

## Shevchenko Scientific Society Around the World Online Conference

*Уляна Плавушчак-Підземецька*

**Ulana Plawuszczak Pidzamecky. Toronto, Canada.** On April 13, 2024, the 3rd in a series of anniversary conferences was held to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (NTSh) in Ukraine and the 75th anniversary of NTSh in Canada: "Shevchenko Scientific Society Around the World: Activity and Future". For the first time in many years, this online event brought together the Society's leaders from the countries where the organization is established. Dr. Marta Dyczok, President of NTSh Canada, welcomed the participants on the sobering 780th day of Russia's war in Ukraine and thanked Ms. Uliana Pasicznyk, Director of Conferences for NTSh Canada, and her committee for organizing the event. The moderator was Dr. Anna Ferenc, 1st Vice-Chair of NTSh Canada. Speakers included Dr. Lidiya Boichyshyn, NTSh Ukraine; Dr. Halyna Hryn, NTSh USA; Dr. Stéphane Dunikowski, NTSh Europe; Dr. Vasyl Grešlik, NTSh Slovakia; and Prof. Marko Pavlyshyn, NTSh Australia (by video).

**Dr. Boichyshyn (NTSh Ukraine)** explained that NTSh Ukraine is considered the only Ukrainian intellectual and scientific institution free from ideological pressure. Its medical, mathematical, chemical, natural science, terminological, and informatics sections are the most active, along with the Collections Institute. Dr. Boichyshyn spoke about the restoration of the Society in 1992 in support of the national revival of the Ukrainian state. NTSh centres are located all over the country, the most active being Kyiv, Ternopil, and Volyn, however ten have stopped functioning over the past year. The organization's main activity is publishing; since the 1990s, more than 850 scholarly books have been published and various periodicals are produced. The Scopus rating of their publications is steadily increasing. She described their very successful jubilee celebrations, which took place in a hybrid format. An anniversary book was published; an anniversary conference was held with the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU) - for the first time since the restoration of NTSh; an exhibition was organized, visited by more than 10,000 people, including students; and a round table was held on the topic "The First National Academic Library of Ukraine - An Interrupted History". Currently, the Society is working on the 6th volume of the "Encyclopedia of NTSh", conducting new research (Dr. R. Kushnir, Dr. A Feloniuk) and partnering with NASU. They hope to continue their fruitful cooperation with the Toronto Ukrainian Library Association. NTSh Ukraine serves as the intellectual front in the further struggle for Ukraine's future and encourages new young scholars to join its ranks.

**Dr. Hryn (NTSh USA)** described the history of the organization, founded in 1940, which acted on behalf of NTSh Ukraine when it was under Soviet rule until 1990. Even with the restoration of NTSh in Ukraine, NTSh USA did not reduce its activities and, since the recent Russian invasion and war, has become even more active. They currently have 426 members. In addition to the main centre in New York, there are centres in Detroit, Washington, and Philadelphia. The American context differs in that many of the organization's members live outside large urban centres and operate individually. Conferences are held regularly and broadcast online. Like NTSh in other regions, they are trying to attract new younger scholars. In this regard, more members and potential members who do not speak Ukrainian are joining. The technical and natural history sections are very active, as well as art history and musicology. The number of Ukrainianist members is also increasing. Organizational committees are mainly administrative in nature. Thanks to the foresight of the Society's founders, the economic base of the organization is secure. The Society has its own building in New York with a library of 30,000 books and a considerable collection of periodicals (432 fonds), mainly in Ukrainian studies, with a focus on the diaspora. Duplicate materials are normally sent to libraries in Ukraine. Although guides to the holdings are

still under development, there is an archivist on site. NTSh USA maintains its own comprehensive website. Over the past 20 years, the Society has produced 38 publications. On the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko, the Society published the 2nd volume of the series "Taras Shevchenko: The Critical Reception". Seven books about Taras Shevchenko in memoirs are being prepared – two have already been published, and two are near completion. Other important publications include the collected works of Panteleimon Kulish, in cooperation with the publishing house "Krytyka", the Institute of Literature at NASU and its Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies. Publication of the "Notes of the Shevchenko Scientific Society" has resumed - two bilingual (Engl./Ukr.) volumes have been produced. An organizational newsletter comes out periodically. Work continues on the "Encyclopedia of the Ukrainian Diaspora". An "Atlas of Ukrainians in the USA" was prepared together with the Centre for Demographic and Sociological Research. An NTSh anniversary conference is planned for May of 2024. As in other countries, grants are made available for publications and research.

