

# The Legacy of the Ottoman Library in the Libraries of the Turkish Republic

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With the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 not only was the Ottoman Empire but also many of its institutions abolished. Many of the classical Ottoman institutions had ceased to operate effectively and had become increasingly irrelevant to the needs of society. In the early Republican period many of these institutions including law, education, the alphabet – both the written and the spoken language, music etc., were replaced wholesale by European models, but in some cases we see that Ottoman attitudes and practices infiltrated into the new order. Particularly in education was it more difficult to change attitudes, so that while

a European-styled system of education was established, there was a failure to provide it with a comprehensive library system to support it. Today in Turkey the concept of a general library operating for the general public and for research is yet to be adopted. This article attempts to examine the attitudes and practices that have held fast in the library system today as part of our heritage from the last century of the Ottoman Empire. It concludes that the professional work of the modern Turkish librarian and the development of Turkish schools for training librarians are contributing to a change in perception.

## Prologue

In 1923 the Turkish Republic was founded and it was all too easy to accept this event as signalling a complete break with the past. Not since the French Revolution had a state rejected its past in such a dramatic fashion and with such apparent enthusiasm. Alphabet, language and dress reforms were easily observable symbols of this break with the past. This break with the past was so enthusiastically accepted and so dramatic that most observers, including scholars, felt no need to question it. [1] However as the years progressed it became apparent that certain deficiencies in the running of Republican institutions could no longer be solely attributed to lack of funding or trained personnel or insufficient attention by the government, but rather signified the survival of attitudes and behavioural traits from the Ottoman period. While dress, language and manners may have been westernised the mentalities of bureaucrats and state employees often remained distinctly

eastern. Scholars began to note a continuity of attitudes from the Ottoman State to the Turkish Republic and that the deficiencies that had led to the demise of the Ottoman State had survived in the Turkish Republic (Rustow 1965; İcimsöy 1993). When they began to study the institutions of both the Ottoman State and the Turkish Republic, scholars were often startled to find that the administrative structures had remained intact. The modern library system in the Republic of Turkey is no exception to this phenomenon.

## The legacy of Ottoman librarianship

The development of the large library system which existed in Istanbul and throughout the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the reform movement in the mid-nineteenth century did not have a very auspicious beginning. The first Ottomans were nomadic warriors squeezed between the larger Turkish principalities and the Byzantine Empire. As they chose to expand at the expense

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of the Byzantines, they were conquering territory which had no tradition of Islamic scholarship. The Ottoman incursion into Europe in 1354 gave the Ottomans a greater degree of security from the Turkish principalities in Anatolia but culturally distanced the Ottomans from the Islamic heartlands. The Ottomans were forced to create their own religious, educational and cultural institutions.

As we all know, it is easy to convert a church or a monastery into a college; what is more difficult is to find qualified and experienced teachers to ensure that teaching is conducted properly. The Ottomans began to look to foreign lands for teachers who began to arrive, not only from the principalities in Anatolia but also from as far afield as Central Asia and the Arab lands. At first there was a small trickle of scholars but with the capture of Edirne (Adrianople) in 1361, the trickle became a steady stream. The scholars arrived with their books and thus the first collections began to be formed.

Just as important as the books was the tradition of scholarship and teaching which came with these scholars. Compared to the large libraries established in the great Islamic cities in Asia and North Africa in previous centuries, the first Ottoman libraries in the early fifteenth century were extremely modest, the largest collections being a mere 300 manuscripts, but in European terms at that time these could be considered important collections. During the reign of Murad II (1402–1451) the Ottomans annexed most of the Turkish principalities in Western Anatolia, in which were to be found many collections of books, but this did not help them expand the libraries in their own colleges. This was for the simple, if inconvenient, fact that Islamic principle made endowed goods, including books, sacrosanct protected collections so that even the Sultan could not remove the books to the libraries he had established.

