Organization of information support for readers in the scientific and technical libraries (best practices of the Republican Scientific and Technical Library)

Mamedov Mehmanali Akbar

Abstract: On the basis of the activities of the largest by volume of his collection Azerbaijan Republican Scientific and Technical Library examines the properties of library and information activity of branch libraries, modern requirement of service of readers in libraries, particularly to engineering and technical personnel. Particular attention is paid to modern methods and operational services such as Selective Dissemination of Information services and services with the use of online technologies. As the growth of the network of libraries for the oil industry workers the scientific and technical library of Azerbaijan has turned into the largest technical library. The structure also includes the National Libraries Patent Foundation, regulatory and technical documents and NDC technical literature.

In this work, the issues related with the organization of the information support for readers in the scientific and technical libraries are analyzed. The best practices of the scientific and technical library are considered.

Subjects: Librarianship; Research Librarianship; Teaching Librarianship

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mamedov Mehmanali Akbar PhD of pedagogical sciences docent, the faculty of Library-science information vice-chancellor. Personal data He was born in Astara on the 18 fevral 1957 year. He graduated secondary school in 1974. He has served in the forces in 1975-1977. He has been entered to the Baku State University in 1979 to the faculty of library science and graduated this university in 1984. Education and academic degrees obtained Complete professional background Present research interests International relations of the libraries of the republic List of selected publications The assortment of the literature of the scientific information.//Scientific works: ANAS. The center scientific library. B., 2004.-V. Edition-p.115-119. Organizing of the library work in the private higher schools. //Library science and bibliography: The scientific-theoretical and practical journal. B.: Publishing house of Baku State University, 2005.-V. Edition-p.60-71. with K.Aslan. The organizing of depository libraries of Azerbaijan.//Library science and bibliography: The scientific-theoretical and practical journal.- B.: Publishing house of Baku State University, 2007.-V. Edition-p.3-8.

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Considering the important role of the different types of the libraries in the social life in this work, we analyze the issues related with the organization of the information support for readers in the scientific and technical libraries. The best practices of the scientific and technical library are considered.

Library in Azerbaijan as one of the main indicators of cultural development and the system of social values has gone through the historical path of formation and has reached the highest level of development in the twentieth century. At the present stage of development of world civilization, libraries serve not only as an indicator of the level of development of culture but also help to determine the situation with the information system in the country and evaluate it.
Keywords: branch library; engineering and technical personnel; scientific and technical literature; library collections; bibliographic service

1. Introduction. The degree to which the problem has been researched
The main activities of the library are the creation and preservation of document-information funds, the use of these materials for legal and real persons, and the creation of a unified information field that allows libraries to exchange information (The Law of Azerbaijan Republic “On librarianship”, Article 4, 1998).

The Library System (see Figure 1) of Azerbaijan Republic consists of universal, specialized state and non-state libraries based on regional, administrative, inter-institutional, sectoral, inter-sectoral and integrated service principles (The Law of Azerbaijan Republic “On librarianship”, Article 5, 1998).

The technical libraries operating in Azerbaijan belong to the section of “Scientific-sectoral libraries of Republican importance,” as is shown in Figure 1.

Historically, the oil industry in Azerbaijan has had a higher technical level of development than other industrial sectors. This peculiarity, first of all, was due to the abundance of oil and gas reserves in the country. Stable development of high productivity, advanced technology and technical equipment in the field of oil production and refining, the information needs of the engineering and technical workers in this area created the need for the establishment of the industrial technical libraries back in the 20s and 30s of the XX century (Mamedov, 2013).

For the formation and development of the oil sector in the republic on a scientific basis, there have been established several scientific research, design and testing institutes, with the libraries of a branch technical profile organized inside them. Some of them continue their activities up to now.

The library and information service support should have a documentary-information base, both in the traditional and electronic form. Since the 40s of the last century, such documentary funds were created in the oil and gas production and processing enterprises, and in the following years, the collection of documents to the funds was continuously developing. One of such libraries with a rich book fund is the Republican Scientific and Technical Library (RSTL), which is one of the leading branch libraries of our republic.
The creation of the RSTL became an important event in the 1920s. It met the library and information needs of the specific groups of readers working in the oil industry of our country, including engineering and technical workers, skilled workers, and was formed as a methodological center for the library networks of the industrial enterprises of the republic.

