

IRAN

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRAN

FARIBORZ KHOSRAVI — CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2003 – 2004

THE NEW BUILDING

The new building especially designed for the National Library is now completed. It covers a total area of 100,000 square metres, though in the first phase only 60,000 square metres are being rendered. It is now furnished and we are getting ready to move into it.

A great deal of work and responsibilities are in front of us. Everybody is working hard and doing his (her) best to handle this great national event. Last year passed with lots of internal seminars, meetings and committees discussing the process of moving, shelving, safety measures, the future, maintenance etc.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Meanwhile the Acquisition Department is working hard to purchase as many relevant books and periodicals as possible from abroad. Approximately \$1,139,270 have been deposited with foreign dealers. All items have been carefully selected by senior staff of the library.

Last year about 117,638 volumes of books reached the library through depositary law. But we also purchased 9,780 titles of Iranian imprints.

To this should be added about 13,550 items of A.V. materials which have been deposited to us through the newly approved Depositary Law of A.V. materials. The exchange department has received 87,681 volumes of book and 944,433 items of posters and postcards. It has sent out 154,934 items as exchange or gift.

PROCESSING

The Processing Department is also working hard to get the books and other items, both new and backlog, catalogued and classified and prepared for shelving in the new building. Last year about 85,509 titles were processed, and more than 134,220 volumes were prepared for shelving.

- Indexing of articles amounted to 57,260 entries. Processing and indexing of photographs and slides are also carried out. So far about 75,000 items have been processed.

CIP

Cataloguing-in-publication is one of the most successful achievements of the library. Last year 29,500 titles obtained CIP of which 1,321 titles were reprint. Almost 90% of Iranian new publications are being fully catalogued before publication.

RESEARCH

- The research on the classification of Islamic Philosophy was completed and the result was published.
- Revision and cumulation of the Name authority list which consists of nearly 140,000 main entries has been finished and is accessible both as database and hard copy.
- Research on the revision and compilation of the Iran Higher Education Section of the Library of Congress Classification which started in 2002 was finished and the result was published under the title: LGR: Educational Institutions of Iran.
- The project of the Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Sciences in Persian is at hand. The first volume was published in late 2002. Research and editorial work for the compilation of the second volume is being carried out.
- A team of cataloguers and computer specialists are working on an integrated library system to be implemented in the new building.
- The continuous research project of production of new authorised Persian subject headings, goes on as usual. The second supplement to the 3rd edition consisting of some 100,000 new entries (main, subdivision, references and changes) was prepared for publication and is now at press (the first supplement came out last year).
- Last year the basic research project of the Library, Persian Cultural Thesaurus in 3 languages: Persian, English, Arabic which had started in 2002, was successfully continued and it consists of approximately 23,000 entries. It is now at press.
- The National Bibliography containing 2003 entries was published as usual in CD format.
- The Directory of Iranian Periodicals and Newspapers 2003, was compiled and published and the 2004 edition is at press.
- Four issues of Faslname-ye Keta , the quarterly journal of the National Library of Iran, was published in 2003.
- Towards the construction of standards for different types of libraries, last year research began on Standards of School Libraries. It is being continued.
- The compilation of the third edition of the Directory of Special and University Libraries of Iran supplemented by Directory of Prison Libraries was published. It consists of 742 information centres and 155 prison libraries.
- Several other basic books and references have also been written, edited and updated or translated. To name a few:
 - Integrated library system: potentialities, specifications and Evaluation Guideline
 - Some documents on Iran and France Relations
 - Records of Iran's Contemporary Literary Notables
 - Some Records on Iran and Turkey Relations, 1925-1941
 - Documents of the Iranian Scout Association During Reza Shah's Reign
 - The History and Analysis of Newspapers of Azarbayjan from 1230 to 1380 (1851-2001)

MANUSCRIPT DEPARTMENT

In the year 2003, 861 titles of precious manuscripts were bought to be added to the collection. Last year 452 volumes of manuscripts were catalogued according to the library's new format based on AACR2 (rev.) with authorized subject headings, and name authorities. The Codicology section is also fully described.

