

Library Service in the Unific Information Space

Natalia Anikina

Foreign Literature Department

Central Scientific Library, National Academy of Sciences

265 "a" Chui Ave., 720071, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

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Libraries form a vital part of the world's system of communication and education. They make available knowledge that has been accumulated through ages. The Central Scientific Library is a unique and universal collection in Russian, Kyrgyz and other languages of the former Soviet Union. At the same time, there are more than 80000 thousand holdings in the Foreign Literature Department, including books and periodicals in English, German, and French.

Having the three main functions to carry out:

the national, universal storage for the literature on natural sciences;

- a co-ordinate center of scientific-methodological and scientific research work in the field of librarianship;
- the center of recommendatory bibliography and interlibrary lending

The CSL NAS KR acquires different types of publications via the books distribution office, through exchange service and other sources (gifts, donations, grants, programs). Any change in storage of and access to knowledge, at a time when more library users are turning to online resources, becomes enormous in rather a big library. Approximately 1 million of holdings, it is quite a collection, isn't it? As information has turned out to be the fundamental component of everyday activities the need for establishing powerful information net is a must, because only the networked information landscape can help library's users to identify and connect the diverse content.

The strivings of the people all over the world after openness and a rational use of information resources have fostered libraries to exist under the conditions of the unific cyber space networking.

Nowadays, our library is involved in this process at a local, national and international level. The two local nets: FREENET and AKNET assist us in bridging with the representations of the International Organizations in Kyrgyzstan, expanding our access to their extensive networks. The CSL co-ordinates its plans and activity with IREX, the Soros Foundation of Kyrgyzstan, the World Bank, ICIMOD, etc.

As IREX, with its giant network, encourages co-operative programs of development for libraries, archives, and information systems, our library applied to the organization's substructure, to the Council on Library and Information Resources, with a project of a creation of our own web site. Following the well-known missions to develop the expanding access to international information resources, it awarded us a grant, amounting to US \$248. They have not been spent for nothing. The library's home page will provide you and our users with the general information, concerning the variety of services available unfortunately, only in Russian.

Emerging technologies, especially the INTERNET and the World Wide Web, have profoundly changed the way we work, live, collaborate, and communicate. Computers and information technologies determine the development of civilization and joint the whole humanity into the unific information community in which successful economic and cultural development, including the state of modern science and education, is to a large extent based on the abovementioned technologies. Via Internet, you can be linked with the following libraries and educational institutions, located in the Kyrgyz Republic, namely: The National Library of Kyrgyzstan, the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences, the International University of Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz National University, the Kyrgyz-Russian (Slavonic) University, the American University of Central Asia, and etc.

It is difficult to achieve social cohesion if culture is not taught and cultivated for it determines the level of intellect. The main criteria in the classification of institutions of higher learning (university, institute, college) are the quality and volume of scientific research and development of the scientific staff and the availability of appropriate laboratory and scientific equipment as well. Some of our universities and libraries have managed to attract funds from the international programs. As the result of this, the National Library displays its web site with the electronic catalogue and our library has created only a web site but still keeps in mind grand plans in case it wins another grant. The same goes with the Kyrgyz Technical University which has become a participant of the TACIS development program in respect of a library. The participation in the International projects enables the higher educational institutions to ensure the scientific potential, the integration and contacts with the outside educational systems, and the creation of the unitary educational space among the countries of the world. After the signing an agreement at a government level, a diploma, issued in Kyrgyzstan, is acknowledged in a number of countries.

The development of higher education in Kyrgyzstan can serve as a model for Central Asian States. Here a number of private higher educational institutions have appeared along with those of the state. They were organized with support of the other

states (Russia, Turkey, USA). A number of universities were opened in the Republic's regions, having made education accessible for the students from the rural areas.

The International University, having been established by a number of co-founders, is not submitted to the Ministry of Education. The Trust Board is the main managerial body of the University. The autonomy has resulted in the implementation of the new training technologies.

So, the system of credit hours has been introduced. It gives maximum independence to the students and a great deal of attention is paid to extracurricular work. This new system predetermines the possibility of interchangeable recording of subjects which gives the opportunity to transfer from one year of study to the same year to the different Western, European, and American universities. The aforesaid educational know-how has its followers in the newly independent republics of Central Asia.

Thus, on the one hand, we have a unific information space and, on the other hand, a unitary educational system. More than 3000 thousand students out of 30 higher educational institutions use the resources of our library both traditional and newly created ones. The signed agreements between our Administration and the Administrative staff of the institutions enable their students to be served in the CSL. From time to time, the Acquisition Department sends duplicates to the regional universities of Naryn and Osh. Besides, an access to the Internet gives the opportunity for our librarians to help the students in search of the necessary materials for their diploma and course papers. We do not only supply them with a copy of the books and periodicals bibliography but also teach and train those who want to be computer literate along with IREX and the other similar organizations. As the result, the students have an access to the educational programs through the Internet as the new educational technologies will become the stimulus of a preparation of a new generation of specialists for the country with a market economy which is being built just now.

Housed in the purpose built building, with the necessary conditions for an adequate functioning, our Library serves the following categories of readers: scientists, students, post-graduate students and the others.

Gradual improvement of the existing matter of things and a strong desire to be empowered with the innovations made us to continue our work with the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). We have decided to submit an application to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, hoping to get the annual international award, having been announced by the CLIR ("Access to Learning" Award-2003). Our project proposal is based on the information technologies implantation and modernization.

In its proposal, the CSL suggests free public access to all members of the public, including children and young people, and the previously under-served population, such as poor and disabled persons.

The Gates Foundation grant (if received) is considered as a major opportunity for a new beginning though, for the first time, we started to talk about the automation in late nineties (90s), but the scanty funding was the reason for giving up the idea.

