Ukrainian Universities and Libraries during Russian military invasion in 2022

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I want to start first with saying thank you for inviting me and thank you to all my colleagues – all US research community for STANDING WITH UKRAINE! I know how much you care about values that both Americans and Ukrainians believe in - freedom, democracy, being able to decide for yourself what we want to do. These ideals, which we all believe in, were also established after World War II. And we believe this can never happen again.

And that's what happened in Ukraine now.

During Russian military invasion in Ukraine.

We wanted to be free and live peacefully in our independent country, with more than 1000 – years history, with beautiful territory and population close to 40 mln people. As a strong European country, equal among free nations, not a colony of an autocratic criminal empire.

However, Russia has other plans for Ukraine and our territory – wanting to destroy Ukrainian country and defeat Ukrainian nation.

This country or state has been known by various names throughout history: Muscovy, Russian Empire, USSR, Russia - it's all the same, anti-human, chauvinistic system. Because of Putin's authoritarianism, the Empire of Lies has always existed.

As you know Russia first attacked Ukraine eight years ago, in 2014 annexed Ukrainian Crimea and occupied part of Donbas and Luhansk regions.

On February 24, the Russian Army invaded Ukraine from the Belorussian border to Kyiv, as well as from Sumy and Chernigiv in the north and east, bringing true war to Europe for the first time this century.

Russian troops are dying in an attempt to occupy another country rather than defending their homeland. The Russian Federation's sickly imperial ambitions were the only reason for this war.

In the last few months, Russia has fired more than 2,000 such missiles, which have already killed hundreds of civilians and destroyed thousands of homes, schools, libraries, hospitals, museums… Even whole cities as Mariupol, Bucha, Irpin…
Let me present some photos from Ukrainian mass media…

Russian soldiers massacred civilians, raped women, and children, robbed homes, and stole away washing machines, dishes, socks, and underwear throughout the captured territory.
During this time since the Russian invasion, an estimated 3,100 civilians have died in Ukraine and more than 5 million Ukrainians have fled the country — creating Europe's biggest refugee crisis in a generation. Among them are the country's estimated 95,000 researchers…
More than 250 children were killed and 400 were wounded in few month…

Twenty-two thousand people of Mariupol city are reported to have been killed by Russian invaders. Every tenth is a civilian. In one city. Within two months.

So, without declaring war, Russia attacked a sovereign country, destroying it, killing its citizens with extreme cruelty, because it is simply located next to Russian border and "has the audacity" to demand for itself territorial integrity and choose the optimal security model. There is no logic here. As it is not present in many crimes against humanity. This is РАШИЗМ - ordinary fascism in its renewed version.

The Russian aggressor claims that he strikes only at military facilities in our country. But we collected numerous facts and arguments that refute this claim: Russian troops are destroying schools and universities, childcare centers and hospitals, maternity centers and theaters, libraries, and museums.

1,635 educational institutions – schools and universities - were affected by bombings and shelling. 126 of them were destroyed, for ex – Khakiv National University, Mariupol University etc.

On 24 February, education across Ukraine stopped at least for one month. Most school buildings in the Western regions of Ukraine are turned into temporary accommodation for refugees.

At least 15 libraries were almost **damaged in Chernigiv, Kharkiv, Sumy,** Starobilsk, Severodonetsk and this number is not final…

In the Kharkiv region on the night of May 7, the Russian military barbarians destroyed the National Memorial Museum of Hryhoriy Skovoroda – world famous Ukrainian philosopher - in the year when UNESCO celebrates his 300th anniversary.

Ukrainian books are being confiscated from libraries in Russian-occupied territory, and books are being burned, just as they were during Hitler's tyranny or in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, Because the written word, the book, and the language all matter. Culture is important.

By killing or plundering everything Ukrainian, the occupier wants to destroy the Ukrainian nation itself.

And if not to destroy, then to appropriate its history, culture and literature.

So academic and public libraries now (we have more than 18 000 public libraries in Ukraine and ab.350 university libraries) play a great role in preserving our memory, culture, literature and Science.

Many Ukrainian libraries are currently serving as refugee receiving centers, hostels, and logistics centers, as well as weaving military camouflage nets.

Home care and premedical courses are held here. Librarians in Kyiv and Kharkiv bring books to the metro, where people live during the bombings. At present, Ukrainian libraries primarily perform their social function and focus their work on refugees. Here everyone can make copies of documents, get advice on housing and humanitarian aid, get information about the schedule of transport, rules concerning curfew, may warm up, eat, get therapy.

It is quite difficult today to talk about the educational process and research in Ukraine , we have about 350 universities all around the country as well as more than 100 research institutions) . Now, many university students and teachers are either in the army or displaced in Ukraine or abroad. However, almost all universities have resumed distance learning since April and plan to end this academic year in July.

By the way, Ukrainian institutions have transferred all of their classes online, which has shown to be a success following the Covid-19 pandemic. MOODLE, ZOOM, MS TEAMS, and other programs are used.

Even in shelters, graduate students continue to work under the supervision of their master thesis advisors... After the shock of the early months of the war, many scientists are still working on their research projects. At home (if they have one) or elsewhere.

And everyone requires resources and assistance, including scientific, educational, and informational services. This assistance is provided by libraries.

We are grateful now for all support from our partners . Clarivate launched special plan for Ukrainian scholars with WoS access and not only (by the way Clarivate closed all business and stopped access in Russia). Elsevier has provided Ukrainian physicians with free access to the ClinicalKey, Complete Anatomy and Osmosis. Ukrainian scientists were also given access to electronic resources available within the Research4Life project. We are thankful for Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative for saving and protecting priceless Ukrainian archival, cultural, and scientific collections under threat.

Coursera and EdEx launched special plans for educational resources for Ukrainain students now.

Many universities have announced scholarship or educational programs for Ukrainian scholars and students. We are very grateful for such support.

However, we do not want all scientists and students to leave Ukraine permanently. It is critical to grow our country, both before and after the war, by advancing education and research, and worldwide opportunities allow us to work remotely.

It would be beneficial to obtain even more scholarly and educational resources, to involve more Ukrainians in joint research and educational projects, and to provide more trainings in the areas of e-resource management, research data management, reference managers, open access and open science movement services and resources... in library information systems management

We'd like to seek for long-term financial support for rebuilding Ukrainian universities, libraries after war.

We'd like to ask you about one more vital point: any research collaboration with Russian universities or libraries that supports violence against Ukrainians would be rejected.

All Ukrainians recognize that this is not only a military conflict; it is a PEOPLE'S CONFLICT in which we protect our families, our homes, our cities, and our country. Moreover, we protect not just our democratic principles and rights, as well as our freedom and independence, but all of Europe and the world.

So it's very important for all of us to try to stop Russia in doing this because it's not only defending Ukraine. It's also DEFENDING OUR COMMON VALUES.

It is difficult to imagine how international research collaborations will continue. It is impossible to say how many lives will be lost and from what ruin Ukrainians will need to rebuild. What is certain is that Ukrainians know who they are and what they fight for—TO BE AN EQUAL AMONG FREE NATIONS.

Finally NOW, I'd like to express my GRATITUDE TO UKRAINIAN MILITARY FORCES for their hard efforts, particularly for the fact that there is no air raid here at my location, so I don't have to evacuate to the bomb shelter and can communicate with you.

Thank you very much for your time and your kind support.

And also, thank you for STANDING WITH Ukraine.