


Ukrainian encyclopedistics in wartime (based on the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*)

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to present the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* (Ukrainian: *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukrainy*) as one of the priority Ukrainian academic scholarly publications in the context of the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine, and to outline the editorial team's priorities in responding to the new challenges of the time. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism and consistency. General scholarly methods were used, including analysis, synthesis, description, and generalisation.


The authors report on the peculiarities of preparing the paper volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*, emphasise the importance and necessity of producing a complete set of EMU volumes for the cultural development of the state and building the state's information ecosystem. At the same time, they draw attention to the fact that paper encyclopedia publishing needs more funding than it currently has (in recent years, the shortage of funding has been compensated by reducing the quality of printing and the circulation of edition volumes). The article also covers the encyclopedia's digital counterpart (EMU website as an online encyclopedia). In particular, it was found that the indicators of the online encyclopedia visits and pageviews are increasing every year. Moreover, in a turbulent 2022 of full-scale war, the website traffic was the highest ever. The language specificity of the online encyclopedia's visitors is in the focus of the authors as well.

The authors state that the war negatively impacts various spheres of life in Ukraine including academic encyclopedistics and suggest that the editorial and publishing process relating to the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* should be revised. It is concluded that it is economically expedient to focus on the EMU's online version during the war. Along with this, there is a possibility of a complete blackout of Ukraine, which could be caused by Russian airstrikes on the country's critical infrastructure. In such a situation, the editorial team's planned direction for the next year(s) of activity regarding online encyclopedia development unfortunately seems problematic as well.

Keywords: *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* (EMU); Russian-Ukrainian war (2022); Ukrainian encyclopedistics; encyclopedia studies

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1. Introduction

The full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022 with missile strikes on Ukrainian cities, caused an unprecedented resettlement of Ukrainians outside the country or to safer regions of Ukraine (Kortukova et al., 2022). Every day, it causes great damage to the state (to culture, art, science, economy, etc.). »The war has a very negative effect on the economy of Ukraine. Thus, the reduction of Ukraine's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 may have been the greatest ever recorded, and it will take more than 20 years to return to the state of 2021.« (Korablin 2022, 40) Research shows that the main factors that led to this are the following: destruction of industries, housing stock, transport, and social infrastructure; restrictions on the use of the national land as a result of its partial occupation as well as damage caused by mining, shelling, and pollution of Ukrainian territories; reduction of the share of workers employed in progressive production; decrease in the volume of consumer spending of the population; reorientation of public expenditures in favour of areas that are not directly related to GDP production; increase in the level of inflation, debt obligations and devaluation of the national currency; direct and related investment losses; increase in prices for energy resources; decrease in the quality of human capital due to psychological injuries and risk of loss of life (Heyets 2022, 30).

Over the centuries, Ukrainian culture fought with great effort for the right to establish and preserve its own national identity. But even after the restoration of Ukraine's independence in 1991, the pressure on it did not disappear: there is a permanent latent or undisguised Russian aggression in the information space, aimed at »deformation and anti-state education of the residents of Ukraine, separation of the citizen from the state, national values, traditions, ideas, and history. A people who do not identify with the state, with its symbols, laws, language and culture, are a greater threat to national interests than any external factors.« (Tarasyuk 2022, 362) In Ukrainian society, national values were and continue to be a fundamental factor for its existence and development. This worldview has always determined the uniqueness of the Ukrainian ethnic group, its understanding of the state, community, family, and the importance of specific personalities in the world. »The Ukrainian people are benevolent, tolerant of other peoples, responsible for their actions, and with a sense of justice. That is why national values were often the main obstacle to the intentions of various aggressive forces to conquer Ukraine, and to turn its people into an obedient crowd without a family.« (Krysachenko 2022, 30) Therefore, it is not surprising that the army of the Russian Federation carries out military attacks on objects associated with the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people. In particular, cultural monuments, museums, schools, and scientific institutions were damaged or destroyed by the Russian army in various regions of Ukraine. An initiative

