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## A History of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library (1992–2023)

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### Abstract

This work examines the history of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library, which was created and currently operates at Cherkas Global University.

The principal sources for this study are relevant documents from the Archive of Saint Petersburg History Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg, Russia) and materials from the personal archive of A.A. Cherkasov. In addition, use was made of the publication 'Cherkas Global University (1992–2022): A Collection of Documents'.

The study's findings revealed that over the period from 1992 to 2023 the fundamental library of Cherkas Global University worked its way from a personal library to a full-fledged fundamental electronic library. In 2019–2020, the bulk of the prerevolutionary (antiquarian) holding of A.A. Cherkasov's personal library was donated to the Library of Congress (USA) and the electronic fundamental library was created. In 2022, the library was named after Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, who in the early 18th century established a shelter for the visually impaired in Keret'. Today, the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library numbers over 61,000 items, with this stock continually growing.

**Keywords:** P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library, Cherkas Global University, history of a library, period 1992–2023, Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, sustainable development in education, education policy, education reform.

### 1. Introduction

A crucial functional unit in any research organization is its fundamental library. For a long time, libraries – in the traditional sense – were mainly made up of printed works and our personal presence was required to visit them, which was not inconvenient. Computerization and the rapid development of digital technology in the early 21st century had a significant effect on librarianship, giving rise to electronic libraries. One such library will be discussed in the present work.

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## 2. Materials and methods

The principal sources for this study are relevant archival documents and collections of published materials. Use was made of the Archive of Saint Petersburg History Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg, Russia) to draw upon the 1711 census materials for the village of Keret' in the Tsardom of Muscovy. Another important source is the personal archive of A.A. Cherkasov, which contains materials providing insight into the development of his personal library over the period 1992–2019. The second group includes 'Cherkas Global University (1992–2022): A Collection of Documents' (Cherkas Global University..., 2022), which contains the foundational document for the fundamental electronic library – Decree No. 2 of January 10, 2020.

Since the topic was seen as a fairly narrow one and most of the material related to it had never been published before, wide use had to be made of the descriptive method. The use of the chronological principle, which involves considering the relevant events in a chronological sequence, made it possible to identify two major chronological periods in the library's history.

## 3. Discussion

The historiography on Cherkas Global University is relatively thin, but it is growing. One of the first publications on the subject was produced in 2018 and was devoted to the operation of a student science club within the university (Ermachkov et al., 2018). As early as the following year, 2019, there came out a work celebrating the fifth anniversary of the International Network Center for Fundamental and Applied Research (INCFAR) (Tarakanov, Ponomareva, 2019). In 2021, K.V. Taran addressed the history of Cherkas Global University between 1992 and 2014 (Taran, 2021). In 2022, I.Yu. Cherkasova released an article celebrating the organization's 30th anniversary – 'Cherkas Global University (1992–2022): Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow' (Cherkasova, 2022).

In addition, between 2022 and 2023 researchers have addressed topics such as the history of Cherkas Global University Press between 1992 and 1997 (Cherkasova, 2022), the international activity of Cherkas Global University (Cherkasova, 2023), and the history of the Rifle Association at Cherkas Global University (Cherkasova, 2022a).

## 4. Results

The history of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library can be divided into two major periods: 1) operation of the personal library of A.A. Cherkasov (1992–2019); 2) operation of the fundamental electronic library (2020–2023).

### *First stage (1992–2019)*

During this period, the library went through the process of accumulating a large number of printed publications. The all-time high in the size of the stock of A.A. Cherkasov's personal library was nearly 1,500 items (Lichnyi arkhiv A.A. Cherkasova).

In 1997, the owner of the library began to keep track of the books in its growing stock. To this end, a seal with the words 'Personal library of A.A. Cherkasov' was created; it listed each book's registration number and the time and place it was obtained (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Seal for the personal library of A.A. Cherkasov. 1997

In addition, two electronic catalogues were launched.

At the same time, the library was divided into two holdings: 1) antiquarian (books released between the late 18th century and 1945); 2) modern (from 1946 to the present). With the former, the registration number was preceded by an 'A' (Lichnyi arkhiv A.A. Cherkasova).

In 2006, the seal was replaced. The new one pictured a double-headed eagle holding an open book in its claws (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. Seal for the personal library of A.A. Cherkasov. 2006

By 2019, the personal library of A.A. Cherkasov numbered nearly 1,500 items, with 300 of these being in the antiquarian holding. The library was built through obtaining books in cities across Russia and in other countries. Initially, A.A. Cherkasov would purchase just about any prerevolutionary book he could get his hands on at book stalls across Sochi. As the library grew, the primary focus shifted to periodicals (magazines) and nonfiction (Lichnyi arkhiv A.A. Cherkasova).

