Türkiye'de Üniversite Kütüphaneleri: Geçmişten Günümüze - Kapsamlı Bir Analiz

University Libraries in Türkiye: Past to Present - A Comprehensive Analysis

Güler DEMİR, Hasan Sacit KESEROĞLU

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Öz

Üniversite kütüphaneleri, üyelerine çok çeşitli temel destek ve hizmetler sağlayarak akademik ortamda yaşamsal bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu kütüphaneler, araştırma materyalleri ve akademik kaynaklardan en son teknolojiye ve uzman personele erişime kadar, hem fiziksel alanlarında hem de çevrimiçi olarak, bir öğrenme, işbirliği ve yenilik kültürünü geliştirme işlevleri ile de ön plana çıkmaktadır. Güçlü ve gelişen bir bilgi ekonomisini desteklemek için gerekli kaynakları ve araçları sağlayarak kendi ülkelerinin kalkınmasına katkıda bulunmaları beklendiğinden, önemleri akademik ortamın ötesine geçmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki üniversite kütüphanelerinin yaşadığı durum ve zorlukların ayrıntılı bir analizini sağlamaktır. Çalışmada betimleme ve belgesel tarama yöntemleri kullanılmış, yerli ve yabancı geniş bir literatür ile resmi birincil belge ve ortamlardan elde edilen veriler analiz edilerek yorumlanmıştır. Çalışmanın kapsamı, geçmişten günümüze Türkiye üniversite kütüphanelerinin tarihsel, yönetsel, yasal ve teknolojik sorunlarıyla belirlenmiştir. Çalışmanın sistemli bir bütünlük kazanması için Türkiye'deki üniversite kütüphanelerine doğrudan ve dolaylı etkisi olduğu düşünülen boyutlar çeşitli başlıklar altında gruplandırılmıştır. Çalışmanın kapsamını oluşturan bu başlıklar, "Mevzuat, organizasyon ve idari yapı"; "Politika, yönetmelikler ve standartlar"; "Bütçe, bina, derme yönetimi, insan kaynakları, kullanıcılar ve diğer ilgili konular"; "İşbirlikleri" ile "Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileri" biçimindedir. Çalışma, tarihsel bağlamı da göz önünde bulundurarak, bu kütüphanelerin geçmişte karşılaştıkları ve günümüzde de karşılaşmaya devam ettikleri sorunlara ilişkin kapsamlı bir anlayış sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırmanın bulguları, üniversite kütüphanelerinin geçmişte karşılaştığı zorlukların henüz etkili bir şekilde ele alınamadığını ve çözüme kavuşturulamadığını göstermektedir. Çalışmanın, üniversite kütüphanelerini hem tarihsel bağlamda hem de günümüzdeki durumu ile değerlendirmeye yönelik yöntemsel, çok yönlü ve çok boyutlu yaklaşımı özgün bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Çalışmada uygulanan kapsamlı ve derinlemesine değerlendirme süreci, bu alandaki önceki çalışmalardan ayrılan özelliğidir. Bu yaklaşımın, üniversite kütüphanelerine bütüncül bir bakış açısı sağlayarak, genel performanslarının daha ayrıntılı ve doğru bir şekilde değerlendirilmesine olanak tanıyacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, üniversite kütüphanesi, devlet üniversitesi, vakıf üniversitesi, özel üniversite, yükseköğretim, mevzuat.*

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University Libraries in Türkiye:
Past to Present - A Comprehensive Analysis

Güler DEMİR* , Hasan Sacit KESEROĞLU**

Abstract

University libraries play a vital role in the academic landscape by providing a wide range of essential support and services to their members. From research materials and academic resources to access to cutting-edge technology and expert staff, these libraries are at the forefront of fostering a culture of learning, collaboration, and innovation both within their physical spaces and online. Their importance extends beyond the academic environment, as they are also expected to contribute to the development of their respective countries by providing the resources and tools necessary to support a strong and thriving knowledge economy. The objective of this research is to provide a detailed analysis of the situation and challenges experienced by university libraries in Türkiye. This study utilized descriptive and documentary scanning methods to analyze and interpret data obtained from a wide range of both domestic and foreign literature, as well as official primary documents and media. The scope of the study was determined by historical, managerial, legal, and technological problems faced by Türkiye's university libraries. To ensure systematic integrity, the study grouped various dimensions thought to have a direct or indirect impact on university libraries in Türkiye under different headings. These headings, which constitute the scope of the study, include: "Legislation, organization, and administrative structure"; "Policy, regulations, and standards"; "Budget, building, collection management, human resources, user-related matters, and other relevant issues"; "Collaborations", and "Information and communication technologies". By taking into account the historical context, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the issues that these libraries have faced and continue to face in the present day. The findings of this research indicate that the challenges encountered by university libraries in the past have yet to be effectively addressed and resolved. The study's methodical, multifaceted, and multidimensional approach to evaluating university libraries, both in the historical context and current situation, presents a unique perspective. The comprehensive and in-depth evaluation process applied in this study is unparalleled and distinguishes it from prior studies in the field. This approach provides a holistic view of university libraries, allowing for a more detailed and accurate assessment of their overall performance.

Keywords: *Ottoman Empire, Republic of Türkiye, university library, state university, foundation university, private university, higher education, legislations.*

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Introduction

Universities are institutions that play a vital role in educating and preparing the workforce required to meet the needs of a country. They play a significant role in a country's progress and development in economic, educational, cultural, social, and intellectual aspects. University libraries are integral to the development of universities and their countries. Aside from imparting education, universities have a responsibility to preserve and promote their countries' cultural heritage, as well as universal values like democracy, equality, and human rights. University libraries are crucial in fulfilling universities' objectives and responsibilities. The Turkish higher education system and university libraries, particularly in public universities, face issues such as limited budgets and resources, infrastructure and technological inadequacy, lack of common policy, and a shortage of qualified personnel. Difficulties in raising young people pose challenges for Türkiye's large youth population. This study aims to investigate the current state and issues faced by university libraries in Türkiye, taking a comprehensive and theoretical approach from the past to the present. Hence, this paper presents a comprehensive analysis of university libraries in Türkiye, identifies the root causes of their issues, and proposes solutions in this context.

Methodology

For this research, we employed qualitative description and document analysis techniques. Kaptan (1995, p. 59) defines the description method as a process of providing an explanation or depiction of something to help someone understand it better. These studies aim to describe and explain various objects, entities, institutions, and groups, to understand what they are. They try to find answers to the question of what these are. These studies aim to accurately depict the current situations, conditions, and characteristics as they truly exist. Descriptive research also aims to explain the relationship between current and past events. Studies based on qualitative description usually provide comprehensive summaries of a phenomenon or event. Such studies tend to be methodologically eclectic. Qualitative descriptive study is the preferred method when accurate and factual descriptions of phenomena is needed (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 334). Besides, document analysis method is defined by Bowen (2009, p. 27) as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge". In qualitative research, social events and phenomena are understood by evaluating them within their environment. In this framework, the aim is to draw conclusions from collected data and make inferences by linking these conclusions. One can use this method to study people's lives, behaviors, institutions, social movements, and their interrelationships (Uçak, 2000, p. 257).

