

## **“Let's Protect Our National Treasures-May Our Stories Live On”**

The "Seven Wonders" created by the peoples of the ancient world have amazed people for centuries. However there is one wonder that we have made a custom - the miracle of the book. As the "Seven Wonders" of the world made by craftsmen in Egypt, Babylon and Greece give us information about the cultures and history of these countries, so books give us information about the entire world - the past and the future. We learn from books. Books teach us of the ancient past and the richness of our culture. Scholars have said very wise things of books. Books have been kept and protected as precious things. Our former leader Heydar Aliyev also placed a high value on books and libraries. He said: "A library is a temple. Every intellectual's path must go through this temple. Here the written chronicle of our history is protected and kept with honor.

Regardless of religion, race or age, every person places great value on their own culture. Because of this, for centuries past every people group has worked to create and protect their own culture. The activity of libraries in developed countries contributes to further development, because this center of collected information is not only a place for reading, but also serves a place for relaxation. With this in mind, libraries work to create a good environment for their readers, with everything they need.

In the past, many readers came to libraries because information was primarily found in books. Today, interest in reading has declined as not only adults, but also students are increasingly interested in television programs and Internet websites.

The F. Kocharli National Children's Library opened in 1965. It bears the name of Firidun bey Kocharli (1863 Shusha -1920 Ganja), who played a vital role in the development of children's literature in Azerbaijan. As an author, teacher, and publisher, he fought to maintain the purity of the Azerbaijani language. He collected some of the most popular oral literature and folklore in his children's book A Gift to Little Ones. Each year in January, Kocharli week is celebrated. During the week, school children prepare speeches which help them remember the literature from Kocharli's book A Gift to Little Ones.

Our library is considered a center of scientific method in printing and preserving children's literature. With this as our goal, our website ([www.clb.az](http://www.clb.az)) brings to readers' attention a book monuments rubric and books from the "gold fund."

Libraries are an arm of culture, and without them it is impossible to imagine culture. Our library holds various events to help with the protection and teaching of national values. Some of these include:

- A competition for handwritten books and artwork on the theme of "Protect Our National Treasures-Keep Our Folktales Alive"

- An exhibition of national children's books each year on International Children's Book Day, April 2.
- Children's book festivals and celebrations
- International Novruz holiday celebration with "tele-bridges" to allow children to become familiar with children's libraries in other countries that celebrate this holiday.
- Creation of Azerbaijani children's literature funds in libraries in other countries.

Each year in our Book celebrations, a parade of Azerbaijani folktale books is held. Books give their words to readers and publishers. Some books have still not been published in the current Latin alphabet. These folktales are put on our website as audio books and electronic publications. There are 30 stories in the collection of audio recordings of folktales, which especially appeal to preschool children.

Additionally, each year on April 2 a national book exhibition is held in the library's reading room. This exhibition continues for one week. During the week, children have the opportunity to meet artists, authors, poets, and publishers. On the opening day of the exhibition a special program is held. A Power Point presentation is prepared for each of the books in the exhibition and they are shown using a projector.

Our library also holds celebrations titled "Forgotten Books" and "Books That Take Us Back to Childhood" which are aimed at those with influence in children's reading. After such exhibitions, we have seen that parents' interest in reading increases. They remember the books they read as children, and read them again, as well as encourage their children to read them. Psychologists believe that the habit of reading is developed first in the family. Because of this, parents should provide their children with various books, and read often to their children.

As part of the Children's Book Festival the SOS Children's Village preschool "Reading Bus" organized a fairy tale journey. Children got on a bus decorated with fairy tale characters *Tik-tik Khanim* and *Lovely Fatima* and when they got out, they found themselves in a fairy tale world. One of the favorite writers of children's tales, Grandmother Gulzar, also participated in this event. The children enjoyed all the games, competitions, and question and answer times. In the game "Questions from Bokhcha" the child who answered the questions correctly received a gift. In addition, children were able to ask questions and learn about Grandmother Gulzar's new children's stories, and say some of their favorite poems. Each of the participants in the event received gifts of magazines and books. Grandmother Gulzar also gave gifts of some of her own books, and copies of the magazine "Language of Little Ones."

