

AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN SOFIA
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THE AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN SOFIA (ARCS)

ARCS is a private, independent, non-profit academic institution whose mission is to promote academic interaction between North American and Bulgarian scholars in the humanities and social sciences and to stimulate American interest in Bulgarian historical and cultural heritage. Historically, our host institution in the US is Cornell University. In 2008, thanks to a generous grant by the David Packard (Packard Humanities Institute), ARCS purchased a three-story building near the center of Sofia. The facility has a lecture hall, a small conference room, a library and a dormitory. Five full-time employees work at ARCS: a director, an administrative director in charge of the US office, an archaeology program officer, a librarian, and a building manager.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

1. Annual Fellowship Program for North American PhD candidates to conduct research in Bulgaria (e.g. next academic year we will have 9 graduate students participating in the program for one or two semesters, during which time they will research Bulgarian or Balkan history, culture and society; the stipends include travel, housing, academic lectures and lessons in Bulgarian language);
2. Joint American-Bulgarian research projects (e.g. currently we sponsor 9 American-Bulgarian archaeological expeditions in Bulgaria and site preservation projects);
3. Grants and projects which stimulate the professional development of young Bulgarian scholars (e.g. this year we offered grants to 13 Bulgarian graduate students and young researchers in the humanities for short-term research trips, between one to three months, to specialized libraries in neighboring countries);
4. Projects which stimulate academic interest in and study of Bulgarian historical and cultural heritage (e.g. publications on Bulgarian history from Prehistory to modern; lectures about Bulgarian history at professional forums abroad).

LIBRARY

Key feature of ARCS is its specialized library, which contains currently about 10,800 volumes. At its core is in ancient Balkan history and archaeology with secondary areas covering Balkan culture, history and society of the Middle Ages, the twentieth century, and the contemporary period. The collection includes an increasing number of materials that are unique or hard to find elsewhere in the country. Its electronic catalogue is available on line. The facility offers high speed wireless internet and access to electronic databases, e.g. JSTOR. The library is open to the public and an increasing number of Bulgarian students and scholars make use of it.

SUSTAINABILITY

ARCS has been very successful in obtaining major grants from public and private foundations and from individuals. In order to ensure its sustainable development it began building an endowment fund which will generate money for its library and staff salaries. To that end in 2010 the Center received a five-year Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (\$750,000). The full amount of the grant will be made available only after ARCS raises from non-federal sources three dollars for every dollar from the NEH. To create extra incentives for donations, two businessmen offered recently mini-challenge grants (\$5,000 and \$10,000, respectively), each with 1:1 match. All proceeds will go towards the NEH Challenge Grant. ARCS is exempt from Federal income tax in the US under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are deductible from Federal income tax in the US.