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PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN TURKEY

Bülent Yılmaz[1]

English Abstract
Turkey has a long library tradition in history. Public libraries are administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Libraries and Publications in Turkey, where the population is around 71 million with 81 provinces in 7 large geographic regions. If the law passes in the Turkish Parliament, Turkish public libraries will operate under the responsibility of local authorities in the near future. The main problem of the public libraries is that they also serve as school libraries, because of the insufficient number of school libraries in most places. Musical materials number is insufficient in Turkish public libraries.

French Abstract
La Turquie, avec 71 millions d'habitants, 81 provinces et 7 grandes régions, connaît une longue tradition en matière de bibliothèques. Les médiathèques publiques y sont administrées par le Ministère de la culture et du tourisme : le Conseil d'administration général des bibliothèques et des publications. Si la loi passe au parlement de Turquie, les bibliothèques publiques seront placées sous la responsabilité d'autorités locales dans un futur proche. L'un des problèmes principaux dans les bibliothèques publiques en Turquie est qu'elles servent également de bibliothèques scolaires, à cause du nombre insuffisant de centres de documentaires dans la plupart des écoles. Les collections musicales existent dans un nombre insuffisant dans les médiathèques publiques en Turquie.

German Abstract
Die Türkei hat eine weit zurückreichende Bibliotheksgeschichte. Öffentliche Bibliotheken werden vom Ministerium für Kultur und Tourismus, Abteilung für Bibliotheken und Veröffentlichungen, verwaltet. In der Türkei leben rund 71 Millionen Menschen in 81 Provinzen und sieben Großregionen. Sobald in nächster Zukunft ein entsprechendes Gesetz vom türkischen Parlament verabschiedet wurde, werden die lokalen Verwaltungen für den Betrieb der Öffentlichen Bibliotheken zuständig sein. Problematisch ist, dass die Öffentlichen Bibliotheken in der Türkei zumeist auch gleichzeitig als Schulbibliotheken fungieren, da es nicht genügend Schulbibliotheken gibt. Die Menge der Musikmedien in den Öffentlichen Bibliotheken in der Türkei ist nicht ausreichend.

Turkish Abstract
Türkiye tarihte güçlü bir kütüphane geleneğine sahiptir. Türkiye'de halk kütüphaneleri Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü tarafından yönetilmektedir. Türkiye 7 coğrafik bölgede yer alan 81 ilde yaşayan yaklaşık 71 milyon nüfusa sahiptir. Halen Türk Parlamentosunda bulunan yasa tasarısı geçerse halk kütüphaneleri yakın bir gelecekte . yerel yönetimlerin sorumluluğuna devredilecektir. Türkiye'de halk kütüphanelerine ilişkin temel sorun onların çoğu yerde birer okul kütüphanesi gibi işlev görmeleridir. Türk halk kütüphanelerinde yetersiz sayıda müzik materyali bulunmaktadır.

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History of Public Libraries in Turkey

Turkey has a library tradition of more than nine centuries, beginning during the Anatolia Seljuk period (1072–1299) and continuing through the Ottoman Empire, 1299–1922.[2] During these periods, libraries were set up in association with private foundations rather than by government and were associated with mosques, Dervish lodges, mausoleums, Moslem theological schools, and other foundations.

Printing was established in 1728 in Turkey, approximately 250 years later than in the rest of Europe. This delay hindered the development of public libraries. In 1869, libraries were connected to the Ministry of Education and obtained civil service identity for the first time.[3] In 1882 the public library service was established by the government. Between 1912 and 1918, many public libraries were established under the title of 'national library'.[4]

With the founding of the Republic in 1923, there was a realization of the social and cultural role of public libraries. One of the most important reforms at this time was the change from the Arabic alphabet to Latin. The government started to promote literacy campaigns and public education programmes in order to encourage the use of the new alphabet and to foster the adoption of a more westernized culture. Essentially, public libraries became one of the principal means of effecting this cultural transformation during the period 1923–1950 and from 1960, they were included in the five-year development plans in Turkey. Public libraries were sometimes at the forefront of educational and cultural issues. However, the military activities in 1970 and 1980 damaged social and cultural development and this was reflected in public libraries. Today, it is difficult to define the functions and cultural role of the public library since there is neither public law nor a national cultural strategy.[5]

