

## THE HISTORY OF LIBRARIES IN QASHQADARYO REGION: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract:** *This article analyzes the development of libraries in the Qashqadaryo region of Uzbekistan during the years of independence and the activities carried out by these institutions. It provides detailed insights into the library system in the region, its resources, library services, the promotion of reading culture, and spiritual-educational events conducted through libraries. The article also reviews reforms, new projects, and programs aimed at expanding scientific and informational resources in regional libraries, establishing electronic libraries, and improving the quality of services provided to readers and the general public. Furthermore, the role of libraries as cultural and scientific centers in contributing to the region's social development is explored. The article highlights the progress made in library activities during the years of independence and their significance in the field of spirituality and enlightenment.*

**Keywords:** *Uzbekistan, independence, Qashqadaryo region, libraries, library system, readers, reading culture, scientific-information resources, electronic libraries, spiritual-enlightenment activities, social development.*

During the years of independence, significant reforms were implemented across various branches of the cultural sector. Broad opportunities were created for carrying out spiritual and educational activities. Cultural and educational institutions, by their nature, serve as centers of spirituality and contribute to the promotion and development of folk creativity. Collecting, studying, and developing folk art such as songs and games are key components of these institutions' activities.

Ideas of reinterpreting layers of historical, cultural, educational, and moral values, principles of renewal, and new dimensions of folk creativity were clearly reflected in the ongoing activities of modern cultural institutions, creative meetings, competitions, and the traditional melodies performed by **baxshis** (folk performers). Notably, during the independence years, fundamental changes were introduced into the functioning of cultural and educational institutions throughout the republic. Since 1991, these

institutions have been operating under a semi-self-financing model. Legal and regulatory documents were developed to manage their activities and were gradually implemented.

In the Qashqadaryo region as well, a number of practical steps were taken to strengthen the material and technical base of cultural and educational institutions. For instance, between 1991 and 1994, 12 library buildings were renovated in Dehqonobod district, 3 in Qamashi district, and 4 in villages of the Muborak district. In 1994, a total of 494 libraries were functioning in the Qashqadaryo region. That same year, there were 810 mobile (non-stationary) libraries operating across the region.

In Uzbekistan, however, some delays were experienced in organizing effective library services. Due to the material hardships of the transitional period, the number of books and journals in libraries decreased. In 1995, the total number of books and journals was 50.8 million copies, but by 2004, this number had dropped to 35.6 million. Similarly, the number of library readers fell from 4.7 million to 3.4 million over the same period<sup>28</sup>. A number of factors contributed to this situation. As the standard of living of the population improved, computers and various video devices became widespread, and a large volume of information began reaching people through technology. Readers gained access to information found in books via the internet. This process was not unique to Uzbekistan but was characteristic of global trends.

Between 2004 and 2008, the number of **club institutions** also declined. For example, in 2004, there were 148 club institutions operating in the Qashqadaryo region, but by 2007, their number had dropped to 121. There were specific reasons for this situation. One of the main causes of the decline was **funding issues**, which had a serious impact. In addition, the **indifference and negligence** of local authorities and responsible leaders led to the deterioration of club institutions' operations.

By 2006, as part of efforts to improve cultural and sports activities and strengthen their material and technical base across Uzbekistan, a number of measures were implemented. That year, **32,591.3 million UZS** were allocated from the national budget for culture and sports affairs. Of this amount, **7,292.3 million UZS** were directed to theatrical and performance organizations, **1,538.9 million UZS** to the restoration of cultural monuments, and **1,144.1 million UZS** to the provision of cultural and educational institutions, among other allocations<sup>29</sup>. 2007 yil Qashqadaryo viloyatida ham jami 121 ta madaniyat uylari va klub muassasalari bo'lgan bo'lsa, ulardan 91 tasi qishloq joylarda faoliyat olib bordi. Shundan faqat 9 tasi namunaviy loyihada qurilgan binolarga joylashtirildi.

