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# An interlending network for Turkish university libraries

Yasar Tonta

## INTRODUCTION

**Interlibrary lending among Turkish university libraries is an activity which has been largely neglected up to now. Yet resource sharing, including interlibrary lending, seems to be a significant way of easing the collection development problems arising from declining library budgets, rising literature costs and a shortage of hard currency.**

There are twenty-nine universities in Turkey, all of which are governed by a common law, the Higher Education Act. The majority of universities have decentralized library systems, with collections ranging in size from hundreds of thousands of volumes in the Istanbul, Hacettepe and Ataturk universities and the Middle East Technical University, to very limited numbers in newly-established universities like Yüzüncü Yıl, İnönü and Bilkent. Likewise the numbers of serial titles acquired by the different universities shows a great deal of variation, ranging from 100 to 2,000 titles.

The general situation of Turkish university libraries and their existing interlending services is reported elsewhere. (1) Two different patterns of university library development have been observed over the years in Turkey. Older universities such as Istanbul and Ankara usually have departmental libraries established along the lines of the German university library system, whereas the newer ones enjoy the relatively well-organized central libraries established under the influence of the American college library system. This dual development complicates the recent centralization efforts made by university libraries in attempts to remedy some of their financial problems.

University libraries in Turkey serve a total of about 450,000 students and about 25,000 faculty members. They generally spend up to 85 percent of their total budgets on serials. The number of current serials in all university libraries in 1986 was 13,650. Since then, however, the number of subscriptions has declined sharply due to financial restraints on university budgets. The total number of volumes of books in all university libraries is around 2.5 million.

University libraries do not make much use of interlending services. In a recently conducted questionnaire survey, (2) two university libraries stated that they never used the existing interlending services at all, seven had never used them for books and four had never used them for serials. Between them the remaining libraries had requested only 209

books and 541 serials from within Turkey. Only 573 requests were made by Turkish university libraries to libraries abroad. The great majority of these (96 percent) were for serials. As these figures show, interlending activity in Turkish university libraries is at a very low level.

An important step that helped to streamline the development of interlibrary lending services among academic libraries in Turkey was the creation, in 1984, of the Higher Education Council Documentation and International Literature Search Center (HECDOC) (Yükseköğretim Kurulu Dokümantasyon ve Uluslararası Bilgi Tarama Merkezi).

HECDOC was opened to the public in 1984 in a new, spacious building with a floor area of 19,000 square metres. Its objective is to provide documents on request to all members of the universities, and to other researchers and research centres. To achieve this objective, it has been developing a very large, mainly foreign, serials collection of about 12,000 current titles, the largest in the country. One of the main reasons for developing such a large collection is to help university libraries avoid committing large proportions of their budgets for serial subscriptions. The idea is that the libraries should subscribe only to the most heavily-used titles which are considered essential, and obtain others from HECDOC. It was also felt that HECDOC would help reduce the dependence of Turkish university libraries on foreign libraries. (3)

HECDOC allocates almost all its budget for the development of its serials collection. It provides photocopies of items requested by users, answers enquiries from its reference collection and offers online literature searching services. It provides photocopies of articles identified in the course of online search services carried out by its staff. Although HECDOC, unlike the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC), was not specifically established for interlending purposes, it tries to satisfy interlending requests for serials from the university libraries and accounts for about 55 percent of the total interlending traffic for serials in Turkey, with a success rate of 72 percent.

## INTERLENDING MODELS

In a report prepared for Unesco in 1980, (4) Line and others presented four main interlending models, as follows:

Model A concentration on a single library

Model B concentration on a few libraries

Model C: planned decentralization

Model D: unplanned decentralization.

Also investigated were various composite models such as Model AC (single library supported by planned decentralization), Model AD (single library supported by unplanned decentralization) and Model 3C (a few libraries supported by planned decentralization)

The main characteristic of Model A is that a single collection dedicated solely to interlending, such as the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC) is set up and all interlending demand is concentrated on this collection. According to Line and his co-authors,

A dedicated lending collection would almost certainly have to be mainly built up specifically for the purpose, unless an existing large library were willing to surrender its present functions; but it could draw on some of the resources of other libraries in order to build up a collection, especially of older material (5)

Model B, requiring concentration on a few libraries, needs close cooperation among the participating libraries as each concentrates on different subjects, such as medicine or the humanities. There are virtually no examples of this model at present, though some countries have systems that approach to it.

The provision of materials is allocated to different libraries on a systematic basis in Model C. It would appear that, due to the fact that libraries tend to develop within a country in a naturally decentralized way, most countries aim to exploit these decentralized resources by adopting a 'planned decentralization' approach. The Federal Republic of Germany, with its *Sondersammelgebiete und Zentrale Fachbibliotheken* (Special Subject and Central Subject Libraries) is a typical example of this model (6). The main advantages are the direct transmission of many requests; resources can serve both local and national needs, and low additional costs of provision.

Unplanned decentralization (Model D), which has been described as being 'not a system at all' (7) also occurs frequently. The advantage of this pragmatic approach is that it makes use of existing library materials, seeking to coordinate their use through the provision of union catalogues. It makes no attempt at specialization, nor at exhaustivity, and has numerous disadvantages.

