ARMENIAN STUDIES AT UCLA AND THE

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S ARMENIAN COLLECTIONS

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In the late 1950s, the University of California established a Near Eastern Studies

program on its southern campus, namely, UCLA. Concurrently, the Near Eastern Center was

also established (1957) and the renowned Arabist and modern humanist Prof. Gustave von

Grunebaum was named its first Director. Prof. von Grunebaum and the then UCLA Chancellor

Franklin D. Murphy, recognized that Armenia occupied a unique place among the diverse

societies of the Near East in that Armenians maintained their Indo-European language and

developed a distinct Christian culture that drew inspiration from and served as a link between

the Orient and the Occident, and thus Armenia was a necessary component of the Near Eastern

studies programs.

This interest on UCLA's part coincided with the burgeoning ethnic self-awareness of the

Armenian community of California -- the American-born Armenian community I might add --

which was anxious to see Armenian language, history and culture taught at the university level.

A similar movement was in motion on the East Coast spear-headed by the National Association

for Armenian Studies and Research newly founded by Mr. Manoog S. Young. There, the thrust

was to establish an Armenian Studies Endowed Chair at Harvard. A local branch of NAASR was

created in California to fund-raise for UCLA. Some names that come to mind are Dr. and Mrs.

Pierre and Alice Haig, Mrs. Beatrice Davidian, Dr. J. Michael Hagopian and Mrs. Toni Hagopian,

Mrs. Anita Bishop, Mr. George Mekjian, Mrs. Serafie and some others.

Now, dare I give voice to the tale I heard (told tongue-in-cheek perhaps?) as to which

institution should be the first to establish a chair -- Harvard or UCLA? A long time ago, I was

informed by one non-Armenian faculty member that had been involved in the beginnings of the

fund-raising that they agreed that the number of the books held by the two institutional

libraries would determine the outcome. They counted the books. Harvard, that venerable

institution in existence three centuries, possessed 300 books. The recently established, thirty-

year old UCLA had 30. And thus, the chair went to Harvard in 1959. Obviously there had not

been enough money for both chairs. An agreement between the University and NAASR in 1962

specified that if California Armenians raised $200,000 in the following eight years, an Armenian

chair at UCLA would be established.

In the meantime, courses in Armenian history and language were being taught on

campus since 1960. Some of the early faculty members were Dr. Louise Nalbandian (1960-61),

Dr. A. O. Sarkissian (Fall 1961-62), Dr. Kevork Sarafian, Emeritus (spring 1962), and the Very Rev.

Smpad Lapajian (1963-64). In 1962, Dr. Richard Hovannisian joined the Department of History

as lecturer and introduced several new courses while completing his Ph.D. degree. In 1965

Prof. Avedis Sanjian joined the faculty of the Department of Near Eastern Studies (later to be

known as the Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, NELC for short) as Associate

Professor with tenure, teaching Armenian language and literature.

By 1969, after many years of hard work, the needed funds for an Armenian Chair at

UCLA had been raised. On May 26, 1969, Chancellor Charles E. Young announced the

establishment in perpetuity of the Chair for Armenian Studies in UCLA's Department of Near

Eastern Languages and Cultures with Professor Avedis K. Sanjian as the first occupant. The

Chancellor also announced that a regular teaching position in Armenian history would be

established in the Department of History. In the fall of 1969, Dr. Richard Hovannisian was

appointed to this position as an Associate Professor.

This arrangement accommodated students concentrating in the linguistic, literary,

philological, and historical fields. Hand in hand with this, the UCLA Graduate Division in the fall

of 1969, approved Armenian as an area of Specialization for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the

NELC Department as well as in the History Department, in view of the fact that both Professors

Sanjian and Hovannisian had augmented the teaching curricula in their respective departments

with a considerable number of graduate courses. Beginning in 1966 and until 1989, the

language instructional staff included, annually, a graduate student as Teaching Assistant. After

1986, the position became a lectureship. The responsibility of the instructors was to teach the

courses in modern Armenian language. In 1979, the Armenian Chair was renamed "Narekatsi

Chair of Armenian Studies."

The year 1986 was another auspicious year for Armenian studies at UCLA. This was the

year the Armenian Educational Foundation established the AEF Chair in Modern Armenian

History thus ensuring the teaching of Armenian history in perpetuity at UCLA. Prof.