was proposed regarding the need to create a lexicon of damaged and destroyed cultural monuments of some of Ukraine's regions during the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022 (Kara-Vasylieva 2022, 42). Currently, Ukraine is defending itself not only from a military invasion, but also from the information power of the Russian Federation. Lies, cynicism, and shamelessness have completely invaded Russian society. In the conditions of mass information aggression, it is necessary to increase the potential of carriers and sources of reliable scientific knowledge about Ukrainians and Ukraine, which reproduce the historical truth and cleanse the information space of Russian propaganda and myths about Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Therefore, taking into account the unpredictability and disappointing forecasts regarding the Ukrainian economy in the conditions of a state of war and, presumably, a post-war state, it is important to form a vision of the ways to further develop Ukrainian encyclopedistics today, so that they continue to be effective and perform their important functions for the state, such as the promotion of national interests in the form of spreading knowledge about the country and the people and protecting the state from hostile anti-Ukrainian informational influence, providing reliable information in contrast to the myths of Russian propaganda.

The purpose of the article is to characterise the possibilities of Ukrainian encyclopedistics during enforced martial law and to substantiate the most optimal ways of developing the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* (Ukrainian: *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukrainy*) in the current conditions as one of the priority Ukrainian academic scientific publications.

2. Results and discussions

Encyclopedias and encyclopedic lexicons (dictionaries, references) are a special category of literature, »alphabetical books of knowledge« (Loveland 2019, 1), because they organise and systematise universal knowledge as well as accumulate (preserve) and spread it. In other words, encyclopedias are more than books and literary sources. They are a form and means of universal knowledge, »a phenomenon in world culture« (Ishchenko 2019, 203), »the most important monuments of the history of science and civilization« (Holmberg 2021, 3), the »art of knowing everything« (North 1997, 181); a special way of thinking that consists of summarising, systematising and comparing knowledge, called encyclopedism. Therefore, encyclopedias also deserve special studies, forming a scholarly domain that we call encyclopedistics (encyclopedia studies): »encyclopedistics are a scientific discipline that approaches the principles and practises of assembling encyclopedias« (Jermen, Jecić 2018, 87).

Encyclopedistics as a domain of humanities and a type of publishing practice have an interdisciplinary nature. In general, interdisciplinary approaches and met-

hods of cognition are currently a progressive tool for the discovery of new knowledge. The interdisciplinary nature of today's science is a response to the pronounced complication of social relations as well as a reflection of the understanding of science as a communicative tool. O. Palagin and O. Kurgaev voice this opinion and note that the era of analyticism and the differentiation of science inherent in it has come to an end. They suggest that contemporary science is not able to fully solve the problems that challenge humanity today. The disunity of scientific fields and work in coordination of academic organisations are the main reasons for this. Instead, elementary synchronisation of science in the form of active interdisciplinary interaction has a significant synergistic effect (Palagin, Kurgaev 2009, 14).

Undoubtedly, specialists engaged in encyclopedic practice unite the disciplines of science and humanities as well as fight against the lack of coordination among academic institutions. This message is not an exaggeration. The results of scholarly studies show that encyclopedias are able to encourage science to further develop and discover new knowledge. In particular, some research conducted on the English-language Wikipedia shows that encyclopedic content contributes to the spread of scientific ideas, and this helps scientists in their work (they use encyclopedia articles as a handy source of information next to monographs, proceedings, and journal articles, despite the fact that encyclopedia articles are rarely cited by scholars). In addition, encyclopedic content reflects the current level of scientific knowledge, because high-quality encyclopedia articles are compiled based on current peer-reviewed scholarly publications (Thompson, Hanley 2018).

Encyclopedic practice is useful for the advancement of not only science, but also education. In any country, the formation of a citizen who is educated and thinks critically in accordance with the needs of the time is one of the basic tasks of the education system. National encyclopedias¹ play an important role in the state education of societies, developing love for one's homeland, civic responsibility, and patriotism in populations. Any national encyclopedia reproduces a picture of the world in a national language, and thus unites the citizens of a country. Such national unity is quite necessary in difficult times. There is a great need for the unity of citizens in war and post-war times. This is evidenced by the current Ukrainian experience.

