

Libraries as Learning Environments: The Example of “Libraries for Everyone”

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Abstract

Purpose – In this article, the Libraries for Everyone Project and the studies carried out within the scope of the Project are presented; the role of libraries as learning environments is discussed; and the data obtained from the library usage research/survey are shared.

Design/methodology/approach – The research includes the findings of a questionnaire study that was applied in May, 2017 to 4566 respondents from 147 libraries participating in the Project. The population is represented with a 99% confidence level and a sampling error of 0.02. The sample size was decided based on the number of registered members in the libraries.

Findings – Municipal libraries have potential to be used as learning environments.

Originality/value – The usage survey reported in the study is the most comprehensive usage study on municipal libraries so far in terms of the number of participants. The Libraries for Everyone Project is the most extensive project implemented at municipal libraries in Turkey.

Keywords Libraries for Everyone, Municipal libraries in Turkey, Libraries as learning environments, Library usage survey, Usage of municipal libraries, User studies

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Libraries are organizations that play a crucial role in the transformation of societies into information societies. Whereas there are many different types of libraries that serve different user groups, the most important goal of libraries is to address the informational needs of individuals. When considered within a system approach, some factors come to the foreground as regards the solution of the problem posed by the barriers before the individuals in accessing information. Such factors as the internalization of the library as an important institution by decision makers, the employment of well-trained library staff, and the elimination of the hardships that libraries encounter in accessing budgetary and information resources can be thought as system entries that will enable users overcome their problems in accessing information. Apart from these, the perception of the library as an institution by the society is extremely important.

In a study on public libraries in Turkey (Al and Akilli, 2016, p. 298), it was found that as of the end of 2013, the proportion of users registered to public libraries was 1.3% in total population. In the same study, Turkey was found to be in the lowest (worst) position among 19 European countries in terms of the proportion of registered users in the entire population (Al and Akilli, 2016, p. 307). Undoubtedly, these findings are the results of various factors. Nevertheless, focusing on what can be done toward improvement, instead of reviving negativity, and planning activities that can transform libraries into centers of attraction for the community will be a more appropriate approach.

Revealing the actual needs of the society is a primary necessity to transform libraries into centers of attraction. What do individuals expect from libraries and what problems can libraries help

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them solve? In this regard, comprehensive needs analysis studies are thought to have strong potential for critical contributions, especially to the efforts of re-defining libraries as “third places”.

In the recent years, the most extensive and comprehensive projects for libraries have been carried out in Turkey. The first of these projects was the “Librar-e Turkey” Project that was implemented by Hacettepe Technopolis - Technology Transfer Center in partnership with the General Directorate of Libraries Publications of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Turkey. The project started in 2013 and lasted for 28 months. Project work/studies were conducted at 78 public libraries located in 26 provinces. An annual increase by 37% in the number of registered users of these 78 public libraries is considered as a highly significant success of the project. The Librar-e Turkey Project was a pilot project which, in a sense, provided the clues about what can be done to transform libraries. The Libraries for Everyone, which was started to be carried out by the same project team following the end of Librar-e Turkey, aims to change the libraries and information centers administered by local governments into centers of attraction for the citizens. The Project activities started in 2016 and will continue until the end of July 2018. Both projects have been financially supported by the Global Libraries Initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In this article, an overview on the Libraries for Everyone Project and the Global Libraries Initiative that supports the Project are given; the studies carried out within the scope of the project are described; the role of libraries as learning environments is discussed; and findings from the library usage study conducted as part of the project works are presented. Additionally, findings from a short online survey applied to library users are also presented.

Global Libraries Initiative and Libraries for Everyone

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supports a number of programs such as Global Health, Global Development, Global Policy & Advocacy. The Foundation, which is a non-profit organization, is active in a variety of fields ranging from health to education and conducts activities to increase awareness toward the solution of many social problems. The Global Libraries Initiative has taken its place in the world librarianship literature as a demonstration of the Foundation’s commitment to libraries. The Foundation has donated over one billion dollars to more than 2000 beneficiaries, mainly under the Global Libraries Initiative (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2017).

The Global Libraries Initiative aims to improve the quality of life and provide access to information and communication technology efficiently via libraries for people who have no or limited access to such technologies in developing and transitioning countries (Jacobs, 2010, p. 26). While there are many reports on the works conducted at these countries, many articles describing the working principles of the Global Libraries Initiative (for instance, Al *et al.* 2015; Streatfield, Markless and Cottrill 2015) have also entered the literature. It is worth noting that that two special issues of the scholarly journal *Performance Measurement and Metrics* have been reserved for studies carried out under the Global Libraries Initiative in 2012 (Vol. 13 No. 1) and in 2015 (Vol. 16 No. 2).

