

Southern Europe

Didar Bayır*

Turkish University Libraries on the Centenary of the Republic

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Abstract: Turkey celebrated the Centenary of the Republic in 2023. Within the scope of this article, the development and changes that Turkish university libraries have undergone in this century-long adventure will be conveyed under the main topics that we consider prominent and important. Under each, the general situation in Turkish university libraries will be explained with examples; and the article will finish with a brief evaluation and suggestions for the future by considering trends that emerge because of studies conducted on a global scale and changes in social, economic, political, and technological fields which contribute to the transformation of libraries.

Keywords: University libraries; Turkish librarianship; university libraries in Turkey; innovative services; global trends

Türkische Universitätsbibliotheken am 100. Jahrestag der Republik

Zusammenfassung: 2023 feierte die Türkei den 100. Jahrestag der Gründung der Republik. In diesem Artikel werden Entwicklungen und Veränderungen der Bibliotheken in diesem hundertjährigen Prozess unter den wichtigsten Gesichtspunkten dargestellt. In jedem Kapitel wird die Situation der türkischen Universitätsbibliotheken mit Beispielen erläutert. Am Ende steht eine Evaluation auf der Grundlage der Trends, die sich aus Studien der weltweiten sozialen, ökonomischen, politischen und technischen Entwicklungen ergeben, von denen die Transformation der Bibliotheken beeinflusst wird.

Schlüsselwörter: Universitätsbibliotheken in der Türkei; innovative Dienstleistungen; globale Trends der Bibliotheksentwicklung

1 The Turkish University Landscape

After the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, many revolutionary movements took place that especially affected the educational life of the nation and, therefore, its libraries. The most important of these reforms include the Tevhid-i Tedrisat (Unification of Education) Law (1924), the Alphabet Revolution (1928), the Depository Law (1934), and the establishment of İstanbul University for the former İstanbul Darülfünunu (1933). In addition, the reports prepared by foreign experts invited from abroad played an important role in the development of Turkish universities and libraries. Hellmut Ritter's Report (1934)¹, Albert Malche's Report on Istanbul University (1932)², and Dr Lawrence S. Thompson's Report on University Libraries (1952)³ are undoubtedly among the important documents in the history of Turkish librarianship.

Another development that impacted on Turkish librarianship was the sending of selected Turkish experts abroad for professional training, starting from 1925, and the librarianship courses initiated by them. Thus, librarians began to be trained to work in libraries and some professional rules and standards were set up. These developments were followed by the establishment of the Turkish Librarians' Association (TKD) in 1949, and the first Librarianship Department at Ankara University in 1954. Today, there are fourteen Information and Document Management Departments (formerly Librarianship Departments) set up in various universities that provide education at both undergraduate and graduate levels.⁴

Istanbul University, the first university of the Republican period, was followed by the foundation of other universities. Up until the 1950s, there were only three state universities, namely, Istanbul, Istanbul Technical and Ankara Universities. "Between the 1950s and mid-1970s, important

1 Ötüken (1957).

2 Malche (1939).

3 Thompson (1952).

4 Council of Higher Education: All Universities with Information and Document Management Programmes: <https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr/lisans-bolum.php?b=10021>.

*Corresponding author: Didar Bayır, didarbayir@ircica.org

campus universities were constructed in Turkey. This was a significant development which was conducive to taking even architectural styles of university libraries into the agenda of the higher education system”.⁵

With the formation of Bilkent University in 1984, foundation (vakıf)⁶ universities started to appear on the Turkish university landscape. As of today, however, the number of universities in Turkey has reached 204, with 129 state and 75 foundation universities, and a total number of students approaching 7 million.⁷

1.1 Turkish University Structure

Universities are institutions that contribute to the production of knowledge through the education and research studies they conduct and places where information is produced and consumed to further the development of their countries.

The higher education system in Turkey is supervised by the *Council of Higher Education* (CoHE). The CoHE is an autonomous institution which is responsible for the planning, coordination and governance of higher education system in Turkey in accordance with the Turkish Constitution and the Higher Education Laws.⁸

With the 1981 Higher Education Law (no. 2547), Turkish higher education started undergoing an academic, organizational, and administrative restructuring. Hence, the CoHE became the sole fully autonomous corporate public body in control of higher education in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Articles 130 and 131 of the Constitution and the Higher Education Laws. There are also some other legal documents which regulate the principles regarding the establishment, operation, supervision, and auditing of higher education institutions, e. g., the *Foundation Higher Education Institutions Regulation*, published in 2005 and updated in 2018.

⁵ Katipoğlu (2010) 154.

⁶ *Vakıf* is an institution established by allocating a real or legal person or persons with a certain property and rights for a certain and permanent purpose. Foundation universities are not profit-making institutions and receive support from the state.

⁷ Council of Higher Education: 2022–2023 Higher Education Statistics: <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>.

⁸ Council of Higher Education: Higher Education System in Turkey: <https://www.yok.gov.tr/en/institutional/higher-education-system>.

2 Turkish University Libraries

University libraries are organizations responsible for meeting the information needs of faculty members, students, scientists, and researchers of the university they are affiliated with, and for contributing to the scholarly production of the country. Turkish university libraries are established within each university, the number of which is increasing, to fulfil these obligations.

Until the 1950s, independent libraries were formed in each of the faculties, departments and institutes affiliated with universities and distributed in different places.