Hovannisian was appointed the first holder of this chair established within the domain of the

UCLA Department of History. The Professor held this position until his retirement last year. He

has taught Armenian history for 50 years; he has placed the study of modern Armenian history

including the topics of Genocide and Genocide Denial on the world stage through his books and

numerous articles, through the world-wide lectures and conferences he has set up or

participated in -- the most noteworthy of the latter being his series on Armenian historic cities

and provinces thus informing and raising the consciousness of thousands of Armenians.

Thousands have flocked to his lectures and conferences. The most telling results, to my mind,

is the preparation of his students who have and will carry on his legacy for, he has produced

twelve Ph.D.s (the first of whom were Dr. Artin Arslanian (1974) and Dr. Gerard Libaridian

(1974) and the most recent is Dr. Garo Momdjian (2012), five C. Phil.s and twenty M.A.s As for

the number of students that have taken his classes, in a good year more than 100 students

attended his classes.

Prof. Hovannisian retired last year. As of the 2011/12 academic year, the new professor

of Armenian history at UCLA is Dr. Sebouh Aslanian, as you all know. We wish him success in all

his endeavors.

In the summer of 1995, the Armenian scholarly world lost one of its foremost scholars

and the first holder of the Narekatsi Chair, Prof. Avedis Sanjian. In order to maintain the

continuity of the program of the Narekatsi Chair, the NELC Department and the Dean of the

School of Letters and Science invited, successively, two scholars to fill in until the appointment

of the next holder of the Chai. Prof. Marc Nichanian of Paris served during the academic year

1995/96 prior to accepting a position at Columbia University. Prof. Nichanian added a new

course , a graduate seminar on the study of the work of Hagop Oshagan and, after an in-depth

study of the language course offerings and the Armenian student population of UCLA,

recommended that East Armenian language courses be introduced in the curriculum.

Prof. S. Peter Cowe arrived at UCLA in 1996/97 and in 2000 he was appointed the

second holder of the Narekatsi Chair. Almost immediately, he introduced several courses. The

first was the teaching of East Armenian. This course (elementary, intermediately, advanced

levels) has been taught by Dr. Anahid Keshishian Aramouni for more than a decade now, while

West Armenian courses are taught by Dr. Hagop Gulludgian. Classical Armenian is taught by

Prof. Cowe. To the existing curriculum, Prof. Cowe has added some five or six courses

(American-Armenian Literature, Armenian Drama, Armenian Cinema, Nationalism in Armenian

Literature, 20th Century Armenian Literature, and Canons of Armenian Literature). To date,

this chair has produced three Ph.D.s two of whom under the direction of Prof. Sanjian and one

under Prof. Cowe; four C.Phil.s, one of whom under Prof. Cowe and six M.A.s also with Prof.

Cowe. Prof. Cowe, as Prof. sSanjian before him, has also organized conferences relating to

Armenian literature.

Besides the degrees in language, literature and history, there have been a number of Ph.D.s in

other areas such as comparative literature, sociology, linguistics, history and *Indo-European Studies.*

The latest news is that as of this year the NELC Dept. has instituted a comprehensive

interdisciplinary major in Middle Eastern Studies which means that Armenian students may

elect the B.A. degree specializing in Armenian. This became possible through Prof. Cowe's

widening the base of Armenian courses with the financial help of the Friends of UCLA Armenian

Language and Culture Studies. The Friends organization was formed in 1998 and, was

recognized by the University as a support group of the Narekatsi Chair. This Friends group

established the Beatrice Davidian Endowment Fund and, since 2004, has been raising funds

towards the annual hiring of visiting faculty in specializations other than language, literature

and history such as art, music, folklore, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, women's

studies and sociology. Thus, it has leant a hand in the successful establishment of the B.A. in

Armenian. This organization also supports the University Library with funds for Armenian

books through its Library Endowment Fund of $25,000. It supports, as does the Narekatsi Chair,

the annual colloquia of the Armenian graduate students with generous donations. It also

honors, once a year, a scholar whose life's work is considered a major contribution to the

treasury of Armenian culture, with the Narekatsi Gold Medal. The honoree on March 17, 2013

will be our own Prof. Richard Hovannisian.