Turkey as a country, with Hacettepe Technopolis – Technology Transfer Center as the grantee institution, has received one of the last grants under the Global Libraries Initiative. It is clear that, with the Global Libraries Initiative’s decision on not to be involved in the library ecosystem anymore (Chant, 2014), serious work is needed towards the sustainability of the Initiative’s achievements. .

The Libraries for Everyone Project endeavors to change municipal libraries into community centers with appeal to citizens. The activities carried out under the Project are structured on the basis of working groups as in the case of the Global Libraries Initiative projects in other countries. As such, there are four working groups in the Project team (advocacy, information and communication technology, training, and impact assessment). While the advocacy working group is responsible for public relations and marketing activities related to the Project, the information and communication technologies working group carries out those activities of the Project that are related to the planning, installation, and maintenance of the components of information and communication technologies for and at the libraries. The training working group assesses the information and communication technology skills and training requirements of library staff and citizens. At the end of this assessment, it is the responsibility of the training working group to develop and implement sustainable online and on-site training programs. Lastly, the impact assessment working group seeks to assess the success of

the Project in achieving its objectives and to undertake activities to follow up the Project's results (Herkes için Kütüphane, 2017). The Project is carried out in collaboration with many institutions and organizations. Turkish Librarians' Association, the Informatics Association of Turkey, Near East University, Turkish Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, Self-Employed and Administrators, and Hacettepe University Alumni Association are among the Project's stakeholders.

Libraries participate to the Project on a voluntary basis and as of July 2017 there are a total of 163 libraries from different geographical regions of Turkey (see Figure 1). The costs of the internet access devices and software, the training and advocacy materials, and staff training in these libraries are covered by the Project funds. The ultimate vision of the Project is to transform the libraries managed by local governments into vibrant institutions that can serve to support the life-long learning efforts of citizens, especially the disadvantaged groups, in addition to providing traditional library services (Herkes için Kütüphane, 2016).



Figure 1. Libraries for Everyone Project Participant Libraries

Libraries as Learning Environments

Libraries have evolved considerably over time. Gradually expanding from the past function of merely being a place where books are preserved, the library is now becoming the “third place” to be visited most frequently after home and work or school. Undoubtedly, the libraries are also competing with some other candidates to earn the position of the “third place”. Frequently visited places such as cafes and shopping centers are foremost among these competitors. In the face of this competition, if libraries are desired to become gathering places or the third places for people, they need to go beyond traditional practices and develop innovative and creative services. In turn, to be able to identify the innovative and creative services to be provided by libraries, it is crucial to understand what users actually need. As long as they adopt new missions and become places where people can develop their individual talents and engage in cultural and artistic activities, libraries can improve their image within the community in the positive direction. .

Today, self-sustenance is improbable for individuals who depend only upon the information obtained from traditional and formal education systems and fail to adopt a life-long learning approach. Moreover, changing and evolving technology has made it indispensable to constantly learn new things in some areas. At this point, the ability of library staff to perform as tutors or facilitators will greatly enhance the value of libraries.

When the inadequacy of school libraries in Turkey is considered, most individuals never meet with the library in their lives or they do so at a very advanced age. When this situation is assessed together with the proverb “as the twig is bent, so grows the tree” which is frequently used in Turkish, unfortunately it will be a very optimistic approach to say that the rising generation has the habit of

using the library. On the other hand, the reality of Turkey shows that a significant proportion of the library users, the numbers of which are relatively small compared to other countries, are younger students. While there are socio-cultural reasons for this, the main reason is that students think of libraries as a location for studying. In view of this fact, it is of utmost importance that libraries grow out from being study rooms into becoming centers for learning. Indeed, libraries should be turned into learning centers not only for young students but also for adults. The foremost steps to be taken for this end are to train the library staff, to carry out awareness-increasing campaigns targeting potential users, and to provide the infrastructure required for modern libraries.