After the 1950s, universities organized within a campus began to be established as a product of the American Ecole. In such universities, there is a central library structure that serves all faculties, departments and institutes. The mess in the organization and working principles of university libraries was tried to be eliminated with a decision taken by CoHE in 1982. In line with the decision, a library and documentation department was established in each university and services began to be provided centrally.⁹

The Library of the Middle East Technical University (METU) was:

The first campus library established in the country to serve at the contemporary library science standards [...] The responsibilities of the library and documentation departments are generally limited to the central library. The administration of libraries other than the central library is within the authority of the unit heads to which they are affiliated. The situation is slightly different in foundation universities. Some foundation university libraries are organized as departments, while others are organized as directorates. It is not common in foundation universities to have branch libraries other than the central library.¹⁰

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (*TÜİK*) 2022 statistics,¹¹ there are 625 university libraries in total in Turkey, of which 475 are in state universities and 150 are in foundation universities. These numbers include the libraries of higher education institutions and faculties as well as central libraries within a campus. The number of central libraries is 195 (121 state and 74 foundation university libraries).

University libraries organized under the 1981 CoHE Law and subsequent regulations began to develop and change with librarians trained in the librarianship departments opened in various universities. Technological developments in the 1990s also affected Turkish university libraries, and

⁹ Polat and Odabaş (2011) 45.

¹⁰ Ibid. 45.

¹¹ Turkish Statistical Institute: Library Statistics, 2022: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Library-Statistics-2022-49355>.

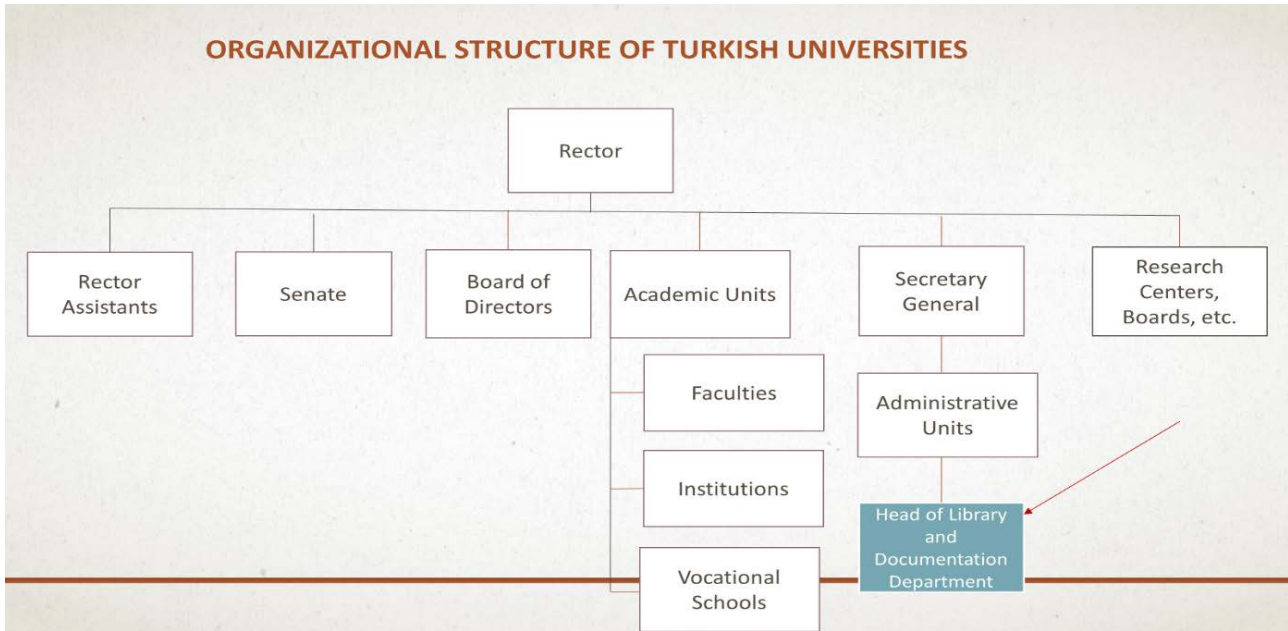


Fig. 1: Organizational Structure of Turkish Universities

many technologies (internet, automation programmes, etc.) that emerged because of these developments began to be used in libraries.

Since the 2000s, Turkish university libraries have begun to experience their golden age, the most important reason for which is the national and international collaboration that started with the work of national consortia.

In the following sections, the developments and changes that Turkish university libraries have undergone to the present day today are summarized under various topics.

2.1 Management and Legal Issues

In Turkey, a law covering libraries and librarianship in general, let alone university libraries, has not yet been enacted. So, the working principles and services of university libraries vary, depending on the university library, and most libraries either prepare their own regulations or directives. However, with the 1981 Higher Education Law, universities were granted the right to establish libraries under the name *Library and Documentation Departments*. So, the responsibility for developing and managing library services in universities has been given to this newly created Department. But, in most state universities, department heads do not have managerial rights over faculty, department, and institute libraries. These libraries are managed by the unit heads to which they are affiliated. The Figure 1

shows a typical organizational structure of a university and the place of a library within this structure.

In addition to the 1981 Higher Education Law, the *Regulation on Foundation Higher Education Institutions* came into force in 2005 to regulate the principles regarding the establishment, operation, supervision, and control of foundation universities. In accordance with this regulation, foundation universities are subject to the supervision and control of the CoHE on education, training, administrative and financial matters.

University libraries are often not considered as part of research and development but are perceived as an administrative unit and Library Directors report to the Secretary-General of the University. But there are some exceptional models which can be seen in some of the foundation universities where the library is considered as an academic unit and the Library Director reports directly to the Rector or one of the Vice-Chancellors.

