



LIBRARIES OF THE DIGITAL AGE: EXAMPLES FROM KAZAKHSTAN

In the age of digital technologies, when information becomes more available on the Internet and traditional libraries lose popularity, many people have doubts about their ability to withstand competition with new information carriers. Surveys of students show that many of them consider paper books archaic, less environmentally friendly than e-books, and quickly losing their relevance. Googling on the Internet, they believe, provides modern and constantly updated information, although its authenticity needs to be checked. However, rumors about the imminent disappearance of the library are clearly exaggerated. Rather, they are in some new – transformational – period, giving up the old and searching for new opportunities and ways of being. No doubt, to some extent, book collections have lost their importance, and they have been replaced by digital libraries, but most of the information in the world is still printed.

Libraries of the digital age are characterized by the emergence of a number of new trends. They no longer seek to increase the number of books on their shelves; on the contrary, many books are removed from halls to distant storage or even beyond library buildings. The digital revolution has most affected university libraries. Their budgets are shifted from the purchase of printed books to the creation of digital materials, new technologies are actively introduced into the processing and use of books, and the physical space of buildings is released for educational purposes. As a rule, in university libraries you can see the space for teamwork, where students can freely communicate, brainstorm and prepare presentations, conference rooms with glass walls, on which you can make notes, special furniture designed for space re-configuration. Students can also use free projectors, iPads, laptops, chargers and bring drinks and snacks. This is possible due to successful design solutions of modern projects: mobile furniture, space that is expanded or narrowed depending on the number of participants in the group and the task they are working on. At the same time, architects also keep the “silence” zones on separate floors or isolated premises for those who are used to working alone. Thus, the functions of traditional libraries and librarians in modern society are changing. Having a stable information technology infrastructure, the research library provides a reliable platform and many skills necessary to create new forms of knowledge and disseminate them to a wide audience of users.

It is well known that the academic community in Kazakhstan desperately needs new models of academic publication. The mechanisms for creating, searching and evaluating scientific content are rapidly evolving and changing in today's digital environment. Some kind of arbiters of content quality are needed, and libraries can play an important role here – to create

and implement systems for assessing the reliability and dissemination of scientists' work, to help in finding new forms of knowledge, cooperation and participation in community networks and multimedia technologies, and in developing new scientific resources. Some scientists demonstrate the ability and willingness to independently and freely explore and use opportunities and tools available on the Internet, but for most students and young researchers, in many cases, a certain level of selectivity and recommendations are needed on how to identify and then evaluate the information they find.

Another area of activity of university libraries can be the selection and analysis of educational and methodological materials as dictated by the demand on the part of students and teachers. In 2017, President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the project “New Humanitarian Knowledge: 100 New Textbooks in the Kazakh Language” within the framework of the state program “Modernization of Public Consciousness”. The project provides for the selection and translation of the 100 best textbooks in the humanities into the Kazakh language. In the selection of relevant educational literature for the translation on the most popular topics, librarians' opinion should be decisive.

Under these conditions, the competence requirements for the library personnel have become more demanding. They must possess special knowledge and skills of active communication with students and teaching staff, since now their function is not only to conduct training on how to find information and evaluate what they find, but also be aware of security measures on the Internet, targeted use of social networking sites and online collaboration tools. In addition, librarians are responsible for making decisions in the process of replacing traditional high-priced textbooks, because they are the ones who buy licenses for things like scientific journals, video libraries, or other open access resources that students and professors may need, and thus save considerable money for them. Conceptually, libraries are transformed from the archives and depositories into teaching and educational centers where you can co-work, communicate, and cooperate. However, academic libraries are not the only type of libraries where the change happens or where people come together to share ideas. Many foreign public libraries began to develop much broader programs for children and adults, as well as older people, with each library trying to build its activities depending on the needs of the community that it serves. In an area where there are many adolescents, libraries should respond to their need for extracurricular space. In an area with many pensioners, the library staff is committed to take into account their needs, such as when someone needs a quiet place to read, while others want to at-

tend training courses or seminars on digital literacy. To do this, the library staff develops a client-oriented policy, collects quantitative and qualitative data on the social groups of visitors, their number, time of possible visits, needs, feelings of comfort or discomfort. Thus, the main reasons why people use public libraries are meeting, learning and reading. Public libraries have become a venue for festivals, conferences, meetings with interesting people and other cultural events, attracting people from all over the world. Moreover, some libraries have serious plans to provide specific support and services for low-income groups such as unemployed youth, immigrants or the homeless, and expand their social projects to the level of participation in addressing the most difficult social problems, such as youth violence, for example.

Being a part of the global community Kazakhstan aims to keep abreast of the latest technological innovations. According to the Ministry of Culture and Sports, it is planned to make libraries a center of leisure for Kazakhstani citizens in the nearest future. Along with reading rooms, libraries will have, for instance, cinemas and children's rooms. To serve this infrastructure, library workers receive special training. For instance, the A.S. Pushkin East Kazakhstan regional library already offers English courses and IT-yurts equipped with computers with Internet access for the unemployed, while special advisers help the unemployed find jobs, practically carrying out the function of an employment center. However, it is still too early to talk about the digital revolution in the library services in Kazakhstan. Recent statistics show that in 2016 only 1,577 out of 4,118 libraries in the country were connected to the Internet, providing access to 260 Internet resources via 9,304 computers. According to the Committee on Statistics of Kazakhstan, only 174,715 out of 2,254,015 publications were received in the electronic form in 2016. Moreover, in late 2016 the number of prints and movie-photo-audio documents at the libraries amounted to 118,961,842 units, while the number of publications on electronic media reached just 1,350,622 units. Nevertheless, the employees of the National Library have started creating a Kazakhstani electronic library; they convert the written cultural heritage into an electronic format so that museum and library rarities are made available to readers. They collaborate at the international level with the libraries, archives, and museums of various countries.