Currently, the information space is saturated with various data, a significant part of which is unverified, dubious, misleading, harmful, aimed at changing the public consciousness of people in the interests of the enemy. Therefore, the important role of encyclopedias also lies in spreading reliable, objective knowledge for society. »At a time when information is increasingly being manipulated for ideological and economic purposes, public access to sources of trustworthy, general-interest

¹ Variety of national online encyclopedias worldwide: <https://doi.org/10.37068/b/wanoe>

knowledge—such as national online encyclopedias—can help boost our cognitive resilience. Basic, reliable background information about history, culture, society and politics is an essential part of our societies' complex knowledge ecosystem and an important tool for any citizen searching for knowledge, facts and figures.« (Bentzen 2018, 2)

The information space of Ukraine is heavily filled with Russian-language (as well as Russian-propaganda) content that is highly popular among Ukrainian youth (both for Russophones and Ukrainophones). This content is spreading via social networks like TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram (Tarasyuk 2022, 369). On the other hand, Ukrainian academic sources like online encyclopedias are much inferior by popularity, although they can boast relatively high rates of visits and views, so these sources of knowledge have a potential for growth in view of building the Ukrainian information ecosystem (Dziuba 2021).

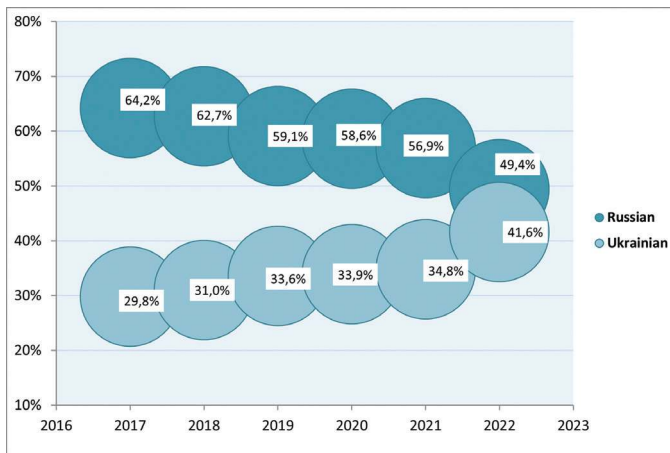


Figure 1. Language preferences of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* website visitors according to Google Analytics languages report

This opinion is confirmed by the dynamics of language indicators of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* website² visitors as well. Fig. 1 represents the ratio of Ukrainian and Russian languages as the most popular languages of the encyclopedia website visitors. We can see that, over the years, the number of Ukrainian-speaking users is gradually increasing, while the number of Russian-speaking users, on the contrary, is gradually decreasing. This figure also captures the current trend in Ukraine caused by the Russia's military invasion (see values for 2022): Ukrainian Russophones are principally switching to the Ukrainian language. This data is obtained from Google Analytics, in which the language indicators correspond to the langua-

² <https://esu.com.ua>

ge settings of desktop computers and gadgets. And therefore we consider only this dynamic as real: Ukrainian is spreading more and more, Russian is decreasing step by step. As for percentage values, we cannot consider this data as reflecting the real language situation in Ukraine (until recent years, Russian was used by default as a localisation language by the devices, because it was not regulated by law in the field of sales, so there is no need to talk about a clear correlation of the language of device owners with the language settings of these devices). In fact, 46% of Ukrainians are Ukrainophones, 32% Russophones, and 21% bilingual (Sokolova, Zalizniak 2018). We can also say that this encyclopedia is most used in those regions where the Ukrainian language fully dominates over Russian (western and central regions). Google Analytics visiting report by locations identifies the following top 10 cities with the most encyclopedia website traffic: Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Uzhhorod, Lutsk, Rivne, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi, Dnipro. This analysis is confirmed by a study (Zhelezniak 2021): in 2021, we conducted an online survey, and one of the questions was »What language do you prefer to read?«. The answers were as follows: Ukrainian language: 83%, Russian language: 15%, other languages: 2%.

National encyclopedias directly relate to issues of information security of each state, because a high-quality national encyclopedia is an important discursive element of the protection of state interests and national narratives. The slogan »Knowledge is power!« can outline the role of the national encyclopedia of Ukraine in the fight against the aggressor. In the context of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* is also a kind of chronicle of the war, since the encyclopedic content includes Ukrainian heroes of this war. In 2022, for the greater popularisation of Ukrainians defending their country from the invader, a special thematic online encyclopedia³ about prominent Ukrainians was created, some of whose chapters are dedicated to the soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (Zhelezniak et al. 2022).