RSTL was established in 1923 and received the status of the RSTL in 1957 (Alenkova, 2014). It was after 1957 that new departments and sections were created in the library and, for the first time in the former Union, a number of innovations were applied in the library.

2. The idea of the network of the scientific and technical libraries

The RSTL, being the part of the network of the scientific and technical libraries, performs the function of the informational, interlibrary subscription and central point for other libraries operating in the relevant field (History of Azerbaijan, 1973). Technical libraries are bibliographic and information institutions that serve the scientific and technical progress and extensive technical education, raise the level of professional knowledge of workers and disseminate the best production experience. In contrast to the public libraries network, the technical libraries basically fill their funds with the modern scientific and technical literature, including periodicals, normative and technical documents (patents, standards and norms, price tables, etc.) and unpublished materials.

The main feature of the entire network of technical libraries is their coordinated activities with the information bodies and functioning on the basis of a single reference fund with the aim of assisting production tasks. Among these libraries, the RSTL occupies a special place. The RSTL documentary fund consists of 14,734,154 copies. Of these, 12,257,760 copies are patent documents (stored in the Republican Patent Fund), 928,915 copies are normative and technical documents that are stored in the Republican Standards Fund. In 2005, the library rendered its information service to 20,401 readers (Rustamov, 2007).

The readers consist of the scientific employees, engineering and technical workers, students for bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, etc. The library carries out its activities through the following departments: the department of subscription and support, equipment department, department of scientific cataloging, informational-bibliographic department, scientific and methodical department, foreign literature department, department of differential information service and research works, department for completion of one-off requests of the enterprises and institutions.

RSTL actively applies various forms and methods of the library and information services in relation to readers. Of these, the organization of days of information, specialist days, open literature review, the SDI (selective dissemination of information) system, the organization of DS (Differential Service) mode for management personnel were especially widespread. It is not sufficient to only focus on the bundling of the scientific, technical and production literature in the RSTL funds. The use of the new library-bibliographic and information methods in the propaganda of this kind of literature has always been important.

Until the mid-1980s, two or three employees worked only in a small number of libraries, mainly in oil refining and developmental areas. But in the 1990s, changes in the sociopolitical and socio-economic life of the Republic, the process of renewal in the economic and management system led to a crisis in the economy, which affected the number of people working in libraries: as in all other spheres of life, here too reductions took place (State Archives, Fund 1610).

At present, one librarian works in each of the National Technical Libraries, operating at the production enterprises. However, the number of librarians in the scientific and economic institutions and design organizations varies from one to three people. The crisis that has arisen in the modern period in the library business, can eventually lead to the situation when only one employee will work at each of the libraries. It can be stated that to date about 100–150 people
work in the National Technical Library of the Republic. The staff of the RSTL is not included in this number (Mamedov, 2003).

It should also be noted that in the 90s, in all STLs as well as in the Republican STL, the material and technical base had significantly weakened. The building, which was intended for the construction of a new campus, remained on paper. The library's book stock grew 3–4 times in 20–30 years, however, the building remained the same. There were no funds to purchase the necessary equipment. During the last 7–8 years, the library finds it difficult to buy not only new books but also periodicals, especially the scientific journals. That is why such situation significantly weakened the methodological assistance to the STL system and the Republican STL itself. Because of this, the number of readers is reduced from year to year. If in the 60s of the last century the number of STLs was about 150, by 1998 the number had been reduced to 50–60 libraries (Mamedov, 2003).

From the documents presented by the RSTL, it can be seen that in some libraries the number of subscribers has dropped significantly. The material and the technical base is at the level of the 80s, there were no significant personnel changes. In order to analyze the staffing of the country's STL in the 1980s, it is necessary to possess the necessary statistical information. According to the information of the mid-1980s, about 80 employees worked in the Republican STL, covering the oil refining industry and related industries. Of these, 16.6% had a higher profile, 29.6%—secondary special, the rest—higher and secondary specialized non-core education (Report, 2009).