Methodology and Limitations

Within the context of Libraries for Everyone Project, an initial user survey was conducted in August and September of 2016. Within the scope of this study, which was also published in the national literature, the questionnaire was responded to by 4317 individuals at 140 libraries (Al, Doğan, Soydal and Taşkın, 2017, p. 18). The questionnaire contains 32 questions and has made it possible to collect baseline data for the Project. The present research, on the other hand, was designed by adding three more questions to the survey conducted in 2016. Many of the questions in the questionnaire were not designed from scratch. The questions were designed based on the structure called Common Impact Measurement System, CIMS for short, which has been used by many of the projects implemented within the scope of the Global Libraries Initiative (Paley *et al.*, 2015). The survey that aimed to obtain information on the users of municipal libraries, their usage level of libraries, and how they perceive of the library as a learning environment was conducted in May of 2017. According to Cochran (1963), the size of the sample to represent the population was calculated using the Formula 1 and Formula 2 given below:

$$n_o = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} \quad (\text{Formula 1})$$

$$n = \frac{n_o}{1 + \frac{n_o - 1}{N}} \quad (\text{Formula 2})$$

In the formulas,

N: Population size

n_o: Sample size

n: Corrected sample size

z: The *z* table score for the selected confidence interval

p: The estimate of variance

q: 1-*p*

e: Desired level of precision

In our study, the population is represented with a 99% confidence interval for $e=0.02$. The sample size is calculated based on the number of registered users of the libraries and each of the libraries in the population is included in the sample in proportion to the number of library members. According to the data gathered from the libraries, the total number of registered users in the libraries participating in the Project is 379,921. In view of this, 4099 participants can be used to represent the population with a 99% confidence interval and a sampling error of 0.02. During the implementation of the survey, this number has been exceeded and the questionnaire has been conducted to 4566 people from 147 libraries.

The most fundamental limitation of our survey is that none of the respondents is under 15 years old. The reason for this is the sensitivity of the financial sponsor of the Libraries for Everyone Project that the age of the survey participants should be at least 15 years of age. It is known that municipal libraries have users under the age of 15, but they have not been included in the sample of this research. In addition, it should also be noted that the questionnaire was not conducted in all of the

libraries participating in the project because a small number of libraries were closed for various reasons (such as renovation-maintenance-repair, not having staff for that period, etc.). Lastly, it should be indicated that the questionnaire includes 35 questions and it is not possible to share all of the findings in such a comprehensive study. Therefore, the present study focuses on education, one of the seven categories of CIMS (communication, digital inclusion, education, economic development, e-government, health, culture and leisure) on which the survey is based, and thus the findings are presented here are related to the questions about educational activities.

While the user profile of the municipal libraries is revealed generally in the scope of this research, it is also tried to examine the extent to which the municipal library users benefit from the libraries as a learning environment. There is no doubt that studies in different countries that examine the role of libraries as learning environments with reference to different types of libraries, especially school libraries, are available in the literature (Ashcroft, Farrow and Watt, 2007; Curry 2017; Salminen, Tornberg and Venäläinen, 2016; Schultz-Jones and Ledbetter, 2010). Since the municipal library landscape is the environment in which Libraries for Everyone is implemented, and since this particular environment in Turkey displays very different organizational structures even within itself, a meaningful comparison with other countries is not feasible. Therefore, this study deliberately focuses exclusively on Libraries for Everyone. Responses to the questions in the questionnaire both provide the background information about the goals that Libraries for Everyone Project aims to achieve and make it possible to observe the changes that take place over time. Findings obtained as a result of library usage survey will make it possible to get to know the users of municipal libraries more closely, to study on the areas that need to be improved, and to plan the required training in the municipal libraries.

Findings and Discussion

The number of users of the municipal libraries who participated in the survey is 4566. The 58% of the users are women (2649 people) and 42% are men (1917 people). Very few of the respondents (6%) stated that they live in a rural area. The 40% of the users are 18 or 19 years old. When we increase the age range slightly, 70% of the users are seen to be between the ages of 15 and 24 (see Figure 2). Even though fewer in numbers, it is understood that municipal libraries also have users aged 75 and above.

