

The most important mission of Imam Reza shrine is guiding people to spiritual perfection in accordance with Imam Reza's life and conduct. One of the prerequisites of this mission is applying targeted means proportionate to people's needs. To that end, printing and publishing books and promotion of the culture of book reading have been among effective steps ever taken. Imam Reza shrine has attached great significance to books and reading as effectual ways and means for conveying cultural messages.

#### Establishment of Imam Reza shrine library in Safavid Era (1736-1501)

Imam Reza library is one of the biggest and most valuable libraries in Iran and in the Islamic world. Remaining documents from Safavid, Afsharid and Qajar eras attest to its long history. Archived documents and manuscripts in Organization of Libraries, Museums and Documents recount the history of the administrative building of the shrine, number and type of occupations, expenses and financial matters, related endowment deeds, method of fundraising, type of cataloguing, method of retrieving information and lending books, the library building in different eras, and structural transformation in past eras.

#### 400 years of librarianship in Imam Reza shrine

Libraries have a pivotal role in information and evolution of human knowledge. Thanks to the work of librarians, these centers have, for centuries, provided scientists and researchers with precious opportunities, without whose efforts the hard work by the guardians of written human records cannot be repaid. Books and reading have a longstanding history in Iranian and Islamic culture and civilization. The archived works in the Documentation Center of the shrine bears witness to this claim. Librarianship was the first job in Imam Reza shrine library. The



oldest document regarding librarianship in the center dates back to 1600 AH. Since this is the only existing document in Iran, it is highly valuable for research on libraries and librarianship.

#### 100 years of cataloguing art

Cataloguing of manuscripts is almost a century-long art in Iran. The first catalogues in Iran, which belong to the shrine library, were written by some front-runner Iranian cataloguers such as Sheikh Mohsen Khalesi, Morteza Qolikhani Na'eeni, Haj Emad ul-Mohagheghin Vaez Tehrani, etc. in 1926. The cataloguing section of Organization of Libraries, Museums, and Documents was launched in the same year – the oldest cataloguing center for books and Quranic manuscripts in the country. Manuscripts are the cultural wealth of a nation, displaying artistic values in different centuries.