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**Indonesian Journal of Cultural and
Community Development**

ISSN 2615-6180 (ONLINE)



BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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Wartime Wisdom: Unveiling Library Resilience in Uzbekistan

Kebijaksanaan Masa Perang: Mengungkap Ketahanan Perpustakaan di Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This study provides a historical overview of the role of libraries in Uzbekistan during the Second World War, a period marked by extensive martial law. Prior research primarily focuses on military and economic impacts of the war, leaving a knowledge gap regarding cultural and informational services in conflict zones. This research aims to elucidate how libraries adapted to wartime conditions and continued to serve the public despite severe restrictions and resource shortages. Utilizing archival documents and contemporaneous reports, this study reveals that libraries not only managed to maintain operations but also played a pivotal role in sustaining community morale and cultural continuity. The findings indicate that despite significant challenges, libraries demonstrated remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of the critical role of information institutions in crisis settings, offering implications for current library science practices and policy formulation in similar contexts.

Highlights:

- **Resourcefulness:** Libraries maintained operations despite severe resource shortages.
- **Cultural Continuity:** They preserved cultural identity and boosted morale.
- **Library Science Implications:** Insights from wartime adaptability inform modern crisis management and policy in library science.

Keywords: Wartime Libraries, Cultural Resilience, World War II, Information Services, Great Patriotic War

Introduction

The Second World War was the largest military clash in the history of mankind. Military actions were fought on the territory of Europe, Asia, Africa, in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic Oceans. It was the most destructive and bloody of wars. On June 22, 1941, Germany, violating the non-aggression pact, suddenly attacked the territory of the former USSR. Together with Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and Italy acted against the USSR. The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 began. The Soviet Union since the mid-1930s took all measures to improve the country's defense capability and to repel possible aggression. Despite this, the damage from the destruction and destruction of material values on the territory of the USSR was colossal, it bore the brunt of the war.

The Second World War, which entered the history of mankind as one of the bloodiest wars, brought huge human casualties, destroyed the economy of entire states, and for many years pushed back the peaceful development of all spheres in the life of the peoples of the world. The allied republics of the former Soviet Union united began their resistance against the fascist aggressors. Today, Uzbekistan's contribution to the victory over the common enemy is beyond any doubt. This contribution consisted not only in providing the front with fighters, necessary raw materials, foodstuffs, military equipment, shelter and food for many thousands of evacuees, but also in the training of scientific and pedagogical personnel, so necessary in wartime conditions.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing archival documents and contemporaneous reports to explore the operation and resilience of libraries in Uzbekistan during World War II. The methodology involves a detailed analysis of these documents to understand how libraries adapted to wartime conditions and continued to serve the public amidst extensive martial law. The selection criteria for the documents include relevance to library operations during the war, insights into public engagement, and examples of resourcefulness under resource constraints. The analytical framework assesses the impact of these adaptations on community morale and cultural continuity, providing a comprehensive understanding of the libraries' role in maintaining societal stability during the conflict. This approach not only highlights the operational challenges faced by libraries but also showcases their pivotal role in sustaining cultural identity and community spirit during a period of severe adversity.

Result and Discussion

The desire to make a worthy contribution to the nationwide struggle against foreign invaders was imbued in the entire intelligentsia of Uzbekistan, as well as in the figures of science, technology and culture. The role of science has become one of the most important. After all, the scientific, technical, economic and cultural potential of the State, the material support of military operations, the combat capability and health of soldiers were largely determined by the level of development of science, the effectiveness of scientific and technical policy and the scale of practical application of the results of scientific achievements. Uzbek scientists contributed in every possible way not only to the mobilization of material resources, but also the spiritual forces of society to repel the enemy. The comprehensive solution of fundamental defense problems was based on the industrial potential that had been created in the republic and fundamental scientific research.

The war changed the peaceful orientation of scientific work, which set the task of immediate implementation of important for defense results of scientific activity in production, further strengthening the links between science and practice, improving the operational forms of management of scientific research work.