In this study, the evaluation of universities and university libraries as institutions is conducted within the conditions of Türkiye. The study drew its data primarily from the domestic Library and Information Science literature, and to a lesser extent from other disciplines. Additionally, sources like the official website of the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkish: TÜİK, Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu), the website of the Council of Higher Education (Turkish: YÖK, Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu), and official government reports were used to provide quantitative and statistical information when necessary.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- How did universities in Türkiye evolve during the Ottoman Empire and the Republican period, and what were the factors that influenced their development?
- What is the present status of universities in Türkiye, and what challenges do they face?
- What was the role of university libraries in the development of universities during the Ottoman Empire and the Republican period in Türkiye, and what factors contributed to their growth and caused difficulties?
- What is the current status of university libraries in Türkiye, and what problems do they face?
- Is the legislative status of university libraries in Türkiye sufficient?
- What is the organizational and administrative structure of university libraries in Türkiye, and what are the problems that arise within this context?
- What is the current status of university libraries in Türkiye in terms of policies, regulations, and standards, and what are the problems they face?
- How are university libraries in Türkiye managing their budgets, buildings, collections, human resources, user issues, and related matters? What problems do they face in these areas?
- What is the level of cooperation and communication between university libraries in Türkiye and other institutions and organizations? Is the current level sufficient, and what are the problems if any?
- Do university libraries in Türkiye have adequate information and communication technologies, and what are their problems and shortcomings in this regard?

- Are there any differences between the libraries of foundation and public universities in Türkiye? If so, what are these differences and how significant are they? What can be done to address these differences?

Historical background of universities in Türkiye

In 717, the first university in the East was built in Harran, which is located approximately 20 kilometers away from Türkiye's current border with Syria in Upper Mesopotamia (Çetiner Özdemir et al., 2022, pp. 33-34; Harran Üniversitesi, 2023). Meanwhile, the first university in the West was constructed in Bologna, Italy in 1088 (Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna, 2024). The University of Berlin was established with the initiative of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who played a vital role in shaping the modern conception of the university. His influence on the education system in Türkiye will be explained in detail later, but it is worth noting that it became particularly evident in the mid-twentieth century.

The issues faced by university libraries in Türkiye today are complex and intertwined with the country's history. Education in Türkiye was mainly provided in madrasas until the 15th century. With Western influence, colleges began to open in the 18th century and Darülfünun, a higher education institution, was established in 1863. This institution persisted through different phases of development until 1933 (Namal and Karakök, 2011, p. 27). The Darülfünun initially only admitted male students. A separate institution was created in 1914 for female education, Inas Darülfununu. In 1919 (Düzcü, 2015, pp. 170-171), it merged with the all-male Darülfünun to save money. Mixed-sex education was opposed, and the school closed in 1921 (Türkoğlu, 2023, pp. 1758, 1762). The closure and reopening of Darülfünun led to educational reform ideas. The Turkish Republic saw many political, social, and cultural changes, along with revolutionary reforms led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In 1924, Türkiye passed the Law on Unity in Education, which made all educational institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Education. Madrasas were closed, and all books gathered. In 1928, Islam was no longer the official religion of the state. This move ensured Türkiye's status as a secular polity. In 1937, Türkiye was declared a republic (Öztürk, n. d., pp. 1-2). In 1928, Türkiye replaced the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet as per the "Law on Turkish Letters". This required all newspapers and magazines to use the new alphabet, and at that time, Türkiye had low literacy rates, with only 10% of the population being literate and women having a literacy rate of only 3% (Demirtaş, 2008, pp. 156, 161-162). Türkiye launched a national literacy campaign in 1929 that established National Schools to educate the public about the new alphabet. Despite decreasing participation, literacy rates increased, and the schools helped create infrastructure for education to be provided in People's Houses and Rooms. These schools, along with other initiatives, aimed to rapidly increase literacy rates in Türkiye (Bayraktutan, 2020, pp. 119, 146, 147; Keseroğlu, 1989, pp. 104-105, 111-114, 127; Keseroğlu, 2022, p. 505). Visuals like pictures were used in the past to motivate low-literate societies. These images showed healthy schoolchildren, women in literacy classes, and co-ed village schools where girls and boys studied together (Dalkıran, 2020, p. 11). As can be seen from the information provided, these efforts established the necessary structure for modern education in Türkiye.

Darülfünun, the first university in Türkiye, faced problems and needed reform. Professor Albert Malche prepared a report for the reform. Darülfünun was closed on July 31, 1933, and replaced by Istanbul University on August 1, 1933. Istanbul University played a vital role in establishing a modern higher education system in Türkiye (Namal ve Karakök, 2011, p. 27). Ankara University's Faculty of Language, History, and Geography (DTCF) opened on February 9, 1935. It produced its first graduates in 1940 (Korkmaz, 2003, p. 271). It's a fact - just like Istanbul University, some of the faculties of Ankara University were established under the confident and determined leadership of Atatürk. His unwavering vision and commitment to education were instrumental in shaping the academic landscape of Türkiye, and we can still see the impact of his legacy today. It's truly inspiring to think about the lasting influence he had and the incredible opportunities that his contributions have provided for generations of students and scholars.

German scientists made significant contributions to the 1933 University Reform, which came into effect after the report on higher education in Türkiye prepared by Albert Malche, invited by Atatürk in 1932. In the same year, the Higher Agricultural Institute (known as Yüksek Ziraat Enstitüsü in Turkish) and the faculties of Ankara University were established in Ankara. These institutions made significant contributions to various fields such as science, art, law, education, administration, politics, and architecture (Karakütük, 2016, p. xv). Istanbul Technical University was founded in 1944, and Ankara University was established in 1946 by transforming the Higher Agricultural Institute.

In 1933, Ankara University and the Higher Agricultural Institute were established in Ankara, with significant contribution from German scientists. They made noteworthy contributions to various fields. Istanbul Technical University was founded in 1944, and Ankara University was established in 1946 by transforming the Higher Agricultural Institute (Peker and Taşkın, 2017, p. 83; Sargın, 2007, p. 137). From 1950, universities in Istanbul and Ankara increased. Between 1955 and 1957, universities were established in other cities, including Trabzon, Izmir, Erzurum, and Ankara. This period marked a rapid industrialization, with significant population growth and migration from rural to urban areas. Young people were concerned about job opportunities due to the location of universities in cities (Sargın, 2007, p. 137).

France, Germany, Austria, and the United States contributed to the development of universities in Türkiye. French influence at Darülfünun was gradually replaced by German influence. French language and culture had a significant impact on the institution during 19th and mid-20th centuries. Austria and Germany influenced the development of medical schools (Arap, 2010, pp. 7-8). Madrasas served as a counterpart to universities in the Ottoman period. Later, the Ottoman Empire adopted a French-style model that emphasized vocational training, followed by the Humboldt model,

which was research-oriented and named after Wilhelm von Humboldt who founded the university (Babaoğlu, 2021, 257-258; Giorgetti, 2019, pp. 433-436). Humboldt, a linguistic philosopher, founded modern universities. He believed the government should fund independent universities focused on scientific research. The US model influenced universities in the 1950s, possessing necessary infrastructure and opening up to the public, unlike the elitist Humboldt model (Tosun, 2015; Tekeli, 2019, p. 290). European countries influenced the establishment of universities such as Darülfünun, and later the United States joined them.

