

**STUDENTS IN THE MUSEUM LIBRARY: PRO ET CONTRA\*****By Olga Malinkovskaya**

While creating the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Professor of the Moscow University Ivan Tzvetaev (1847-1913) paid much attention to the museum's library. In his letters to the architect of the museum, Roman Klein (1858-1924), the library is often mentioned. So one can see that it was considered by Tzvetaev to be very serious, fundamental part of the museum, a kind of heart. Tzvetaev's idea was that the library had to provide for the scientific work of the museum, and at the same time, to be a base for the studies in the Moscow University. The students of the University were considered to be the readers that enjoyed full rights. Tzvetaev understood that the existence of the scientific library of such a kind had to raise the authority of the museum in general.

During Tzvetaev's life the reading rooms of the library were three large rooms on the first floor (now one can see there Dutch, Flemish and Italian paintings), while the repositories for books and periodicals were in the ground floor. The latter were "...constructed wide enough to place the future stocks during 50 years," as Tzvetaev wrote in one letter to Klein.

The years passed and brought a lot of changes. In 1924 because of the opening of the picture gallery, the reading rooms of the library were moved to the so-called White Room of the museum on the second floor. Serious changes were happened to the library: it grew, its specific character expanded, and the amount of literature about the history of art, painting, and engraving increased. A few large private libraries were received, as well as a lot of books from the Roumiantzev Museum (later known as the Lenin Library). In the end of the 1930s, because of the expanding picture gallery, the whole library (both the reading rooms and the repositories) were moved downstairs, on the ground floor. The space reserved for future expansion was nearly exhausted.

In 1948, the Soviet government closed the famous Museum of Modern European Art that was previously built upon the base of two great private collections of Ivan Morozov and Sergey Zhukin; they contained art of the impressionists and post-impressionists. The brilliant objects from the museum were given to the State

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Hermitage in Leningrad (St.Petersburg) and the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. The large library of the Museum of Modern Art, as well as the slide-library, archive and photo-archive, were given to the Pushkin Museum. The resources of the museum library were increased by rare art books and periodicals devoted to European art of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the absence of free space affected the whole life of the library.

It was to be expected that in such conditions the library had to cut down the amount of its users and to become a pure museum library. Fortunately, that did not happen. On the contrary, the library became a sort of a cultural center and treasure for the filmmakers, staff of the publishing houses, etc., who found here a lot of materials for their work: reproductions, illustrations, as well as facts about the life and creative work of the artists.

The role of the library as an educational center also increased. Special seminars for the students of the Moscow University were held by the professors V. Pavlov (1898-1972), well-known Russian Egyptologist, B. Wipper (1888-1967), an outstanding Russian art historian who specialized in European art, and authored such fundamental books as The Struggle of Trends in Italian Art of the 17 Century, The Formation of Realism in the Dutch Art of the 17th Century, and others. For many years (1944-1967) Wipper was the vice-director/scientific director of the museum. Some courses were held by the chief of the faculty of art history of the University ,professor V.Lasarev (1897-1975), specialist in bysantine, old russian and early italian painting , and later- by V.Grashenkov.

The students of Moscow University worked in the library while preparing their first degree or some special course works. This tradition has survived up to today. Until now the museum`s library is «alma mater» for the students. We give them nearly everything they need, free of charge, and require nothing except careful handling of books. Now we think that it is time for our children to take care of their parent.

We are speaking about a new system of access to the library. It can be some kind of a contract according to which the student is allowed to work in the reading room if he promises to give the library (for the official purposes only) a copy of the bibliography on his theme after the work is done.

Why do we propose such a thing? There are two reasons. One benefit of such system is for the library: such bibliography may be very useful when the librarians are to find some illustrations on the same or close to the same themes for other users. Some examples of student topics from the previous year include: historiography of the Russian Assyrologie; old Egyptian wood sculpture of the Middle Kingdom; antique themes, motives and topics in the cameos of the Renaissance; accessories in portraits of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the

ornamentation of French faience of the 18th century, and the etchings of F. Segers. It can be also used in collection development. The copyright is carefully must be observed by the library.

Another benefit is for the students. It is not a secret that rather rare students are able to make a professional kind of bibliography to their first scientific work. There are no special bibliographical courses in the Universities. The indispensable condition to give a bibliography to the library must stimulate students to do their best in this field. We, the librarians, can help them.

All of us should look to the future. If we close the doors of the library to new generations of the historians of art, we decrease objectively the level of their education. The libraries they are allowed to use - art department of Russian State Library (held by Svetlana Artamonova), Russian State Art Library (vice-director Ada Kolganova), the art department of the State Russian Library of Foreign Languages (Olga Sinitzina) and others- have good resources, highly-educated staff, more space, etc. But in comparison with our small (only 20 seats in the reading room) library, they have no or rather small amounts of some very special materials: catalogues of different art collections ( both state and private) and exhibitions. All art historians know that exactly this kind of special literature is a real bread for the researchers.

