



World Library and Information Congress: 69th IFLA General Conference and Council

1-9 August 2003, Berlin

Code Number: 016-E
Meeting: 66. Acquisition and Collection Development
Simultaneous Interpretation: -

“Never look a gift horse in the mouth. Is it so?”

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Abstract

In the papers submitted the conceptual vision of donations phenomenon (collections) is reflected, its social and political effect and its significance in the practice of international library integration.

Together with theoretical and methodological foundations, conclusions of the problem of library collections there were orderly analyzed and given historical, cultural and normative positions, evaluations, opinions in respect of such important aspects as – formulating of general definition of donations, the legal applicability of the “spiritual presumption” principle, actualization of the national managers’ role in the selective and criterion approach to problems of donations.

Level of development of the world library community and perspectives of realization of collections’ donation policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan is projected. Constructive idea is proposed – at the IFLA level - to prepare and ratify the memorandum “About donations (library collections)”

Conclusion. Intergovernmental acts of national collections’ donation it is necessary to examine as effective instruments of cultural policy of pluralism conducted by library subjects.

The general theme of the “Gifts” proposed by us above for the discussion at IFLA section is necessitated by the following subjective and objective factors. First of all, the proverb in the title of the paper has more than one meaning. The context of the civilized modern society can selectively and purposefully formulate the national gradation of spiritual values and also find its way and tolerantly accept (and reject) the values of another national environment.

Secondly in a wider context of the proverb we must take into account that the world processes of globalization have objectively deformed and made trivial some truths of the past epochs. In the given theme the tendencies of mutual integration accumulated in the library as collections are apt to become a mega or worldwide gift in future accessible for the mankind.

Naturally the first place would take the humanitarian criteria of quality of synthesized content of the world library collection. National libraries are the main to receive gifts and due to this fact I could see the historical mission of the IFLA organization in modern epoch.

Thirdly the century of informational technologies dynamically impose upon the society material values that are by far insensible and untouchable on the level of material life of man. The gift is a work of art or the scientific-informational product and means more than just a thing in the material meaning of the word.

Besides, the cumulative effect of the values entirely changes the way and the quality of life of individuals and the society. In its turn all these factors are reflected in the understanding of object, subject and meaning of gift. The important methodological point that I would like to emphasize is the speculation of all three parts in unity of their manifestation in the very act of gift.

Fourthly, library collections presented by different countries are formed and regulated by different national legislations whose harmonization is necessary for receiving gifts. Sometimes it is worth thinking before making up a decision to accept such a donation taking into consideration the custom clearance, insurance and other unexpected difficulties and there may arise such a situation when “the price of the castle will be much higher than the content of the chest of drawers”. Consequently in the case of gifts in our library practice of international cooperation one has to look and not only in the mouth.

Fifthly the proverb propagating somewhat justified and possible “second hand” ideology is addressed to the socially vulnerable strata of population, and it doesn’t concern by far the gifts coming into our library collections. Because any formed national library collection is a priori rich in its collections. But we due to inert stereotype are inclined to project proverbs, aphorisms etc. upon all cases in life which is full and rejecting adequate estimation for incredible facts and events, sometimes contradictory and reflecting different levels of understanding the subject.

The data and the concisely expressed theses in my view are important for conceptual understanding of library collections formed through gifts. Let us analyze and enlarge a little our understanding of gifts.

First of all we’ll try to formulate a preliminary definition of the starting point of the paradigm of gifts and justify their presence in the library experience. Gifts (in the form of library collections) are the spiritual-moral act in the library space that took place in the past, the present and the future. At the present historical stage of civilized development of world states the act of donation is possible despite the proverb “Never look a gift horse in the mouth.” The act of donation in the international practice of library cooperation is the handing on the spiritual baton from state to state, nation to nation, society to society, institute to institute, individual to individual. The above formulation requires clarification mostly of “timelessness” of the donation act.

If we consider libraries as historically formed social institutions that accompanied mankind for millennia then they must have appeared on the basis of initially and objectively realized public agreement to collect and accumulate everything valuable and fit to satisfy the social-intellectual needs of the individual and the society on the whole.