In Türkiye, education is divided into Formal and Non-Formal types. Formal education is provided at schools with programs designed for specific age groups and levels, including preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education (Millî Eğitim Temel Kanunu, 1973; Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2023a). Before 1981, Turkish higher education had five institution types (Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2018):

- Universities
- Academies affiliated to the Ministry of Education
- Most two-year vocational schools and conservatories are under the Ministry of National Education, with some under other ministries
- Three-year educational institutes affiliated to the Ministry of National Education
- The Non-Formal Higher Education Institution (Turkish: YAYKUR, Yaygın Yükseköğretim Kurumu) that provides correspondence education

During the 1960s-70s, the higher education system grew rapidly but suffered from a lack of central planning, leading to corruption and failure. The 1981 reform brought all institutions under the Council of Higher Education, transforming academies into universities and educational institutes into faculties. The Council of Higher Education is now responsible for all higher education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2018).

Current status and problems of universities in Türkiye

Türkiye's population in 2022 was 85.3 million, with 15.2% being aged 15-24, higher than all EU member states. In 2021-2022, 44.7% of students enrolled in higher education, with 8.3 million students. 3.2 million attended public universities, 671,437 attended foundation universities, and 9,162 studied at foundation vocational schools (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2023b). Türkiye had a population of 84,680,273 in 2021 and 85,279,553 in 2022. Around 7% of the population had higher education by 2022 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2024). Although there are limited official records on universities prior to 1984, available literature suggests that Darülfünun was the only university during the early years of the Republic. However, it was closed in 1933 by the decision of the Grand

National Assembly of Türkiye, and later replaced by Istanbul University (Hız, 2010, p. 60; Kömürlü, 2019, pp. 37-39, 41-42)

Between 1933 and 1946, higher education institutions expanded across Türkiye, with Istanbul Technical University established in 1944 and Ankara University in 1946 (Kömürlü, 2019, pp. 38-39). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership and encouragement were crucial in establishing faculties of Law, Agriculture, Language and History, Science and Medicine before the founding of Ankara University. In the 1950s, only seven universities were established in Türkiye. Since only 5% of the population could read and write (Toplu, 1992a, p. 29), this number was considered a success. Istanbul University, Istanbul Technical University, Ankara University, Karadeniz Technical University, Ege University, Atatürk University, and Middle East Technical University were the first universities established in Türkiye (Kömürlü, 2019, p. 41). After the 1960s, efforts to establish new universities continued, and the number of universities increased to 19 by 1978 (Hız, 2010, p. 60). From 1945 to 1960, Türkiye underwent political changes that resulted in rapid progress. The education system also saw significant changes during that period (Özkiraz & Arslanel, 2015, pp. 39-40). However, the number of universities increased slowly until the late 1970s. It surged in the last two decades of the 20th century, with 66 universities established between 2001 and 2009 (Aslan, 2012, p. 345). From 1924 to 1946, Türkiye had only three universities. By 1978, the number had increased to 19, but they lacked the necessary quality by world standards. Amendments were made to the legislation to improve the infrastructure of the universities (Çağatay, 1990, p. 1217). This period was marked by the economic depression in the United States and the conditions of World War II, which led to hardships.

The number of universities in Türkiye gradually grew from 1933 to 1982 with some halts due to internal and external factors. Before 1982, there were 19 universities, and the 1970s political and economic turmoil harmed them. Between 1987 and 1992, the number of universities increased significantly to 53, with the addition of 24 new universities (23 state universities and one foundation university) (Günay & Günay, 2011, p. 2). The Higher Education Law No. 2547 in Türkiye has been heavily debated since its adoption in 1981 (Toplu, 1992a, p. 30). YÖK has been criticized for its centralist and uniformist nature, prioritizing quantity over quality, and inadequate accreditation and quality measurements. The 1990s ideological polarization also significantly impacted universities (TÜSİAD, 2003, pp. 16, 18, 19, 23).

The data presented below illustrates the changes that have taken place in higher education institutions from 1984 to 2023 (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2018):

There was no significant increase in the number of public and private universities between 1984 and 1989. In 1992, 21 new universities were established outside of major cities as part of a plan to spread higher education. Before this, only two out of nine

universities were located outside of Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir. The number of privately funded universities more than doubled after 1996-1997. According to Arap (2010, p. 13), the formation of 21 universities in 1992 in areas beyond major cities was a strategy to expand the presence of universities throughout the country. This rapid increase in the number of universities within a year could be attributed to the concern over the failure in implementing policies in the previous years. Between 2000 and 2009, foundation universities increased by 130%. Public universities saw an average 30% increase in 2006, and an average 78% increase in 2008-2009. Foundation vocational schools increased from one in 2005 to five in 2009. The number of public universities rose by 26% from 2010 to 2018 and remained steady through 2023. However, the number of foundation universities dropped from 76 in 2015 to 65 in 2016, likely due to the state of emergency declared after the 2016 coup attempt. Many institutions, including foundation universities, were shut down. Also, three foundation vocational schools became universities, leading to a decrease in their number (Cappadocia Vocational School, Plato Vocational School and Beykoz Logistics Vocational School).

Many universities struggle with quality issues despite rapid growth in higher education. Studies (Arslan, 2019; Bahat, 2020; Biçerli, 2011; Ersoy, 1978; Kılınç, Çepni, Kılcan, Palaz, 2017; Özdemir, 2023) have highlighted the need for improvement in university education. Ersoy (1978, p. 144) noted that newly established universities in Türkiye lacked modern management and business understanding, which led to problems in their libraries. Pre-existing issues were also exacerbated due to a lack of resources and support. In Türkiye, there is a mismatch between higher education and the labor market. In some fields, more graduates are trained than the labor market can absorb, causing unemployment. Faculty boards recommend opening new university departments or increasing quotas without conducting market research. The flawed decision-making process leads to a rise in the number of educated and unemployed individuals (Biçerli, 2011, p. 124). There are several problems in universities, including a high ratio of students to academic staff, lack of socialization areas, insufficient infrastructure, unequal financial support for staff, and inadequate funding for academic studies (Kılınç et al., 2017, p. 292). Universities lack the independence and resources to address innovation, tech, and entrepreneurship. Democratic culture is declining, and capital-focused foundation universities are replacing critical traditions (Arslan, 2019, p. 82-83; Özdemir, 2023, pp. 1137, 1147). Higher education organizations often lack teaching staff, technology and infrastructure, and internship opportunities for students. This results in graduates lacking the basic skills required for employment (Bahat, 2020, p. 19). In universities established after 2006, these issues are more noticeable.

