



Documenting Ukraine: Bearing Witness to War

Vital work is being done by those who create a record of the Russo-Ukrainian War, who capture the human experience of that war, and who make it accessible and comprehensible to the broader world. Launched in March 2022, the IWM's program Documenting Ukraine supports scholars, journalists, public intellectuals, artists, and archivists based in Ukraine as they work on documentation projects that establish and preserve a factual record—whether through reporting, gathering published source material, or collecting oral testimony—or that bring meaning to events through intellectual reflection and artistic interpretation. Since that time, nearly 200 wide-ranging projects have been funded by Documenting Ukraine.

On 7-8 February, three round tables will bring together experts from Ukraine and across Europe and the United States to spotlight the insights gleaned from the multifaceted work of Documenting Ukraine and to explore some of the crucial thematic and methodological questions raised in the program's initial months. These round tables will be followed by an evening event on 8 February that will give program supporters, members of the IWM community, and media the chance to hear first-hand from leading Ukrainian intellectuals and cultural figures.

Tuesday, 7 February 2023

14:30-18:00 Afternoon Roundtable: Protecting Ukraine's heritage: What heritage and whose? Location: IWM Library

With one of the Russian Federation's war aims being precisely the destruction of Ukrainian heritage and culture, understanding and preserving that heritage becomes a particularly urgent task. Material objects as well as intangible cultural heritage are under threat. Who decides what needs to be preserved? What is in danger of being overlooked? What resources are needed? How should we think about layers of the past being erased through selective preservation? What are the dangers at issue in approaching the past – essentializing, instrumentalizing, sanitizing?

Wednesday, 8 February 2023

9:30-12:30 Morning Roundtable: Recording the present for the sake of the future
Location: IWM Library

This roundtable will bring together scholars, archive specialists, and preservation experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities and exchange best practice examples of preservation and archive building during war. It will reflect on the importance of balancing the exigencies of the present moment with the need to build secure and lasting collections, the ethics of inclusion and exclusion, and questions of access and interpretation.

Seeking to learn from and build upon other archival initiatives that document experiences of war, this session will consider the technical, intellectual, and ethical guiding principles that should govern how to manage building archives under extreme time pressure and extreme circumstances. Discussants will consider ways of defining the purpose and scope of collections, who does the collecting, and what resources are needed to make collecting possible. Other questions explored include identifying whom a particular archive is intended to serve and managing access and rights.

13:30-17:30 Afternoon Roundtable: Who tells Ukraine's story and how should it be told?

Location: IWM Library

With easily available technologies that give access to audiences of millions, coupled with changes in attitudes to trusted news sources, there has been a disruption of traditional models of war reporting and who is able to tell the stories of war. Despite persistent gatekeeping, how reporting on war works and who it empowers and leaves out has been transformed. This roundtable will consider the changing media landscape as it pertains to the Russo-Ukrainian War. In the first session, the focus will be on new approaches to storytelling and the technologies that make them possible; the second session will concentrate on questions of authorship, agency, and representation.

13:30 – 15:15 Afternoon Session 1: Disrupting the media: Formats, structures, and audiences

Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war has thrown into sharp relief the transformation of the media sphere in recent years. Innovation in news reporting comes from journalists themselves rather than media brands, and well-resourced legacy media are challenged by fresh and insightful newcomers. Unpredictable events require nimble responses; changing audience expectations drive new approaches to delivering information. Highly visual journalistic storytelling—whether interactive content, short-form video, or via image-centric media such as Instagram—and podcasting have become primary sources of news for many millions of people worldwide. This new configuration makes it possible to reach carefully targeted audiences who previously may not have been taken into account, but to do so requires specialized knowledge and insight into messaging. This session will reflect on these changes and the opportunities and challenges they present.

15:45 – 17:30 Afternoon Session 2: Whose story? Representation and themes

Questions under discussion in this session, which concentrates on the intellectual and practical principles of storytelling in wartime, include:

- How should we think about the notion of “objectivity?” What is the role of local expertise and insight? How can and should international media and journalists work ethically with local experts and professionals?
- What is the role of the “other” reporting through storytelling, whether from artists, writers, or public intellectuals?
- What stories get overlooked? What needs are being served and what neglected?

Evening Event: Bearing Witness to War

Location: IWM

Doors open at 18:15, Program begins at 18:30

With 200 projects now funded by the Documenting Ukraine program, this event is designed to highlight the work of the Documenting Ukraine grantees and present early results from the program. It is an opportunity for grantees and roundtable participants to network with the wider IWM community. The evening will bring together a variety of interested publics, including those who influence opinion and craft policy, to foster a greater understanding of both the program and the work of those it supports, who are bearing witness to war.

The evening will also include the opening of a preview exhibition of art and photography from Documenting Ukraine projects. From eight artists working in different media, the exhibition is a preview of a larger exhibition to take place later in 2023.

Speakers include:

Timothy Snyder, Yale University, IWM Permanent Fellow

Katherine Younger, IWM Permanent Fellow

Volodymyr Yermolenko, Ukrainian philosopher and journalist, Editor-in-Chief at *Ukraine World*, President of PEN Ukraine

Confirmed event participants:

Maksym Demydenko, Ukraine War Archive

Natalka Diachenko, DE-NE-DE

Sasha Dovzhyk, Ukrainian Institute London

Sofia Dyak, Center for Urban History

Misha Glenny, IWM

Nataliya Gumenyuk, Public Interest Journalism Lab and The Reckoning Project

Anna Ilchenko, Old Khata Project

Kseniya Kharchenko, IWM

Sebastian Majstorovic, Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online

Stephen Naron, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies

Bohdana Neborak, The Ukrainians

Inna Nelles, Life in War

Tetyana Ogarkova, *Explaining Ukraine* and Ukraine Crisis Media Center

Svitlana Oslavska, Old Khata Project

Timothy Snyder, IWM and Yale University [online]

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