**Dr. Dunikowski (NTSh Europe [France])** presented highlights from the history of NTSh. He emphasized that the Society shares Shevchenko's ideals to this day. The organization has functioned as an actual academy of sciences. In France, NTSh was founded in Sarcelles in 1950 under the leadership of Prof. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and here the editorial office of the "Encyclopedia of Ukrainian Studies" (EU2) was also located. Printing costs were covered by Germany. The staff of the encyclopedia was paid with grants from the UGCC and members of the Ukrainian émigré community. A building for NTSh was purchased in 1950. In those early years, the Commission for Aid to Ukrainian Students, the Institute of Distance Education of the Ukrainian Free University, and the Eastern Congress of the UGCC were also active. Today, the question of NTSh in Europe is an existential one. The building belongs to the legal structure of the Ukrainian Social Services Society and its return to NTSh is still being decided in court. However, NTSh Europe must continue to pay rent, and the building is in a deplorable condition. The financial situation is uncertain because the inflow of donations is minimal. As for scholarly activity, NTSh Europe did not receive lists of former members and did not inherit contacts with the broader scholarly world, so new connections are in order. However, the Society continues to work actively to attract new younger members, and to rebuild.

**Dr. Vasyl Grešlik (NTSh Slovakia)** noted that the Society is celebrating its 30th anniversary in Slovakia. Since the late 20th century, NTSh Slovakia has been deeply engaged in scientific cooperation. For example, the publications of the famous folklorist and Ukrainian scholar, Dr. Mykola Mushinka were supported by the Society in Sarcelles. After the death of Prof. Kubijovyč, this partnership shifted to Canada. With the establishment of NTSh in Slovakia, the connection with Ukraine was also restored. These contacts helped to ensure that the Society received external financial support. However, the current situation is uncertain, as there is no state support. Therefore, it is necessary for NTSh members to also be members of the Association of Ukrainianists of Slovakia and other scholarly institutions. Nevertheless, annual academic conferences continue to be held. Members also participate in other scholarly events in Europe and Ukraine. The main field of endeavour is ethnology. Publishing is made possible thanks to public support and member voluntarism. Organizational activity has decreased somewhat in recent years as many members approach or enter retirement. However, they anticipate replenishing their ranks with new younger scholars. Today, there are 21 members, most of whom are engaged in Ukrainian studies, and one physicist.

**Prof. Marko Pavlyshyn (NTSh Australia)** outlined the history of Ukrainian emigration to Australia. He spoke about the fundamental work of Yevhen-Yulii Pelensky, Ukrainian

bibliographer, literary critic, publisher, teacher, outstanding PLAST member, full member of NTSh, and founder of NTSh in Sydney, Australia in 1950 (and president from 1950-1956). Prof. Pavlyshyn also spoke about other notable members (e.g., Dmytro Nytchenko-Chub). The Society has worked closely and for many years with other Ukrainian organizations in Australia, especially in publishing. Over the course of the Society's existence, its members have published in diverse professional and scientific disciplinary journals. Separate centres were established in Adelaide in 1965 and in Canberra in 1971. In the 1980s, the Society expanded its links with other academic institutions, especially universities. In the 1990s it partnered with NASU and other scholarly institutions in Ukraine, including NTSh Ukraine. In recent years, NTSh Australia has held five conferences about the history of Ukrainian studies, among them "Ukraine in the Context of the Other" (Monash University, Melbourne, 2003) and "Law, Politics, Culture, and History in Independent Ukraine" (Adelaide University, 2009). Members have fundraised to support the publication of the "Encyclopedia of Ukrainian Studies" and have worked on the "Encyclopedia of the Ukrainian Diaspora" (volume 4 was published in 1995 about the diaspora from Australia, Asia, and Africa). In 1990, the Association of Ukrainianists of Australia (later including New Zealand) was established, including five members of NTSh Australia. To date, NTSh Australia has hosted 80 conferences, among them a particularly successful online conference at the University of Melbourne in 2022, prior to the war in Ukraine. NTSh Australia focuses on Ukrainian Studies and on raising awareness about this research field.

Among questions raised:

*Is there a certain degree of duplication in the work of NTSh and NASU?*

It was explained that these are two different institutions - NTSh performs a public awareness and educational function, while NASU serves a research function. The importance of NTSh also lies in the fact that the Society networks Ukrainian scholars, so that Ukraine does not lose them to "brain drain". In addition, NTSh publications are unique (e.g., "Notes of the Shevchenko Scientific Society"). More recently in Ukraine, the ranks of NTSh have been replenished with young teachers for certification reasons, enriching the Society's membership. In fact, NTSh is the only institution in Ukraine that offers such an opportunity. Meanwhile, NASU is a place of professional employment, but has recently experienced significant staff reductions and salary cuts. NTSh, which survives on modest membership fees and donations (and during the war, almost no income), perseveres without government assistance.

*What is the role of NTSh in countering historical Russian narratives?*

It was noted that it is difficult to quantify the successes of the Ukrainian side, although evidence can be found across all communication channels. Authoritative publications about Ukrainian history in English and other languages are very helpful and are supported by the state. It was observed that there should be academic sanctions against Russian scholars - scholarship is not outside of politics. An example of this is when Ukrainian graduate students refrain from submitting their presentations at a conference where the jury includes Russian scholars. But not all international publications cooperate with Ukraine on this question - some say that scholarship exists exclusively for the sake of scholarship. This attitude is still present in many European and international scientific associations. NTSh does everything possible to support the Ukrainian informational and educational fronts.

A recording of this event, and previous conferences, is available on the Society's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@theshevchenkoscientificsoc94>. Future NTSh Canada anniversary events are planned for autumn 2024.