Mapping Ukrainian Collections in US Public Libraries

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Abstract

Over 270,000 Ukrainians have come to the United States since the February 24th, 2022, full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.[1] This has raised demand for Ukrainian language materials that some public libraries have struggled to meet.

In order to facilitate the acquisition pipeline for libraries developing new Ukrainian language collections, we sought to identify libraries with strong existing collections, as well as those libraries that may need assistance with building these collections. We used OCLC data on Ukrainian language titles and their holding libraries. Two Washington State high school students with data science skills assisted us in the process, creating an interactive map showing the location of Ukrainian books in American libraries. We hope this map will be useful for improving the state of Ukrainian language collections to serve communities in the United States.

Objectives

- Map the availability of Ukrainian language book collections across U.S. libraries
- Create an interactive tool to connect communities to Ukrainian reading material

- Identify libraries with sizable Ukrainian language collections for further research
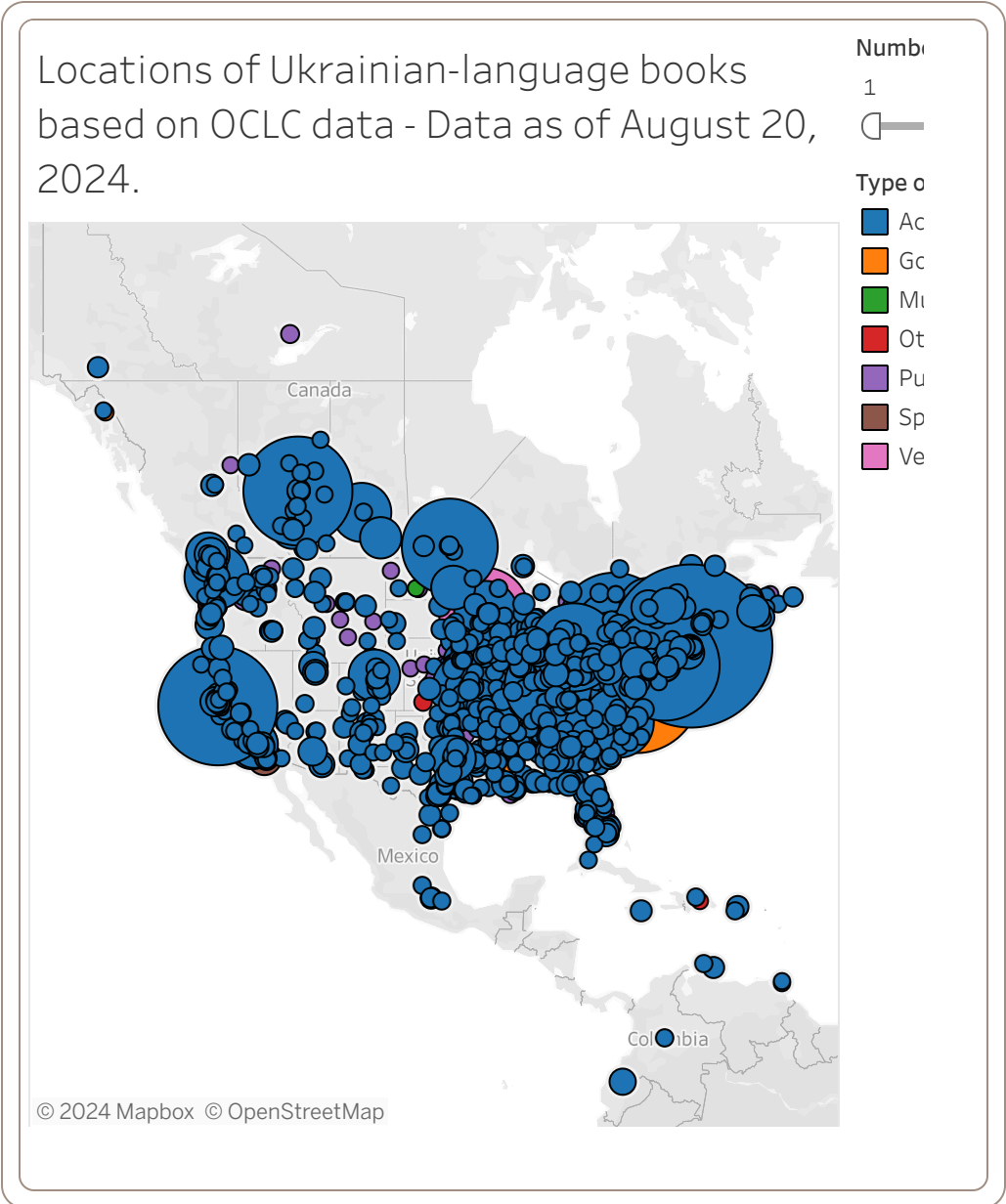
Methods

Ukrainian-language books were identified by creating an OCLC WorldShare query collection using the query la="ukr", resulting in a total of over 800,000 records retrieved on May 5, 2023. We used MarcEdit to extract and compile each book's OCLC number from the System Control field (035 $a) and convert the resulting list to .tsv format.

We used R to retrieve holdings data for each OCLC number from the WorldCat Search API, and counted each mention of an institution.