The CoHE Report dated 2014 and titled *The Current Situation, Problems, Standards, and Suggestions for Solutions for University Libraries in Turkey towards 2023* is the most important report prepared in co-operation with expert university librarians. It touches upon the problems experienced by university libraries under the headings of buildings, human resources, budgets, collections, user services and information literacy courses, technological infrastructure, and open access, and suggests solutions. It also emphasizes the necessity of determining standards to create sufficient financial resources, qualified personnel, suitable spaces

and collections that will support research, and the need of implementing these standards from the initial establishment of universities. The report also includes information on establishing new units for *Scholarly Communication, Research and Teaching Support* in university libraries and demonstrating to senior management the different areas where the library can contribute.¹²

Another important law obliges a university library to compile and preserve all publications published in the country. The *Law on the Compilation of Reproduced Intellectual and Artistic Works* (No. 6279) came into force in 2012: it covers collecting copies of intellectual and artistic works that constitute the cultural existence and knowledge of the country, reproduced and published in the country and abroad, transferring them to future generations, and storing them in suitable environments. This law (*Depository Law*) regulates the procedures and principles regarding the protection, organization, and presentation of intellectual and artistic works for the information and benefit of society.¹³ There are six legal deposit libraries in Turkey, one of which is İstanbul University Library.

2.2 Budgets

In Turkey, most resources of the university are managed through the central budget.

All expenses of state universities are made from the share allocated by the state to the university. Since the salaries of the employees are paid from the budget of the Ministry of Finance, they are not included in this share. The rector has all authority in determining the library budget. This situation causes significant differences in the share allocated to the library from university budgets. It is common for library services to improve during the service of rectors who care about library and allocate a larger share of the budget. This situation is slightly different in foundation universities. Although a certain amount of funding is allocated for the library at the beginning of the year, this funding can be constantly increased in line with the needs of the libraries.¹⁴

However, the recent economic crisis, especially after the pandemic, has also caused reductions in the budgets of foundation university libraries.

The research performance and scientific publication output of universities and their place among national and

international universities are closely related to the financial resources they have, and the ratio they allocate from these resources to their libraries. Looking at the top eight universities in the 300–800 range in the *Times Higher Education 2024 World University Rankings*, four of which are state universities and four of which are foundation universities, it would not be wrong to state that all of them have well-equipped and recognized libraries internationally.¹⁵

2.3 Staff and Professional Development

The status and recruitment processes for staff working in libraries vary in state and foundation universities.

The state is responsible for the employment of personnel in state universities. Specialist, government employee and contracted personnel are employed. Academically qualified experts are generally people with professional education. Since government employment in Turkey is done through central examination and placement, libraries do not have the opportunity to select the personnel working in these positions. For this reason, most of the personnel working as government employee consist of people who have not received professional training. [On the other hand] Library employees of foundation universities are contracted personnel as required by the private sector. The number of librarians with professional training is higher in these libraries. Apart from this, support staff with various educational backgrounds is employed.¹⁶

Nowadays, we witness that some foundation university libraries employ graduates in different educational fields as special experts/subject librarians. These experts are responsible for collections on the subjects in which they have been trained and provide reference and research services regarding these collections.

With the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 2010/1092 published in the Official Gazette No. 27781, librarians who moved from the *General Administration Services Class* to the *Technical Services Class* started to receive salary from this Class in state university libraries. This decision, which was realized because of the lengthy efforts of the Turkish Librarians' Association, was an important step in improving the financial situation of university librarians.

The establishment of the *Anatolian University Libraries Consortium* (ANKOS)¹⁷ in 2000 was a milestone in the history of university librarianship. It has enabled university

¹² Council of Higher Education: 2014 University Libraries Report: <https://gcris.iyte.edu.tr/bitstream/11147/4316/1/%c3%9cniversite%20K%c3%bct%c3%bcphaneleri%20Raporu.pdf>.

¹³ Ministry of Culture and Tourism: Inspection Board Presidency: <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.6279.pdf>.

¹⁴ Polat and Odabaş (2011) 45–46.

¹⁵ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-turkey>.

¹⁶ Polat and Odabaş (2011) 45.

¹⁷ <https://ankos.org.tr/en/>.

Number of university libraries and materials, 2022			
	Toplam Total	Devlet State	Vakıf Foundation
Kütüphanesi olan üniversite sayısı - Number of universities that have library	215	130	85
Üniversite kütüphaneleri sayısı - Number of university libraries	625	475	150
Merkez kütüphane - Central library	195	121	74
Yüksekokul/Fakülte kütüphanesi - Library of faculty/higher education institution	430	354	76
Toplam materyal sayısı - Total of materials	121 228 690	81 568 098	39 660 592
Kitaplar - Books	21 098 691	16 323 871	4 774 820
Ciltlenmiş süreli yayınlar - Bound periodicals	1 759 209	1 433 508	325 701
Elektronik kitaplar - Electronic books	95 947 266	62 301 355	33 645 911
Tezler - Theses	895 874	805 747	90 127
Kitap dışı materyal sayısı ⁽¹⁾ - Number of out-of-book materials ⁽¹⁾	1 527 650	703 617	824 033

TÜİK, Kütüphane İstatistikleri, 2022

TurkStat, Library Statistics, 2022

(1) Kitap dışı materyal sayısı afiş, atlas, bilgisayar, zeka oyunları vb. kapsamaktadır.

The number of non-book materials includes posters, atlases, computers, brain teasers, etc.

Fig. 2: Print and Electronic Book Collections in University Libraries

librarians to specialize in issues such as database responsibilities, personnel exchange programmes, annual meetings and workshops, international consortia memberships and meetings, collaborations, electronic resource purchases, budgeting, licensing, and negotiations with foreign companies. Many colleagues who have been involved in ANKOS studies continue their careers in incredibly good positions today.

