

Transforming Public Libraries as part of the National Development Plans in Turkey

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Abstract:

Public libraries in Turkey are administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Libraries and Publications. As of the end 2014, 1121 public libraries offered user services to nearly 21 million people, the majority of whom were children and youth; this was an increase of 2.75% from the previous year. Such an increase is significant if one takes into consideration the challenges presented by digital materials and internet technologies.

In Turkey, the majority of public libraries were built before the 1980's; most of these are not suitable for the needs and requirements of new-generation users. The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Ministry of Development, initiated a project for the renewal of public library buildings. The renewal program is based on the 10th National Development Plan published in 2014, covering the period of 2014 and 2018. Initially, 10 public libraries, located in different regions of the country, were included in the renewal program. The main criteria for selection was the urgency created by the state of the current buildings.

The project for the transformation of public libraries is not limited to the construction of new buildings. It also entails redefining the requirements and functions of the public libraries and creating a new social environment to meet these requirements and functions. The Ministry of Culture commissioned the author to develop the functional requirements of library services that would be suited to the needs of current and future users. A number of technical and conceptual documents have been produced to assist the designers and architects who are, or will be, commissioned for the rebuilding of public libraries. This paper outlines the efforts made by a number of stake holders, including government departments and universities, in transforming public libraries in Turkey.

Keywords: Public libraries, Turkey, National Development Plans.

The outlook of publishing and libraries in Turkey

Libraries play a vital role in the development of modern society; the library, an institution that collects and organizes information, also offers open access to information equally for all

members of society. Libraries are able to offer information when and where it is needed to every individual. In this way libraries contribute to the development of society as well as ensuring intellectual freedom. As all members of society are equally entitled to access, social inclusion is encouraged.

In recent years an increasing awareness and investment, as well as new development projects in the publishing industry and libraries has taken place in Turkey. The number of publishers registered with the ISBN Agency reached a total of 28,141 by the end of 2014.¹ In Table 1 the number of new publishers entering the publishing industry in the last 5 years is given. These figures include publishing companies, universities, government departments, local governments, NGOs and private persons acting as publishers.

Year	New Publisher
2010	1,708
2011	1,659
2012	1,812
2013	1,732
2014	2,138

Table 1: New publishers registered in the last five years

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute. <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>

The number of titles produced in the last five years has also increased steadily, reaching over 50,000 by the end of 2014. Table 2 shows the number of new ISBN given over the last five years. This increase is not limited to new titles, but also includes the circulation of new publications, which has also increased. Table 3 gives a breakdown in subject areas, the number of new titles in respective subject areas and the ratio of subject areas in terms of titles printed and circulated. The total circulation reached over 265 million by the end of 2014, with a 46% increase from the previous year.

Year	ISBN Given
2010	35,767
2011	43,096
2012	42,626
2013	47,352
2014	50,752

Table 2: New titles published in the last five years

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute. <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>

¹ Yayıncı Meslek Birlikleri Federasyonu (Federation of Publisher's Unions). <https://www.yayfed.org/website/content/215> Accessed on 20 July 2015.

Subject	ISBN Given	Number of prints	Ratio of subject to total ISBN given	Ratio of number of prints to total prints
Literature	9,542	15,224,861	19%	6%
Culture	11,652	18,868,754	23%	7%
Academic	7,171	8,566,221	14%	3%
Religion	3,118	12,670,932	6%	5%
Children/Youth	6,889	23,979,620	14%	9%
Education	12,380	186,042,525	24%	70%
Total	50,752	265,352,913	100%	100%

Table 3: Breakdown of titles printed according to subject area

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute. <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>

Important data that also need to be taken into consideration consists of the number of electronic books produced in the last five years. Table 4 shows the number of electronic books and their ratio to printed materials. The ratio of digital books to printed books grew by four times in the last four years, reaching 13% at the end of 2014.

Year	Print Books	E-Books	CD-DVD Book	Total Digital Books	Ratio of Digital to Print Books
2011	40,915	1,055	259	1,314	3%
2012	39,367	2,167	311	2,478	6%
2013	47,352	2,299	1,781	4,080	9%
2014	44,613	5,245	483	5,728	13%

Table 4: The number and ratio of digital books to printed format

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute. <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>

Figures given in the four tables above show how publishing has grown in Turkey. The size of the publishing market is eleventh according to the IPA report for 2014.² This intense publishing environment has a direct impact on the demand for libraries.

Turkey is a country which has a long history of libraries as public institutions. During the Ottoman era, books were considered to be endowments for the public benefit. These books were housed in libraries that were established in connection with universities (medrese) or mosques, and which were open to the general public. A number of these libraries are still functioning in Turkey today.³ There are a number of public, university, school, research,

² Annual Report October 2013 – October 2014. International Publishers Associations. p.16. <http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/reports/2014/IPA-annual-report-2014.pdf> Accessed on 20 July 2015.

³ There is extensive literature on Ottoman foundation libraries by İsmail Erünsal. For example Ottoman libraries: a survey of the history, development and organization of Ottoman foundation libraries / İsmail E. Erünsal; established by Şinasi Tekin; edited by Cemal Kafadar, Gönül Alpay Tekin. -- Cambridge: Harvard

foundation, rare books and manuscripts, as well as private libraries and knowledge houses.⁴ The following table, given as example, indicates the different types of libraries and their numbers in Istanbul.

Type	Number
Research	97
Children's	30
Public	172
School	73
University	82
Rare books and Manuscripts	9
Total	463

Table 5: Number of Libraries in Istanbul

Source: <http://www.istanbulkutuphaneleri.org/index.php>

This number may seem to be adequate for a city which has a population of nearly 15 million; however, it is known that most of the libraries are oversubscribed and users quite often have difficulties finding a seat. Many of the abovementioned libraries, in particular research libraries, have plans to expand their space.