Historical background of university libraries in Türkiye

In Türkiye, libraries were established in various ways until the adoption of Humboldt's new university concept in the early 20th century. Libraries in Türkiye were founded by

foundations. To understand the history of university libraries in Türkiye, we need to look at the Ottoman Empire's library system. The analysis will cover two periods: the Ottoman Empire and the Republican era.

History of university libraries during the Ottoman Empire

In the Ottoman Empire, foundation libraries were the only form of establishment until the Ottoman Scientific Society was founded in 1861. Libraries in educational institutions were based on the founder's wishes. Wealthy individuals established foundations to gain God's favor. The founder would create a document called "vakfiye" in Turkish, which specifies its operations. The Ottoman Empire had 350 libraries. Only three foundation libraries had collections exceeding 5,000 books (Alpay, 1976, p. 58). In medieval times, Western colleges and Eastern madrasas had similar structures. Monasteries and madrasa libraries acted as school, public, and university libraries. Monastic libraries were religious and primarily in Latin, while madrasas emphasized religion in Arabic. Monastic libraries had collections of manuscripts and printed books published after 1450, whereas madrasas had mainly manuscripts. Library classifications were based on the courses offered by the institution (Juchhoff, 1968, p. 6). Madrasas prioritized positive sciences during Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror's reign, but after his reign, the focus shifted to religious subjects. In 1560-1561, donations collected for the Fatih Complex were categorized into various subjects. Items in the library's collection classified under an unrelated subject may indicate inadequate qualifications or lack of knowledge on the librarian's part. It could also mean little interest in works outside of religious topics (Erünsal,1988, p. 219; Keseroğlu, 2006, p. 58).

The Istanbul Darülfünun, established during the Ottoman Empire, was initially organized and administered like a secondary school, suggesting poor quality primary and secondary education at the time. Reşit Galip, the Minister of National Education in 1933, stated that a university like Darülfünun could not be established in a country without primary or secondary schools (Hirsch, 1998, p. 311). The 1869 Ordinance of General Education required the university library to provide after-hours library services to the public and expand its collection through book exchange and purchases (Keseroğlu, 1989, pp. 89-90).The state was required to establish libraries according to the most crucial article of the Law (Keseroğlu, 1989, p. 89; Soysal, 1998, p. 35). Hirsch (1998, p. 315, 517) announced that the university would establish a new Turkish Revolution Institute, along with a library containing significant translated books from around the world. The name Darülfünun would remain temporarily until a more suitable replacement was found.

In 1924, the Kadılar School in Harbiye was chosen as the new Turkish Republic's Darulfünun library. The collection mainly consisted of books from the university's faculties of literature, science, and law. Additional library donations were received from

various individuals and institutions, including the Abdülhamit's Palace Library in 1925. The library was moved to a new building in the center of the university, which was one of the five to benefit from the "Legal Deposit Act" of 1934. In 1984, due to insufficient space, books written in Latin script were relocated to a new building in Beyazıt Square, while the old building retained old letterbooks and manuscripts (Keseroğlu, 1983 p. 1314). In 1932, Swiss scientist Albert Malche criticized Istanbul University for its lack of reference books and early library closures. He suggested that catalog cards should be copied and presented together in the Central Library's union catalog. To improve the library system, he recommended that all libraries in the university should follow the same practices as the Central Library, including allowing the Central Library to handle all purchasing, extending the opening hours from 16 to 18 hours, and keeping the library open until 10 pm two days a week. He also suggested implementing a book lending program to enable students to borrow books (Malche, 1998, pp. 244-245, 251, 264-265).

During the First Education Council (Turkish: Birinci Maarif Şurası) in July 1939, the Faculty of Literature of Istanbul University proposed extending library hours until 8 pm (Hirsch, 1998, p. 355). The council discussed the scarcity of Turkish resources in university libraries and the need to improve foreign language skills of students. On the 10th anniversary of Istanbul University's founding, the then-Rector announced a fire at the Faculty of Science's laboratories and library in the Zeynep Hanım Mansion (Hirsch, 1998, pp. 367, 465). In '95-'97, "Istanbul University Union Catalog of Foreign Periodicals" project monitored foreign periodicals in university libraries. It revealed 13k titles with multiple copies, costing $30k (Keseroğlu, 2003, p. 5). The issue of purchasing duplicate publications, mentioned in Malch's report, persisted negatively even 60 years later.

History of university libraries in the Republican era

In the early days of the Republic of Türkiye, the government sent individuals to Western countries to study various fields, including library studies. Hasan Fehmi Ethem Karatay was the first librarian to study overseas, becoming the first representative of modern librarianship in Türkiye. Upon returning to Türkiye, Karatay became the director of the Istanbul Darülfünun Library and introduced several pioneering initiatives, such as the first vocational course, the hand receipt catalog system, and decimal classification (Avcı, 2017, p. 142; Buluş & Delibaş, 2021; Sevgisunar, 2007, p. 110; Subaşıoğlu & Tamdoğan, 2014, p. 584). Adnan Ötüken, the last student sent abroad, founded the Turkish Librarians Association in 1949 (Ersoy, 1972, pp. 84-85) and the National Library in 1950 (Avcı, 2017, p. 149). He made valuable contributions to Turkish librarianship by offering courses and publishing the Bulletin of the Turkish Librarians Association. Scholars of Jewish origin from Germany also contributed to the development of university libraries during this period (Peker & Taşkın, 2017, p. 83). Foreign experts, including John Dewey, contributed to modernizing education in early Republic Türkiye. Ernst E. Hirsch and Albert Malche

also made significant contributions. Josef Stummvoll established the library at the Faculty of Agriculture in Ankara and initiated courses in librarianship in 1935 (Bezirci, 2020, pp. 36, 38; Ötüken, 1957, p. 6). During the early years of the Turkish Republic, American professor John Dewey and folklore expert Hamit Zübeyr Koşay wrote reports highlighting the need to improve libraries. Koşay's report revealed disparity between libraries in Istanbul and Anatolia, traditional resources, and recommended prioritizing librarian education. (Koşay, 1960, pp. 36-37; Polat & Odabaş, 2011, p. 46). Dr. Thompson from the University of Kentucky authored a report in 1952 outlining issues facing university libraries (Thompson, 1952, p. 9). During the 1970s, the importance of libraries for universities and the need for reform was emphasized, bringing attention to the problems faced by academic libraries. The restructuring of higher education in the 1980s increased studies that provided library recommendations (Polat & Odabaş, 2011, p. 46).

