

Special Feature

Rapid Response Research and Ukrainian Studies

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss a rapid response project that brought together action researchers from two countries and several universities to provide academic commentary on events emerging during Ukraine's 2014 Euromaidan protest demonstrations. This is a case study of real time engagement over a six-month period. It identifies the results, the complex global and local infrastructure that enabled project exploration to take place and explains its success. Outcomes provide evidence that supports Roger's (1995) contention that globalization of universities has created a system with a capacity for both top-down centralization and bottom-up decentralization as well as Beerkens' (2008) notion of isomorphism or local reinvention. This combination should be understood and utilized in action research projects. Supporting Morley's (2013) claim, analysis of the underlying social context demonstrates that when bottom up local and top down global factors are engaged, maximum results are achieved. This paper may be of particular interest to faculty members who have strong ties to local minority discourse communities or those studying civil movements or unrest and wish to use Rapid Response Research (RRR) methods.

Keywords: Euromaidan, Ukrainian studies, rapid response research, globalization, civil movements

Introduction

Rapid Response Research (RRR). RRR has become a common term in many disciplines. Medical and natural disaster relief have developed a complex infrastructure of people, organizations, experts, and technology for professionals who have to reach people and groups in crisis as rapidly as possible. Some RRR documents take the form of an online synthesis of research on social issues such as suicide prevention intervention, addiction, poverty, school closure, or inequities of minority groups in the workplace. In this paper we describe and analyse a project of rapid response research in the humanities and social sciences focusing on the 2014 Euromaidan protests in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Rapid response research has become a common term in many disciplines and falls into three categories. In medicine and natural disaster relief a complex interconnected structure of people, organizations, mandates, experts, and technology exist to provide services to professionals who have to reach people and groups in crisis as rapidly as possible. There are foundations devoted to RRR, funding agencies at national and international levels and even special awards for RRR: “the Rapid Response Innovation Awards (RRIA) program supports high-risk, high-reward projects with little-to-no existing preliminary data, but with potential to significantly impact our understanding of Parkinson’s disease (PD)” (The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s research, n.d., para.1).

Some RRR takes the form of an online synthesis of research on social issues (e.g. suicide prevention interventions, rehabilitation-care models for frail seniors, addiction, and poverty). Many universities engage with community in this way (e.g. [McMaster University](#) and [Guelph University](#)). The Canadian International Council engages in public and professional dialogue about issues pertaining to RRR such as negotiating with terrorists ([Open Canada](#)).

In other disciplines, RRR typically provides academic analysis and interpretation of data collected by the above network: in the social sciences researchers have brought inequities of minority groups in the workplace to the fore (e.g. Hamermesh, 1998); education researchers have concentrated on financial viability of school closure and [intelligence testing](#); and politicians have even used it as an [electoral issue](#). RRR has evolved into a sophisticated infrastructure of technological tools, skilled professionals, and institutional support.

This paper introduces a third model of RRR – academic commentary in real time on events such as those reported in the news media on a daily basis. Open access to such insights can enrich public understanding of local and world events. All three variations rely on a sophisticated infrastructure for mobilizing knowledge and resources.

Globalized universities and the Internet. In a globalized world, universities continue to pursue excellence in teaching and research, and support free enquiry (Sadlak, 2000, p. 248). A key element in globalized higher education is free and almost instantaneous electronic

communication around the world at all times. This has compressed former notions of time-space (Giddens, 1981), increased mobility and created new “terms of reference” that shape our debates about the future organization of the world” (Sadlak, 2008, p. 244). Rogers (1995) classifies such mechanisms for diffusion along a continuum between centralized and decentralized information diffusion systems (pp. 204-251). Centralized diffusion is a linear one-way interaction controlled by an authority and a top down process, which is asymmetrical in the power relationship between diffuser and adaptor. Decentralized systems are horizontal networks of peers and allow for greater local ownership and adaptation in fostering institutionalization. Beerkens (2008) argues that the global diffusion of particular university models does not necessarily lead to convergence in practices and results (p. 33). The key to understanding these contemporary changes, according to Sadlak (2000) is to see them in historical perspective and realize that universities and electronic communications “more and more resemble the real world with all its interest groups, minorities, relationships, processes and other such traits” (p. 247). The distribution of these new technologies still mirrors the shadow of geography and history. Internet connections tend to follow the routes laid down by earlier forms of communication as well as contemporary capacities (Morley, 2013, p. 64).

In Morley’s (2013) terms, we should focus “not on the internet in general, or on cyberspace in the abstract, but rather on the particular types of cyberspace, which are instituted in specific localities, under particular cultural, economic, and political circumstances” (p. 62). Miller and Slater (2000) show how the world of the virtual and actual are differently integrated across the globe in specific contexts, pointing out that call centres in India and North Africa are located specifically there because these regions have a history of English and French as colonial languages in combination with low-wage economies.

This project will show that with the right technology and infrastructure of support, RRR offers researchers opportunities to explore events in real-time through action research, which can be of particular benefit to minority discourses under specific conditions. RRR and action research both engage participants in a process of planning, doing, observing, and reflecting in a constant spiral of adaptation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982; Oja & Smulyan, 1989).

Over the past twenty to thirty years, an increasing number of Canadian universities have approved policies to internationalize their institutions. Prompted by economic globalization, the process of internationalization has affected many parts of the university including: the President’s office, to sign international agreements; the International office, concerned with recruiting students who pay international fees; Deans, who are encouraging faculty members to develop international research and publishing projects; and students, who are participating in study abroad courses at foreign partner institutions in increasing numbers.

Increasingly, Canadian institutions are cooperating with governments and trade agencies to coordinate their international efforts. Programs, such as English as a Second language, business education and science programs, attract the attention of countries seeking to buy education

services, and assist them in moving from a condition of economic under-development to a more advanced level. Canada and Alberta compete with other developed English-speaking countries (e.g. the United Kingdom, United States and Australia) to attract students to their institutions and win contracts abroad. In a number of institutions revenue from these activities is a substantial portion of the university's annual budget. Moreover, elements of this infrastructure are the very criteria used to rank universities in the [world](#).

