

## **BOOK PUBLISHING IN GEORGIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Georgia – country of the mythological Golden Fleece and the motherland of winery – is an independent country with a young state system and firm intentions to integrate into Europe.

Since the 1990s, a new publishing sector has emerged in Georgia. For the last 15 years – and particularly since the 2003 Rose Revolution – new publishing houses and bookshops have appeared; all working in accordance with western standards and constantly seeking to make contact with their western colleagues. At present, 150 Georgian publishing houses publish up to 2500 titles annually.

Additionally, a new – and very important – process of selling Georgian publishing rights has begun, simultaneous to the practice of purchasing translation and publishing rights from European and/ or American colleagues.

The Collective Stand of Georgian Publishers running at the Frankfurt Book Fair since 2007 is an important step towards the enhancement of this progress and also will allow the rest of the world to become acquainted with our small but beautiful country and with its exciting history and culture. Georgia – with almost twenty centuries of Christian history, fifteen centuries of literature, its own unique alphabet and being concurrently involved in the process of steady democratization and changes in its world outlook – is worthy of attention from authors, translators, publishers and politicians alike, and it is my hope that in a just a few years time we will even attain the status of guest of Honour at Frankfurt Book Fair.

Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association

## IMPORTANT DATES

- 468 - The first Georgian inscription was made.
- 495 - The first Georgian book "The Martyrdom of Shushanik" was written.
- 973 - The first Georgian fully preserved Manuscript of the Four Gospels was written.
- 1629 - The first Georgian book *Italian-Georgian Dictionary* was printed.
- 1712 - The first book was printed in Georgia.
- 1819 - The first Georgian newspaper was printed.
- 1995 - The law on intellectual property was adopted.
- 1995 - Georgia joined the Bern Convention.

## THE HISTORY OF BOOK PUBLISHING IN GEORGIA

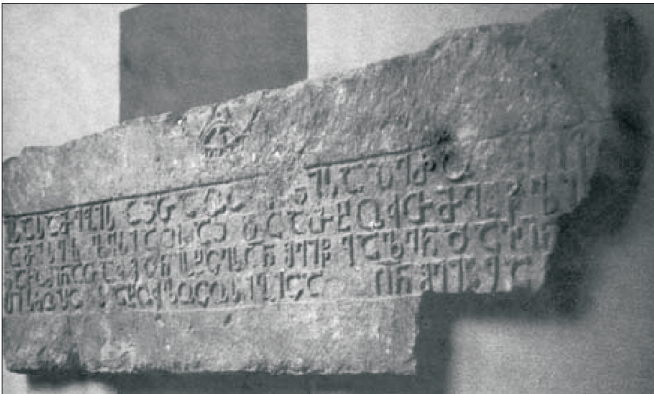
The roots of book publishing in Georgia go back to the 4th Century when Georgia's conversion to Christianity caused demand for manuscripts in Georgian. These manuscripts were copied in monasteries across the country.

Alongside the translation of the Bible, original texts were created. These early books were of religious content and were written by monks. The first Georgian book *The Martyrdom of Shushaniki* by Iakob Tsurtaveli was written in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

Although 5<sup>th</sup> Century inscriptions on the walls of churches are maintained, there are sadly no complete books in existence from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Century period; only fragmentary pages survived. One Georgian handwritten book which did survive to the present day is the *Mt. Sinai Bible* dated 864.

Despite the fact that Georgian books were printed from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, manuscripts still constituted the largest fraction of Georgian literature until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. And though thousands of books survived through the various centuries, even more were allegedly destroyed.

There are 10 000 titles of both manuscripts and old printed books preserved at the National Centre of Manuscripts of Georgia.