Beside these efforts, professional associations organize workshops, seminars, webinars, etc. provide continuing education programmes in different areas. For example, webinar recordings organized by the University and Research Librarians' Association (ÜNAK) are made available to professionals on its YouTube channel.¹⁸

Another example of best practices offering professional development opportunities is a podcast series launched by Koç University Anatolian Civilizations Research Centre Library (ANAMED) in 2020. *Library Podcast: Talking Here Free* is the first library and archive themed podcast created by a research library in Turkey. This podcast aims to contribute to the dissemination of information and the visibility of library and archive staff by presenting developments, projects, publications, work-related processes and innovations in libraries and archives to a wider audience.¹⁹

2.4 Collections

When libraries are established, they create core collections in the fields in which the university they are affiliated with provides education, and over time, this collection develops and grows in line with needs. Previously, a library's growth was focused on collections, and the value of a university library was measured by the quantity of collections it had. However, changing needs have led to the adoption of user- and service-oriented approaches. Although we still see that some university libraries start out with statements such as the *largest library with 1 million books*, the number of university libraries that target the user, enlarge, and organize their spaces according to their expectations and create new service areas is increasing.

University libraries purchase publications through tendering within the scope of the Public Procurement Law No. 4734 dated 2002. On the other hand, most of the libraries could develop their collections through publication exchanges with other institutions and donations. Because of the inadequate budgets allocated by universities, they are having difficult times in purchasing publications.

From 2000 onwards, university libraries joined forces under ANKOS (Anatolian University Libraries Consortium) and created a successful state of cooperation in the acquisition of e-publications and subscriptions. This structure, formed by voluntary cooperation, is made up of an administrative board, work and research groups and database liaisons. Even libraries with the smallest budget have enabled their users to have access to thou-

18 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjV18yFhKNf06PFJy4VVk7Q>.

19 <https://anamed.ku.edu.tr/en/anamed-library-podcast-buradakonusmak-serbest/>.



Fig. 3: Sabancı University Information Centre's Collaboration Space
Copyright <https://cospace.sabanciuniv.edu/en>

sands of periodicals under ANKOS which is run by around 50 volunteers from university libraries.²⁰

Also “starting from 2006, TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey – Turkish Academic Network and Information Centre) has started paying for some subscriptions out of its own budget. This initiative to provide university libraries lacking sufficient funds with additional revenue was a positive step in supporting university libraries financially.”²¹

Today TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM within the scope of its Electronic Resources National Academic License (EKUAL) provides access to more than 20 databases including EBSCO, IEEE, JSTOR, ProQuest, Science Direct, Scopus, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Web of Science.²²

In 2022, the number of e-books in university libraries increased by 2.6 % compared to the previous year and rose to 95, 947.266, while the number of non-book materials increased by 13.4 % and reached 1 527.650. The Figure 2 shows the statistical data.²³

Turkish university libraries began organizing their institutional repositories by using digital platforms such as *DSpace* and *CONTENTdm* and providing open access to the copyright-cleared scholarly output (journal articles, conference proceedings, editorial materials, meeting abstracts,

reviews, technical reports, working papers, presentations, posters, etc.) of their universities.

With technological developments, libraries with cultural heritage materials in their collections conduct identification, digitization, and preservation works to make them more visible and gain value on national and international platforms. Koç University Library's efforts to preserve cultural heritage materials such as manuscripts and rare works, photographs, and maps in its collections and to transfer them to future generations through digitization can be seen as one of the best examples (Library's digital collections).²⁴

2.5 Buildings

University library buildings are experiencing many changes not only as places to search and access information but also as places of learning and socializing. While the new library buildings that have changed in the last decade have chosen the concept of a single iconic building, many library projects have been renewed and transformed within existing buildings at national and international levels.²⁵

The so-called “Green Library” movement started in the 1990s. The Green Library, also known as the “Sustainable Library” means environmentally friendly and energy-saving library buildings. In Turkey, recently built libraries have modern green (sustainable) buildings with 24/7 open study halls, conference and seminar rooms, food and beverage venues, group and individual study rooms, museum

²⁰ Kaygusuz (2008) 20.

²¹ Ibid. 20.

²² TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM: EKUAL Databases: <https://cabim.ulakbim.gov.tr/ekual/e-veri-tabanlari/>.

²³ Turkish Statistical Institute: Library Statistics, 2022: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Library-Statistics-2022-49355>.

²⁴ <https://librarydigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/en/>.

²⁵ Güneş (2020) 44.

and exhibition areas, a wide range of workshops, music, and media areas (i. e., *makerspaces*) reflecting innovative service features. Also, older buildings have begun a transformational change period and become a large social centre serving their users. An example of a university library with a makerspace is Sabancı University Information Centre's *Collaboration Space* (see Figure 3). It is "a Fablab which is designed for innovative and collaborative hands-on learning experience to get creative with DIY projects and share ideas. Resources like 3D printers, 3D scanners, VR, electronics, craft and hardware supplies and more are offered."²⁶

All the United Nations' Sustainable Development goals (17) are related to the activities of libraries and the services they provide. While there are many examples of the implementation of the four goals that apply in libraries – *Quality Education, Gender equality, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure and Sustainable Cities and Communities* – more work should be done in these areas. In addition, *Libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Storytelling Manual*²⁷ published by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) describes the contributions of libraries in line with the UN goals.

In Turkey, university libraries are taking initiatives to implement the concept of sustainability. Efforts are being made to ensure that new buildings, especially those being constructed, have green building standards; and to reduce the carbon footprint by using green technologies in libraries.