Most of the items within the antiquarian holding belonged to the period between the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The oldest book in the library was 'Psaltyr' (Russian: "Psalter"), published during the later period of the reign of Catherine II, in 1795. It was obtained in the city of Petrozavodsk in 2010.

The bulk of the antiquarian holding consisted of prerevolutionary magazines, including *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, *Russkoye Bogatstvo*, *Russkaya Starina*, *Russky Arkhiv*, and *Ogonek*. There were a few dozen issues of the illustrated magazine *Niva*. Another prerevolutionary magazine represented by a large set of issues in the holding was *Voyenny Sbornik*. In 2013, Cherkas Global University Press resumed the publication of this magazine. Significant effort was put into making as many prerevolutionary issues of the magazine available on its website as possible. To this end, the personal library was enriched with a few dozen previously undigitized prerevolutionary issues of *Voyenny Sbornik*. These issues were scanned and then added onto the website – <https://vs.cherkasgu.press/>.

The library's modern holding, which numbered nearly 1,200 items, consisted of books in Russian covering the period between the late 18th and mid-20th centuries. The most common topics were the history of the Caucasus and the Caucasian War (1801–1864), the history of World War I, and the history of World War II. The items included both historical research studies and documents of private origin (diaries, letters, and memoirs) (Lichnyi arkhiv A.A. Cherkasova).

Some of the items obtained formed entire book series. For example, a large one was 'Tiraniya' ("Tyranny") (Figure 3).



The 'Mir v Voynakh' series covered both World War I and World War II. The library also contained many items from the series 'XX Vek v Voynakh' ("The 20th Century in Wars"). The non-series items included numerous narrowly-specialized books on the history of rebel movements and military propaganda.

In 2019, A.A. Cherkasov, who was about to move, had a large portion of the books in his personal library scanned and then gave them out to his colleagues. The bulk of the antiquarian holding and many of the rare books in his personal library were donated in late 2019 to the Library of Congress (USA), one of the largest libraries in the world. A total of six parcels, weighing a combined 80 kg, were shipped to the US. In February 2020, a letter was received confirming receipt of the books by the Library of Congress (Figure 5).

