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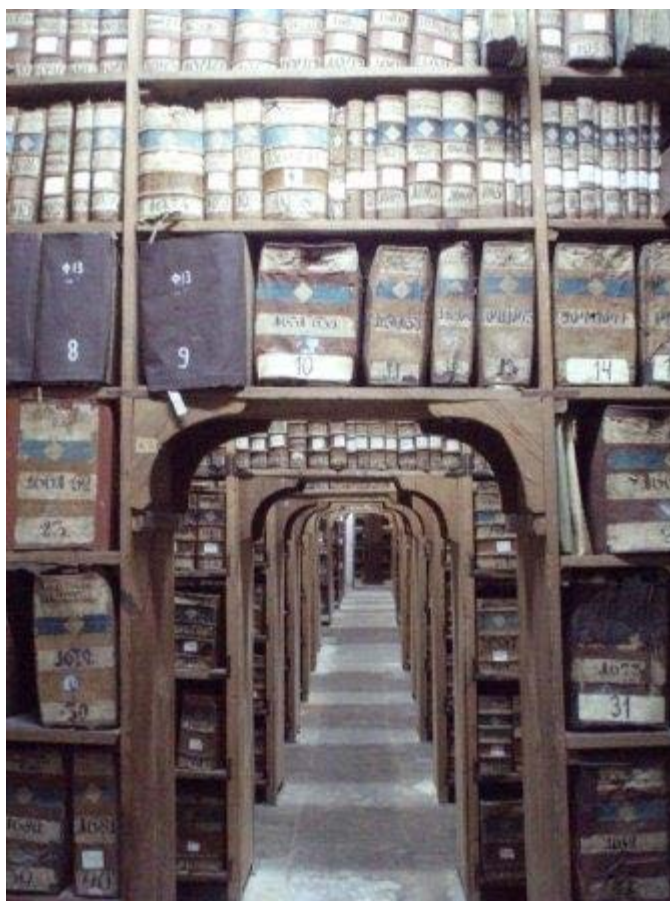
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L'VIV ARCHIVES PROJECT

U.S.-Ukraine Foundation: Building Ukraine's Future By Archiving the Past

Washington, DC, February 27, 2007 - *Skarb*, the Ukrainian word for "treasure," came immediately to mind when representatives of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation visited the 700 years of history encapsulated in Ukraine's Central State Historical Archives in L'viv. One million records - decrees, diplomas, ancient prints, maps, blueprints, dignitaries' personal documents, and records noting the activity of public, religious and cultural institutions and societies – detail the history of Ukraine's Halychyna region's relations with various European countries and entities from the 13th through the 20th centuries. Containing volumes in 13 languages, including Arabic, Armenian, English, French, German, Latin, Moldovan, Polish, Turkish and Ukrainian, the Archives' shelves span nearly 7.5 miles.



Ukraine's Central State Historical Archives in L'viv

However, the future of this *skarb* is uncertain. The Archives are located in the former Bernardynskyj Monastery and the former Royal Arsenal, historical structures that date back to the 17th century, which were not intended to house valuable documents requiring special ventilation and treatment. Since the buildings had never undergone major renovation, they are in dismal condition.

Consequently, on a daily basis, the valuable documents are exposed to humidity, mold, and sunlight that enter through the Archives' windows and cracked walls and damage the records. The danger of an electrical fire caused by an outdated electrical system constantly looms over the Archives. High levels of humidity are significantly harmful to the records, and partial repairs, with finances from the Archive's budget, have not produced any significant results.

In August 2005, the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, in cooperation with the R'fa'aye-nu Society, launched the L'viv Archives Preservation Project, a \$105,000 initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The project was built upon the proposal of Mira Brichto, founder of the R'fa'aye-Society. Ms. Brichto approached the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation with the idea of creating a project to preserve the cultural and historical treasures contained within the L'viv Archives. Thus, a two year initiative was born. On the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation's side, the project is coordinated by the Foundation's L'viv Western Ukrainian Regional Training Center, and assisted by Chrystia Sonevytska, Special Projects Coordinator and Volunteer from Washington, DC.

Through the L'viv Archives Preservation Project, the mission of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation is to preserve the rich history and culture housed in the Archives, and to prevent deterioration of the Archives' by the elements of nature. In support of the project's work, the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation has a unique approach. The Foundation works directly with the contractors who perform the building restorations on a project-to-project basis. No funds go directly to Ukraine's Central State Historical Archives in L'viv.



Centuries-old documents are damaged by sunlight that enters through broken windows

To date, through the L'viv Archives Preservation Project, excavation work has been done on the water canal system to provide better drainage, the electrical system has been partially repaired, and the foundation of the building has been improved.

"This project is vital to preserving not only Ukrainian history and culture, but the histories and cultures of Belarus, the Vatican, Italy, Lithuania, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, and France that are documented in the L'viv Archives. Comprehensively catalogued in the Archives is also the history of the Jewish community in western Ukraine. It is an honor for the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation to be part of this important initiative," says John A. Kun, Foundation Vice President.

Upcoming tasks for which funding is still available through the USAID grant include the introduction of chemical treatments to better preserve the books, training of the Archival staff in modern conservation technologies, and bringing in experts from various European countries to share best practices in Archival technologies.

Since the L'viv Archives Preservation Project is due to expire in June 2007, more assistance is direly needed to help continue the Archival restoration efforts. The lengthy "to do" list includes roof repairs, chemical treatment of documents, repair of the water pipes and electrical wiring system, installation of an air conditioning and heating system, partial floor and window repairs, placement of grates on windows, reparation of the buildings' facades, and installment of a fire alarm system.



Cracked walls let in moisture and humidity that are harmful to the Archives' records

In order to extend the life of the documents, there is an urgent need to digitize the Archives' records. In order to make this a reality, there is an urgent need for microfilm machines, printers, scanners, modems, machines to view microfilmed materials, machines to bind documents together, computers, chairs and tables for the reading room, electrical lamps, and document holders and shelves for storing documents. Assistance is also needed in developing the Archives' website, supporting the Archives' publications, and displays. Additionally, it is important to further train Archival staff in new conservation technologies via internship programs at Archival institutions in Ukraine and abroad, and participation in Archive-related conferences and seminars.

"We are deeply grateful to the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation and the R'fa'aye-nu Society for their work in helping us with the restoration work of the Archives. However, much work still needs to be done, and we encourage the assistance of new donors. For example, the leaking roof still needs to be repaired, the walls need to be painted and the cracks in the walls need to be patched up, and new windows are needed. More importantly, we would like to digitize the documents. This will not only prolong the life of the documents, but make them readily accessible to the public," explains Diana Pelts, Director of Ukraine's Central State Historical Archives in L'viv.

For more information about Ukraine's Central State Historical Archives in L'viv, please visit: <http://www.archives.gov.ua/Archives/index.php?ca04>.

The U.S.-Ukraine Foundation would like to expand its activity in the area of historical and cultural preservation. We are seeking individuals to offer ideas for future preservation projects, to volunteer,

and to financially support program activities. If you would like to assist the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation in this field, please contact Chrystia Sonevytska at xpucmias@yahoo.com or at (202) 223-2228.

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