

Cataloguing Practices in Kazakhstan Amidst Pandemic: The Nazarbayev University Library Experience

April R. Manabat

Expert Librarian

Nazarbayev University Library

Nur-Sultan Kazakhstan

april.manabat@nu.edu.kz

The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed brought a drastic change both in industries and educational institutions around the globe. This crisis has forced many governments to close many institutions even cultural centers such as libraries to minimize physical and social interactions with the hope of “flattening the curve”. The same is true in Kazakhstan. Libraries are forced to close their doors physically but still expected to respond to the informational needs of their clients remotely. As many schools and universities are now shifting into the online mode of learning, libraries are putting its best efforts to provide synchronous and asynchronous services to their clients during the pandemic.

The **Nazarbayev University (NU) Library** is one of those libraries in the country that was also forced to close the physical library doors to their clients due to the pandemic. As a relatively young university library, it has been offering relevant, comprehensive, and current resources and services to the entire academic community since 2010. As NU decided to adapt the online mode of learning during the Fall 2020 and the incoming Spring 2021 semesters, the library willingly extended its collections to the community by providing extended access to electronic resources and online databases alongside with the various online library services such as interlibrary loans, virtual reference assistance, virtual library orientations and information literacy programs among others.

To facilitate easy access and retrieval of these electronic resources and databases even during the pandemic, the librarians especially the cataloguers have been working tirelessly to make them available online for the community. Aside from print collections, e-books are being cataloged to make them readily available to library users through the library’s online public access catalog (OPAC). Since their in-house integrated library system (ILS) allows them to catalog these kinds of materials, e-books that are accessible perpetually are being included in the collection where links to these resources are provided alongside with other metadata. With the use of available cataloguing tools online such as the Library of Congress (LC) classification web, cataloguers were able to classify and assign appropriate subject headings to these resources. Although cataloguing of e-books has been done even before the pandemic intensified in Kazakhstan, this crisis allows them to focus more on processing these collections. Aside from this, the NU library has recently implemented creating authority records for the library collection to bring together library materials that belongs to a common author or creator.

Due to the nature of their work, cataloguers are expected to work physically in the library. As the pandemic heightened in the country, bulk number of print materials from previous acquisition orders have arrived and need to be processed. To continue the work, scheduling of cataloguers was done wherein they were allowed to physically work at the library. With the idea that some of these materials will be needed by clients, working in a schedule basis has seen as the best way to continue

moving forward. To ensure their health and well-being, proper safety protocols were implemented such as maintaining social distance, wearing of face masks and gloves, proper handwashing, and undergoing PCR at least every 2 weeks were implemented.

The NU Library's experience has probably no difference with all the libraries around the world. With the primary goal of responding to the informational and research needs of their clients, in a true sense, the libraries and librarians become the frontliners in catering these needs during these trying times.