Until 1959, the library staff working in the mentioned sectors of the national economy had no higher education. Only 1% of employees had a secondary specialized vocational education. As for the oil refining industry and related spheres, the dynamics of workers in libraries with special education can be traced in Table 1.

In 1959–1985, in the mentioned oilfields, the number of library personnel grew rapidly. This also applies to the staff with the higher and secondary special education. At the same time, the number of employees with a secondary general education decreased.

This tendency is first of all connected with the commencement of the Library Science faculty. Thus, the Library Science faculty at Baku State University, the library has been operating since the

| Table 1. Dynamics of library staff with special education in 1959–1985 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Industrial sector** | STL of the oil-refining industry | STL of the oil machine building | STL of the oil refining and oil and chemical industry | **Total** |
| 1959                  |                               |                               |                                               |
| Higher specialized    | -                              | -                             | -                                               |
| Secondary specialized | 1.0                            | 1.0                           | 1.0                                             | 1.0 |
| Higher non-specialized| 4.0                            | 8.0                           | 6.0                                             | 6.0 |
| Secondary (general)   | 95.0                           | 91.0                          | 93.0                                            | 93.0 |
| 1985                  |                               |                               |                                               |
| Higher specialized    | 11.0                           | 16.6                          | 21.4                                            | 16.6 |
| Secondary specialized | 34.3                           | 29.1                          | 25.7                                            | 26.6 |
| Higher non-specialized| 20.0                           | 25.2                          | 42.1                                            | 29.2 |
| Secondary (general)   | 37.4                           | 29.1                          | 10.8                                            | 24.6 |
1947–1948 academic year. This helped to satisfy the basic need for library personnel throughout the republic. The provision of STLs with the highly qualified personnel had a positive effect on the use of information resources of libraries by workers and engineers in the industrial production sectors.

At present, more than half of the personnel working in the STL system are the middle generation of graduates of this faculty. Approximately 50% of the employees have 25–30 years of work experience, while the rest have 10–15 years. As a whole, STL’s number of staff with higher and secondary special education corresponds to the average indicators of the library sector in the country. The Republican STL is the methodical center of the network of the scientific and technical libraries. 126 people work here. Of these, 32 have higher education and 50 have the secondary specialized education. In general, 60–65% of employees have specialized education, which is much higher than the average for the republic. 35–40% of the library staff have more than 15 years of work experience, 20–25% have 25–30 years (Republican Archive, Fund 1610).

3. Operations organization of the scientific and technical libraries

One of the main tasks of the library is the provision of services to cover the professional information needs of the engineering and technical workers, enterprises and institutions. With this purpose, there are used bibliographic, reference and information publications. The general educational, scientific and professional information service in RSTL is comprehensive in its content (political, scientific, technical and production literature for a specific request), covering not only specialists but also the expert readers.

The scientific or production difficulties or questions faced by readers in the process of work activity create their professional information needs. In addition, there are other forms of information needs serving the formation and development of individual groups of readers as individuals (for example, political, aesthetic, artistic, etc.). Clearly realized, specific parts of information needs of readers are manifested in information requests. And, therefore, the study of the information needs should not be looked as a job unrelated to the library. In other words, it is possible to organize library’s work more efficiently on the basis of studying the information needs of not only the individual groups of readers but also the potential groups of readers residing in the territory where a particular library operates.

The RSTL is considered to be the Republican center providing the reference and bibliographic library services to the ministries, companies, enterprises and institutions, research and design organizations, university students, and individuals engaged in research in the field of science and technology. In addition to being one of the largest scientific and industrial libraries in the country, RSTL is also a large institution that deals with both traditional book propaganda and library and bibliographic services, and the research work and methodological activities such as author certificates, patents and patent literature, normative and technical documents, foreign journals and other literature.

4. Work with the readers

In 2010, the number of readers in the RSTL was 7187 people. 5712 people were served on the subscription and in the reading room, 216 people on the interlibrary loan, 961 people on the Republican patent fund, and 514 people served on the fund of normative and technical documents. The largest and most demanding section of the service department is the customer service department. The total number of readers here is 5712 people. Of these readers, 3,912 people have been registered this year.