This is also true of the use of the Internet for research purposes at universities. Rapid Response Research fits well in studying international "hot issues" for two reasons. First, world crises, in fields such as health epidemics or political conflict, receive international media coverage. Global news coverage stimulates academics around the globe to take an interest in the same issue at the same time, thereby allowing for the emergence of a community of practise. Second, international issues are both a priority with, and correspond to, the social and technical infrastructure capabilities available at universities.

This RRR project comprised researchers from two countries and several universities to achieve insights (as distinct from media reports) regarding emerging events, at that time, relating to Ukraine's Euromaidan protest. Taking place as events unfolded, it was a 'high-risk, high-reward project with little-to-no existing preliminary data, but with potential to significantly impact our understanding of¹ civil protest movements. This paper identifies the infrastructure that enabled the real time research to take place within a system of globalization², in the history of community-university relations and with strong interest and support from technology specialists. A summary outlines the benefits accrued over the project's six-month history and then explains that pre-conditions of infrastructure in Ukrainian studies and in RRR at the University of Alberta that set the foundation for success and sustainability. This case study may be of particular interest to minority discourse communities who struggle to have their needs considered by decision makers at public institutions or to those studying civil movements, such as the Arab Spring or the Uprising in Venezuela.

Background

In 2004–2005 Ukraine experienced what is known popularly as the Orange Revolution (Kuzio, 2007; Bachmann & Lyubashenko, 2014) Public protests on the central square of Kyiv—the Maidan—became known worldwide as the population succeeded in setting aside a falsified national election of the President of Ukraine. It was during this event that many of the

¹ This phrase is used as a [criterion](#) for rapid response research awards on Parkinson's disease (<https://www.michaeljfox.org/research/grant-detail.php?id=3>)

² We are aware that some of these global processes can be seen as imperialistic and we share concern of those like Schiller (1976, in Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997, p. 49), who describe cultural imperialism as the 'sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes even bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system'.

mechanisms of protest were developed and later served the Euromaidan events of 2013. Although much was printed about these events, it is notable that social media was not in use during the Orange Revolution as it was in the Euromaidan. Academic articles and books appeared analyzing the Orange Revolution after a year or more whereas the Euromaidan was analyzed in scholarly ways by this project within months of the events occurring.

Euromaidan demonstrations started when then-President Yanuchovych reversed his position and refused to sign the Ukraine agreement for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. When they began in November 2013, along with Ukrainians throughout the diaspora, Ukrainian Canadians followed the peaceful, then violent, events through social media and international news coverage with great interest and support. Indeed, a number of Ukrainian Canadians were physically present on the Euromaidan and the Ukrainian Canadian community provided material resources throughout the protests, even at times of great risk.

As a result of this high level of involvement, the Ukrainian Canadian public in Edmonton, including faculty and students from many of the universities, sought out ways that they could be of help to academic specialists to better understand the democratic protestors. A leadership team emerged from the University of Alberta (UA) and MacEwan University (MU) that combined various electronic and other resources from the two universities to offer a more informed, but rapid, multi-media commentary about events in Ukraine. Drawing upon digital expertise from the University of Alberta and university contacts in Ukraine provided by MacEwan University, an inter-university consortium of Canadian and Ukrainian universities was formed. This in turn led to the establishment of the Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum (CURF) and its experiment with digital technology. All interaction between partners, including the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA) and the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, took place entirely through electronic means, even between leaders who were from universities in the same city. The project integrated several forms of electronic communication: online international meetings with ClearSea (a more stable and secure type of Skype), sub-committee meetings through Skype, electronic letter style updates, a website that provided academic articles and perspectives on the changing daily events on Euromaidan, and an international online conference held on June 26, 2014.

CURF set out to explore rapid response research in real time, not in the context of medical or natural disasters but, rather, in identity-forming expressions during civil discontent. After the Euromaidan had stretched into several weeks of daily-televised unrelenting expressions against then-president Yanukovych, Dr. Geoffrey Rockwell, Director of the Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) at the University of Alberta, suggested documenting and responding to the events in real time. Having pioneered the method with an earlier shorter-term real time project “Metis in the Courts” in 2012 ([Metis in the Courts](#)), Rockwell and his KIAS specialists facilitated and enabled CURF team members to recognize the potential of the technological

tools, available both through universities and in the public sphere, and also to use them to build RRR documents for data analysis, research relationships, and a community of practice.

The collaboration began in January 2014, but at that time the project participants did not know that the Euromaidan process would transform from a non-violent demonstration into a violent confrontation with the Government of Ukraine that led to over 100 people being killed on the Euromaidan by government snipers and led to over 1000 people being hospitalized by March 2014. Researchers at the time did not foresee that Euromaidan would become the Revolution of Dignity and that the President of Ukraine and his closest collaborators would flee the country to Russia, from where they called for counter-revolution. In return they were declared wanted by the new Government of Ukraine, through Interpol, for murder and grand theft. Although unforeseen, all of these events occurred as part of the Euromaidan process and were studied in this project during the period January to June 2014. Subsequent events—like the Russian Federation’s annexation of Crimea in May 2014, and the terrorism and insurgency in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts—were deemed to be separate phenomena and were not studied as a part of this research project, even though they have a direct relationship to Euromaidan.

This paper presents the outcome of a RRR project and then examines why and how it was that such a project was initiated from two universities in Edmonton, Canada. It identifies the infrastructure that enabled the real time exploration to take place and the benefits accrued. Results confirm Morley’s assertion that the existence of a prior history of Ukrainian Studies at these two universities, established the availability of an infrastructure that enable the rapid response research to take place. It further advances Beerkens’ (2008) thesis that within a knowledge society processes can be of two kinds—centralized from the top by authorities with resources or decentralized and impacted by local context (p. 33). *We argue that both are needed.*

These features of internationalization have had their effect on the University of Alberta and MacEwan University. Both have established internationalization policies and employed a number of staff to carry out this programming. For example, both Edmonton universities have signed bilateral agreements with the same partner institutions in Ukraine (e.g. National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy). At the same time each also has partners unique to their needs and potential. The University of Alberta, for example, has had a long relationship in Ukrainian history with Karazin Kharkiv National University, while MacEwan University has a partnership with Ternopil State Medical University to facilitate cooperation between nursing programs at the two universities. Faculty exchanges, joint research and publications have strengthened the working relationship between universities and enable the emergence of new international initiatives.

