

A Report on a Trip to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan

MARY ST. GERMAIN
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

In January of 2001, I began planning a trip to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The trip would immediately follow attendance at the MELCOM conference in St. Petersburg from May 28–30. My intentions were to buy materials, visit academic and national libraries and explore any other sources for obtaining materials. Planning turned out to be even more time consuming than expected.

There are flights on Western airlines directly from Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Istanbul into Tashkent and Almaty. Flights to Bishkek are much less frequent. Western carriers are preferable, as one is less likely to be charged an exorbitant amount for “overweight” luggage. Since I was flying from St. Petersburg to Moscow to Tashkent, however, I had to fly a post-Soviet carrier. They are night flights. One must be careful about flying from Moscow. There are two airports, Domodedovo and Sheremetevo. They are about fifty kilometers apart. Russian airlines are not entirely predictable about respecting “confirmed” tickets, or about which airport they fly from, so it pays to check bookings frequently. Sheremetevo itself has two terminals, about two miles apart. One is for foreign flights, one for domestic. Check the Russian language website: <http://www.sheremetyevo-airport.rub/> to see which terminal a flight uses. I flew from Sheremetevo’s domestic terminal, which has very little signage, Russian only announcements, and only one waiting room for post-security passengers. In that room, there was no announcement of which flight was actually loading. Although originally booked on Transaero, I ended up flying Uzbek Air, which turned out to be quite pleasant. The uniforms are colorful and pretty.

Through HOFA (Host Families Association, <http://www.innsite.com/inns/A003498.html>), I made advance bookings for a room and two meals a day with a family in each of the cities I visited. HOFA turned out to be a Prof. Kostarev running a side business. This option is cheap and safe, but at the standard of living of a middle class Soviet family. Families are very helpful with directions and how to use local transport. The food is excellent! Tap water, which may contain giardia, should be avoided, although the host family might keep a crock of boiled water. The disadvantages are that Prof. Kostarev does not like to book until twenty days before one arrives in a city and that in cities distant from St. Petersburg,

he does not necessarily know the family or their accommodations. Some member of the family knew some amount of English, although I found it easier to rely on Russian. Although his emails to me were accurate, Prof. Kostarev had switched arrival dates for each of the host families in Bishkek and Almaty. We worked this out, but the confusion was not entirely convenient for my hosts. He expects payment in advance and provides a sealed envelope to each host family containing their share of the payment, without letting you know it contains cash. It could get interesting if a customs officer decided to ask how much cash one was really carrying. Rooms can also be booked through travel agents in the republics, and it is easy to find travel agent websites. The prices tend to be a little higher than HOFA's. I would recommend Silk Road Adventures in Almaty (sradventure@nursat.kz; <http://silkroad-adventures.hypermart.net>), as they are reliable. Most hotels that can be booked in advance charge \$70 to \$300 per night. What is worse, if you stay at one of these hotels, anyone who sees you exit expects that you will be carrying cash. Considering that many people find the equivalent of \$1–\$2 a major amount, the situation is not ideal. It is necessary to register one's residence, and while hotels register guests automatically, families do not. Lonely Planet guidebooks explain the process. In Kazakhstan, the agency that provides visa support must register you, so you must know their name and address.

As for managing money, I carried easily \$6000 cash in money belts. Cash must be in new style bills and should be uncrumpled, without stains, ink marks, or missing corners. In Uzbekistan, I never saw an exchange office. However, there must be change facilities at tourist hotels. In Bishkek, practically every third shop is an exchange office. In Almaty, exchange offices are all over, and ATMs are prevalent. Some ATMs are said to give dollars. Exchange offices do not take travelers checks, although guidebooks say that one office at the local Central Bank takes them during limited hours. Credit cards can only be used at ATMs and tourist hotels.

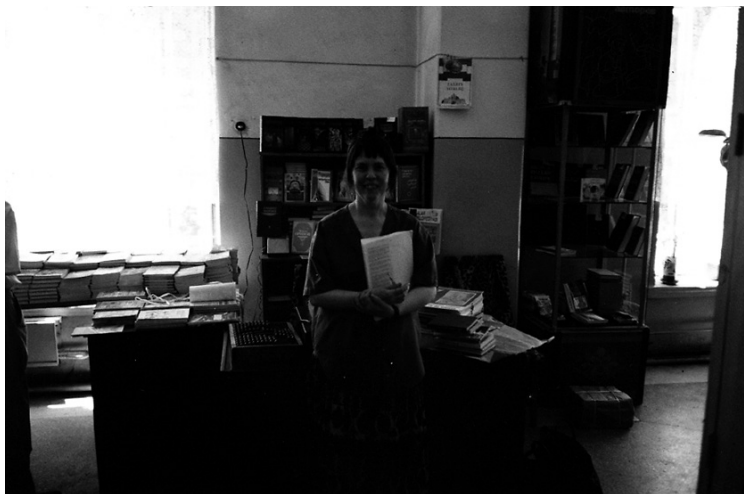
I scheduled meetings with libraries in advance to be sure that staff would be available. The information in *World of Learning* (Europa Publications) is out of date. I found some current addresses, phone and fax numbers, and email addresses on the web. A few of the emails worked and eventually resulted in a response. I also found both current and outdated country and city telephone codes, which, after some negotiation, put me through. One of the better resources is <http://kropla.com/dialcode.htm>. Keep in mind that there is an average twelve hour time difference between Seattle and Central Asia, and most libraries turn their fax machines off at night. I became accustomed to returning to the office at around 10:00 PM, when

I would dial through on the telephone unit of the fax machine and request that the fax machine be turned on. I recommend notifying the recipient of how many pages will be sent, since the fax machines usually switch off after the cover sheet arrives. Then one must start the whole process over. The standard language for this process is still Russian. If I could not get through by email or fax, or did not receive an answer within two weeks, I sent a letter, and sometimes another. After all this effort, I heard from ten out of eleven libraries.

