

**Ukrainian–Australian literature (1949 – 1991):
an on-line exhibition curated by Sonia Mycak**

After the Second World War, 21,000 Ukrainian ‘Displaced Persons’ immigrated to Australia as refugees. On arrival they immediately formed a community and organised social and cultural institutions and infrastructure. A lively literary life also flourished. Authors, many of whom had begun writing prior to arrival in Australia, wrote mainly in their native Ukrainian language. They wrote across all genres, producing poetry, prose, novels, plays, memoirs and essays in a wide range of subjects and styles. Literary texts were produced, distributed and consumed within the Ukrainian community and a distinct and dynamic literary culture evolved, comprising writers’ associations and readers’ clubs, recitals at community concerts and commemorations, literary events, competitions, and the production of periodicals and books. Literary texts were also distributed within an international diaspora located in North and South America and western Europe. Eventually, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, connections would be made with an independent Ukraine.

Writer, publisher and literary scholar Dmytro Nytczenko [Дмитро Нитченко] estimated that in total, from the first book published in Australia in 1951 until 1995, more than 200 publications of different genres for different purposes were published. He further calculated that each year, on average 4.5 books were published for some 30,000 – 35,000 Ukrainians. Comparing this to the number of volumes which were published in the Ukrainian language in Ukraine, it appears that in Australia for each 10,000 Ukrainians there were more Ukrainian books published than in Ukraine itself.

[Всього в Австралії з дня виходу першої української книжки на цьому терені (1951 р) до 1995 р. вийшло понад 200 видань різного жанру й призначення...Щороку виходило пересічно 4,5 книжок на 30–35 тисяч українців...І коли порівняємо це з кількістю україномовних видань, що виходили українською мовою в Україні, то...виходить, що тут на кожних 10,000 українців українських книжок вийшло більше, ніж в Україні.] (Taken from “From the literary–publishing life in Australia: A bibliographical account” [«З літературно–видавничого життя в Австралії: Бібліографічна розвідка»] in *Ukrainians in Australia: Volume II* [Українці у Австралії, Том II] published by the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations [Союз Українських організацій Австралії] in Melbourne [Мельбурн] in 1998, pages 656-686, page 659.)

This attests to an extraordinary commitment on the part of Ukrainian–Australians to preserve the Ukrainian language and develop Ukrainian literary culture, at a time when both were under threat in the USSR.

This on-line exhibition features 170 books and periodicals which are representative of Ukrainian–Australian literary production in the period beginning with the arrival of Ukrainian ‘Displaced Persons’ up to 1991. Post-war arrival in Australia until the collapse of the USSR was a distinct and historic period of community and literary–cultural development. Decisive change occurred with the proclamation of Ukrainian sovereignty, after which a new phase of creative and communal life developed in connection with an independent Ukraine.

Most of the books were published in Australia. However, some were published in other countries (mainly within the diaspora) or prior to immigration. Most works are by Ukrainian authors who resided in Australia. If not, they were published by Ukrainian–Australians.

These titles fall within the following categories of work:

- autobiographical pieces and life-writing about Soviet rule in Ukraine (including the Holodomor), Nazi occupation, war experiences and then escape as a Displaced Person, and immigration and life in Australia;
- personal memoirs;
- travelogues (recounting journeys within Australia, the Pacific, and travel to Soviet Ukraine);
- historical fiction;
- humour and satire;
- reprinted works by noted and dissident writers of Soviet Ukraine;
- children's literature and teaching resources;
- literary scholarship and criticism;
- works published before arrival in Australia;
- works published outside of Australia, mainly within the diaspora;
- translations;
- poetry collections;
- literary journals.

The on-line exhibition comprises scans of the front matter of each publication, in the form of the front cover and title page(s) which show title (and subtitle), author, editor or translator (if applicable), place of publication and publisher. In the case of four publications, the back cover is included because it contains part of this information. In some volumes this bibliographical information is given only in Ukrainian, in others it is also provided in English.

The publications were selected and scanned by Dr Sonia Mycak, drawing on her expertise in literary scholarship. Most are from her personal collection, which she has acquired over many years by purchase and through donation. She also accessed community-held collections and some titles were sighted by her at Ukrainian community halls, schools, churches and in the archives of Ukrainian community organisations. Individuals within the Ukrainian–Australian community also shared books from their private collections. Dr Mycak herself has been reading and researching Ukrainian–Australian literature since her post-doctoral studies in the 1990s, first at the University of New South Wales and later at the University of Sydney. More recently, as a research fellow in the Centre for European Studies at the Australian National University, she has been writing a book-length history of Ukrainian literature in Australia, with support from the Ukrainian Studies Foundation in Australia.

The volumes which feature in the on-line exhibition include those which were published in relatively large print-runs as well as lesser-known texts and those which are now rare. Together, these titles are characteristic of Ukrainian–Australian literary production by the first generation of Ukrainian immigrants who lived in Australia. The exhibition illustrates a prolific and diverse literary output and acknowledges the talent, creativity and resourcefulness of Ukrainian–Australian authorship.

Fieldwork in the Ukrainian Community Hall in Noble Park, Melbourne, Australia (2018)