It was no accident, therefore, that faculty members from the University of Alberta and MacEwan University banded together to create the “Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum” when the events of the Euromaidan took place starting in November 2013. The use of electronic means has been established as a normal university practise as was the notion that it

was the responsibility of faculty members to continue to experiment with new learning tools and methods as they become available. The university's desire to apply academic methods to understand the Euromaidan fits the post-secondary system requirement to be an engaged university that undertakes research ventures that are intrinsically valuable, topical, and relevant to the public's interest. As a consequence of these standards being in operation at Alberta's universities, the new method of rapid response research was utilized in Ukrainian studies when worldwide attention focused on the Euromaidan protests. The project was well received by faculty members because it aligned with current innovative performance standards established by the internal policies of their universities.

Methodology

In the absence of the type of data that often precedes an academic pursuit, innovative research often embraces action research as a methodology. The CURF team accepted the challenge of trying “out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p. 5). When the project began, there was no intention to publish results; rather, we expected to provide a report of our findings and reflect on what we had learned in order to expand our collaborations. Thus, we did not apply for research ethics approval; however, as recorded during our first ClearSea meeting, all participants were aware of the “experiment” and fully consented to being recorded and providing feedback to the process. To triangulate our perceptions and the data produced during the project (e.g. Google analytics, the record of letters, surveys about participation in the videoconferences, comfort using technology and engaging in the evolving process, meeting minutes, and comments), a final version of this paper was shared with the most active participants from each post-secondary institution for corrections, deletions, and additions.

For us, action research was a form of “self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (our) practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, p. 5). Such research moves from a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to a reformulated plan, revised action, more observations, and further reflection to another reformulated plan, revised action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Our task, the task of educational research, “is to develop theories of practice which are rooted in the concrete experiences and situations of practitioners and that attempt to confront and resolve the problems to which these experiences give rise” (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, p.118).

This paper draws upon the many written and multi-media artifacts created from January to June 2014 for this project. It adheres to ethical principles of confidentiality, openness (disclosure), empowerment, and freedom. Through personal reflections, we strive to offer insight into the promise of applying current technology to the multitude of world uprisings, including Euromaidan.

The Study

The CURF Euromaidan project had two major focal points: a) to conduct an interdisciplinary, rapid response, research project documenting, analyzing, and interpreting the various dimensions of the Euromaidan; and b) to experiment with the use of online technology in post-secondary education. To make the above two focal points possible, faculty gathered from the four post-secondary institutions. Their working relationship entailed the following, which will be discussed in more detail:

- conducting a technological scan at partner universities
- developing a collaborative website
- experimenting with different communication technologies to learn how to bring researchers from the two countries together
- modelling long-term communication for educational and research purposes
- developing a broad email distribution list and notifying the public of upcoming events of our project
- sharing information with the academic and general communities
- organizing an international online conference
- reflecting on successes and challenges
- identifying possible future directions

Experimenting with different communication technologies to learn how to bring researchers from the two countries together. The project revealed the technological know-how that is currently available at all of the participating universities, in particular the creative expertise at the disposal of faculty at the UA. The infrastructure provided by KIAS enabled us to learn what would be required to sustain and expand this project (at each university and into a larger consortium). We especially appreciated the expertise of KIAS staff on matters relating to security, as there were attempts to ‘hack’ into the site. We utilized ClearSea to hold monthly meetings of the organizing team at the four participating universities. These meetings included participants in Canada, Ukraine, and Brazil, and although there were occasional “glitches”, a community of practice was able to emerge (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hord, 1997). Regular email messages (on average six per month) were sent to a growing number of members of each participating university and all conference participants. During the period of the experiment (January to June 2014) our Facebook page contained 78 posts, 217 likes, and had been visited 28,968 times. The Government of Alberta provided the high speed *Government of Alberta Bridge* for our monthly meetings and conference. We also noted that use of twitter was not possible in Ukraine during the online conference; however, feedback was provided through the Facebook page. The Canadian technical staff noted the sophistication of technology available in Ukraine: “Some of their facilities are better than ours!”

Modelling distance conferencing for educational and research purposes. To accommodate participants on different continents, we scheduled our monthly partner meetings at different times of day, on different days of the week, and using different reporting styles. Although attendance varied according to faculty teaching schedules and the fact that our partners in Ukraine consistently met at the end of their working day due to the 9-hour time difference, a core group from each institution met and discussed matters in an increasingly open manner. The understandable shyness and lack of familiarity at the onset of the project slowly evolved into comfort, laughter, and increased openness over the six-month period. All meetings were recorded for future reference.

To the survey about participation in the videoconference meetings, 45 % of respondents reported that at the beginning of the project they were “comfortable (I have participated in such interactions on line a few times in the past)” and 45 % reported that they were “a little comfortable (This was my first experience but I have other online experience).” Ten percent (10 %) reported being “uncomfortable,” and none reported being “very comfortable.” Six months later the same survey participants reported as follows: 11 % “very comfortable”, 78 % “comfortable”, and 11 % “a little comfortable.” The project enabled participants to utilize technology and thus share their expertise with a broader international audience.

To maintain connectivity between participants from all institutions, numbered email “letters” were dispatched on at least a weekly basis—32 in total. One hundred percent of participants in the above survey reported that the letters were “very helpful”. They provided “continuity” and helped participants see that the project was steadily moving forward. The project also provided a range of long term capacity building opportunities for student engagement, such as (a) participation in videoconferences as observers; (b) participation in videoconferences as contributors; (c) participation in videoconferences as presenters of papers; (d) participation in reflective writing exercise, which culminated in posting of selected essays on the project website. These graduate and undergraduate essays captured the sentiments of Ukrainian students living in Kyiv. They described the varied emotions of determination to continue toward economic independence, devastation at the loss of life on the Maidan, and deep reflection about the future of their country ([Euromaidan research forum](#)). After adjudication by CURF members from Canada and Ukraine, book prizes were donated by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies for all whose essays were posted on the website.

