



ZAH LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT

ZAH ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MARCH 29, 2026

The ZAH Library continues to serve as a cultural and intellectual cornerstone of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, advancing its mission of preserving, promoting, and sharing Zoroastrian history, scholarship, and lived experience.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2025, we celebrated 25 years of continuous speaker programming—marking a quarter century of scholarship, dialogue and community engagement. The anniversary gala in October featured presentation by Prof Dan Sheffield and Prof. Afshin Marashi and recognized past scholars who have shaped the intellectual life of ZAH.

PROGRAMS

| Date | Event |
|-----------------|--|
| March 5-6, 2025 | <i>A Celebration of Heritage and Scholarship</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artifacts from our library collection showcased at MFAH until December 2025.• Zoroastrian Day at the State Capitol in Austin where a copy of the <i>Tamam Khordeb Avesta</i> was placed in the chapel.• Zoroastrian Day at Rice University: Orchestrated by Mahtab B. Dastur, the event was a remarkable celebration featuring distinguished speakers, delicious food, and a thoughtfully curated exhibit.• Meet-and-Greet session with Professor Toledo in conjunction with a WZCC event. |
| May 30, 2025 | Book reading by Nawaz Merchant (Nev March), winner of the Minotaur Books/Mystery Writers of America Award for Best First Crime Fiction for <i>Murder in Old Bombay</i> and an Honorable Mention in the Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Contest for <i>The Spanish Diplomat's Secret</i> , who visited Houston to read from Book 4 of her series, <i>The Silversmith's Puzzle</i> . |
| June 26, 2025 | MFAH Visit: Organized tour for ZAH of the new Parpia Collection |
| Oct 10-11, 2025 | <i>25th Anniversary Gala Event</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognized past speakers and contributors who have shaped the intellectual life of ZAH presented by Vehishta Kaikobad – technical help by Edul Chikhliwala• <i>Testimonies of Tradition: An Introduction to Zoroastrian Manuscripts</i> - Prof. Dan Sheffield• <i>Parsis and Iranis: Historical Preservation between Print Culture and the Digital Age</i> - Prof. Afshin Marashi |

FIRES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – PRESERVING LIVING MEMORY

One of the most impactful initiatives of 2025 has been the continued development of the FIRES Oral History Project: <https://fires-fezana.org/category/oral-history/>.

The Oral History Project preserves invaluable first-hand narratives, strengthens intergenerational connections, and creates a permanent digital archive documenting the lived experiences of the first generations of Zoroastrians who built their homes in North America

This initiative documents the lived experiences of senior community members—capturing migration stories, personal reflections, community building efforts, and memories of earlier generations. These interviews are professionally recorded and made accessible through the FEZANA YouTube channel and the FIRES website, ensuring that future generations can hear these voices directly, with 5000 plus views on YouTube.

FIRES's volunteers, especially young members, have collected 12 interviews so far and 7 of them are available online.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT & PRESERVATION

In 2025, the Library expanded its holdings through acquisitions and generous donations, including new scholarly works and diaspora narratives. Cataloguing and organization progressed steadily.

Our book collection currently stands at: 1639 books (926 ZAH & 713 FIRES)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

- Collaboration with ZAH visitors to the Atash Kadeh and Center
- Research assistance for students and members

FINANACIAL OVERVIEW

Donations

- Anonymous donation of \$10,000
- Individual donation \$1,000
- Program-related contributions \$893
- Meheryar Rivetna's continued donation from sale of his book
- Sponsorship of 25th Anniversary event by Rare Book School: \$1,000

Expenses

- See Treasurer's Report for details

VOLUNTEERS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The vitality of the ZAH Library rests entirely on the dedication of volunteers. The library team works hard on our programs throughout the year, but we could not put on these programs without the help of our community volunteers who put in their time, talents and money to make sure the programs are successful. We thank them for their willingness to show up for us anytime we ask for help. Their commitment ensures that the Library remains both dynamic and sustainable.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move beyond our 25th anniversary milestone, our goals include:

1. Expanding the Oral History archive
2. Increasing youth participation and research engagement
3. Accelerating cataloguing completion
4. Developing curated thematic exhibits
5. Strengthening digital access to lectures and archival materials

The ZAH Library today stands not only as a repository of books, but as a guardian of memory, scholarship, and identity. In celebrating 25 years of speaker programming and advancing our Oral History initiative, we affirm our commitment to preserving both the written word and the living voice of our community.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nauzer Bilimoria, Rustom Engineer, Yezdi Engineer, Debra and Darayus Kolah, Sharmeen Mehri, Zubeen Mehta, Jehangir Mistry, Yasmin Pavri, Meheryar Rivetna, Aban Rustomji, Nazanin Sarkari and Arnavaz Sethna.

Aban Rustomji
Chair, ZAH Library Committee