

Ivan Frolov

I joined this project because of a personal curiosity about books—especially those that have been banned or challenged. There's something deeply intriguing about the idea that a book could be considered so powerful or disruptive that someone would go to the lengths of censoring or removing it from public access. That sense of mystery and weight behind banned literature immediately drew me in. At first, I was simply interested in the topic from a curious, even slightly academic point of view.

As I got deeper into the work, though, my interest shifted from passive curiosity to something more engaged. Over time, I began to see the broader value of what we were doing—not just in documenting censorship, but in supporting librarians and educators in their efforts to push back against it. The idea that these seminars could help people who are actually working on the front lines of information access gave the project a new kind of purpose for me. I found myself thinking more critically about the educational aspect of it all: what kinds of conversations these seminars might spark, how they could empower professionals, and what role research like mine could play in making that happen. That shift in perspective made the work feel much more meaningful.

Working on the research team was a positive and rewarding experience. The atmosphere was friendly and collaborative, and I appreciated how “chill” the overall workflow was. It felt open and trusting, which made it easier to work at my own pace. That said, the open-ended nature of the project sometimes made me feel a bit anxious—I wasn't always sure if I was going in the right direction or doing enough compared to others. To make things more manageable, I decided fairly early on to narrow my focus and work on a single country: Kazakhstan. There wasn't a particularly strategic reason for picking it—it just caught my attention as a place that hadn't been fully explored (later I found out that this country could provide good opportunities), and the rest of the group seemed fine with me diving into it. As time went on, that choice became more deliberate and Kazakhstan became “my” subject.

In the end, I'm really glad I took part in the project. It gave me the chance to explore a topic I care about, to contribute to a team effort, and to develop my independent research skills in a low-pressure but meaningful environment. More importantly, it helped me grow from someone who was simply curious to someone who understands and values the importance of educational outreach and support—especially when it comes to defending access to books and ideas.