In the philosophical sense all the national funds together are an invaluable gift presented to contemporaries by many generations of the past enlarged by us at present and intentionally turned into future spiritual-moral act. The national managers of the library space by using the system of acting legislations, civil codes, normative acts etc. do their best to regulate and adapt this objective process and turn it into definite social-economic and ideological coordinates. We need the legal and other organizational forms to get donations to library collections also for the future generations of intellectual users oriented upon the content of objectively transferred cultural wealth. We are only conductors of historically formed donation traditions.

The next important regulation is that the donation act (in our library case) as legal action morally presupposes subject-to-subject relations concentrated upon donation. The final all-human result of donation is determined in civilized society by the level of realization of two subjects as equipollent personalities and citizens or such plenipotentary institutions in case of juridical persons.

It is between such subjects (juridical and physical persons) that the spiritual act of donation is implemented because the above-mentioned constituents predetermine that subjects participating in the process do not lose their national face and also take care about the counteragent not to infringe his rights, freedoms and merits. In other words they will preserve the high status of the state and personality at the same time acquiring the mutually enriched all-human meaning of their destination on this planet.

The relations between the subjects actualize the very object (intellectual product) of donation. Naturally the subjects carry some historical responsibility in the choice of the object that reflects the uniqueness and rarity in the sense of concentrated expression of an advanced idea of society, or an information - scientific (not classified as secret) and cultural product, necessary in the social and political, economic and cultural aspect at the given historical moment, for another (donated) state.

But the next problematic situation might arise. For example, in the library collections there are books and objects officially and by status still unrecognized by national states, but in the opinion of a certain circle of experts and specialists, their creative value will exceed all expectations but in future. Especially as the Book's self-value from the standpoint of influence upon person and community as a whole is impossible to measure. What is to be done?

The given circumstance sets the national managers of state libraries before a strategic task – to elicit the promising stratum and put it into civil timely circulation on the level of library community, then to implement their geo-cultural expansion through the donation act. That is to popularize and represent the best achievements of national culture, science and art in the collections of other libraries. In other words, to focus on spiritual and intellectual wealth of the people, turned into future, but not on the ceremony of donation. Therewith we must utterly realize the measure of responsibility, and have both public and expert popularity rating mechanism, survey criteria of potential donation area in our collections. I can't judge

where and how the given work is organized, I accent only its ideological and professional significance for state managers, implementing library policy of the present day.

As a whole, in general, such are the formulated general methodological aims, considerations taken in application not to private cases, but to conceptual foundation of understanding of donation problems. We deliberately considered it to be reasonable in the context of debates upon the problems on the international library quorum level to set analysis quota high on the given basis, as the role and significance of formation and active introduction of library collections is immeasurably greater than the current set of books, presented, as a rule, by official representatives.

Thus, judging by high criteria we give a definite answer– in case of library collections, where every gift is valuable separately, and in the system of its national integrity and importance, we face the very heart of the act and object of donation.

At the same time, we follow the precept “Never look a gift horse in the mouth” only in one case, - when the scant national funds must reflect in their maximally full volume the socially necessary generally known information product, which is absent by one reason or another. Under such donation act books full of violence and distortion, provoking inter-confessional and inner-confessional wars are ousted. We live in a real world and we can’t avoid a collision with such negative experience, so we can use another proverb about the “Gifts of Dannaans”...

Above we tried to give an answer in respect to our general position on the theme assumed by us. Let’s pass over to the analysis and representation of the nature and meaning of the library collections’ formation as well as the conduction of own policy on donations in the format and scale of Kazakhstani national experience.

The experience of book donation to libraries of Kazakhstan

Kazakh society has strong traditions of respecting the elders, the land and motherland. The ancient donation traditions reflected in many customs and rites are also observed most respectfully.

In the middle centuries in the East and Central Asia it was wide spread practice to submit personal libraries and books into “common” library or as it was then called “vakf” from Arabic “vak f” which literally means that it is funded by donations. Gifts to libraries are exemplified in modern collections by unique manuscripts, rare printed editions, collections in many languages of the world. In confirmation one can look at an example from the history of Kazakhstan. The scientific council of the Kazan University on May 29, 1844 unanimously elected Zhangir-khan an honorary member. He was thus honored for the contribution in the development of the material-technical bases of the university. He donated six manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages that cost 598 rubles in silver. Among them most prominent are: the medical work of Nefis ben-Evaz Al-Hakim; Tarikhi-giuzide compiled by Al-Kazvani in 735 h. written in 803; Habib-ussiyar, compiled by Khan-emir about 927.; distichs of Djelal-Al-Din Rumiya written in 1033. In 1855 as part of the big collection of oriental manuscripts the rarities changed place of residence. Today they are kept on the banks of the Neva.

