

International Journal of Information Science and Management

The Role of the Periodical Fund of the National Library Named After M. F. Akhundov in the Development of the Azerbaijani Culture and Science (1923-2008)

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Abstract

This article elaborates on the role of the periodical fund of the national library named after M. F. Akhundov in the development of the Azerbaijani culture and science through a short survey of the funding history. The main goal of this article is to create a comprehensive historical scene of the periodical fund of this library which was established in the first half of the twentieth century and to determine its function vis-à-vis the scientific idea of national librarianship.

Keywords: Periodical Fund, National Library, Azerbaijan.

Introduction

On June 3, 1995 our national leader Heydar Aliyev in his presentation during the exhibition of the miniature books in the national library named after M. F. Akhundov said, “During the past times I used to come frequently to this library. But today, I felt great respect and reverence when I passed the doorsteps of the library. I would like to pay respect to the library and the people working here” (Librarianship & Bibliography).

Later Heydar Aliyev noted, “The library is a sacred place and source of morality, knowledge and intelligence for people, nation and society. Therefore, one of the factors demonstrating the culture of our people is the constant concern about the library.” (Librarianship & Bibliography).

The history of world civilization contains the long period from ancient libraries of the Sumerian people who preserved books in clay tablets to the period of modern libraries which use and preserve huge volumes of information in the information society. During this period, the “document” was characterized as a concept of broad understanding and it had been formulated as a meaningful scientific communication in the development of society. Nowadays, the “document” by different resources means a material (paper, microfilm, CD, DVD, etc.) which represents information in a given time and space. Manuscripts, printed works, visual and audiovisual means, graphic works and even collections of objects are

referred to as document. There are different types of documents: scientific, technical, economic, artistic, legal, aesthetic, historical, political and other types of documents that have been more widely spread.

Currently, the decree dated March 12, 1999 passing the Law of the Azerbaijan Republic “On Libraries” adopted by the former President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Heydar Aliyev, provides the legal basis for the organization and management of libraries. This law consists of six chapters and thirty-four articles (Law of Azerbaijan Republic, 1999).

The twentieth article of the fourth chapter of this law, (“Organization of Library Service”) reads as follows:

“Libraries have the bibliographic and information services for the effective use of the print materials and other documents.

The purpose is to provide literature and information services to subscribers to assist them with selection of the resources and information.

Library services are organized in complex ways like subscription service, reading room, interlibrary loan, international subscription, bibliography, scientific and technical information, personal and public, written and oral, non-stationary and stationary, extra-mural.

The library services are responsible for collecting the world literatures, protecting and delivering them to future generations, advertising them among the population; getting universal knowledge, actively helping citizens develop independent and creative thinking” (Law of Azerbaijan Republic, 1999).

The twenty-sixth article of the fifth chapter of this law, (“Scientific-methodical and staffing of libraries”) reads as follows:

“Regardless of ownership, the scientific and methodological support of libraries is carried out by the National Library and the libraries having the status of the scientific and methodological centers.

Library with status of the scientific and methodological center publishes the teaching materials related to librarianship, bibliography and information, methods of modern business generalization in the field of library theory and practice as well as helping to improve skills of the staff” (Law of Azerbaijan Republic, 1999).

Discussion

In accordance with its purposes and responsibilities, the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov is one of the world libraries located in the Azerbaijan Republic.

In 2008, for the first time in history, according to the order number 416 dated 08.07.2008 of the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan Republic, the 85th anniversary of the National Library was celebrated during three days—17 – 19 November,

2008.

The opening ceremony for 85th anniversary of the Azerbaijan National Library named after M. F. Akhundov was held on November 17, 2008 at the Azerbaijan State Musical Comedy Theatre. In this ceremony the Minister of Culture and Tourism Abulfaz Garayev welcomed the representatives of the Second International Conference of Directors of the National Library of Turkish-speaking countries, representatives of the Tenth International Conference of the Non-Profit Partnership – “The Assembly of Libraries of Eurasia” and congratulated the personnel of the Azerbaijan National Library on this significant date. The Minister spoke about the great attention and care of the State to culture and libraries, also read the congratulation letter of the President Mr. Ilham Aliyev to the participants and awarded some members of the National Library the honorary diploma of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (85th anniversary of Azerbaijan National Library).

