University Libraries in Turkey

Ahmet Çelik*

Introduction

There are 51 state and three private universities in Turkey as of June 1995.[1] In 1994-1995 academic year, there are 459.411 undergraduate and 56.635 gradute students in these universities. On the other hand, three private universities, namely Başkent, Bilkent and Koç, have 7998 undergraduate and 675 graduate students. The total number of teaching staff for both sectors are 49.317.[2] These figures show that the government has an important place in the university education.

In this paper, we will briefly discuss the Turkish university system and its effects on the university libraries.

Turkish University System

Although it has a long history through "medrese" education, the first university was established in 1863, under the name of "Osmanlı Darülfünunu" in Istanbul. In the beginning of Rebuplican period, Turkey tried to make several reform attempts to reach the Western standards. In this context, a reformation act was also put into action in Istanbul University in 1933. In this period, several scientists especially from Germany made great contributions to the development of modern university education. Their impact was also seen in university librarianship and decentralised libraries appeared in the university, as a result of the German tradition, in 1930s.

For long years Istanbul University remained the only university in the country. The second university, University of Ankara, was set up in 1946. After the World War II, Turkey established close ties with the U.S.A. and became a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1952. This situation brought about Anglo-Saxon effects upon Turkish universities and campus model with centralised libraries became a new model. The Middle East Technical University is the best example of it.

Universities were under state control until 1961. A new constitution at that time, supplied autonomy to universities in their scientific and administrative matters. The number of universities has increased rapidly, especially in 1970s. In 1981, a new law, the Higher

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* Dr. Ahmet Çelik is with the Department of Library Science, Hacettepe University, 06532 Beytepe, Ankara.

[1] State universities are: Abant İzzet Baysal, Adnan Menderes, Afyon Kocatepe, Akdeniz, Anadolu, Ankara, Atatürk, Balıkesir, Boğaziçi, Celal Bayar, Cumhuriyet, Çanakkale 18 Mart, Çukurova, Dicle, Dokuz Eylül, Dumlupınar, Ege, Erciyes, Fırat, Galatasaray, Gazi, Gaziantep, Gaziosmanpaşa, Hacettepe, Harran, İnönü, İstanbul, İstanbul Teknik, Kafkas, K.Maraş Sütçü İmam, Karadeniz Teknik, Kırıkkale, Kocaeli, Marmara, Mersin, Muğla, Mimar Sinan, Mustafa Kemal, Niğde, Ondokuz Mayıs, Orta Doğu Teknik, Osmangazi, Pamukkale, Sakarya, Selçuk, Süleyman Demirel, Trakya, Uludağ, Yıldız Teknik, Yüzüncü Yıl and Zonguldak Karaelmas

[2] All data mentioned above has been obtained from the Higher Education Council (June 1995).

Education Act, was made effective for all universities. A new body, the Higher Education Council (HEC), for universities was established. By law, HEC is the responsible body for education and the majority of its members are appointed by the government. Its main function is to coordinate activities among universities. Universities, including their libraries, receive goverment funds through HEC. The new act made it also possible to open private universities, the number of which has been increasing rapidly in recent years.

HEC has established a modern library, called Documentation Center of Higher Education Council (HECDOC) in 1983. The aim was to collect core journals, either foreign or local, in every scientific discipline. It aimed to subscribe around 20.000 journals annually. It was quite successful at the beginning. But, journal subscriptions have been decreased in the last two years because of financial problems.

Each university is administered by a president, called rector, who is appointed by the President of the Turkish Republic. Director of the library in the hierarchial structure reports to the secretary-general of the university, who is the head of the administrative staff. In this sense, library is seen as an administrative unit rather than an academic organ in the university.

Turkish University Libraries: Current Situation

In order to better describe the current situation of Turkish university libraries, it is better to evaluate them on the bases of some objective criteria. The criteria we used in our evaluation are: budget, personnel, collection, building, and the user.

1 - **Budget**: The lack of financial sources, as is well-known, is a universal problem for all kinds of libraries. Funds that libraries receive are not enough to cope with the "information explosion". This is also a common case for Turkish university libraries. In the fiscal year of 1994, government allocated 255 billion Turkish Liras to university libraries for purchasing materials (Üniversite, 1994). Since libraries largely depend on materials from abroad, this amount is not sufficient. Turkish universities, on the average, allocate 0.9% of their total budget for the library expenditures.