A poster was recently presented at the IFLA 2022 WLIC Conference in Dublin on *How can academic librarians contribute to the development of SDG goals: Awareness-raising activities with librarians in Turkey*, by Kübra Zayım Gedik, a University Librarian.²⁸

The CoHE develops projects to provide disabled students with a barrier-free education and training environment and to ensure their greater participation in social and cultural activities. Within the scope of these projects, Barrier-Free University Awards have been given since 2018 in two separate areas: *Barrier-Free University Flags* and *Barrier-Free Programme Badges*. Aydın Adnan Menderes University Library won the *Barrier-Free University Award* organized by CoHE in 2019. Libraries are among the university units that have received this award. For example, Aydın Menderes University Library was a candidate in the

field of Space Accessibility in 2019 and received the *Orange Flag* award given by CoHE in 2020. This Library offers collections and services for disabled people including audible and visual warnings, a group study room, a Barrier-Free Access Unit on the ground floor equipped with a scanner, an audio computer, suitable chairs and tables, and books written in the Braille alphabet and audio books.

2.6 Users and Services

In 1984 CoHE established a Documentation Centre which offered university libraries free literature search and photocopy services through its well-established periodical collections. This Centre also collected theses from universities. But later on, this Centre was transformed into the National Thesis Centre and started to offer theses from Turkish universities online.²⁹ However, hard copies of theses that are not authorized to be published in the Centre's database can be accessed via the Turkish Document Supply System (TÜBESS)³⁰, which aims to ensure that information centres in the country co-operate in resource sharing in order to meet the information needs of academic users.

Another important service provided by university libraries is the inter-library loan service, which is available to users through KITS (Interlibrary Loan Tracking System) created by the ANKOS Collaboration Research Group in 1998.

KITS is an application that centralizes all ILL operations and processes in different formats (print, postal, fax, e-mail, computer files etc.). When the institutions decide to participate in the KITS system, they do not need to use traditional ways for ILL activities any further. The participating institutions can manage all resource sharing activities on-line.³¹

The National Union Catalogue initiative called TO-KAT³² was developed by ULAKBİM in 2009 and facilitates user access to library collections via a single platform. Since then, libraries, mostly university libraries, voluntarily started to add their online catalogues to this system.

Turkish university libraries are heavily engaged in developing user-oriented services to increase usage of their resources and make their users information literate. To realize these important goals, they organize training, instruction, and information literacy programmes that have

²⁶ Sabancı University Information Centre's Collaboration Space: <https://cospace.sabanciuniv.edu/en>.

²⁷ <https://www.ifla.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/05/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/sdg-storytelling-manual.pdf>.

²⁸ <https://repository.ifla.org/bitstream/123456789/2151/1/104-gedik-en-poster.pdf>.

²⁹ <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>.

³⁰ <https://www.tubess.gov.tr/>.

³¹ Çimen et al. (2009) 5.

³² <https://www.toplukatalog.gov.tr/>.

become accredited and certified courses in some university libraries.

As Yaşar Tonta emphasized in one of his articles, libraries should use social media and virtual environments to meet the information needs of their users:

There are more resources and services in networks and virtual environments where digital natives gather, spend time and 'live'. Instead of trying to be 'virtual routes', libraries should bring their resources and services to the social networks and virtual environments where digital natives and digital immigrants reside. 'Connectivity, communication and content' are necessary for libraries to be visible and usable through social networks without the need for users to leave the environments they are accustomed to.³³

Today university libraries use these platforms to promote their collections and services and integrate them into their websites.

University libraries, which follow and implement global trends well, have improved their services, especially in areas such as open access, research data, scholarly communication, and publishing and have begun to contribute to the research output of their universities.

2.7 Technologies

Libraries that implement the innovations brought about by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have moved many of their traditional services to the electronic environment, leaving their physical spaces and making their collections and services accessible from anywhere without time limits. Also, some started to digitize their resources as they have a shortage of building and shelf capacity due to the increasing volume of printed collections.

By taking over the task of performing repetitive tasks in libraries, ICT has significantly reduced the time spent by staff and managers on their work. For example, traditional operations such as order catalogues, inventory lists, duplication of catalogue cards, monitoring of loans and documents in circulation, scanning of documents such as books and periodicals from printed catalogues, keeping reports and statistics used in management decisions can be done in a shorter time and are conducted error free. Thus, more is achieved with existing staff and savings are made in time and number of staff.³⁴ In other words, libraries moved their operations to electronic environments and began to provide services 24/7, independent of time and place.

³³ Tonta (2009) 763.

³⁴ Kurulgan (2005) 175.

Besides the advantages provided by ICT, there are disadvantages. For example, issues such as infrastructure deficiencies, the cost of new technologies, staff not adopting new technologies, the need to train staff and users, the decrease in face-to-face communication and legal issues regarding copyright can be noted as disadvantages of ICT.

By taking advantage of ICT, Turkish universities have not fallen behind the times and have adopted many technologies and used them in their operations. In 1986, the first local library automation system BLISS (*Bilkent Library Information Services System*) was prepared by Bilkent University and started to be used by university libraries. However, since it could not be developed further, it was replaced by other library systems. Today, all university libraries use library automation systems and discovery tools produced both locally and internationally.

The common theme of professional events organized by different institutions at a national and international level in 2023 was "the future" and artificial intelligence-focused studies came to the fore.