Visas were an additional problem, and one is needed for each Republic. Visa requirements can be found on embassy websites or the Travel Documents System (TDS) website (<http://www.traveldocs.com/>). It generally takes three weeks per visa. In order to obtain four, it is necessary to start even earlier than most embassies are willing to begin the process. Since Kazakhstan requires a letter of support from a government-approved agency in Kazakhstan, and I had no ready contacts, I used Red Star Travel in Seattle to obtain my Kazakh and Kyrgyz visas. Many tourist agencies use TDS. For a small additional fee, the Uzbek Embassy processed my visa within a week. Visa fees increase depending on the length of stay. There is no flexibility with entry/exit dates once a visa is issued. It is only possible to reach Kyrgyzstan by crossing Kazakhstan. It is no longer possible to obtain a transit visa at the Kazakh border, so it is essential to obtain a double entry Kazakh visa.

On June 1, I arrived at the Tashkent Airport at approximately 5:00 AM. The family I would stay with was waiting for me with a taxi. After a few hours nap, I met one of our graduate students and went to my first bookstore. Generally, shops are open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 or 6:00 PM, except for an hour closed for lunch, usually 1:00–2:00 PM, but not always. Generally, shelving starts around hip, or sometimes, knee level and runs up to the ceiling. A ladder is available for reaching the upper shelves. Each title sits in a stack, front cover up. One copy stands up, leaning against the stack, with the front cover facing out. When buying a title, one always takes a “clean,” i.e., less dusty copy from within the stack. Dust is pervasive, even when not visible, and hands turn black after handling only a few items. In addition to books in the local Turkic language, there is generally a large section of elementary and secondary textbooks, a smaller section of popular books in Russian, and a section of office supplies. Uzbekistan is still on the abacus system, although a few stores do have cash registers. To all other stores, the government is trying to distribute small machines that will print sales slips when the clerk enters the total for a purchase. In all other cases, one needs to ask the clerk to write the total on a small slip of paper.

Invoices normally are not provided. I spent evenings listing my purchases, so that I would be able to verify whether they eventually arrived home. Since Uzbekistan is not linked into the world banking system, bookstores cannot process payments from abroad and so cannot do business with us directly.



Tashkent Bookstore

Bookstores do not flourish in Uzbekistan. Although the Uzbeks say this is because television and computers are more interesting to the younger generation, I suspect some other reasons: authors must pay to have their works published, and many cannot afford the fees; Uzbek works are encouraged; few scholarly books in Russian are published. While this presents no problem for Uzbek speakers, there are substantial numbers of other nationalities and even Uzbeks who do not speak Uzbek. The regions from Samarkand west are predominately Tajik, and many more people there speak Tajik better or rather than Uzbek. At this time, Russian is still the *lingua franca*. The subject range of publication is limited. Censorship is heavy, so many authors restrict themselves to literature. Some historical works are published. A small number of books on Islam are produced, either by the A. Qodiri press, or without any provision of publication information. Although Uzbekistan is nominally Muslim, practicing Islam is politically risky. Islamic books are frequently sold from tables in the Charsu Bazaar, where the sellers can disappear suddenly if necessary. Those who study Islam often use old hand-written books. How long such books will survive is questionable. A new souvenir trade, miniature painting, is be-

ing officially encouraged. Miniature painters buy such books for their high quality paper. Most use only the blank pages, but I did see full pages of text with recently added margin paintings for sale in Bukhoro.

Bookstores in Uzbekistan were not referred to by name, commonly only by location. Walking from the Mustakkilik Maidon subway station, across Buyuk Turon Street onto Matbuotchilar Street, a bookstore is on the far corner of the block. The store was under renovation, and so the books were in one small room, behind a counter. In addition to the ever-prevalent literature, I found a good selection of historical books here, including a new three-volume history of Uzbekistan. This store also sold several pictorial volumes on different cities of Uzbekistan and one volume of a set on Uzbek handicrafts. The first volume of an Uzbek encyclopædia was also available.

There is an unexpected reward for visiting this store. By angling to the left from the Mustakkilik Maidon subway station, one runs into a street known as “Broadway,” which consists of a whole row of open-air restaurants offering various types of cuisine. One block behind the raised stage on Broadway is a very Western restaurant with a fancy bakery, juice bar, hamburgers—yes, my sweet tooth prefers the bakery—and an Internet café in the basement. It is not the fastest Internet connection, but it is a stable, obvious location. Prices were around \$1 per hour. Telnet was not available, so it’s worth having a Hotmail or Yahoo email account.

The next day, Saturday, was also a book buying day. The next bookshop is on Abdulla Kodiry Street. Go out of the Ghafur Ghulom subway, stop, and head toward the café at the “Y” in the road. Stay on the right fork, the left side of the street, and keep walking until you come to the bookstore. This is the largest store I visited. It is long and arranged in three “U”-shaped sections. The largest section consisted of Uzbek language books, mostly literature and some history. There was a small selection of *dombra* folk music scores. The next section held titles on medicine and a few on law. The University of Washington does not collect law codes or theory. We would collect discussions of the effects of law or of constitutional law, but I did not find any. The third section had some archæological books and a few pictorial works. This is the only place I found archæological books. I bought almost as many books here as I had on the first day. Our graduate student also took me to two small stalls, both just off the Biruni Street entrance to the Charsu Bazaar, to look for Islamic books. One had a few Arabic books and translations of medieval Turkish works. Yunus Emre is popular, as is Nosiruddin Burhonuddin Rabghuzii. The other stall was closed.