The *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* is a national encyclopedia about Ukraine and Ukrainians, an essential factor in building the state's information ecosystem and an important element of its information protection, and that is why the issue of assembling the encyclopedia is a state matter.⁴ This reference work is produced by a

³ <https://ukrainci.top>

⁴ Historically, the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* is the second national encyclopedia. The first one was the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* published in 1948–1985 by the Shevchenko Scientific Society, located outside Ukraine (Zhelezniak 2018). It should be noted that in Ukraine there is a clear division of great encyclopedias into national and general encyclopedias. The first general one was the *Ukrainian General Encyclopedia* published 1930–1935 (3 vols) by Ivan Rakovsky. This diversification of encyclopedia variations was provoked primarily by the fact that the territory of Ukraine was under the occupation of the USSR for almost the entire 20th century. Therefore, the general encyclopedia was a source of universal knowledge, and the national encyclopedia was also a means of preserving national

non-profit academic institution (the Institute of Encyclopedic Research, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). The EMU is a multi-volume, alphabetically-ordered publication that has not yet been completed. 24 volumes have been published since 2001. In 2022, in the conditions of war, and thanks to all who defend Ukraine, the 24th volume, covering the letter »O«, was printed and published online. The EMU's digital counterpart represents the content from the printed volumes, some part of which has been updated by the editors. There are about 10 employees of the academic institution who are involved in the EMU editorial team. A certain achievement is the fact that the institution did not suffer destruction due to the war, and the editorial team continues to work almost in full (several people left the team for various reasons).

The strength of the EMU's editorial team and the level of state funding (Fig. 2) currently make it possible to publish one volume per year. With the higher funding in some previous years, it was possible to assemble two volumes per year. There was also an opportunity to pay fees to involved contributors (before 2017). Currently, this is purely volunteer, conscious work by contributors. In view of every year's inflation, the trend is that the funding of the EMU is decreasing step by step. That is why the circulation of volumes was reduced from 10,000 to 3,800 copies in a few years, as a result of which many regional libraries were left without new volumes of the national encyclopedia. In 2022, the circulation of the 24th volume was the lowest ever (less than 1,000 copies).

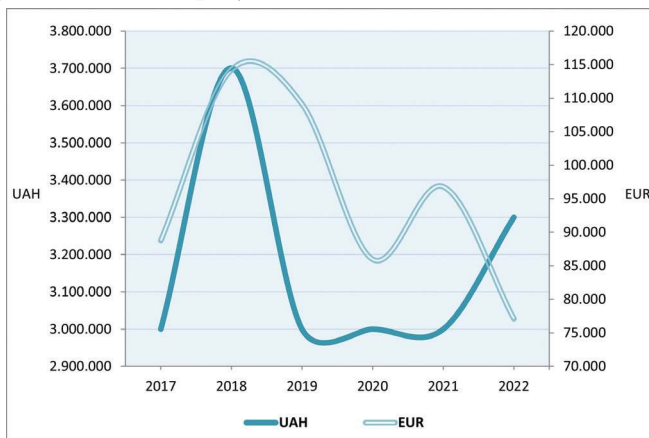


Figure 2. State funding of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* building (by the last 6 years)

values, national memory, and a form of information struggle for independence. It currently serves the same function. So, due to the economic situation in the country caused by the war, a decision was made for 2023 to postpone the publication of the next volume of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*. The main planned work for the period of martial law is the development of the EMU website (updating content and adding new articles).

The Russian military invasion and aggression negatively impacts various spheres of life in Ukraine, including economics. It is expensive to publish many copies of a work. One of the first steps in responding to the challenges of time was the editorial and publishing process revision. It was decided that the turbulent wartime should be used as an opportunity to intensify work on the digital counterpart of the encyclopedia. According to our previous studies, in Ukrainian society there is a demand for paper volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* (Zhelezniak 2021). Thus, the idea of paying attention to the deeper development of the online encyclopedia format does not mean the end of the history of printing volumes. In addition to public demand, a complete set of the EMU's paper edition is a necessity based on the fact that any national encyclopedia is a cultural phenomenon, an intellectual business card of a country, a symbol of the strength of its scholarly community. A national encyclopedia cannot be only a virtual one and barely exist in the information space; it is a strategically important scholarly and cultural object for the development of the state, which must have its own history with an important milestone associated with the volume editions—their material presence in the world. The current case of a partial blackout in Ukraine after Russian missile attacks clearly demonstrates this, because when the power supply disappears, it can be assumed that the online encyclopedia does not exist for those left without power. One of the most famous encyclopedias in the world, *Britannica*, which has been published exclusively online since 2012, has a history of paper editions from 1768 (Živić 2021, 109). Abandoning the paper EMU (not completing the full set of printed volumes) also means a loss of reputation for the Ukrainian scientific community and, in a broader sense, the victory of the spontaneous form of organisation of knowledge over the academic one (Upshall 2014, 641). In other words, it means the victory of Wikipedia over traditional encyclopedias in Ukraine. However, during the war, the idea of focusing on improving the online format of the encyclopedia is appropriate.