With the capture of Istanbul in 1453 the Ottoman State acquired the status of a world empire and was able to attract scholars, and their books, from all over the Islamic world. Mehmed II, the Conqueror, reorganized and added to the college system and personally founded a complex of colleges to which he endowed a sizeable library. The leading statesmen of the day emulated their ruler. In the reign of his son Bayezid II (1481–

1512), Ottoman culture flourished, history and literature were promoted and it is not surprising to find catalogues from this period that demonstrate librarians with analytic minds attempting to organise collections to make them useful to the reader. These catalogues are preceded by introductions which describe the rules of cataloguing, classification and shelving of books at a level of sophistication well in advance of anywhere in Europe (Erünsal 2001).

By the middle of the sixteenth century manuscript libraries had become an integral part of every college no matter how small and cataloguing had reached the apogee of its sophistication, with the detailed description of the books reading like a modern catalogue of manuscripts (Erünsal 2001). At this point originality of thought seems to have ceased, for from this period on, the catalogues stopped developing except in the case of large collections which required additional classification headings. It is as if the Ottoman librarians had decided that the level they had reached was as good as they were likely to need and while in Europe advances began to be made, in the Ottoman Empire nothing innovative in terms of cataloguing, crept into system for the remainder of its existence.

One of the characteristics of the history of the Ottoman library is that while the college library remained the backbone of the Ottoman library system, towards the end of the sixteenth century there appeared some small local libraries which consisted of books of a devotional and mystical nature as well as college textbooks. These were local lending libraries intended to meet the needs of the immediate locality. They were generally small collections of perhaps a hundred manuscripts belonging to a scholar who wished to benefit the locality by allowing his books to be used after his death. Rarely was provision made for care of the collection, the presumption being that the books would remain in his house and someone from his family or the preacher of the local mosque would lend and collect the books on an informal basis (Erünsal 1984).

However, the difficulties inherent in preserving these collections militated against their survival. As they were not housed in a suitable building protected from the dangers of flood, fire and earthquake, it meant that in the long run such small local libraries could not be feasible and

gradually we witness their demise as founders preferred to endow their books to the more secure college libraries where they knew their books stood a much better chance of being preserved.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century all the major cities of the empire were well-endowed with mosques, colleges and institutions associated with religion and culture and some of these colleges also contained a library. The late seventeenth century witnessed the appearance of the independent library which housed large and valuable collections of books which went beyond the strict requirements of the college student. It was this type of library which was to dominate the library system for the next two centuries. While Istanbul could boast of a network of large collections, every town and city throughout the Empire had a library no matter how small. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman library system had matured into a sophisticated network of collections of manuscript works, adequate to meet all the needs of the educational system. To complement this large network of libraries set up primarily for college teachers and students there were dervish convent libraries that housed works of mysticism and literature.

Towards the end of eighteenth century the Ottoman elite began to realize that political reforms were necessary. A series of disastrous wars had shown them that the old military tactics that they employed had served them well into the seventeenth century but Western Europe had overtaken them so that the Ottoman forces were no match for a modern army. Western instructors were brought in to educate the officer class of the navy and the army. The first library with Western language printed books was established at the School of Engineering (1793). Western books were translated into Turkish and printed and once printing was revived it did not restrict itself to military works but produced works of literature and history including world histories. More significantly, Arabic and Persian were no longer seen as the basic educational prerequisites of the Ottoman elite. A knowledge of Western languages, especially French, became the basic skill demanded of the new intelligentsia. By the mid-nineteenth century the Ottoman ruling class had begun to embrace Western European values and had left the old mentality behind them – or at least, so they believed.

For the vast majority of the Muslim population it was business as usual. The first of the reforming sultans, Selim III, had attempted to reform the institutions of State and discovered that the forces of conservatism were too powerful for him and he was overthrown and killed. It was left to his successors through the nineteenth century, to begin building up parallel modern institutions, leaving the older institutions to become increasingly irrelevant. While new schools of engineering, medicine and law, all with their new libraries of modern Western language and Turkish printed books, were founded, the old foundation colleges continued with their medieval curriculum and manuscript libraries. Increasingly irrelevant to the elite, these libraries ceased to play any role in the affairs of State, their collections were becoming antiquarian curiosities, as were the scholars who still continued to consult their books.

