

2.8 Iran

Armenian Libraries in Iran: Will They Ever Be Able to Move Forward?

Nancy Beygijanian

Introduction

Historically, Armenian libraries have been in existence for over a century in Iran, originating back to church libraries some of which to this day still stand and are at least one hundred years old. Yet currently, it is astonishing to discover that many Armenian libraries suffer from a lack of technological progress because of different factors. The social and political elements of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards information and communications technology has affected all libraries in Iran and their adoption of technology to varying degrees. But technology in Armenian libraries has either not been introduced or when it has in a small number of cases, it has faced difficulties because of a lack of a budget, no professional librarians on staff, poor planning, software issues, and/or challenges in trying to purchase proper equipment. Thus, Armenian libraries have not had the advantage to fully enjoy the benefits that technology can offer. In addition, the Diaspora of the Armenians from Iran to other countries has caused the closure of many Armenian libraries. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the difficulties Armenian libraries face in introducing technology in their organization, the reasons for it, and to make recommendations on how Armenian libraries can improve the status of their condition. Specifically, it will look at some of the libraries in the capital city of Tehran.

History of Armenians in Iran

Armenians and Iranians have had a long past with each other going as far back as before the third century AD, when marriages between the aristocracy of both ethno-linguistic groups occurred often. Both groups even enjoyed political and religious similarities up until the seventh century when Iran converted to Islam (Armenia had converted to Christianity by the fourth century). The Seljuk Turks, in the eleventh century, forced many Armenians into Iranian Azerbaijan, where they either worked as artisans and merchants or some