus (1816), Ukrainyskyi Visnyk (the

Ukrainian Herald, 1816-19), the Ukrainian Journal (1823-25) and Molodyk (New Moon, 1843-44).

The Central Scientific Library has also preserved the books of the **Kharkiv Collegium**, the first educational institution in the east of Ukraine. The collection includes over 300 works by Stefan Yavorsky (1658-1722), a well-known religious figure of the late 17th, early 18th century, whose library was for many years considered lost.

The largest collection of **early printed Ukrainian works in Cyrillic** includes publications by the printing house of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, including Pamvo Berynda's Lexicon (1627), the Kiev-Pechersk Paterikon (1678), the Synopsis by Innokentiy Gizel (1680) and the 1659 Decree of His Royal Highness for the Zaporozhian Cossack Army (1660). Ukraine only has two copies of the *Collection of the Most Necessary Things* by Timothy Mykhaylovych (Ostroh, 1580), one of which is in the Central Scientific Library. The 1628 Psalter (Kyiv, Tymofii Verbytskyi printing house) is little known among bibliographers and probably the only surviving copy in the world.

The Ukrainian renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s is represented by a large collection of periodicals, including Literary Fair (1928-1930), *Nova Generatsiia* (New Generation, 1927-1930), *Chervony Shliach* (1923-1936), *Hart* (1927-1932), *Vsesvit* (Universe, 1925-1934) and works by members of the Ukrainian Executed Renaissance published in their lifetime.

Polish was the first Slavic language taught at Kharkiv University. In 1818 at the initiative of the University's curator Seweryn Potocki, the Department of Polish Language was opened in the Faculty of History and Philology. The founding of the Department contributed to further additions to the collection of rare Polish publications. It is worth mentioning that prominent academics and public figures of Polish origin studied and worked at Kharkiv University. For example, the future Marshal of Poland, prominent statesman and politician and the first leader of the Second Polish Republic **Józef Klemens Pilsudski** (1867-1935) studied at the University.

The Polish collection of rare books consists of 400 copies of 375 different works published on the territory of modern-day Poland

in Polish or other languages, and published outside the country in Polish. It also includes publications by Polish authors printed in different languages in various cities across Europe. The oldest publication in it, dated 1554, is *Prognosticon astrologicum in Ecclipsim futuram Lunae, praesentis...*, Cracoviae: Marc Scharfenberger, 1554.

The collection includes sermons and related literature by Polish authors and books of the Holy Scriptures. Among the books on theology are works by prominent religious figures, preachers and writers such as Jakub Wujek (1540–79), Piotr Skarga (1536–1612), Joanicjusz Galatowski (1620–88) and Lazar Baranowych (1593–1693).

Also worthy of mention is Jan Bielski's (1714–68) *Widok Krolestwa Polskiego*, published in 1763 in Poznań.

The collection further contains a book by Piotr Skarga (Skarga, Piotr. *Żyoty świętych Starego i Nowego Zakonu*, Kraków, Andrzej Piotrkowczyk, [after 21 June] 1585) and Cesare Baronio's *Church History*, published in 1695 in Kalisz by Jan Kwiatkiewicz (Baronio, Cesare, *Roczne Dzieie Koscielne Od Roku Pańskiego 1198 Aż do lat naszych*, Kalisz, 1695).

The collection is also home to the following work by **Copernicus** (1473–1543): *Nicolai Copernici Torinensis De Revolutionibus orbium coelestium, Libri VI : <...> item De Libris Revolutionum Nicolai Copernici Narratio prima, per M. Georgium Ioachim Rheticum ad D. Ioan. Schonerum scripta/Nicolaus Copernicus*. – Basileae : Ex Officina Henric Petrina, [IX 1566]. – 2° ; [6], 213, [1], and many other publications.

THE LIBRARY BUILDINGS

In 1902 the first library building was constructed to a design by the university architect Victor Velychko (1864–1923) – a Pole by birth. The building included a great reading hall with 250 places, the necessary administrative areas and a book depository with a metal structure. The **Library of the University of Warsaw** was taken as the model for the Library. In October 1897 the Board of Kharkiv University requested and received plans, drawings and explanatory notes for the construction of the Library from the Board of the University of Warsaw.

The building of the Central Scientific Library of V. N. Karazin of the Kharkiv National University is an architectural monument of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and a local landmark (protected monument No. 428, registered by of the Executive Committee of Kharkiv Oblast No. 334 of April 30, 1980 and No. 61 of March 5, 1992). Since 1935 the Library has also occupied a large part of the building at Universytetska Street 25 (left wing), built in 1831, which is also an architectural monument (No. 11547 in the National Registry and protected monument No. 694/2 in the Kharkiv Oblast listings). Both buildings are important objects of cultural heritage with the status of national asset, registered in the **State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine** by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 928 of September 3, 2009 (No. 200002-N).

Translated by Marianna Tarnavska