

The Scientific Library of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy

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It is hard to imagine our world without books. Books accompany a person throughout their life and are valuable sources of knowledge and information. A human personality cannot be formed without a book, and furthermore, without a book learning or carrying out scientific activity is unthinkable. Therefore, the functioning of an educational institution is not possible without a book collection.

The Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy (VOTA) (Lutsk, Ukraine) is an accredited institution of higher spiritual education of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which prepares various types of people – future pastors of the Church of Christ, precentors of the church choir, employees of eparchial institutions and missions, specialists in the field, and those at different levels of church service and public positions related to educational, research, cultural, and administrative-consultative work – with deep knowledge of Christian doctrine, church-historical, religious and social processes, and phenomena. The Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy is the legal successor of the ancient Volyn Theological Seminary, whose history dates back to 1796. During this time, the seminary experienced various events and changed its location (Ostrog, Hanopyl, Kremenets, Zhytomyr, Lutsk). The library, which has its own interesting history, was an integral part of its functioning.

With the revival of the Volyn Theological Seminary in 1991, the Library's activity (and the collection of its holdings) restarted in Lutsk. Although the library's holdings are new compared to the previous library, the spirit and atmosphere of library work that has always filled the book collection throughout the centuries have been preserved to this day.

One of the first important contributions to the development of the library was made by Anatoly (Dublyansky) (1912–1997), Metropolitan of Paris and Western Europe and Hierarch of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the Diaspora. He handed over about 400 volumes of theological literature, which he collected during his 50-year stay in Germany. Subsequently, in 1995, having headed the Volyn Diocese, Yakiv (Panchuk) (1931–2004), Metropolitan of Lutsk and Volyn, donated to the library a complete set of the pre-revolutionary edition of the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Brockhaus and Efron, which he acquired during his studies at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. In 1996, part of his own library was handed over by the then-Rector Petro Vintsukevich. (Among the books worth mentioning are the complete collection of works of Archbishop of Kherson Inokentiy, the first volumes of the Works of the Kyiv Theological Academy and valuable selections of theological periodicals of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.) In the mid-1990s, well-known representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora joined the formation of the library: Bishop Paisiy (Ivashchuk), Fr. Petro Satsevich, Pylyp Shaida, Ivan Popel, Serhii Lyashuk, and many others. Many books also came from the Institute of Volyn Research in Winnipeg.



[Image 1] Reprint editions: Kholm Gospel, Peresopnytsia Gospel, Mazepa's Gospel (photo by the author)

The improvement of the educational process, the activation of scientific life, and the development of the infrastructure of the theological school led to the reorganisation of Volyn Theological Seminary into Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy in 2011. This new Academy status significantly motivated the teaching staff and students to pursue scientific research work with clear objectives: to preserve the traditions of spiritual education and to bring many years of experience into the global educational and scientific space. The acquisition of 'academic' status also affected the further development of the Scientific Library: it moved to new premises; book collections have undergone changes and improved significantly; since 2012, registered funds have been introduced, the owners of which are constantly adding new books to them; an electronic catalogue (the "Ukrainian Stock House Library") and many other things were introduced.



[Image 2] Reading room of the Scientific Library of VOTA (photo by the author)

The Scientific Library of VOTA consists of a reading room and a book depository. The reading room is equipped with the necessary furniture, computers, internet and access to scientific and metric databases, such as Web of Science, Scopus, and others. On the walls of the reading room, you can view a valuable collection of church Antimins of the 19th - 20th centuries, with autographs and corresponding statutory inscriptions of many famous Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. All books are stored in the book storage, which is equipped with state-of-the-art sliding archive cabinets purchased in Italy.

Today, the Scientific Library has more than 17,000 volumes of books and about 20,000 copies of periodicals, alphabetical and systematic catalogues are kept, compiled in accordance with the system of disciplines taught at the theological academy, in the order determined universal decimal classification. The library's entire collection is registered in four special inventory books. Each edition has its own number, which matches the number in the inventory book. The format conforms to generally accepted standards: the first (title) and seventeenth pages are stamped 'Library of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy' and the book's inventory number is indicated.

The holdings of the Scientific Library consist not only of theological works but also items with historical, cultural, reference-encyclopedic value, and books from other areas of knowledge. Therefore, users are not only the students of the Academy, but also secular scientists, students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and other higher education institutions.