*The building  
inscription  
of Bolnisi  
Sioni, 493-494*

## GEORGIAN ALPHABET

ა - a

ბ - b

გ - g

დ - d

ე - e

ვ - v

ზ - z

თ - t

ი - i

კ - k'

ლ - l

მ - m

ნ - n

ო - o

პ - p'

ჟ - zh

რ - r

ს - s

ტ - t

უ - ui

ფ - p'

ქ - k

ყ - gh

ყ - q'

შ - sh

ჩ - ch

ც - ts

ძ - dz

წ - ts'

ჭ - ch'

ხ - kh

ჯ - j

ჰ - h

## SECULAR LITERATURE

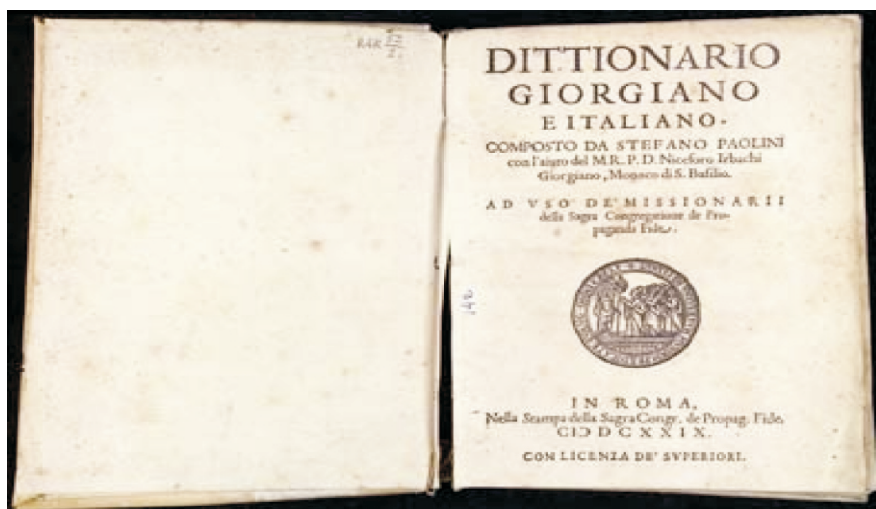
The creation of secular texts began in 10-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* was written in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century; a masterpiece considered to be one of the most important achievements of Georgian culture; the poem is preserved in numerous copies of different manuscripts. It is particularly interesting to note that *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* was often distributed in the form of illustrated manuscripts.



*The Knight in the Panther's Skin*  
Illustrated Manuscript, 1646

## THE FIRST GEORGIAN PRINTED BOOK

Due to the complicated political and economic situation in Georgia (the country was at one point totally isolated from the rest of the world), the first ever *printed* book was the Italian-Georgian Dictionary, printed in Rome in 1629. More books were printed abroad - in Italy and Russia - during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.



The Italian-Georgian Dictionary, printed in Rome in 1629



The first printing house in Tbilisi was established in 1712 and the first books printed there were *The Bible*, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli and *The Georgian Dictionary*, as well as *The History of Georgia* compiled using old manuscripts.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century 19 titles were printed in Georgia.

The Tbilisi printing house closed down and reopened several times.

## **BOOK PUBLISHING AFTER 1801**

After the annexation of Georgia by Russia in 1801 and the abolition of the Georgian Kingdom, Georgia remained a Russian province until 1918 when an independent republic was announced. During this time, Georgian did not function as a state language (until 1805, teaching Georgian at schools was also prohibited) and books were distributed only in handwritten form until 1805.

The first Georgian newspaper appeared in 1819.

## **STATISTICS FOR THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO 1918**

The total number of titles published from 1801 to 1918 (the year Georgia declared its independence) was 5395.

## **STATISTICS FOR 1918-1921**

The total number of the titles published from 1918 to 1921 was 896.

## **PUBLICATION STATISTICS IN INDEPENDENT GEORGIA**

After the 1921 Soviet occupation, book publishing was monopolized by the state and became heavily censored and controlled. Moscow ruled over the system as it did in all other Soviet Republics. Publishing regulations were governed by a special Committee and were obeyed by all publishing and printing houses. The total number of titles published during the 1921-1991 period is 40 000.

## 1992-2009

The first half of the 1990s were earmarked by vitally important changes for Georgia. The civil war caused the total collapse of book publishing. There were almost no books published during the 1992-1994 period. A small revival took place in 1995 whereby several private publishing houses were created which fully replaced the state-ruled publishing houses within a few years.