With the outbreak of the war, most cultural and educational institutions ceased their activities, since in 1941 only 699 of the 994 existing cultural and educational institutions remained in Uzbekistan, and the funds allocated for them decreased from 16 million rubles to 8.7 million rubles [1]. Funds allocated to cultural and educational institutions have been reduced. As a result, the network of cultural and educational institutions was sharply reduced. In 1940, there were 2,859 club institutions operating in Uzbekistan. In 1943, compared to 1940, the number of cultural and educational institutions decreased by 500. In particular, 221 libraries were closed in the villages of Uzbekistan. Most cultural and educational institutions had no conditions [2]. Equipping them and providing them with the necessary materials became one of the serious problems. In addition, there was an acute shortage of personnel due to the fact that most of the personnel were mobilized to the front

In 1943, 168 club buildings of the republic were transferred to other organizations. In the same year, there were 7 regional houses of culture, 125 clubs, 325 reading rooms, 234 district and city libraries in the republic. In 1944, the number of libraries was 433, and club institutions - 1044.

In 1944-1945, the construction and renovation of club buildings in the regions of Uzbekistan accelerated. For example, 8 collective farm clubs were repaired in the Gallaorol district of the Samarkand region. In Bukhara, on the collective farms "Red Leader", "Red Cotton Grower", "Red Army Man" and other collective farms, clubs with 200-300 seats were built. In the rural artels "13th Anniversary of October" and "Red Labor" - Beshkent district of

Kashkadarya region, the local population built clubs, each of which had 250 seats. [3]

Libraries were one of the main centers of cultural, educational, political and mass work. Their role in carrying out mass political, enlightenment and educational work among the workers and the population was enormous. Despite the fact that their network was significantly reduced during the war years, they continued to carry out fruitful work to educate the masses. The aim of the librarians was to radically restructure all their work in accordance with the requirements of the war, to make full and effective use of the multi-million book collection, to provide scientific institutions and scholars with the necessary material, and to further strengthen political, agitation and propaganda work among the population. The staff of all libraries in Uzbekistan have done a great job in popularizing historical, artistic and scientific literature among the population, raising the level of knowledge and culture of workers. They organized lectures on various topics among the population and conducted propaganda on defense, art and history.

Libraries have always played an important role in the cultural and educational sphere and were constantly active in this capacity. On the eve of the war and especially during the war, libraries were formed at large industrial enterprises. Despite the extremely difficult living conditions during the war, people's craving for culture and knowledge did not weaken. However, the difficult financial situation also affects libraries. The number of libraries, especially in rural areas, begins to decline sharply. The ratio of different groups of readers in libraries is also changing significantly. On the eve of the war in Uzbekistan there were 1792 public libraries with 253000 books. Of these libraries, 497 worked in cities and 1,295 in rural areas [4].

During the war there were 440 libraries in the republic, not counting the libraries of scientific institutions and various enterprises; in 1942 alone there were 193 public libraries. While in 1941, 89528 books were distributed to readers in libraries, in 1942 there were 105000 books [5]. By 1943 there were 293 public libraries in the country, including 100 regional, 120 district, 51 city and 22 children's libraries. Their book collection amounted to 1,269,580 items. The libraries had the task of promoting as many social and political books as possible among the public. Library staff used such forms as regular reading of books and press materials, discussions, quiz nights.

On March 31, 1944, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution "On Measures to Improve the Work of Political-Educational Institutions and Public Libraries". The resolution defined measures to reopen all the libraries that had been closed during the first years of the war. As a result, in 1944 the number of libraries amounted to 433 and the number of club institutions to 1,044.

Because of the war, the publication of many newspapers and magazines was suspended. The total circulation of books compared to 1940 decreased by 2 times, the annual circulation of newspapers - by 2.5 times, the circulation of scientific papers and newsletters - by 8 times. This affected the work on providing libraries with compulsory editions. If the state library named after A. Navai is provided with compulsory publications. A. Navai State Library received 94646 volumes of books in the obligatory copy, then in the second half of 1941 this indicator decreased 2.2 times. The State Public Library (now the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan) is one of the oldest libraries (150 years since its foundation in 2020), is the main custodian of the library fund and its role is extremely important in preserving historical memory, studying military history and passing it on to the next generations.