During 2010, 42,347 pieces of literature were provided to readers. Of these, 7312 printed copies, 310 copies of foreign literature, 129,730 printed copies of patent literature were provided through the subscription and the reading room, 12 exhibitions of new literature were held during the year. 1250 copies were received in the library this year and 7312 copies returned by readers, all of those were arranged in their places using UDC. 32 copies of journals were submitted to the fund of the normative and technical documents during 2010. The employees of the scientific processing completion of normative and technical documents department numbered and placed in their
places 1500 technical conditions. In 2010, 120,000 obsolete, overdue and destroyed documents were withdrawn from the fund, and an act was drawn up (Mamedov, 2003).

During 2011, the number of readers of the RSTL was 6486 people. Of these, the number of readers through the subscription and the reading room was 5636 people, 216 through the interlibrary loan, 42 people of the Republican Patent Fund, and 392 persons of the Standard and Technical Documents Fund (Mamedov, 2003).

4109 readers of the service department were registered in the same year. These readers were granted 114,582 copies of literature in total. Of these, 25,325 printed copies were provided to the readers through the subscription and the reading room, 41 printed copies through the interlibrary loan, 106,783 printed copies of the patent literature, 3933 printed copies of the normative and technical documents. According to the results of 2011, 7526 printed copies of literature were provided to readers through the service department. Of these, 3,672 books, 3,743 journals and 751 printed copies of reference were provided to the readers (Republican Library Report, 2012).

The number of readers who applied to the library during 2012 made 6,681 people. Of these, the number of readers through the subscription and the reading room made 5,910 people, 216 people through the interlibrary loan, and 412 people through the Republican patent fund and the fund of normative and technical documents. In 2012, there were 4270 readers registered at the service department, in total 89,862 copies of literature were provided to these readers. In 2012, the library received 343 copies of new books (Republican Library Report, 2013).

During 2013 the number of readers of the library was 6928 people. The number of new readers who came to the library during the year made 231 people. Of these readers, 80 people enrolled in the library on the basis of identity cards. 151 readers were given a verbal reference and bibliographic service through a telephone. Thus, these readers were informed by telephone about the acquisition of the new literature that meets the requirements of today’s science and technology. There is a special logbook for these readers. It indicates only their name, surname, patronymic, and the content of their requests.

One of the important forms of serving readers in the RSTL is the ILL (interlibrary loan). The ILL department built its work on the basis of the mutual use of the library funds of the republic.

Currently, the ILL department has 741 users. 287 subscribers are active, and 454 are passive subscribers. In September 2002, 903 copies of literature were provided through ILL, of which 183 copies were books and pamphlets, scientific and technical literature, 491 copies of journals, 95 copies of standards and other normative documents. In September 2002, 53 copies of books from other libraries were purchased to meet the needs of readers (Republican Library Report, 2002).

The department carried out the registration of 135 copies of literature, which were provided to subscribers. Every reader who applied to the library during the year was registered, reader requests were accepted, relevant information and literature were provided to readers. The number of readers of the RSTL is 6681 people (1 January 2016). Of these, 5910 people are served through the subscription and the reading room, 216 people through the interlibrary loan, 43 people from the Republican Patent Fund, 412 people from the Fund of normative and technical documents, and 4270 readers from the service department were registered in the new year. These readers were granted 89,862 copies of literature. Of these, 7,732 copies were provided through the subscription and the reading room, 103 copies through the interlibrary loan, 80,870 copies of patent literature, 1260 copies of normative and technical documents (Republican Library Report, 2016).

The ILL users’ directory was recently checked, and addresses and other user data were updated. Now the ILL department has 728 members. In 2015, the department received 800 requests.
If the library cannot satisfy the reader’s information request with the literature available in his fund, this request is then made using the ILL system. RSTL has always supported interlibrary relations with a number of fundamental libraries of the Soviet Union, in order to maintain its technical profile since its inception, manage its work efficiently, meet the information needs of highly qualified readers, and acquire the necessary literature. At present, RSTL carries out the exchange of documents through the ILL system with the following main centers: Central Scientific Library of ANAS and the National Library named after M. F. Akhundov.