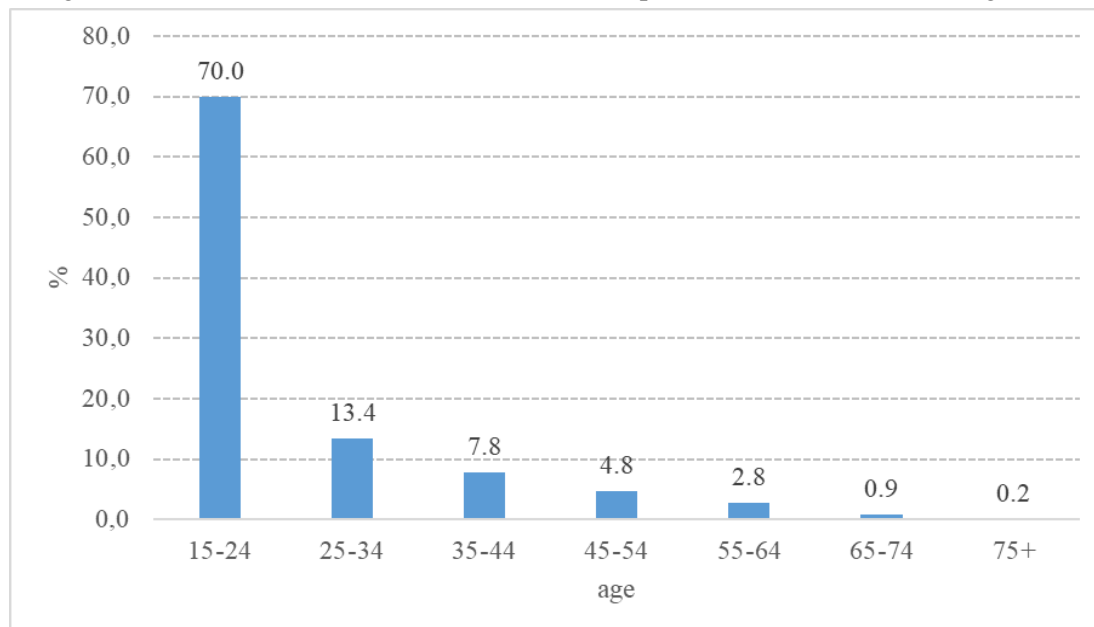


Figure 2. Distribution of users by age range

Table 1 presents the educational status of the library users participating in the survey. Those under the “other” option are the illiterate and the primary school drop-outs as they indicated. The findings parallels the baseline study conducted in 2016. In that study too (Al, Doğan, Soydal and Taşkın, 2017, p. 19), it was also determined that the two largest groups are high school and secondary school graduates, followed by university graduates.

Table 1. Educational status of users

Educational status	n	%
Primary school graduate	274	6
Secondary school graduate	1456	32
High school graduate	1995	44
Graduate	735	16
Postgraduate	51	1
Other	55	1
Total	4566	100

Table 2 that includes the findings on the employment status of users shows that 62% of the users are students. The fact that the unemployed constitute a larger group than employees shows that among the seven impact areas determined by Global Libraries Initiative, namely communication, digital inclusion, education, economic development, e-government, health, culture and leisure; the economic development impact area is an area that presents and opportunity for municipal libraries.

Table 2. Job status of users

Employment status	n	%
Employee	650	14
Unemployed	1033	23
Student	2824	62
I prefer not to respond	59	1
Total	4566	100

82% of the participants declared that they do not have any income. This is perfectly normal when we consider that a significant proportion of the participants are students. The findings of the study show that the annual income of the municipal library users who declared income varies between 600 and 120,000 Turkish Liras (TL). As shown in Table 3, when we group annual income equally, it is seen that the four in five of those who declared income have an annual income of 30,000 TL or less.¹

Table 3. Income distribution of users

Annual income (TL)	n	%	Cumulative %
1-5000	125	15.3	15.3
5001-10000	121	14.8	30.0
10001-15000	42	5.1	35.2
15001-20000	166	20.3	55.4
20001-30000	208	25.4	80.8
30001 or more	157	19.2	100.0
Total	819	100.1	

Note: The total percentage of all values is not equal to 100% due to rounding.

When the findings of Figure 2, Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 are evaluated together, it is possible to obtain some clues about the profile of municipal library users. When the answers to the question “Do you have any physical disability?” that is not included in tables or figures but included in

¹ In May 2017 when the survey was implemented, the average exchange rate in US dollars was 1 USD = 3.5704 TL (TCMB, 2017). Thus, it is possible to say that 81% of library users have an annual income of less than 8402 USD.

questionnaire were examined, it was understood that 1.8% (82 persons) of the respondents were physically disabled. When the studies carried out both by Turkish Statistical Institute and by the Directorate General of Services for Persons with Disabilities and for Elderly People of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies are examined, difficulties were encountered in accessing up-to-date information about the current rate of disability and disability type in Turkey. The reference works in terms of currency and scope are the Health Survey prepared by Turkish Statistical Institute in 2012 (TÜİK, 2012) and the statistical bulletin prepared by Directorate General of Services for Persons with Disabilities and for Elderly People in October 2016 (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2016). Based on these studies, it is understood that the proportion of disabled people in the population of Turkey is around 7%. The proportion of disabled citizens benefiting from the municipal libraries (1.8%) is relatively low compared to this rate. It is essential that municipal libraries take into consideration the needs of physically disabled users in designing both the building and the library services designs to ensure that these citizens can effectively use library.