It is no doubt that a project should start with a plan, giving the analysis of the user requirements and state the current infrastructure and information services, as well as examine the future and expected needs of the Library readers, keeping in mind the social and cultural changes within society, and the situation in a library itself.

In this connection, the Central Scientific Library has many ideas. Along with the free access of all categories of the readers to the information technology and services which were previously unattainable for them, we plan to create an electronic catalogue and to insert the defended dissertations in our web site. The same goes with the newly composed bibliographical indices, devoted to the Kyrgyz Statehood and based on the rare books collection, dating from 1835 to 1935. We also include into our plan the study tours and publications in journals and conference web sites.

In case the CSL is a winner, it will act as a sponsoring organization in respect of those who want to be involved into the new library technologies, and we are eager to find out that the International Advisory Committee of Librarians and information technology experts will pass a positive decision.

Nowadays, we carry out the co-operative work with IREX, an International Research and Exchange Board, dedicated to promoting the advanced research and students' training programs. In other words, IREX builds and sustains the network of intellectual and professional contacts. The IREX's network impact is far reaching and very fruitful due to its conferences and seminars under the leadership of Larisa Desyatkovna, a specialist of the American Resource Center. The latter is a departmental organization, having a wide network on the post soviet space, which administers US-based and on-site education and training for students, scholars, and scientists, and the CSL is also involved in this, ensuring a free of charge access to the INTERNET.

We enjoy the European-based networking as well. INTAS is a project for the mutual beneficial development of all partner countries. An access to the European Publishing Houses (Blackwell and Springer) was opened to the scientists and scholars of Kyrgyzstan by the joint efforts of our Asiatic co-ordinator of the project Tatiana Chepurnaya and our own ones. We have managed to increase the number of computers and now, our information service, which is the duty of the Foreign Literature Department,

is available for the representatives of all constituencies who are interested in the European scientific ideas. INTAS can be found in each or almost each republic of the former Soviet Union.

We still provide our users with electronic copies of documents, requested by them within the frame work of INTAS project. The requests are sent and received via Internet by our Department of Foreign Literature. This networking service is very popular in the Academy of Sciences, especially in the Institute of Chemistry and Chemical Technology. UN General Assembly of November 3, 1998 has declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. Within the framework of the aforesaid, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, cordially welcomed the Mountain Summit on its territory which gave our Library an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with another networked system ICIMOD (International Center for Integrated Mountain Development). Both of our countries, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal (the ICIMOD locates in Katmandu, Nepal), live in fragile mountain ecosystems which can be easily wounded and needs protection. At present, the CSL is integrated into this widespread networked system at information level. The recently formalized books exchange is very important for our readers as the two sides are called to solve the same problems: water scarcity, quality management, landslides and risk engineering, etc. Our links with ICIMOD via Internet and trough traditional exchange service certify to the expansion of the library functions from educational to contributory for the promotion and assistance in the integration processes. They have also stimulated our efforts to start the publication of the main academic issue *Izvestia* in English if we want our scientists to be understood everywhere in the World.

The use of advanced technologies has turned libraries into multimedia resource centers which house the educational and recreation materials in a variety of forms. The Central Scientific Library also tries to keep up with the latest high technologies in information sphere. We have ensured the access of our users to the electronic versions of periodicals via a well known EBSCO Company which covers more than 5 thousand publications of different Publishing Houses within the framework of the joint eIFL project. As every project of nowadays, it provides a free of charge digital device only at its pilot stage. The further participation requires financing. At a special seminar, having been conducted by the Soros Foundation of Kyrgyzstan, it was decided to form a consortium, including the libraries, universities, different organizations, and sponsors which will finance the project when the free of charge access is unavailable. It was planned, in particular, that the part of means will be paid by the Euro-Asia Foundation while the other - by the Soros Foundation of Kyrgyzstan. But the reality turned out to be not as promising as the plan and, as a result of this; we have no access to the electronic journals via EBSCO

company from February 2003. But our library still hopes that in the long run we'll get it back again.

Among five data bases the most visited was Academic Search Elite. It is a data base of scientific journals. While browsing the Academic Search Elite, you may come across the fullest collection of periodicals on history, education, ecology, physics, jurisprudence, psychology, etc.

In addition to the abovementioned, via EBSCO Publishing, Information Group, we still have an access to CD-ROM database, serving us as a resource for the up-to-date journal coverage and research materials for a Business Periodicals Collection, Biomedical Reference Collection, and an Academic Periodicals Collection as well. The lack of the graphic files on them is the only thing which slightly disappoints.

At present, the CSL has started to use the other free of charge resources, for instance, the electronic versions of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA (the issues from 1991 to 2001 are free), and the online issues of the Moscow University, named after M.V.Lomonosov.

But, undoubtedly, we resume our participation in the eFL Direct Project in the necessary funding is obtained.

Nobody can deny a fact that computers and based on their use information technologies determine the development of civilization. As we entered the third Millennium, our future will depend on our creative actions taken today, and the concerned people extend themselves into the new world of Internet with its multimedia capabilities of the World Wide Web and networking. Our Library is also concerned and inspired by the world experience in the sphere of library high-tech. Take, for example, the Alexandria Library, this restored miracle of the World, having modern equipment and 3500 seats in a reading room, which locates in the truncated cone figure building and is lighted through the top part of a construction, enabling the readers not to become shortsighted. Of course, we set only those tasks which can be fulfilled but, nevertheless, the Alexandria Library is so amazing.

From this time on, our Library will never turn back because all, I have been saying, is nothing else as the evidence of the early digital era in the CSL library service. The Central Scientific Library will step forward; at least, I hope so.