Libraries of Kazakhstan were opened and are opened as a rule with the participation of the population, for example in such cities like Uralsk in 1871, Pavlodar in 1896, Semipalatinsk in 1883, Verny today Almaty in 1910 and others. Petr Filippovich Stolbov, first librarian of Eastern Kazakhstan Regional Library, which opened as a city library in 1896, recalled: “The city administration having rather small budget couldn’t allocate much funding for the keeping the library. The city intelligentsia at once responded and helped by donating money and literature”. The National library of the Republic of Kazakhstan when it was being formed in 1931 on the basis of the Almaty regional library also received gifts. From Moscow alone from the Academy of the General Headquarters, the State library after V.I.Lenin and other institutions there came about 200 thousand books.

Book donations to Kazakhstani libraries in mid 80-s of the XX –th century turned into a whole movement by the initiative of people well-known in the USSR, among whom there was the Kazakhstani poet Olzhas Omarovich Suleimenov. They came forth with an initiative on gratuitous transfer into public use that is to the libraries, of literature from personal collections. The legal conditions for gifts and donations in sovereign Kazakhstan are exceptionally favorable. The legislation provides fulfillment of civil legal acts on gratuitous transfer of property and financial resources through gifts and donations. Both physical and juridical persons can be grantors or donors. Gifts or donations are effected verbally or by common act. As alternatives of gifts or donations there are examined such types of charitable activity of juridical and physical persons like gratuitous aid to libraries and financing of development programs in the conditions of non-profit partnership. To the alternatives of library backing pertain also the state order for highly artistic and socially significant literature for the libraries from the Ministry of Culture, Information and Public Concord of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The acceptance and use of gift literature transference doesn’t cause any difficulties to the libraries. Gift copies are registered in accordance with the instructions. They are transferred to the Stack department under the “Donations” act. In the last years the introduction of the automated library and informational system allows to reserve gift copies for all types of registration and analysis of library work with them. The standard form of letter of thanks for donors has been elaborated and used by the libraries now. In special cases individual letters of thanks are composed. The card index of donors is maintained.

At the National Library there are registered about 100 donor-organizations of Kazakhstan and other countries of the world, besides among the donors there are authors of books, holders of private libraries. The donor-authors gift their books with their autograph and wishes. During the automated processing of gifted books a note indicates “Book with autograph”. Separate copies and collections with ex libris or marked with special stamp are received. When using the donated books the donors’ wishes are taken into account. But on the whole, the librarians are trusted to define the destiny of the books. The system of collections and interlibrary connections helps use the donations effectively. The books are distributed to the main book storage, depositories, repositories, book stock for exchange and reserve of the National Library, and they are sent to the libraries of boarding schools, children’s homes, penitentiary institutions, personal libraries of large families.

Donations are used without special preferences in readers’ servicing. But they always attract special attention. For example, at the exhibition dedicated to the 100 anniversary of the classic of Kazakh literature S. Mukanov, there was presented the writer’s personal library transferred to the National Library by his relatives. They reflected his literary connections,

predilections. S. Mukanov's books with donors' autographs – his contemporaries have been preserved, and nowadays – they are the pride of the world culture. Visitors of the exhibition were attracted by this exposition as if the writer was himself there.

The dynamics of the acquisitions of gifted copies to the collections of the National Library can be traced back upon the example of the last years. In the period from 1995 to 2002 inclusively the donations were 10% of all acquisitions on the average. Such volume is typical, for example, for the Russian National Library, Central scientific library of the National Academy of Sciences (Kazakhstan).

