Library development in the Georgian Republic:
Problems and Progress since the Dissolution of the USSR

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Abstract

The paper provides a situation report on the state of libraries and information services, publishing and bookselling in the Republic of Georgia in the South Caucasus. It briefly describes their development, outlines the international development assistance that they have received during the last twenty years, describes their current situation, and indicates some of their future needs.

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union's highly centralised system was a major catastrophe for the library and information services of the newly independent countries (Sochocky 1994; Richards 1999). Their situation is not well described in the professional literature; it is fragmented, and not fully captured in the major indexes. A study of the assistance that several of the post-Soviet Republics, including Georgia, have received suggests that, for lack of adequate understanding of the situation, much of the development assistance that their library and information services have received from external agencies, while well-intended, has been uncoordinated, sometimes inappropriate, and frequently not sustained or unsustainable (Johnson forthcoming). This paper was prepared as a background study for a TEMPUS Joint European Project, NMPLIS (New

Master's Programmes in Librarianship and Information Science),[1] which was supported by the European Commission to facilitate the modernisation of professional education and the underpinning library services in Armenia, Georgia and Uzbekistan between 2009 and 2012 (Hopkinson and Zargaryan 2009a, 2009b; Corradini forthcoming). It is based on a review of the published literature, and data gathered during the implementation of the project. It outlines the factors that have influenced the national development of library and information services in Georgia, outlines international development assistance that they are reported to have received, describes their current situation, and indicates their future needs. It is expected to be of value to future projects intended to assist the development of that country's libraries and information services.

Georgia: history, governance, and economy

The area of what is now western Georgia, lying to the east of the Black Sea in the Caucasus region, was probably settled by the beginning of the second Millennium BC. The ancient kingdom of Colchis was absorbed into the Roman Empire in the first century BC, while neighbouring Iberia (roughly the southern and eastern parts of the present Republic of Georgia) simply came under the protection of the Roman Empire. This was one of the first regions to adopt Christianity formally, in the fourth century A.D. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, control fluctuated between the Persian, Byzantine, and Arab empires, with intermittent periods of independence. A notable independent kingdom emerged in the early Middle Ages (eleventh to thirteenth centuries A.D.), but Georgia was then ravaged by the Mongols. Subsequently its territory was fought over by the Turks and Persians, but at the end of the eighteenth century Eastern Georgia was taken under Russian protection.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, Georgia declared its independence in 1918. However, the British had to intervene to stop a war with Armenia, and the country was under British protection until 1920. In 1921 it was seized by the Red Army and incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922. At the behest of Stalin (himself Georgian by birth), Georgia became part of the TransCaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, which also included present day Armenia and Azerbaijan. Eventually, that was dissolved, and Georgia was designated as a separate Soviet Republic in 1936 (Dobson 1973).

A movement for independence began in the 1960s, but it was not until 1991 that the country was able to break away from the collapsing USSR. It was destabilised in the first years of independence by the status of its semi-autonomous regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which embroiled the country in three civil wars between 1990 and 1994, and then again in a brief conflict with Russia in 2008.

Its constitution is now that of a representative democracy, and it has thus been able to become a member of the Council of Europe. Since the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe (whose membership is open to all the Parliamentary democracies in the region, and

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[1] NMPLIS website URL - http://www.flib.sci.am/eng/Tempus/

which should not be confused with the European Union) has taken an active role in encouraging the modernisation of the book sector in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The STAGE Project (Support for Transition in the Arts and Culture in Greater Europe) was launched by the Cultural Policy and Action Department of the Council of Europe in 2000 with the aim to create a framework for exchange and co-operation amongst countries in the Caucasus area and to assist them in the transition of their cultural policies. One of the objectives of the project was to assist policy makers in implementing appropriate policies in order to respond to the challenges of democratic transition, notably new ways of financing cultural activities, their decentralization and/or privatisation, and the development of civil society. This paper draws, *inter alia*, on studies prepared as part of the STAGE project (e.g. Haavisto 2005).

By the end of the Soviet period, agriculture and industry contributed equally to the national economy of Georgia, with almost half of the industrial production being concerned with food processing. Maize, wheat, tea, tobacco and citrus fruits are cultivated, plus extensive viniculture. Other important industries were mineral extraction and metallurgical production (Dobson 1973). Natural resources include manganese, oil, coal, hydroelectric power, non-metallic minerals and mineral waters. Some chemical and light industry also existed, but in general the latter has struggled since the ready markets of Russia are no longer as accessible as they once were. Agriculture and tourism are now the principal economic sectors. Like many post-communist countries, Georgia suffered from an economic crisis which, along with its periods of military conflict, has disrupted its development.

Georgia's population is now between 4.6 million and 5 million, with about 40% living in the capital Tbilisi and three other urban centres. Its land area, some 69,700 km², is comparable in size to Ireland or North Dakota. However, the estimated GDP per capita in 2010 was $5,057, compared with $38,685 in Ireland and $47,123 in the USA.

