Publication of documentary sources in Ukraine in the era of independence

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Abstract. The purpose of the article is to summarize the experience of independent Ukraine in publishing collections of historical documents in the main areas and periods. The research methodology is based on comparison strategies, typology, principles of historicism. The logic of the presentation of the material is based on the problem-historical principle, which allows to reveal the main topics and directions of the published collections of documents on the history of Ukraine in a chronological order. The Scientific Novelty. The article covers archeographic publishing activity for 30 years of our state independence. Emphasis is focused on joint publications of archives with academic institutions and universities, regional centers, public organizations, foreign institutions and researchers. It has been shown that the volume of documentary materials published during the independence of Ukraine is quite large and has created thematic blocks with a very broad chronology in the information space.
of Ukraine. The authors single out two main periods: the 1990s and the 2000s, which differ in their thematic areas, accents and approaches to covering historical issues, involvement in publications of central, regional, foreign scientific and public centers, the use of modern information technology. The Conclusions. Historians and archivists generally cope with the task of showing an objective picture of historical events, but the issues of methodological plan, a qualified use of the latest information technologies, new types of sources remain topical. It is necessary to respond more quickly to the urgent information requests of the population, topics that are discussed actively, including in the world, and especially saturated with clichés, myths, and where there is an external informational influence on Ukraine. This response will increase the presence of the Ukrainian archeographic product in the national and global information space.

Key words: documentary editions, state archival institutions; collections of documents and materials.
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(Kozlov, 2017). This new significance of a historical document sets the task for historians and archivists to satisfy the information needs of citizens more fully by means of publication of documentary sources, as well as to search for modern forms of representing them to the population. The above mentioned issue makes it topical to analyze the main tendencies in the publication of archival documents on the history of Ukraine during the period of independence.

The Analysis of Sources and Publications. A number of disciplines deal with the study of the publication history of documentary sources, in particular, Archeography, Source Studies, Archival Studies, etc. H. Boriak, L. Dubrovina, O. Zhurba, Ya. Kalakura, O. Kupchynsky, N. Myronets, V. Nimchuk, V. Ulianovsky, V. Shandra and the others made a significant contribution to their development. The works of P. Sokhan (Sokhan, 1992; 2001) and O. Mavrin (Mavrin, 2008; 2017) are of great importance, in which the current issues and directions of work of the Ukrainian archeography are defined. In a number of works by the Ukrainian scholars, the publishing activities of individual institutions in certain directions and periods are covered in detail (Papakin, 2010; Ukhach, 2021; Yakubovskyi, 2021). It is worth noting the works of foreign scholars on the related issues (Kozlov, 2017; Nestsiarovich, 1997; Sabennykova & Khymyna, 2016). The analysis of scientific work on the specified issue allows us to assert that the history of the publishing activity of documents and materials on the history of Ukraine, which covers the period since 1991, has significant achievements, and at the same time it needs further progress, clarification of assessments, in particular the selection of development stages.

The purpose of the article is the experience generalization of independent Ukraine regarding the publication of collections of historical documents according to main directions and periods.

The Results of the Research. The Ukrainian historical heritage continues to be in a state of formation and awareness by the society. It cannot be complete without the constant involvement into the scientific circulation of new or little-known documentary sources of various directions and complement them with a professional commentary. It is worth mentioning that in the history of Ukraine, the documentary heritage has undergone significant distortion and destruction, as well as silencing, banning, and removal. A significant volume of archival documents, manuscripts, library and other collections disappeared due to a careless treatment of them. The archival documents were burnt or exported, in particular to other countries, during wars, fires and other tragic events.

Some examples should be provided. At the beginning of the 1920s, during the establishment of the Soviet management apparatus in the Ukrainian SSR, which was accompanied by a strict economy of resources, a low-quality yellow paper, sometimes wrapping paper or cigarette paper, was used in clerical work; the ink was diluted. Over several decades, in the archives these documents began to deteriorate, fall apart, the ink faded and the text was lost rapidly. During World War II (from June of 1941 till October of 1942), the management of archival institutions evacuated the documents, however, due to the lack of vehicles, it was not possible to remove everything and a significant number of them were burned. Thus, the Central Party Archive of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U lost about 70% of documents (Zhurzha, 2018, p. 180). At the end of 1942, the Regional Administration of Archives, Libraries and Museums under the Reich Commissar of Ukraine was established in occupied Ukraine, and the following year the mass export of valuable documents to fascist Germany began (Gamaliia, Dovzhuk & Sichkarenko, pp. 82–83, 89).
The active process of the documents declassification, access to archives, special storages began at the end of the 1980s. This process was facilitated by the decision of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine to renew the work of the Archaeological Commission in 1987 and to establish the Institute of Ukrainian Archeography on its basis in 1991 with the publication “Ukrainian Historiographic Yearbook”. The opportunity to acquaint the scientific community with foreign editions of the Ukrainian Studies centers in Europe and America, in which valuable sources on the history of national movements, spiritual life, social and political thought in Ukraine were published actively, expanded. This expansion made it possible to start an active preparation and publication of documentary sources.