Studies conducted by organizations such as the Oxford University Future of Humanity Institute highlight the superiority of artificial intelligence and provide data that 65% of librarians will surrender their current jobs to artificial intelligence and robotic systems in the long term. Regardless of the direction and the level of evaluations and approaches, advanced applications such as artificial intelligence will shape humanity. Every day, artificial intelligence and robotic systems are gaining importance in data processing in institutions, societies, and states. However, it seems at present that it will not be possible to eliminate humans. As artificial intelligence technologies increase, the value of people who feed and understand them better will also increase.³⁵

Libraries cannot avoid technology. On the contrary, they should make the most of the benefits it offers, not fall behind the times, and adapt to change in the best way possible without underestimating the human factor.

2.8 Standards and Evaluations

Libraries can design their own services, but some standards need to be applied. International standards applied in Turkish university libraries include, for example the *American Library of Congress Classification System*: "In March 1958, METU Library decided to implement the *American Library of Congress Classification System* within the

³⁵ Ünal and Özdemirci (2017) 60.

framework of the main principles of the library's organization. With this application, METU Library became the first library to use this system, which has been used in many universities and research libraries in the country today."³⁶ With *Resource Description Access* (RDA), the classification system has been taken one step further and has begun to be implemented in some university libraries.

University libraries use MARC standards and data exchange as well as Dublin Core standards for archival materials. Many also conduct their cataloguing and classification studies in two languages (Turkish and English) and use Library of Congress subject headings.

For university libraries to become user-oriented information institutions that consider the expectations and needs of the user groups they serve, measuring the quality of the services they offer should be seen as a necessity. Studies aimed at measuring the quality of services in university libraries are initiatives conducted by a few libraries on their own. Measurement tools such as LIBQUAL+ have been used by some libraries, but such efforts have not proved sustainable.

In addition, there are several surveys in the literature aimed at measuring the efficiency of university libraries and evaluating their services. One of these surveys was a study based on using American College and Research Libraries (ACRL) standards evaluation criteria to determine the current situation of university libraries in Turkey. In this study, library directors were asked questions about the physical environment and conditions of their libraries, budgets, personnel, collection development, resource acquisition and presentation, and the answers received were evaluated with separate results for state and foundation universities.³⁷

Çakın, in his study where he evaluated the problems of university libraries in the country with a general grouping in the context of management, financial support, personnel and collection, stated that libraries are inadequate in matters related to evaluation. Çakın pointed out that this situation is thought-provoking due to the nature of the education and training programs and research activities carried out in our universities and stated that the lack of standards causes each library to provide its own information service and, with a few exceptions, libraries are not supported by the university administration to which they are affiliated.³⁸

In 2021 under the leadership of the TKD, the *Competent Library Certificate* programme was created in cooperation with a commercial company. The programme, which aims

to improve the services and policies implemented in libraries at a national level, concentrates on ensuring that users can receive the same quality of service in the same type of libraries and allowing common standards to be applied in new libraries being planned. Libraries are inspected and certified against the evaluation system customized for libraries, and their adherence to national and international standards on information security, personal data protection, quality management systems and disabled access, which are vital for the development of libraries and keeping up with the new age.³⁹ Unfortunately, this programme, which is a paid service, has not been implemented outside of a few university libraries.

2.9 Covid-19 Pandemic

Wars, disasters, and epidemics in the world have deep effects on the social, economic, and political order in countries in the long term. For example, people who migrate due to wars around us have especially caused changes and problems in the demographic, social, and economic situations of some countries. It can be said that this situation affects libraries, and they must develop collections and services according to the needs of refugees. On the other hand, political changes happening in Europe or elsewhere do not have a direct impact on Turkish research libraries. For example, the Fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 brought about the end of the Cold War in the world. Obviously, this event had an impact on Turks living in Germany, even if not on libraries.

However, the pandemic outbreaks in 2020 deeply affected countries in every sense, and the impact of this effect has still not decreased. What happens in one country does not directly affect other countries unless it is on a regional or global scale.

When attempts to control the COVID-19 virus, which broke out in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 failed, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the epidemic a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, and made an ending statement on 5 May 2023.

After the first case was seen in Turkey on 11 March 2020, the President of CoHE announced on 26 March that face-to-face education would not be held in universities in the spring semester and instead education would be provided online. Schools opened normally again on 6 September 2021. University library managers took the risk factors

³⁶ Kampüs: Middle East Technical University Campus Magazine: METU Library: <https://kampus.metu.edu.tr/en/category/campus-101>.

³⁷ Polat and Odabaş (2011).

³⁸ Çakın (2000) 39.

³⁹ Turkish Librarians' Association (2021): <https://kutuphaneci.org.tr/yetkin-kutuphane-sertifikasi/>.

into account and decided to limit library services or continue with online services only.

In 2020, a survey was conducted to determine the arrangements made by university libraries in Turkey during the pandemic to arrange the services they developed specifically for this period, and to measure to what extent these services met user needs. Another purpose of the survey was to assess the preparations, precautions, and awareness about the reopening of university libraries at the end of the pandemic. The survey was sent online to university library managers on 25 April 2020, and 84 library managers from both state and foundation universities in different regions of Turkey participated in the survey. Some of the results obtained from the responses to the survey are summarized below.⁴⁰

- During the pandemic, all university libraries continued their services by keeping them open physically on certain days of the week, library staff continued to work from home or by coming to the library on duty, and physical resources were mostly available to academic staff.
- Library users mostly benefitted from e-books, open access databases and e-reference services.
- User training, Turkish online content, budgets, staffs' remote working experience emerged as the main problems. It has also been observed that there is no problem with remote access to content and information resources in foreign languages in the electronic environment.
- Users intensively use library web pages, social media accounts, online reference, and online meeting programmes to access library services and resources and prefer e-mail to communicate with the library.