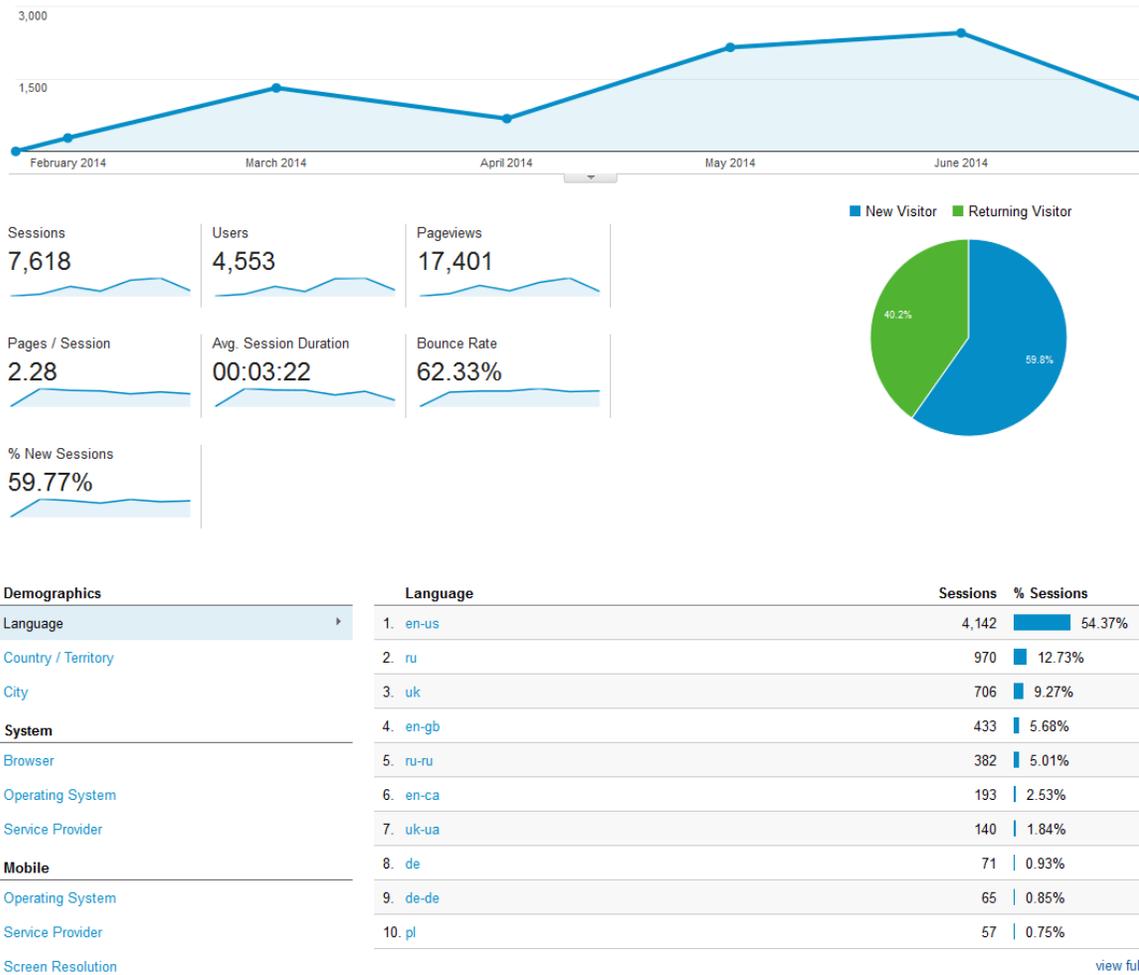
Developing a broad email distribution list and notifying the public of upcoming events of our project. The email list of weekly numbered letters grew from 27 to 53 participants, from five to nine institutions, from two to five countries. Visitors to the website reveal an even broader reach, as Figure 1 shows below.

Figure 1: *Countries of visitors to “Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum” website* (courtesy of Google Analytics).

Country / Territory	Sessions	% Sessions
1.  Canada	2,902	38.09%
2.  Ukraine	2,186	28.70%
3.  United States	1,079	14.16%
4.  United Kingdom	184	2.42%
5.  Germany	147	1.93%
6.  Poland	100	1.31%
7.  Brazil	89	1.17%
8.  Switzerland	67	0.88%
9.  Belgium	65	0.85%
10. (not set)	65	0.85%

Sharing information with communities. The highest number of visits to date took place on the day of the online conference on June 26, 2014. Almost 1,000 users tuned into the 21 presentations and live discussion thereafter. This is a significantly larger number than attend traditional conferences with international guest speakers. See Figure 2. We hypothesize that the low point in April might be due to exam season for students and faculty.

Figure 2: *Monthly number of visitors to “Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum”* (courtesy of Google Analytics).



Organizing an international online conference. The conference was delivered livestream through the website and offered academic analysis of events in Ukraine as they unfolded in real time, and thus marked the first such venture in Ukrainian studies. This experiment proved the feasibility of such international conferences among participants in North America, Ukraine, and worldwide. Almost 1000 participants from around the world viewed 21 presentations by faculty and graduate students from five countries. Research clusters included: folklore, culture, religion, media, communications, and social and political science. Each presentation was recorded for 9-12 minutes and remains online in an archived format at ([Euromaidan Research Forum](#)).

In the post conference survey, 77 % of respondents reported that sessions were very good to excellent. Ninety-five percent said that they liked the distance delivery approach and would

participate again. One presenter commented that, “keeping up in real time feels riskier because you’re blogging about things and doing quick analyses that may or may not be fully accurate. That’s been challenging, but it’s been exciting too.”

Discussion

Over the six-month period of this digital experiment, the key components proved successful, namely the website, the monthly videoconference (VC) meetings and the online conference. These components allowed a network of faculty and graduate students to work together as a community of practice researching the topic of Euromaidan in media, folklore, and social, and political sciences. The surveys administered to rate the experiment revealed that a large majority see the project as a success and asked for it to continue.

The impact of Euromaidan on institutions such as universities has challenged organizers to re-think traditional approaches in higher education. Digital technologies provide us with opportunities to spread ideas broadly and quickly and less expensively. The power of social media on knowledge mobilization is undeniable. Tools such as twitter, blogs, and wikis enable universities to build informal learning communities. Digital technologies also increase access to more formal learning opportunities through strategies known as blended learning.

The nature of the distribution of participants reveals how technology allowed for individuals outside of centres of concentration to participate in research of interest. For example, one graduate student in Washington D.C. and another in Madrid, Spain, were able to participate in the conference. The majority of presenters at the conference were graduate students from European universities who are now required to present papers at international conferences and publish in peer reviewed journals in order to graduate. The Euromaidan research site allowed people to participate actively from within and outside of the consortium on a daily basis by sending blogs, analyses, and fresh information and perspectives in various modalities. As well, the materials have been archived and made available to researchers in the future.