The Ukrainian public had the opportunity to get acquainted with the documents that covered unknown or little-known events, and to deepen understanding of historical processes. In particular, this concerns such phenomena as the survival of the civilian population under the conditions of the fascist occupation, the life of the population of the western and southern regions that became part of Ukraine in 1939 – 1940, industrialization of the Ukrainian SSR, famine, activities of law enforcement, censorship, other authorities, etc. Large arrays of documents were discovered in dozens of state archives, special storage facilities, etc. Their study was facilitated by the order of the State Archives Committee of Ukraine “On the Preparation of the Register of Declassified Funds (1991 – 2000)” No. 17 dated March 21, 2001. Nowadays, three volumes (5 books) of “The Register...” have been published. The presentation of information on each declassified archival fund is structured in the form of a descriptive article in accordance with the requirements for accounting and reference documents.

Analysis of publications of central and regional archives, academic institutes, public organizations and Ukrainian centers abroad, etc., as well as historiography of the above mentioned issue gave the authors the opportunity to single out two main periods in the thirty-year archeographic publishing activity. It should be noted that at each stage of the country’s development, different goals and priorities were set before the sphere of documentary publications by the state administration bodies, the public, and scholars. At the same time, any periodization of social processes is conditional, it has its own logic of development, because certain processes intersect or go beyond the boundaries of an outlined stage.

The first period: from 1991 till 2000 is characterized by the so-called archival revolution (which began at the end of the 1980s), and was followed by the “archeographic revolution”, which in its turn is characterized by the public interest boom in the publication of declassified or little-known documents of the country’s history. At first the documents were published in magazines and newspapers.

The second period: from the beginning of the XXIst century till the present time, is marked by a deeper theoretical understanding of the problems of archeography, an active involvement of the Ukrainian studies centres abroad, regional state institutions and public organizations into the publishing activity, expansion of the topics of publications. This period is characterized by the widespread use of modern information and communication technologies concerning publications on the Internet, which, meanwhile, is of a rather controversial nature.

In historical retrospect, looking at the topic of documentary editions of the first period, we notice the emphasis not only on the publication of declassified or little-known documents, but also on the inheritance and continuation of certain editions from the Soviet period. Central state archives, including cooperation with academic institutes, continued publishing traditional collections of documents and materials according to the plans elaborated in the 1940s – the 1980s (Mavrin, 2017, p. 33).
In the first place there are collections summarizing the legislative activity of the Verkhovna Rada and executive bodies of the state: the Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, published since February of 1941, and the Collection of Resolutions of the Government of Ukraine, which was published from 1938 till 1996. In 1997, “The Official Gazette of Ukraine” was launched, and in 1998 – “Collection of Governmental Regulations Acts of Ukraine”. The tradition of publishing documents on the history of Ukraine during the Soviet era was started in 1939 by the Institute of History of Ukraine of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. The series of documentary collections “History of Ukraine in Documents and Materials” included a wide range of thematic publications. The majority of the documentary publications of the Institute of History of Ukraine and other academic institutes are characterized by adherence to the rules of texts publishing accepted in science with maximum preservation of their content and form, and significant comments.

