

The PNC Buryat Academic Information Center

**Tsymjit Vanchikova,
Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs,
Institute of Mongolian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies**

The present situation at the turn of the century is generally characterized by the activation of international activities, by disappearance of rigid political obstacles, that have formerly prevented or limited the contacts between both separate countries and various institutions. Now the situation has completely changed and owing to the advances in scientific and engineering areas of knowledge new perspectives have emerged for closer contacts.

The peculiarity of the Republic of Buryatia is that it is located at the juncture of the East and West and has a great experience of more than 3 centuries of peaceful coexistence and interrelation of different cultural paradigms and combines in itself the cultural traditions of either but still it is a genuinely oriental republic. Now by the end of the XXth century when humankind faces the problem of elaborating new global models of further development, Buryatia can be taken as a rich field for studies - sociological, culturological, philosophical, etc. It is obvious also, that for comprehensive study one needs as much as possible complete and easily accessible information.

The main priorities of Buryatia have been lately oriented at the cooperation with the Pacific Ocean countries particularly in the field of economy. And if in the field of economy, trade and culture there have been already established certain relations and twin-city relations have been established with the cities of South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, the contacts in the sphere of science and information exchange are yet to be established.

The major difficulty the researchers of the problems of the countries of the Pacific Ocean area encounter is the lack of any kind information both of the countries upon the whole and the scientific and educational institutions, of their workers, of the main trends of research, of libraries and archives, of publications and periodicals.

On the other hand it is quite discouraging that in Russia due to the drastic changes of the social structure there have lately been destroyed and broken the systems of the traditional centralized financing of the libraries, archives and other informational structures, foreign books and journals stopped coming to most libraries, the library interchange network has stopped its functioning. Therefore for the last 10 years a big information gap has emerged which is most notable in the periphery and which is to be filled up. The solution of some aspects of this problem is just the chief end of our project aimed at the restoration of the former connections and establishment of the new ones and the build up of the solid basis for the exchange of the information. The solution of these problems just from the very beginning presupposes the use of modern methods of information exchange, which will be considerably stimulated by the use of common approaches.

It might as well be appropriate at the preliminary stage to carry out this project step by step beginning with only a few participants at its start, e.g. some libraries and humanitarian establishments of Buryatia and Taiwan with the subsequent attraction of all other members of the PNC. But nevertheless all our information and database will be accessible for everyone.

In its turn the successful completion of the project involved might greatly contribute to the expansion of the interests and spheres of the PNC participants activity in Russia, the regions of East and South Siberia and Inner Asia.

The project suggested by the scholars of the Buryat Institute of Mongolian, Tibetan and Buddhist studies (IMTBS) of the Buryat Research Center (BRC) of the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of sciences (SB RAS) has been designed as an on-going modular project hopefully aimed at establishing general information contacts and stable exchange of academic data on different subjects, mostly bibliographic, between countries of the PN, Buryat Republic being the bridge between the East and the West.

Aims and objectives of the Project:

The main aim of our project is the restoration of the old contacts and establishment of the new ones, build-up of a solid basis for a information exchange on a new advanced level, elimination of the gap that has been formed during the last decade. The project presupposes the computer approach and the step by step formation of a joint database.

For this project to be gradually completed multilateral cooperation is actual.

Its final purpose is mutual information exchange in the sphere of Humanities and development of the technical and the technological infrastructure.

The characteristics of our funds:

Department of oriental manuscripts and xylographs (DOMX) of the IMTBS was established in 1921 with the aim of preserving and studying of rich written heritage of the peoples of Buryatia and Inner Asia. The funds of the DOMX contain one of the largest collections in the world of historical archival documents and materials on history and culture of Buryatia and Inner Asia, written sources in Tibetan, classical Mongolian, Buryat and Russian, rare photos, tape records of Buryat, Mongolian and Russian folklore, many of them being unique. The scholars of DOMX carry on intensive research work on their description and introducing these materials into scientific turnover.

The initial stage (the starting point):

1) The work on the formation of the electronic catalogs of the Mongolian, Tibetan collections and archives funds has been started.