LIFE Training Activities

During the project the training activities are carried out by the training working group. As stated earlier, the ultimate goal is to develop sustainable online and on-site training programs and ensure that they are implemented. One of the most important activities in order to enable the sustainability of educational activities is for the library staff to acquire educational qualifications. For this purpose, firstly the needs and expectations of the library staff were investigated at the beginning of the project. To state the general situation at the beginning of the Project with numbers; it was found that 78% of the library staff have never participated at any distance education program; that 42% never attended a course or seminar related to librarianship / library services; and, finally, that and only 12% of the staff were graduates of librarianship departments (Al and Madran, 2016, p. 16). In the current phase, almost all of the municipal library staff use the “Akademi | HİK” platform, that is created within the scope of Libraries for Everyone Project, for distance education purposes. The platform includes rich educational content in a variety of topics such as corporate social media usage, basic computer use, and e-government applications. The training component of the Project is not limited to distance education only. The face-to-face training sessions provided at different times and in different geographies, under the name of capacity building, are intended to enable the library staff to further internalize the Project and gain experience in training related matters. On the other hand, various webinars are organized on both the overall progress of the Project and topics related to the educational activities. Some of these webinars are designed for library staff only (for example, on the topic of disability-oriented services in libraries), while others are intended for library users.

When library users were asked in the survey whether or not they were aware of the trainings at municipal libraries on various subjects, 42% of the participants (1908 people) responded by stating that they knew about the trainings. That more than half of the users are not aware of the trainings in libraries may be considered as a problem at first glance. However, this ratio can be considered reasonable due to the fact that the starting dates of the trainings are relatively recent and that some libraries have fallen behind in starting training activities because of the lack of staff. When it is taken into account that almost no training has been provided in the municipal libraries until the Libraries for Everyone Project, 42% awareness rate is considered important. Among those who were aware of the trainings in the municipal libraries, 28% (535 out of 1908 people) reported having participated in various training activities. Survey findings show that some people participated in more than one training session. According to these findings, the trainings on Internet use are participated to by users more than any other training topic (see Figure 3). Other trainings are basic office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), e-government applications (i.e. obtaining e-government password), basic computer use, CV writing, e-mail use, consumer training, and video conferencing (i.e. Skype), respectively.

