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NATIONAL LIBRARY OF UZBEKISTON NAMED AFTER ALISHER NAVOI: EASTERN INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE AND A MODERN DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE CENTER

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ABSTRACT: This academic and analytical article examines the multi-century history of the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi, its leading role in the country's information-library system, and its strategic operations in gathering, preserving, and cataloging national and international press resources. The research details the structure of the library's collections, technologies for preserving rare manuscripts and printed editions, the implementation of international bibliographic standards, and the stages of developing an electronic library system amid digital transformation.

KEYWORDS: National Library named after Alisher Navoi, national depository, information-library resources, rare editions, digitization, electronic catalog, bibliography, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The spiritual level, scientific potential, and cultural development of any nation are directly connected to its written heritage and the institutions that safeguard it. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the principal information and academic institution fulfilling this vital role is the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi. This institution stands not only as the country's largest book repository, but also as one of the most authoritative scientific and cultural centers in Central Asia. In the 21st century, as the knowledge economy and digital technologies rapidly advance, critical responsibilities rest upon the National Library. On one hand, it bears the responsibility of preserving the multi-century written monuments, manuscripts, and periodical press of the Uzbek people for future generations. On the other, it functions as a coordinating center that satisfies society's demand for rapid, convenient, and high-quality access to information, constructs digital library infrastructure, and shapes national bibliography.

The objective of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical foundation of the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi, the structure of its collections, its achievements in implementing modern information and communication technologies, and its strategic role in enhancing the intellectual and scientific potential of Uzbekistan. The establishment and historical evolution of the National Library named after Alisher Navoi spans several distinct phases: The library was originally founded in 1870 as the Tashkent Public Library. Initially, its collection comprised 2,200 volumes, primarily focusing on Oriental studies, scientific publications regarding the Turkestan region, maps, and rare materials. The renowned "Turkestan Collection"

(compiled by V. I. Mezhov) became one of the founding pillars of the library's repository. In 1920, the library was granted the status of State Public Library. During this period, the collection expanded rapidly through local publications and mandatory legal deposit copies, establishing the institution as the republic's primary bibliographic center.

In 1948, the library was named after the great poet, thinker, and founder of the Uzbek literary language, Alisher Navoi. This designation further elevated the library's role in promoting national culture and literature. Following Uzbekistan's independence, on February 20, 2002, by resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Republic Library named after Alisher Navoi and the State Scientific and Technical Library were merged to establish the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi. In 2011, a modern, state-of-the-art building equipped with advanced technologies was opened in central Tashkent for the National Library, marking the beginning of a new digital and technological era in the country's library science history.The National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi serves as the country's main national depository. The library collection is universal in nature, covering all fields of human knowledge. Currently, the library holds over 10 million items. The collection consists of the following primary resource categories:

Printed books and scientific monographs. Literature, scholarly works, and textbooks published in Uzbekistan and foreign countries across various languages. Rare and high-value editions. The library’s most valuable asset is its Rare and Manuscript Editions Collection. This depository houses lithographs and manuscripts dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries, rare historical documents concerning the Turkestan region, early Uzbek and Tsarist-era periodical press samples, and Western European incunabula. Periodical press collection. Complete archival copies of newspapers and journals published in Uzbekistan, including historical publications such as "Turkiston viloyatining gazetasi", "Sadoi Turkiston", and "Oyina", are preserved with specialized archival care. Dissertations and abstracts. The library acts as the sole official depository for all Master’s and Doctoral (PhD and DSc) dissertations defended in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Sheet music, maps, fine arts, and audio-visual resources. Rare multimedia materials related to culture, art, and cartography. In modern operations, the National Library named after Alisher Navoi has systematically transitioned from traditional service models to digital and virtual delivery formats.

The library operates high-resolution professional scanning laboratories and hardware systems dedicated to resource digitization. Priority is given to digitizing rare books, manuscripts, dissertations, and physically deteriorating periodical press items. This process preserves fragile materials while enabling remote access for researchers. Through the National Library's official portal and electronic catalog, patrons can remotely search, request, and read digital resources. Comprehensive metadata based on MARC21 and other international bibliographic standards is continuously integrated into the electronic catalog. The library also functions as the lead methodological institution connecting all regional information-library centers (AKM) and educational libraries across Uzbekistan into a unified national information-library network. The National Library named after Alisher Navoi actively represents Uzbekistan within the international librarianship community. The library holds full membership in prominent organizations, including

the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the Eurasian Library System (BAE), and the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL). International book exchanges, knowledge sharing, and joint digitization projects are maintained with leading global institutions, including the U.S. Library of Congress, the British Library, the Russian State Library, the National Library of China, and the national libraries of Turkey and Korea. Through international licensing, library users gain direct access to premier commercial and open-access scientific databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Web of Science. The National Library of Uzbekistan focuses on the following priority objectives to further enhance its operations: Complete digitization of rare and historical sources, alongside the development of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and automated analysis systems for historical manuscripts using artificial intelligence. Integrating AI-based search algorithms and recommendation engines into library services to deliver rapid, precise responses to research queries. Connecting all regional libraries to a unified cloud-based electronic library platform, guaranteeing equal access to national and global electronic resources for citizens across all regions. Upgrading biophysical and chemical restoration laboratories with modern preservation technology for long-term paper preservation.

CONCLUSION

The National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi is more than a physical repository for books; it serves as a spiritual and scientific bridge connecting the past, present, and future of the nation. While preserving centuries of intellectual wealth, it continuously adapts to the demands of the modern information society and digital world. In strategic reforms aimed at laying the foundation for Uzbekistan's Third Renaissance, the National Library remains a key educational platform supporting youth education, academic research, and integration into global culture.

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