Since stores were closed on Sunday, I went back to the Charsu Bazaar and wandered through the temporary tables and blankets on which people sell second-hand books. Such “stalls” are arranged along the paths encircling the permanent food market buildings. Most offerings were of no interest, but I did find two small tables of Islamic books. One of the more interesting items was an Uzbek *tafsir*: *Tafsiri hilol*, edited by Muhammad Sodiq and Muhammad Iusuf in 1995. Since it was a scorching 100 degrees plus full sun, I did not spend much time looking at the rest of the Bazaar.

On Tuesday, I went to the National Library. It had just moved to a different building, about five blocks from the old one. The library has financial problems. The staff had had to use student volunteers to move the collection and admitted that, although intentions were good, accuracy in shelving had sacrificed. Currently, budgets are not sufficient to buy materials. To some extent, the staff must find their own money for postage for library business. There is no budget line for exchanges. The Library was able to provide me with a list of the serial publications acquired. Although they indicated that it was a complete list of serials currently published, it is not. Shelving is insufficient. There are no public photocopying machines. Microfilm readers have long ceased working. There is no regular supervision within the Rare Books Reading Room, and it would be possible to walk off with excised pages. However, the National Library is automating the catalog, using IRBIS, the system supported by the Gosudarstvennaia Publichnaia Nauchno-Tekhnicheskaiia Biblioteka Rossii in Moscow. The Librarian served bottled water. This is worth noting, because it seemed that the better the treats offered, the less the library could do in the way of business.

From there I went on to two other bookshops on Alisher Navoi Avenue. They are closest to the Alisher Navoi subway station, which seems isolated, despite its location in town. As you come out of the station, turn back around the staircase, and proceed along Abai Avenue to the first corner, which is Navoi Avenue. Turn right, and continue about ten blocks on the left hand side of the street. Two bookshops a block or two apart will appear. The second is quite small and handles some new books along with office supplies and textbooks.

The next day I made the long tram trip out Biruni Avenue to the Library of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. The closest subway station is the Biruni stop at the end of the line. The Academy is another three tram stops along Biruni Avenue. This library could offer an exchange of Academy published serials, since it acquires free copies. They hope they will soon receive free copies of monographs as well. Budgets are very constrained

as are salaries. The librarians admitted they are not taking their work as seriously as they once did, since they cannot achieve the same results. Nevertheless, they were engaged in putting on a historical exhibition of University publications.

Less than halfway between the second and third tram stops on Biruni Avenue is another book store. The Academy librarians had told me it was the official map distributor. As I walked back toward it from the Academy, I also found a used bookstore. It was not of interest, since it sold mostly Russian publications—antiquarian science and classical literature. Just as I was giving up, I reached the other bookstore. It turned out to be a disappointment. The selection of books was limited, and I saw little that I had not already bought. There were few maps—one of the whole country, a few outline maps of provinces and a school atlas. From there I went back to the used book store on Navoi Avenue. It offered mostly Russian books, but did have a small bookcase of Uzbek books and a copy of the 1959 Uzbek-Russian dictionary. Comprehensive dictionaries and new dictionaries were not available, and old editions were hard to find.

The librarians at the Academy of Sciences had told me that the librarian of the National University Library wanted to meet with me. The University is located near the Biruni subway stop. It is hidden behind trees, so one needs to ask directions. The conditions there were quite depressing. The Librarian had not been allowed funds for postage or access to email in order to respond to my request for a meeting. Salaries had been cut. University Departments had taken sections of the collection to form departmental libraries. There was definitely no money to maintain the collection, and certainly none with which to participate in exchanges.

I had reserved my last day in Tashkent for the task of shipping. Mail service is reliable. The Central Post Office handles foreign parcels quite efficiently. Clerks at one window wrap the parcels into five-kilogram parcels. The clerks are very careful to maximize the weight, so allow time for them to stack and re-stack the books. They are quite adept at making even packages that will hold together. Regulations forbid shipping sheet maps, but the clerks did not look twice at the bound atlas. Fortunately, our graduate student had a diplomatic passport and could carry the sheet maps home for me. Once parcels are wrapped and addressed, there is another window for affixing postage. The parcels are tied with string, which does not always make it through U.S. postal machines.

On Saturday I set out for Bukhoro, via Samarkand. I had decided to take ground transport. I am not keen on former Soviet airlines; moreover,

customs at airports, which might assess “fines,” is likely to be stricter than at ground checkpoints. Also, I had foolishly imagined that the trip would be scenic. The Tashkent bus station is sprawling, without apparent organization. One of the sons in the family I stayed with found me a “taxi” to Samarkand. Unemployed men buy cars and wait by bus stations to attract four passengers headed for the same city as the bus. Quite often, they formerly had much better jobs, like hydraulic equipment repairman, or military pilots. They will take fewer passengers as long as they split the total fare. The driver I found accepted a lower fare, because he said wanted to get home to Bukhoro. He really wanted to convince me to hire him for several days as a guide. When he realized that was not to be, he left me at the bus stop in Samarkand, rather than taking me to the taxi area. Despite stories of functional, air-conditioned buses, I never saw one. It took seven hours to get to Samarkand, rather than the three hours a car would take. Buses stop at all villages for passengers and even more often in between to repair the motor.

The family I stayed with in Bukhoro had a lovely home and a remarkably diverse ethnic background that included Arabs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Russians and Jews. They also played me a videotape of the son’s *sunnet*, including the operation, which the father could not bear to watch! I found only one bookstore in Bukhoro. It is located in a few buildings along the path leading to the left from the Labi-Hauz toward the Taqi Sarrafon. Although there were a few newer books, most of the stock consisted of textbooks and some older books that did not appear to have moved in ages. It was quite disappointing.