Although the foundation libraries had served their purpose well in the past, it was impossible to introduce books from Europe or translations of these books for the simple reason that the librarians could not read foreign languages and even when they were translated into Turkish they would not have understood them. Also the legal status of the foundation libraries meant that they were independent of the state and as charitable foundations they could not be taken over by the state. The result was that if the State wanted libraries with modern books, the State would have to create these libraries itself. The Ottoman foundation libraries could not be modernised; they had to be replaced.

The new Western-oriented elite may have believed that they had abandoned the old mentality, but they proved themselves every bit as pragmatic as the founders of the foundation libraries. The new libraries were founded in the spirit of the very first foundation libraries established in colleges. They had collections of the basic textbooks which would service the college or school to which they were attached. There was no concept of founding these libraries as repositories of knowledge; they were restricted to the curriculum of the new schools. The librarians too, like the classical Ottoman librarian, were chosen from the new elite, but this was now an elite who could read Western languages. They were chosen not because they could understand the needs of the

library and the readers but because they could read the works. The new librarian, like the old, was book-centred not reader-centred.

In the last years of the Empire it was realized that the new library system established in schools and colleges was not serving the new elite as successfully as the old classical library system had served the former elite 150 years previously. The lack of general libraries, or even a single national library, was noted and attempts were made to meet this need. In 1882 the Ottoman General Library (*Kütüphane-i Umumi-i Osmanî*) was established with the purpose of bringing into one collection a copy of all the books published in the Empire and to function as a national deposit (copyright) library. During the period of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki*, 1908–1918), nationalist trends became more pronounced and several libraries, open to the general public and designated “national library” (*Millî Kütüphane*), were founded in Istanbul and the provinces by the regime. However well-intentioned the regime may have been, the two Balkan wars (1912 and 1913) and the First World War (1914–1918) rendered the provision of libraries very much a secondary priority. These were therefore national libraries in name only and were not to flourish. The libraries of the late Ottoman Empire were effectively restricted to servicing teaching institutions, just as they had been in the earliest period.

### *Libraries in the Republic of Turkey*

On the eve of proclamation of the Republic (1923), the libraries that existed in the Ottoman Empire were either collections of manuscripts or specialist libraries attached to institutions. There was no network of general libraries or large university libraries as could be found in Europe. Intellectuals thought of libraries either as collections of valuable manuscripts that had to be preserved as part of the Ottoman heritage or as specialist libraries with foreign books and Turkish translations which would service specialist institutions. This attitude continues to the present day. The concept of a large general library which combines rare books, manuscripts, journals, newspapers, modern books on all subjects, in other words a research library, had little currency. This attitude towards libraries extended to the librarians too. The first librarians in the Republic were not

trained in librarianship, and like their Ottoman counterparts they were scholars who had the necessary skills to read the books in their care. In choosing librarians the sole criterion was their ability to use the books in the collections rather than their ability and willingness to serve the reader.

The legacy of the Ottoman library system in the Republic can be seen in the attitude of the intellectual elite towards libraries and librarians. A library should be a specialist collection to serve the immediate needs of an institution. For many administrators of educational and other institutions the independent Ottoman library still seems to be the model for modern libraries in Turkey: it should consist of a room for storing books, a room for reading them, and a librarian to catalogue and fetch them. The only difference today is in the size of the library – there may be several rooms of books and several reading rooms and numerous librarians, but the concept remains the same. The idea of a large multi-storeyed library with a reference section, large research collections of books and the various functions that are carried out in European libraries is not readily understood in Turkey except for very few state and private university libraries.