Education and research

Education in Georgia is mandatory for all children aged 6–14. The adult literacy rate in Georgia is given as 100%. In the communist era, education followed the standard Soviet model of complete state control (from Moscow) of curricula and teaching methods, and close integration of education activities with other aspects of society. The education system of Georgia has undergone sweeping reforms since 2004.

A liberalized higher education system and the availability of donor funding have fostered the emergence of private colleges and universities outside the state university system (Gibradze 2004), but led to a situation in which there were 30 autonomous public institutions and some 230 private ones. The work of the National Education Accreditation Centre has resulted in a reduction in the number of private and public universities in Georgia, in some cases by merger and consolidation. As of 2009, 60 higher education institutions (HEIs) were accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, including 20 that are state-funded. The law on higher education provided for an entirely new

organizational and management structure for HEIs, making public universities more autonomous, and democratically governed.

Georgia joined the Bologna process in 2005, and the European three-cycle (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral) studies and the European Credit Transfer System have already been introduced in all accredited HEIs in Georgia. Considerable progress is said to have been made with the development and introduction of a quality assurance system. All curricula and their learning outcomes should now be approved by the University's Academic Council and published, e.g. on a University web page. Study programmes and research quality are said to be regularly reviewed to assist the integration into the international academic community.

In the Soviet system, the national Academies of Science coordinated the top-level research and educational institutions, and were the leading institutions in all types of research. The Georgian Academy of Sciences was established in 1941 (Dobson 1973), and had several research institutes attached to it. The research institutes have mostly now been merged with universities (except Institute for Linguistics, National Centre of Manuscripts, and National Scientific Library, which have become independent bodies).

Georgia claimed to have the most highly educated population of all the Republics in the USSR, and now needs to capitalise on this labour force. However, some bibliometric indicators extracted from the Web of Science for 1996-2006, which records articles published in peer-reviewed mainly English-language scientific and scholarly journals suggest that the country's intellectual skills are not yet widely recognised. They reveal that, among the 3 countries participating in the TEMPUS NMPLIS project, Georgia had fewer published articles per million inhabitants (PA/POP), and fewer published articles per year divided by GDP (PA/GDP) compared with Armenia, although more than Uzbekistan (Moed 2007).

Country	GDP ($000 million)	POPulation	Published Articles	PA/GDP	PA/POP
Armenia	6.4	3.0	352	55.0	117.4
Georgia	7.6	4.4	269	35.4	61.1
Uzbekistan	17.2	26.5	322	18.7	12.2

Table 1: Bibliometric indicators for the NMPLIS Partner Countries, 1996-2006. (Source: Moed 2007)

In the USSR, it was considered that there was no need to be published in foreign journals in order to establish a scientific reputation. Learning English was not encouraged, and use of English-language scientific literature remained limited for this reason (Gibradze 2004). However, Russian is increasingly losing ground as a language for scientific communication in Georgia, and being replaced by English, particularly among younger researchers. During the past 3-5 years English language studies were promoted by Government in different forms – including making English a mandatory requirement for higher education. Some lecturers are teaching in English, and many universities use English materials in

addition to Georgian, but very few are using Russian. The citation record may, therefore, change in time.

Georgia has been producing a patent database (www.sakpatenti.org.ge) since about 1993, with an English interface on the search page (Milushev 2009).

Language issues, publishing, bookselling, and bibliographical control

The population exhibits significant linguistic diversity. Some 40 different ethnic groups live in Georgia. The official languages are Georgian, spoken by 71% of the population, and also Abkhaz, spoken within the autonomous region of Abkhazia which has a population variously estimated at around 200,000. The Georgian language is unique, and has its own alphabet. The distinctive Georgian script is said to have originated in the fourth century B.C. (Dobson 1973).

Printing was introduced in Tbilisi the early eighteenth century - in 1709 (Boguta 2003), and the first printed book was produced in 1712 (Garibashvili 2004).

In the Soviet era, there were about 8 publishing houses in Georgia, plus one in each of the semi-autonomous regions (Walker 1978; Nemirovsky 1981). The latter may account for a later report that there were 11 publishing houses in Georgia. However, there was only one distribution company, which managed 165 bookstores, including 60 in Tbilisi (Rosen 1990).

In 1970, 127 newspapers were being published, including 107 in Georgian, as well as 95 magazines and periodicals, of which 80 were in Georgian (Dobson 1973). Before 1986, all titles had to be approved in Moscow before they could be published. Supplies of paper and the allocation of printing time were controlled locally, but imports of paper from Russia into Georgia were controlled in a way that also inhibited Georgian publishing (Rosen 1990). Books continue to be published in Russian, but now account for only about 5% of the total output (Chelidze and Zmroczek 2010).

The collapse of the communist system led to an increase in the number of publishing houses, but their outputs often appeared in short print runs (Shatberashvili 1993). Economic problems reduced Georgian book publishers' output to nil in 1995. There are now about 20 professional publishers and another 120 legal entities with publishing as one of their registered activities. Georgia has one of the smallest book-markets in Europe, and book prices are high relative to incomes. Typical print runs have been estimated at 500 to 2,000 copies (Boguta 2003).