The heat in Bukhoro definitely exceeded one hundred degrees. Most monuments line a single street. I would have to straggle from one building to the next and then have to sit in the shade to recuperate. The whole city depends on the tourist trade for income, and prices are probably double those in Tashkent. Every monument is packed with souvenir stalls. The tile-work is stupendous. I highly recommend the booth for hand-woven silk within the tourist cooperative located on the left path leading away from the Labi-Hauz. Despite its reputation, I did not find the bazaar as interesting as the ones in Tashkent and Bishkek.

I continued on to Samarkand. The Samarkand State University attracted many dissidents sent to Samarkand beginning early in the 20th century. It is making a valiant effort to modernize and making effective use of a small computer network, email, and the Internet. Their greatest interest is science, and they eagerly seek ways to obtain Western scientific materials. The library is automating its catalog. The Vice Rector is willing to guar-

antee support for exchanges. However, at the same time, the Library was being required to discard books containing the word Communism, just as they had been forced to discard pre-Soviet journals in the 1930's. The Head Librarian indicated that at the beginning of each year, a list of books and journals to be published is circulated among libraries so they can order copies.

Although most bookstores in Samarkand were in decline, the bookstore opposite Samarqand State University had an excellent selection and the woman running it knew her business. I visited three other bookstores. One, World of Books, is located next to the department store, GUM. Another was near the intersection of Amir Temur and Main Street. I cannot remember the location of the third. All had been reduced to a few shelves of books in a store selling mostly office supplies and greeting cards. On the other hand, the stall in the gift shop of the Guri Amir Mausoleum has an excellent selection of mostly Islamic books.

I found the monuments in Samarkand very interesting, with much more ornate interior detail than those in Bukhoro. However, they are scattered about the city. The Registan has an interesting exhibit on restoration. The daughter of the family I stayed with found me a shared taxi back to Tashkent. The person who assists in passengers' departures records the number of the taxi and lectures the driver on delivering them safely. Travelers customarily let people know that they have arrived at their destination. I do not know what could be achieved with that recorded number if the traveler does not arrive safely.

Overall, the librarians in Uzbekistan appeared to have been very well trained and are highly dedicated to the profession. Although each Republic has a library association supported by the Soros Foundation, it was only in Uzbekistan that I saw the librarians avidly reading their association's journal. They were altogether aware of the difference between what could be accomplished now and what had been in the past and were actively looking for ways to improve the situation.

Although statistics on acquisitions and books available on the market will never be entirely accurate, I think it is worth looking at the relative changes such statistics show. In Uzbekistan, it would appear that the publication rate is generally about a third of what it was before Uzbekistan became independent. The rate seems to follow the general economic conditions. The Uzbek economy began to improve shortly after the breakup, as reflected in 1994–1995, but has slipped downward since then. Chulpon, Esh Gvardiia, Ezuvchi, FAN, Ghafur Ghulom, Sharq, Uqituvchi and Uzbekiston

are the most stable and prolific publishers, but they rarely achieve more than 15 scholarly books a year. The publishers Adolat, Manaviyat, Qomushlar and Uzbekiston Entsiklopediiasi seem stable, but publish significantly fewer works. I find publications by twenty-seven other publishers.

Uzbekistan

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Other	4	5	8	3	2	3	1	1	1		4	
A. Qodiri				1								
Adolat				4	3	1	2	1	1	3	1	
Bilim		1	2		1							
Chulpon	3	4	2	4	8	7	6	1			1	
Esh Gvardiia	22	2	2	7	8	3	2	2			1	
Ezuvchi	4	13	5	6	17	3	2	3	7	3		
FAN	61	53	10	10	10	2	2	1				2
Ghafur Ghulom	34	35	5	9	11	11	11	5		2	14	2
Kamalak		8	1		2		2					
Manaviyat								1	4	7	7	1
Mekhnat	3	7				1						
Qaraqalpak				3		1						
Qomushlar		2	4	2	1	1	5	0				
Sharq			2	3	9	6	3	7	10	17	18	6
Uqituvchi	8	4	7	7	17	16	4	6	2			
Uzbekiston	8	12	9	8	12	15	13	5	1	1	1	
Uzbekiston Entsiklopediiasi	2						1		2	12		1
	149	145	57	67	101	70	52	33	28	45	47	12

On Sunday, June 17, I headed for Bishkek. Vehicles are not allowed to cross the border. A relative of my host family walked me through the Uzbek border crossing and then through the Kazakh border crossing. I lacked some form that Uzbek customs wanted because of the amount of cash I was carrying. We had a rational discussion—the concern seemed to be how I spent \$600 in a week and a half—and the official let me out. Unlike in the old days, no one checks for currency exchange receipts. Rather, you need the second copy of the entry customs form, plus possibly other forms. Although transport was supposed to be readily available on the Kazakh side, there was no sign of a bus station. I ended up taking a “taxi” driven by a sleazy-appearing driver, but it was a very nice car. He drove me about halfway, to Jambol, where he decided to find me another driver. The new

driver was a very nice man, but had driven to Tashkent the day before—how or whether he got the car across the border I don't know—and had not been able to sleep the previous night. He had a bad headache and kept groaning and slumping in his seat. I kept wondering whether he would doze off, and I would have to spring into the front seat to grab the wheel. A few hours out of Bishkek, he turned off onto a less travelled back road, to avoid police checkpoints. We immediately ran into a herd of rams being herded by men on horseback. To complete the trip as fast as possible, he drove like a bat out of Hell from then on, mostly on the wrong side of the road. The surrounding area had more water than most areas, with tallish green vegetation. At one point, we flashed past a herd of camels grazing in the distance. Despite the water, the region seemed deserted and untilled. When we got to the border, we could not cross it. We waited around for at least an hour until the driver gave up and paid another taxi to take me the rest of the way. The new driver drove at a crawl and kept telling me about thieves and made me wonder whether I would reach Bishkek safely. We did, and he even carried my suitcase up six flights of stairs.