As for the librarian, he should be a person who could read the books. The first librarians were either graduates of modern language departments who could read books in English, French or German or graduates of Turkish, Arabic and Persian literature or history, who could read manuscripts and works in the Arabic script. It was not until the 1950's that a Department of Librarianship was opened. Their graduates however were unable to make progress against this entrenched attitude for a long time (Çakın 2000; Keseroğlu 2003). [2]

Libraries, of course, are there to service the needs of the institution and there is very little point in them providing services that are not required, and therefore not used.

### *University and college libraries*

The Ottoman college was set up to train scholars in the Islamic sciences and were, in Western terms, a combination of a law library and a divinity library. There were basic textbooks to be studied and reference materials to throw light on how the

core knowledge was arrived at. Modern Turkish universities also tend to train rather than to educate. Each course will have a textbook and require the undergraduate to go no further than it. Postgraduates may be required to read a little more widely. The concept of requiring an undergraduate to read widely for a single course or to undertake research, no matter how basic, exists only exceptionally in very few departments. [3] What research facilities exist in the libraries are seen as the sanctuary of the postgraduates and the staff; undergraduates are not welcome there.

It is only when universities start educating rather than training that the need for a large university library will be felt. The problem facing many universities is that they cannot educate students without a large library, but as long as they are merely training students with textbooks and examining them on a limited area of knowledge then there will be no need for this type of library. In this regard the usual modern Turkish library is no better conceptually than its Ottoman counterpart.

There is also confusion about the function of a library. University libraries are seen sometimes as research libraries and sometimes as an adjunct to a training institution. Thus in a university library which is run as a research library a single copy of each necessary book will be found. The idea that undergraduates may be required to read a particular work and that 5 or 10 copies of this work should be available simply does not exist. In this regard the Ottoman library was superior in that multiple copies of the most popular texts were often made available (Erünsal 1988).

### *Public libraries*

The public library system in Turkey is in distress. Suffering from understaffing, underfunding and overuse, it is surprising that it continues to function at all. Many public libraries are mainly used by high school students to do their homework with students occupying the tables and chairs rather than consulting the reference materials. The public library provides them with a relatively comfortable environment to read their textbooks and do their homework. It is therefore impossible to gauge how successfully these libraries work. If they were not occupied by high school students,

would the general public use them? The concept of libraries promoting themselves as essential public services does not exist, and even if it did and the public libraries could provide reading space, we cannot know how the public would react.

### *Literacy and publishing*

At this point another important issue is worth mentioning, that is the attitude of governments in Turkey in not allocating enough money for developing collections and providing personnel (İcimsoy 2007). This raises the question of literacy in modern Turkey. Modern Turkey can boast a relatively high level of literacy for a Middle Eastern country but there is, compared to northern Europe, not much of the habit of reading (Yılmaz 1993). When books were published in the later period of the Ottoman Empire the print run would characteristically be two to three thousand copies. Today print runs are still this size, with the exception of some rare publishing phenomena, usually a maximum of 3,000 copies.

While literacy in the Ottoman Empire was quite low, the literate population had acquired the habit of reading and we can be sure that the mosque and *tekke* (dervish convent) libraries were well frequented. For a variety of reasons, most probably the availability of other forms of entertainment, the reading habit has diminished among the general population and we do not know how great the demand for public libraries would be if they could be made available to the public.

### *The Western library model*

The Ottoman libraries were able to evolve to meet the needs of their users until the period of reforms when the Ottomans looked to the West and founded new institutions on Western models. However these libraries with western books were not western libraries functioning on western models, they were Ottoman libraries with western-type books. This has created some confusion in modern Turkey: it is felt that because a library has foreign books it is like a foreign library, when in fact it is a library that is functioning conceptually very much like a classic Ottoman library. Today there is little awareness of what a modern library should offer and therefore little demand for its services (Keseroğlu 2003). [4]

The Ottoman concept of what a library is still prevails in today's Turkey. In this age of information technology, libraries with a huge reference section with access to knowledge throughout the world should be the norm, but unfortunately this is as yet to be realized. However, very few special subject and university (state and private) libraries, with the extensive use of electronic sources, provide commercial and academic information for their users (Arslantekin 2006; Kirlidog 2007).