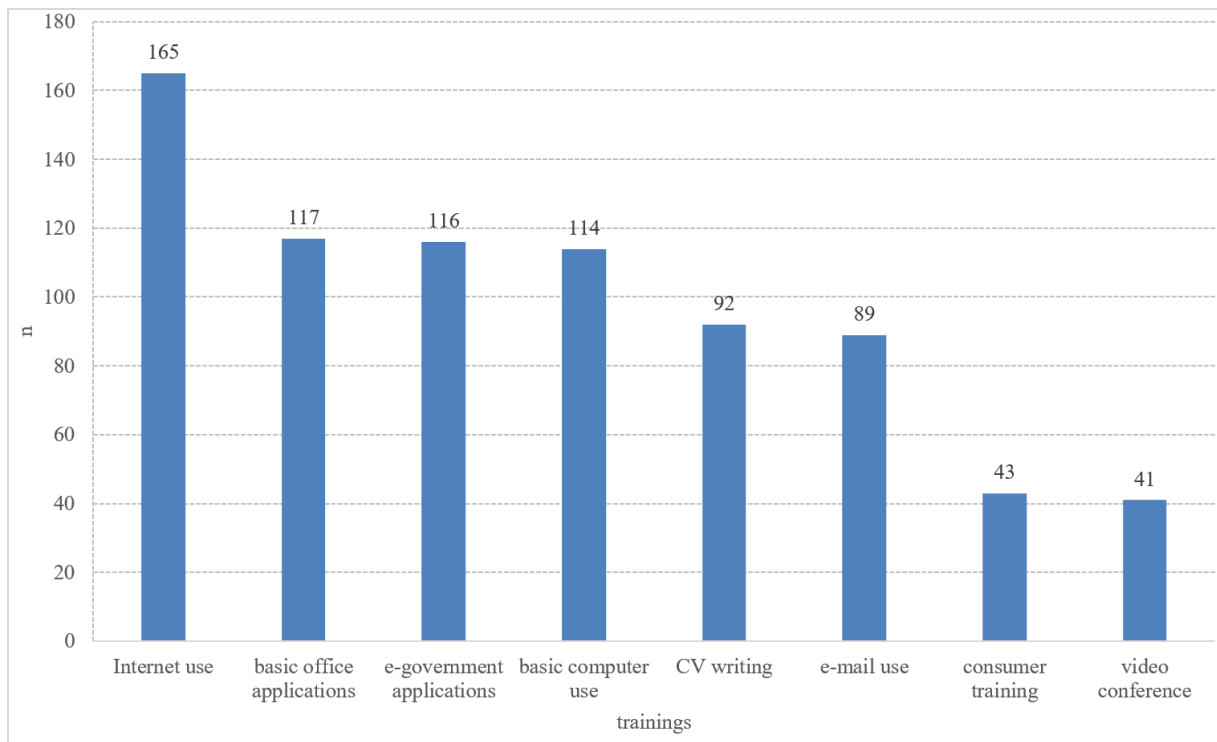


Figure 3. The trainings to which users in municipal libraries participated

The majority of users find the trainings to which they attended beneficial to a great extent. Findings that show the proportion of those who find the trainings beneficial are presented in Figure 4. According to this, while the trainings about e-government applications are reported to be the most useful, the topic of video conversation seems to have potential for further development when compared to other topics. Nevertheless, it appears that four out of every five people who participated in the trainings were satisfied with the training on video conversation.

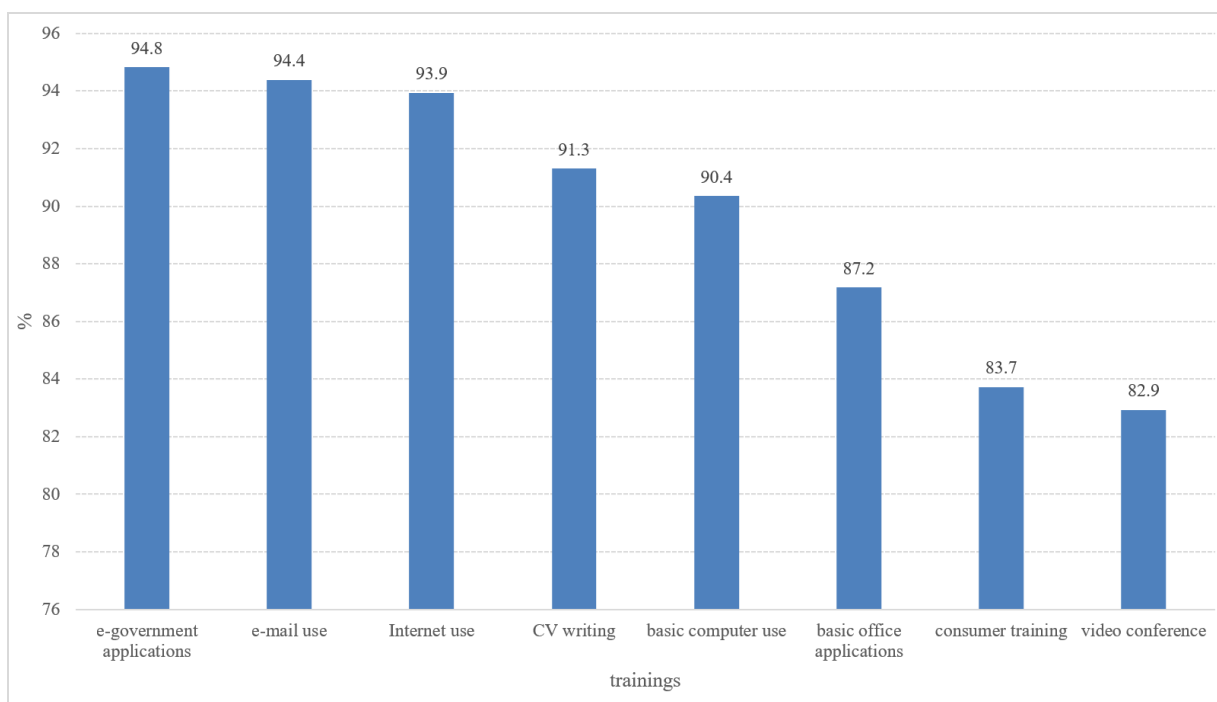


Figure 4. Users' percentage of finding the trainings beneficial

When the municipal library users were asked about what they learned from the trainings by library staff or by experts providing support from outside the library, their responses suggested that the lives of a large number of people were positively touched. Especially, many users with lower levels of computer skills have experienced to turn on and off the computer, use the mouse, and use office software products for the first time in the library environment. These users constitute a slice of approximately 5% among all users. What is striking is that 31% of the respondents marked the opinion "I use the technology more than I normally will" with the effect of trainings and support of the library staff. From this point of view, it seems that through the Libraries for Everyone Project people are beginning to position themselves differently as regards technology use. The report of 51% of the participants as "I am more inclined in society than I am in usual" shows once again that libraries have a strong potential to become an important institution in the socialization of people.