At this event, Mr. Chingiz Abdullayev, the secretary of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union, people's writer Mr. Dusen Kaseinov, director of CEO TURKSOY and others spoke and congratulated all the staff of the National Library on the anniversary (85th anniversary of Azerbaijan National Library).

Then, the participants in the ceremony watched the documentary film, “The National Library”, which was about the history of the Azerbaijan National Library shot by the Documentary Film Studio "Salnamə". In the film, the director of the National Library Mr. Karim Tahirov talked about the development stages of this temple of science since its beginning in 1923, and role of the library in enlightening people and developing science and education. It was stressed that during the first years of its establishment, the library consisted of 4 rooms with the fund for 10 thousand copies. It was shown how the library was expanded to several buildings until 1961, when it was moved to the magnificent building where currently more than 5 million printed products are preserved. Moreover, the incomparable attention and role of the great leader Heydar Aliyev in the labor improvement and security conditions of the library was explained which led to its present perfection and enriched the book fund (85th anniversary of Azerbaijan National Library).

As it is known, formation of the main fund of the National Library and its development has an 85-year history. Officially, the library was opened in 1923 and since that time serious attention was given to the fund which was to ensure the library's activity. In the view of this, attention was paid to purchase of books from different individuals and efforts were made to collect the national printed products. One fact is enough to show that in 1922, the General Economic Council gave 10,000 manat in gold coins to the State Library (now National Library) for providing the necessary books in the national language (Mammadov, 1993). In addition, when the library was opened the books fund consisting 5,000 volumes of books belonging to the Baku Department of the Imperial Technical Society and the Baku Social Society was given to the library (Khalafov, 2003).

In June 1939, the library was named after the well-known playwright and Azerbaijani philosopher M. F. Akhundov. In 1960 the library moved to a building located in one of the places of national architecture (architect Mikail Huseynov) (A-T-RIH, 2000).

The status of the "National Library" was granted to the State Library named after M. F. Akhundov by the order number 50 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 15 April 2004 and since that time it is called the Azerbaijan National Library (ANL) (Report of the National Library of M.F. Akhundov, 2008).

According to the report of the year 2008, the Azerbaijan National Library named after M. F. Akhundov preserves 4,508,626 of printed units by the library fund. In 2008, 25,672 copies of new documents were included in the library, 11,548 copies of which were books and 14,124 ones were miscellaneous documents. 8,032 copies out of 11,548 books were in Azeri, 2,678 copies were in Russian, and 838 copies were in other languages. During that year, 37,185 people used the library (Report of the National Library of M.F. Akhundov, 2008).

The National Library has totally 25 departments, 50 sections, and 361 staff of whom 301 are librarians. 213 of the staff have higher education degrees (149 of them have Library and Information Science degrees) and 88 of them have secondary education (Report of the National Library of M.F. Akhundov, 2008).

In 2008, the number of the readers in the library was 37,185, the number of the virtual readers (who used the web site) was 98,447, the number of the virtual service users in the library was 260, and the number of the people who used the electronic catalogs was 43,458. 175,969 people attended the library and 694,017 copies were circulated (Report of the National Library of M.F. Akhundov, 2008).

It is well known that as a result of the cardinal process of information processing several revolutions took place in the development of civilization. These revolutions have led to the creation of new human societies of high quality

- **The first information revolution** is associated with the opening of scriptures found on any material object (stone, wood, etc.). In this case there appeared an opportunity to transfer knowledge from generation to generation;
- **The second information revolution** (mid XV century) is associated with printing books. The book is a material object allowing the spread of the semantic information – knowledge –through both time and space;
- **The third information revolution** (the end of XIX century) is associated with discovery of electricity. As a result, there appeared telegraph, telephone and radio, which allowed the direction of any number of collected operational information;
- **The fourth information revolution** (70th year of the twentieth century) is associated with the advent of microprocessor technology and the advent of personal computers. This revolution has led to the creation of a new sector - the information industry in

society. In other words, the process was initiated to create an information society.