This RRR and an online conference were more impactful and cost effective than traditional academic methods. The total cost of the project was under \$20,000, which is less than half the cost of organizing a comparable international conference that involves expenditures for travel and housing. The project yielded research results about the Euromaidan protests in less than six months of them happening. This stands in contrast to a process of up to two years to produce a collection of printed articles. Moreover research results were distributed multi-modally in words, images and sound rather than just in print. Consequently, the Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum reached a larger audience at a fraction of the costs of traditional conferences and publications.

Finally, the project had a direct impact on policy and strategic thinking. The Ukrainian Catholic University adopted the research questions of this project into their development

strategy for the next five years.

Reflecting on the sources underlying successes and challenges. The emergence and persistence of Euromaidan led to major political shifts in the self-identity of Ukrainian citizens towards patriotism and loyalty to the nation and the deepening of the autonomy of civic society in Ukraine. An historical phenomenon, Euromaidan deserved international documentation, research, and analysis. This was undertaken by this project, which was also the first university research project in Ukrainian studies ever conducted in real time and the first that would hold an online conference to distribute research results among consortium participants.

The online conference, archived website with research on Euromaidan in real time, and articles in this journal constitute traditional academic “success,” but of greatest value to the readership of this paper is how and why this project emerged. What enabled its success? Could other groups replicate it? The answer to these questions is complex and relates in large part to the processes of globalization that have influenced post-secondary institutions as well as the evolution of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora and its relationship to its universities.

Globalized standards among universities. Globalization has ushered in a high degree of standardization and convergence in universities around the world, thus enabling them to share a common culture and infrastructure. Although the mass production of models of teaching and learning, research and governance are often isomorphic (Beerkens, 2008), this standardization generally makes possible ease of communication across academic institutions. In fact, in order to survive, post-secondary institutions have had to adopt a common or standardized orientation, which can be described by the two major descriptor sets used to rank them—*The Times* Higher Education Rankings, out of the United Kingdom, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWA). Although they both have biases toward the hard sciences, both the former, out of the United Kingdom, and the latter, out of Shanghai, are recognized worldwide. *The Times* Higher Education Rankings uses 13 performance indicators grouped into the five areas of teaching, research, citations, industry income and international outlook. The ARWA ranks the world’s top 500 universities according to quality of education, quality of faculty, research output, and per capita academic performance of an institution.³

³ *The Times* Higher Education Rankings uses 13 performance indicators grouped into five areas: teaching (the learning environment for 30 %); research (volume, income, and reputation for 30 %), citations (research influence for 30 %), industry income (innovation for 2.5 %) and international outlook (staff, students, and research for 7.5 %). ARWA ranks the world’s top 500 universities according to quality of education (Nobel prizes and fields medals won by alumni for 10 %), quality of faculty (Nobel prizes and fields medals won by staff for 20 % and highly cited researchers in 21 subject categories for 20 %), research output (papers published in *Nature* and *Science* for 20 % and papers indexed in science citation index-expanded and social science citation index for 20 %), and per capita academic performance of an institution for 10 %).

Given that universities rise and fall on these scales on an annual basis, senior administrators and governance personnel are concerned with increasing their university's scores in each area by institutionalizing policies and practices that enable them to both direct faculty to "what counts" and to access and report this data easily. Accordingly, they have crafted and structured annual reports of staff, faculties, and institutions, criteria used by granting institutions, and the administrative infrastructure to support and grow areas such as technology and internationalization, which are favoured highly in the *Times* ranking.

Our project greatly benefitted from this orientation of participating universities in a number of significant ways: the international nature of the project itself increased faculty orientations toward Ukraine and eastern Europe; the technological support of technicians and equipment at all four institutions made the interaction possible with no overhead associated with travel; technology units were eager to experiment and stretch their own capacity to use cutting edge technology that was in place. Beerkens (2008) would consider the first two of these points centralized or top down and the final point decentralized or bottom up (p. 32).

By way of further explanation this article identifies seven additional factors that enabled a rapid response to launch this project: 1) the presence of the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora and the history of its relationship to its universities; 2) the expertise assembled as a result of the history of Ukrainian Studies in both classical and international forms; 3) well-developed relationships with institutions in Ukraine; 4) technological capacity at all participating institutions; 5) interest in further experimentation with "new" technology; 6) financial support; and 7) globalization. As we shall demonstrate, Internet connections tend to follow the routes laid down by earlier forms of communication as well as contemporary capacities. In other words, both the general top down trends of universities and the bottom up local context enabled our RRR project to succeed; both are needed.

Ukrainian Canadian diaspora and its relationship to Alberta universities. Ukrainian Canadians are a significant portion of the Ukrainian worldwide diaspora that has settled in Europe, North and South America, Australia, Oceania, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East during the last two centuries (Isajiw, 1994, p. 327).

The first three waves of immigration to Canada of ethnic Ukrainians decreased in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of Canada's general pattern of waves of immigration. The percentage of Ukrainians who arrived in 1891-1914 was ten per cent of about 1.5 million immigrants. During 1920-1929 it was about six percent and in 1947-1954 period was two percent (Petryshyn, 2004, p.19). The first wave of immigrant settlement to Canada of 170,000 occurred before World War I and their descendants over five generations are the majority of today's 1.25 million Ukrainian Canadians who claim Ukrainian roots in response to census questions. The second wave of 68,000 Ukrainian immigrants came in the 1920s and the third wave of 37,000 came after World War 2. The fourth wave of Ukrainian immigration of people from Poland and Ukraine, numbering approximately 40,000, has come in the last 25 years,

especially after the independence of Ukraine, starting in the mid-1990s. Overall, however, 95 % of Ukrainian Canadians were born in Canada and are primarily English speakers (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Having a different mindset depending on the time and place of departure, each of the waves of immigration was influenced by the immigration policy in place in Canada at the time, and by the manner that Canadian society received them. In return, each wave of immigration made its own contribution to building the layered infrastructure of the Ukrainian community in Canada. This included the churches and schools built by the first settlers, the national community organizations set up during the inter-war period, and the creation of educational institutions established by the third immigration (Petryshyn, 2004).