The picture of document making by state institutions is complemented by the research of the source base of the Archive Fund of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which has been carried out by the Institute of Archival Studies of V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine since 1989. This research of the source base of the Archive Fund is reflected in the series “Sources from History of Science in Ukraine” – collections of documents and other sources of the history of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. During the years of 1993 – 2012, materials were published about the activities of the Academy in 1918 – 1955. In 1997, 2004 and 2007, the publication “Collection of Copies of Documents and Materials on History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine” was published. Publishing house “Naukova Dumka” also published a number of collections of documents on the participation of academic institutes in minimizing the consequences of the 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Since the end of the 1980s, documentary sources about such a terrible page of our history as the famine during the interwar and postwar years began to be published. At first in foreign historiography (Conquest, 1986; Carynnyk, Luciuk & Kordan, 1988) and among domestic researchers there were publications of documents on the Holodomor of 1932 – 1933. These are the publications of S. Kulchytsky, A. Perkovsky and S. Pyrozhkov, R. Pyrih and the others. Since 1991, the number of collections of documents has rapidly increased not only due to the unprecedented declassification of documents of the state archives, but also due to the possibility of collecting evidence. The first important collections of documents published by scholars of the Institute of History of Ukraine were: “Collectivization and Famine in Ukraine 1929 – 1933” (Kyiv, 1992), “Famine of 1921 – 1923 in Ukraine” (Kyiv, 1993), “Famine in Ukraine in 1946 – 1947” (Kyiv, 1996), etc. The Ukrainians in Canada published the following documents: “The Famine of 1921 – 1923 and the Ukrainian Press in Canada” (Toronto, 1992). Although, the highest intensity of publication of documents on this issue was achieved in the 2000s, in the bibliographic index “The Holodomor in Ukraine. 1932 – 1933” (Odesa – Lviv, 2001) there were illustrated about 600 items of various publications of the 1990s.

Historical science, along with the requirements for the publication of previously unknown documents, faced the issue of revising the methodological principles concerning their evaluation. Thus, in the editions of the 1990s, a considerable attention was paid to the events of the 1917 – 1921 Revolution, which were read in a new way. These are collections of documents and materials in 2 volumes “The Ukrainian Central Council” (Kyiv, 1996), “Peace Negotiations between the Ukrainian State and the RSFSR in 1918” (Kyiv, New York, Philadelphia, 1999) and the others.

Since the 1990s, the publication of little-known documents on the tragic pages of the history of national minorities representatives has also begun in Ukraine in the XXth century. In particular, this is the collection “The Germans in Ukraine. The 20s – 30s of the XXth century” (Kyiv, 1994), “The Deported Crimean Tatars, the Bulgarians, the Armenians, the Greeks, the Germans: Collection of Documents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (1989 – 1999)” (Kyiv, 1999), etc.

Under the new historical conditions, documentary publications which dealt with the class struggle, workers and peasants movement in Ukraine no longer attracted researchers as before. At this stage, only the documents “Peasant Movement in Ukraine: 1569 – 1647” were published (Kyiv, 1993), during the following period, the role of the working class was considered only at the level of an individual enterprise: “Historical Memory of Dnipropetrovsk Region: Events, Facts, Names”, in 5 volumes (Dnipropetrovsk, 2015).


Thus, in the collections of documents published during the first post-Soviet period of the 1990s there were formed thematic blocks with a broad chronology, and the issues and concept of documentary publications changed significantly. Along with new topics of publications, traditional ones (history of the revolution, the civil war, etc.) they also gained significant scientific objectivity and comprehensiveness. To a sufficient extent, the publications of documentary sources were coordinated by M. S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archeography and Source Studies of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. In 1992, the founder and director of the Institute, P. S. Sokhan, in the programme article “The State and Prospects of the Development of Ukrainian Archeography” named the priority and the first-priority objectives: publication of sources on the history of the Ukrainian Cossacks; publication of documents of the 1920s and 1930s about famine and political repression in Ukraine; publication of monuments of the Ukrainian historiography, in particular, the creative heritage of outstanding figures; publication of foreign sources on the history and culture of Ukraine, etc. (Sokhan, 1992). The Ukrainian archeography developed in this direction mainly.

During the second period: in 2000 – 2020, we observe, on the one hand, the continuation of the publication of documentary sources on the topics covered in the 1990s, on the other hand, the emergence of new thematic directions and much wider involvement of regional and foreign researchers and institutions in the publishing activity.

Collections about military events during World War II are among the thematic areas that began to appear in our millennium actively. Among them: “Sources on the History of F. M. Mykhailov Partisan Unit” (Kyiv; Chmelnytsky, 2015), “Magazines on Combat Operations of the Troops of
the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts. October of 1943 – 1944” (Cherson, 2015), “Burned Villages and Towns of Chernihiv Region in 1941 – 1943: Crimes against the Civilian Population” (Chernihiv, 2013), “War through the Eyes of Children” (Kharkiv, 2013), etc. Their peculiar feature is a wide involvement in the publications of not only the central state, but also regional and city archives, regional councils, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, Search Agency for the creation of scientific documentary series “Book of Memory” and “Rehabilitated by History”, Podillia History Research Center, Union of Archivists of Ukraine, etc. Participation of regional archives, public organizations, foreign partners brought an element of concreteness, comprehensiveness, and novelty concerning the involvement of unknown layers of documentary sources. This concreteness allows you to analyze historical events thoroughly, with the involvement of sources of various levels. Scholars began to write about a new type of documentary publications – “cascade” (Kozlov, 2017; Sabennykova & Khymyna, 2016).

