

# The game versus quarantine

## The experience of Ukrainian libraries in communicating with students during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic stimulated the transition of Ukrainian libraries to remote forms of work with students. The closure of the physical space of libraries and universities made it impossible for students to communicate personally with librarians. The formation of an alternative communication environment in which students get acquainted with the library as a center of communication and development is becoming relevant and necessary for university libraries.

An analysis of recent publications has shown that in this period of uncertainty, as reported by Muhammad Rafiq and his colleagues, libraries consider their collective and individual role in educational and social spaces.<sup>1</sup>

According to Arda Putri Winata, Raisa Fadelina, and Sulisty Basuki, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of webinars to organize library events in real-time to provide information and motivation and compliance with social constraints was significantly intensified.<sup>2</sup>

Among some works on the impact of the pandemic on the activities of libraries in different countries, we can single out works that examine practical cases of transformation of traditional library services into remote.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, the authors offer their own experience of establishing communication between first-year students among themselves and with the libraries of higher education institutions of Ukraine during the quarantine of COVID-19 through online games.

### The emergence of the idea, format and platform choice for the game, and arrangements

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian university students studied full-time (March–June 2020) or part-time (September–December 2020 and January–June, September–December 2021) attendance mode, which made it difficult for them to get to know each other and created difficulties in communicating with librarians. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, employees of university libraries in Ukraine, working remotely, have been looking for ways to overcome quarantine restrictions in communication with students. At the beginning of 2021, the staff of the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (KNUCA) Scientific Library proposed establishing communication between first-year students and the library in the format of video conferencing using the online game format.<sup>4</sup> The idea was supported by the management of the university library, specialists

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of the Kharkiv Korolenko State Scientific Library (KKSSL),<sup>5</sup> and the Kharkiv Regional Branch of the Ukrainian Library Association All-Ukrainian Public Organization (ULA), a professional association of information and library specialists.

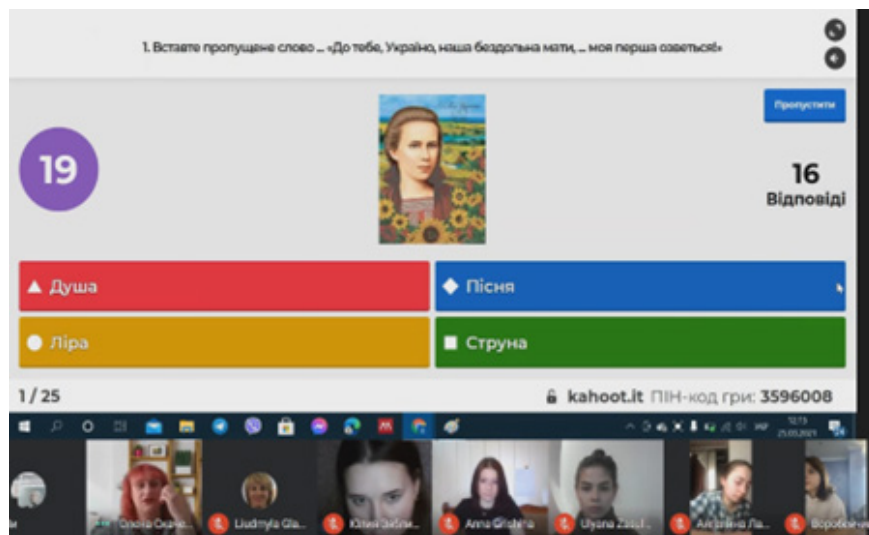
The initiative group agreed that the best format for attracting students to get acquainted with the library would be intellectual competitions, namely, online quiz games. Among the online quiz development platforms, we chose the digital learning tool Kahoot, as the KNUCA Scientific Library has a positive experience of conducting quizzes with students based on this platform.<sup>6</sup> KKSSL uses this service in the nonformal education of librarians.<sup>7</sup>

Since the libraries of two millionaire cities—Kyiv and Kharkiv, which are also the largest university cities in Ukraine—were involved in organizing the game from the very beginning, the idea was to invite higher education libraries from other Ukrainian cities. The following goals of the tournament were defined: organizing youth to overcome the negative effects of self-isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown, showing creative abilities, getting emotions and joy from a successful game, and more.