The disappearance of generous state subsidies for scholarly and scientific publishing, the reduction in the number of research institutions, and migration of the country's scientific potential have adversely affected the volume and quality of academic publishing in Georgia. Many Georgian scholarly and scientific journals were suspended or are being published only sporadically (Gibradze 2004).

In the USSR, all new publications had to be submitted under legal deposit regulations to the State Republican Library in Georgia, Tbilisi University, the Georgian Academy of Sciences, and the Public Library in Kutaisi, Georgia's

second largest city (Chelidze and Zmroczek 2010). The national Book Chamber, founded in 1924, was responsible for bibliographical services (Harris 2010). A national bibliography "Book Annals" began to be issued in Georgia in 1926. The Book Chamber also prepared indexes to local newspapers from 1934, and to journal articles from 1939 (Whitby and Lorkovic 1979; Beynen 1986).

Since the dissolution of the USSR, copyright legislation was, however, brought in line with European standards in 1998/9 (Boguta 2003; Pilch 2005), but no new legal deposit legislation has been introduced (Chelidze and Zmroczek 2010). The publication of the national bibliography ceased, and for some time the ISBN system barely functioned (Boguta 2003). Approximately 1,200 titles are said to be published annually, but only about half of these were being acquired by the Book Chamber or the National Parliamentary Library (Boguta 2003).

In 2006, however, the National Parliamentary Library (http://www.nplg.gov.ge) took over responsibility for national bibliographical services from the National Book Chamber, which became the Library's Department of National Bibliography and Statistics. The Library, which assigns ISBNs and ISSNs, has still had to rely on an informal agreement with publishers to collect one copy of each publication. All relevant professionals and organizations, including the Georgian Publishers' and Booksellers' Association, have been persuaded of the importance of re-establishing the national bibliography. The National Parliamentary Library estimates that it now receives, on this voluntary basis, about 80-85% of the country's publications (Chelidze and Zmroczek 2010). Although publication of one issue of the national bibliography was undertaken with financial support from the Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association, it still does not appear as a regular annual publication.

Library and information services

Library development in the Union Republics in the USSR followed a uniform pattern, with a 'State Republican Library' in each Republic receiving copies of the USSR's published output through a legal deposit system, widespread provision of academic, public and school libraries, and specialist library networks serving the scientific and technical communities, e.g. agriculture, medicine, etc. (Serov 1980). During the Soviet period there were about 8,000 libraries in Georgia. The decline in numbers has been rapid. For example, between 2001 and 2004, for example, 41 public libraries and 269 school libraries seem to have ceased to exist (Boguta 2005). By 2004, there were only about 4,500 libraries, and the number now may be significantly fewer, perhaps little more than 3,000.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was some overlap of functions, not least between some major libraries and the Book Chamber, and a lack of coordination (Gibradze 2004), until library services were reorganised by legislation passed in 1996 (Boguta 2003). The Georgian government's library policies are now determined by the Ministry of Culture's Department of Book Industry and Libraries.

However, very little central funding has been provided for the development of library services (Boguta 2003). Many libraries in Georgia still operate only closed access stacks (Intner 2004). There has been little support from government to set up the national mechanisms needed to deal with tasks formerly undertaken

by USSR central information services, to participate in the information programmes of international organizations, and to provide further training for information professionals. There were pressures on the country's supply of hard currency, which affected the acquisition of foreign publications (Shatberashvili 1993). Access to foreign publications had been regulated centrally in the USSR. Now, availability of English-language journals is limited by the poor economic situation (Gibradze 2004).

To address the problems they face, some networks exist and the book/library sector has already set up platforms for the joint discussion of issues (McIlroy 2002). An initiative by the former President of the American Library Association, Nancy Kranich, took a seven-member delegation to Tbilisi in May 2001 for a regional workshop, funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation and designed to help strengthen library associations in the South Caucasus (ALA 2001). Face-to-face meetings in Tbilisi sponsored by the ALA/Carnegie project have helped to launch resource-sharing programmes (Dowling 2005). Among them is a document delivery service operated by the Library Automation Association of Georgia and the National Parliamentary Library (Chkhenkeli 1998; Gibradze 2004). A Georgian library consortium has been established to facilitate joint access to foreign journals (Garibashvili 2004). However, access to some commercial databases is still generally available only through short-term projects sponsored by international donors in specific institutions (Shatberashvili and Maru 2008).

National Library

The National and Parliamentary Library was designated as the national library by law in 1997 (Boguta 2003). The Library, formerly Tbilisi Public Library, occupies a former bank building (Intner 2004). It has a collection of about 16 million items (Chkhenkeli and Garibashvili 1998). It is said to be seriously underfunded (Boguta 2003). The Library was allocated only about €44,000 for subscriptions in 2005, and this was reduced to about €15,000 in 2006 (Shatberashvili and Maru 2008).

The absence of legal deposit requirements has affected the National Library's ability to play an effective role in preserving the national heritage (Shatberashvili 1993). The Georgian National Book Chamber has a collection of 1.6 million titles, including material published abroad in the Georgian language (Boguta 2003), and seems to have been merged with the National Library.