**ILL service system** is the most convenient form of customer service used to fully meet the demands of research workers arising from their research work. Nowadays, as the next stage of the ILL’s development, the electronic document delivery provides scientific workers and specialists with an opportunity to have access to the world’s leading libraries.

The RSTL uses both individual and group forms of service to improve the professional level of readers, enrich scientific knowledge, and improve the production experience. During the provision of the individual library services, each reader is treated individually.

In the RSTL, each reader can use literature according to his area of interest, being in a reading room, searching it directly from a card index or a bookshelf. In the service of the subscription to find the cipher, which determines the place of the required documents in the storage facility, one needs to search the catalog. In this case, the reader, first of all, turns to the library. The employee of the library, the bibliographer, gives the reader the individual bibliographic advice, recommendations on the use of catalogs and card files, reference and information bibliographic tools.

To improve and expand the individual library and information services of specialists, attract more readers and exhaustively satisfy their specific creative needs, the RSTL, first of all, should try to plan and properly supplement its book fund in accordance with its profile as well as the new literature.

5. **The libraries’ cultural and educational activities**

In addition, the RSTL organizes various events, certain exhibitions related to historical events and significant dates. Every year, the annual report events are organized in the Department of Mass Events. The department of mass events serves to increase the information-bibliographic level of specialists.

The department of mass events of the RSTL regularly provides bibliographic information about the literature that has come to the library and organizes thematic exhibitions in order to contribute to the best working experience for the specialists of the republic both at home and abroad. Thus, the department is engaged in the promotion of the scientific and technical library, both in the library and outside of it. To this end, on Wednesdays, the department provided the staff and the readers of the network with the information about the new literature that has arrived in the library.

RLST works in coordination with other libraries and organizations in the implementation of certain activities. Due to certain mass events, the library purchased 98 copies of literature from the Presidential Library, the National Library named after M.F. Akhundov and other libraries. There were held 5 exhibitions of new literature. Two hundred eighty-four readers took part in these exhibitions. Of these, 182 people were students, and 102 people were people of various professions, scientists, engineering and technical workers, etc.

Each employee of the RSTL, which has set a goal to familiarize its readers with the achievements of scientific and technological progress for the comprehensive satisfaction of their versatile requests and information needs uses all forms and methods of the library and bibliographic services. The RSTL that we are researching is also trying to draw up its work plan in this direction by justifying the production plans of the organization to which it is subordinate. The library renders information services to provide scientific employees and specialists with the necessary materials,
to satisfy multidisciplinary, complex queries, the direction of their reading, and to widely promote the existing new scientific and technical literature.

The reference and bibliographic services providing the scientific and technical information to all groups of readers in the timely and regular manner is carried out in the “request-response” mode having a number of advantages and is the most widely used service mode in the RSTL. To organize this service, the reference and information funds of the RSTL and other research information bodies are used.

During this service, the information request of a specialist related to the implementation of programs or the solution of a scientific and technical problem (for example, the processing of synthetic rubbers on a plastic basis) is investigated, prepared and provided in an exhaustive manner. The request can be sent in the form of a thematic bibliographic, factual and another query. The information provided on the basis of the request is made in the form of written and oral information. Most of the references provided to the readers during the year consist of thematic bibliographic references.

The RSTL widely uses various forms and methods of mass information service to satisfy the complex requests of engineering and technical workers, scientific experts. The mass information service organized by the library includes the organization of exhibitions, information days, open views. In general, mass events, carried out to promote current literature in accordance with its content, purpose and direction of the readers, are organized both for the general readership and for individual groups of readers, laboratory technicians, engineers, etc.

For example, libraries hold open views and thematic exhibitions of scientific and technical literature related to various fields, which makes it possible to open the fund for the readers. In general, such events as the “Day of the Specialist”, “Information Day” and other events play an important role in the effective organization of library and information services.