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND

A division of Services to the Blind was set up consisting of a special computer with Braille and ordinary keyboard and other peripheral equipment. Some 1,002 files of books in full text exist on the computer for Braille users.

The National Library with the cooperation of Paktus Company is also compiling a data bank of the National Bibliography as well as the index to periodicals and printed books, so that the blind can have access to the bibliographic information of all printed materials of the country.

The cooperation of the National Library with Rudaki Organization to develop and enhance their Braille and talking-book division is another achievement of the National Library.

AFGHANISTAN

The National Library of Iran has been fully involved in the reconstruction and development of libraries and librarianship in Afghanistan who's main language is Persian (Dari) and with whom we have deep cultural affinities. A separate report of our participation is enclosed.

THE LIBRARIES OF AFGHANISTAN: ENDEAVOUR FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

GHOLAMREZA AMIRKHANI

Afghanistan is situated in the large continent of Asia and its population is over 23,000,000 people. The last two decades of the 20th century have been bitter black years for her people. Wars, sectarian differences and interference of some neighbour countries, and the stationing of the terrorist groups were the factors that caused the domination of poverty, homelessness, illiteracy and deprivation from social welfare in this country in such a way that nowadays as well it has the highest rate of illiteracy among the countries.

MAGNIFICENT PAST

If we return to some centuries ago, we will see completely different conditions. The territory that is called Afghanistan today, in the 15th century used to be a flourishing country with culture and art loving people. Herat, in the west of Afghanistan, that for some time was the capital of the empire of Iran, used to be one of the most beautiful and flourishing cities in the world. One of the important aspects of this flourishing and briskness was the splendid libraries in which valuable works and books were kept and also where precious art copies and masterpieces of Persian Literature were created; the copies that now are the decorations of many large museums and libraries of the world.

In the libraries of Herat and other regions of Afghanistan, the librarians were themselves considered artists, men and women of letters, and researchers. These people would compare and correct the copies remaining from important texts. Also the fine and precious copies created in the libraries were the most suitable and customary gifts to be sent to the courts and libraries of sovereigns and dignitaries. There are the names of many artists, writers and scientists in the history resources who were the librarians of these libraries who have attained global fame. Amongst them, one can mention the name of Kamal ul Din Behzad who is the most famous painter in Islamic civilization.

THE LIBRARIES AND RECENT CHANGES

The uncalm conditions of the society of Afghanistan, and the occurrence of numerous wars have inflicted many losses on the libraries of this country. Some of the libraries were burnt in the fire of ignorance and some others were robbed. For example in the late 1990s, the library of Pole Khomri city in the north of Afghanistan was set on fire and the Library of Iranian Cultural Center in Mazar Sharif was burnt in 1998 by the Taliban forces. The library of the University of Kabul too was robbed a number of times by different groups and many of its resources were subjected to loss. The precious manuscripts were stolen from the museums and libraries and were transferred to other countries. The Library Association of Afghanistan that had been founded at the beginning of the 1970s was closed and many of the librarians immigrated to other countries. In this period, only some of the religious books, subject to agreement with the ideas of the Taliban, got permission for publication.

THE PRESENT SITUATION: COOPERATION AND ENDEAVOUR FOR REBUILDING

After the fall of the Taliban Regime, many countries hurried to assist the people of Afghanistan in such a manner that this country is a good example of the cooperation of different governments and nations for reaching a lofty and humanitarian objective. Iran, that has long borders and common historical culture and language with Afghanistan, has undertaken to render help in different economic, cultural and scientific ways. On this basis, the duty of renovation and equipping of the libraries of Afghanistan has been delegated to The National Library of Islamic Republic of Iran. In September 2002, the first group of Iranian Experts made their studies on the libraries of Kabul, the results of which were:

- There are two important libraries in Kabul: the Central Public Library and the Library of Kabul University. At the Central Public Library of Kabul, which has been playing the role of a national library for lack of an official one, resources available on the shelves are all pre-1980s. At present, the main library of Kabul University is the best-equipped library in Afghanistan. However, this library suffers from the lack of trained staff for cataloguing and because of this thousands of gift books from other countries and international foundations have not yet been prepared for the shelves.
- Iranian organizations, universities, and libraries are well-suited to help Afghanistan because Persian is an official language in both countries. Standards compiled in the National Library of Iran, in conjunction with the Dewey and Library of Congress classifications, which will be used in Afghan libraries with minor changes, can also facilitate the process.
- **Manpower:** The studies made indicated that there are no specialist librarians, graduated in the library science in any of the libraries. In other words, they are in need of specialists and/or their personnel should undergo on-the-job training.
- **Library Associations:** In the beginning of the 1970s, the Afghanistan Library Association had been founded and it worked for some years. But now, for many years, the association has been closed off. During its period of activity, in addition to holding training courses, it had also published some volumes of the National Bibliography of Afghanistan.

EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS

Having examined the results gained in the Scientific Board of The National Library of Islamic Republic of Iran, the fundamental needs of the libraries of Afghanistan were defined and the executive operations started in April 2003 as per the following description :

Training: In accordance with the program drawn up, one training course for 55 librarians of the Library of University of Kabul, Public Libraries of Kabul Radio and Television of Afghanistan and National Archives of Afghanistan was held in January 2003. Three Iranian professors taught the essential subjects of Librarianship , Computers and Cataloguing in this course. These classes were held in the Central Library of University of Kabul.

At the end of the course, based on the examinations held, twenty of the librarians were selected for the advanced course and dispatched to Tehran. This group, in August and September 2003, whilst taking part in Reference Services and Classification workshops, visited the following libraries and information centers:

National Archives of Iran

Central Library of Medical University

Special Library of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Library of Youth Tough Center

New building of National Library of Iran (under construction)

Central Library of Broadcasting

Center of Islamic Encyclopaedia

Institute of Index (a center for Indexing all Persian articles)

Presenting Books: At this stage about 40,000 books were dedicated to the libraries in Kabul and other cities. These books were selected considering the needs of the library's clientele and students of the universities. An important part of these books were the reference sources.

Computer Equipment: Ten computers, equipped with library software and Bibliographic banks were presented to the public library and Kabul University. In the National Archives as well, one scanner and a system for manuscripts were installed in order to protect the precious cultural heritage of Afghanistan and keep them for the coming generations.

Library Equipment: Taking the climatic conditions into consideration and the type of usage of the equipment, different types of equipment have been presented to the libraries throughout the country. Metal and wooden bookshelves, desks, chairs and other educational accessories have been distributed among the libraries of Kabul, Herat and a number of other cities.

CONCLUSION

In the National Library of Iran, in addition to the common particularities between the countries and people of Iran and Afghanistan, we had another motivation in helping the libraries of Afghanistan: the performance of the librarian prophecy and to strengthen relations between the society of librarians of Afghanistan and other countries. In the world today, the librarians and libraries are both the guardsmen of their written civilization heritage and they have a major role in the distinguishing of different cultures from one other. A world full of understanding and acquaintance with different cultures and people, will be a more prepared and capable world for peace and calm.

It seems that the appropriation of a special section in IFLA for helping the Afghanistan Libraries and more importantly coordination with and supervision of the voluntary assistance of the member countries and institutions will be very useful.

The other peculiarity among the librarians selected for training, is the willingness of the women to learn librarianship. The Afghani women who, during the government of the Taliban, were faced with the harshest laws and restrictions and had no possibility for social activities, are currently trying to reach a suitable position shoulder to shoulder with the men. This effort and advancement was witnessed by us during the holding of the educational courses in such a way that a woman attained the first rank in the educational courses and all should accept that the Afghani people, women and men alike, are looking forward to a brighter future by an admirable effort.