Pre-1950s, university libraries were not centralized like German university libraries, causing poor coordination (Toplu, 1992b, p. 89). Dr. Lawrence S. Thompson reported disorganized structures and high costs at Ankara and Istanbul Universities. He recommended revising university libraries for better efficiency (Atılgan, 2008, p. 454; Thompson, 1952, p. 89). In the 1950s, with the backing of the US and American school ecole, university libraries underwent a transformation. Middle East Technical, Hacettepe, and Boğaziçi University adopted a central library approach to serve all faculties, departments, and institutes of the university. The Middle East Technical University Central Library System was established later, providing the first examples of modern university librarianship in Türkiye. Only Hacettepe and Boğaziçi followed this system to some extent among the universities established after it (Çakın, 1998, p. 41; Toplu, 1992b, p. 89). The Turkish Librarians Association was established in 1949, and the Bulletin of the Turkish Librarians Association was first published in 1952, which marked significant events in the history of librarianship in Türkiye (Şenalp, 1974, p. 43). The Association of University and Research Libraries (ÜNAK) was founded in 1991, which includes university and research libraries, and the Information World Journal was started by the association in 2000. After the Republic's proclamation, efforts to address library issues failed due to the lack of modern librarianship-trained personnel. The absence of trained librarians caused many problems (Şenalp, 1974, p. 41). Librarianship education in Türkiye began at Ankara University in 1954-55. Istanbul University started offering it in 1964-65, followed by Hacettepe University in 1971-72. The Department of Librarianship was renamed to "Department of Information and Records Management" in 2002 (Yılmaz, 2018, p. 46). In 2024, there are precisely 11 departments in Türkiye that go by the names "Information and Records Management" or "Information Management," such as Hacettepe University. To fix disorganized university libraries, each university was given a library and records management department, established by the Council of Higher Education in 1982. This allowed for centralized services (Toplu, 1992b, p. 89). It is important to note that newly established departments are highly likely to encounter

issues that have already been identified. Addressing these problems from the get-go can ensure a smoother journey towards success.

In 1989, Yaşar Karayalçın wrote an article on the persistent issues related to librarianship in Türkiye, previously discussed in the 1950s (Karayalçın, 1989). Osman Ersoy chaired a 1976 meeting to address these issues. Ersoy, a prominent figure in Turkish librarianship, received a scholarship from the Ford Foundation in 1955 to study librarianship in the United States. From the 1950s to the late 1980s, discussions were held on librarians' training, inadequate allocation of resources, insufficient statistical studies and inventories, and lack of collaboration between libraries (Karayalçın, 1989, pp. 123-124).

Current status and problems of university libraries in Türkiye

The university library's components include budget, building, collection, human resources, and users. Integration and coordination of these components can improve services. Libraries need to be well-managed, have policies, and collaborate with stakeholders for cost-effective management. Technology empowers libraries to offer faster and more accessible services. In the subsequent parts of the study, we have analyzed the condition of university libraries in Türkiye based on the following categories: legislation, organization, and administrative structure; policies, regulations, and standards; budget, building, collection, human resources, user-related matters, and other relevant issues; collaborations; information and communication technologies.

Legislation, organization, and administrative structure

In Türkiye, state university libraries are considered administrative rather than academic. The Department of Library and Documentation is responsible for providing services, creating catalogs, and conducting bibliographic scanning studies as per Article 33 of Decree-Law No. 124 (Yükseköğretim Üst Kuruluşları ile…, 1983). Library and documentation department heads are appointed by rectors' decision as the law does not specify selection criteria. Article 65 of Law No. 2547 covers various aspects of higher education institutions such as education, staff registration, promotions, and disciplinary matters. The Council of Higher Education issues regulations for these situations (Yükseköğretim Kanunu, 1981).

Türkiye's laws for universities lack sufficient mention of libraries. Law No. 1750 on Universities specifies the establishment of directorates under the Rectorate, but it does not mention libraries despite allowing for their establishment under the General Secretariat of the Rectorate (Sefercioğlu, 1983, p. 75; Üniversiteler Kanunu, 1973). In Law No. 2547 on Higher Education, the term "library" is only mentioned in the definition of "experts" who are temporary teaching assistants at universities. Specialists are temporary

teaching assistants assigned to work in laboratories, libraries, and workshops. However, these laws do not provide a legal basis for university libraries (Sefercioğlu, 1983, p. 75). The absence of a legal framework for university libraries leads to several problems such as disorientation caused by centralized and dispersed library structures, the perception of libraries as administrative units only responsible for clerical work, and the lack of specific positions for libraries, except for managers in university centers or faculties. Sefercioğlu (1999, p. 63), attributes these problems to the legal void.

The organizational and administrative structures of Turkish university libraries vary from each other. In public universities, libraries report directly to the Rectorate through the General Secretariat, while in most foundation universities, libraries report directly to the Rectorate. State universities have centralized or dispersed settlement structures. University libraries with dispersed structures have different branches and report to the respective faculty or department. Differences exist in management and functioning (Koçak, 2019, p. 41). Despite legal regulations, centralization remains an issue in coordinating small units from separate locations (Çelik, 1991, pp. 59-65). Faculty libraries in dispersed universities face coordination problems due to the lack of a direct legal relationship with parent organizations. Libraries have their own policies, which can create challenges for standardization and cooperation. A centralized system has relatively low staffing and administrative expenses, but some departments may face challenges due to their distance from the library. However, a centralized system is more functional overall (Çelik, 2000, pp. 57-59). Turkish libraries and information centers are managed by a "president" or "director." Public university libraries are run by the Department of Library and Documentation, national libraries are run by the National Library Directorate, and provincial public libraries are run by the Provincial Public Library Directorate. The university rector elects the university library directors. Managers can delegate decision-making power to lower-level managers as long as they supervise them (Yılmaz, 2004, pp. 179-180).

Libraries in state universities are often seen as administrative rather than academic partners. The title "Dean of the Library" is given to library managers at top universities worldwide, who report to the rector or vice-rector overseeing teaching and research (Kaygusuz, 2020, pp. 39-40). In the United States, the dean of the library receives reports from the university librarian and reports to the academic president or vice-chancellor (Chowdhury, 2006, p. 65). In Sudan, the highest academic body is the Senate, consisting of the rector, faculty deans, university vice president, and the dean of the library, responsible for determining the university's academic policy (Mohammed, 2010, p. 119). Private university libraries offer better services than public university libraries due to their flexible management. They have better funding, technology, pay policies, and employ qualified librarians. Private libraries report directly to the rector, which allows for quicker reactions to changes. In contrast, state libraries can be hindered by bureaucracy and funding limitations. (Çelik, 2000, p. 60).

Policy, regulations, and standards

For a nation to compete globally, it needs access to knowledge centers and information. Public institutions, private organizations, and society should recognize their importance and actively utilize them. To achieve this, a nation should establish information policies and standards, link information centers to these policies, and incorporate libraries into its development plans. (Canata, 2012, pp. 130-131). The State Planning Organization aimed to accelerate Türkiye's growth through five-year development plans, while the Ministry of National Education's Shura documents focused on enhancing the educational system.

Türkiye's long-term growth plans in economics, society, and culture are evident through the five-year development plans prepared by the State Planning Organization, established by law no. 91 of 1960 (T.C. Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 2021). The Ministry of Development implements these policies, serving as the foundation for Türkiye's growth (Akça et al., 2017, p. 394).

The First Five-Year Development Plan (1963–1967) observed that libraries were not receiving adequate investments (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilâtı, 1963, p 421). The Second Five-Year Development Plan (1968–1972) acknowledged the shortage of quality and quantity of library facilities and high costs of reading materials. It suggested measures to train a workforce specifically for the field of librarianship, including university libraries as an area of significant opportunity (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Müsteşarlığı, 1968, pp. 187-188).