By the beginning of World War II, the library had become the largest book depository in Central Asia with over 1246561 printed items in 75 languages of the world. In the first years of the war the library allocated more than 8 thousand volumes from its collections for military hospitals and sanitary trains, for 12 front libraries, as well as to the branches of the State Literature Fund for the reconstruction of destroyed libraries. The number of readers increased unusually during the war years (for four years of the war - 45 thousand readers, the number of issued books increased in comparison with the pre-war years from one million to 1 million 500 thousand). In wartime conditions the workload of the library staff increased sharply. The library and its branches worked very intensively, as the demand for books increased significantly.

The library also served the sick and wounded: book exhibitions were held in hospitals and hospitals, "traveling libraries" operated, and public readings were often organized for audiences of patients and medical personnel. The acquisition during the war years pursued, first of all, the main goal related to the working conditions - to provide organizations and individual readers with military-patriotic literature. Therefore, it was purchased in the first place and in the required quantity. The main sources of acquisition during the war were: a compulsory copy received free of charge from the printing houses located in the country, a compulsory copy of local editions received from the Book Chamber of Uzbekistan, subscriptions to periodicals, purchase of books in stores, from private individuals and by paid copy. In October 1941, the Book Chamber of the Republic was obliged to provide the library with a compulsory copy of local publications.

Cataloging in the library became more complicated: since July 1941 the library stopped receiving catalog cards of the All-Union Book Chamber. The description of books had to be done manually. During the first war year 14853 books without cards were processed - this was almost all the literature received. The department of processing and catalogs, despite all the difficulties of the war time, decided to process in a timely manner all the works of print coming into the library, to start compiling a general systematic catalog and to create a subject key to it. In order to meet the needs of the readers from the first days of the war, the reference and bibliographic department began to collect materials about the war and the participation of Uzbeks in it.

Since 1944 the work on replenishment of library funds with books has improved a lot. In 1941-1945 the total growth of the book fund of libraries amounted to 706440 copies [5]. Almost all the main libraries of the republic were provided with electricity. During the four years of the war the State Library of Uzbekistan served 47 thousand readers [2]. In 1943 for the State Library named after A. Navai was allocated an electric power supply. A. Navai was allocated 477500 rubles, of which 25000 rubles - for new books, 6000 rubles - for new equipment, 50000 rubles - for scientific research [6]. This year, 33 employees worked in the library, 20 of them were researchers.

In 1943, the A. Navai State Library had 10 departments. A. Navai State Library had 10 departments. In particular, these were the departments of administration, replenishment and processing, book storage, children's literature, bibliography, special fund, oriental manuscripts, public and book distribution. During the war years, a special fund department was established, which required special permission for use. The Oriental Manuscripts Department, founded in 1935, collected literature in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. For example, the number of manuscripts in Persian and Turkish in the section amounted to 12,000 volumes. During the war years the public department of the library was active. This department was tasked with organizing exhibitions of literature on certain subjects, holding evenings dedicated to historical dates, organizing lectures and conferences. In general, as of December 31, 1941, there were 1319935 pieces of literature in the general fund of this library. They consisted of books, magazines, stacks of newspapers, oriental manuscripts, maps, posters and the like.

During the war years the work on strengthening the material and technical base of the State Library named after A. Navai was in a deplorable state. A. Navai State Library was in a deplorable state. In archival documents about the library building the following information can be found: "The building of the library, located on Lenin Street, 36 (corner of Stalin Street), did not meet the requirements at all: its premises were too narrow, it did not meet the requirements of the library - old, uncomfortable and fire hazardous. It had little space for books and manuscripts, and since there was not enough space for books, there were no conditions in the collection for storing books, they were stored in warehouses and in places not intended for storing books.

