

THE ACTIVITIES OF LIBRARIES IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract

The article examines the history of libraries in Uzbekistan during the Second World War. It highlights the sharp decline in the rural library network due to the war, as well as a significant increase in the workload of library staff. During this period, there was also a noticeable rise in the demand for books. In addition, libraries provided services to the wounded and sick; "mobile libraries" were established, and book exhibitions were organized in hospitals.

Keywords

Second World War, libraries of Uzbekistan, cultural heritage, Fundamental Library of the Academy of Sciences, library of the Central Asian State University, book provision, State Public Library, mobile libraries, exhibitions, home front.

Introduction. Today, books and libraries play an immensely significant role in the spiritual and intellectual life of society. Reading contributes greatly to the formation of ideological immunity, the ability to distinguish right from wrong, personal worldview, modes of thinking, perspectives on events, and fundamental life principles. Throughout history, great scholars and thinkers who emerged from our land preferred access to palace libraries over treasures of gold, silver, and jewels when asked about their desires in royal courts. Our ancestors, who shook the world with the light of knowledge, immersed themselves in reading at the legendary "Bayt al-Hikma" (House of Wisdom) and produced groundbreaking discoveries. Indeed, our people have long revered libraries as houses of treasures, havens of wisdom, and sources of spiritual healing. A library is a cultural, educational, and scientific institution that ensures public access to printed and manuscript works. It regularly collects, preserves, promotes publications, and conducts information and bibliographic activities.

It is well known that on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a treacherous attack on the Soviet Union. The needs of the front shaped the direction and content of all enterprises and institutions across the country, including libraries in Uzbekistan. In this difficult time, the Party and government adopted crucial

decisions that helped libraries carry out propaganda and mass education work in line with pressing modern challenges.

The People's Commissariats of Education (Narkompros) of the Soviet republics issued directive documents regarding the operations of cultural-educational institutions, including libraries. These bodies provided active leadership and promoted cooperation among libraries under various institutions. In its address to educational workers, and in the resolutions titled "On the Activities of Political-Educational Institutions During Wartime" and "On the Activities of Public Libraries During Wartime," the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Education recommended libraries conduct daily newspaper readings, organize book exhibitions, and compile lists of the best literature on urgent topics.

It was especially emphasized that mobile libraries should be used to supply industrial and agricultural enterprises, scientific communities, military mobilization points, army units, and hospitals with military-defense and political literature. On November 12, 1941, the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR issued an order titled "On the Activities of Libraries, Reading Rooms, and Clubs." This directive was directly connected to the resolution of the State Defense Committee "On the General Compulsory Military Training of Citizens of the USSR." Beginning in October 1941, a nationwide movement for acquiring military knowledge was launched with great intensity, in which the libraries of Uzbekistan actively participated.

During the first year of the Great Patriotic War, the military situation led to a sharp reduction in the library network within the Uzbek SSR, particularly in rural areas. The primary cause of this decline was a significant reduction in funding allocated to libraries. By the end of 1942, only 190 of the 408 public libraries that had existed at the beginning of 1941 remained operational in the republic, with a combined book collection of 259,000 volumes. The number of specialized libraries also decreased, and their staffing levels dropped substantially. By 1945, there were only slightly more than 200 employees working across all scientific and specialized libraries in the republic, a number nearly four times lower than in 1940²²⁹.

Due to the growing importance of political and educational work during the war, every library and reading room was obliged to actively conduct public political and cultural-educational activities. They were tasked with explaining Party and government decisions, the situation on the front lines, international developments, home front responsibilities, and other issues of national and republican significance. Libraries vigorously promoted military-patriotic literature

²²⁹ Касымова А.Г. История библиотечного дело в Узбекистане. Т.Ўқитувчи. 1981.-С. 81.

and, in support of industrial production, compiled reference-bibliographic manuals on military-technical topics.

By ensuring the broad dissemination of books, supplying essential information to home front workers, and assisting military units, the libraries of Uzbekistan gained valuable experience in political education and mass propaganda work during these challenging wartime years.

In 1940, readers from the military accounted for only 17.3% of all library users at the State Library of the Uzbek SSR. By 1945, this figure had risen to 47%. The number of library visitors also increased significantly, especially military personnel who began to use the services of Tashkent city libraries more frequently. While in 1940, this group represented only 2.4% of all library users, by 1944, the figure had reached 17.6%²³⁰.

Such changes in the composition of readers also shifted the thematic demand for literature. During the war, the need for military, technical, and medical literature grew markedly. At the same time, the central focus in both mass and individual work with readers was the promotion of socio-political literature. For example, in 1941, libraries in Uzbekistan distributed 89,500 copies of mass political literature, and by 1942, this number had reached 105,500 copies²³¹.

The People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros) of the Republic instructed libraries to regularly read books and newspapers aloud, organize discussions and Q&A sessions, and promote literature through various means. Libraries were encouraged to operate within enterprises, scientific institutions, higher educational institutions, and hospitals, ensuring the delivery of books to readers.