2- **Personnel**: The Higher Education Act states that all activities regarding the university library are under the supervision of the director, who is called as the head of library and documentation center. At least an undergraduate degree, not necessarily in librarianship, is sought to become a library director. The main duties of the library director are:
- to provide every kind of service which the university library should provide,
- to prepare catalogs of books, films, microfilms, and other library materials,
- to do other duties assigned by the university administration.

There are two kinds of personnel in libraries. The first group is professional librarians, who shoud have at least an undergraduate degree in librarianship, and their number is around 300 by 1994. The second group includes support personnel, whose education varies from primary school to higher education and their total number is approximately 1400 (Üniversite, 1994).

University librarians can get academic statuses within the universities according to the Higher Education Act. However, in practice, only half of the professional librarians have obtained academic status.

3- **Collection:** Turkish university libraries can be divided into two categories, from the viewpoint of their collectiones: a) decentralised collections with closed shelves; b) centralised collections with open shelves.

Although the majority of libraries have decentralised collections, current tendency is towards the centralised collections with open shelves. University libraries contain 4.576.749 books and 1.175.547 bound periodicals. The principal systems used for cataloging and classification are AACR2 and LC, respectively (Üniversite, 1994). There is great necessity for cooperative efforts, but the lack of a national book catalog restricts resource sharing. Therefore the amount of cooperation among libraries is very limited.

In recent years, computerised systems have been developed for different purposes. Nearly all university libraries have systems or plans for automation.[3] The leading library in this area is the Bilkent University Library, which has developed a software called BLISS. At the beginning, each library was trying to develop its own system. Today, the tendency is towards buying off-the-shelf systems either local or foreign. University libraries are also becoming a part of information networks. For instance, the Bilkent University Library catalog is on the Internet. Currently, 18 universities have connections to EARN (European Academic and Research Network) and 16 universities to the Internet.

4- **Building:** Few universities have specifically designed library buildings. The rest are operating in insufficient places. The building problem is especially important for newly-established universities which do not have library buildings yet.

5- **User :** Students, teaching staff, and local researchers are the major users of libraries. Therefore, a university library should be organised so as to satisfy their information needs. Majority of Turkish university libraries cannot satisfy their users' needs effectively. Lack of necassary materials, lack of interlibrary loan, insufficient library buildings, and language problems are the main causes of this situation.

Problem Areas

It can be said that Turkish university libraries are struggling with several problems. Some of them are: finance, personnel, standardisation, cooperation, bibliographic control, automation, collection development, building, social status of librarians, etc. All kinds of problems mentioned above can be classified under three headings: a) budget; b) personnel; and c) policy.

a) **Budget:** Lack of financial sources has two dimensions. On the one hand, funds allocated to libraries are not sufficient if we consider the current standards. With a few exceptions, the majority of universities spend less than 1% of their total budgets for purchasing library materials. On the other hand, a comparison of library expenditures per user shows a great imbalance among universities. For instance, Boğaziçi University Library spent 170 times more than that of Edirne University Library for each user in 1990 (Çelik, 1991).

b) **Personnel:** Problems related to personnel can be evaluated under three headings. The first one is the selection of library directors. Currently, the majority of library directors (29)

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[3] For more information on automation see Tonta (1990).

have no degrees in librarianship. The number of library directors with formal education in librarianship is 21 (Üniversite,1994). Library directors without library education are, of course, one of the problem areas of Turkish university libraries.

The second issue is concerned with the professional staff. Their numbers are not enough to provide a satisfactory library service in universities. Another problem area for professional librarians is related to academic status. Higher Education Act allows universities to employ librarians with academic status. However, standards applied to obtain academic status are not specified. Currently, the university president decides who would get the academic positions regardless of their education and experience.

The third issue is related with the support staff, whose number is also limited. The biggest problem for this group is the level of salaries they get.

c) **Policy:** Although there are some attempts, Turkey has not established its national information policy yet. Therefore, there is not much coordination among institutions on library-and information-related issues. There is also no law or legislation defining librarianship as a profession. Clearly, the lack of official policy is a big obstacle for the development of library and information services in the country. University libraries are therefore heavily affected by this situation.

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to show some points of Turkish university libraries. It is clear that it is not possible to explain all aspects of these libraries within the limits of a paper. Nevertheless, it can be said that Turkish university libraries have some serious problems. It will not be possible to have a satisfactory library service without solving problems indicated. The community of Turkish librarians is aware of those problems and they are trying to cope with the developments in modern librarianship.

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