Public libraries

The first public library was created in the mid-nineteenth century, in 1846, when the Tbilisi public library was founded (Nazmutdinov 1986).

During the Soviet era, there were 2,200 public libraries operated by local authorities (Garibashvili 2004) under the control of the Ministry of Culture. The government was aware that some local authorities demonstrated a lack of interest in their public libraries (Cultural policy 2002). Nonetheless, in 2007 a Government Decree transferred responsibility for all public libraries to the local authorities. There are now approximately only 1,000 public libraries.

In the public libraries, 30% of the collection was in Russian. Most libraries had no funds to purchase books in 2004/5 to build up their Georgian collections, but the Ministry of Culture then established a fund of 70,000 GEL (about €28,000) p.a. for acquisitions. However, it is notable that other government budgets have usually fallen about 40% short of their target because of poor tax collection (Boguta 2005), and in any case it seems that this allocation was sustained for only a few years.

School libraries

Only a few years ago, there were about 2,100 secondary school libraries under local authority control (Garibashvili 2004). Very little of the funds allocated for education found its way into school libraries (Boguta 2003), and the number may have declined. There are now said to be approximately 1,700 school libraries.

However, the renovation of Georgia's school infrastructure is under way. Refurbishing school libraries is now one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education, and they will be intensively supplied with literature as well as textbooks and other educational materials. In 2010, for the first time, 8 million GEL (€3.5 million) has been allocated for supporting 'vulnerable' (i.e. poor) first graders with textbooks, and to supply secondary school libraries with textbooks, but the Ministry has also called on organisations and individuals to donate books.

It is claimed that these will be a new kind of school library that has not previously existed in Georgia, or in other post-Soviet countries. The library will include pedagogic literature by European and other foreign authors as well as books by Georgian authors. Libraries will be supplied with literature offering different perspectives and content, and all children will be able to use them. All teachers will be able to use the pedagogic material, which will contain tests and additional material for teachers. They will have an opportunity to take the books home for a period as well as attend any training seminars that will take place in the reading room of the library (Georgia. Ministry of Education 2010).

University libraries

German troops plundered libraries in the USSR during World War II, allegedly seizing as many as 100 million books (Nazmutdinov 1986). Soviet forces appear to have exacted retribution in a similar fashion. After 1945, large quantities of books from libraries in the occupied eastern sector of Germany were taken to the Soviet Union, and scattered among several Soviet Republics. After the political changes of 1989-92, in response to a German government initiative on cooperation between German academic libraries and academic libraries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics, the independent Republic of Georgia decided to return German books in its territories to Germany. Since 1992 as much as possible has been returned, initially to Berlin, where they were sorted according to origin and then returned to their original libraries. Many valuable books and manuscripts that had been taken from Lubeck University were sent to Georgia. There were identification problems in some cases but, despite some manuscripts and rare printed books appearing to have been lost without trace, more material than expected was returned to Lubeck (Fligge and Schweitzer 1997; Hamann, Lulfing and Malck 1997; Petsch 1998). Altogether about 100,000 books came from the Library of the Academy of Sciences, and

about 5,000 from university libraries. In 1996, in exchange for return of these books, several German libraries agreed to supply 16 periodicals to partner libraries for 3 years, as well as some technical equipment (Schumacher 1998).

In the academic libraries 80% of the collections were in Russian. The Ministry of Education oversees Georgia's 60 accredited higher education institutions, but was showing little inclination to manage them (Boguta 2003). Although the number of institutions has been rationalised by the accreditation process, the multi-site nature of many institutions means that there are approximately 150 academic libraries. The law requires that the University Senate shall include a representative from the institution's library/libraries, as prescribed by the institution's charter, but this may not guarantee effective influence over institutional priorities and budget allocations.

As Georgia transitioned to a market oriented economy, the country needed new business graduates to establish, lead, and manage businesses in the post Soviet era. In 1998, Georgia State University (Atlanta, USA) in partnership with universities in the Republic of Georgia founded the Caucasus School of Business (CSB), with funding through the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and the Eurasia Foundation (USAid). GSU helped CSB establish the necessary library, computer laboratory, Internet connections, and audiovisual facilities. Books and reference material were purchased and shipped to Tbilisi, and the librarian was trained in Atlanta. These efforts established a modern library with textbooks, periodicals, and reference books in English, Georgian and other languages in various fields as well as access to different on-line libraries for faculty and students. CSB has established agreements with selected publishers that allow students to purchase books on-line with significant discounts (Fazlollahi 2006).

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has been working to improve higher education in some of the post-Soviet countries because it also recognised that quality academic programmes are crucial to developing the next generation of leaders. To help improve access to information in academic libraries, the Foundation awarded a $125,000 (€91,000) grant to the ALA International Relations Office in 2001 for a two-and-a-half year project in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. This project provided Tbilisi State University with computers, library systems, interlibrary loan software, books, databases, workshops, and face-to-face meetings with U.S. library partners (Dowling 2005).