2) In the Library of the Buryat Research Center (BRC) an extensive bibliography of the works on ethnography of Buryats beginning with the earliest works known has been compiled. The librarians addressed the Russian Humanitarian Research Foundation (RHRF) for financing their project aimed at the compiling of the electronic catalog, which received the support for the 1998-1999.

The participants of the project:

On the basis of the PNC it should be reasonable to form up the Coordinating Committee including the parties concerned, to assign the persons in charge of the regional parts of the Program who are to work out common requirements for the catalog entries and their

descriptions. We are ready to begin the cooperation, to present the information data concerning some of the Buryat collections. We think it proper to begin with a concrete subject bibliography, e.g. with the bibliography of works on ethnography of Buryats and other Mongolian peoples which have been mentioned above. Its draft copy has been compiled by the Library of our Center and now it is to be put into the computer. The next stage should involve the translation of the titles into the English language.

The DOMX of the IMTBS Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences is recommended to be the coordinator on the Buryat part.

The information transfer: should be in our view as follows:
BAIC - IMTBS DOMX - BRC Library - the BRC GIS Center - PNC
participants.

The equipment required:

At the end of 1997 we have applied for the grant to the RHRF with the project aimed at the creation of the IMTBS oriental studies information database. We have recently been informed that our project was supported and the DOMX will be given a certain sum of money for the purchase of the electronic devices needed. Thus one might say that our program is being successfully carried on.

However in order to adequately exchange the information the technical and technological basis of the project should be accordingly leveled up.

The participants of the project should work out common standards for the accumulation and dispersal of the information, software and hardware platforms should be similar. It is rather hard for us to correspond to the modern technical level, since the PN countries are in technical and technological respect ahead of not only of Russia, but of other countries of the world as well, e.g. the better part of the computer equipment used in Russia being produced in the countries of the given region.

We can achieve the modern technical level in 2-3 years on our own, but we cannot eliminate the lag without certain external support. Therefore to successfully promote the project it is desirable that the Coordinating Committee should give proper attention to the project they consider it necessary to help or raise it up to the necessary standard.

In the first place, some financing will be needed for the payment of communication expenditure which is very high in Russia.

The language of the information: it is preferable to give the bibliographic description in 2 languages: in the language of the original and in English.

The stages and the terms:

The compilation of the project given is supposed to be conducted in 3 stages:

1) database development, starting with general exchange of the preliminary information, accumulating data about universities and academic institutions, their structure, the themes of the researches, periodicals and editing activities; it might be called as the bibliographic stage,

e.g. compilation of electronic catalogs (subject catalogs of the some of the collections, Buryat, Mongolian and Russian folklore recordings), and databases of the libraries and archives, making them easily available to the members of the PNC - 1998-1999;

2) initiating open access to the newly created resources – the end of 1998 - 1999;

3) establishing of the permanent information service - 1999-2000; creating facilities for exchange of databases with the subsequent access to virtual libraries. Its electronic presentation in the form of catalogs will allow for a search according to each entry field.

The results expected:

The creation of the common network of the PNC academic information database of a similar technical standard.

Financing: the creation of the database will be financed by the participants of the project.

It will be reasonable to conduct the entire project on an international net-working basis in collaboration with various institutions and individuals. The data collected will be made available electronically to scholars' use.

We are aware of the incompleteness of the data that might be gathered, but we think that these data, even incomplete, nevertheless will allow for the first review of a general situation in the academic researches that are presently going on in the region. We hope that the future will provide more facilities for all of us to use each other's libraries and archives. The first probationary stage of the project is to be completed by the end of the year.

In case the project is approved the 2-nd stage is to be fulfilled in several years.

Librarians and scholars are invited to join the project, discuss its program in detail and various aspects of this project, concerning methodological and technical issues.

Cooperation is agreed with the GIS Center of the Buryat Research Center, which is currently founded at the Buryat Research Center that might be in charge of the technical part of the project on our part and might be the collector of technologies needed.

For the present we have prepared for you the initial information concerning the main educational and academic institutions and libraries of Ulan-Ude in the electronic format.