Today, Ukrainian Canadians constitute 3.74 % of Canada's population of 33.5 million. In 2011, 1.25 million Canadians claimed to have Ukrainian roots, with 276,055 being single origin and 975,110 having multiple origins (Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011). The largest number of Ukrainian Canadians can be found in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Nova Scotia, respectively. The Prairie Provinces have the largest percentage of the provincial populations. Of Alberta's 3.3 million residents (in 2006) 7.68 % claimed Ukrainian origin. Of the 332,180 Ukrainian Albertans, 82,185 claimed single origin and 249,990 multiple origin. However, only about eight percent of Ukrainian Albertans view Ukrainian as their mother language (ie. 29,455 in 2011) (Statistics Canada, Ethnic origins, 2010).

In 2011, the largest urban concentrations of Ukrainian Canadians were found in Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Calgary, and Saskatoon, respectively. However, the ratios of Ukrainian Canadians to other citizens vary. For example, the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (2011) showed that 11.74 % of the population (ie. 93,420 people) of 795,675 living there claimed Ukrainian origin (NHS Edmonton, 2011). In recent years the buoyant Alberta economy has been attracting internal Canadian migrants, thereby reducing the percentage of Ukrainian Canadians in the population. Moreover, inter-marriage as well as language and religious assimilation over the generations (Kalbach & Richard, 1980, p. 94) have meant that ethnic identity has become more symbolic than instrumental. Nevertheless, Edmonton's Ukrainian community in Alberta remains one of the largest and best organized in Canada.

The Ukrainian Canadian community has shared a long history with its local universities. In Edmonton it lobbied for the first Ukrainian language courses in 1962 and, as we shall see later, for other institutes and academic projects. Its contributions through fundraising have enabled numerous research centres to emerge and research chairs to become sustainable (See Appendix A).

Throughout its 120 years of history in Canada and interacting with several different political regimes in Ukraine, Ukrainian Canadians have always been attentive and closely affected by the political, religious, and cultural life of people in Ukraine. It is not surprising

therefore that many in the Ukrainian Canadian population in Alberta closely follow events in Ukraine today. They are concerned to make their contribution to the successful emergence of Ukraine as a new country on the world stage. Ukrainian Canadians want to assist institutions in Ukraine to speed up their integration into the democratic values and quality standards of the western world, within the priorities held by Ukraine's leaders on the strategic direction for their country.

Expertise assembled as a result of the history of Ukrainian Studies in both classical and innovative forms. Given this social environment and drawing on experiences of struggling for educational rights in Western Ukraine, Ukrainians were interested in establishing Ukrainian studies as a discipline that would attract youth, particularly the children of the second and third waves of Ukrainian immigrants. During the first two waves of immigration, Ukrainians first set up private schools (*ridni shkoly*) at the elementary level and student residences (*buryy*) and then religious colleges at the high school and university to pass on language, religious, and cultural knowledge (Samoil, 2000; Baziuk, 2000).

The organized Ukrainian community in Alberta (driven to a large extent by third wave immigrants who wished to serve the needs of their children) successfully lobbied school boards for Ukrainian language high school courses, which began to be offered in 1958, and then the Government of Alberta and the University of Alberta for post-secondary programs (Savaryn, 2000; Polkovskij, 2000). The first classes in Ukrainian were offered in 1964 and grew in number and variety for the next forty years. In 2014, the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta offered Bachelor, Masters and PhD. programs in Ukrainian language, literature, linguistics, and folklore, and the Department of History boasted Ukrainianists as well as Ukrainian-Canadian history specialists, making the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta the most diversified and comprehensive location for Ukrainian Studies in the Western hemisphere.

Unique in North America, the Ukrainian Folklore program has produced over three-dozen Masters and eight PhD. dissertations, supported by both scholarships and awards. Supported by the Kule Folklore Centre, its collection for Ukrainian and Canadian Culture has amassed paper, audio recordings, and photograph archives since its inception in 1977.

In line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism made in 1963, leaders from the Ukrainian Canadian community advocated strongly for the implementation of legislation and policies that recognized Canada as a multicultural country and society. The Commission was instructed to take into account contributions made to Canada by the other ethnic groups to the nation's cultural enrichment and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution. This framework allowed Ukrainian Canadians to claim that governments have an obligation to support minority languages and cultures in public institutions. In 1974, the Alberta government approved a pilot

project in Ukrainian-English bilingual education .After being approved three years later, further academic expertise was developed.

The establishment in 1976 of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) happened in the context of the Ukrainian community's concern about the policy of increasing Russification in the Ukrainian SSR and the advent and growth of Federal and Provincial policies on multiculturalism in Canada. CIUS was created to advance Ukrainian Canadian studies, encourage studies about Ukraine and support the teaching of Ukrainian in public schools (in the Ukrainian-English Bilingual program) by collecting and producing bilingual teaching and student learning resources, and providing teacher professional development.

CIUS currently consists of a number of centres, programs, and projects whose activities range from research to publishing, developing materials for Ukrainian-language education, organizing conferences, lectures, and seminar series, and awarding graduate and undergraduate scholarships, and research grants. [See Appendix A](#). During the period between 1976 and 2014 CIUS grew in size, in the number of centres that it housed, and in the value of its endowments. It achieved an enviable list of publications and offered students and scholars research grants and international travel opportunities.

The capacity of Ukrainian studies in Edmonton became even more differentiated in 1987 with the creation and endowment of the [Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre](#) (URDC) at today's MacEwan University. Unlike previous institutional innovations that established Ukrainian courses, research grants, and publications, URDC was set up not to teach or conduct research, but to be an entrepreneurial academic organization focused on system innovation in Ukrainian studies. This was not only an innovation in Ukrainian Studies but also a response to precisely what universities were looking for, at the time, on three fronts—how to internationalize their campuses, how to bring in external funds, and how to engage community. As mentioned, these criteria continue to be utilized to assess and rank universities worldwide.

Unlike the previous emphasis on Ukrainian content in researching, teaching, and learning in classical Ukrainian studies (e.g. language, literature, linguistics, folklore, and history), URDC introduced the concept of engaging resources from Canadian universities in the modernization of various disciplines in Ukraine. This meant that Canada-Ukraine projects were no longer limited to only certain fields of study with specific Ukrainian content. Instead, URDC worked through international joint projects in many different fields of research and study available in Ukraine. This has expanded the concept of Ukrainian studies to include other fields of endeavour such as agriculture, nursing, business, pedagogy, and disability studies.

