



## THE PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI CARPATHO-RUTHENICA COLLECTION

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**I**N 2019, THE Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library became the custodian of what has been described as the Carpatho-Rusyn national library. On 4 April 2023, the University of Toronto Libraries celebrated this remarkable donation with an exhibition of selected items from the collection and a lecture by Nicholas Kupensky, a professor of Russian at the Department of Foreign Languages, United States Air Force Academy. The bequeathed material is both an archive of a place, Carpathian Rus'—a borderland of borderlands in the heart of Europe—and the cultural heritage of a stateless people, the Carpatho-Rusyns. The ten thousand-volume library is not one evacuated during national border changes or the wars of the twentieth

or twenty-first centuries. Paul Robert Magocsi, a professor of history and political science and the holder of the John Yaremko Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto, assembled it over the course of six decades. Professor Magocsi has been called the national awakener of Carpatho-Rusyns, and a liberal humanist and cosmopolitan. However, the role most dear to him is that of curator of the Paul Robert Magocsi Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection.

The impetus for developing the Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection came from Magocsi's wish to create a national bibliography. But to create one, he needed the material to describe: in other words, a library. The budding bibliographer and fanatic bibliophile set about

collecting everything he could find about Carpatho-Rusyns beginning in the 1960s while in Prague undertaking research on his doctoral dissertation, *The Development of National Consciousness in Subcarpathian Rus, 1918-1945* (1972), and continuing to the present day. Magocsi describes his multi-pronged approach to building the collection in his soon-to-be-published book, *From Nowhere to Somewhere: The Carpatho-Rusyn Movement—A Personal History*.

Building the collection involved visits to used and antiquarian bookstores in European cities like Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Kraków, and L'viv, in addition to Prešov, Uzhhorod, and Mukachevo in the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland. Magocsi arranged to photocopy



or microfilm, or obtain duplicate copies, of other Carpatho-Ruthenica material from national, religious, and university libraries. Book dealers fulfilled *desiderata*, among them George Sabo (1896–1983), a Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant to the United States from the Kingdom of Hungary, and Otto Sagner (1920–2011), a Munich-based importer and exporter of books from Eastern Europe and Russia. More recently, bookstores Lexicon in Warsaw and Kobzar in Uzhhorod carried on this function. Colleagues and friends have helped by seeking publications in Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, Russia, and the Czech Republic. Chance also played a role in his acquisitions. Individuals age, and institutions outgrow their function, purpose, or need, so material was acquired from heirs of private collectors and reorganized or defunct organizations.

For example, the Greek Catholic Union, a fraternal benefit society headquartered

in Beaver, Pennsylvania, was downsizing its museum-library of superfluous material, ‘written in “funny” and not understandable languages’ in 2002.<sup>1</sup> Magocsi discovered in their collection rare European publications from the 1920s and 1930s and a providential find for the collector: a much-desired copy of the book *La Ruthénie subcarpathique* (Geneva, 1944) by the Swiss geographer Aldo Dami (1898–1977). A decade later, scores of religious titles, some dating back to the seventeenth century, as well as bound runs of pre-World War I Carpatho-Rusyn American newspapers were discovered during a visit to the sold premises of the Benedictine Monastery of Eastern-rite monks in Butler, Pennsylvania, whose library had to be liquidated. In Butler, just as in Beaver, Magocsi casually discovered a book that he had tried hard to locate at the great libraries in Vienna, L’viv, and Budapest: the multi-language dictionary, *Ó-szláv-, magyar-, ruthén-, (orosz) német szótár a szentírás olvasásához* (Old Slavic, Hungarian, Ruthenian, [Russian] German dictionary for reading the Holy Scriptures; Uzhhorod, 1906), by the priest, lexicographer, and belletrist Emilij A. Kubek (1857–1940).

Magocsi also purchased material from private individuals, often family members of deceased collectors, and in this way, the Carpatho-Ruthenica collection was supplemented by the following treasures: the first published history of Subcarpathian Rus’,

*Brevis notitia foundationis Theodori Koriathovits* (A brief account of the donation made by Fedor Koriatovych; Košice, 1799–1805) by the Basilian monk, Ioanykii Bazylovych (1742–1821); a literary almanac, *Поздравление русиновъ на годъ 1851* (Greetings from the Rusyns for the year 1851; Vienna, 18[50]), compiled by the priest, writer, and historian, Aleksander Dukhnovych (1803–1865); the first history of Carpatho-Rusyn literature, *Очеркъ литературнаго движенія угорскихъ русскихъ* (Outline of the Carpatho-Rusyn literary movement; Odessa, 1888), written by the educator and gymnasium director, Petro Feierchak. The 1851 literary almanac is notable for two reasons. First, it includes the poem that became the national hymn, ‘I was, am, and will remain a Rusyn,’ by Dukhnovych. Secondly, the copy, like many other items in Magocsi’s collection, includes traces of notable previous ownership: Stefan Pankovych (1820–1874), bishop of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo from 1867 to 1874, and Basil Shereghy (1918–1988), a well-known Byzantine numismatist and Greek Catholic priest from Uzhhorod who was active in the United States after World War II.