It is known that public libraries in Turkey function like school libraries. In a study conducted in 2010, only 10% of schools are reported as having their own libraries (Yılmaz, 2010, p. 306). The situation of the municipal libraries is not different from the public libraries; due to the inadequacy of school libraries, a significant portion of the user population are students. In fact, it has already been established in a previous study that the public libraries and the municipal libraries have many similarities in terms of user characteristics (Al, Doğan, Soydal and Taşkın, 2017, p. 21).

2745 people (60% of users surveyed), of whom the majority are students, rank studying and preparing for exams among the purposes of their library use. Among the answers to the question about the purposes of library use, borrowing or reading books was marked by the users at the rate of 43%. These findings point to the existence of an important group of library users who uses the library for purposes other than borrowing and reading books. While the option of borrowing or reading book had a share of 63% among the purposes of library use in the study carried out in 2016 (Al, Doğan, Soydal and Taşkın, 2017, p. 22), the decrease in the mentioned option at a rate of 20% in a relatively short period may be seen as indicating a rapid change in users' purposes for library use. In addition, while internet use was reported as a purpose for visiting the library at the rate of 15% in the previous study, the same rate increased to 23% in the study conducted in 2017. These findings should be analyzed in detail at the library level and necessary studies should be undertaken considering the tendency to change over years. Otherwise, municipal libraries will most probably fail to offer services that will satisfy the changing needs and expectations of their users.

In addition to the face-to-face survey conducted in May 2017, which is detailed in the above, a brief survey for library users was also conducted online in April 2017. In the survey, in which the data was collected via the software called Data Giraffe², the level of satisfaction from library services in general and specifically the interest of library users in the Women's Health Platform are questioned along with demographic data. The Women's Health Platform is part of the training programs of the Libraries for Everyone Project and aims to inform women, especially those in disadvantaged groups, across Turkey on women's health issues by the contributions of experts and through the Project member municipal libraries as venues. A total of 13 events were organized within the context of the Women's Health Platform and training was provided in the form of webinars on many different topics (such as breast cancer and prevention, menopausal health problems, the importance of nutrition in child development, etc.). Announcements were made in advance of the events and the announced trainings were delivered by the subject experts alive via the designated website. Not only live broadcasts, but also the video recordings of the webinar trainings were shared via Project web site and YouTube channel to make later access possible for those interested. The 13 trainings have approximately 500 minutes of content in total. The contributions of participants with questions and answers are included in this total duration.

2653 people participated in the online questionnaire mentioned above. According to this, 26% of the participants stated that they participated in at least one Women's Health Platform webinar. At this point, it may be highlighted as an interesting finding that about a quarter of the participants in these webinars were males. This may be explained by the fact that some trainings did not have content that were exclusively for a female audience (for example, the importance of nutrition in child development).

² Data Giraffe is an open source software and it is linked to the pop-up survey program. It was initiated by IREX, which was the non-profit organization that managed the Global Libraries grant in Ukraine (Chiranov, 2011, p. 52; Streatfield *et al.* 2015).

The users were also asked whether they were generally satisfied with their libraries' services as part of the pop-up survey and 95% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied. This appears to be a considerably positive situation, and without a doubt, point to the need for further efforts by library staff in order to not lower the bar and for further works that will support sustainability in terms of user satisfaction.

Future Training Activities

A large number of training sessions have been provided and continue to be offered as a critical activity of the Project. The kind of training sessions to which users would have showed interest in if they were to be offered free at the library were also investigated in the survey. There are 23 options in this particular question and the educational demands of the users are presented in Table 4 in descending order by frequency. Accordingly, it is observed that the percentages of the options presented in the survey vary between 75% and 19%. Three out of every four users are interested in participating in free online courses via the Internet. The planning of a series of trainings to be made available through the Akademi | HİK platform currently continues in order to respond to this demand.