My family in Bishkek was Korean, a widow and her teen-aged daughter. The woman sold cosmetics for a European firm that offered nutritional counseling and nutritional supplements, as well as low-priced cosmetics. It was a job with short hours and comparatively high pay in comparison with academic salaries. She had had another job as a cook for a Japanese businessman some years earlier, so meals were quite delicious.

I had reserved Monday to recuperate from the long trip to Bishkek and to renew acquaintances at the Kyrgyz American University Library. I had been to Bishkek in 1995 and 1996 to help set up the library. The Librarian allowed me to use the library as a base and gave me access to email. The University very kindly handled my registration. All the libraries and all but one book store are located more or less along Chuy Prospekt.

Tuesday, my first stop was the Kyrgyz Slavic University (KSU). One of their professors had been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Washington and was eager to help set up an exchange. While KSU is willing, the prospects are not promising. They do not have a materials budget. Most of the library holdings were acquired through a Soros grant, which has been expended. To obtain books now, they would check with the Knizhnaia Palata, i.e., the national depository, to find out where to contact the publisher. Through the publisher they contact the author and solicit a free copy.

Our former Fulbright scholar spent the rest of the day with me. We found the Statistical Institute. It has a small office that sells its own excellent statistical and census publications. It seemed outstandingly modern: It has a small catalog of its publications, takes orders via fax, takes payment by wire transfer and even ships the books! The last two volumes of the most recent census were published while I was in Bishkek. Their office is located on the second floor of the building on the corner of Frunze and, if I recall correctly, Koyenkozov. Their fax number is 996-321-660138. From there we went to the book kiosk in the lobby of the bright pink main building of the National University. This is the best place to look for older books. The kiosk also provides photocopying service to students, so it is best to be prepared to spend some time. The woman running it is very friendly and happy to write out the books and prices on a sheet of paper. There is another kiosk, only marginally interesting, in the lobby of the City Municipal Building, a dark gray stone building directly across the park and Chuy Prospekt from the National University. Just around the corner on Chuy and Manas is a bookstore, but it has only a few shelves of Kyrgyz books, some of which are older, but of little scholarly interest.



National University Bishkek

Wednesday, I went back to the Kyrgyz American University so the Librarian could drop me off at major bookstores. I went to Raritet, which is in small, horseshoe-shaped brown stone building in Dubovy Park just off Chuy Prospekt. Raritet has few scholarly books, but is the official map distributor. I got a good set of sheet maps of each province. (<http://www.books.kg> and rarity@elcat.kg; Ul. Pushkina, 78, g. Bishkek, Kyrgyzskaia Respublika, 720040). At the time, Raritet could not convert foreign currency.

In the afternoon, I went to the Chernyshevskii Public Library. It had previously been our best exchange partner. Even in 1995, it had had packages ready that it could not afford to send. Now, it no longer participates in exchanges. Budget problems are too great. After some determined phone calls by my friend at KSU, we managed to see the Assistant Director of the National Library. In 1995, the administrative librarians at the National Library had been well-trained and highly interested in finding ways to maintain their library. There was a section devoted to Kyrgyz bibliography and one for the upcoming Manas anniversary. There had been a lot of traffic in the lobby. This time, the lobby was vacant and seedy looking. I could not elicit any useful information from the Assistant Director. She was highly interested in any opportunities that might leave money under her direct control, but how that money might be used within the Library was unclear to me.

The next day, I visited the Library of the National University. This is not in the bright pink main building, but in a large green building on Chuy Prospekt, several blocks toward Osh Bazaar from the main building, where the road widens into a round plaza. On this trip, IREX was located in the same building. Three women talked with me and served tea with fruit and biscuits, a bad sign, I noted. They had our serial subscriptions ready to send but did not have money for postage. As is typical, the Library gets free copies of University publications. However, the price they wanted to charge us was exorbitant. They had little expectation for their library and were more interested in conversation over tea and biscuits. It seems becoming nannies in the U.S. looks like a hot opportunity.

Friday I spent at Nukus, the largest bookstore, with by far the best selection of books in the Kyrgyz language. It is located on Panfilov, across Abdumomunov behind Dubovy Park. It is run by two middle-aged women who had operated an export book business before the Soviet Union broke up. They knew the authors and all the publishers. They felt they could still sell books abroad if the buyer were willing to pay one of them individually through Western Union. They hand-write their invoices with abbreviated titles, not always in the same language as the book, and with prices. Nukus had some privately published materials which I did not see elsewhere, and some journal issues. Since I did not generally see issues of scholarly journals in bookstores or in kiosks, I assume that they are distributed by subscription only. (Tsentr Kyrgyzskoi knigi "Nuska", pr. Erkindik 56, g. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; phone: 996-321-22-43-44)

On Saturday I went to Areopag, the bookstore demanding the highest prices. It has a smaller, but high quality, selection of Kyrgyz books and

is the only place which carries books on law. It is set up as a joint venture with a German firm to sell office equipment. It is unique in that it can take foreign checks and exchange currency. The manager is enough of an entrepreneur to attempt profitable ventures, like selling books abroad. (Areopag Trade, Ul. Erkindik, 43, g. Bishkek, Kyrgyzskaia Respublika; fax: 312-66-51-79; book@mail.kg or Mikhail Mikhailovich Bukharov at buharov@yandex.ru)

On Sunday, the family I was staying with, some friends, and I went to the mountains. We had hoped to go to Issik-Ata, but transportation arrangements fell through. Instead, for \$20 for the day, I rented a taxi, and we went to Ala-Archa, a national park. Ala-Archa has never been lucky for me. In 1996, I had gone there with friends for the day. There was a very nice walk along a small river, but the park was thigh-deep in snow. We stood around cooking shashlik in miserable cold. This time, the weather was good, but when we got into the park, the upper part with the trail along the river was closed so the military could conduct rescue maneuvers. Maybe next time, the third, would be the charm...