Year	Domestic editions		Foreign editions		Total:	
	Copies	%	Copies	%	Copies	%
1995	6 530	1,4	3 095	65,5	46 752	20,5
1996	890	1,26	2 399	51,0	74 940	4,38
1997	2 308	5,70	1 519	49,9	43 497	8,79
1998	1 523	4,61	1027	29,9	36 399	7,0
1999	1 525	6,13	1 415	54,9	27 435	10,7
2000	3 464	13,4	1 198	50,5	28 114	16,5
2001	2 659	9,88	1 015	45,4	29 142	12,6
2002	2 474	3,80	1 476	50,0	67 925	5,8
Total:	14 843		13 144		354 204	

Donations in foreign languages form half of acquisitions, domestic editions – 5% at the National Library. In the structure of gifts domestic editions are presented by books in the main and in foreign languages - 2/3 are books and 1/3 – periodical publications.

For example, information for 2001 is summarized at the table below.

Domestic	Foreign
Books – 2651	Books – 668
Maps - 8	Magazines –324
Total: 2659	Newspapers –23 1015

The libraries of individual regions of Kazakhstan acquire different number of gifts. For example, in Karaganda region they form 7 %, in the North-Kazakhstani region – 9 % and in Akmolinsk – 17 % from all acquisitions in 2001.

Known to the world N. A. Rubakin said: “At any library just that book is to be welcome cordially which was received without any material and spiritual effort”.

The National Library received with gratitude 62 titles of 124 copies of books, published in highly artistic style in the Kazakh and Russian languages of the "Otyrar kitapkhanasy (Otyrar library)"series, edition of which is made on the state order of the Ministry Culture, Information and Public Concord of the RK.

It was impossible to reject such a gift as the jubilee copy of the book by Abai “I don't conceal my fate from the world” in leather binding of the “Atamura” publishing house of 1995.

Kazakhstan is a secular state by its constitutional structure. At the same time everybody has the right to liberty of conscience. Different confessions peacefully co-exist together, and they gift literature to libraries on legal grounds. The First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. A. Nazarbayev on the occasion of the 90 anniversary of the library gifted an excellently designed book “Kuran Kerim Osmani: Darun-Namir” 1403 (1983) in the Arabic language, and the Monuments of history and culture preservation society transferred the “Tora” to the library.

The National Library not only receives gifts but puts into practice a certain system of measures on their attraction. It is namely these actions provide significant influx of donations the major actions are those which were held in the framework of The World Book Day and Copyright. In 2000 the library received about 1000 books from “Books at the border of the third millennium” exhibition. In 2001 in Almaty under the aegis of the World Book Day the “Along the Great Silk Road ” First International Book Fair took place with the participation of the National Library in its organization. There was received from the participants of the Book Fair 200 copies of books from the CIS countries. In 2002 1183 copies were received owing to the book festival with the “Gift a library a book” action and the “With love to a book” exhibition.

The Board of the State foundation of culture and art support in 2000 announced the public cultural action “Kamkor”. In the framework of this action the State foundation provided the National Library with 100 thousand tenge to acquire expensive encyclopedias and reference books.

By the Presidents of Russia V.Putin and Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev announced the 2003 year as The Year of Kazakhstan in Russia. In the framework of this agreement the visit of members of the State Duma of the Russian Federation took place in Almaty. They brought 12 thousand copies of literature published by the public union of the Russian language community abroad and intended for the state educational institutions and libraries of Almaty city.

In all regions of the republic there was held in 1999 the “Gifts to the libraries of the XXI century” action, which was conducted on the occasion of the first congress of librarians in independent Kazakhstan. 536.5 printed units come to the libraries. Two actions “Books for the libraries”, “Bolashak - kazyna” held in April and September 2001 enlarged the book stocks of the Aktiubinsk region libraries by more than 31 thousand books. And such actions as “Gift a book to a library”, “Help libraries” in the Akmolinsk region increased the libraries’ collections by 16 thousand books.

The “Pushkin Library” mega-project of “Open society” – Russia pertains to the gifts. For example, 5 regional universal scientific libraries received over 5 thousand titles of excellently issued books by this project.

Many authors having no means for address delivery of their books to the libraries of the republic for appropriate transfer bring them to the National Library. The National Library itself as well takes an active part in the charitable republican actions and international programs of Kazakhstan with obligatory book donations to the libraries of boarding schools, children’s homes, military units and penitentiary institutions. The library

workers, publishers collect literature for donation. Sponsors of actions are attracted to cooperation.