<sup>28</sup> O'zbekiston Respublikasi Davlat statistika qo'mitasi yillik Statistika to'plami. 2004. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 136.

<sup>29</sup> O'zbekiston Respublikasi madaniyat va sport ishlari vazirligining joriy arxivi. O'zbekiston Respublikasi madaniyat va sport ishlari vazirligining 2006 yildagi ish faoliyati bo'yicha ma'lumotnoma.

There was a certain degree of delay in organizing the work of libraries in Uzbekistan. Due to the financial difficulties of the transition period, the number of books and magazines in libraries also decreased. For example, while there were 5,986 libraries operating in rural areas of the republic in 1995, by 2004 their number had dropped to 4,933. In 1995, these libraries held 50.8 million copies of books and magazines, but by 2004 this number had decreased to 35.6 million. Similarly, the number of readers also declined from 4.7 million to 3.4 million during the same period<sup>30</sup> A number of factors contributed to the emergence of this situation. As the standard of living of the population increased, computers and various video devices became widespread, and much information began to reach people through technological means. Readers were given the opportunity to access information from books via the Internet through computers. This process is characteristic not only of Uzbekistan but of the entire world.

In 1999, there were 169 clubs in the region, with seating capacity in clubs and cultural centers for 14,400 people. There were 8 cultural and recreational parks, 4 theaters with a total of 700 seats, and 490 libraries with a book collection of 5,361.6 thousand copies. By 2002, the number of clubs had decreased to 148, the seating capacity in clubs and cultural centers was reduced to 11,600, while the number of cultural and recreational parks remained at 8, and theaters at 4 with 700 seats. The number of libraries decreased to 461, and the book collection was reduced to 3,607.4 thousand copies.

In the region, the number of cinema projectors was 25 in 2004, 25 in 2005, and 27 in 2006. The number of clubs and cultural centers remained at 148 in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Their total seating capacity was 12,700 in 2004, and increased to 15,400 in 2005 and 2006.<sup>31</sup>

In 2004, 2005, and 2006, there were 6 cultural and recreational parks across the region. The number of theaters remained constant at 4 during these years. The number of seats in theaters was 700 in both 2004 and 2005, and increased to 1,329 in 2006<sup>32</sup>.

At the S. Nasafiy Kashkadarya Regional Information and Library Center, the regional stage of the Republican contest "The Best Specialist of the Information and Library Institution" has concluded. The winners who advanced to the Republican stage are: D. Elomonova, head librarian of the electronic reading room of the Regional Information and Library Center; D. Soatova, specialist of the Information Resource Center at Karshi Pedagogical College; O. Ziyotova, librarian at the Karshi branch of Tashkent University of Information Technologies; S. Qurbonova, specialist at the regional library for the visually impaired; D. Saylieva, librarian of School No. 13 in Kasbi district; and O. Hayitova, librarian of School No. 4 in Muborak district. The winners were appropriately awarded by the Regional Information and Library Center.

<sup>30</sup> O'zbekiston Respublikasi Davlat statistika qo'mitasi yillik Statistika to'plami. 2004. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 136

<sup>31</sup> Qashqadaryo viloyati ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy pasporti. 2007. 22-bet.

<sup>32</sup> Qashqadaryo viloyati ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy pasporti. 2007. 22-bet.



The Decree of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, dated January 12, 2017, "On the establishment of a commission for the development of the system of publishing and distribution of books, promotion of reading and reading culture," and the Resolution No. PQ-3271 of September 13, 2017, "On a comprehensive program of measures to develop the system of publishing and distribution of books, enhance the culture of reading and promote reading," testify to the fact that the development of reading culture has become a pressing issue elevated to the level of state policy.

In September 2018, a children's book festival-exhibition was held under the slogan "A Healthy and Spiritually Mature Generation is the Future of the Nation" at the Kashkadarya Regional Information and Library Center, in cooperation with the regional office of the Uzbekistan Press and Information Agency, the Regional Department of Public Education, and the regional branch of the Writers' Union.