The librarians who conducted the survey also made some basic suggestions about the measures to be implemented in the reopening of Library collections. These suggestions are:⁴¹

- Library Collection budgets should be re-evaluated, and the number of electronic and online resources should be increased.
- Students and academics should be provided with more training on remote access services.
- Physical conditions should be reviewed, and spaces should be rearranged according to social distance rules.
- Library staff offices should be rearranged, physical arrangements should be made in circulation, reference, etc. areas that require direct physical contact with users, and special equipment should be used to pro-

tect the health of employees (special clothing, masks, gloves, etc).

- The technological infrastructures of libraries should be reviewed, and equipment should be financed for remote working.
- Working hours in libraries should be rearranged (for hygiene purposes, cleaning, etc).
- Physical services (circulation, face-to-face training, etc.) should be provided on a limited basis.
- User groups should be redefined, and restrictions on user groups should be imposed as and when necessary.
- ILL services should be redesigned, and priority should be given to sharing electronic resources, especially by using secure document sharing software.
- The number of physical events organized by libraries should be reduced and online events should be prioritized.
- A backup/archiving system should be established within the country to ensure that the electronic resources used in the country remain accessible under exceptional conditions such as possible global internet outages.

During this period, university librarians also took some international initiatives. For example, the declaration published by the International Coalition of International Consortia (ICOLC) and dated 13 March 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic was translated into Turkish⁴² and shared by university librarians. In addition, seven university libraries from Turkey participated in the work conducted by IFLA's Document Provision and Resource Sharing Committee at an international level, and 22% of the requested documents were provided by these Turkish university libraries.⁴³

After the CoHE closed the universities and suspended face-to-face classes in March 2020, many students went back to their hometowns, where they had only limited access to computing devices and broadband required for distance learning. Another obstacle was the cost of monthly metered Internet usage, which went up significantly during the pandemic. Here, two Turkish library associations started a pay-it-forward initiative, *Askıda İnternet – İnternet Bill on the Hook*, to help support library and information science (LIS) students' access.⁴⁴ Thus, students who had trouble paying their Internet bills were supported by anonymous donors.

COVID-19 forced educational institutions into lockdown around the world. They had to continue their activities through distance learning and online courses to cope with

⁴⁰ Çimen et al. (2020a) 52.

⁴¹ Ibid. 53.

⁴² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U3wkEfvz_yD4QWVblZ5Pm_BhlFac5zmJ/view.

⁴³ Çimen et al. (2020b) 174.

⁴⁴ TKD ve ÜNAK (2020).

the pandemic. One of the areas of higher education that was most affected by this unexpected situation was internship programmes, and alternative ways began to be sought instead of face-to-face internships.

The first online internship programme was developed in response to the nationwide pandemic lockdowns by the professional associations ÜNAK and TKD, in co-operation with the Information and Document Management Department of Istanbul Medeniyet University. The programme was held between 29 June and 24 July 2020, via the Zoom platform. It was designed in five modules, with the detailed content information provided under each module. A total of 21 sessions were held, and 32 library and archive specialists contributed to the programme. Following the first, programmes were also organized for intern students from other information and document management departments for a period of two years.

Although the programme itself had several disadvantages, we still believe that it was a valuable contribution to the students' professional development and that it was a successful collaboration between associations and academic departments. Overall, it achieved its aim of providing the interns with an alternative and secure way of completing their internship course during the pandemic, and all the parties involved have already positioned themselves to cope better with future crises ahead of us.⁴⁵

When gradual steps to normality were taken after the pandemic in 2021, the TKD created the *Safe Library Service Certificate* programme in partnership with a commercial company to protect the health of both libraries' staff and users. This Certificate was created using the World Health Organization and ISO standards and based on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Epidemic Management and Working Guide. Some university libraries were able to receive the Safe Library Service Certificate after the necessary inspections were conducted by expert auditors in their fields.

2.10 Professional Associations and Co-operation

After the establishment of the TKD⁴⁶ in 1949, ÜNAK⁴⁷ was founded in 1991. In 2002, the Association started publishing its journal *Bilgi Dünyası*.⁴⁸

Today there are several working groups operating under the umbrella of this association for which profes-

sionals from various university libraries work voluntarily. These groups include the *Medicine and Health Sciences Platform*, *Law Librarians Platform*, *Library Data Working Group*, *Sustainable Libraries Working Group*, *RDA Working Group*, and the *Bibliometrics and Citation Indexes Working Group*.

ÜNAK organizes a yearly symposium which focuses on current trend issues for university libraries. This type of professional event helps librarians to share their knowledge and experience with their colleagues and create social networks. During the pandemic, this symposium was held online, and a virtual fair was also organized during the symposium. Another important initiative is LibraryFEST organized by ÜNAK. This is an *Entrepreneurial Librarians* event and is open to everyone as a platform where young and prospective professionals can express their ideas and work.

University librarians have started participating in national and international professional meetings and conferences more and are organizing international professional events in Turkey. After the 1995 IFLA conference in Istanbul, organized by the Ministry of Culture and where university librarians were active participants, ANKOS, with the participation of university librarians, has been organizing annual meetings on an international level starting from the year 2000. In 2003, the International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL) conference was held at the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ). With the 2008 Annual General Conference of LIBER being hosted by Koç University Suna Kıraç Library in July, university librarians will be developing their professional expertise and organizational skills even more.⁴⁹

Many university librarians who took part in the international organizations listed above have begun to undertake important duties in international professional associations and thus make professional contributions at an international level. They also support the development of the country's librarianship by sharing the knowledge and skills they acquired during these events with their colleagues.