In 2001 there was organized the special train “Menyn Kazakstanym (My Kazakhstan)” in accordance with the republican Plan of activities on the realization of the Decree of the President of the RK “About the announcement of the year 2001 to be the Year of the 10-th anniversary of Independence of Kazakhstan”. The aim of the special train is to cover the most remote districts of Kazakhstan with educational, cultural and humanitarian program. On all routes of the train there was organized the charitable action “Book donations”. The National Library of the RK in cooperation with publishing houses, “The Eurasian Association of Manufacturers” and other philanthropists transferred for gift 803133 copies of books costing 2308205 tenge.

For the residents of the ecologically calamitous districts there were collected children’s books by the library workers in the framework of the republican action held in Atyrau region under the auspices of the President of the “Bobek” foundation S. A. Nazarbayeva.

In 1999 Ufa city, the capital of Bashkortostan received the participants of the constant Council ministers of culture of Turkic countries “Turksoi”. The exhibition “Turkic world in books” was timed to the symposium. The National Library of the RK made up detailed exposition with souvenir productions of decorative-applied art. 300 copies of books were donated to the National Library of Bashkortostan, specially collected for this purpose from the authors and publishers of Kazakhstan. They were books on history of Kazakhstan, on the present condition of politics, economics, culture and art of the Kazakh people, the works of famous Kazakh writers and poets.

On April 29, 2002 the National Library participated in the International Book fair in Iran. 160 copies of books costing 73770 tenge were donated to the National Library of Iran. The books are different in themes, in three languages: English, Russian, Kazakh, the reference books and valuable albums on history and politics of Kazakhstan in the main.

In May 23, 2002 in commemoration of the Days of Culture of Kazakhstan in Russia 140 copies of books costing of 14147 tenge were donated to the Russian National Library in St-Petersburg from the book exhibition “Our homeland -Kazakhstan”. These are books about Kazakhstan, albums, souvenir editions on culture, art, history and about 20 books issued by the National Library of the RK on Librarianship of Kazakhstan.

On October 16, 2002 the National Library of the RK was a participant of the international presentation of the re-created famous Library of Alexandria in the Arabic Republic of Egypt. The National Library gifted 84 titles of 90 copies of books costing 162480 tenge in the English and Russian languages on the history and culture of Kazakhstan. Among them there are the colorful album with the state symbols of the RK, the multi-volume series “Monuments of culture of Kazakhstan”.

In 1999 the libraries of Kazakhstan received from the publishing houses 2,2 mln. copies of literature, published for the last two-three years by the single action held by the Ministry of Culture, Information and Public Concord of the RK.

We can give examples endlessly. But the examples given say about the donations’ significance as additional sources of acquisition of library collections. At the same time the case is not so easy.

With reference to the Library of Congress, which received in the 70-s 1,7 mln. control units as gifts, but included into the fond just one third of them, some Russian specialists in library science offer careful approach to the questions of acquisition regarding gifts. The non-systematic character, impossibility of regulating flow of editions on the part of the library, carrying out laborious work on checking duplicated editions etc. pertain to the shortage of gifts' acquisition. At the Russian National Library there arise problems of "unnecessary" gifts. And this state is aggravated by financial wastes. They are connected with the transportation, customs. The North-Kazakhstani S.Mukanov regional universal scientific library (RUSL) notes in its 2001 report that through the action "Gift a library a book" in 2001 during the year the libraries of the district centralized library system and the regional children's and youth's library received more than 5 thousand books, but mainly there were gifted the little used, duplicated, obsolete books. More of them were handed over to the exchange collections.

The acquisitions' experience through gifts of domestic literature and in the Russian language substantially differs from the interstate donation actions. First of all, as was mentioned before they constitute as, for example, in the National Library 50 % of acquisitions of new literature in foreign language. Secondly, 1/3 of them are periodicals. As a rule, the gifted literature is not duplicated and is a well-finished collection with good polygraphical quality.

