

## **Rare Book Collections of Uzbekistan**

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the importance of rare book collections in preserving scientific and cultural heritage. Rare books are not only invaluable sources reflecting national history and culture, but also serve as a means of transmitting intellectual and cultural wealth to future generations. The article analyzes the relevance of these collections, their preservation, and their role as sources for research. Modern technologies, particularly digitization processes, play a crucial role in safeguarding the physical condition of rare books and ensuring their effective use. Furthermore, the article examines the contribution of rare book collections to cultural and scientific development and offers recommendations for their preservation.

**Keywords:** rare books, scientific heritage, cultural heritage, digitization, book collections, preservation methods.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Scientific and cultural heritage is an integral part of human civilization and national identity. Every nation has its own monuments that reflect its history, achievements in science, culture, and education. The rare book collection is one of the most important components of such invaluable monuments. These collections serve as unique sources for studying history, science, and culture, through which the knowledge and experiences of past generations are conveyed to the present and future generations. The primary task of rare book collections is to protect unique and ancient publications, manuscripts, preserve their original copies, and make them available to researchers. These collections are important sources for scientific research as they encapsulate valuable information about historical processes, ancient scientific and literary discoveries. For example, ancient manuscripts serve as crucial material for scholars researching fields such as language and literature, history and archaeology, culture, and philosophy. Rare books are significant not only for scientific research but also for preserving cultural heritage. These books play a vital role in preserving national identity and introducing it to the world community. Through books, a nation's cultural values, customs, and intellectual level are revealed. For this reason, preserving rare books and conveying their essence to the broader public is a crucial task today.

Modern technologies are offering new opportunities for preserving rare books. Through digitization, electronic copies of such books are being created and made accessible to the public. This not only protects books from physical damage but also facilitates their use by researchers and readers. The importance of rare book collections lies in their ability to transmit historical and cultural heritage to future generations. These collections are not only a nation's wealth but also part of the collective heritage of all humanity. Therefore, the preservation and effective use of rare books is a task of both national and international significance. This task, in turn, ensures the scientific and cultural development of each country and stimulates the global exchange of knowledge.

## LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis of literature on the topic of rare book collections is of great importance in revealing the critical aspects of this field. The research conducted in this area allows us to understand the role of rare books in preserving scientific and cultural heritage. M.S. Salaeva's article titled "Rare Works – As Part of Our Spiritual Heritage" [3] is one of the leading sources in this field. This work provides a detailed analysis of the role of cultural heritage in reflecting the intellectual wealth of the people and the importance of preserving rare books. This article is primarily based on the collections of the National Library of Uzbekistan, reflecting a national approach. However, the lack of information about international experience is considered a relative shortcoming of the study. Additionally, the article "On the Activities of the Uzbekistan History State Museum" [4] written by J. Akhmedov and R. Akhmedova focuses on the efforts of museums and libraries in preserving and researching rare books. This work deeply explores the activities of rare manuscript collections and their significance in science. However, the article places less emphasis on technical preservation issues.

## RESULTS

Rare books are, in fact, invaluable treasures of cultural and historical heritage. They not only serve as sources for scientific research but also reflect the intellectual and artistic development of the people. The rarity of these books further enhances their value, as each copy holds unique historical significance and artistic value. Characteristics such as the quality of paper, the elegance of the cover, or the delicacy of the font make rare books significant not only for reading but also for visual pleasure. Therefore, preserving and studying such books, conducting scientific research on them, is not only a task of preserving cultural heritage but also of transmitting artistic and historical knowledge to future generations.

The formation of rare book collections dates back to the medieval period. The manuscripts created during this time form the basis of today's rare book collections. For example, the National Library of Uzbekistan, named after Alisher Navoi, houses manuscripts and printed books from the 13th to the 19th centuries, created in the regions of Mavarannahr, Khorasan, and Turkistan [6]. Looking at history, such palace libraries and private collections have existed since ancient times. Historical sources indicate that Egypt had already established the collection and preservation of books and documents.

