

3-27-2022

Pride, Devotion, Persistence

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Harris, Kayla, "Pride, Devotion, Persistence" (2022). *Marian Library Blog Archive*. 88.
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Pride, Devotion, Persistence

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Sunday March 27, 2022

By Kayla Harris

The Marian Library's collections include diverse cultural representations of Marian devotion across the world. In 1981, Marian Library employee Helen (Halyna) Nykolyshyn established the Ukrainian Marian Collection to collect and preserve artwork, manuscripts, stamps and other artifacts that document Ukrainian devotion to Mary from Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Originally from Ukraine, Nykolyshyn spent time in Germany and Australia before coming to the United States. She earned her Master of Library Science degree from Kent State University and worked in the Marian Library as a cataloger.

Nykolyshyn sent out letters to various parishes and Ukrainian cultural organizations throughout the United States, explaining the purpose of the collection and asking for donations of items or money for preservation supplies. The size of the collection gives evidence of the strong presence of the Ukrainian American community and the devotion of Ukrainians toward Mary.

Nykolyshyn collaborated with Anatol Kurdydyk, a Ukrainian journalist who later relocated to Winnipeg, Manitoba. The May 1982 issue of the *Marian Library Newsletter* states that “donations to our collection of Ukrainian art have been increasing steadily through the efforts of Mrs. Helen Nykolyshyn, our cataloger, and our very energetic and devoted collaborator in Winnipeg, Mr. Anatol Kurdydyk. From him we have received art reproductions, recordings of Christmas carols and liturgical music, photographs, stamps and slides. ... Not content with his personal gifts, he has prevailed upon others to send materials to the library.”

In 1988, Nykolyshyn organized a major program on campus to celebrate the millennium of Christianity in Ukraine, including prayer services, an art exhibit in Kennedy Union and displays in the Roesch and Marian libraries. In 1990, Nykolyshyn established the Ukrainian Marian Foundation, a nonprofit organization to ensure the continuation of her work to preserve and encourage the study of Marian traditions of Ukrainians after her retirement from the Marian Library.

Today, the collections that Nykolyshyn established are being organized by an International Marian Research Institute doctoral graduate, Richard Lenar. Lenar was awarded the 2021 Clinton Fund Scholarship from the Mariological Society of America to organize the Ukrainian Marian Collection and the Ukrainian Marian Foundation records so that they are more accessible to researchers.

— *Kayla Harris is an associate professor and librarian/archivist in the Marian Library. She manages the arrangement and preservation of the Marian Library’s archival materials including photographs, personal papers and other artifacts.*



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Poster commemorating the millenium of Christianity in Ukraine, Zhisowska, 1987