Next, we used a Python script to retrieve location and institution type information from the WorldCat Registry API and used this new dataset to generate the interactive visualization using Tableau.
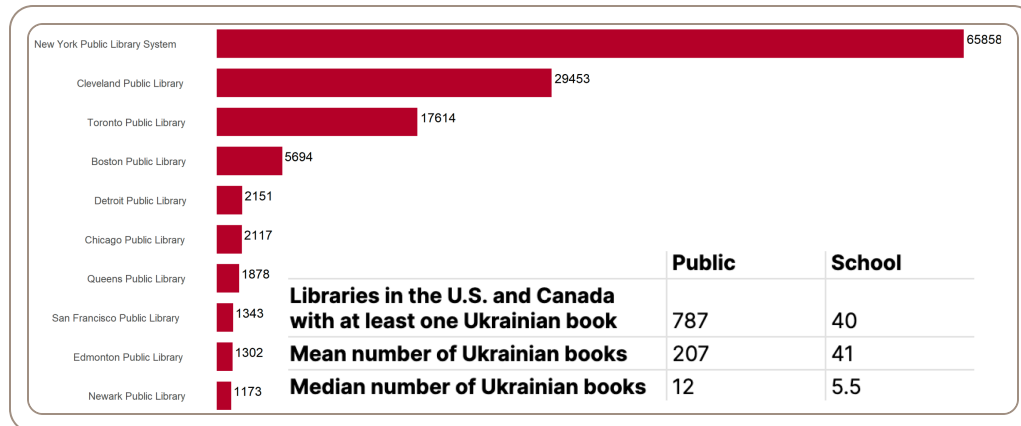
Figure 1. Interactive map of Ukrainian language book holdings by library

Locations of Ukrainian-language books based on OCLC data - Data as of August 20, 2024.

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© 2024 Mapbox   © OpenStreetMap

The [map] above gives an overall picture of the state of Ukrainian book collecting in the US. Academic library collections are by far the biggest. Harvard University has the largest collection at 123,446 items. Among the largest non-academic collections identified through our research are the Library of Congress (74,414), Google (47,560), and East View Information Services (27,690), a vendor with headquarters in Moscow (Russia) and the US, which sells cataloging records to libraries through approval plans. Large collections are concentrated in the Eastern and Midwestern US, with other substantial collections at the University of Alberta (66,244), University of Manitoba (49,737), and Stanford University (64,930).

Note that holding numbers are determined by OCLC records and will not reflect books not registered to a library in OCLC. Also, a holding record does not guarantee a book is publicly available.

Figure 2. Largest public library Ukrainian collections

	New York Public Library System	65858
Cleveland Public Library		29453
Toronto Public Library		17614
Boston Public Library		5694
Detroit Public Library		2151
Chicago Public Library		2117
Queens Public Library		1878
San Francisco Public Library		1343
Edmonton Public Library		1302
Newark Public Library		1173

	Public	School
Libraries in the U.S. and Canada with at least one Ukrainian book	787	40
Mean number of Ukrainian books	207	41
Median number of Ukrainian books	12	5.5

According to the data retrieved from OCLC, the largest Ukrainian book collections are in the New York Public Library System, Cleveland Public Library, and Toronto Public Library. These numbers may not reflect materials currently available through the library's catalog, but are still indicative of the scale of Ukrainian collections at the library. Large collections in smaller cities may reflect nearby Ukrainian communities.[2]

Discussion

This map represents our initial step for identifying Ukrainian language collections in US libraries. The project itself is indicative of a mutually beneficial collaboration between WSU faculty and Washington State high school students with advanced data science skills. It provided the students a mentorship opportunity and an opportunity to engage in academic research.

While we hope this map will be of assistance to anyone looking to find Ukrainian language books, we are still working to remove non-book items (such as serials or archival materials) from the data set. Still, the map may be a helpful starting point to find local libraries with rich Ukrainian collections.

Our next steps will be to continue cleaning and refining the data set, compare our data to library catalogs, and to investigate representation

of different books and book types (e.g. nonfiction, adult fiction, children's fiction) in publicly accessible collections.

We will use this data to design a survey of collection and acquisition strategies at institutions discovered through the visualization to identify challenges and success stories in meeting the reading needs of Ukrainian language communities.

References

1. Department of Homeland Security. (2023, February 24). Statement from Secretary Mayorkas on the Anniversary of Russia's Unprovoked Invasion of Ukraine. https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/02/24/statement-secretary-mayorkas-anniversary-russias-unprovoked-invasion-ukraine

2. Tucker, N. (2023, February 8). NLS Shares Ukrainian Books to Aid War Refugees. Library of Congress Blogs. https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2023/02/nls-shares-ukrainian-books-to-aid-war-refugees

Acknowledgments

Research Poster

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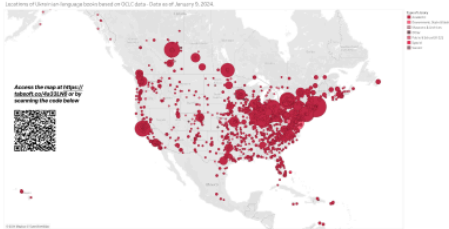
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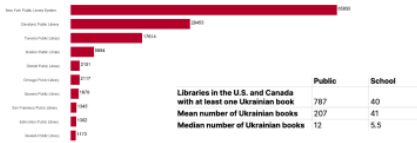

Locations of Ukrainian-language books based on OCLC data - Data as of January 5, 2024

Access the map at https://tabsoft.co/4a33LN6 or by scanning the code below

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References

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