The information society is a society in which people are engaged in processing and implementing safe information, particularly in its highest form of knowledge production with the help of modern information technology.

Contemporary library funds as well as a single fund of the Azerbaijan National Library named after M. F. Akhundov consists of various types of the published and unpublished documents. Books are printed documents, however not only books but also periodicals (periodicals, etc.), government documents, technical reports, manuscripts, maps, photographs, drawings, notes, micro documents (microfilms, microfiche, microcards) are considered as the printed documents. Unpublished documents in the funds of library are audio-visual materials (films, slides) and the electronic edition (CD, VCD, and DVD). Azerbaijan National Library provides great services for the preservation and organization of these collected documents as they are the most important centers of scientific information. However, traditionally among the documents in the library, books retain their own advantage. Nonetheless, the periodical fund of the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov has the undeniable role and place in the development of science and culture of Azerbaijan (Scheme) (Mammadov, 1993).

In addition to materials and resources that are provided by Azerbaijan National Library, the press has also an especial position among other collections. The word press includes published papers and publications. The press, as the primary means of mass information and propaganda, is a powerful weapon in the formation of the social and political struggle, dissemination of scientific knowledge, development, education and public culture, opinion and outlook (Azerbaijan Soviet Encyclopedia, 1982).

Due to the significance of newspapers and periodicals -since many old newspapers and periodicals are preserved in Azerbaijan National Library- I point out some of the first newspapers and periodicals published in Azerbaijan: The first newspapers in the Azerbaijani language were "Tiflis əxbarı" (1832) and "Qafqazın bu tərəfinin xəbəri" (1845). The history of the National Press in Azerbaijan begins with the newspaper "Əkinçi" printed by Hasan Bey Zardabi on July 22, 1875. The first magazine in the Azerbaijani language was a satirical magazine entitled "Molla Nəsrəddin" (April 1906) which was published in Tbilisi under the guidance of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh (Azerbaijan Soviet Encyclopedia, 1979).

The society was not able to value great civic work of H. Zardabi who despite all the problems managed to print the newspaper in 1875. Only 25-30 years later there emerged a need for daily newspapers in Azerbaijan. New publishers began to emerge such as M. Shakhtakhtinski, A. Huseynzade and A. Agaoglu. In Azerbaijan the business model of newspapers of the West was established. A realistic product of the rational thinking—the

journal of "Molla Nəsrəddin"—was published in Azerbaijan, a country living for centuries with its literary and art schools.

In the middle of 1910, the Azerbaijani press with the help of the newspaper "Açıq söz" began to spread the ideas of national independence. Unlike Russia, in Azerbaijan the real press has created the basis for freedom of speech. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, first issued a decree on liquidation of newspapers that publish information contradicting the ideology of the Bolsheviks. In 1919 the Parliament of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic adopted a charter about the press. Now we can proudly say that, in contrast to the Russian periodical press, the history of periodical press of Azerbaijan, at least has tasted the freedom of speech and the press (Mammadly, 2001).

From "Əkinçi" up to the present days the press, which served people, was not protected by the same people. Tens of times in its history, the Azerbaijani press being in big need for people's protection and support underwent pressures from the officials and censorship. Thus, the Azerbaijani press is worthy of respect and love as it suffered alone for hundreds of years but never defeated.

The study of this history is the study of the socio-political and cultural heritage of the country. This is pushing forward the role and place of periodical fund of the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov in the development of culture and science in Azerbaijan. So, Azerbaijan National Library named after M. F. Akhundov is a national treasure-house and public book depository, which implements state policy in library work in Azerbaijan, collects and preserves the national publications, works published in the Azerbaijani language in foreign countries and works of the Azerbaijani authors, world publications, as well as information materials published in foreign languages.