Between 2003 and 2005, ALA collected over $450,000 worth of new scientific and LIS books donated by publishers and sent them to libraries in the Caucasus. In addition, OCLC donated access to its "FirstSearch" database for two years, and ALA was able to purchase "Ariel" inter-library loan software for the libraries from Infotrieve. With access to "FirstSearch," the libraries are now able to search for needed items, which can then be provided thanks to assistance from several university libraries in the USA which use the "Ariel" electronic document delivery service to make inter-library loans. The libraries can now also provide access to e-books and have installed wireless technology for searching databases and the library catalogues (Dowling 2005).

Specialist libraries and information centres

There are approximately 150 special libraries. In addition to these there are an unknown number of information services in public, non-governmental and private institutions/organizations. The scientific and technical information services in Georgia were soundly based, but held little non-Russian information.

The flow of scientific and technical information seems to remain poor (Shatberashvili 2006). For example, the national agricultural research system is poorly supported, and a few years ago the Ministry of Agriculture Library had no computer facilities and was generally regarded as not properly functional (Temel and Maru 2006). A study of the status of agricultural information services in the region was made by the Central Asia and Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes in 2007 with support from the Global Forum on Agricultural Research. While the organisational infrastructure was in place, it was handicapped by underfunding. Agricultural libraries were not able purchase international publications (books, journals) primarily due to the costs involved (Khalikulov 2009). Their efforts to sustain research to improve the productivity of agriculture are constrained by the limited range of electronic information that they able to access free through the Internet from FAO-AGORA, U.S. National Agricultural Library, the AgroWEB Network, and open access sources such as BioOne (Shatberashvili and Maru 2008).

As Georgia assumed independence from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, healthcare institutions also found themselves in need of foreign assistance. The flow of Russian medical literature had more or less ceased in 1990. In 1992, the University of Illinois at Chicago Library began to offer support through its International Health Information Networking Project (Teplitskaia 1997). Much of the assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAid) took the form of partnership programmes funded through the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) to develop a new and sustainable health care system in Georgia. For example, AIHA was funded by USAid to establish a partnership between medical schools in Atlanta, Georgia and Tbilisi. This was to be based on access to digital collections, to compensate for the absence of western bio-medical literature in the newly independent Republic but poor telecommunications and irregular power supplies were at that time a major hindrance (Burns, Kirtava and Walker 2005).

Rare books and archives

In the Soviet Union, archives policy had been guided by the Soviet central archives authority (Glavarchiv). Rare manuscripts were mostly collected in one place during the Soviet era and are now held by the National Centre for Manuscripts. Other bodies – libraries, National Archives, some museums - hold a very small number of Georgian manuscripts and rare books. In 1995, a new law defined the responsibilities of the Georgian State Archives Department (Cultural policy 2002), now a part of Ministry of Justice and renamed the National Archives.

Implementation of modern information technologies

Until 1991, the USSR implemented international standards for bibliographic description devised by IFLA, making corresponding corrections in the national standards known as GOST, and communicating these rules to the Republics. In

some cases, they were translated into Georgian (Shatirishvili 1999). Takniashvili (1999) described how the last major GOST revision was implemented in Georgia in 1997, translated and modified to meet Georgian needs, and commented that information flow on new library methodologies had significantly decreased during the 1990s.

The adoption of the more recent standards for cataloguing and electronic data exchange depended on first purchasing computers for libraries and then training staff how to use them. Computers began to be made available to Higher Education Institutions in Georgia in the early 1970s, but it was not until 1983-85 that they introduced courses in informatics. In 1985 courses in computing, with an emphasis on programming, began to be taught in secondary schools, as part of an initiative across the whole USSR (Abbasov 1989).

By 1996 the National Library had only 3 PCs, but was using CDS/ISIS, in which it had developed a Georgian version (although at the time there was no standard computer character set for the Georgian language, which uses a script which is neither Roman nor Cyrillic). The Central Library of the Academy of Sciences participated in a European Commission project CHASE (CHAracter SEt standardisation). Funded under the 'Telematics for Libraries' programme as part of the Commission's 'Framework 4 for Research and Technological Development', the project conducted feasibility tests for migration strategies to UNICODE. The difficulties of standardizing bibliographic formats for the 3 million items held by the 60 libraries of the Georgian Academy of Sciences were, however, compounded by lack of equipment and inadequate communication (Chkhenkeli and Garibashvili 1998).

The EURASIA Foundation provided a grant for the Library Automation Association of Georgia, helping to establish the use of UNIMARC through one-month programmes in which 100 librarians were trained (Chkhenkeli and Garibashvili 1998). Library development has also benefited from some modest support from the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation), principally a small grant ($49,000) towards the cost of library automation (Boguta 2003).

Intner (2004) highlighted the lack of IT and continuing reliance on card catalogues. The collapse of the Soviet Union had cut short the libraries' ability to computerize their catalogues. Funds from the ALA project have allowed Tbilisi State University to purchase a Russian IRBIS system (which is based on CDS-ISIS). The University libraries are taking the lead in introducing automated library systems, but only the National Library has implemented an OPAC.