The Third Five-Year Development Plan (1973-1977) aimed to develop research and specialized libraries, as well as documentation services, in line with the needs of the people to advance scientific and technological knowledge and information flow. (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Müsteşarlığı, 1972, p. 690). Librarianship was redefined under the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan (1979-1983) to go beyond preserving books. The plan aimed to promote and popularize reading by transforming librarianship into a proactive and engaged service (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1978, pp. 151, 283). The Fifth and Sixth Five-Year Development Plan aimed to build more libraries in a planned and balanced way (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1989, pp. 322-323) while lowering the cost of book manufacturing (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1984, p. 148).

The Seventh Development Plan aimed to give universities scientific autonomy by aligning their curricula and instructional methods with international standards. This involved adding scientific publications to university libraries (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1995, p. 30). The Eighth and Ninth Development Plans highlighted a lack of resources for integrating new technologies in education. Inefficient resource

utilization, inadequate research and development, and industry collaboration, and the absence of high-quality vocational training programs were among the challenges identified. Access to computers, the internet, and relevant software was suggested as a solution to these problems across all educational levels (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2000, pp. 14, 18; T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2006, pp. 29, 96). The Tenth Development Plan emphasized on developing new technologies while considering ethical and environmental concerns (T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2013, p. 8). Meanwhile, the Eleventh development plan focused on enhancing library services and promoting a reading culture through new technologies and spatial restructuring (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2019, p. 149).

In Türkiye, National Education Councils are among the other fundamental papers for comprehending, organizing, and carrying out the national information policy. Examining the meeting minutes from the First National Education Council, which took place from July 17–29, 1939, to the Twentieth National Education Council, which took place from December 1–3, 2021, reveals a broad range of opinions, particularly concerning education. The documents often contain goals for enhancing university education systems as well as rules on education in the context of societal transformation. The Council meetings did not go into great detail about university libraries. That was, however, briefly discussed in the seventh, twelfth, and thirteenth.

The Seventh National Education Council meeting on February 5–15, 1962, decided to establish new universities and libraries. The main topics of the meeting included staff training, compilation concerns, inter-library cooperation, and establishing national, public, and school libraries (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1962). At the Twelfth National Education Council in 1988, the need to improve university libraries and faculty members' conditions was discussed. The focus was on supporting research, increasing options for communication and overseas travel, and reducing weekly course loads. Even though the topic of university libraries was mentioned indirectly, it was still an important part of the meeting. (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1988). In 1990, during the Thirteenth National Education Council, it was decided that universities should be responsible for public education, instructional programs and resources, and library services, including university libraries (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1990). At the May 13-17, 1996 Fifteenth National Education Council, recommendations were made to expand the use of interactive teaching resources such as CD-ROMs, videos, and the internet in libraries. They also suggested setting up libraries with the necessary infrastructure (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996). During the Eighth National Education Council in 1970, libraries were considered low-cost establishments. The council categorized training programs into high and moderate expenditure groups, with librarianship being among the inexpensive subjects (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1970). In the past, decisions regarding school and public libraries were typically made in other councils.

However, during the Twenty-First National Education Council held from December 1-3, 2021, an important recommendation was made regarding the employment of staff members in educational institutions, particularly professional librarians. This marked a significant moment as the term "professional librarian" had never been used before in a council meeting. This recognition demonstrates the importance of specialization within librarianship. The recommendation was documented in the report by the T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (2021, p. 97).

The issues faced by university libraries in Türkiye are related to the lack of policies and standards, in addition to the absence of essential components such as building, budget, staff, collection, and users. Çelik's study (1991) found that Turkish university libraries in the late 1980s and early 1990s had issues with personnel, budget, and collection due to the absence of regulations and standards. The study suggests that a minimum of 5% of the university budget should be allocated for the library budget, including all expenses. In Türkiye, the average budget ratio of university libraries fluctuated between 0.79% and 1.04% from 1987 to 1991. International guidelines recommend one librarian for every 300 users, but in 1990, there were only 180 librarians for 1575 required. Almost 43% of those in charge of libraries didn't have a degree in librarianship, and 82% of library staff members had non-librarianship degrees. Turkish university libraries face issues with management and coordination, as well as a scattered structure. The absence of a national librarianship policy with legal foundations has caused harm to these libraries. There are no regulations governing these organizations, which has resulted in significant differences between libraries (Çelik, 1991, pp. 59-65). Turkish university libraries were found to be substandard and unable to obtain support from their respective administrations, according to Çakın's (2000, p. 38) study. A study by Polat and Odabaş (2011, pp. 44, 60–61) found that Turkish university libraries faced challenges in the early 2000s. Libraries lacked physical space, staff, funding, and a unified collection development policy. Public universities faced more issues than foundation universities. Most libraries had fewer volumes per faculty member than the national average. Polat and Odabaş (2011) found that foundation universities outperformed public universities in Türkiye, but also noted a lack of library standards. Furthermore, according to the Council of Higher Education's General Report on University Monitoring and Evaluation (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2023, p. 45), the average number of printed books per university student in 2022 was 6.98. Additionally, there were 33 universities where the number of printed books per student was 10 or more. The average number of printed books per student was 6.10 at public universities and 8.54 at private universities. On average, students at private universities in Türkiye had 2.44 more printed books than those at public universities.

University libraries in Türkiye have been facing multiple problems due to the lack of a policy. There is no coordination among these libraries, leading to challenges that are being solved through individual initiatives. One significant challenge is the

digitization of printed resources, which is not permitted by the Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works No. 5846. This law applies to university libraries as well, causing financial, personnel, space, and infrastructure issues. The lack of trained librarians is another significant problem that needs immediate attention (Çukadar et al, 2012, pp. 2428-2437). The number of universities in Türkiye increased from 74 to 175 within the first 10 years of the 2000s, but this was driven more by quantity than quality. The "Universities in every province" slogan was implemented without the necessary infrastructure preparations. This issue also was highlighted in reports by Çarıkçı (n. d., p. 17). Unfortunately, the trend of prioritizing quantity over quality continued in the following years. Türkiye has the second largest number of higher education students in Europe after Russia. However, the government's focus on quantity has caused damage to university libraries.

As per the data of the Council of Higher Education, for the academic year 2022-2023, 208 higher education institutions were providing education to 6,950,142 students (Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2018). According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2024, Türkiye's population in 2023 was 85,372,377 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2024). According to the data, in 2023, 8.14% of the total population were university students. In 2023, there were over 700 state higher education institutions in Russia, with more than 15 million enrolled students. The population of Russia in 2023 was 144,444,359 (Macrotrends LLC, 2024; Russian Education Center, n. d.). Based on the available data, it was found that in 2023, 10% of the Russian population consisted of university students. These statistics reveal that the proportion of university students in Türkiye is almost the same as in Russia.

Çarıkçı (n.d., p. 16) criticized Turkish universities for their lack of strategic direction and specialization. In contrast to American, British, and Australian universities, Turkish universities aim to excel in every field. However, some recently established foundation universities have focused on a specific field. Universities need to shift their focus from proving themselves to simply "being/doing". Consequently, library services are also affected by the issues faced by universities.