### *Foundation libraries*

Many problems facing foundation libraries still persist in today's library system. Towards the end of Ottoman Empire complaints about the library system were being voiced constantly. In the last 50 years of the Ottoman Empire there was far more criticism of the poor state of the library system than there is today. Newspapers continually complained about the libraries, and officials, even at the highest level of government, were aware that a problem existed. The poor state of the libraries was also noted by foreign scholars and travellers (Roper 1998). These complaints can be divided into six areas: firstly, the lack of any single institution responsible for all libraries. Secondly there were continual complaints about the scattered nature of the libraries which frustrated any attempt to compare and collate manuscripts. This leads to the third area of criticism, namely the lack of a union catalogue of all foundation libraries in Istanbul. The remaining areas of criticism all arose from the lack of funding: the irregular and unannounced opening times which was a result of the poor salaries allocated to librarians and lastly, the poor condition of the books.

In 1904 it was reported that the underlying problem was the fact that the two ministries, Education and Foundations, each had different, and sometimes conflicting, interests in the foundation libraries:

The main reason for the foundation libraries being in a pitiful condition is the system of shared responsibility. In one aspect, being foundations, the salary of the librarians, the cost of repair of the library buildings, the repair of books and bindings is the responsibility of the Ministry of Charitable Foundations. The other aspect is that responsibility for supervising and inspecting the running of the library belongs to the Ministry of Education. It is this twin

responsibility which causes the problem. For instance, when a library is closed by the Ministry of Charitable Foundations to carry out repair work, it becomes impossible for the Ministry of Education to inspect it, and thus it effectively loses control of the library (Erünsal 1990, BOA.ŞD.Evkaf 126/4, BOA.MF.KTV.3/11 and 3/12).

In response to the criticism, attempts were made to introduce a single agency responsible for all libraries. However the period 1910–1924 were traumatic years witnessing the demise of the Ottoman Empire and it would have been very surprising had any attempt at reorganising the library system been successful. In any event all attempts were doomed to failure.

### *The lack of a national policy*

In Turkey this lack of a national policy towards libraries still persists today. There is no single agency responsible for formulating and implementing a policy for all libraries as libraries are attached to a variety of administrative institutions. All school libraries, for example, are directly controlled by the Ministry of Education, while university libraries are the responsibility of the Council for Higher Education (YÖK). Most of the manuscript libraries and all public libraries are controlled by the Ministry of Culture while a few manuscript libraries are the responsibility of the General Directorate for Pious Foundations. Other specialised libraries are under the control of other ministries. There are also public libraries under the control of larger municipalities, but their number is very few. This variety of responsible agencies need not in itself be a problem if there was a high level of cooperation among them. However, there is little, if any, communication among them. In terms of a uniform policy towards libraries Turkey is no further on than it was a hundred years ago, and a lot more backward than it was two hundred and fifty years ago.

Another problem of the foundation library system was the location of small collections. Many of the smaller donations were located in mosques and dervish convents scattered throughout Istanbul, and even if there was a librarian in attendance it often meant a long walk to consult a single work and often no possibility of comparing two manuscripts. Smaller collections located in buildings that were not purpose-built libraries often deteriorated due to unsuitable storage conditions

(BOA.MF.KTV.3/91). In 1861 A. Fâris al-Shidyaq noted that many scholars were wasting time and energy walking throughout the city from one collection to another. He recommended that all the small collections should be transferred to a single location in the centrally located Nuruosmaniye district of Istanbul and that a librarian be appointed and paid 500 piastres a month, but on condition that he be present in the library from morning to evening on those days when the library was to be open to the public (Roper 1998). Münif Pasha also pointed out the same problem in his report submitted to the Grand Vizier Âli Pasha, in 1870 (Cunbur 1964).