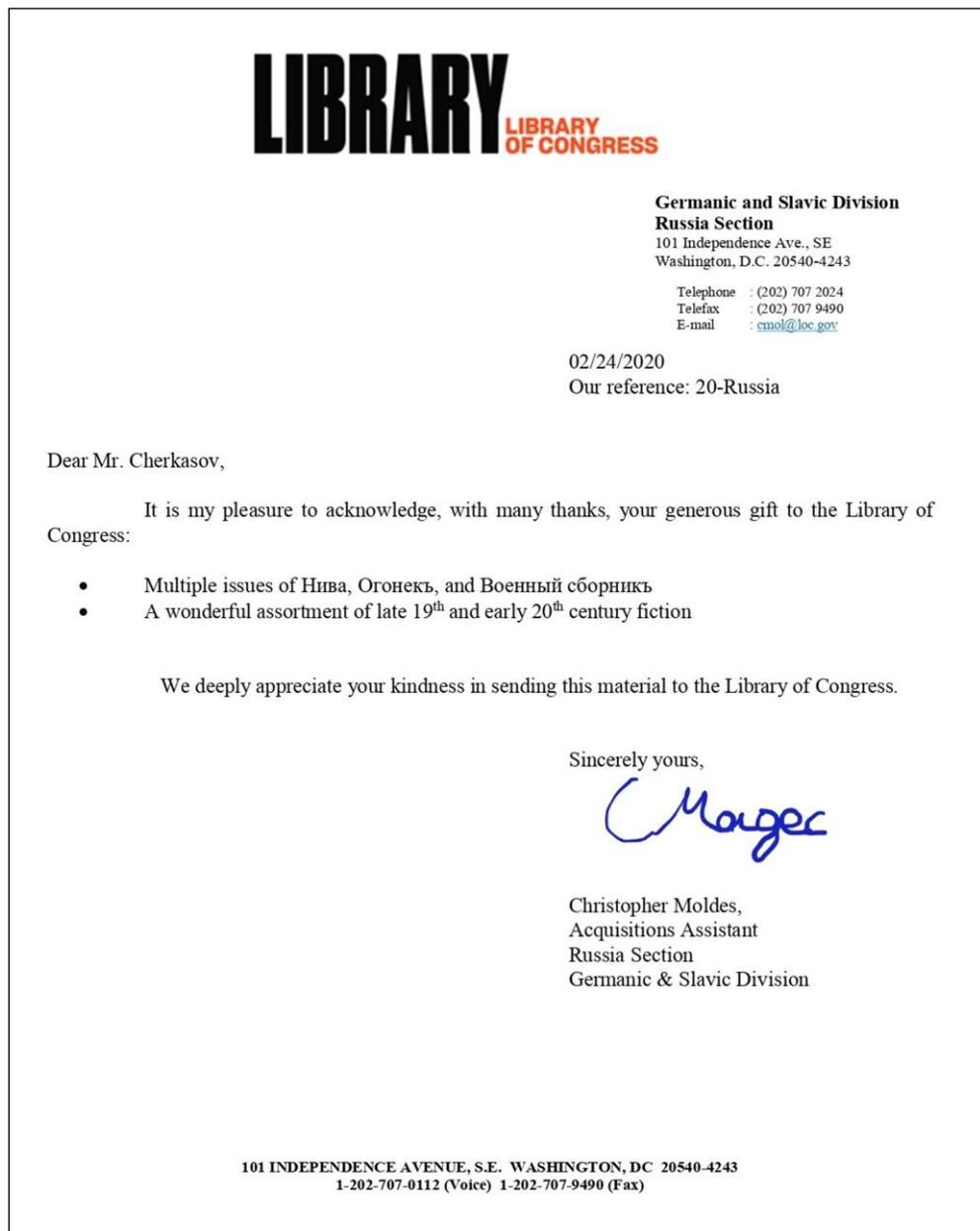


Fig. 5. Letter from the Library of Congress. 2020

### *Second stage (2020–2023)*

In 2020, it became obvious that the organization needed a library of its own. Considering that the geography of Cherkas Global University's workforce spanned seven countries, the library would have to be an electronic one. Consequently, on January 10, 2020, A.A. Cherkasov signed a document (Decree No. 2) creating a fundamental electronic library within the organization. The decree covered the appointment of those responsible for putting the library together and set

February 10, 2020, as the deadline for creating the library's website ([Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 58](#)).

By February 10, 2020, the work on the library's website was completed and those responsible for working on its holding were appointed.

The following sections were gradually created within the library: Atlases, Military History, General History, Journal Hall, Russian History, Regimental Stories, Travels and Land Descriptions, Document Collections, and Encyclopedias and Dictionaries. All materials were uploaded to the platform as PDF files.

Each section is outlined below.

The Atlases section included cartographic materials.

The Military History section was concerned with military history and conflicts.

The General History section included general historical works, exclusive of those on Russian history.

The Journal Hall section provided access to magazines and newspapers.

The Russian History section was concerned with books on the history of Russia exclusively.

The Regimental Stories section included works on the history of imperial-period Russian regiments.

The Travels and Land Descriptions section was concerned with travel and descriptions of places.

The Document Collections section included collections of documents.

The Encyclopedias and Dictionaries section was concerned with encyclopedic works.

Works were selected for inclusion in the library collection based on the areas of expertise among the staff of Cherkas Global University – primarily, prerevolutionary Russian history, the history of slavery, and military history. As a consequence, the library included a large number of periodical press materials concerned with military conflicts, including those dealing with World War II collaborationism. Among the rare publications included in the library collection, of particular note is the newspaper *Vestnik Leib-Gvardii* (almost all of its issues for 1992–1997 included).

The bulk of the work on putting together the library holding was completed as early as 2020, when the stock surpassed 50,000 items.

On August 1, 2022, the day marking the 30th anniversary of Cherkas Global University, the fundamental electronic library was named after Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov (1659–1725). In the early 1700s, Prokopii Cherkasov set up a shelter for the visually impaired in his backyard in the village of Keret' (Tsardom of Muscovy) ([Arkhiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135-135ob.](#)). That is, members of the Cherkasov family performed an important social function in the life of Russian society as early as the 18th century.

Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov was a member of the Cherkasov (Keretsky) family. Cherkasov had a fairly large farmstead, which in 1711 accommodated a total of 12 people (4 households). The census book for Kolsky Uyezd mentions him as a crippled, visually impaired person ([Arkhiv SPb II RAN. F. 10. Op. 3. D. 20. L. 135](#)).

As of 2023, the fundamental library of Cherkas Global University numbers over 61,000 items. Access to the library's resources is restricted and is only allowed to staff members via logins and passwords.

## 5. Conclusion

Over the period from 1992 to 2023, the fundamental library of Cherkas Global University worked its way from a personal library to a full-fledged fundamental electronic library. In 2019–2020, the bulk of the prerevolutionary (antiquarian) holding of A.A. Cherkasov's personal library was donated to the Library of Congress (USA) and an electronic fundamental library was created. In 2022, the library was named after Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov, who in the early 18th century established a shelter for the visually impaired in Keret'. Today, the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library numbers over 61,000 items, with this stock continually growing.

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