Strıcture and Organization of Public Libraries in Turkey

Since 1960, all public libraries are administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Libraries and Publications. Turkey has a population of around 71 million people and the country is organized into 7 large geographic regisons with 81 provinces. The General Directorate of Libraries is the largest department within the Ministry in terms of its budget and personnel. The children's libraries, which are operated under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, are mainly established in the public libraries. Some children's libraries have their own building, although there has been a recent trend towards having children libraries within the public libraries. There are also a few municipal libraries governed and financed by the local authorities. There are several articles in the regulations of the municipalities regarding the establishment of public libraries.

Public libraries are largely financed by the central government. However, the city private offices provide some financial aid to the public libraries. Most of the local authorities

2. İsmail Erünsal, *Türk Kütüphaneleri Tarihi II: Kuruluş, tan Tanzimata Kadar Osmanlı Vakıf Kütüphaneleri.* Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Kültür Merkezi?, 1988, p. 279; Jale Baysal, *Kitap ve Kütüphane Tarihi*. İstanbul: Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği İstenbul Subesi, 1992, p. 52.

3. Soysal Özer, "Geleneksel Türk Kutuphaneciliği", *Türk Kütüphaneciliği: Bilginin Yazgısı*, Ankara: Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği, 2007, p. 37–40, esp. 38.

4. Özer Soysal, "XIX. Ve XX Yüzyıllar Osmanlı Siyasal Yaşamının kütüphane Kurumunu Etkileyen İki Olgusu", *Türk Kütüphaneciliği: Bilginin Yazgısı*, Ankara: Türk Kütüpheciler Derneği, 2007, p. 17–26, esp. 24.

5. Bülent Yılmaz, "A Sociological Study of Public Library Use in Ankara, Turkey", *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 30/4 (1998), 259–267.

support the Ministry of Culture and Tourism by providing the library buildings. The organizational structure of the libraries in the cities is as follows:

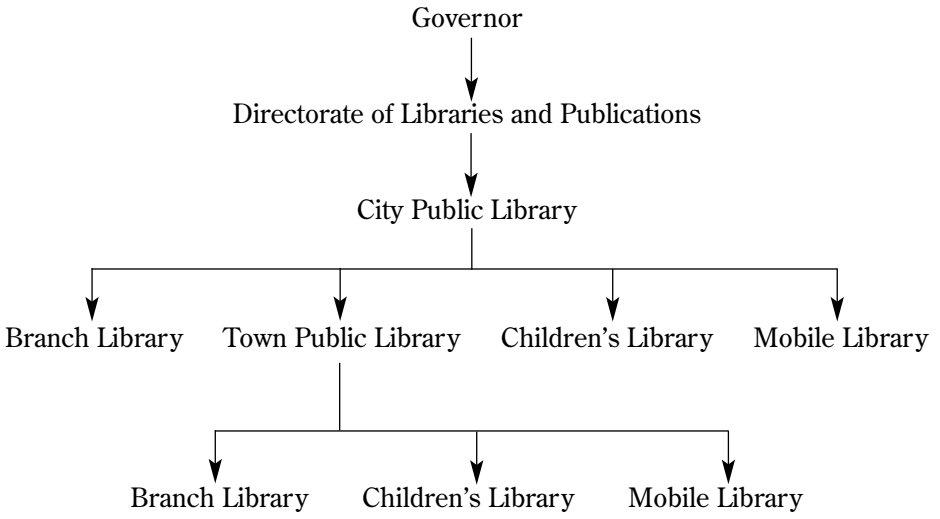

FIGURE 1 Organization Chart of Turkish City Libraries

The public libraries provide some services at prisons, care centers, child care institutions, camps, etc. The mobile libraries reach the rural and remote areas where public libraries do not exist.[6]

However, the present government is trying to change the Turkish public administration. In the frame of these efforts accelerated by the integration period to European Community, Government is issuing new laws in order to make the essential change. Main aim of these laws is to transfer the central public administration from the government to the local administration system. This changing will affect the present public library system in Turkey. If the law passes in the Turkish Parliament, Turkish public libraries will operate under the responsibility of local authorities in the near future. It means that related changing is the biggest radical transformation in public library system in Turkey.