At the end of the 1st century AD, the Library of Alexandria held over 700,000 papyrus books in its collection. Egyptian rulers did not put much effort into increasing the library's collection. Every ship arriving at the Alexandria port underwent a thorough inspection, and all written items, books, and documents on papyrus were confiscated and added to the library's collection [2;41]. Additionally, in ancient Greek culture, there was a different approach to books. They placed great importance on collecting books and documents. Similarly, the Romans also undertook the collection and preservation of books, and historical sources serve as evidence of this.

Rare book collections hold a special place in scientific research, education, and cultural preservation. Through them, we can gather information about various periods and cultures, conduct scientific research, and lay the foundation for new studies. Furthermore, rare books serve to preserve national culture and history [6]. Rare books are significant in strengthening national values, preserving identity, and enriching culture. With the help of modern technologies, the digitization of rare books ensures their long-term preservation and provides the opportunity to share them with a wider audience. Thanks to digitized works, scholars and readers can access this invaluable heritage remotely. This contributes to the intellectual development of society by presenting rare books to the global scientific community. Rare books are also of great importance from the perspective of art and aesthetic values. The miniatures, decorations, and calligraphic writings in manuscripts are considered works of art. Through them, one can study the concepts of elegance, design, and the approach to art in past eras.

Modern techniques are used to preserve rare books. The primary focus in book preservation is maintaining stable temperature and humidity, as these factors have a significant impact on the long-term preservation of books. Some important preservation techniques are as follows:

- **Conservation:** Protecting books from chemical and biological damage.
- **Restoration:** Rebuilding historical works while preserving their original state.
- **Digitization:** Converting rare works into electronic form, which allows for broader preservation [5].

Museum collections require careful preservation, including managing temperature and humidity conditions for different groups of materials, protecting against vapor-inducing factors, maintaining proper lighting, combating biological pests, and safeguarding against mechanical damage, especially in emergencies. Each museum should develop a system to address these preservation needs [2;254]. Moreover, it is important to focus on creating the most effective conditions for preserving museum items while considering protection.

Digitizing rare books is one of the most modern methods of making them accessible to the public and ensuring long-term preservation. Through digitization, books are preserved without damage and distributed globally. Additionally, researchers and readers can work with rare books remotely. This process greatly simplifies the preservation and study of books [7]. Currently, the "Rare Publications and Manuscripts" database program has been implemented by the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan [8]. The program includes a catalog of rare publications and the full text of the works. Furthermore, individual users (scholars, specialists, and researchers) can use this program to upload comments and articles on the topics they are interested in. The advantage of this national program is that users can access manuscripts, rare books, albums, newspaper catalogs, and full texts online via the internet, regardless of their location. This convenience brings ease to every user, as they can read materials written two or three centuries ago through a smartphone.

Preserving rare books presents several complex challenges, including the negative effects of environmental conditions, interactions with harmful substances, and outdated preservation technologies. To address these issues and ensure the long-term preservation of rare books, several important measures are taken.

Using high-quality protective materials requires the use of special archive boxes and acid-free paper packaging to protect books from harmful external factors. Maintaining an optimal microclimate allows for a stable temperature and humidity level in the storage environment. Implementing digitization technologies plays a vital role in protecting the original copies of books from deterioration. Modern conservation methods are employed to restore the physical condition of books and prevent factors that may cause damage.

Detailed information on the problems of rare book preservation and measures to address them can be found in the resolution No. 202 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated July 9, 2012 [5]. This document outlines measures for preserving rare and valuable publications, as well as systematically increasing and enriching their collections. Specifically, Appendix 1 of the resolution presents comprehensive measures to ensure the careful preservation of rare and valuable publications in the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan. These measures include using high-quality materials, ensuring a proper air environment, and applying modern technologies. Additionally, the "Rare Publications and Manuscripts" database created by the National Library of Uzbekistan allows users to access digitized copies of rare books [9].

There are several important centers in Uzbekistan dedicated to preserving and researching rare books. In particular, the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan houses manuscripts and printed books from the 13th to the 19th centuries. This collection is a major center for Uzbek cultural and scientific heritage. Established in 1870, the Alisher Navoi National Library preserves unique manuscripts and printed books that reflect the historical heritage, culture, and science of the Uzbek people. The library provides extensive opportunities for scientific research, data collection, education, and the promotion of culture.