One more strong argument in defense of the rights of students: in our library all of the users have a real chance to become acquainted with the new publications in art history , ancient art, archaeology, etc., both in Russian and in foreign languages. Despite our financial difficulties, we didn't break up our international book-exchange program, to say more- we do our best to increase in. Besides we have a lot of gifts by the foreign partners of the museum. There are also some sponsors that sometimes help the library. For instance previous year when the museum had celebrated the anniversary of its foundation, the international financial committee «The Renaissance» presented us The Dictionary of Art in 32 volumes. We are the only library in Moscow now that receives a rather vast set of special periodicals. It is not enough, but to compared with others, we are on the first spot. If we forbid the students to use the museum's library, we deprive them of the hot news in the field of their professional activity.

There is one more aspect of the problem. If the student is a reader that enjoyed full rights in the library, he is able to work side by side with the well-known scholars and has a chance to have professional contact with the elder colleagues, to consult with them on some special problems. Some of the museum's curators are also professors of the university. So they meet with their students in the library. The serious students, zealously working day-after-day in the library, become a sort of museum landscape. They evoke an interest in the staff of the museum. Some of the

curators have begun to introduce them to some fields of museum work. Sometimes this kind of connection has the logical prolongation and after finishing the university, the student is taken on the museum's staff.

I have to add that the librarians are not only the independent observers of these situations. I'll not make a mistake if I say that a clever, zealous student is a kind of a present for each librarian. We are ready to fulfill nearly any of his/her tasks, to bring as many books as necessary, to find some book or magazine on the highest shelf or in the darkest corner. And the future professional life of those who are our wards is of concern to us, as well as the future of the museum. That's why we try to give the best support to these students in case of need.

Until now the focus on library users has primarily been on the students of the State Moscow University. The library is also open to the students of the State Russian University of Humanitarians, that is directed by the famous Russian historian, Youry Afanasiev. In the last few years, the connections between the museum and the university have become closer because of a rather special kind of a joint activity: an educational museum named after Ivan Tzvetaev was organized in the rooms of the University. More than 700 plaster casts from the museum's collection were placed in the University and arranged in special expositions. They were bought by Tzvetaev for the Museum of Fine Arts in the beginning of the 20th century, but later with the change of the character of the museum were moved to storage. Now they are again available for the spectators.

Coming back to the problem of students in the museum library, we are to mention one more argument of the opponents. They speak about the preservation of books. All the librarians know that book preservation is a very serious thing. But who says that it is the fault of the student users? Unfortunately we sometimes notice even the members of the museum staff are not very good in handling books. The problem of preservation is the problem of the library. It must have the system (technical, pedagogical, etc.) that prevents as much as possible the damage or theft of books.

The problem of preservation in our days stands before all of the libraries even more seriously than 50 years ago. Precisely now there is a tremendous discussion whether the book in its traditional view will still exist in the future, or it will be forced out by electronic vehicles? The role of libraries, especially the museum libraries in this discussion, must be very strong. We are to educate our users, the young generation first of all, to make them understand and to make them feel that the book is much more than sheets of paper with the letters, that give us some information. The book must be considered by them as a unique example of the human activity and not only a bank of information.

In this context we think that we should explain for our users (mostly-students) some of our codes. The code system of our library is rather difficult and was organised chaotically during the long history of the library. It has both letters and figures. Anyway there are some special codes that tell us that this book came from some private library. For example, the code BW tells us that we take a book that previously belonged to Boris Wipper, whom we mentioned already. The code AG means, that the book is from the library of Andrey Guber (1900-1970) also an art historian who was the chief curator of the museum ( 1945-1970). Recently we have made a few new codes. IK for Irina Kuznetzova, the eldest curator of the

French and English collection of the picture gallery, who is giving us her library, and IA for Irina Antonova, the director of Museum. A lot of books from these private libraries have autographs, book plates or some special marks, so they can be considered as artifacts.

In the field of the educational programmes of our library we are going to make special lectures in the Universities about the library, its past, present and future . We think that it might be not only interesting but necessary for the students. We consider the history of the library to be a small part of art history of Russia.

Not long ago we asked our users to fill a form. Among other questions we asked them : Are you ready to help the library by:

1. giving money
2. giving books
3. making some kind of heavy, dirty but very necessary work ?

And we received no negative answers! And there were a lot of « Yes» on the third question. So we are looking forward with optimism in spite of having small money and not large amount of interest from the administration. But we are sure that the times are changing and maybe someday we will have something like our colleagues in the new library of the museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. Our library and our students deserve that.

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