There were received in the period from 1994 to 2002 from 16 countries: Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Canada, China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Romania, USA, Turkey, France, Switzerland, Japan 6 538 books, 364 magazines, 166 newspaper files, about 50 CD-ROMs. The active grantors were: Goethe-Institute, the Embassy of Germany, Ebert foundation, the German Library Institute, the British Council, the Embassy of France – Department of culture, the USIS of the Embassy of the USA, the Cultural centers of Iran, Turkey, Embassy of Pakistan.

The library is the depository of the UNESCO editions. There are also donations from the European Commission, the UN, the World Bank, the Soros Foundation Kazakhstan.

One can pertain to the causes of donation the following:

- The celebration of the World Book Day and Copyright, for example, The French reading festival etc.;
- The carrying out of activities dedicated to prominent and memorable dates (For example, the Embassy of Romania to the 150-th anniversary of the outstanding Romanian poet M. Eminescu).
- The establishment of partnership relations with the purpose of cultural cooperation;
- The participation in joint programs and projects (the UN, UNESCO, Eurocommission, World Bank);
- The opening of diplomatic missions to Kazakhstan, humanitarian actions in support of new independent states including the RK (1991-1994).
- The charitable book program of the government of Germany for the countries of the Eastern and Central Europe in support of the new independent states and book publishers of own country (1995-1996);
- The reception by the Kazakhstani institute of management, economics and law (KIMEP) of big humanitarian help from the USA for the institute's library. There were so many books that the administration of the Institute decided to share with the libraries of Almaty city. (1997);
- On the occasion of the Millennium – many gifts. (1999-2000);

- To the 10-th anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Among the biggest and best donations in foreign languages are the following:

- The German charitable book program costing 56.000 DM – 445 books, 14 cassettes, 42 diskettes, 2 CD-ROMs, 4 maps. These are the Brockhouse and Meyer universal and branch references, books on management and business; the courses of German, French, English, Italian languages, illustrated albums and text-books of useful advice, splendid albums on art and countries of the world; the Greek-Roman classics, the itineraries of the great travelers of Europe to Kazakhstan in the past centuries etc.;
- The British Council project “Millennium Library” – 250 volumes of greatest classical works of the world and also 50 books on modern technologies, use of Internet-resources in librarianship.
- 32 volumes of the New Britannica encyclopaedia. (The Ministry of foreign affairs of the RK).

Conclusion

As a whole such are the priorities and practice on donations today implemented by the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Of course, many aspects of our experience need further correlation regarding elaboration of more purposeful and deeper strategy and policy of donation as well as planning a substantial donation act through which our national library collections could enjoy higher demand in the world library community. However, the analyzed national experience, in our view, allows to generalize the following, significant, conclusions in principle:

Donations (library collections) are to be examined as concentrated expression of intellectual and moral, diplomatic act at the level of two national states. Inter-state acts of library collections donation – are both development of inter-cultural communications between various structures and civil society institutions;

Donation act is to be based on the “presumption of spirituality”, excepting deliberate poverty of national collections. Recognition of subjects, representing state interests of their countries in the library community, equipollency and equality in their historical donation mission;

Defining significance in civilized societies belongs to the tendency of qualitative increase of values, but not their quantitative side. The given circumstance suggests a complex of demands and criteria in respect of donations, which the national libraries must adhere to, taking into account the state ideology and mentality of society;

Donation is not charity, bridging rich and poor countries. Self-sufficient donation act of library collections occurs between communities wishing to be richer and more civilized. Donation practice and experience testifies to cultural, scientific, intellectual break through of a nation, and its openness to collaboration;

Inter-state donation acts of national library collections need to be examined as effective instruments of geo-information and cultural pluralism policy conducted by countries. Also noble in essence, the practice of donation of most valuable and best things at the same time is to be considered as a barrier against illegal transfer of cultural treasures, or their excessive concentration by private persons, which considerably curtails freedom of access to them;

Summing up the above-stated, let me deviate from the theme of my paper and propose to IFLA experts and administration on behalf of so important an organization and elaborate the memorandum (manifesto) “About donations (library collections)”. A great many organizational, normative and financial problems came to fruition, that claim united general principles and requirements to international donation practice from book stocks. I believe, that such IFLA political document, as expression of the will of most states, will introduce to the globalization processes the universal, humanitarian measurement.