To connect with teams, we chose a video conferencing Google Meet platform. Starting November 2021, the battles took place on Zoom. The project partner was the publishing house Morning, which provided future winners with prizes—books in electronic and print format.

## The first all-Ukrainian digital intellectual student battle

In February 2021, we held the first all-Ukrainian intellectual student battle. The game's theme was the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Lesya Ukrainka, a famous Ukrainian writer and translator. Forty-two participants joined from five universities in three cities: Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa registered to participate in the online tournament. To increase the excitement of the game, the questions were announced by the moderator and simultaneously displayed on the players' mobile devices. A total of 25 questions were asked concerning interesting facts about the life and translation activities of Lesya Ukrainka.<sup>8</sup> We often used quiz questions that had a single correct answer and true-or-false questions.



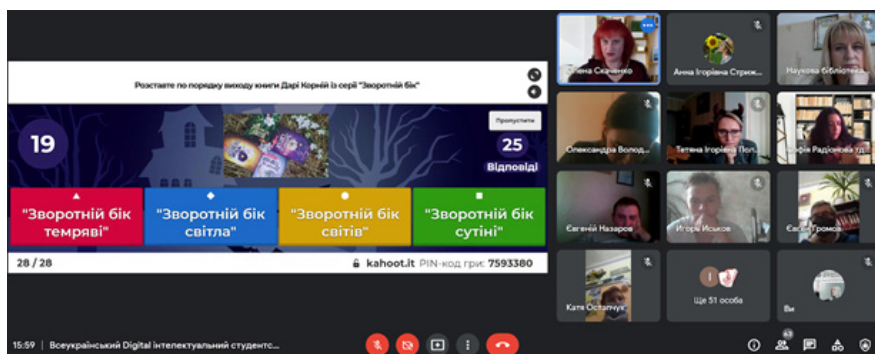
Screenshot from the intellectual student battle.

After the game, the winners were announced immediately. Next, the moderator conducted an oral interview of participants—we discussed the most interesting questions and named those that turned out to be easy or too difficult. The organizers asked students to suggest topics for the next tournaments.

## Five intellectual tournaments of 2021: Topics, participants, and feedback

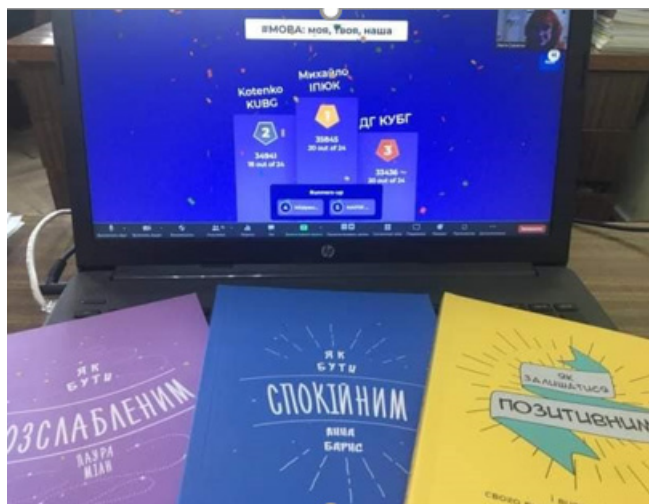
Students' proposals helped develop and hold four more intellectual competitions by the end of 2021. Each of them was tied to a specific event and was characterized by an increase in the number of participants: both students and universities.

The second tournament was “#LibraryDay 2021: Library. Book. Reading.” We held it on the All-Ukrainian Day of Libraries (September 30). Its participants were students of seven universities (37 players). Teams from 12 higher education institutions of Ukraine—63 participants—registered for the third intellectual battle: “Veles Night VS Halloween: breaking stereotypes about the holidays” (October 29). Fifty-five students played on the Kahoot platform.<sup>9</sup>



Screenshot from #LibraryDay2021 event.

The largest number of participants gathered for the game on the Day of Ukrainian Literature and Language, which is celebrated on November 9. A total of 130 intellectuals expressed their desire to participate in the intellectual tournament “#MOVA\_moya\_tvoya\_nasha.” Competing for victory in the Kahoot quiz were 117 students from 18 universities and art colleges of Vinnytsia, Dnipro, Kalush, Kyiv, Melitopol, Mukachevo, Alexandria, Slovyansk, Sumy, and Kharkiv.<sup>10</sup>



Preparing for the Day of Ukrainian Literature and Language event.