On Monday, I mailed the books I had acquired. The Post Office was reliable, but hardly pleasant. Several young girls had to do the wrapping. They did the first few packages in such an appallingly bad way that I made them re-wrap them. A slightly older woman took the payment and issued the stamps. Again, due to a string catch, one package disappeared in the U.S. postal handling machines.

Publication statistics for Kyrgyzstan are quite modest, but consistent from year to year. Based on what I found, in the post-1991 period, Kyrgyzstan and Sham are publishing around 35% of scholarly publications. Erkin, Ilim, Kyrgyz Entsiklopediiasi, and Uchkun publish a few books, more or less regularly. I found thirty-four publishers that have published only a few books each.

Kyrgyzstan

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Other	1	3	2	7	5	7	4	5	4	5	14	7
Adabiat	3	5	1									
Akyl							5		3			
Erkin		1						1	1	2		1
Ilim	6	8		3		1	3		1	4	3	
Kyrgyz												
Entsiklopediiasi	1			1	7	6	1	3	1			
Kirstan		1		1	1	7	3	9	5	1	3	1
Mektep		1	1							2	2	

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Sham					1	2	4	3	6	7	7	1
Uchkun					2	2	1		2	2	1	
	11	19	4	12	16	25	21	21	23	23	30	10

Although the quantity of publications is low, the range of subjects is considerably more diverse than in Uzbekistan. Literature and history publishing thrive. In smaller but stable quantities, books on law, politics, ecology, economy, folk music, and culture appear. Russian scholarly publication continues in Kyrgyzstan, except in the field of literature. Approximately a third of the books on the market are in Russian, primarily on history, politics, economics, law, sociology, ecology, and the Korean minority.

One of the women working at the Kyrgyz-American University Library arranged for me to ride to Almaty with some of her relatives who were going over on a business trip. They turned out to be part of the President's military guard. We went in an SUV that did not stop at the border or any checkpoint. It was a quick, reliable trip.

Downtown Almaty is laid out in a large square grid. Transportation is reliable and efficient. There are trams and buses that operate on the perimeter of the downtown area and across the center of the grid. There are also minibuses which have set routes shown on a placard in the window. They are cheap and fast. My first stop was at an air freight company, Schenker International (pr. Abaia, 42/44, of[fice]. 907, g. Almaty, Kazakhstan; fax: 7-3272-509168), so I could arrange to drop books off for shipment as I bought them. Kazakhstan has enacted a law requiring foreigners to use a shipping service instead of the Post Office.

Kazakhstan is linked into the world banking system. Currency exchange offices are all over. ATM's are common. Some are even said to disburse dollars. However, the ability to convert currency has not reached smaller businesses.

From Schenker, I continued on to the Dom Izdatel'stva, or Publishing House. Most publishers have their offices and a small sales room in that one building. I spent the rest of Thursday and most of Friday there. There is no building directory, so one must enter the left end of the building and walk up and down the hall on each of the six floors. The elevator is interesting—pushing a button closes the door, but another push is necessary in order to move. There is much variety among the publishers. All publishers publish literature and history, so I will not repeat those as specialties of each publisher. Zhazushy is the largest press. Their “salesroom” is a locked storage closet in which one copy each of all available books is

displayed in a bookcase. A middle-aged woman opens the room and pulls a copy of each book off the storage shelves as you choose them from the bookcase. They LOVE Americans, since we buy almost everything. Qazaqstan is also large. Its clerks are not highly motivated, so it takes a long time to get your purchases totaled up and an invoice written out. Qainar is a small publisher, with only a short shelf or two of books mainly on agriculture and home economics, plus some books on the ecology of Kazakhstan. Oner has a salesroom that actually looks like a salesroom, and they rotate the sales-staff in order to keep the store open during lunch. Oner specializes in coffee-table books and books on Kazakh folk music and material culture. Bilim has a few long shelves high on the wall in a secretary's office. Bilim publishes some economics books, very few titles on law, and works on minorities in Kazakhstan. Zhalyn displays books in a room serving as a "mini-mart". It sells books of other publishers, as well as its own. The sales staff is always busy settling purchases "on account" with regular customers, so you need to pick up an "invoice" some hours after making purchases. Ana-Tili has a whole wall of shelving. One of the office staff describes each title on the shelf as you look at it, even if you can read it for yourself. Ana-Tili has a strong collection of publications on Kazakh customs, Kazakh language, and Turkic languages. Balausa publishes mostly children's books but does offer a few for adults. Rauan is the only press entered from the right end of the building and is not accessible through the left entrance. Rauan is notable only for a large group of specialized Kazakh-Russian dictionaries on such topics as economics, forestry, politics, etc.

The presses close for an hour at lunchtime. I found it interesting that a whole staff would have a very large meal together every day. There are two "restaurants" in the building, as well as Zhalyn's mini-mart. One of them I did not visit. The other was an unadorned worker's restaurant, with a few tables and a screened off area in one corner for dish washing and food preparation. The prices were extremely cheap. The food was home cooked and clean—mostly soup and salad of the day, chicken, and a casserole type dish.