Time constraints prevent me from listing names of visiting faculty both in Armenian

history and Armenian language and literature, from speaking of scholarships and fellowships to

help aspiring students to reach their educational goals, of public lecturers, conferences and

symposia organized on campus and elsewhere nationally and internationally, of the activities of

the Armenian Student Association that has been around for more than 50 years and is a

powerful force in its own right, of important visitors and so much more.

THE COLLECTIONS

UCLA has been in the forefront of the pioneering endeavor to make Armenian studies a

strong presence within the Middle Eastern Studies domain and at present claims to be the

largest and most comprehensive in the country from the point of view of course offerings,

degree programs, and enrollments.

The instructional and research programs at UCLA utilize what we have believed, until recent

years, to be one of the largest funds of Armenian research materials in the United States.

Because of its size and quality and bibliographic control noted for its depth and thoroughness,

the collection is also the most widely used.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN COLLECTION at the University Research Library

has roughly paralleled the growth of the Armenian studies programs at UCLA. In 1960, the

UCLA Research Library received the private library of the late Dr. K. M. Khantamour, comprising

a collection of some 1000 out-of-print nicely bound books dating from the 19th century and the

first half of the 20th century. These were mainly in the fields of Armenian history, literature,

and folklore. I have seen a 1960 photograph where Dr. Khantamour is standing next to His

Holiness Vazgen I and Chancellor Franklin Murphy all are looking down at a large volume from

the collection. At that time, there were no professional librarians with Armenian language

specialty to catalog the books and incorporate their records by author, title and subject in the

then-general card catalog. These books did not even have a hand-list. At that time, Dr. Louise

Nalbandian, an early American-Armenian Ph.D. in Armenian history and author of the Armenian

Revolutionary Movement of the 19th Century (1963), was a strong presence on campus. She

was walking along on campus one day when she came face to face with Chancellor Murphy

who asked her why she looked so thoughtful. She immediately informed him of the need for an

Armenian typewriter to create records of the Khantamour books. The Chancellor lost no time

in funding the purchase of an Armenian typewriter and a student was put to work to create

Armenian language records on 3 x 5 cards for the thousand books. These books were placed in

some beautiful, custom made bookcases with glass fronts.

In the course of the next few years, the library purchased small groups of books from

various sources and began receiving gifts from Armenia. After the mid-60s, the faculty visited

Armenia and had groups of books sent to UCLA as gifts. These added up to some 1500-2000

volumes and at various times, students were implemented to use their own tables of

romanization to create 3 x 5 cards for the card catalog. However, the books were not given call

numbers so they were not housed in the library stacks and the cards were not merged with the

other, professionally cataloged book records. Instead, the Armenian transliterated records of

author, title and sometimes subject, were filed following the Z's in the card catalog. One can

imagine the frustration of people who might need to find some materials on Armenian topics in

the Armenian language.

In 1968, UCLA purchased an outstanding and perhaps the world's largest private library

of printed books, manuscripts and archival materials belonging to the late Dr. Caro O. Minasian

of Isfahan, Iran. Accumulated during the lifetime of a single individual, this private library

consists of some 10,000 printed books and manuscripts as well as thousands of archival

documents in Armenian and various Middle Eastern and European languages. The purchase of

this collection became possible through the concerted efforts of Chancellor Murphy, Prof. von

Grunebaum, University Librarian Robert Vosper, Professor Amin Banani, and especially

Professor Sanjian who initiated and finalized the negotiations with the owner and secured its

shipment to UCLA. With the exception of a most generous contribution of $25,000 from Mr.

Alex Manoogian of Detroit, Michigan, UCLA accomplished the purchase of this unique library

with its own resources and at the cost of $200,000. Of the 10,000 volumes, 2000 are

manuscripts of which about 90 are in Armenian. This makes the UCLA collection of manuscripts

the largest in a U.S. public institution. Prof. Sanjian has published a descriptive catalog of these

manuscripts. My colleague, Nora Avetyan, will go into more detail concerning these

manuscripts and the thousands of archival materials and documents, including ecclesiastical

encyclicals and government edicts, private papers of Armenian clergymen and mercantile

families in Iran and India.