It can be summarized that in an era where everyone can access global information through their pocket gadget, the role of physical libraries has not diminished, but has become even more important. Libraries of the XXI century provide space, which still creates an opportunity for knowledge, research, cooperation, communication and creation.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his State-of-the-Nation Address, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined and set goals to improve the well-being of the nation by accelerating economic growth. According to the address, the country needs to improve the banking sector, optimize the financial system, promote small and medium-sized businesses and fight corruption. It was also noted that all modernization processes should be based on human capital.
- During his official visit to Ankara, Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani met with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss the ways to strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries, focusing on the international and regional developments, most importantly, the situation in the Middle East, especially in relation to Jerusalem, and Syria.
- During his official visit to Dushanbe, Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov met with President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon to discuss the elimination of trade restrictions, simplification of the visa regime, reduction of tariffs for goods, restoration of railway communication, and opening of existing border checkpoints.
- During his official visit to Astana, Chairman of the Central Asia Group of the Finnish Parliament Ville Skinnari met with Chairman of Kazakh Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to discuss further development of bilateral relations and interparliamentary cooperation between the two countries. The sides exchanged views on the prospects for further cooperation in terms of projects implemented at the EXPO venues in Astana.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed a decree on measures to improve the management in the transport, communications and high technology sectors. The decree stipulates the creation of the State Maritime and State Civil Aviation agencies on the basis of Azerbaijan's State Maritime Administration and State Civil Aviation Administration, respectively.
- According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, in 2017 the country reduced oil production by 6.3% to

806,000 tons, while natural gas production was increased by 0.5% up to 56.417 billion cubic meters.

- According to the Chinese state owned oil company PetroChina West Pipeline Company, crude oil imports from Kazakhstan to China through the transnational pipeline hit a new record high in 2017. The China-Kazakhstan pipeline carried 12.3 million tons of crude oil in 2017, which is a 23.2% increase year-on-year.
- According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2018 Azerbaijan is expected to produce 0.79 million barrels of petroleum and other liquids per day, while the figures for 2019 are expected to stand at 0.77 million barrels per day.
- According to the State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, in 2017 the inflation rate in the country totaled 12.9% year-on-year. During the reporting period, the prices of food, non-food products, and services rose by 16.4%, 11.6% and 9.3%, respectively. The monthly inflation rate in Azerbaijan totaled 0.5% in December 2017.
- According to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, the country exported goods and services worth \$13.9 billion in 2017, which is a 15.4% increase compared to 2016. During the reporting period, Uzbekistan's imports rose by 7.2% up to \$13.008 billion. The positive balance of foreign trade turnover increased by almost 20 times and amounted to \$945.5 million. Moreover, in 2017 the country's GDP totaled 249.17 trillion soums (\$29.9 billion) in current prices, which is a 5.3% increase compared to 2016. Based on the results of 2017, GDP per capita increased by 3.6% reaching 7.692 million soums (\$923.04).
- According to the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan, about 2.61 billion manats (\$1.54 billion) were transferred to the state budget in 2017, which is a 14% increase compared to 2016. It was also noted that the committee transferred 225.38 million manats (\$133.36 million) to the state budget in December 2017.
- According to Finance Minister of Russia Anton Siluanov, non-oil-and-gas deficit of the federal budget declined to 7.9% of GDP in 2017. It was also noted that in 2016 the rate was 9.1%.

- According to Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan Timur Suleimenov, the country's GDP growth reached 4% in 2017. It was noted that the non-oil sector's contribution to the GDP growth totaled 60%. The greatest growth was observed in industry (7.1%), transport (4.8%), communications (3.3%), and trade (3.2%).

Society and Culture

- According to Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan Kubat Otorbaev, about 1 million of Kyrgyz citizens do not have access to clean drinking water. It is noted that there are 1,891 settlements in the country, including 1,805 villages. At least 725 villages (38%) in Kyrgyzstan do not have sufficient access to central water supply, 267 (14%) have water pipe systems built before the 1960s, while 396 villages (21%) have no water pipes at all.
- According to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, in December 2017 the number of unemployed people in the country amounted to 441,800 people, which is 5% of the economically active population. In late December 2017, the employment agencies of Kazakhstan registered 70,300 unemployed people, or 0.8% of the country's economically active population.
- According to the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan, in January-November 2017 the inflow of remittances transferred by labor migrants reached \$2.28 billion. In November 2017, the inflow of transfers amounted to \$205.2 million, which is a \$30.8 million increase compared to the same period of 2016.
- According to the Federal Air Transport Agency of Russia, the country's airlines carried 105 million passengers in 2017, showing an 18.6% increase year-on-year. It was also noted that the Russian airlines transported 7.6 million passengers in December 2017, which is a 14.1% increase in annual terms.
- Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan Ismatilla Irgashev took part in the ceremony of donating 25 buses, 3 tractors and hinged equipment to Afghanistan held in Hairatan. According to Irgashev, the leadership of Uzbekistan attaches importance to developing and strengthening good-neighborly relations and expanding mutually beneficial cooperation with Afghanistan in all spheres.