Publication of collections of documents on famine during the interwar and postwar years continued in the 2000s with a greater intensity as compared to the previous period. These documents were prepared by scholars of academic institutes and central archival institutions: “We strike the Big Bell...”, “The Holodomor of 1932 – 1933 through the Eyes of the Ukrainian Diaspora” (Kyiv, 2008), “Famine of 1932 – 1933 in Ukraine as Genocide” (Kyiv, 2008). A feature of this period was also the widespread involvement of regional researchers in publications and documents of the region, district, and village levels: “Neither a Grave nor a Sign of the Cross: the Holodomors of 1932 – 1933 and 1946 – 1947 in Chornuhynsky District of Poltava Region” (Chornyhy; Kyiv, 2004), “Famine and Holodomor in Podillia of 1920 – 1940” (Vynysa, 2007), “Rozkurkulennia, Collectivization, Holodomor in Dnipropetrovsk Region (1929 – 1933)” (Dnipropetrovsk, 2008), “Famine of 1932 – 1933 in Kirovohrad Region” (Kirovohrad, 2008), “Kherson Region. The Holodomor of 1932 – 1933” (Kherson, 2008), “The Holodomor of 1932 – 1933 in Chernihiv Region” (Chernihiv, 2009), “Famine of 1946 – 1947 in Mykolaiv Region” (Mykolaiv, 2010), “Collectivization and Holodomor in Slavutychyna in 1928 – 1933” (Kyiv, 2013). Documentary evidence was also published about the social and political situation during this period, as well as about cynicism of higher authorities with the involvement of the National Center for Scientific Research of France: “The Party-Soviet Leadership of the UkrSSR during the Holodomor of 1932 – 1933” (Kyiv, 2013). It should be noted that the vast majority of publications are devoted to the events of 1932 – 1933, the famine in Ukraine in 1946 – 1947 was covered much less.

Documentary publications are related to the above mentioned issue, which testify to the resistance of peasants to forced collectivization, to the actions of the authorities: “Tragic Past: Documents Testify”, in 5 volumes (Dnipro, 2018), “Anatomy of Peasant Uprisings: The Horodnia Uprising of 1931 led by Ya. Riabchenko” (Chernihiv, 2015).

During the period of the democratic Ukrainian state development, the issue, deformed by the Soviet system, regarding the coverage of the Ukrainian resistance movement and the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during World War II turned out to be particularly painful. It was necessary to study and bring to the interested public documents and materials related to the history of the OUN and the UPA. They began to be actively published during the 21st century: “National Reconciliation or Confrontation” (Kyiv, 1999), “Materials and Documents of the Security Service of the OUN (b) in the 1940s” (Kyiv, 2003), “The OUN and UPA in 1945” in 2 parts (Kyiv, 2015), etc.

Painful issues deformed by the Soviet policy include falsified cases against representatives of the Ukrainian liberation movement and the events of the civil war. Collections of documents...

Since Ukraine gained independence, there has been a public demand for a comprehensive coverage of such a heroic page as the Cossacks. Historians’ answer to this was the publication of eight volumes of the corpus of documents of the Kash archive of Nova Zaporozka Sich of 1734 – 1775, with the participation of foreign centers of Ukrainian studies during the period of 2000 – 2019. Historians prepared the publication dedicated to the events of Koliivshchyna in 1768 – 1760 based on the documents of Kash of New Zaporozka Sich (Kyiv, 2019). The events of the period of B. Khmelnytsky, the liberation war and the so-called reunification of Ukraine with Russia were an extremely politicized page of history. A comparison of the approach of the compilers of the 1946 and 1953 collections to the selection of documents on these issues, and editions of 2003 and 2009 is illustrative: “The Pereiaslav Rada through the Eyes of Historians” and “Baturyn: Pages of History”.

The cultural component of the life of the Ukrainian society is elucidated in a number of documents collections, the majority of which appeared in the 2000s. These are: “Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments in Ukraine (1917 – 1918)” (Kyiv, 2008), “The Ukrainian Identity and the Language Issue in the Russian Empire: an Attempt of State Regulation (1847 – 1914)” (Kyiv, 2013).