Georgia is one of the former Soviet Republics that has made the most progress in promoting the Internet as an information resource in the public sphere (MFM Group 2001; Skogen and Smith 2009). Nonetheless, while USAid projects were striving to improve Internet access (Burns, Kirtava and Walker 2005), less than 20% of Higher Education Institutions were providing access to the Internet in 2005 (Seidelin and Hamilton 2005). Moreover, the right to free flow of information is not fully recognised. Georgian Internet Service providers blocked Russian web sites for 2 months after the conflict in 2008 (Skogen and Smith 2009).

Professional development

The major libraries in Georgia, the National Library, the library network of the Academy of Sciences, and the University Library together employed about 2,000 staff in the early 1990s, but the number of staff then employed in the 4,200 regional, urban and rural libraries was not known, nor was the proportion requiring professional training. In addition, archives services employed about 135 staff, and the Book Chamber employed 134, some of whom would have been responsible for preparing bibliographic records for library catalogues (Shatberashvili 1993). However, it has been estimated that, in the much reduced number of library and information services, the total number of employees may now be as low as 3,000.

During the Soviet era, high level training for librarians was provided (at undergraduate level) by the Department of Librarianship in the A.S. Pushkin State Pedagogical Institute in Tbilisi (Fang, Nauta, and Fang 1985; Chkhenkeli and Garibashvili 1998), more recently known as the Department of Library Science and Bibliography of S.S. Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University (Shatirishvili 1999). There was also a School of Library Science in the State University of Culture. In about 2005, when a reform of Higher Education commenced, the University (which was being focused on theatre and film) closed the School. It had enrolled 10-20 students per year (Garibashvili 2004). The number of students on the course in the Pedagogical University has varied, with 15-20 students enrolled in 2000. A Publishing Study Centre was established by the Faculty of Philology in Tbilisi State University, and graduated about 10 students each year (Boguta 2003). This may also have closed, in about 2006, as part of the same reform of Higher Education, but it has not been possible to confirm its current status.

Scholarships provided free tuition, textbooks, and - if needed - accommodation for undergraduate students. The curriculum covered various traditional librarianship topics (such as cataloguing, bibliography, history of books and libraries), but also aspects of history, philosophy and politics from a Marxist perspective, and was taught in the Georgian language. Information technology applications began to be referred to in courses from the mid-1960s. There were two main specialisms: one for librarian-bibliographers for all kinds of libraries; the other for librarians for children's' and school libraries. However, by the late 1970s, increasing attention had begun to be given to the particular requirements of public libraries and scientific and technical information services.

Provision for training lower level library staff was also said to be available in each Republic in the Soviet Union (Terioshin, V.I. 1995), but the relevant institution in Georgia has not been traced. Advanced training was provided in Moscow, where a 3-year course and the presentation of a thesis led to admission as a Candidate of the Academy of Science (CSc.). Thereafter, suitable individuals were provided with training for research or for higher administrative positions (Sikorsky *et al*. 1979).

The majority of library and information service employees in Georgia do not currently hold LIS qualifications at any level. There are at present no official requirements for professional qualifications in LIS for librarians or information professionals in Georgia. Most institutions require a postgraduate diploma in any

field in addition to general relevant competencies and skills. Much of the effort of developing and modernising the skills of the labour force has been attributable to the professional associations in the field.

The Association of Information Specialists (AIS) was founded in 1997 by a small group of Georgians who had studied or undergone some training in the USA. It has sometimes been erroneously referred to, for example by Boguta (2003), as the Georgian Library Association, a separate body which was founded in 2000. AIS was only one of several Georgian national professional associations actively involved in library advocacy and promoting library education. The association worked mainly to establish:
- regional cooperation and collaboration with the library associations and libraries in Georgia and Southern Caucasus, organizing workshops and the annual South Caucasian library conferences (Gibradze 2004);
- continuing professional education for librarians and information specialists (Metreveli 1999).

Communication in the region is affected not only by technical limitations, but also by cultural and linguistic and political issues (Gardner 2008). Nonetheless, the first South Caucasian regional conference was organised by AIS held in 1998 and was attended by librarians, library and information science educators, library administrators, and information specialists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, the United States, and Hungary (Gibradze 2001). A second conference took place the following year (Stvilia 1999). AIS also collaborated with the United States Information Agency (USIA) in organising a two-week workshop, in Tbilisi in March 1999, which was attended by 24 librarians from Azerbaijan, Armenia as well as Georgia (Gibradze 2001). During 1999, AIS conducted 2 courses to train a total of fifty librarians from major libraries of Georgia in the state of the art in library and information work, and prepare them to train others in their organizations in:
- American rules and standards for cataloguing and electronic exchange of bibliographic data
- information technologies
- library management
- fund-raising and grant-writing (Metreveli 1999).

Another association, the Library Automation Association of Georgia, helped IFLA to arrange a TransCaucasian Workshop on Universal Bibliographic Control and UNIMARC in September 1999 in Tbilisi, which was sponsored by OSI and other organizations. The workshop was a response to problems in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia arising from lack of experience in the creation and management of national bibliographic systems. International speakers and regional delegates dealt with topics concerning non-Roman scripts, the need to replace abandoned Soviet standards with international or national bibliographic formats, the choice of integrated systems, the need for legal, organizational, technical and linguistic support, and finance. In discussion the lack of experienced professionals in the region was noted, as well as the lack of documentation about non-Soviet systems in local languages (Plassard 2000).