We organized the fifth intellectual battle on the occasion of the International Student Day with the theme “#DigitalMonth\_2021” (November 17). The fifth tournament of 2021 was “#KOD\_studenta\_abo\_pan\_abo\_propav,” which included 77 students from 16 higher education institutions.<sup>11</sup>

In total, the five intellectual student battles of 2021 involved 349 participants from 19 universities and 9 colleges from different cities of Ukraine. The tournaments showed a high level of knowledge and erudition of the participants, gambling, demonstrated vivid emotions, revealed different strategies for preparing students for the game and the will to win.

From tournament to tournament, new elements were added to the event’s program. The game “Warm-up” appeared in the second battle. For the tournament on the occasion of the International Student Day, we offered to supplement the teams’ presentation with the announcement of the university’s slogan. In addition to official slogans, students announced slogans and poetic phrases about universities or colleges that they had written specifically for the tournament. For example, “Inspiration. Youth. Beauty. It is the slogan of our life” (Bortnyansky Sumy College of Arts and Culture). The team from Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University announced the following slogan: “Together we can achieve all the goals. Back—no step! Together to the goal!”

We invited the famous Ukrainian fantasy writer Dara Korniy to participate in the tournament “Veles Night VS Halloween,” which took place on the eve of Halloween. Her story about the Ukrainian kind of Halloween—the holiday of Autumn Santas—was full of exciting facts and legends about the traditions of this holiday.

Librarians from other educational institutions participated in formulating quiz questions for the fourth and fifth tournaments.

To expand the geography of participants in intellectual battles, we have published text messages about tournaments, photos of winners and their awards, video contests, Kahoot final reports, etc., on the websites and social networks of university libraries.

We were also interested in students’ feedback and curators from libraries under these posts. The fact that students liked this format of communication is evidenced by comments such as one from Artem Grizoglavov from KNUCA, who responded on Facebook: “Exciting game. Such excitement awakens; it is not a pity. There would be more such events.”

## Conclusions

The challenges facing society through the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a search for solutions. Quarantine restrictions could not compete with libraries’ desire to be on the same page as their users. The idea of holding intellectual competitions to acquaint first-year students with each other and with the library, which emerged in the Scientific Library of Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, was transformed into all-Ukrainian digital intellectual student battles organized by libraries of other higher education institutions.

Librarians of Ukrainian universities and colleges offer students opportunities to communicate and obtain information about libraries and their distance services. Using the capabilities of the digital learning tool Kahoot has enabled libraries to promote reading as leisure, develop skills in teamwork, create strategies for successful play, and win well-deserved victories.

The five intellectual battles of 2021 revealed vivid emotions and different strategies to prepare students for the game and to win. Among the factors that contributed to the participation of student youth in intellectual tournaments was the need for positive and emotional

communication, finding a reference group for interaction on the internet, and recreational and cognitive motivation (get interesting information).

We hope that this game format will be useful for establishing online communication between students and librarians and that the experience and practical steps to prepare and conduct intellectual tournaments will facilitate its implementation in other libraries.

## Postscript

The organizers of the intellectual tournaments had plans to continue communicating with students in 2022. However, this possibility was canceled by the war that began on February 24. As of this writing, we are still unable to establish permanent contact with students and colleagues in other cities of Ukraine because of the following reasons: The building of the KKSSL is damaged. There are active battles for Slovyansk and Kramatorsk. The cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Dnipro are under constant missile strikes. Colleagues in Melitopol are under occupation, and pro-Ukrainian activities are prohibited there.

However, the Ukrainian people continue to fight for their independence. We believe in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and our Victory.

## Thanks

The authors of the article sincerely appreciate the 28 Ukrainian university and college library staff's assistance in preparing and conducting student intellectual tournaments to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We thank the English editor, Daria Fugalevych, for the appropriate recommendations and editing. ✍

## Notes

1. Muhammad Rafiq, Syeda Hina Batool, Amna Farzand Ali, and Midrar Ullah, "University Libraries Response to COVID-19 Pandemic: A Developing Country Perspective," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102280>.