While URDC operates as an endowed centre that responds to needs in Ukraine and Canada, it also achieves MacEwan University's educational objectives by cooperating with internal faculties and programs. Externally, URDC works in partnership with community and professional organizations and its project teams are selected to have multi-disciplinary backgrounds appropriate to project objectives. Over the last twenty years, URDC has carried

out over a dozen major projects in various fields (See Appendix B.). Internally, URDC's Advisory Council also oversees an annual cycle of inter-faculty cooperation that includes: an annual research theme for faculty and students; international exchanges; an international symposium; an open online conference; and finally, publication of selected papers in the journal *Social, Health, and Communication Studies*.

Well-developed relationships with institutions in Ukraine. Soon after Ukraine became independent, in 1991, Ukrainian Studies programs at both the University of Alberta and MacEwan University established bilateral relationships with a number of universities and academies, as well as with government agencies, in Ukraine. For example, both Canadian universities, earlier, had independently signed agreements with the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA), since it is considered to be among very few institutions in Ukraine that favours western principles of organizing post-secondary education. Unlike most other post-Soviet Ukrainian universities, NaUKMA offers students a choice in selecting courses, has recognized both the Masters and Doctoral types of degrees and encourages courses being taught in English.

Depending on their fields of interest, different programs in Edmonton aligned themselves with specific universities and academies. Historians from CIUS developed a particular relationship with V. N. Karazyn National University of Kharkiv and the Ukrainian Archeography, affiliated with the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. URDC established a working relationship between MacEwan University Nursing programs and those at the Ternopil State Medical University as well as with the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences.

Supported by revenues from endowment funds, these working relationships develop dependable networks (social capital) that played a role in launching the Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum. Earlier contacts from other universities, such as the Ukrainian Catholic University, also had pre-existing individual relationships that facilitated joining the project. This social capital of trust and proven success expedited launching the CURF project.

Technological capacity at all participating institutions. The past two decades have seen universities building an infrastructure to support the use of technology, for example through senior administrative appointments to manage technological change, approval of a new interdisciplinary department on humanities computing, branding of department website designs, online blended learning course materials (e.g. Nedashkivska, 2002, 2010, 2014), on line journals (e.g. *East-West*), Internet research projects (e.g. Ukraine encyclopaedia), faculty evaluation reports requiring indications of use of technology in instruction. In selecting possible partners, the Canadian team also considered which institutions would have the technological and English language capacities to participate as well as the graduate programs and research interests that would match those of Canadian partners.

Interest in further experimentation with “new” technology. While all four universities had already been globalized in terms of their technology infrastructure, innovative experiments

require champions who are willing to expend whatever time is required to generate success. The University of Alberta's technological expertise responded as willing and eager participants who had personal investments in what they could learn from the process. As one team member stated, "We are more than just technicians. We can help you expand your outreach, but we need to be asked to do so." One team member who wishes to remain anonymous, was able to visit Ukraine during the course of our RRR noted that the "technological capacity at NAUKMA was superior to what we have at MU in media and communications."

Financial support. RRR is both a rapid response approach to researching events in the world as well as an ability to acquire rapidly the financial support to enable the exploration of such events. In as much as the CURF project was an experiment in rapid response research, it also required rapid funding. The infrastructure of centres, technology, interest in innovation and strong relationships with the community again enabled the team to act quickly. The proposal for the CURF project was submitted to the following four funding bodies in December 2013: the Kule Institute of Advanced Study (KIAS) and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS), both at the University of Alberta; the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) at MacEwan University; and the non-profit community organization Alberta Foundation for Ukrainian Education Society (AFUES). With approved funding a technology specialist and trilingual website master were hired to begin the design and construction of a website that would expand and evolve on a daily basis. The continued support of KIAS expertise, at every step along the way, counter balanced the, sometimes, daunting challenge of working with, and in, the new technologies.

Course offerings and digitization. Our analysis of the situational factors in Ukrainian studies concludes by suggesting that future use of digital resources is no longer optional. Led by new technology, economic processes, and student expectations, research and publishing endeavours in the university environment have experienced a real paradigm shift. Today, new modalities are presenting themselves and require that the old concept of delivering only Ukrainian content materials and only in a print or face-to-face format has been expanded into a multi-modal digital system that includes both Ukrainian content courses and involvement with non-classical disciplines in Ukraine. We need not fear losing what is dear in the old paradigm, as the new one will embrace and expand on much of the tradition through a blended format. The future for a more robust definition of "Ukrainian studies" now already exists and will be a perpetual feature of this field of studies for generations to come. With the changing demographics and enrolment quotas at universities, classical Ukrainian studies must appeal to the digital native generation who expects to utilize what the information age has created.

Conclusion

Having met to discuss the future of Ukrainian Studies at their universities in December 2013, the authors went on to discuss the "hot issue" of the day—the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine being covered by the world's media. In discussion with Dr. Geoffrey Rockwell, of the

KIAS, we decided to focus a portion of our work time on undertaking a Rapid Response Research project. We accepted the challenge of championing the project and found most of the initial finances at our universities, although additional bottom up financial assistance was found in a timely manner from a community organization.

Goals were set but remained flexible and improved as the circumstances changed, as per action research methodology. The result was that our action research project soon located technical personnel, found partner universities in Ukraine, set up a website, issued regular letters, conducted inter-university monthly videoconferences, put out a call for papers, and held an international video conference where 21 papers were presented. All of these events happened within the project's six-month framework and resulted in almost a thousand people participating in the conference.

After writing a report about the project and, upon reflection, the authors decided to write this paper expressing their realization that the success of the project had far deeper roots than just the availability of grant funding and access to university Internet technology.

Beerkens (2008) argues that universities have no choice but to accept the globalization processes of standardization, convergence, and homogenization (p.16). Globalization of technology and performance standards has created an environment of global competition and cooperation among universities. This provided the capacity for top down leadership. Participating universities in this project all had compatible technical capacities and were open to being led by the University of Alberta where staff were engaged in experimenting with new technology.