The Abu Rayhon Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established in 1943 and houses both the main and state collections. The manuscripts



and works stored in this institute are of great importance for scientific research and the field of science. The main collection includes 13,139 manuscripts, which consist of works by historical figures and scholars. A collection of works stored in libraries across Uzbekistan has been formed. The state collection contains 5,237 manuscripts, some of which have been restored and preserved after being damaged [1;14]. This collection is supported by the state and plays a crucial role in studying and preserving the cultural, historical, and scientific heritage of the East.

The institute conducts scientific analysis and preservation of ancient manuscripts, historical and cultural works, as well as rare books from Eastern countries. The Institute of Oriental Studies is internationally recognized as a scientific center with its rich scientific library, archives, and manuscripts. The institute primarily focuses on studying the language, literature, history, art, and religious heritage of various Eastern peoples. Here, the oldest and most unique manuscripts of the East, including works in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and other Eastern languages, are stored and scientifically analyzed.



In addition, international organizations, including UNESCO and countries like Saudi Arabia, have established cooperation ties in the scientific research of the manuscripts in this treasure. Catalogs of the manuscripts and research work are being conducted regularly. The use of modern methods to monitor the condition of books and optimize preservation strategies, scanning rare books and storing them in digital formats, and applying special chemicals and biological environments to protect books from mold and insects plays an important role in the preservation process. Storing books in digital format is crucial for preserving their original condition and makes them more accessible to a wider audience. Through modern technologies, the Institute of Oriental Studies and other centers create opportunities to present the preserved works to the public and facilitate their use in scientific research.



The Imam al-Bukhari Islamic Studies Center holds a comprehensive collection of information about Islamic sources and their manuscripts. This center is actively involved in the study and preservation of Islamic scientific heritage. The Islamic Studies Center is recognized as a significant center not only for Uzbek, but also for the entire Muslim world in the research of religious and scientific sources. In addition to the Imam Bukhari Center, the Termezi and Maturidi centers also play an important role in studying Islamic scientific heritage. The Termezi Center primarily conducts research on historical

sources, particularly Islamic works from the Jadid period. The Maturidi Center focuses on scholarly work related to the study of Islamic philosophy and theological systems.

Furthermore, within the framework of monitoring the condition of national collections, archaeological expeditions carried out in the Fergana Valley, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent, Syrdarya, Jizzakh regions, and the Republic of Karakalpakstan have revealed that these areas hold 10,080 manuscripts written in Arabic script, 14,400 lithographs, and 16,820 historical documents. These findings show that our country's rich scientific and cultural heritage can be studied in greater depth. These results emphasize the importance of understanding the uniqueness and significance of historical writings, as well as the crucial efforts directed at preserving and studying our national heritage.

## CONCLUSION

The collection of rare books is one of the key tools for preserving, studying, and passing on scientific and cultural heritage to future generations. Through these collections, the most important pages of national and global history, as well as cultural and scientific achievements, are transmitted to future generations. They not only embody the information of their time but also reflect the progress of human thought and intellect. In this way, rare books not only have historical value but also mirror the intellectual potential of society.

Today, modern technologies, such as digitization, are creating new opportunities for preserving and utilizing rare books. This process not only protects invaluable treasures but also enables broader access to them. Creating digital archives, increasing access to them through electronic resources, and facilitating the global distribution of rare books and documents help make these resources more widely available. This, in turn, creates new opportunities in scientific and cultural fields, as well as in the education system, providing students and learners with the chance to study unique sources.

The development and preservation of rare book collections is crucial for the cultural and scientific advancement of any society. They are the highest expression of a nation's historical memory, religious and philosophical views, and creative and scientific endeavors, contributing greatly to world culture. Moreover, the preservation of rare book collections helps society gain a deeper understanding of itself and its history, ensuring the continuity of its culture. Each generation is responsible for preserving the legacies of those before it and transmitting the cultural and scientific wealth of society to future generations.

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