The desirability of having several professional associations in the same field in such a small country was questionable. Diversity of interests in organising continuing professional education was no justification; a single association could

just as easily mobilise its members to provide the desired range of activities. It began to be recognised as more important that the local professional community spoke to government and external agencies with a single voice. If government received inconsistent and possibly contradictory advice, it had an excuse for taking no action. Only the Georgian Library Association still exists.

Prior to 1990, there were several centres for continuing professional education in Georgia. Subsequently, the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Mortenson Center for the International Library Programmes (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) helped to establish a continuing education centre and library science library at the Tbilisi State University (Gibradze 2001; 2004). As already mentioned, an American delegation visited Tbilisi in early May 2001 for a regional workshop, funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation and designed to help strengthen library associations in the South Caucasus (ALA 2001).

Since 2008 however, only one centre exists, managed by the Georgian Library Association. This provides short courses (up to 2 weeks) which focus mainly on the application of library technologies and library management principles. Clearly, this was inadequate for a workforce that has been faced with major technical changes during the last 30 years, as well as the social and economic changes that have taken place since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition, it has been said that 50% of the library workforce in Georgia is aged over 46 (Boguta 2005). The country's library and information services are thus facing a situation in which the skills of the existing workforce are under-developed and obsolescent, and in which there will be a growing demand for new recruits with more appropriate knowledge and expertise.

The Pedagogical University was considering modernising its courses in 2004 (Intner 2004). The existing library science curricula were - in their form, content and teaching approaches - still based on the 1960s model. The lectures were heavily overloaded with outdated Soviet library management traditions. In 2006, it became part of Ilia Chavchavadze State University (now simply named Ilia State University), which was created from a merger of several higher education and research institutions. In that year, the new education framework was implemented in Georgia (based on the Bologna principles), and all universities stopped admissions to former programmes and started new programmes at all levels. Ilia State University had developed new undergraduate (major and minor) programmes in LIS, but there were no applicants to those programmes. After the last students graduated from the old undergraduate programme in June 2009, there were no LIS students in Georgia.

Starting from January 2009, Ilia State University joined institutions from Armenia and Uzbekistan in a three-year project to develop new Master's Degrees in Library and Information Science in partnership with European Union universities, funded by the TEMPUS programme. The LIS school has been re-established. A group of seven professionals have been selected as faculty members, based on the following criteria:
- postgraduate academic qualifications
- a minimum of two years teaching experience
- professional experience at a senior level
- further training and professional development.

The selection and appointment of professors in LIS is regulated on the same basis as for other professors in the majority of State Universities in Georgia. Usually academic staff are employed on the basis of a 1-2 year contract. There are no formal requirements for professional development of teaching and academic staff in Georgia.

In keeping with the general goal of the University reforms in Georgia, innovative student centred methods have been introduced in teaching. NMPLIS encouraged the development of sustainable programmes in Armenia, Georgia and Uzbekistan that responded to national needs rather than simply following western models (Hopkinson and Zargaryan 2009a, 2009b; Corradini forthcoming; Johnson forthcoming). The result has been different programmes in each country. For the new Master's programme in Georgia, the aim is to balance core LIS disciplines (e.g., cataloguing, classification, bibliography, etc) with IT disciplines (management of databases, ICT technologies, software design, networking) and management (general management, financial management, marketing, public relations). Consequently 3 core programmes will emerge: IT for libraries, Library Management and LIS (general). The professionals produced by the courses would be qualified as library managers, IT managers in library and information service contexts, and library and information service specialists. The curricula developed in Georgia will meet the requirements of the Bologna and related agreements. No further specialisations (e.g., school libraries, digital libraries, etc.) are planned. However, it is recognised that many Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in the European Union also teach records management and archival studies. The discipline is increasingly sharing modules with library and information science in the electronic age and was included in the project. In Georgia, there is an intention to develop and provide topics in archive studies so that the outcomes of the Master's programmes would be high-level specialists in library, archive and information science able to create or develop information systems in these different environments.

23 students enrolled for the first intake to the new Master's programme in 2010. For all higher education programmes, students now have to pay fees (approximately €700 annually), but may be supported by State Scholarships. The amount of the grant depends on examination marks and can cover one third, half, or the full annual fee. The fees were waived for the first intake, as required by the TEMPUS programme. For the second intake, after the TEMPUS funding ceased, fees have had to be paid by the students, but the enrolment increased.

Distance education tools are not yet in use. However, their implementation is planned for the near future to facilitate online access by students in the new Master's Degree programme to educational resources. Given the significant need for continuing education for the existing library workforce, and the shortage of professional resources in Georgian, open access to some of these resources may have a potentially wider impact on professional development, and indirectly to increasing confidence in the contribution of modern libraries to society.