As we have shown in this paper, pre-existing assembled expertise and established international networks allowed an immediate bottom up engagement with the political protests in Euromaidan soon after it emerged; personnel with technical capacity allied with a well-developed specific community of interest (i.e. Ukrainian Studies), and academic project champions of several post-secondary institutions in two countries took the lead. Under these conditions, we see that innovative RRR projects can benefit small fields of study, such as ethnic and minority communities, who are concerned to bring human interest and social justice dimensions to macro processes of standardization and convergence. This project leads us to suggest an interpretation of Beerkens' (2008) thesis that within a knowledge society processes can be of two types—centralized from the top by authorities with resources or decentralized and impacted by local context (p.33). This paper argues that our experiment achieved its purpose because it included both processes and saw these two dimensions as both simultaneous and equally necessary for success.

Universities today are spending significant resources to build and maintain their infrastructure for Internet communication. That universities need to compete and maintain themselves in the forefront of Internet research enables and encourages faculty experimentation, which provides top down capacity to carry out projects. However, this form of communication

gains its influence only when it carries messages from the bottom up that are meaningful and of consequence to communities of interest and the public. The involvement of a community of interest recognizes the value of the communication, as is evidenced by current collaborations and financial contributions to such academic projects, and by the historical continuity of investment in the field of study prior to the RRR project being undertaken.

Indeed, it can be said that demographic circumstances in Edmonton, the interest and influence of the Ukrainian community on promoting Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta, and the existence of endowed Centres that served the university's interests and were supported by the community for 50 years, constituted the bottom up infrastructural foundations on which this project was built. Also, certain Ukrainian Studies courses and centres built up over decades provided the experienced faculty necessary to help achieve the success of this project.

All of these factors were at play in the successful establishment of the Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum. This suggests that when certain conditions, such as the ones identified above, prevail, a minority field of study can successfully undertake a Rapid Response Research project. As Morley (2013) suggests, we should focus not on the Internet in general, or on cyberspace in the abstract, but, rather, on the particular types of cyberspace which are instituted in specific localities, under particular cultural, economic and political circumstances.

Dr. Roman Petryshyn holds a Ph.D. in Sociology of Race and Ethnic Relations from the University of Bristol, England and a Diploma in Social Sciences from the University of Birmingham, as well as a Masters and Bachelor degree in Clinical psychology from Lakehead University. Dr. Petryshyn is the Director of the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) at Grant MacEwan University where he holds the Drs. Peter and Doris Kule Chair in Ukrainian Community and International Development. He has worked as a Research Associate in the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, and with the Governments of Ontario (Citizenship Branch) and Alberta (Cultural Heritage) where he was engaged in multicultural programming. His research and publications focus on the integration of Ukrainian minorities in Britain and Canada. He edited *Changing Realities: Social Trends Among Ukrainian Canadians* and has contributed articles to several published compilations. Since 1991, Dr. Petryshyn has been actively engaged in structuring and delivering technical assistance projects in Ukraine and Russia through MacEwan University's representative office. He was Project Manager for the "Agricultural Curriculum" and the "Agri-Business Learning Materials" projects (1991-95); coordinator of research for the study "Reform of the Novosibirsk Health Care System"; Manager of the "Yamalo-Nanetsk and Tyumen Organizational Readiness" project (1996-97); co-director of the "Canadian Business Management Project in Ukraine" (1997-2000); and the "Health Education Learning Project" in Russia (2000-2004). He is active in the Canada Ukraine Research Team, administered jointly with the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, studying and improving the educational services available to children with disabilities in public schools of Alberta and Ukraine. Currently, Dr. Petryshyn is a co-director of the "Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Ukraine" project (2008-2013).

Dr. Olenka Bilash is professor of second language education in the Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta and North American representative to LINGUAPAX, a UNESCO cat-affiliated organization designed to advocate for all languages in the world and plurilingualism. She has worked with teachers of minority or new languages on six continents for four decades, including long term projects in Brazil, Japan, Korea and South Africa. She has authored textbooks, learning resources and curriculum documents, supervises graduate students from many countries and teaches children of all ages through demonstration lessons for teachers and through coaching. A former Associate Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research she has also worked with universities to help develop a culture of research. She has taught a course on qualitative research methodology in Ukraine, served on the Premier's Consultative Committee on Ukraine-Alberta relations, hosted and coordinated programs for visiting professors from Ukraine, contributed to Alberta's member of Canada Ukraine Research Team (for inclusive education), was the first director of the Ukrainian Resource Centre at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta and is now Senior Advisor to the Ukrainian Language Education Centre. Recipient of Canada's distinguished 3M National Teaching Fellow in 2010, as well as a variety of research awards, Dr. Bilash is eager to explore the use of technology in increasing student and faculty engagement. She has held posts at the University of Calgary and as a visiting scholar at the University of Curitiba and the Pontifical Universidade Catolica de Rio de Janeiro. Her research interests include: language planning and policy, oracy and literacy development, teacher professional development, identity formation and transformation, global citizenship awareness education, and student-faculty engagement.

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Appendix A:

Institutes and Centres in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS)

Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies

The Ukrainian Language and Education Centre (ULEC)

The Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research

The Kule Ukrainian Canadian Studies Centre

The Centre for Political and Regional Studies

The Stasiuk Program for the Study of Contemporary Ukraine

The Internet Encyclopedia Ukraine

The East-West Journal of Ukrainian Studies

The Research Program on Religion and Culture

The Kowalsky Program for the Study of Eastern Ukraine

The Danylo Struk Program in Ukrainian Literature

The Holodomor Research and Education Consortium

Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies

The Kule Folklore Centre

Department of History

The Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies

Kule Institute for Advanced Studies

Appendix B:

Major projects completed by URDC, MacEwan University over the past twenty years

- a) Canada Ukraine Farmer Exchange Program
- b) Agricultural Curriculum Development Project
- c) Agri-Business Learning Materials Project
- d) Project Ukraine Nurse Upgrading Modules
- e) Canadian Business Management Program in Ukraine
- f) Civil Society and Community Roots Project
- g) Canada Ukraine Alliance for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons
- h) Canada Ukraine Research Team
- i) Translation Project Lastivka
- j) Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in Ukraine
- k) Canada Ukraine Foundation
- l) Kule Visiting Scholars Program
- m) Chair of International Health