In terms of gathering small and medium-sized collections to a single location today much has been achieved with the transfer of many collections to the Süleymaniye Library which is now the largest repository of Islamic manuscripts in the world. However many small collections still remain, both in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey in scattered places. One continuing problem with these smaller libraries maintaining separate existences is that despite the best efforts of the librarians to preserve their collections they are at loss to do anything about the danger of fire and flood and, without an efficient security system, to prevent theft. Therefore, the gathering of smaller collections into the Süleymaniye Library must be continued. The provincial towns may lose cherished sources of pride but the libraries will be much better looked after in the central location provided by the Süleymaniye. Scholarship also would be much better served when all manuscripts could be used in a single location. Similarly, a recent prototype attempt was made by the University of Istanbul to gather together the collections of the libraries of departments and institutions within the Faculty of Letters. Unifying the catalogues of these libraries is still going on.

### *Union catalogues*

Yet another problem for the user of foundation libraries was the lack of any union catalogue (Çavdar 1995). Foundation libraries did have catalogues, but like their sophisticated predecessors from the sixteenth century, they were drawn up primarily to audit the contents of a library, rather than to facilitate the reader in his search for a

book. Even in the nineteenth century the catalogue was still an inventory of books rather than a modern catalogue. The only innovation was that in the last quarter of the century the catalogues of all of the Istanbul libraries were printed with location numbers, indicating that they were intended as aids for the reader to search for a book rather than as an inventory. The scattered nature of the collections in Istanbul created a need for a union catalogue of all the Istanbul libraries. Two attempts were made, but neither of them was completed, the third promising attempt floundering in the course of the First World War (Erünsal 2001).

In the period of the Republic (1923 onwards) various attempts were made to produce printed catalogues of manuscripts in special subjects such as history and literature in foundation libraries but there was no attempt at preparing a union catalogue until 1978 when a first fascicule appeared. Since then another 22 fascicules have emerged from the press. So far 18,953 books have been catalogued, but as there are more than 500,000 manuscripts to be catalogued we can say that in the last 25 years we have hardly begun this huge task (Aynur 2002). No attempt has ever been made to produce an electronic union catalogue for current printed materials.

### *Hours of opening*

At the beginning of the twentieth century a constant complaint about libraries was that a potential reader could not be certain that any given library would be open when he arrived, and even if it were open he could not rely on it remaining open long enough to get useful work done. Today the situation is very much improved. One can rely on libraries being open on weekdays. However the opening hours of many libraries, for example public libraries, is Monday to Friday, nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening and in some cases Saturdays as well, if there is enough personnel. While this may ensure that the librarians have good personal timetable, it is not convenient for many readers who have to work throughout the period the library is open. University libraries too often show greater consideration for the librarian than the students. Many are shut on Saturdays, most are shut on Sundays and some libraries are only open nine o'clock to six in

the evening on weekdays. [5] Keeping a library open only during the times of day when a student has classes seems rather pointless.

### *Librarian salaries*

In terms of salaries the situation of the librarian has improved dramatically. A librarian no longer lives in penury, but he is still paid less than, say, a schoolteacher. The low pay offered to librarians does very little for the status of the profession.

### *The condition of collections*

At this point the zeal and honesty with which the librarians both in the Ottoman and Republican periods have looked after the collections in their care should be noted. In the Fatih Library, for example, from a collection of 2,500 works a mere 50 books were lost over a period of 200 years. Today, despite low salaries and the resultant low status of their profession, librarians go to great lengths to preserve what they regard as their heritage and a national treasure.