In December 2018, librarians of the S. Nasafiy Kashkadarya Regional Information and Library Center organized a roundtable discussion titled "Patriotism – a Clear Mirror of Education" in cooperation with Military Unit No. 521. Within the same military unit, they also arranged a literary exhibition titled "Our Homeland – Our Sacred Place."

In May 2001, a publishing center was established at Karshi State University. Beginning in September 2001, the center started publishing lecture texts, methodological manuals, and textbooks prepared by the university's professors and lecturers across various subjects. In addition, the center regularly published proceedings of international and national scientific-practical conferences held at the university. In 2001 alone, conference materials totaling 69 printed sheets and two monographs totaling 48 printed sheets were published. The establishment of a publishing center within the university played a significant role in the publication of scientific research and educational literature.<sup>33</sup>

On January 7, 2019, a roundtable discussion was organized at the S. Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center in cooperation with the Regional Department of the Defense Assistance Society (JGMXO) as part of the "Month of Patriotism", held from December 15 to January 15. During the event, a presentation of Marcel Brion's book "Who Am I, Sahibqiran – The World Conqueror Temur?" took place, along with a literary exhibition titled "The Commander Recognized by the World."

On January 8, 2019, Dilfuza Jabborova, a librarian from the S. Nasafiy Kashkadarya Regional Information and Library Center, visited Preschool Institution No. 4 in the Karshi district and read stories from "Uzbek Folk Tales" to inspire young children to take an interest in reading.

On January 26, 2019, a joint roundtable titled "Books are the Tireless Wings of Thought" was held at the "Vatanparvar" Park in Karshi city, in cooperation with the S.

<sup>33</sup> Qarshi davlat universiteti joriy arxivi materiallari

Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center, the JGMXO, and Military Units No. 86729, 23716, and 521. During the event, M. Porsieva, head of the Legal Information Sector, and U. Otamurodov, a service department librarian, delivered speeches.

In 2019, to commemorate the 578th anniversary of Mir Alisher Navoi's birth, the S. Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center, together with Mobilization Battalion No. 521 and Schools No. 43 and No. 14 in Karshi, organized a literary evening titled "Poetry – The True Gardener of the Garden of Verse."

On October 22, 2024, as part of the XIII National Information and Library Week "INFOLIB UZBEKISTAN-2024", a roundtable discussion was held at the S. Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center in cooperation with students of Karshi State University and Turon University. The event was dedicated to the 55th anniversary of Asqad Muxtor's novel "Chinor."

Also on October 22, 2024, within the same week, a seminar-training was held on "Online Management of Reporting Tables on a Systematized Website." Specialists of the Kashkadarya Regional Information and Library Center participated via the Zoom platform.

On October 23, 2024, another seminar-training was conducted at the S. Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center as part of "INFOLIB UZBEKISTAN-2024", focusing on "Organizing Information-Bibliographic and Local History Work in Information-Library Institutions." It was attended by information and bibliographic service specialists from district information and library centers.

To implement the Presidential Decree No. PQ-147 dated April 1, 2024, "On Measures to Further Improve the Activities of Creative Schools", and the Order No. 33 of the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi dated April 4, 2024, a practical training session was held on October 24, 2024. The training, organized by the IT and Digitization Service of the S. Nasafiy Regional Information and Library Center, introduced 10th-grade students of the Abdulla Oripov Creative School to Flash AI devices, their functions, and the scanning processes, as part of a program to train students in digitization and digital resource processing.

In conclusion, libraries play an essential role in raising a well-rounded young generation by nurturing pure human values and high moral standards. Libraries, which enlighten minds and broaden worldviews through knowledge, are rightfully regarded as sacred spaces. The regular organization of educational and cultural activities, roundtable discussions, and literary evenings has sparked great interest among book lovers. Organizing literary and artistic events dedicated to significant dates has become a tradition. Over the years, these cultural institutions have been equipped with modern information technologies, and electronic databases of educational materials and literary works have been launched, greatly expanding opportunities for readers.

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