On Friday, I also visited the al-Farabi National State University Library. The campus is lovely. The buildings are in two rows along a vista with a view of mountains. At the end of the vista is a large statue of al-Farabi. The Library put on an elaborate buffet of open-faced sandwiches, cookies, juice, tea and wine—a very bad sign. They are eager to exchange materials, but can offer only University publications. They have absolutely no way of shipping materials. They are able to exchange with the Library of Congress,

because USIA handles the shipping. The Library showed more initiative than I saw at most libraries. They had obtained about twenty terminals and were compensating for their inability to buy books by heavy use of the Internet. They proposed sending us scans of journal articles in exchange for our materials. The idea is creative, but the journals from which they can send images are very limited in number.



al-Farabi National State University

On Saturday, publishers are not open for business, so I went to the Akademkitap bookstore on Furmanova just off Gogola. There is smaller branch of the same store at the other end of Furmanova. This is the most expensive bookstore in town and has a large selection. They have six to eight shelves of books on law. Although other bookshops had more literary works, I would say the Akademkitap probably has more social science works than other stores. It is also the official map distributor. As well as maps of all Kazakhstan, it has a complete set of maps of each oblast', or province, and a set of maps of the neighborhoods of Almaty. Just around the corner on Gogola, there is a food store with an excellent delicatessen featuring Kazakh and Russian food ranging from the standard baked and fried potato pierogi through horsemeat dishes, plus a counter of salads and fancy baked goods. It is upscale enough for European stomachs.

Having finished browsing in Akademkitap before lunchtime, I fortunately happened to head for Kitap Alemi. It is around the corner from the Dom Izdatel'stva. It seems to have the biggest overall selection of books, including older books. It sold books published by Elorda in the new capital city, Astana. Kitap Alemi was closing for renovations at the end of that day. They let me stay after they closed until 7 P.M. My purchases must have really increased their profits for the month. If I were to go to Kazakhstan again, I would visit Kitap Alemi right after the Dom Izdatel'stva.

I began Monday with a visit to the Library of the National University, formerly the Academy of Sciences. The main lobby of the Academy of

Sciences building is known for the audio properties of its dome—you can hear a whisper on one edge anywhere in the room. The Library's Director actually came in from vacation to meet with me. There was no food, and they were truly serious about reinstating our exchange agreement. Of all the libraries I visited, this one functions the best. It has a separate unit for exchanges. Their record keeping is accurate, and they know where their problems lie. A budget line for exchanges was restored in 2001. There may be a problem with the budget line for postage, however, since they seem to be behind on sending shipments. There is a gap of perhaps three months between the time parcels are sent for shipment and the time they actually go into the mail. The delay is attributed, I am sure, to the staff who have to pack and mail the shipments. An explanation of why this obvious problem cannot be improved was not forthcoming. The Library knows that quite a few recent shipments never arrived and is working on solving the problem in addition to resupplying lost shipments. The Library has a separate unit for Kazakh publications. It is able to provide information on what Kazakh serials are available. The Library has an office selling duplicates and even provides lists. Whether the duplicates can always be located is uncertain.

Daik Press is located in the Academy of Sciences building. At the back of the building, in line with the entrance to the Library, is another door. One enters through that door and proceeds down a hall that looks totally vacant, until the entrance to the press appears. It is a small press, but in 1999, it published *Qazaq tilining sozdigi*, the large Kazakh-Kazakh dictionary and was planning to publish some comprehensive multi-lingual dictionaries. It also publishes works on Kazakh music and the Korean minority. The yurt just outside the back door of the building is a good place to buy souvenirs. It is owned by some of the local artists.

This was the day that I happened upon the Statistical Bureau sales office. Their publications are expensive. The census produced in 2000 was available. The latest comprehensive statistical yearbook on display was for 1999, although there were more recent specialized breakdowns of statistics, for example, on women or economics. Unfortunately, I did not have enough local currency to buy what I wanted. I made three more trips to the Statistical Bureau, before finding it open again. The clerks, or *devushki* (girls), must not get paid much, because they are grumpy at best and not inclined to open the sales room if they can avoid doing so.

I visited the Scientific and Technical Library on Tuesday. It had two branches. The wrong one is hard to find, and the other, to which a staff member escorted me, is in an unmarked building on an unnamed road. The staff was pleasant, and they were very practical and fully familiar with

the advantages and disadvantages of web pages and what is involved in providing online service. It is a public library which does not engage in exchanges, so our conversation on that topic was fairly short.

It is not far from the Scientific and Technical Library to reach the Sanat Publishing House store on Baitursunova across from the Nikolskii Market. Sanat publishes a large series of historical novels, some in Russian, some in Kazakh. It also publishes historical works drawing from Korean sources, partially in Korean.

On the same block, there is a new bookstore called Dom Knigi Madaniyet. It has a substantial collection of Kazakh books. By the time I visited it, I had bought most of my books. I did buy an Internet directory there, since their price was lower than the Akademkitap's.

Among the visits I made during the rest of the week was one to the National Library. I met with the Director and five other department heads. Their responses to my queries tended to be more theoretical rather than practical. The Director had sent me a list of some online Kazakh publications prior to our meeting. I suspect she was not keen on exchanges, since she asked what would be the value of an exchange when those publications were online. The National Library has equipment to produce CD-ROM's and does an excellent job of it. I bought a CD of Kazakh folk music which provided information on folk instruments, composers, etc. The Library has also established a Preservation Center. However, I was unable to ascertain that it has any equipment. That issue was consistently skirted in our conversations. Despite the financial problems of libraries in Kazakhstan, the upper staff of the National Library can regularly attend International Conferences.

The legal publisher Zheti Zhargy is just down Abai from the National Library. Across the street from Zheti Zhargy, on the corner of Abai and Furmanova, is a bookstore that did not have a distinguishable name. It sold some books self-published by their authors.

Through a friend of a friend with connections, I was able to visit the Atamura Press warehouse. Atamura has recently published a three-volume version of the 11th century Turkic dictionary by Mahmud Kashgari, entitled *Turik sozdigi*. It has also republished a three-volume history of Kazakhstan, although it is hard to find all of the volumes. I went to the public Atamura store as well. It is in a white building on Ablai Khan just off Gogola. This is harder to find than I expected, since the door is set back from Ablai Khan, facing away from Gogola. Although much of their stock duplicates that of the warehouse, they had literary works I had not seen before.