They create conditions for the readers engaged in the research work in order to acquire new information related to their topic and problems, production tasks. The book exhibitions organized in the library serve for the demonstration of books and periodicals, normative and technical, design and engineering documents, industrial catalogs, abstracts of scientific research papers serving as recommendations, and other documents of various institutions and organizations. It mainly reflects the magazines that are associated with the technology, oil, chemical industry of our country and foreign countries.

In the RSTL, along with exhibitions such as “New Literature”, “Abstracts”, “Azerbaijan Oil Today”, etc., there are also organized exhibitions related to a certain topic (for example, “inorganic chemistry”, “Oil and oil refining”, etc.), events and history (professional holidays, jubilees of prominent scientists of the institute, etc.).

6. Inferences
As the network of libraries for oil workers grows, the Azerbaijan Scientific and Technical Library has become the largest technical library. Over time, the management of all libraries of the industrial enterprises, ministries of the technical profile, design institutes, non-academic research institutes was transferred to this library. Since 1957, the library became a part of the State Planning Committee of the Azerbaijan SSR and became known at its current name. At present, the Library is under the jurisdiction of the State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Patents. The structure of the Library also includes the Republican Patent Fund, the Foundation for Regulatory Technical Documents and the Depository Fund of Technical Literature.

Recently, the development of the scientific and technological progress requires equipping the young scientists and intellectuals with modern scientific knowledge, meeting their information needs at a higher, professional level, providing them with more progressive library and information services.
Therefore, the scientific and technical libraries and information bodies of our republic must fully achieve the operational satisfaction of the information requests of research workers and specialists and provide effective services for the propagation of scientific and technical literature among them.

7. Conclusion
All these facts and figures make it possible to draw the general picture of the provision of the STL network with qualified personnel and come to certain conclusions. During the study and analysis of the material and technical and personnel aspects of the issue in the Republican STL, the first thing that drew my attention was the problems of all libraries are approximately the same. The most important of them is the weakness of the material and technical supply, the lack of equipment and technology, the lack of funds to ensure the supplementation of funds, as a result, there is no progress, in the service of readers and other areas of work.

Despite all this, some national entrepreneurs, who can not correctly enough assess the role of STLs in technical progress, are trying to ensure closing some of these libraries. That is why STLs, which are part of a unified system of libraries, must be protected and the relevant state bodies should work in the following direction:

● when privatizing organizations and enterprises in which there are STLs, these libraries should be preserved, their protection and development should be kept under special control, as the intellectual property of the state;
● increase a number of allocated grants in order to strengthen the material and technical base of the state libraries;
● in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Information, Informatization and Information Protection”, to prepare and apply the relevant government regulations on the organization and development of the STL network, which is an integral part of the state information system;
● establish a working group with the necessary authority under the State Agency for Standardization, Metrology and Patents, which would monitor the operation of the STL network, prepare scientifically based methodological recommendations for them;
● allocation of necessary funds for the construction of a new building, where a unified information system for technical libraries will be created;
● to revive and improve the activities of the Republican STL, which has significantly weakened recently, to strengthen the material and technical base and provide its other objective needs.

As it is emphasized in the Law on Librarianship in the Republic of Azerbaijan, “state and non-state development funds can be established to strengthen the material and technical base of libraries. These funds are created from the contributions of the founders of funds, voluntary donations of individuals and legal entities, lotteries and other purposeful commercial activities” (Article 29).

A positive solution to these and other problems will allow in the near future to improve the material and technical support of the STL network, having a stimulating effect on its development and functioning as a whole.

As a result, the Azerbaijan RSTL, like all libraries in the former Soviet Union, was subjected to the ideology of the Communist Party, all the statistical indicators of the library were exaggerated, and the library was deprived of science and independence. This has led to the concealment of socio-economic and cultural tensions in the country. The lies about the Soviet people and the most reading by the population books were all endorsed and praised in world mass media. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, there were no accurate and valid figures on the number of readers in the country, even in separate regions and libraries. Undoubtedly, the advanced community has
objected to this fearful self-criticism in the early 1990s, and in recent years, libraries have gradually abandoned the previously exaggerated statistical indicators and began to present the existing realities.

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**Author details**
Mamedov Mehmanali Akbar
E-mail: mamedovmehmanali@gmail.com

1 Faculty of Library and Information, Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan.

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