It is also suitable to report that online resources of knowledge do not have only advantages over printed publications. Lexicographic experience shows that »the greatest problem e-dictionaries currently face is that content does routinely change in unspecified and even undocumented ways. It shows as well that the move from print to digital, against popular perception, results in a loss of lexicographical detail and scope« (Ferrett, Dollinger 2020, 66). Contemporary e-lexicography also faces challenges such as »the danger of overwhelming the user with an abundance of unstructured data leading to the loss of information« (Filipović Petrović, Parizoska 2022). These remarks suggest that the end of the era of paper dictionaries and encyclopedias and the move to digital resources does not finally solve the problems regarding the effective dissemination of knowledge, but demands time to keep up with rapid technological developments and social needs.

On the other hand, one more problem has loomed in recent months, as Ukraine is constantly on the edge of a complete blackout. As of December 2022, half of the country's energy system has been destroyed by targeted Russian missile strikes, and the other half is under threat. Each settlement experiences periodic blackouts every day for an average of 2–4 hours several times a day. In many cases, residents lose access to running water, because plumbing and waste treatment systems cannot operate without electricity. Heat supply also often disappears due to power failure. Internet infrastructure in Ukraine has been damaged as well: »With data collected before and after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict we observed considerable damage to the Ukrainian Internet network with numerous outages and minimal damage to the Russian network. Averages of 11.12% of Ukrainian ASes were unreachable at each IXP« (Trusin, Bertholdo, Santanna 2022).

So, due to the situation in the country caused by the war, a decision was made for 2023 to postpone the publishing the next volume of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*. The main planned work for the period of wartime is the development of the EMU website (updating content and adding new articles). The idea of returning to the printing of volumes after the war remains relevant.

The shift in focus to the online encyclopedia does not have only an economic reason. The EMU's digital counterpart is a website that attracts numerous visitors in Ukraine. According to Google Analytics, during 2022 there were more than 2.8 million unique visits to the EMU website (this is almost 235,000 visits every month and almost 7,700 every day). Most of the visits are, naturally, from regions of Ukraine.

Encyclopedia articles attained new uses starting from 24 February 2022. In particular, this is evidenced by our analysis of website visits in 2022. First, the share of the audience from the territory of other countries has increased from 5% to 18% (this can be both the influence of Ukrainian refugees and the increased attention to Ukraine among foreigners). Secondly, the most frequently viewed pages were related to the topic of war. Among them are articles about: famous figures of the Ukrainian independence movement during World War II, biological weapons, denationalisation, international military tribunals, military tactics, chemical weapons, etc. Thirdly, in 2022, the encyclopedia website traffic was the highest ever (fig. 3).

It is gratifying that people looking for information on the Internet about what is current get to the pages of EMU and are able to use verified facts. However, it should be admitted that a large number of the articles need updating. On the home page of the encyclopedia website, there is a section titled »Featured Articles«. It was usually filled with the most interesting articles from each new volume, and now in this section there is content related to the topic of war: »Refugees«, »Poverty«, »Genocide«, »Collective Security«, »Lend-Lease«, »Violence«, etc. Despite the