So far, Professor A. Khalafov in his monographs and articles on the theoretical history of librarianship in Azerbaijan has explained about the history of the periodical fund of the National Library, its present status and perspectives of development to some degrees. In a same way, the issue has been highlighted in the scientific works of several researchers including the outstanding library and information specialists of our country Khalil Ismailov and Zohrab Bakhshaliyev. However, the periodical fund of the National Library has never been the object of a separate study.

The main goal of this article is to create a comprehensive historical scene of the periodical fund of the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov established in the first half of the twentieth century and to determine its function vis-à-vis the scientific idea of national librarianship.

In a study on the fund of the National Library of Azerbaijan, interesting facts and statistics were revealed.

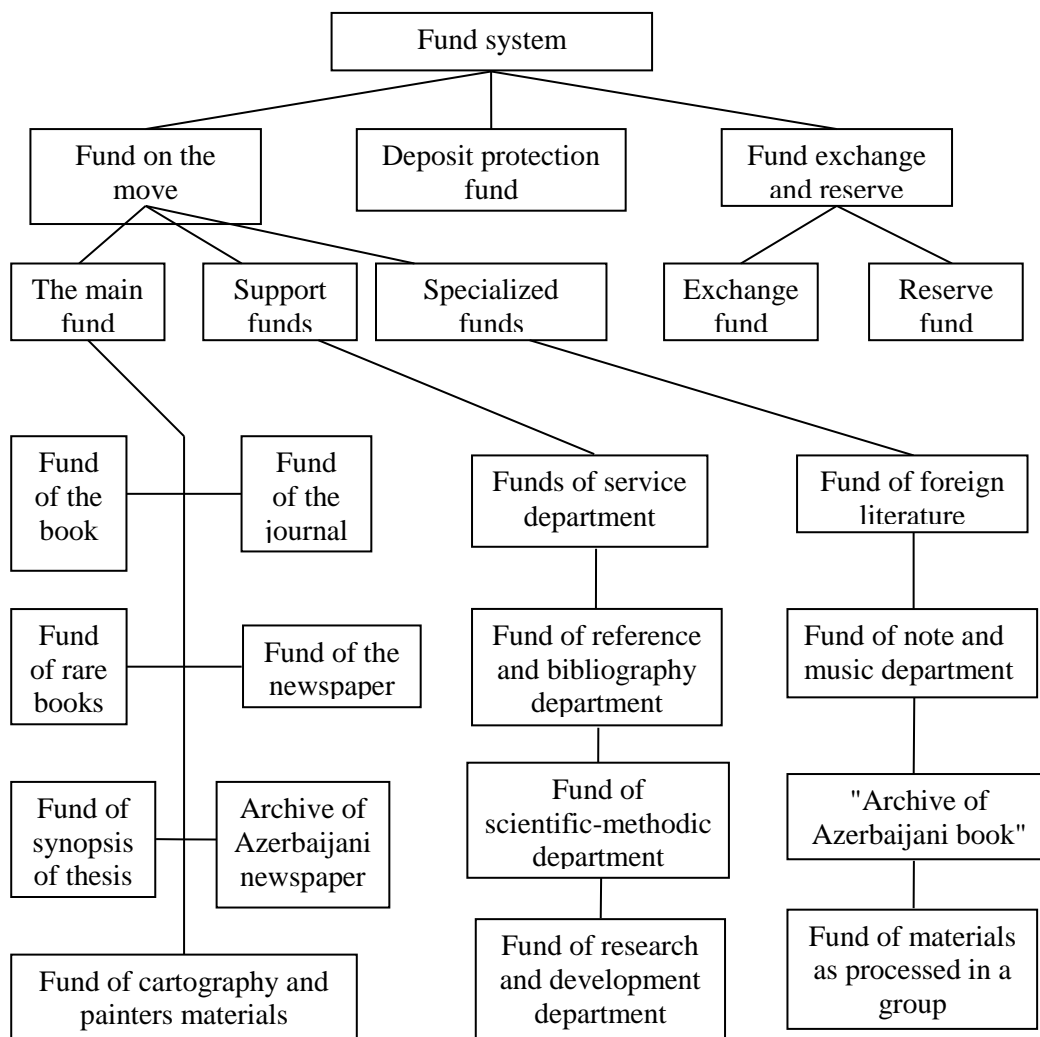


Figure 1: Facts and statistics on fund distribution

The results of six months of research on the fund of newspapers in 3 departments ("Department of Fund of Book Shaping ", "Department of Archive of Azerbaijani Book", "Department of Fund of Keeping Books") of the National Library covering the period from 1923 to 2008 showed that the library had 1,000 newspaper titles in the Azeri language; 182 titles were regional newspapers, 427 titles were in Russian and 4 titles were newspapers in other languages. The "Department of Archive of Azerbaijani books" is keeping 74 titles of newspapers and 45 titles of microfilms in the national language and 34 titles of newspapers in Russian.

The following table contains data for the period from 2000 to 2008:

Table 1

Data for the Period from 2000 to 2008

Year	Publications (documents) in the fund	Library attendance (arrival)	Documents given by library	Documents given on interlibrary loan	Number of readers
1	2	3	4	5	6
2000	4,482,986	211,317	791,759	4,014	28,067
2001	4,489,450	231,716	862,563	3,915	30,495
2002	4,495,098	227,025	933,486	3,424	30,487
2003	4,509,511	206,848	775,421	3,661	32,359
2004	4,513,244	177,154	713,714	2,942	27,623
2005	4,453,071	204,227	765,407	4,038	31,491