During the Soviet period, there were no documentary publications on the history of the Orthodox Church. At this stage, a number of collections of documents regarding various aspects of the churches activity appeared: “Documentary Heritage of Sviato-Mykhailivsky Zolotoverkhy Monastery in Kyiv, the XVIth – the XVIIIth Centuries” (Kyiv, 2011), “State-church Relations and the Situation of Dnipropetrovsk Diocese of the Ruska Orthodox Church (1945 – 1953)” in 2 books (Kyiv, 2011), “Foundation of the Galician Metropolis in the Light of Diplomatic Correspondence between Austria and the Holy See of 1807 – 1808” (Lviv, 2011), “Documentary Heritage of the Sviato-Preobrazhensky Maksakiv Monastery, the XVIth – the VIIIth centuries” (Kyiv, 2015), etc.


During this period, many documents were published about iconic personalities whose lives reflected the historical era. These collections of documents are dedicated to the activities of the military scribe Andriy Tovstyk (Kyiv, 2010), Taras Shevchenko (Kyiv, 2015), an apostolic visitor in Germany, Father Peter Verhun (Kyiv, 2016), Oleksandr Shulhin (Kyiv, 2016) and the others.

Collections of documents about tragic events in Kyiv with previously unknown facts formed a separate direction of publications. The following publications are meant: “Memory of Bykivnia” (Kyiv, 2000), “Kyiv during the Days of the Nazi Invasion” (Kyiv, 2003), “The Kurenivska Tragedy of March 13, 1961 in Kyiv” (Kyiv, 2012) and the others.

The period of the 2000s is characterized by the widespread use of information technologies for mass publication of historical documents on the Internet. A number of publications are devoted to this mass publication on the Internet (Boriak, Lobuzina, & Yurkova, 2021; Papakin, 2021). However, they are of a rather ambiguous nature. The scope of the article does not give us the opportunity to analyze consider this mass publication on the Internet. On the one hand, such publications duplicate publications on paper media, simplify processing, and make the process of making documentary sources public for the general public cheaper. On the other hand, documents posted on the Internet by users, sometimes far from professional knowledge of history and norms of publishing activity, can distort historical facts and events, and consciously or unconsciously contribute to the manipulation of the public opinion. Such phenomenon is called “folk archeography”. The publication of historical documents on the Internet turns into the publication of an average information product. Therefore, it does not undergo scientific analysis and appropriate preparation for publication. The lack of scientific analysis and appropriate preparation often lead to the spread of surrogates, fakes and counterfeits.

Therefore, the publication of historical documents during the 2000s is characterized by a greater variety of topics due to the expansion of cooperation between the state archives and scientific institutions of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, by higher education institutions, public organizations, foreign partners, as well as the focus on the development of previously inaccessible documentary sources for ideological reasons. This focus explains the politicization of the subject of a number of publications. Regional archives in joint publications with central archives, local scientific, educational institutions, public organizations reflected the specifics of historical events at the local level, which contributed to the comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of historical events.

The Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research. Thus, in the information space of Ukraine important changes take place after gaining independence. The amount of
Documentary publications are quite significant, it has specific thematic blocks with a broad chronology and can be divided into two periods: the 1990s and the 2000s. The majority of the documentary collections were devoted to topical and painful issues of the history of Ukraine, which were deformed during the Soviet period or were silenced, and also responded to new requests of the society. Publications are of mostly scientific and popular science nature. The main type of publications is thematic, as a rule, based on the funds of one archive or region in the format of a collection of documents or a series.

In addition to academic institutions, especially the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, central and regional archives, public organizations, foreign researchers and institutions, etc., were actively involved in the publication of documents and materials collections. Thus, the enormous efforts of scholars in Ukraine and the diaspora made it possible to fill the gap in the coverage of famine during the interwar and postwar periods and during the years of independence. This was done not only by central scientific institutions, but also locally – in the regions, districts, and villages. Documentary collections prepared in the regions began to be published in large numbers from the beginning of our century and focused on various topics and periods of the history of Ukraine, in particular, those that began to develop only during the post-Soviet period. Thus, in general, historians and archivists cope with the task of providing the Ukrainian society with an objective picture of its history, in particular, by means of the publication of documents reflecting the opposite positions of the parties to the conflicts.

At the same time, it can be stated that the publication of documentary sources has significant reserves for its progressive development. Issues of methodological aspect, work experience generalization of the previous years, competent use of modern information and communication technologies, involvement of new types of sources for processing and publication remain topical. It is necessary to respond more quickly to urgent information requests of the population, topics that are actively discussed, in particular, in the world, and are especially rich in clichés, myths, and where there is an external informational influence on Ukraine. This response will contribute to increasing the presence of the Ukrainian archeographic product in the national and global information space.

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