



FaRiG is a UK charity, which provides assistance to scholars in Georgia working in the humanities to carry out research and publish the results. FaRiG thus contributes to the preservation of Georgia's unique cultural heritage and to making their work better known in the international academic community.

Overview

Since 2000 FaRiG has been giving well-targeted assistance to Georgians who are working in the difficult conditions of post-Soviet life to document, analyse and maintain their country's 3,000-year-old patrimony. FaRiG has so far given 13 research grants, 11 book prizes, 8 conference grants, 6 excavation grants, 3 essay prizes and 4 special grants. Research grants have covered a wealth of topics such as:-

- the fortifications of 4th-6th century castles in Western Georgia
- secular imagery in 4th-13th century Georgian art
- the historical and cultural heritage of the town of Gori
- the Alaverdi diocese in the 17th century
- illustrated Georgian gospels in the monastery of the Black Mountain (Turkey)
- 19th century Tbilisi architecture

Other examples of FaRiG grants include:

- FaRiG has given a grant to the S Janashia Museum of Georgia for the purchase of a digital microscope camera which will be used in conservation, publications and teaching work for the Museum and the Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (previously Archaeopolis in Samegrelo).
- Access to international academic journals is a key element in research. Tbilisi State University was not subscribing to the leading on-line source, JSTOR, so FaRiG kick-started their subscription by paying the one-off entrance fee. Hundreds of their students and researchers now have direct access across the whole range of the humanities.
- Georgia has some major Graeco-Roman sites, so FaRiG has contributed towards the annual excavations at Pichvnari and Nokalakevi involving both Georgian and British scholars and students. Similarly it has contributed towards the conservation of the Royal Wall Paintings at the Church of the Dormition at Vardzia, led by the Courtauld Institute.
- FaRiG has helped scholars attend academic events in Oxford, Birmingham, London, Göttingen, Krakow, Sofia, Rome and Rio de Janeiro.

FaRiG currently awards an annual essay prize and an annual research grant. To continue and expand this work, FaRiG seeks your financial support. 100% of any funds raised go into FaRiG's work as it holds no assets beyond cash and has no employees (its trustees, many from Oxford, Cambridge and London, provide their time without any charge). FaRiG has received significant help over the last fifteen years from certain private benefactors but needs on-going support. The scope of FaRiG's work could be extended after discussion with donors, for example

- FaRiG could consider scholarships or bursaries for suitable scholars.
- Awards could be targeted at specific regions, towns or institutions or indeed at sectors or subjects.
- Awards could be anonymous or named.

Examples of previous named awards include Rothschild Research Grant and Caroline Adams Essay Prize

Background

There is an acute shortage of support for this level of research as Georgia has plummeted from being a rich and important centre of culture in the USSR to become one of the world's poorest countries (110th on the World Bank ranking of GDP per capita). Since perestroika, a civil war and a Russian invasion and trade blockade have damaged not only economic life but also left its academics with little support, especially for research in the humanities.

The transition from a Soviet academic system has largely left this research outside the new hierarchies. One notable trait in the Soviet system was a sharp division between research and teaching with research conducted mainly in research institutes subordinated to the Academy of Sciences. That institution has lost its crucial role and importance and, as pointed out in a study for the University of Fribourg, no other institution

has taken its place. Now the national priority for the Georgian university budget is the teaching of the young and its focus is westward towards membership of NATO and the EU.

Business support for research into the humanities is sporadic at best. International research grants go mostly to the natural sciences and technology development.

This threatens the survival of Georgia's culture, which has evolved from its ancient roots over millennia. The location of Georgia on the crossroads of Asia and Europe has brought travellers, merchants, missionaries and conquerors of all kinds and creeds. Georgia thus enjoyed influences from Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Greece, Persia, Rome and Byzantium. It has further evolved in the Middle Ages under Christian ecclesiastical and Middle-Eastern influences and then from the 19th century onwards under European and Russian influences.

Georgians created some of the earliest Christian art, architecture and polyphony (though battered, much of this still survives – just). Its cinema was described by Fellini as “a unique phenomenon”.

However deep their commitment to Georgia and its civilisation, the nation's scholars struggle to keep themselves and their families above the poverty line. As a result, the preservation and study of Georgia's priceless frescoes, icons and paintings have been badly neglected. In many places, the nation's heritage is literally crumbling away.

Georgia has a deep, rich but neglected heritage in the humanities. FaRiG seeks to preserve it and to sustain and strengthen Georgia's expertise in these fields. We need your generous support to do so.

Testimonials

It's my pleasure on behalf of TSU to express our gratitude and appreciation to FARIG for the support provided to our institution. In 2010, FARIG agreed to fund the start-up costs for TSU to acquire access to the JSTOR online collection of academic journals. This has resulted in a huge improvement to our students' and our faculty's access to current scholarship across a very broad range of disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Prof Marine Chitashvili

Vice-Rector for Strategic Development, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU)

FaRiG is considered one of the essential grant programmes supporting the study of Georgia's cultural heritage. Practically, Georgia did not previously have a programme for individual scholars, helping them to achieve independent and in-depth research in their work. Such assistance is also very effective for institutional and team work, because of their single research initiatives that enrich and benefit the mutual results. Those initiatives cover a variety of academic topics and themes. I am sure that such a grant programme is still crucial to encourage the Georgian academic potential and raise the effectiveness of the research.

Prof Dr Nikoloz Vacheishvili

Centre of Development of Georgian Cultural Heritage Resources, Agriculture University of Georgia

FARIG was established in 2000 during the toughest period for Georgian humanities, when the State could not finance any kind of serious research work, and there were no other sources of funding in this field.

Against this background the activities of FARIG proved to be very efficient and helpful for Georgian scholars in general, and for art historians in particular. Indeed, many researchers from the Chubinashvili National Research Centre benefited from FARIG.

Along with funding different types of work (travel, field-work, academic studies, scholarship etc.) FARIG financed the purchase of scholarly literature for the Centre's library. Given that in 1991 a large part of the library, archives and equipment had been destroyed by fire during the military confrontation, this aid received from FARIG can hardly be overestimated.

Our partnership remains very successful, especially in supporting young scholars. We highly appreciate this approach and will be very glad if FaRiG's activities continue in the future.

Dr. Mariam Didebulidze

Director, G. Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation,

Please contact:

Chairman – Prof Donald Rayfield, Professor Emeritus, University of London donald_rayfield@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary - Robert Scallon robert@scallon.co.uk

Website - www.farig.org