In 2014, the Council of Higher Education published a report titled "University Libraries in Türkiye Towards 2023" to address the lack of standards being followed in university libraries. The report analyzed the existing situation, identified problems and suggested solutions. Based on its findings, a standard was established (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014). The report based on ACRL's [Association of College & Research Libraries] "Standards for Libraries in Higher Education" (ACRL, 2011) and CTCL's "Standards for Canadian College Libraries" (CTCL, 2004), cited in Kaya (2017, p. 395).

Global standards should be adapted to suit each country's unique circumstances. Association of College and Research Libraries acknowledges that each institution has its own values and should define goals and assess outcomes accordingly (ACRL, 2010, p.

7). University libraries face several challenges, including insufficient buildings, low staff salaries, inadequate qualifications, and training. Inadequate budgets are a fundamental problem, and administrations mostly decide about the library budget. Users' lack of information literacy skills is also a problem. The report suggests that library automation systems lack compliance with international standards, and library systems do not adequately support innovation and entrepreneurship (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014). Aslıyüksek (2017, p 115) also noted that Türkiye has not implemented international standards for its university library budgets.

Budget, building, collection management, human resources, user-related matters, and other relevant issues

Public university libraries in Türkiye are fully funded by public resources, but foundation universities operate differently. These universities are not just educational institutions, but also commercial organizations, which gives them more resources and opportunities than public universities. This creates an unequal distribution of resources between the two types of universities, which is a major issue (Polat & Odabaş, 2011, p. 43).

Akkaya (2013, pp. 601, 606, 612, 615) found that the rapid rise of universities had a negative impact on their libraries. A survey of 46 university libraries revealed various challenges for newly established libraries, including staff shortages, budget constraints, and collection problems. The survey found that less than 31% of staff had library education and 74% had less than 40,000 books. Akkaya emphasizes that a new university library should have 100,000 books to meet international standards, stating that 40,000 is insufficient (Standards for Libraries in Higher Education, 2011; Withers, 1988, as cited in Akkaya, 2013, p. 606). Uçar's study (2019) highlights a lack of awareness about subject matter expertise in our country, making it difficult for university libraries to offer effective support for specialized research needs. The shortage of knowledgeable staff is a significant challenge. Foundation university libraries have an advantage over public university libraries in creating and using subject guides. The lack of budget and qualified personnel in state universities is attributed to the failure to develop subject specializations (Uçar, 2019, pp. 85-87). According to Kaygusuz (2020, p. 39), university libraries in Türkiye struggle to meet the changing demands of the information age. They require a sustainable budget and an adequate number of qualified staff. University libraries are generally categorized as administrative units rather than academic units. They rely heavily on foreign currency for funding which often renders the existing budgets inadequate. Kaygusuz (2020, pp. 28-29) points out that university libraries have done well despite budget constraints, thanks to the cooperation of librarians. Collaboration in providing e-resources has enabled them to access scientific resources that would have needed to be easier to acquire.

Collaborations

Interlibrary cooperation is crucial for sharing library resources. The exchange of loans and copies between libraries in different countries is a valuable and necessary part of this process (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2009). Libraries cannot function alone and must rely on collaboration with other libraries. Even Harvard University admits that no library is extensive or wealthy enough to operate independently. Collaboration helps libraries extend their value and justify their use of public resources (Horton and Pronevitz, 2015, p. 1).

Interlibrary loan and document delivery services in Türkiye are led by specific institutions, but a national infrastructure is yet to be established. TÜRDOK has created a union catalog covering all provinces of Türkiye. Established in 1966, TÜRDOK is supervised by TÜBİTAK. The catalog was first published in 1971, and despite limited resources, the Ankara Periodicals' Catalog published in 1977 is a remarkable achievement (Toplu, 2009, pp. 97-98; Yörü, 2012, p. 158). The Catalog of Turkish Manuscripts was published by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications between 1978 and 1979. It is a significant work on Turkish manuscripts, despite its delay (Nuhoğlu, 1980, p. 45). University libraries in Türkiye cooperate through semiannual meetings, facilitated by the Documentation Center of the Council of Higher Education during the 1980s. These meetings allowed librarians to share knowledge and ideas, leading to the development of interlibrary loan forms (Küçük et al., 2004, pp. 122-123).

In 1984, Türkiye's Scientific and Technical Documentation Center established the "Information Retrieval System" (TÜBESS). It allowed users to subscribe to international databases like DIALOG, ESA-IRS, RRS, Telesystems Questel, SDC, Pergamon Financial Data Service, and INKADAT. This system was a significant step towards improving infrastructure for information scanning and document provision services (Toplu, 1991, pp. 248, 268-269, as cited in Toplu, 2009, p. 98). In 2006, Türkiye's State Planning Organization developed the Integrated e-Library System (TO-KAT) to promote interlibrary cooperation. The system allows access to multiple catalogs and automation systems from a single interface. The Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS) was established in 2000 to enhance information access, affordability nationwide, and collaboration between university libraries. ANKOS initially subscribed to three databases from 12 member institutions (ANKOS, 2023; Aras, 2018, p. 152). The consortium, established by the Middle East Technical University, became one of Europe's leading organizations within a few years. The number of licensed databases in the consortium increased from 129 to 968 between 2001 and 2007, growing at an average rate of 45% per year (Karasözen & Atılgan, 2008, pp. 230-231). During the 2000s, universities with fewer full-time equivalents became more efficient, while larger universities with larger budgets started to pay less. The National Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBİM) has subscribed to e-resources through EKUAL since 2006, providing crucial

support to university libraries. (Kaygusuz, 2020, p. 29). ULAKBIM, established in 1996 (Turkish Academic Network and Information Centre) is a part of TÜBİTAK and operates a high-speed computer network for collaboration among the research and education segments. Additionally, it provides information technology, library, and information services to the research community in Türkiye. With the support of Interlibrary Loan (ILL), the KİTS system has enabled serious cooperation in providing printed resources and developing interlibrary loan services. (Kaygusuz, 2020, p. 29). Despite the successful partnership achieved through the solidarity and efforts of university librarians, university libraries require greater budgets to support their growth and expand their research capabilities. In Türkiye, exchange rate fluctuations can lead to reduced funding and make it challenging to predict future budgets. These problems must be solved urgently to make university libraries more functional (Kaygusuz, 2020, pp. 29-30). These problems must be solved urgently for ANKOS and other partnerships to gain more power and for university libraries to become more functional. ANKOS is a consortium of over 60 publishers, 155 university and research institution members, and 50 employees. It has 1628 agreements with 83 databases (ANKOS, 2023).The consortium's success has led to other cooperation efforts, such as the Common Document Servicing project. This project enables researchers to request documents through four Ankara university libraries and ULAKBIM (Atılgan, 2005, p. 3).

According to Kaygusuz (2020, p. 41), ANKOS has been a crucial partner for university libraries since 2000. To stay ahead of emerging issues, ANKOS should create new groups and a supergroup called "Scholarly Communication" for librarians to keep up with recent developments. These groups should collaborate with professional associations and information and records management departments to explore topics such as rankings, academic performance, copyright infringement, and RDM.