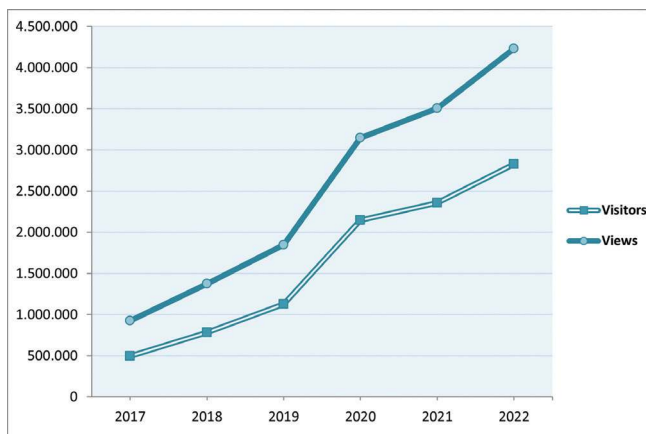


Figure 3. The *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* website visitors and pageviews per year (Google Analytics data by the last 6 years)

fact that their content is relevant and provides quite adequate academic information about the essence of a phenomenon, concept, or event, almost all articles need editing and additions in view of today's realities. There are many articles that need such treatment, and this requires a systematic, purposeful work, which could become dominant during the crisis caused by the war, and which has never been carried out before. Along with this it is necessary, of course, to continue collecting material for the next volumes, despite the fact that war is being waged, civilians are being attacked by Russian missiles, and the encyclopedia's editorial office is under threat of destruction.

3. Conclusion

Russia's war against Ukraine causes great damage to the Ukrainian economy, culture, and science as well as its encyclopedistics. In order to avoid decline and to develop further, it needs adequate editorial response to the global challenges of the time.

In the context of the development of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* as one of the priority Ukrainian academic publishing cases, a step towards responding to the challenges of time can be to change the focus of its preparation to wartime, and from a book to an online format as the dominant one.

To put it differently, in times of a difficult economic situation, it is appropriate to temporarily suspend the publication of the next volumes and concentrate efforts on updating the content published online that is highly popular among Ukrainians.

This means that assembling the paper version of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* has been postponed in 2023 (and possibly during the entire period of the war, which will end in an unknown time). Updating articles on the website and preparing new articles for online publishing are priority goals for the near future of the encyclopedia's editorial team.

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UKRAJINSKA ENCIKLOPEDISTIKA U VRIJEME RATA (NA TEMELJU ENCIKLOPEDIJE SUVREMENE UKRAJINE)

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SAŽETAK: Cilj je ovoga rada predstaviti *Enciklopediju suvremene Ukrajine* (ESU; ukr.: *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukrainy*) kao jedno od važnih ukrajinskih znanstvenih izdanja u kontekstu rata koji Rusija trenutačno vodi protiv Ukrajine te zacrtati prioritete uredništva u odgovaranju na nove izazove vremena. Metodologija istraživanja zasnovana je na načelima historicizma i dosljednosti. Upotrijebljene su opće znanstvene metode, uključujući analizu, sintezu, deskripciju i generalizaciju.

Autori izvješćuju o osobitostima u pripremanju tiskanih svezaka *Enciklopedije suvremene Ukrajine*, ističu važnosti i potrebu produciranja čitavoga niza svezaka ESU za kulturni razvoj države i izgradnju državnog informacijskog ekosustava. Istovremeno skreću pozornost na činjenicu da izdavanje tiskanih enciklopedija zahtijeva više sredstava nego je trenutačno predviđeno za tu svrhu (posljednjih se godina nedostatak sredstava nadoknađivao smanjenjem kvalitete tiska i naklade svezaka izdanja). U članku je usto riječ o digitalnoj inačici enciklopedije (mrežna stranica ESU kao *online* enciklopedija). Otkriveno je da pokazatelji mrežne enciklopedije, poput posjeta i pregleda stranica, rastu iz godine u godinu. Štoviše, obujam prometa u turbulentnoj ratnoj 2022. bio je najveći dosad. Autori se usredotočuju i na jezične specifičnosti korisnika mrežne enciklopedije.

Autori pokazuju kako rat negativno utječe razne sfere života u Ukrajini, uključujući znanstvenu enciklopedistiku i predlažu izmjenu procesa uređivanja i izdavanja ESU. Zaključuju da je tijekom rata ekonomski poželjno usredotočiti se na mrežnu inačicu ESU. Usto postoji mogućnost potpunoga pomračenja Ukrajine prouzrokovanoga ruskim zračnim napadima na kritičnu infrastrukturu u državi. Nažalost, u takvom bi slučaju i plan rada uredništva za iduću godinu (ili godine) u vezi mrežne enciklopedije bio doveden u pitanje.

Ključne riječi: *Enciklopedija suvremene Ukrajine* (ESU); Rusko-ukrajinski rat (2022); ukrajinska enciklopedistika; enciklopedijske studije



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