3 Conclusions

When we look at the voyage of Turkish university libraries on the Centenary of the Republic, it can be said that considerable progress has been made despite some difficulties and challenges.

The 1980s were important dates for our universities and their libraries because we witnessed the establishment of CoHE, the enactment of the higher education law and the restructuring of all universities under this institution

⁴⁵ Bayır (2022).

⁴⁶ <https://kutuphaneci.org.tr/>.

⁴⁷ <https://unak.org.tr/>.

⁴⁸ <https://bd.org.tr/index.php/bd>.

⁴⁹ Kaygusuz (2008) 24.

and law. In the 1990s, we started to use the opportunities offered by technology and reshaped our collections and services accordingly. The 2000s were the years when Turkish university libraries experienced their golden age. The establishment of national consortia, the increase in international collaboration, and the rise of qualified librarians to important positions were all part of these years.

Today, even though their resources are limited, many university libraries make every effort not to fall behind their counterparts and the times. Global trend reports constantly published by organizations such as IFLA, LIBER, ACRL and Horizon Educause are closely followed by librarians and developments in the professional arena are attempted within the framework of these trends.

Despite all these efforts, solutions to some of our key problems in implementing global developments in our libraries are still awaited. These have been summarized below and some solutions have been suggested.

First, the existence of a law (a library law in general, a university library law in particular) that will ensure the establishment and implementation of international standards and rules in university libraries is inevitable. The responsibility here falls on everyone involved, especially our associations. It is not said that we do enough advocacy. An effective communication and cooperation network should be established, especially among relevant ministries and authorized institutions such as CoHE, as it was described earlier. The services provided by university libraries are not administrative or support services. It should be accepted that they are an integral part of education and research, that is, an academic activity.

Information and Document Management Departments in universities were opened without any assessment of student recruitment supply and demand, and today their number has increased to fourteen. Hundreds of librarians and archivists graduate from these departments every year, but they have difficulty finding jobs in their fields and turn to other professions. Solutions are required to address problems experienced in basic issues such as course programmes and materials, personnel policies, internships, publications and research, collaboration between departments and with other institutions and professional organizations. In addition, it is vital to develop closer communication and cooperation with CoHE which is the main responsible body for many of the issues listed above.

To have libraries that keep up with the times, it is necessary to employ enough qualified librarians. Depending on changes and developments in social, economic, political, technological, and other fields, the knowledge and skills of university librarians should also change. The responsibility for acquiring such knowledge and skills falls not only on

librarians themselves (fulfilling their profession with pleasure, professional identity, making individual efforts, not hesitating to take part in national and international organizations, supporting professional organizations) but also on the Information and Document Management Departments (open course resources, application-oriented courses, qualified teaching staff, student quality), the professional associations (professional resource sharing platforms, continuing professional training, the example of the ANKOS Academy) and the institutions they work for (organizing in-service courses for staff in order not to fall behind and supporting participation at national and international professional events).

The pandemic period has shown us that the most important trend of today and the future will be resource sharing. In addition, increases reflected in the prices of materials due to foreign exchange and inflation cause slower growth, especially for printed collections. In this case, it is inevitable that university libraries should cooperate through common collection development policies and customizing their collections by focusing on certain areas. As a result of moving library collections and services beyond physical borders, users can access information wherever and whenever they wish. Collections should also be evaluated to increase digitization, and open access studies should be supported by digitizing materials that do not have copyright issues. In addition, collections should be analysed to ensure that they are up-to-date and developed to meet users' information needs.

To secure a sufficient share of the university budget (the international standard for the ratio of the library budget to the university budget is 5%, and this rate should be higher for newly established and developing university libraries) library managers should make every effort to raise funds outside the budget, at a national and international level and undertake projects.

The library and information habits of the young generations (Z, Alpha generations) born into the products of the digital age have changed. Therefore, information services adapted to these generations (e. g., specialized subject/research guides, certified or credited information literacy training, creation of active and interactive learning environments, using artificial intelligence chatbots, etc.) should be offered to users who are trying to cope with disinformation and misinformation.

Searching, finding, evaluating, and using the needed information in line with ethical principles from various types and forms of sources among the information piles that grow uncontrollably and like an avalanche are becoming an increasingly bigger problem. To overcome this issue, libraries should be accepted as an indispensable component of higher education; and librarians should be more actively involved in education and research.

In other words, libraries able to provide the following services, skills and abilities will make significant contributions to the quality of education and research:

- equipped with printed and electronic resources in sufficient number and quality, and modern spaces with 24/7 service,
- supported by appropriate and sustainable financial resources, and enough qualified librarians and other staff according to the size of the university,
- using up-to-date information technologies,
- collaborating and sharing resources with other libraries, and organizing joint projects,
- constantly co-operating with academic units in education and research activities,
- being the sustainable social and cultural centres of universities.

The dizzying developments in technology, one of the areas that most affects the librarianship profession, led to the emergence of beliefs that this profession will disappear. We are witnessing that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly improving and changing the library's traditional services. However, we still do not believe that this profession, which dates back centuries, will disappear. On the contrary, librarians are needed in the development of AI applications. In addition, university librarians embrace change and are in favour of turning to new emerging areas (research data management, open science, geographic information systems, etc). I think that in this complex and cruel world we live in, we must look at the future with hope and positivity.

Whatever the circumstances, libraries will continue to be at the *heart* of the university.

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Dr. Didar Bayır

Head of Library and Archive Department
Research Centre for Islamic History, Art
and Culture
Hoca Paşa Mahallesi
Alemdar Caddesi, No. 15
Bâbiâli Girişi Çağaloğlu, Fatih
TR-34110 İstanbul
Turkey

didarbayir@ircica.org