The library had no recreation room, dining room, or even dedicated research rooms, reading room, or youth rooms. The staff worked in unbelievable conditions. In addition, in winter there was no possibility to heat the library, especially the book storages, despite the fact that the library building and storages were filled with books there was no fire safety system. These facts show that the State Library is located in a building completely unsuitable for it, which is a shame in front of scientists and writers who came to Tashkent from the center. It was impossible to think of a worse place to house the State Library, which is the treasury of the entire republic". Despite such a harsh environment, the number of visitors to the Navai State Library has increased. The number of visitors to the Navai State Library increased. In 1940, 1,087 books were issued to the readers in one day, and in 1942 - 1,374 books [7].

Due to the evacuation of many research institutes and Academies of Sciences of the USSR, Ukraine, Belarus, scientists from different fields continued their research in Uzbekistan. As a result, the number of scientific and engineering staff increased among the visitors. In 1940, the number of such readers of the State Library named after A. Navai amounted to 17. A. Navai State Library amounted to 17.3%, and in the main library of the Academy of Sciences 64%. During the war years the number of military readers increased. For example, while in 1940 2.4 percent of the readers were military, in 1943 they amounted to 14.3 percent and in 1944 to 17.6 percent. By the end of 1941, the number of libraries and their users in Shakhriyabz district of Kashkadarya province had more than doubled. More than a hundred people visited libraries daily. Library staff provided comprehensive assistance to the workers of industrial enterprises, transportation, agriculture. In the district worked one district, 2 city and 22 libraries of rural farms. The work of librarians was assisted by 65 volunteers and propagandists who prepared wall newspapers, combat leaflets and held talks. They also helped in organizing photo exhibitions and mobile libraries. In 1942-1943, the region did a lot of work to popularize military and political literature. Dozens of book exhibitions dedicated to war heroes and front-line workers were organized. Three mobile libraries were set up to serve construction sites, one of which was located near the Rudasoy reservoir. During the most difficult period of the war, 11 mobile libraries and dozens of collective farm and school libraries were established in Kashkadarya province.

Through libraries, teachers carried out socio-political, cultural and educational work among the population. They became the most active assistants of library staff. For example, more than a thousand teachers of Kashkadarya province took an active part in the work of libraries, helping them to organize various events. Teachers of Karshi, Guzar, Beshkent, Shakhriyabz districts showed an example in organizing talks and lectures among the population [8; p.274]. An example was the library of Dasht village council of Karshi district, which operated in the collective farm "15th anniversary of October". The main part of these exhibitions was devoted to war materials. If in the first three years of the war the number of books coming to the library decreased, from 1944 the situation improved much more and the number of books, newspapers and magazines in the library increased. The heads of agriculture Jalilov and Choli Begimkulov provided great practical help in this work [8]. The library also organized a number of exhibitions in cooperation with the school and the village club.

The staff of the Kokand city library also used various forms of political, mass and educational work among the population. Its book fund was systematically replenished. In 1943, a department of foreign literature was opened here. In total, the library had 16 thousand copies of books, it served more than 2 thousand readers, on average 160-180 people visited it daily. The library supplied many enterprises, recruiting stations and the nearest collective farms with mobile libraries. 3 mobile libraries with a collection of more than 2 thousand books were sent to

Farhadstroy.

The Bukhara Regional Library occupied one of the first places in the republic; its collections contained valuable manuscripts and books. It carried out mass political and propaganda work well. Thus, in just six months of 1943, 55 book exhibitions were organized here and 11 mobile libraries operated. The number of readers of the Fergana Regional Library in the first half of 1943 alone increased by 34%, about 20 thousand books were issued to them, and 16,158 people visited the reading room.

An example of well-organized work is the Tashlak district library in the Fergana region. Despite the fact that it was located in a very small room and had a small book stock - only 2,400 books, the number of readers in it increased from year to year. If in 1942 the number of visitors was 70 people, then in 1943 there were more than 900 of them. In 1942, 50 reading rooms, 14 district libraries, 31 rural libraries, and 20 city libraries operated in the Tashkent region alone. In 1941, 89.5 thousand copies of social and political books were issued to visitors to libraries in Uzbekistan, and in 1942 their number amounted to 105.5 thousand books. During the war in Karakalpakstan, 17 clubs, 163 clubs in villages, 123 public libraries and 116 red teahouses operated in urban and regional centers [9]. The library contained 16,000 copies of books and served about 2,000 readers.