In another respect there is a very positive development. At the beginning of the twentieth century the complaint was that books in some of the foundation libraries were in very bad condition. Several scholars and some reports complained of the deteriorating conditions of the books in these collections. For example a certain scholar, Nuri Efendi, in a report dated 1900, noted:

Our libraries are in pitiful condition. Some collections have been transferred to other locations and are no longer accessible while the doors of some libraries have been locked and are sealed. As for those that are open to the public, they are so filthy that you are hard pressed to find somewhere to sit. When a book arrives your heart sinks seeing its condition: it is covered in years' of dust and looks as if it is about to fall apart (BOA.Yıldız Evrakı 14/2045/126/10).

This can no longer be said to be the case. The Süleymaniye Library has a department dedicated to the repair of manuscripts and is gradually restoring the whole collection to its former condition. Furthermore, the library has started a digitisation project to digitise the manuscript collection and started giving digital copies to readers instead of original manuscripts (Küçük 2003).

### *Library cooperation*

There would have been a further complaint at the beginning of the twentieth century had scholars only been aware of the concept of cooperation between libraries and the interlibrary loan system. There was little cooperation between libraries and no interlibrary loan. The situation is that this concept has still to arrive in Turkey and as of now there is still no interlibrary loan system. Indeed it has been observed that even within the faculties of the same university there is often no cooperation between librarians and libraries (Çakın 2000). [6] Let alone one university library sending photocopies of articles to other university libraries, some of them refuse to allow students from other universities to use their facilities. In actual fact, though, an unofficial system of interlibrary loan has grown up on the initiative of some librarians so that some universities (say four or five in Istanbul and three or four in Ankara) do lend books between institutions. However this is done more or less unofficially, on a limited scale and without overall regulation, and mostly for the benefit of university staff and post-graduate students. Moreover librarians showed themselves willing to cooperate and made several attempts to prepare a union catalogue of scholarly periodicals in the Istanbul libraries (Kütüphanelerarası 1983), and in 1971 there appeared the first fascicle of a union catalogue of periodicals in the university libraries of Istanbul (Baysal 1971). However when faced with the lethargy and indifference of the university authorities, the librarians, naturally, gave up (Çakın 2000).

Furthermore there is no central interloan library to lend books to the university libraries on the model of the Boston Spa library in Yorkshire in UK. Boston Spa does not have its own readers, its clients are the universities throughout the UK which order books for the benefit of their own readers. This is an extremely cost-effective way of buying specialist publications which are, in their nature, extremely expensive. As for Turkey the lack of such an institution results in a great waste of scarce resources for buying books. Far from not having a national interloan library we find that expensive journals and monographs are bought by more than one faculty in a university, and in some cases even a single faculty has had more than one subscription to the same journal (Keseroğlu 2003).

There have been several attempts to address this issue in the last two decades. After the military intervention of 1980, new arrangements were carried out for the reorganisation of public institutions. For example, the Council for Higher Education was established in 1982 to bring the universities together under the control of a state agency, as they had formerly been independent organisations before the 1980 intervention. Although various criticisms have arisen over the establishment of the Council, as it was felt it would destroy the cherished independence of the universities, it proved useful by establishing a documentation centre that encouraged academic research by supplying necessary documents to academics. In order to accomplish this, the Centre subscribed to 273 national and 6,267 foreign academic journals (Arslantekin 2006; Kirlidog 2007). This enabled university libraries to devote their budgets mainly to the acquisition of books and other materials, and not to worry about journals. The Centre was responsible for conducting photocopying services from its collection upon request and providing a reference collection in a variety of languages. It was also conducting searches through various databases for researchers and providing journal articles. It also preserved and made available postgraduate theses from Turkish Universities and maintained a bibliographic database of these theses. Although well-intended, the economic difficulties the country encountered created difficulties for the Centre, as when its subscriptions to most journals were cancelled between 1994–1995 in the wake of a financial crisis.

A protocol was signed between the Council for Higher Education and the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for transferring the duty of supplying documents with the exception of maintaining a database for university theses, to a newly formed ULAKBİM (National Academic Data Processing Centre). Within this organisation a new centre called UBİM (National Information Centre) was established and took over the responsibilities once carried out by the Council for Higher Education Documentation Centre. The title of the UBİM was changed in 1999 and a world famous Turkish mathematician's name was given to this institution. The title became *Cahit Arf Bilgi Merkezi* (Cahit Arf Information Centre).