A very important step in the development of book publishing in Georgia was creation of the Georgian Book Publishers and Book-sellers Association. The Association initiated creation of an ISBN agency in 1997 and in the same year the first Book Fair in Georgia's capital was held.

A positive role was played by the SOROS Foundation (Open Society Georgia Foundation) which funded several visits of Georgian publishers to the Frankfurt Book Fair as well as arranging numerous training seminars for publishers. The Translation Support Program successfully functioned for many years.

## **CHARACTERISTICS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE GEORGIAN BOOK MARKET**

In 1996, four Georgian publishers exhibited at the Frankfurt Book Fair, representing three independent publishing companies. It was not just their first personal attendance at this fair, but the first participation ever of Georgian publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The four were among the few independent publishers who set up publishing companies in the turbulent years immediately following the declaration of independence. They presented all of twelve new publications on a four square-metre Georgian collective stand in the huge Hall 9.2 at the Frankfurt Book Fair. At that time, around 500 titles were published in all of Georgia; the maximum print-run for a novel came to 500 copies at the most.

Fifteen years have passed since then and it would seem that those difficult times are long since over.

Today, there are around 120 independent publishers, 80 book-shops and 5 wholesalers in Georgia. Most of them regularly take part in the Tbilisi Book Festival which is organised annually by the Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association (GPBA). The number of independent publishing companies and new publications is gradually increasing; sales figures are also rising steadily.

## SOME FACTS ABOUT GEORGIA

**General Information:** Georgia covers the central and western parts of the Southern Caucasus. Its territory within the borders as acknowledged by the international community, amounts to 69,5 thousands sq.km., while the country's territory except for the non-controlled areas, i.e. the ones where the jurisdiction of the Central Power of Georgia is not spread, makes 60,1 thousands sq.km.

Number of the population of Georgia by 2010 year equals to 4436,4 thousands. Among them 53% residential, 47% rural. Capital: Tbilisi, population – 1.300.000. Principal towns: Kutaisi – 235.100, Rustavi – 161.000, Batumi – 147.000.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH IN GEORGIA

Based on the preliminary data of the State Department of Statistics, GDP in Georgia amounted to Lari 17948.6 million (€ 7478.6 million) in 2009, i.e. GDP per capita of approximately Lari 4092.8 (€ 1705.3). The sustainability of high economic growth is a positive tendency in the economy of Georgia. Average yearly income of population is 17682.8 million lari (€ 7367.8 million).

Per year income per capita is 4032.2 lari (€ 1680.1) The subsistence minimum by 2009 is 114 Lari (€ 47.5). Inflation rate 2009 was 3%<sup>1</sup>.

## PUBLISHERS AND MARKET SHARE

There are more than 100 publishers registered in Georgia. However, the market is highly concentrated. The 10 largest publishing companies hold almost 80 percent of it. Approximately 5 companies publish more than hundred books per year.

## GENERAL STATISTICAL ISSUES

<b>Book Production</b>			
	2008	2009	2010 (First two quarters)
Print runs (in thousand of copies)	2391.7	2474.0	1162.8
<i>Source: State Department of Statistic of Georgia</i>			

<b>Income from book sales per annum</b>			
Year	Income Million Lari	Income Million Euro	Inflation Rate
			%
2008	14.5	6.04	5.5
2009	17.0	7.08	3.0
2010 (First two quarters)	7.5	3.2	-
<i>Source: State Department of Statistic of Georgia</i>			

<sup>1</sup> State Department of Statistics of Georgia, Annual Report 2009



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Georgian Book Publishers and Booksellers Association (GPBA) is a business association which acts in its own interests, and according to the Legislative Constitution of Georgia, both within Georgia and overseas.

The Association is playing the important role in the development of Georgian book sector.

#### **MAIN ACTIVITIES OF GPBA:**

GPBA defines and protects the interests of the book sector. The association organizes and runs the annual Tbilisi Book Fair, protects the copyright and freedom of publishing. GPBA organizes seminars, conferences and civic projects and consultation services relevant to its interests.

The GPBA has created and put into effect a professional code of ethics and also legislation in order to improve conditions in the book sector.



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