The Armenian portion of printed books in the Minasian collection is about 2000

volumes and includes some 1000 early printed and rare books in the fields of history, language,

theology, church history and literature printed; a large number of translations from European

languages; early runs of several valuable journals and a large number of 19th and 20th century

publications. The UCLA Armenian rare book collection includes the gamut of Armenian

printing presses in port cities ranging from Amsterdam to Marseille, to Venice, all the way to

Madras and Calcutta. For example, the Special Collections Department houses two copies of

the Amsterdam 1666 Armenian Bible, one of them on blue paper.

PURCHASES

In late 1967, I received my Master's in Librarianship and was immediately welcomed by the

Cataloging Department of the Research Library. You can imagine my situation then. There

were no encyclopedias, no biographical dictionaries, no bibliographies, no literary histories for

me to use as tools on the job. I had a large group of books in West Armenian (Khantamour

collection and such) and in East Armenian (Soviet Armenian publications that had been

dribbling in during the 60s) a table of transliteration with both East and West Armenian options

but preferring the East Armenian and no subject headings to speak of in the Library of Congress

Subject Headings Book. Then, we were also dealing with typewriters and card catalogs. My

battles with the Library of Congress were about to start. About this later.

In 1973, I was also appointed bibliographer for Armenian and Modern Greek. I was

assigned a modest budget but in those years of plenty, at year end, the Near Eastern Center

always provided the Middle East Bibliographer with extra funds for the purchase of books and I

had a modest share in that. There were, and are, three ways of acquiring books. The first is

through purchase, of course. In the Armenian field this was difficult as there were hardly any

large publishers that sent you printed booklists. There were the occasional ones of course.

With West Armenian books booksellers would contact me and often prepare lists and send

them based on our collection profile -- which was mainly in the areas of the Armenian programs

on campus and the interests of the faculty. With local bookstores, I would visit them on a

Saturday and prepare lists of books I felt we needed and we did not possess. One big effort at

buying a large selection from a West Armenian booklist was that of Mr. Iskenderian of Beirut

who prepared his list in dark corners and corridors during the Beirut bombardments of the 70s,

sent his list and letters to his wife in Germany, then Ireland, who then contacted me, etc. Some

communication was done by telephone. I had to find special funding for this purchase which

finally arrived. Some items literally had bullet holes in them. Library administrators have come

to the rescue many times when the need has arisen The most regulated fashion of acquiring

books through purchase was from 1973-1990 through the to-be-published catalog called knigi

na armianskom iazyke (Hayeren grk'er). It would offer more than 800 titles. I would select

what I needed and/or what my budget would allow but the books would be channeled through

a specific European bookseller.

GIFTS AND EXCHANGES

The exchange arrangements were more common in the Soviet era as far as the

Armenian books are concerned. This was mainly with the Committee for Cultural Relations

with Foreign Countries (Artasahmanyan Erkrneri het and the Barekamut'yan ev Mshakuyt'I

Haykakan Enkerut'yun) and was most useful in the regular exchange of periodical titles. Of

recent years, exchanges have been taking place with a few institutions such as the Armenian

Studies Research Center of the University of Michigan in Dearborn.

Gifts at first were very welcome. They came at unexpected moments, they were large

or small in quantity and most of the time they were new to the library. From Armenia, we have

received gifts from the Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad

(Spyurkahayutyan het mshakutayin kapi komite), the Library of the Academy of Sciences and

one or two other institutions. Often the gifts would be large after a visit from here by Prof.

Sanjian, or Prof. Hovannisian or myself. There was a large one-time gift of some 250-300 music

scores published in Soviet Armenia from the 1940s to the 1970s given to me by the then

President of the Union of Armenian Composers, Mr. Edward Mirzoyan during my stay in

Armenia in 1978. Gifts locally were from individuals such as the fairly large collection of the

very rev. Isahag Ghazarian gifted to us by his relatives after his death. Another was the music

collection of American-Armenian composer conductor Marshall Chashudian gifted to us by his

widow in 1980. This includes music printed in the United States, France and the Middle East

and combines folk music, ecclesiastic music and Modern Diaspora composers' works. One item

stands out: it is the conductor's score of the famous opera Anush which was filmed in

Hollywood probably in the early 1950s. To complete the picture of the music numbers, I

purchased some 100 works, mostly of contemporary composers on a trip to Armenia in 2002.