2. Arda Putri Winata, Raisa Fadelina, and Sulisty Basuki, "New Normal and Library Services in Indonesia: A Case Study of University Libraries," *Digital Library Perspectives* 37, no. 1 (2021): 77–84, <https://doi.org/10.1108/DLP-07-2020-0059>.

3. Luidmyla Semenova, Tetiana Shchetinina, and Olha Kolesnyk, "Tsyfrovi Merezhevi Tekhnolohii v Akademichnykh Bibliotekakh Pid Chas Suchasnykh Vyklykiv" ["Digital Network Technology in Academic Libraries During Modern Challenges"], *University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development: tezy dop. V Mizhnar. nauk.-prakt. konf. 8–9 zhovtnia* [http://conflib.diit.edu.ua/Conf\\_univ\\_Library2020/paper/view/22181/11380](http://conflib.diit.edu.ua/Conf_univ_Library2020/paper/view/22181/11380) [in Ukrainian]; Dunja Holcer, Yurii Gorban, Delija Dina Mašina, and Olena Skachenko, "Library Online Services During COVID-19: the Experience of Libraries in Croatia and Ukraine," *Library Mercury* 1, no. 25 (2021): 81–97.

4. Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (KNUCA)—a leading institution of higher art education—is in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv. The KNUCA Scientific Library plays an important role in the educational and scientific complex of the university.

5. Kharkiv Korolenko State Scientific Library (KKSSL) is an information, resource, and methodological institution of national importance; it is a multifunctional center of cultural

services. Particular attention is paid to the organization of nonformal and informal education of users and librarians. Various sociocultural events, art training, consultations, and digital, media, and information literacy classes are held for users.

6. Yurii Gorban and Olena Skachenko, “Dosvid Vykorystannia Tsyfrovoho Instrumentu Navchannia Kahoot! u Diialnosti Biblioteky Universytetu” [“Experience of Use of Kahoot! Digital Tool in the University Library Activities”], *Ukrainskyi zhurnal z bibliotekoznavstva ta informatsiinykh nauk* [Ukrainian Journal on Library and Information Science] 5 (2020): 66–79, <https://doi.org/10.31866/2616-7654.5.2020.205730> [in Ukrainian].

7. Kateryna Viriutina, “Suchasni Aktsenty v Neformalnii Osviti Biblioteknykh Fakhivtsiv Ukrainy: Navchalni Praktyky KhDNB im. V. H. Korolenka” [“Modern Accents in Non-Formal Education of Librarians of Ukraine: Educational Practices of KKSSL”], *Suchasna Publichna Biblioteka: Vyklyky, Mozhlyvosti, Dosiahnennia: materialy VII Vseukr. shk. metodysta*, Kyiv, 7–11 zhovt. 2019, <https://elib.nlu.org.ua/view.html?id=11686> [in Ukrainian].

8. Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts Scientific Library (KNUCA Scientific Library) [Naukova Biblioteka Kyivskoho Natsionalnoho Universytetu Kultury i Mystetstv], “All-Ukrainian Digital Intellectual Student Battle #150Lesya Ukrainka Forever” [“Vseukrainskyi Digital Intelktualnyi Studentskyi Batl #150Lesia Ukrainka Forever”], March 28, 2021, <http://lib.knukim.edu.ua/vseukrainskiy-digital-intelektualniy-st/> [in Ukrainian].

9. KNUCA Scientific Library [Naukova Biblioteka Kyivskoho Natsionalnoho Universytetu Kultury i Mystetstv], “GlobalMILWeek: III Vseukrainskyi Intelktualnyi Batl” [“GlobalMILWeek: III All-Ukrainian Intellectual Battle”], November 2, 2021, <http://knukim.edu.ua/globalmilweek-iii-vseukrayinskyj-intelektualnyj-batl/> [in Ukrainian].

10. KNUCA Scientific Library [Naukova Biblioteka Kyivskoho Natsionalnoho Universytetu Kultury i Mystetstv], “Intelktualni Turniry Lystopada vid Naukovoii Biblioteky KNUKiM” [“November Intellectual Tournaments From the KNUCA Scientific Library”], November 19, 2021, <http://lib.knukim.edu.ua/intelektualni-turniri-listopada-vi/> [in Ukrainian].

11. KNUCA Scientific Library, “November Intellectual Tournaments.”