Policies and Strategic Activities

In Turkey, there are no laws governing the public libraries. But there are some regulations, most of which were revised in the 1980s, related to the services of public libraries, such as, "Public Libraries Task and Working Regulation"[7] "Public and Children Libraries Regulation"[8], "Ministry of Culture and Tourism Regulation of Selection of Publications",[9]

6. *Report on Public Libraries*, In: http://www.pulmanweb.org/countries/Turkey.htm [viewed 13 Feb.2008],
7. *Official Journal*, 21.9.1981, 17465.
8. *Official Journal* 19.8.1982, 17789.
9. *Official Journal*, 18.06.2005, 25849.

"Regulation of Educational and Cultural Activities in Libraries",[10] "Regulation of Inter Library Lending Printed Books",[11] "Regulation of Celebrating the National Library Week".[12]

As mentioned earlier, the public libraries are included in the five-year development plans under the headings of "culture" or "education". In these development plans, general attitudes and principles regarding the public libraries are mentioned. But there are serious problems in converting these principles into reality.

The main problem of the public libraries is that they also serve as school libraries, because of the insufficient number of school libraries in most places. Today only 10% of schools have their own libraries. This affects the services, policies, and facilities of the public libraries.

Collections of public libraries are developed by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications through central purchasing, according to the "Regulation of Selection of Publications". The Directorate also pays attention to the recommendations made by the public libraries while selecting the materials. Some public libraries have their own public funds and associations supported by the local people. These funds help them to develop their collections.[13]

There are only a few thousand music materials in all Turkish public libraries and it can be said that these collections are very weak for public libraries. Actually, children and young people are interested in musical materials in public libraries. There are 52,040 sound recordings, 20,005 CDs and 1,883 DVDs in public libraries in Turkey. Most of them are on music. Public libraries in Turkey also have books and journals on music subjects. Public libraries sometimes organize free musical courses for users.

There are Official Public Training Centres in each province and they have organized many free courses on teaching students how to play an instrument. As part of the course, they give the course materials to the students. There are also special musical courses in Turkey.

Statistics on Public Libraries in Turkey

Table 1 includes the data of the last 19 years in Turkey:

Year	No. of Libraries	No. of Mobile Libraries	No. of Staff	No. of Books	No. of Visits	No. of Registered Users	No. of Books Loaned
1990	891	45	4,096	7,880,681	18,222,639	817,110	2,824,398
1991	938	51	4,112	8,930,287	18,730,918	850,888	2,981,873
1992	1,046	59	4,107	9,419,007	20,337,365	878,037	3,236,060
1993	1,117	66	4,107	9,817,668	22,752,970	962,647	3,499,132
1994	1,184	77	4,110	10,276,101	23,259,597	1,051,664	4,111,276
1995	1,214	73	3,858	10,632,532	23,261,642	1,069,116	4,458,769
1996	1,260	72	3,285	10,899,127	22,523,449	1,004,681	4,507,508

10. *Official Journal*, 21.9.1981, 17465.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Official Journal*, 6.3.1982, 17625.
13. *Report on Public Libraries*. In: http://www.pulmanweb.org/countries/Turkey.htm [viewed 13 Feb.2008]