Add to these the books and scores received in trickles over the years, and we have a total of

approximately 600 music scores and books, almost completely cataloged.

An unusual gift was that of Mrs. Jean Zakarian of Santa Barbara. This was the W. L.

Sachtleben collection of photographs, notes and letters connected with this American's lengthy

stay in Erzurum in the mid-1890s trying to unearth the murder details of an American cyclist in

that Vilayet and becoming witness to the Oct. 30, 1895 massacres of the Armenians. He had

pictures of many victims photographed and then sent them to an English periodical. These

photographs were the subject of my paper in Prof. Hovannisian's conference on Karin/Erzerum.

The Library has also received the archive of the Karin Compatriotic Union as a gift which had

been in the possession of Mrs. Katherine Mirijanian of San Diego. Many other compatriotic

unions have donated books and especially runs of their periodical publications. Many

individuals have been supportive friends of the library and have donated small and large groups

of book s to the library. The most constant donor was Prof. Sanjian. I should add here, that my

colleague Mr. Hirsch, has looked up Armenian organizations upon his book buying trips to

Argentina, Uruguay, some Middle Eastern countries (such as Lebanon) and elsewhere and

almost always has been given some interesting ephemera to bring to the library thus enriching

our holdings of information of other areas of the Armenian Diaspora.

The NUMBERS

The Armenian Collections although administratively independent of the two chairs are

intimately connected with the Armenian programs and cater to the needs of faculty and

students and the wider circle of scholars in Armenian language, literature, history and beyond --

such as art, architecture, folklore, church history, music, and some others. The materials take

the form of manuscripts, printed books, newspapers, periodicals, dissertations, microfilms and

microfiche, recordings, slides, photographs, music scores, documentary films and archival

documents. If in the late 1960s we had some 4-5000 books, by the time I curtailed collecting

and concentrated on cataloging in 1990 while Mr. David Hirsch took over the book buying role,

the library had amassed some 23,000 books at which time I used to claim that we had the

largest, the best bibliographically controlled and the most used Armenian collection in the

United States. Evidently LC and Harvard have large funds of money nowadays and they buy

everything. Since the early 90s, the library's intake averages about 300 titles a year.

To date, our collection has grown to some 30,000 volumes. This total does not count

the approximately 700 periodical titles, the close to 100 newspapers (dead or current), the

hundreds of microfilms and thousands of microfiche, the scores of films and recordings and the

thousands of archival materials. We have periodicals from the early 1800's to the present. We

own the first Armenian newspaper published in the U.S., namely, Aregak ed. Haykak Ekinian,

Jersey City, 1888. We even have received publications of the notorious ASALA group sent to me

without a return address.

CATALOGING

Of course having a large collection is meaningless unless it is available for use. Truly, at

the beginning of my career at the Research Library, there were only two or three shelves of

cataloged books in non-Armenian languages. The rest were out of sight and a book could only

be accessible by paging it through a numerically identifying number found in the separate

Armenian card catalog. Soon I discovered that the Library of Congress cataloging methods

were quite antiquated and inadequate for handling large numbers of books. In language

classification numbers, for example, East Armenian had been given short shrift whereas since

the 1920s a very large number of books on East Armenian had been published. I don't think

much had been done with Armenian language materials at LC since the end of WWI. It was

necessary to modernize things. It became my role to introduce changes in the Armenian

Romanization table of LC, add to Armenian subject headings (e.g. devised the entire history

period breakdown of Armenia), improved classification schemes in Armenian language -- thus

modernizing the bibliographic control of Armenian materials. All these innovations were

adopted by the Library of Congress and thus by the English-speaking countries. This is

considered an important contribution to the system of bibliographic control of Armenian

materials in the United States.

How far we have come today from those difficult, time consuming but creative days.

Today, while cataloging continues to be difficult and time-consuming -- what with complicated

international cataloging standards -- the work of the cataloger is not locked up in the card

catalog of his/her institution's library. Now, the record becomes accessible to anyone in the

world because the UCLA catalog is on-line. Now, the work goes to data bases and it can be

copied by other libraries that do not have the personnel to do the onerous and expensive work.

This is another level of pride to be part of the Armenian component of the UCLA family.