



International Leads

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Ilhan Kum: A Remembrance

By Jordan M. Scepanski

He was gentle, polite, and unfailingly cheerful. He was a teacher, a scholar, and a university administrator. And he was a librarian. He was very proud to be a librarian, even though the role and relevance of the profession in his country were not all that well understood.

I first met Ilhan Kum on a warm Sunday afternoon in Ankara, the fall of 1981. He was chairman of the Department of Library Science at Hacettepe University where I had just been assigned as a Fulbright grantee. On medical leave from the university, he nevertheless wanted to immediately see the new American faculty member, and so he dispatched a senior colleague to pick up my wife, my daughter, and me and bring us to his home. Having just arrived in the Turkish capital the evening before, we were ushered in, bleary-eyed and still disoriented, to meet this distinguished Turkish educator and his equally renowned spouse, Eren Hanim, dean of the university's nursing school. Over tea and pastries he told us stories of his days at the University of Kentucky and at the Brooklyn Public Library.

In 1951 Lawrence Thompson, the director of University of Kentucky libraries, had been sent to Turkey by the U.S. State Department to assess the status of libraries there. In a training course he offered during that time Thompson identified Ilhan as a bright

prospect who could benefit from further education in the field. He promised him a job and assistance in enrolling in library school. Ilhan went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees at the university while working part time in the library's circulation department. He then moved to the Brooklyn Public Library's Science and Industry branch. That afternoon in 1981 he talked with fondness of the blue grass state and of his love for fried chicken, a taste acquired in Lexington, Kentucky.

We did not see a great deal of Ilhan that year. The severity of his heart condition limited his presence in the department to but periodic visits. There were nevertheless social and ceremonial occasions with him during our eleven months in the country, and encounters on subsequent trips. We talked about

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libraries, about the state of the profession and medical librarianship, about the turmoil in Turkish higher education, and about his many travels to gatherings of the International Federation of Library Associations.



Ilhan Kum was Professor and Head of the Department of Library Science at Hacettepe University.

Hacettepe University offered bachelors, masters, and doctoral training in librarianship and as department chair Ilhan could have chosen to teach only upper level and graduate students. Instead, he insisted upon instructing first year students. With entrance to Turkish universities controlled by examination and admission to the various disciplines based upon exam scores, many students found themselves enrolled in programs they knew little about and cared for less. Ilhan took it upon himself to first interest these neophytes in his noble profession and then to excite them about its possibilities. He told them of the role of libraries in the research process, of the importance of librarians in providing informational and recreational reading

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A Remembrance

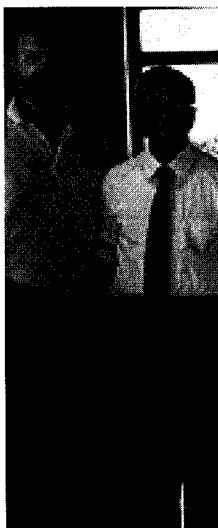
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materials, of school libraries, of medical libraries, of special libraries, of libraries the world over. He shared with each beginning class his extensive collection of library photographs he had taken during his travels. He taught his students library history and how the profession had developed in Turkey. He told them of his work abroad, of his positions at Middle East Technical University, at Ankara University, and as founding director of the medical

Ilhan took it upon himself to first interest these neophytes in his noble profession and then to excite them about its possibilities.

library and later secretary general (or chief operating officer) of Hacettepe University. It was while he was Hacettepe's secretary general that he convinced that university's founder, the indomitable Ihsan Dogramaci, to establish an Institute of Librarianship and Documentation, which was later to become a full-fledged department. It was there that he created a graduate program modeled after those in the United States.

Ilhan dreamed of having IFLA someday meet in Turkey. That dream was realized in 1995, three years after his retirement, when the organization convened its general conference in Istanbul. There his former colleagues,



Jordan M. Scepanski and Ilhan Kum in August 1989 in Ankara. (Photo: Jordan Scepanski)

students, and friends displayed for the world's librarians the richness of the country's culture and the dynamism of their profession. Ilhan Kum did much for Turkey's libraries, for librarianship, and for education. He died peacefully in his sleep on January 3, 2001 at the age of 73. (Jordan Scepanski is executive director of the Triangle Research Libraries Network and Chair of International Relations Committee. He served a senior Fulbright lecturer in library science at Hacettepe University in 1981/82)

IRRT International Librarians Reception in San Francisco

Mark your calendars again for the best reception at ALA Annual! The International Librarians Reception will be held on Monday night, June 18 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the spectacular Bankers Club on the 52nd floor of the Bank of America Building. Please join us for the great views, great company, and wonderful food. International Librarians, including Canadians, receive a complimentary ticket. For U.S.

librarians, tickets purchase after May 18 will be \$25. You may purchase your tickets using the on-line or printed ALA registration forms, or you can send checks to the International Relations Office. Tickets may also be purchased at the conference.

Congratulations to New IRRT Executive Committee Members! Vice-Chair: Karen Starr, Member at Large: Rebecka Lindau, and Secretary-Treasurer: Jeanette Pierce.

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