By fulfilling these directives, public libraries conducted multifaceted political and educational work among the population. During the spring sowing campaign of 1942, all libraries in the Tashkent region prepared special stands and colored posters calling for the supply of bread, vegetables, and other foodstuffs to the front and rear. Mobile book exhibitions and display cases were also utilized. Libraries and club institutions in Havast district created posters and showcases indicating the number of hectares of land to be sown with agricultural crops.

Regional and district libraries helped specialists resolve pressing production issues, promoted the experiences of leading practitioners, and organized public readings and literary recommendations among farming communities. All reference and bibliographic activities of libraries were subordinated to wartime needs. For

²³⁰ Охунжонов.Э. Ватан кутубхоначилиги тарихи. 2-қисм. Дарслик. Т., Алишер Навоий номидаги Ўзбекистон Миллий кутубхонаси нашриёти. –Б.127.

²³¹ Охунжонов.Э. Ватан кутубхоначилиги тарихи. 2-қисм. Дарслик. Т., Алишер Навоий номидаги Ўзбекистон Миллий кутубхонаси нашриёти. –Б.128.

instance, in the first year of the war, the Ibn Sina Regional Library of Bukhara provided 2,550 reference services on war-related issues upon readers' requests.

In Vobkent district, under the library's initiative, clubs for PVHO (Air Defense and Fire Prevention) and GSO (Sanitary Defense) were established, where primarily housewives were trained. These women later worked as nurses in collective farms and kindergartens. Library staff regularly conducted oral readings and discussions among collective farmers, participating in work brigades and teams. For example, in the first quarter of 1943, 24 discussion events were held with 1,892 participants. The library provided reference services to 183 readers, organized two mobile libraries, which alone served 675 readers in that quarter.

During the spring sowing campaign, 27 mobile libraries operated on the initiative of the library, with the participation of school librarians and teachers in the promotion of reading. In Tashkent and Tashkent region, many libraries used mobile libraries to serve workers and specialists at new construction sites, as well as those involved in building irrigation canals and hydroelectric power stations. Libraries throughout the republic organized thematic exhibitions of books dedicated to the events and progress of the Great Patriotic War²³².

By 1943, the state of library affairs had significantly improved. The network of public libraries gradually began to recover. By 1944, there were 203 libraries operating in the republic, including 10 regional, 51 city, 120 district, and 22 children's libraries. Their total book holdings exceeded 2.7 million volumes²³³.

During the war years, a number of technical libraries were established. The total number of scientific and specialized libraries in the republic reached 243. In 1943, there were 36 libraries in Tashkent province alone, employing 86 staff members, with collections totaling 17.4 million volumes, and serving nearly 108,000 readers.

In 1944, the Party and state authorities of the Uzbek SSR adopted several measures aimed at improving library work. These included the restoration of all libraries closed during the war, the return of library buildings occupied by other institutions, and the organization of training courses for 200 library personnel.

During the war years, higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan became centers for training highly qualified specialists across all fields of the national economy, science, and culture. Both local and evacuated institutions of higher education contributed to the preparation of personnel for science and industry. The republic's scientific libraries made a worthy contribution to this important state task.

²³² Касымова А.Г. История библиотечного дело в Узбекистане. Т.Ўқитувчи. 1981.-С. 84.

²³³ Касымова А.Г. История библиотечного дело в Узбекистане. Т.Ўқитувчи. 1981.-С. 86.

The Fundamental Library of the Central Asian State University, which before the war closed its reading rooms at 6:00 p.m., remained open until 11:00 p.m. during the war. Each reading room was supervised daily by university faculty members, while librarians provided readers with consultations on various academic issues. Due to a shortage of textbooks and teaching aids, library staff proposed collecting and distributing old lecture notes, manuscripts, and course papers to students as supplementary study materials²³⁴.

In 1938, the daily number of books issued by the library was 540, while in 1942 this figure rose to 1,000. The growing interest in research work led to an increase in bibliographic inquiries addressed to major scientific libraries across the republic. During 1944–1945, libraries in Uzbekistan received literature from the Book Chamber of the Soviet Union to replenish their collections²³⁵.

The Second World War necessitated a complete reorganization of the country's national economy. In this context, libraries played a crucial role in explaining the goals and interests of the war, mobilizing workers to meet the needs of the front, and promoting military knowledge among the population. As such, the work of libraries gained significant importance.

Librarians in Uzbekistan consolidated all available resources to fulfill the tasks set forth by the Party and the people, providing broad-based services to the population of the republic and simultaneously offering assistance to their colleagues in the fraternal allied republics. Library staff made a substantial contribution in helping the public comprehend the heroism of those who participated in the Second World War, deepening the understanding of the value of freedom, and mobilizing efforts in the fight against the enemy.

In this way, the patriotism and devotion to national values inherent to the Uzbek people found clear expression in the activities of Uzbekistan's libraries during the years of the Second World War.

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²³⁵ Феруза Нормуратова. Хизмат кўрсатиш: кеча ва бугун. «INFOLIB» ахборот-кутубхона журнали. №3 (27) 2021. –Б.49.

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