

**Comments from the Roundtable “Future of Ukrainian Studies in North America”
Graduate Student Symposium “Exploring Ukrainian Identity: Gender,
Ethnicity, and Statehood” University of Toronto, March 12-13, 2004**

Maxim Tarnawsky

Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Toronto

I don't want to repeat what other participants have already said on various issues regarding the future of Ukrainian studies, so I shall focus on one very specific point. The future of Ukrainian studies will depend on good planning today. If we look back to the past we can see clear examples of the failure to make plans for the development of Ukrainian studies in an institutional context.

Surely one of the first priorities of Ukrainian studies has always been and continues to be the development of resources to teach the Ukrainian language. In the past this was even a higher priority than it is today. Nevertheless, the institutional investment in this specific area has been minimal. Most of the investment of money and energy in Ukrainian studies has gone to the development of high-profile projects with a political or local-institutional goal. Specific practical targets were seldom envisioned or funded. Thus, despite over forty years of Ukrainian studies in North America and the creation of multi-million dollar institutional centres and foundations, the simplest of goals, the creation of a practical and functional model for the teaching of the Ukrainian language to university level students has never been contemplated, let alone implemented.

Today, we still have only a handful of ineffective and uncoordinated textbooks and a few specialists working independently and with no coordination and little shared experience. We don't even have a general understanding of what constitutes a first year or a second year language programme. If the record of past institutional achievements in Ukrainian language teaching is a harbinger of what we can expect in the future, the lesson we should all learn is that local priorities and international prestige offer very poor dividends in planning the future of our discipline.

What we need are a clear delineation of global priorities with a clear recognition of their practical value and realistic implementation and the fortitude to direct the available resources to where they are most needed and where they will meet the goals and priorities we set for ourselves. Good scholarship comes from good scholars. The future of a discipline, however, depends on foresight, planning, and implementation.