The Uzbek people spared no effort to resume cultural and educational work in the territories liberated from the fascists. In Uzbekistan, various literature was collected for libraries in 20 regions of Ukraine, teaching aids for pedagogical institutes, and equipment for schools. For these purposes, 4 thousand books were allocated from the library fund of universities and secondary specialized educational institutions in Karakalpakstan alone. In 1943, more than 81 thousand different books were collected from all over Uzbekistan. 17 thousand textbooks, historical and fiction literature were collected from the libraries of universities, other institutions and from the population; 40 thousand books were sent by Uzbeks to the Kharkov region alone [10]. Library staff Ibn Sina collected 40,000 books in Bukhara [11]. The central library of the Samarkand region collected more than 80 thousand textbooks. The libraries of the Kashkadarya region, as well as the entire country, made a worthy contribution to the culture of the territories liberated from the enemy, including in the restoration of libraries.

On February 9, 1943, the Council of People's Commissars of Uzbekistan adopted a number of resolutions "On the creation of a 4-million-dollar state book fund for the restoration of libraries in liberated areas", on September 13 "On the restoration of reading rooms in the territories liberated from the German fascists", "On the creation of a special book fund under the republican, regional and district libraries"[12]. Kashkadarya residents also took an active part in the nationwide movement for the implementation of these decisions. Regional Central Library, Karshi Pedagogical College, school named after Stalin (Navai) in Karshi, schools No. 1 and No. 3, educational institutions of the region and districts collected books and transferred them to the book fund for the restoration of libraries in the territories liberated from the enemy. Teachers and students also took an active part in collecting books for this fund. The public movement to donate 2-3 books from each person intensified, and regional teachers allocated more than 320 books from their funds and sent them to Poltava residents [13].

The above examples are a striking example of how during the war years the workers' desire for books, periodicals, and daily information about the situation at the front and in the rear increased significantly. In 1943, more than 100 mobile libraries were sent to the active army. One of the important features of the work of libraries during the Great Patriotic War was their patronage over hospitals and military units. Book transports systematically worked in hospitals, the wounded were uninterruptedly supplied with newspapers and magazines, library workers conducted readings, conversations, wrote letters to family and friends, and reading conferences were organized for those recovering [14].

In strengthening the moral spirit of the people, instilling in them such valuable qualities as courage, perseverance, love of the motherland, an extremely important role belongs to educational and cultural figures. During the Second World War, the development of the cultural sphere became one of the components of state policy. During the harsh years of the war, culture played an important role in the development of society, served as one of the main factors in the development of the economic and social spheres of the republic, in maintaining the spirit and mobilizing all the forces of the people and the army to fight the enemy. Libraries, as one of the main cultural and educational institutions, tirelessly carried out their activities and strengthened the promotion of socio-political knowledge among the population. On this occasion, library staff widely used such methods as organizing exhibitions of books and press materials, conversations with readers and holding evenings of erudition.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the significant role played by libraries in Uzbekistan during the Second World War, underscoring their critical involvement in sustaining societal morale and imparting essential virtues such as bravery, perseverance, and patriotism through various educational and cultural initiatives. The adaptation of libraries to the demands of wartime, particularly through organizing exhibitions, reader discussions, and educational evenings, exemplifies their dynamic contribution to the cultural fabric of the nation, which, in turn, supported the broader socio-economic stability during a tumultuous period. These findings not only reinforce the understanding of libraries as pivotal cultural institutions but also suggest the need for further research into the specific impacts of these activities on public sentiment and wartime morale. Future studies could explore

comparative analyses with library functions in other conflict zones, providing deeper insights into the interplay between cultural institutions and national resilience.

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