The entire library is divided into more than thirty departments. The first department is devoted to theology and has many subdivisions: Christology, Hagiology, Apologetics, etc. One of the most important works in this department is Lives of the Saints, composed by St. Dimitriy, Metropolitan of Rostov. There are several paterikas: Kyiv-Pecherskiy, Volyn-Pochaiivskiy, Solovetskiy; some works of Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienka) devoted to Hagiology, in particular,

Canonization of Saints in the Ukrainian Church and others. The next department is devoted to the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament. The Holy Scriptures are stored here in translations into Ukrainian by Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko), Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienko) and Panteleimon Kulish, as well as translations of God's Word into many foreign languages. This department includes interpretations of the Holy Scriptures by famous fathers and theologians: Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop Averkiy (Tatushev), Oleksandr Lopukhin, Boris Gladkov, Mykola Barsov and others. The department of dogmatic theology is important and represented by many works of Orthodox theologians: Metropolitan Makarios (Bulgakov), Archbishop Filaret (Gumilevsky), Bishop Kallistus (Uer), Archpriest Mykola Malinovskiy, Metropolitan of Pergamon Ioan (Ziziulas), Archimandrite Cyril (Hovorun) and others.

One of the largest sections is dedicated to the works of the holy fathers and teachers of the Church. The creations of Saints Ioan Chrysostom, Vasyl the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Saint Ephrem the Syrian, Saints Theophan the Recluse, Ignatius Bryanchaninov, Saint Simeon the New Theologian, and others are presented here. A special place is occupied by the works of Saints Augustine Aurelius and Cyril of Alexandria in the Ukrainian language, the translation work of which was contributed by the teaching staff of VOTA. The department dedicated to homiletics and sermons is also special. Another important department belongs to liturgy and liturgical books. A special place here is occupied by liturgical literature in the Ukrainian language as well as many well-known works on the church charter. The decoration of the department is a reprinted edition of Trebnik by Petro Mohyla. The largest department is literature devoted to the history of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Thanks to the donations of Ukrainians from the diaspora, the library has almost all the works on the history of Ukrainian Orthodoxy that were published abroad. In addition, many books on this topic, which were published during the years of Ukraine's independence, were bought recently. Philosophy is a separate department. It also includes religious philosophy, psychology, and Christian ethics. Several more departments are devoted to the history of religions, the origin of Protestant denominations and their teachings, as well as art and literature.

The Library is particularly proud of the department of old prints. It has more than a hundred valuable and rare editions – mostly liturgical books – and old prints. The Floral Triodion, published on 1st June 1631, in the printing house of the Holy Dormition Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, deserves special attention. There

are also facsimile editions: the Lutsk Gospel; the Kholm Gospel; the Lavryshevsky Gospel; the Peresopnytsia Gospel; the Rheims Gospel; the Ostromir Gospels; Mazepa's Gospel; the Ostrog Bible, and others.



[Image 3] Old prints on a shelf (photo by the author)

Since the revival of the spiritual institution, a regency department has also been operating in the library. Therefore, significant space is devoted to church singing as an integral part of Orthodox worship. Over the years, a rich music archive has accumulated here. The department is rich in choral works by prominent church composers: Kyrylo Stetsenko, Maksym Berezovskiy, Artem Vedel, Mykola Leontovych, and others.

The Scientific Library of VOTA is filled not only with the main holdings already described but also with many named collections, beginning with that of Metropolitan Anatoly (Dublyansky). The following named collections have been created within or gifted to the Library: those of Metropolitan Mykhail (Zinkevich), Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko), the Exarch Fund of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ukraine, Bishop of Komanskiy Mykhailo Anishchenko, Archpriest Mykola Tsap, Archpriest Volodymyr Vakin, P. Vintsukevich, M. Kuchinka, and others.

The collections are also constantly filling up with modern/new books, through donations from both readers and authors, benefactor donations, and general purchases. In particular, within the framework of the programme of support for institutions of higher spiritual education of the Union of Ukrainian Women of America, the Scientific Library of VOTA has been repeatedly replenished with new books; cooperating with the Spirit and Letter publishing house, almost all editions of this well-known publishing house are with us; every year on 23rd October, during the celebration of the Act Day of VOTA in honour of the Cathedral of Volyn Saints, the Scientific Library of VOTA is replenished with the latest scientific works and periodicals of other institutions of higher spiritual education of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine..

In February 2020, VOTA signed a ‘Memorandum on cooperation’ between the libraries of theological institutions of Ukraine (Ukrainian Catholic University, Drohobych Theological Seminary of Blessed Hieromartyrs Severyn, Vitaly and Yakym, Ivano-Frankivsk Academy of Ioan Chrysostom, Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary and Kyiv Trichsyatytsky Theological Seminary of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), which seeks to expand horizons and access to information. Through this cooperation, the teachers and students of VOTA have the opportunity to use publications not only from their own subject-specific library and collections but also from the holdings of all other participating scientific theological libraries. All this aids further scientific thinking and educational endeavour; which would, as said above, be impossible without books.



[Image 4] Trebnik by Petro Mohyla (photo by the author)