Due in part to public demand, but also as a result of government policies, public libraries are experiencing rapid growth; the table below demonstrates this growth in the number of libraries, books, periodicals, users, members and materials loaned.

	2013	2014	Change	Change ratio %
Number of public libraries	1,118	1,121	3	0.27
Total books in public libraries	16,099,993	17,111,825	1,011,832	6.28
Newly purchased books	1,107,320	1,185,200	77,880	7.03
Number of periodicals	262	251	-11	-4.20
Number of users	20,232,069	20,787,765	555,696	2.75
Number of members	1,025,846	1,209,766	183,920	17.93
Materials borrowed	7,465,763	7,600,807	135,044	1.81

Table 6: General outlook of public libraries

Source: Ministry of Culture, General Directorate of Libraries and Publishing.

<http://www.kygm.gov.tr/TR,9/istatistikler.html>

In a recent presentation produced by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publishing, Ministry of Culture, which was given to the Ministry of Development, an outline of the new

University, 2008. XXIV, 254 s. (Doğu dilleri ve edebiyatlarının kaynakları = Sources of oriental languages and literatures; 84)

⁴ Knowledge houses (*bilgi evleri*) are institutions that offer free academic support to primary and secondary school students.

vision for public libraries was presented. In this presentation, the importance of harmony with current needs and demands was emphasized; in addition, the need to attract the reader's attention, the aesthetics of the location, the need for information technology, the functionality of the spatial order, the importance of light, heat, acoustics and interior design for the comfort of the users were all discussed.⁵

The place of libraries in the National Development Plans (NDPs)

Development plans are published every four years in Turkey. The latest macro level national development plan (10th NDP) was published in 2014, covering the years from 2014 to 2018. As part of this four-year plan, the Ministry of Development issued an investment program for each year, giving the details of the NDP. New public libraries are included in the development program for Turkey and the 2015 Investment program includes 3 items related to libraries.

As part of the macro-level policy it has been indicated that there is a need to spread the reading culture and to ensure that spaces dedicated to education in culture and art for young children are available.

The first of these action plans is Item 80. Item 80 consists of the establishment of new children and school libraries and re-designing children sections in public libraries. This will be undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and local city councils. The outcome of this item is to redesign children, school and public libraries in order to make them more children friendly in terms of collection, physical design and technology. The development of the plan will be reported by the end of December, 2015.⁶

Item 112 is concerned with the establishment of new enriched primary school libraries. This will be undertaken by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and local city councils and NGOs. 200 new Z-libraries will be established. The development of the plan will be reported by the end of December, 2015.⁷

Item 113 aims at the rehabilitation of 100 public and school libraries. This will be undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, local city councils and NGOs. 100 public libraries, with priority being given to children's libraries, will be rehabilitated. The development of the plan will be reported by the end of December, 2015.⁸

The next step in the implementation of the investment program is to include libraries in the budget for the following year. So far, 10 libraries have been included in the 2015 budget and construction is underway

⁵ Halk kütüphanelerinin mekansal tasarımları ve yeni gelişmeler [Building designs and new developments in public libraries]. Unpublished briefing notes by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publishing, 2014.

⁶ 10. Kalkınma Planı 2015 Yatırım Programı [10th Development Plan 2015 Investment Program]. Ankara, Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2014 p. 120.

⁷ 10. Kalkınma Planı 2015 Yatırım Programı [10th Development Plan 2015 Investment Program], p. 138.

⁸ 10. Kalkınma Planı 2015 Yatırım Programı [10th Development Plan 2015 Investment Program], p. 138.

The transformation of public libraries project

These plans, which are on the macro-level, have been taken up by the Ministry of Culture, Directorate of Libraries and Publishing and the implementation plan has been put into effect. In the first stage ten libraries have been included in the renovation program.

In order for the program to be carried out in the most effective manner, the Ministry of Culture is cooperating with Marmara University, Department of Information and Records Management. As a result of this cooperation a project that will ensure the redesign or design of public libraries in keeping with the current demands and technology.

The aim of the project is to determine the rules, principles and standards for the construction or renovations of library buildings, including, but not limited to, provincial public libraries, regional public libraries and children libraries.

The scope of the project includes, but is not limited to, the functions of the libraries, the rules, principles and standards to be implemented during renovations and repairs, the architectural features and functions of the library buildings, as well as the equipment to be included, and the qualities to be sought in library services.

In addition, a template for librarians is being prepared in order to determine the current needs and future projections of the library in terms of space, collection, technology, equipment and services.

Thirdly, a conceptual design for the architects, as to how the library functions, has been created. This will ensure that the library meets the needs of the public. The conceptual design indicates where a user can be directed when they come to the library in terms of reading and research areas, computer usage areas, service areas, social and cultural activities areas and personal need areas.

As a result of this project the public libraries in Turkey are undergoing a fundamental transformation. All interested parties, such as Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Development, local councils and universities, are cooperating in the development of the new public library image. This is being done from macro-level planning to the detailed projects. With this new approach there is a need for transformation of strategies, physical space and infrastructure, human resources, information resources and processes and services.

Future libraries will be shaped on three basic dynamics and in the foreseeable future the effect of these dynamics will continue. The first of these dynamics is technology. Developments in information and communication technologies will continue to effect developments in books and librarianship. The second dynamic is social transformation. Social and cultural demands and changes in demographics will influence library services. Libraries will play a central role in urbanization and the new urban concept and will be an important candidate as a main center in which urban services are offered.

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