Information and communication technologies

In the 1980s, Turkish university libraries adopted information and communication technologies, improving management decisions, planning, and organization. The technologies also enabled modern management techniques despite challenges. This led to better understanding of library department issues (Kurulgan, 2005, p. 53). In the 2000s, the internet usage grew rapidly. Web2 approaches intensified the interaction between the user and the information center, leading to the open-access concept and an explosion of library content. However, Türkiye needs better management of its content explosion. To achieve better results, prioritize user satisfaction and provide flexible, empathetic advisory services guided by a new philosophy (Aslıyüksek, 2017, p. 115).

To manage emerging technologies effectively, organizations need a skilled workforce that possesses in-depth knowledge of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. This enables them to leverage the full potential of emerging technologies and achieve their business goals more efficiently.

As stated in the report by the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2014), the demand for professionals with expertise in new technologies and their continuous improvement is on the rise, particularly in the field of information and records management due to technological advancements. It's crucial to hire competent personnel who are qualified for the required position and provide support for routine tasks. Kaygusuz (2020) emphasizes the importance of data librarianship worldwide and in Türkiye. Kaygusuz (2020, pp. 36-41) argues that the pandemic highlighted the need for more knowledge of information technology facilities among university librarians and users. To address this, universities should prioritize educating users on how to effectively use library resources and make user training mandatory. User feedback should also be considered to determine the principles of distance education and performance criteria.

Technology has increased the variety of information sources available through various media. Libraries offer resources via subscription, purchase, rental, or collection development. Library budgets have remained relatively low, making it critical to use them efficiently and make more resources available with the existing budget (Çukadar & Delibaş, 2021, p. 45).) Selçuk's 2019 study analyzed the annual reports of ten university libraries from 2017 and 2018. These reports introduced the libraries' technologies, but AI and autonomous robots were not mentioned. The study emphasized the importance of integrating AI studies into Turkish libraries, particularly with 5G technology (Selçuk, 2019, pp. 101-102).

Mır (2023, pp. 3, 30-31, 77, 88, 116, 122-123) conducted a study in 2023 on 375 employees and managers working in the libraries of 11 research universities and five candidate research universities in Türkiye. The aim was to determine how the leadership styles of research university library administrators affect the level of organizational learning. Mır emphasized the importance of allocating sufficient budgets for technology infrastructure, staff training, conferences, and other similar activities to facilitate organizational learning processes. The study concludes that university libraries in Türkiye have not invested enough in new information technologies and need more proficiency in using technology.

Findings and Conclusion

This study highlights the persistent problems faced by university libraries in Türkiye. It analyzed the libraries' legislation, organization, policies, budget, infrastructure, collaborations, and use of technology. Findings and evaluations regarding the problems faced by university libraries are as follows.

In 1981, the Law No. 2547 on Higher Education was passed, giving universities some autonomy, but Rector appointments are now solely made by the President. Library department heads, often appointed instead of selected, lack proper training, resulting in a shortage of trained librarians. Private universities may differ. Some private universities have opened without proper infrastructure, such as departments lacking trained personnel, which is unacceptable and poses a challenge to the department's success. Library heads are not academic partners and lack decision-making authority. There is a shortage of trained librarians. The 1981 Higher Education Law led to the establishment of university libraries, but only central libraries were recognized. Approval from central libraries was necessary for scattered university units, but this created communication issues as library directors often reported to different offices under different titles. There is no specific law that governs university libraries. The first Turkish university library was in Darülfünun during the Ottoman Empire. Changes in education and academic disciplines made library services difficult during the Republic period. Rules were introduced for university libraries in 1869, but were not enforced in the first Darülfünuns. Türkiye's development plans are unrealistic. University libraries were ignored or mentioned only as problems in the National Education Councils. The councils prioritized political power over the needs of university libraries. University library management is problematic due to the absence of proper legislation, policies, and standards. Library constructions typically have non-standard features and lack standard implementations. Many university libraries use the American Library of Congress subject headings, but this approach is not suitable for promoting scientific advancement due to inconsistencies, lack of coordination, and standardization issues. This is evident when examining the National Union Catalog (TO-KAT). Library budgets need to be revised realistically. University administrations make budget decisions without considering unique problems. The Presidency has made library budget planning a central issue, but it doesn't account for individual universities' issues. Turkish universities' budgets for foreign publications are often unrealistic. Multiple units providing same books or journals without a central reception is not cost-effective. Turkish university libraries lack copyrighted and translated books, hindering students' foreign language knowledge. Graduates of information and records management programs face employment challenges, especially those with low scores. University students also lack information literacy skills. Additionally, limited library hours can impede their effectiveness.

Problems such as not lending books to students were of utmost priority for the first university libraries. Despite the joint purchase of electronic resources and databases and the provision of common documents across the country, interlibrary cooperation and coordination between universities remain a significant problem. In university libraries, students often face restricted access to electronic resources and databases. Additionally, the lack of technological literacy and proficiency in foreign languages can hinder their ability to perform effective research. This issue is a significant concern that should be addressed within the Turkish national education system as a whole. University libraries in Türkiye face significant challenges, including inadequate investment in new technologies and insufficient technological knowledge and skills among managers and employees. These problems are also affecting library users, who are struggling with similar issues. Moreover, the lack of education in this field is a concerning issue that needs to be addressed. In Türkiye, university libraries have been working hard to improve their automation systems and databases, but they have not yet fully embraced the innovative technologies and artificial intelligence that have become increasingly important in the 21st century. While foundation universities tend to have better technological infrastructure and equipment than state universities, university libraries across the board are generally lacking in this area.

University libraries are facing various challenges due to financial constraints. One significant factor contributing to this problem is the funding inequality between foundation universities and state universities. Another issue is the lack of laws, policies, and standards applicable to all university libraries. Furthermore, the libraries are not considered academic units and are not given the same importance as other units. As a result, the value of libraries and information centers is not well understood. To address these challenges, it is essential to recognize the value of university libraries and develop policies that reflect this. This is not just a problem for librarians to solve. It requires a collective effort of all relevant mechanisms, including the government at all levels throughout the country.

Author Contributions Statement

Güler Demir and Hasan Sacit Keseroğlu conducted thorough ideation and analysis by reviewing various literature sources to choose a suitable topic for their research. After discussing all the options extensively, they selected a specific subject matter that they believed would be most relevant and impactful for their study. After finalizing the methodology and data collection techniques, Güler Demir and Hasan Sacit Keseroğlu produced a preliminary draft. They then created a working draft and shared the headings and subheadings in the following way: Hasan Sacit Keseroğlu analyzed the historical backgrounds of university libraries, whereas Güler Demir examined the current status and issues related to university libraries. Güler Demir wrote the manuscript. The paper in question underwent review by both authors, and its finalization was carried out by Güler Demir.

Ethics Committee Decisions and Permissions

It is not necessary to obtain approval from an ethics committee for this research.

Consent for publication

This work has not been published anywhere, therefore no consent for publication is applicable.

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