2006	4,465,442	225,318	783,949	5,145	34,083
2007	4,482,954	200,050	713,444	5,103	39,716
2008	4,508,626	175,969	694,017	4,630	37,185

In addition, during 2000 to 2008 a large number of documents (magazines, newspapers, scientific papers, journals of abstracts) from the National Library were given to users as shown below:

Table 2

Documents from the National Library Given To Users during 2000 to 2008

Year	Journals, reference journals	Newspapers	Archive of Azerbaijani newspaper	Scientific works
1	2	3	4	5
2000	37,442	8,498	7,998	7,879
2001	30,995	6,112	6,387	7,205
2002	27,880	5,995	3,725	5,695
2003	2,440	5,562	2,230	5,278
2004	2,050	5,400	2,000	4,980
2005	36,804	6,785	2,900	4,052
2006	41,938	183,913	3,000	3,873
2007	48,334	51,678	600	3,844
2008	51,120	3,527	100	3,758

In 1999, the number of library users was 26,536 consisting of:

- Azerbaijani (21,007 users)

- Russian (2,773 users)
- Foreign nationals (742 users)
- Citizens of CIS (2014 users)

In 2008, the number of library users increased to 37,185 consisting of:

- Azerbaijani (28,900 users)
- Russian (2,683 users)
- Foreign nationals (2,310 users)
- Citizens of CIS (3,292 users)

Preservation of documents along with efforts made by library workers ensured systematic public use of these documents.

Conclusion

A very important part of culture - Library- has been improved by the support of the government during the 34 years leadership of our president Heydar Aliyev—the great son of our people, a prominent politician and the architect of the independent state of Azerbaijan. Library work has always been the focus of attention of the leader and this period is marked in the history of our country for the development and advancement of librarianship. Following this precursor, the current president of our country Ilham Heydar Oglu Aliyev, continues father's way and has made significant strides in this area. His order for “Improving the Activity of Libraries in Azerbaijan” (April 20, 2007) and the state program for “Development of Library and Information Field from 2008 to 2013” (October 6, 2008) have been considered by country’s librarians and intellectuals as the continuation of Heydar Aliyev's heritage.

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