In each issue of the children's magazine "Rainbow," published by our own library, old and sometimes forgotten Azerbaijani stories, never before printed in the current Latin alphabet, are printed for children to read. In the section for

parents called "How to Encourage Your Children to Read," parents discover ways to help their children enjoy reading. Children's authors Alemdar Quluzada, Zahid Khalil, Rafiq Yusifoghlu, Solmaz Amanova, Fikrat Sadig, Gulzar Ibrahimova, Nariman Hasanzada and Sevinj Nurugizi have participated in various memorable events. Book celebrations, national children's book exhibitions, and book festivals, games, competitions and plays attract children and parents to the library. As they come and participate, our national treasures are protected, and interest in our stories increases.

Librarians also participate in a competition called "Dear Grandma, Tell Me a Story." Librarians prepare stories and tell them during the competition and receive an award for the "Best Story-telling Librarian." Also each year on December 1, we celebrate Fairy Tale day.

The library has also held a round-table conference with publishers entitled "Children's Books Today." In such events participants discuss ways to make stories more attractive to children, presenting them through puzzles, films, audio books and games. In addition, well-designed books presenting traditional old children's games and stories are brought to the attention of participants.

We have organized polls for children called "Do You Know Our Folktales?" In the poll, children are asked which stories they have read, which story characters they know, and from what source they know them.

A monitoring program has been implemented in village libraries in eleven different outlying regions of Azerbaijan. As a result of this program, each year a Caravan of Books is organized for six of the regions. Mobile book exhibitions bring children's literature to readers in the libraries of these villages and regions.

Village libraries have begun holding story hour events in which children hear stories read aloud or listen to audio recordings of stories from our National Children's Library website.

We have been able to provide 50 different books and audio story recordings to libraries in various occupied and border regions (Tapgaragoyunlu in Goranboy regions, Alibayli in Tovuz region, Guzanli in Aghdam region, Shinix in Gadabay region and others). Children in these outlying areas do not otherwise have access to children's literature and thus have little opportunity for reading. These libraries have also begun holding story hours called "Come and I'll Tell You a Story," organized by local grandmothers.

Every year the library named after F.Kocharli celebrates "Kocherli Week". This week the library distributes F. Kocharli's book "As a Gift to Children" to children as a gift. In this book is a set of interesting fairy tales, the description of ancient

childish sports, and models of folklore works. This book is also placed on a library website, in the section for electronic books. For weeks "Kocharli" holds competitions on drawing and handworks, and also lecture halls and game competitions for children are carried out.

Every year on April 2 there passes the National children's exhibition. At an exhibition all national editions for children published under the following names are shown to the operating publishing houses: "From a Grandmother's Treasure Chest", "I Still Look at Picture Books", "They write for you" (Sevinj Nurugizi, Gasham İsabeyli, Solmaz Amanova, Zahid Xelil, Elchin, Rafiq Yusifoglu and etc.), "The Native Language- Sweet Language", "Our carpets: This our National Creativity", "I Love the Homeland," and under other names of subjects pass exhibitions.

On our site under a heading "Memorable Books" is the gold fund of the library. Here the most ancient books are developed in the Latin alphabet, to help children to be interested in these books. The following listed books are placed on our site in department electronic books ("The old woman and a calf", "A fox and a snake", "Candlestick"). For the occupied zones of our republic, on our website under a heading "audio fairy tales," it is possible to copy these fairy tales on a disk and to hold in the library a "Time of fairy tales" for children.

Every year our library organizes an event "Caravan of Books" by means of which to villages in the occupied zones, and also to the most remote villages of the republic can be delivered a large number of children's books.