The LIS programme and its staff are expected to respond to the main priority of the University, which is to develop into a research-intensive institution. The teaching of research methods and the requirement for a thesis will underpin that development. In the past, the Georgian National Book Chamber has supported

research in bibliography (Boguta 2003). This may provide a starting point for supporting a wider range of relevant activity.

Future challenges

Georgia's libraries do not appear to have been as successful as those in some other former Soviet Republics in attracting international assistance. Fund-raising skills have come to be seen as important (Garibashvili 2004). However, dependence on short-term grant from international governmental agencies and foundations is no substitute for winning the support of the people who control the regular state budget. This depends on the existence of a body of enthusiastic, professional librarians who see their responsibility not merely for operation matters, but also for raising awareness of the role and value of libraries and information services

Government's ability to support the development of library services will depend on the state of the economy. Demonstrations of how libraries and information services can foster economic development are essential. One of the principle reasons why organizations have channelled less money than they might into Georgia seems likely to have been their inability to conduct accurate feasibility studies for such projects. One of the main difficulties faced by potential investors in Georgia is the lack of business information, including accurate and up-to-date information on business opportunities in the country (Infrastructure 1999; van Oss, A. 2004; U.S. Department of State 2007, 2008). Even the largest global database facilities do not provide substantial or quality information. In order to benefit potential investors, specialized information is needed. This requires the urgent establishment of business information database services. The creation of appropriate database services can help to overcome two problems which may have held back the development of Georgia's libraries and information services: a lack of recognition of their potential contribution to development, and an increase in inward investment that would improve the national economy. Another way of benefiting society would be to supplement the national patent information service by making the research work of Georgian scientists more widely known, through the development of online repositories for their publications, with abstracts and indexes in major European languages.

The Georgian government sees the new Information and Communication Technologies as a critical element in the modernization of the country, and there are now 12 Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Nonetheless, telecommunications systems have been poor, and international tariffs were high, discouraging ISPs from establishing high-bandwidth networks. Personal Internet availability is very low, but access is provided by some libraries and in Internet cafés. Computer provision in schools is limited, and generally they are not networked. In the universities, computer access is usually limited to staff, and computer training and education started only recently. Enhanced efforts at workforce development to support the implementation of ICTs are clearly essential (Temel and Maru 2006).

There is clearly a need to develop a forum and channels of communication for influencing the Georgian government, whose random actions to date demonstrate the lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy for the development of the country's library and information services. Georgia successfully celebrated

the first ever National Library Week in April 2002. This new advocacy initiative was encouraged by the American Library Association and supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Association of Information Specialists collaborated with the Georgian Library Association and others to create celebrations that stretched the entire month of April nationwide, which included exhibitions, press conferences, seminars, and one-day when free Internet access was offered in the AIS's computer laboratory at Tbilisi State University. The goal was that it would become an annual event (Hayrapetyan and Shatirishvili 2002). This needs to be fostered, but means of more regular contact with political and administrative decision makers in government also need to be developed.

There have been some successes in library advocacy, but it is not clear whether they have been followed through. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the American Library Association organised a regional workshop for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on "The Role of the Academic Library in Fostering Civil Society" in September 2002, in Yerevan, Armenia. The workshop was historic in that it was the first effort in the region to bring university officials into discussions with librarians on the value of libraries in rebuilding institutions (John and Dowling 2002). The Association(s) need to consider how to build on that beginning.

The professional advocacy effort also needs to emphasise the rights to free expression and freedom of information from such pressures. Georgia has no law on religion, and has a history of tolerance. However, since the demise of the collective atheism of the Soviet Union, plurality and tolerance have been on paper only. In theory, church and state are separate. In reality, the Georgian Orthodox Church continues to meddle in public and private affairs, and seeks to exert a new form of censorship (Spurling 2004) which should be resisted if Georgia is to become an open and tolerant society in which foreigners, investors and tourists alike, feel comfortable.

Concluding remarks

At the time of independence, the library system was not failing, but was entirely oriented to the needs of the Soviet Union. The country's previous dependence on the USSR resulted, after independence, on a "lack of management strategy and policy, lack of know-how, and finally the lack of people able to analyse the problems and accomplish indispensible changes" (Garibashvili 2004). Appropriate management data does not appear to be readily available to the Georgian government (Statistical 2010), but available data suggests that use of libraries is now comparatively low (Boguta 2005) and that the country's library system is collapsing. There is a clear need for an authoritative review of current library and information provision as the basis for devising a strategy that would enable Georgia to become the knowledge society that its claimed and potential intellectual strengths suggest is possible.

A test for the new Master's Degree programme will be the extent that it is judged, over time, to have produced graduates with skills appropriate for meeting these challenges. The staff of the new Master's Degree programme need to consider how their teaching and research, and their students' research, can contribute to an improvement in the information about Georgia that is

readily available and accessible outside Georgia, as well as to an understanding of the strategic issues that the country faces in developing the information sector and the potential benefits of doing so.

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The origins of the project, and an initial, formal evaluation, are summarised in a forthcoming paper by Elena Corradini.

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