While the above were all remarkable purchases, the biggest one of all, for a price of ten thousand dollars, was the private library of Carpatho-Ruthenica assembled by Ivan Komloshii (1920–1996), a teacher and director of a gymnasium in a small Hungarian-inhabited village near Berehovo,

**OPENING PAGE:** Exhibition catalogue for the Paul Robert Magocsi Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection and *Поздравление русиновъ на годъ 1851*, an early literary almanac for Carpatho-Rusyns. **ABOVE:** Paul Robert Magocsi at the exhibition and lecture event, with Sally Jones. **FACING PAGE:** *Brevis notitia foundationis Theodori Koriathovits*, the first published history of Subcarpathian Rus’.



Ukraine. Komloszhi's library enriched Toronto's collection with thousands of works on Carpatho-Rusyn literature and education, as well as newspapers and journals published in Subcarpathian Rus' under Czechoslovak and Hungarian rule. The books were brought in small batches across the border into Slovakia and eventually to Toronto, and the rare serials were secreted out for microfilming with the help of an acquaintance's diplomatic passport into Hungary. Magocsi jokes of this experience in his memoirs that he became not only a purveyor of culture (*Kulturträger*) but also a professional book carrier (*Bücherträger*), doing whatever it took 'to get Carpatho-Rusyn publications across land borders and the proverbial pond to North America.'<sup>2</sup> The result was the establishment of a true Carpatho-Ruthenica research library housed at the University of Toronto that attracts scholars to Ontario from the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, the United States, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, and Austria.

Among the distinguished scholars who have worked with the collection is Nicholas Kupensky, who in his Fisher Library lecture 'Archive, Nation, Text: The Lives of the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library' described his amazement at the collection's systematization—a system ranging from bibliographies to maps, with topographies, biographies, histories, language, literature, and architecture and art, ethnography and folklore, as well as other subjects in between—that 'we are told

is even superior to the Library of Congress.' He marvelled at the casual discovery of his grandfather's name listed as a priest in a nineteenth-century Greek Catholic church *schematism* on a shelf in Magocsi's office library. From there, Kupensky realized that he:

[J]ust had to reach down a shelf to see his [grandfather's] curriculum, turn to the left to see maps of the roads he took, jump into the next alcove to read the histories of the villages he served in, walk around the corner to learn the variant of Rusyn he would have known, walk across the room to see the icons he venerated.

It was then, seeing his grandfather's name, and surrounded by books, that Kupensky felt something akin to the sublime. He was not in a library dedicated to Carpathian Rus'; he was *in* Carpathian Rus'.

To be *in* Carpathian Rus' is not limiting in terms of geographical or national scope. The publications in the collection deal with the history, language, and culture of Carpatho-Rusyns in all the regions where they reside in the European homeland as well as in the diaspora, especially in the United States and Canada. These take the form of encyclopedic and statistical guides, histories, church *schematism*, school texts, original literary works, folk songs, primers, atlases, maps, and complete runs of serials (significantly, a wide range of immigrant and homeland annual almanacs), with a chronological range from the seventeenth century to the present. One

cannot study Carpatho-Rusyns without noticing how their culture is embedded in regional and global networks. There are studies too, in diverse languages, about other peoples in Carpathian Rus' who have interacted with Carpatho-Rusyns—Hungarians, Jews, Slovaks, Germans, Roma, Czechs, Russians, and Ukrainians, among others.

In his closing remarks, Nicholas Kupensky thanked Larry Alford, University Chief Librarian, University of Toronto Libraries, and Loryl MacDonald, Associate Chief Librarian for Special Collections and Director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, for taking 'a leap of faith that there will be Rusyns tomorrow.' By accepting this unique and outstanding donation from Paul Robert Magocsi, they took 'a step to ensure that there will be Rusyns in the future,' as well as scholarship on them for years to come.



A copy of the *Carpatho-Ruthenica Exhibition Catalogue* is available gratis; send your name and postal address to: [ukr.chair@utoronto.ca](mailto:ukr.chair@utoronto.ca).

#### Endnotes

- 1 Magocsi, *From Nowhere to Somewhere*.
- 2 Ibid.