TÜBİTAK was established in 1963 to promote research on pure and applied sciences in Turkey. It is a governmental institution and has its own budget. To accomplish TÜBİTAK's objectives, the Turkish Scientific and Technological Documentation Centre (TURDOK) was established in 1966. It started collecting scientific and technological information through foreign sources and disseminated them. It also started publishing bibliographies, union catalogues and specialized abstracts in various technological subjects. It also issued newsletters reporting on scientific and technological meetings all over the world. Work was carried out manually during these years. Online data access was introduced in 1985. The two institutions, TURDOK and the Council for Higher Education Documentation Centre, which functioned separately during these years, merged in 1996 to function more effectively.

#### *Library collection size*

As for the size of collections we see that in the classical Ottoman library that the collection never exceeded 6,000 books. However, 6,000 books were more than enough to meet the needs of the scholars and students who were studying law and/or theology. The Ottoman college system was there to learn, understand and teach law and/or theology not to research or to change the understanding of the subject. Therefore the collections of foundation libraries were totally adequate for the Ottomans.

Today, the same attitude seems to prevail. Expanding university library collections does not seem to be a priority in most of the universities. Most Turkish university libraries have, in international terms, rather poor collections and indeed there are many universities with fewer than 40,000 books in their libraries (Çakın 2000). However the scarcity of books and periodicals, especially in the provincial university libraries, has been mitigated by the Internet. Many libraries subscribe to electronic journals (Çakın 2000) [7] which are especially useful for scientists keeping up with the latest developments in their field. One suspects, however, that these journals are intended for the use of the staff and that undergraduates are not encouraged to use these sources. In most cases, language barriers (mainly the lack of English) are important obstacles for the use of these sources.

## Epilogue

As we have seen, today, many of the complaints raised about Ottoman libraries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are still valid: restricted opening times, lack of cooperation, poor collections, lack of funds to buy books or pay librarians a decent wage, the lack of any single institution responsible for all libraries in the same kind, the scattered nature of collections and the lack of union catalogues. But while the Ottomans recognised these faults, today in Turkey there is a general lack of importance given to libraries on the part of university authorities and a general lack of awareness among the public of the value of libraries. However in one respect there is cause for optimism. With the establishment of Departments of Librarianship the profession is slowly gaining power and showing initiatives. Librarians cooperate among themselves and show initiative which is truly remarkable when we observe how their profession is treated by the authorities. The public perception of the librarian may change as Departments of Librarianship and Departments of Archival Studies are beginning to adopt the title of departments of Information and Records Management.

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## Notes

1. This statement, whilst true in general terms, needs to be qualified. Recently some scholars have observed the survival of Ottoman institutions albeit in Republican garb: see for example Ihsanoğlu 2004; Silverstein 2003; Heper 2000.
2. Throughout Turkey, of the staff employed in university libraries, a mere 28% have been educated in university departments of Librarianship. In Istanbul University library, of the 73 librarians only 23 are graduates of the Department of Librarianship.
3. To be fair, we should point out that there are some universities which offer an education comparable to that offered at prestigious colleges in the Europe and United States, but of the 53 state universities in Turkey more than half have little or no research facilities in their libraries.

4. From research carried out by Hasan Keseroğlu we learn that even in Istanbul University 67 out of 115 departmental, faculty and other libraries do not provide their readers with photocopying services.
5. This information comes from recent research through the Web sites of Turkish university libraries [17/01/2007].
6. Hasan Keseroğlu also complains that he could not get the cooperation of all librarians in Istanbul University libraries for the union catalogue of periodicals he had prepared. (s. 53)
7. An example of this is the Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS) which cooperates in making joint subscriptions to electronic journals at a reduced price.

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