Table 4. Trainings requested by library users

Trainings	n	%
Participate to free Internet-based courses on topics of interest (i.e. learn foreign language)	3423	75
Advanced level computer use (web page creation, software development etc.)	3211	70
Get information about health (make an appointment via the Internet, get information about diseases, doctors, prescription, medication quota etc.)	2717	60
Course follow-up over the internet (i.e. open education courses)	2558	56
Get news about the province you live in	2479	54
Use e-government services (download/fill up/send governmental forms, pay tax, request a governmental form or license)	2201	48
Use e-municipal services (invoice payment, make application, application track, keep informed about announcements etc.)	2149	47
Buy ticket, make booking/reservation for transportation/accommodation	2117	46
Use secure Internet banking	2105	46
Participate to governance processes (electoral registration information, citizen rights, communicate with local governments or elected officials, get information about how to become a volunteer in political events etc.).	1993	44
Parental control for your child using the Internet	1968	43
Look for a job, make a job application (curriculum vitae preparation, follow job advertisements etc.)	1949	43
Talking with family and friends over the Internet with audio and video	1908	42
Get information about your child's education	1825	40
Sent message to newspapers/TV channels, participation in discussions	1803	40
Get information about political parties	1762	39
Get information about company establishment conditions and credit facilities	1713	38
Basic level computer use (turning on a computer, creating a file, using e-mail, using the Internet, etc.)	1596	35
Intermediate level computer use (writing, accounting etc.)	1555	34
Sell product or service	1487	33
Get information about bank credits/interests etc.	1369	30
Buy product or service	1361	30
Get information about agriculture, husbandry etc.	871	19

Users responded by stating demand rates of over 40% to 15 of the 23 choices offered to them. The responses even to the option of “Get information about agriculture, husbandry etc.”, the option with the lowest rate of 19%, reveal that municipal library users will benefit from the libraries as an educational environment if and when appropriate conditions are created or they will be involved in distance education activities offered by the library.

Two other webinar series similar to the Women's Health Platform that are planned on the basis of the feedback obtained from the users in cooperation with Hacettepe University Alumni Association and the Informatics Association of Turkey have also started as of July 2017. As of August 2017, a webinar (entitled “Why iodized salt?”) was organized with the contributions of Hacettepe University Alumni Association and two webinars (on child abuse prevention, and social media risks and security) were organized with the contributions of the Informatics Association of Turkey. These webinars are planned to continue until the middle of 2018. Additionally, the project team will train both library staff and users on a variety of topics.

Conclusion

Libraries for Everyone Project aims to ensure that the users of the Project libraries are able to meet their information needs with the help of the information and communication technologies provided by the libraries and the trainings they receive at the libraries. In this context, municipal library users (especially, women, the elderly, the unemployed, people with disabilities, young people, and people living in rural areas, namely those considered “disadvantaged” in the context of the country’s conditions) are expected to benefit individually from activities that target digital inclusion, education, and economic development (i.e. the Project’s priority impact assessment areas). Particularly, the educational activities realized within the scope of the Project help libraries progress significantly toward becoming learning environments. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal is "to teach fishing, not to give fish". Thus, in the staff of the Project libraries bear tremendous responsibility.

As a result of the usage study we have conducted at the municipal libraries, it is possible to list the main results concerning the education impact area as follows:

- Municipal libraries are often used by young people, and the majority of these people are students.
- More than half of the respondents indicate that they use the library for the purpose of studying or preparing for exams.
- It has been determined that users have shown a significant degree of interest in face-to-face and Internet-based trainings organized in municipal libraries. Moreover, users are very satisfied with the trainings.
- Users have the potential to use the library as a learning environment. The survey found that, if offered, free trainings on different topics would be attended to a significant degree.

The translation of basic findings listed above into actual and meaningful benefit on the part of the users is not easy to achieve in the short term. For this reason, it is planned that Turkish Librarians’ Association will take over the leadership role at the end of the Project. During the Project, efforts have been spent to enhance and strengthen the capacity of the Turkish Librarians’ Association for this role. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation attaches great importance to sustainability issues. In this regard, the role of the Turkish Librarians’ Association, which is active as the oldest non-governmental organization in the country in the field of librarianship, is deemed critical for the sustainability of Project works. Therefore, Turkish Librarians’ Association was selected as the main stakeholder at the beginning of the Project and through a systematic design of the Project activities it was ensured that the Association participates in all activities from the start of the project period. In prospect, efforts should be made to ensure that projects such as the Libraries for Everyone are on the radar of librarianship associations and information management departments in Turkey and that potential resources are optimally used.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for contributing to the study. We also thank Dr. Sinan Akıllı for his careful reading of this article and for his invaluable suggestions.

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