Year	No. of Libraries	No. of Mobile Libraries	No. of Staff	No. of Books	No. of Visits	No. of Registered Users	No. of Books Loaned
1997	1,310	70	3,162	11,296,391	23,121,725	970,316	4,707,687
1998	1,343	70	3,212	11,598,444	20,515,171	498,180	4,130,219
1999	1,373	67	3,067	11,930,929	20,732,712	395,723	4,117,786
2000	1,403	68	2,923	12,181,330	19,903,256	386,790	3,926,314
2001	1,414	67	2,878	12,399,913	20,987,978	400,482	4,185,569
2002	1,436	67	2,842	13,433,310	22,963,578	424,493	4,474,438
2003	1,435	65	2,715	12,731,943	22,542,631	426,695	4,337,267
2004	1,432	62	2,529	12,984,801	20,871,850	427,614	4,348,267
2005	1,286	62	2,426	12,948,460	20,706,526	426,351	4,385,926
2006	1,179	60	2,628	12,958,376	21,138,821	485,216	4,493,029
2007	1,162	58	2,791	13,198,814	20,222,517	493,596	4,401,617
2008	1,156	55	2,778	13,662,483	19,034,750	503,961	4,578,792

TABLE 1 Statistics on Turkish Public Libraries. Source: http://kygm.kulturturizm.gov.tr

As seen in Table 1, there is one Public Library for each about 50,000 persons in Turkey. The number of registered users (member) seems very low if it is compared with EU statistics. According to these statistics, there is averagely one public library for each 7558 person in EU.[14] Also, the collections in the Turkish Public Libraries in Turkey are not large enough: 34.6% of the total collection is borrowed by the users. Each staff of Public Libraries has to serve to approximately 27,000 users. The number of mobile libraries is not enough for an effective public library service.

Information and Communication Technology in Public Libraries of Turkey

Public libraries use Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2 (AACR2) and the 20th edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification system in general. Cataloguing and classification processes are done locally by each public library.

Although efforts are being made to develop information technologies in public libraries, this is the most problematic area and one of primary concern. However, the "Section of Information Process" within the General Directorate is working on the implementation of automation in to the public libraries. Up to now, automation has been introduced in many libraries using a software program called "Milas 4.0". It was developed and freely distributed by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications. But all services are not yet automated in these libraries.

The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications also aims to create a union catalog for Turkish public libraries, Once the project is finalized, all public libraries will be able to access all of their records as well as the Directorate's records. On their own, public libraries try to keep their Internet connections up and to create web pages.

14. Bulent Yilmaz, "Avrupa Birliği sürecinde Türk halk kütüphaneleri: Nicel bir değerlendirme", *Türk Kütüphaneciliği* 2006, 20 (1): 61–84.

The main problems in this area are:

- *Lack of strategy*: There is no a long-term strategy for automation in public libraries
- *Lack of money*: Because of insufficient budget allocations, most libraries cannot pay for their Internet connection fees.
- *Lack of staff*: There are not enough staff who have efficient skills to run an automated library[15]

Political Considerations

Turkey has a centralized public administration and all public libraries serve under this structure, as part of this centralized organization. It is recognized that all public libraries should be under local authorities, however, the local authorities in Turkey generally are the political institutions, and do not see the libraries as their supporter in the election arena. So, they do not put any value on having the libraries as local organizations.

Turkey officially started negotiations for membership in the European Union on October 3, 2005. This means that a new stage has started for Turkey in the process of access to the EU.

From now on, Turkish libraries will be evaluated under the subject heading of "Education and Culture". It appears that public libraries in Turkey and EU countries are quite different. The difference between Turkey and EU rises especially on number of librarians and public library use.

Conclusion

Some public administration laws which were issued by the Turkish Parliament in 2004 transferring the public library services from the central government to the local governments included some fundamental principles which could be used as a base for the reorganization process. However, in order to achieve the transformation of public library system successfully, the laws should be supported with the new legal regulations. Furthermore, there are some precautions which should be taken before the transformation process. Transformation of public library services without a well prepared infrastructure will result serious problems.

There are five librarianship departments at the university level in Turkey, and the average number of graduates is 200–250 per year. So, there should not be a problem in finding qualified people to recruit to public libraries.

Turkey is a cradle of information and civilization from the antique period. It has a very dynamic and educated young population. Therefore, public libraries must become important and functional institutions by reforming them immediately.

15. *Report on Public Libraries*. In: http://www.pulmanweb.org/countries/Turkey.htm [viewed 13 Feb.2008].