There is a bookstore, called "Book Store" on the corner of Seifullin and Gogola. I found a book of short biographies of folk musicians with examples of their music there, but not much else. They do carry coffee-table picture books on Kazakhstan, perhaps a third of which consists of advertisements for the companies subsidizing the publication. Across Seifullin, used books are sold from blankets laid out on the sidewalk. Another bookstore is located on Abai between Mechnikov and Seifullin. As of last summer, it sold only popular works. One other bookstore is located on Zhibek Zholy around Pushkin. It had a small Kazakh section, but it could probably be overlooked without much concern. There are very likely other book stores in the city, which I missed.

Publishing in Kazakhstan decreased after its independence, in 1991, and then has increased as its economy improved. Although the economy is hardly thriving, it has sustained a slightly higher level of improvement than the economies of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Generally, Ana Tili, Atamura, Qazaqstan, Sanat, and Zhazushy each publish more than ten scholarly books a year. I would place Ghylym in the same category, but the Kazakh librarians definitely felt that the press no longer occupied the same status it had before 1991. Balausa, Bilim, Daik Press, Elorda, Oner, Qainar, Qazaq Entsiklopediiasy, Rauan, Zhalyyn and Zheti Zhargi are all stable presses with somewhat lower levels of production. I found 39 other publishers that produced ever fewer books.

Kazakhstan

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Other	13	4	12	11	15	10	7	4	16	8	13	8
Adolat									1			
Ana Tili		1	4	6	4	9	12	10	13	2	3	1
Atamura			3	9	11	9	9	6	19	7	4	1
Balausa			1	2	4	2	1	3		1	2	1
Bilim			1	1	2	4	6	3	5	6	2	3
Daik									1	7	2	3
Elorda					2					4	15	
Ghylym	25	27	9	11	13	15	15	11	19	3	3	
Nauka	14											
Oner	2	1	2	2	4	3	3	2	5	2	2	2
Qainar	3		1	1	2	6		1	2	1		
Qazaq												
Entsiklopediiasy		1		1		2		1	4	2	1	
Qazstan	3	1	4	6	15	5	8	13	11	5	9	1
Rauan	2	1	1	1	5	5	5		3	1	16	1

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Sanat				10	8	11	17	18	7	1		
Zhalyn	1	1	4	2	3	2	7	5	6	1		
Zhazushy	47	6	3	4	10	7	17	20	22	3	9	3
Zheti Zharghy					1	3	2	1	2		2	2
	110	43	45	57	101	90	103	97	147	60	84	26

Language, literature and history are the primary topics of publishers in Kazakhstan, but politics, foreign relations, international treaties, traditional culture, law, ecology, economics, and minorities are also well-represented. Historical materials, works of folk poets and writers from the turn of the century, particularly materials that could not be published under the Soviets, are being republished. Unlike the other two Republics, local authors still write and publish literature in Russian. Certainly a fifth of scholarly publications are in Russian. Works such as telephone books and Internet directories are beginning to appear. Zhazushy also publishes a small number of works in Uigher.

The main tourist attraction in Almaty is the Medeo, or professional ice rink, in the mountains outside town. One climbs about 840 steps to the top of the earthen dam above the rink for the view and stops to enjoy shashlik on the way down. Buses and minibuses run regularly from Dostyk. The old Art Museum on Satpaev near the Rakhat Palace Hotel is spectacular and very large. The Museum of Modern Art across the road from the National Library is much smaller, but has a better sales room. Art is not cheap, but it is of high quality. Silver jewelry is a local specialty.

Email centers are almost as plentiful as currency exchange offices. The problem arises that the network hub is overloaded and cannot allow your dial-up connection to complete. There is an email office on the same floor as Schenker, just around the corner from their main door. It is owned by a wizened old man, maybe 4 feet tall, who wears a suit on which he shows off his World War II medals. He is really sweet. When the hub works, it is convenient. Computers are a recent enough arrival that staff competent in their use are hard to find. Teenagers are frequently hired to maintain the computers but feel that their real work is an interruption to be avoided as they download music clips. One does not have to pay if the connection to the Internet is unsuccessful, but repeated attempts certainly waste time. There is a professional Internet center at the Exhibition Center on Jandosova.

Schenker has proved reliable in the long run, but it is important to check in frequently before leaving to be sure the books are packed, hauled to

the airport, processed through customs, and booked on a flight. Schenker cannot quote a firm price until the books have passed customs. Efficiency of the staff seems to vary. It is also important to follow up on whether the shipment actually makes it onto a flight, even though payment needs to be made before the shipment leaves. Schenker cannot leave the shipment sitting very long or it incurs storage costs that would not be included in the payment. My shipment costs varied between \$2 and \$3 per pound.

International flights leave Almaty around 3 A.M. IREX or ACCELS hires local drivers on a regular basis. If you ask nicely, they will refer you to a reliable English-speaking driver who can take you to the airport. Waiting at the Almaty airport is not a pleasant experience. Departing flights leave from an old building whose entrance is rather out of the way. There are no signs. You have to go through security first and only passengers destined for specified flights can go through. You, or the driver, have to ask the guard whether your flight is currently being processed. The customs agents were more predatory here than anywhere else on my trip. Usually two copies of the Kazakh customs declaration are issued upon entering Kazakhstan. It is essential to keep your copy and present it to these customs agents. It requires a substantial bribe to carry foreign currency out if you cannot prove you brought it in. I suspect the whole issue has little to do with actual laws, but is attributable to the presence of greed—of the six or so customs agents I encountered, usually one or two seemed to making money in this way.