The question of the degree of centralization or decentralization of provision is one of the most important issues in interlibrary lending. Line and his colleagues well summarize this issue, and the limitations of the above-mentioned models, as follows:

Total centralization of provision—the provision of all required material in one single collection—is unattainable, if only because the literature of the past could not be gathered in such a collection

Total decentralization—all libraries playing a more or less equal part in interlending—is equally impossible, because libraries are very unequal in the collections they have. We therefore consider various degrees of centralization and decentralization between these extremes, and the general bias of the system towards or against centralization. Four levels of concentration may be identified, although even these are unlikely to exist in their pure form, and they constitute a continuum rather than clearly distinct entities, and in practice systems will approximate to composite models (8).

The main advantages of concentration on a single library are: that it offers a single channel to which most or many requests can be sent, thus simplifying procedures and saving transmission costs; that a very broad range of materials can be easily provided; that direct costs of handling requests are low because of economies of scale and special procedures, and that it is economical for libraries to use. But it has disadvantages too. It is very expensive in that the costs of setting up and maintaining central collections are high and the unit costs are also high unless demand is heavy. More importantly, any failure to finance it adequately could undermine the whole system of interlending (9).

Serials are especially suitable for central provision. As explained later, they also account for a large amount of demand. Kefford and Line give the following reasons for this.

- (i) acquisition and recording processes for journals are usually simpler (and therefore cheaper) than for most other forms of material,
- (ii) most requests for journal articles can be supplied in the form of photocopies, this saves money on postage and keeps the original issues available for further requests,
- (iii) most 'serious' journals are in science and technology, where the need for supply is greatest,
- (iv) a higher proportion of demand for journals tends to fall on a relatively limited number of titles;
- (v) current and past use is generally a good indicator of future use, so that the journals needed can be relatively easily identified (10)

In fact, these issues identify the main criteria for an interlending system and are the significant factors affecting its performance. This is because the three main requirements of a national interlending system are given as:

- (i) adequate satisfaction level (proportion of requests satisfied);
- (ii) adequate speed of supply;
- (iii) lowest cost for achieving adequate satisfaction and adequate speed. (11)

The results of a study carried out at the then British Library Lending Division may well explain why serials are so important for interlending systems. It revealed that out of a total of 54,000 current titles (plus 96,000 that had ceased publication) held by the Division, 12,626 (8 percent of all titles) accounted for 90 percent of all demand for serials, 7,480 (5 percent) for 80 percent of demand and 1,939 (1 percent) for 50 percent of demand. (12) Kefford and Line evaluate the research results and conclude that

in most developed countries a collection of 7,000-8,000 current titles (with adequate backruns) could supply 80% of demand and a collection of around 2,000 50% (13)

provided that they are core collections. Although the general characteristics of core collections are unlikely to vary greatly between countries, they will consist predominantly of scientific, technical and medical journals, where demand is not only greatest but most urgent, where backruns do not need to be so long, and where the greatest and most immediate impact on service to users can be made. (14)

### A PROPOSED INTERLENDING NETWORK FOR TURKISH UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Before going any further, perhaps it is time to pose the question, 'why resource sharing by way of centralization?' rather than by way of provision by individual libraries. The literature shows that if a library has to request a specific item more than two or three times, it may be spending more money on interlending costs such as communication, photocopying, etc., than the actual price of the item itself. If this is so, why should libraries bother to share resources if it costs more? Is it not the cost that matters?

Cost is obviously the dominant factor. The findings of the above-mentioned studies, on the other hand, mainly reflect the situation in developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where the average cost of an interlending transaction, if the British Library's findings are taken as an indicator, varies between £4 and £6, and where the number of transactions is very high. It is therefore understandable to put the question in that way.

But the other side of the coin is quite different. The situation is not the same in most countries, such as Turkey, where not only are the information resources provided mainly from abroad, but they have to be paid for in hard currency, at exchange rates which greatly increase the amount of local currency required in library budgets.

The cost of foreign information sources must also be taken into account. Annual subscriptions to most foreign journals vary between about US\$70 and US\$100, or about 150,000 to 210,000 Turkish lira

For the same expenditure, a library in Turkey could borrow at least twenty or thirty issues of such a journal from elsewhere in the country, due to relatively low staff and other costs involved in interlending. Furthermore, interlending will also help to reduce other libraries' expenditure on serials subscriptions, as well as reducing overheads and staff costs associated with their acquisition and processing.

Figure 1 illustrates the configuration of a proposed interlibrary lending network for Turkish university libraries which has similarities both with Line's Model AC (single library supported by planned decentralization) and Model AD (single library supported by unplanned decentralization), in that the network is based mainly on the large concentrated collection of serials at HECDOC and on the resources of three other major libraries.

The proposed network is not such that it need be created from scratch. It is entirely based on existing resources already available in Turkey. It involves the foreign serials collection of HECDOC, with seven-year backruns, and the collections of the Hacettepe University Medical Centre Library, for medicine, the Middle East Technical University, for science and technology—both of which have considerable backruns in their respective domains—and the Turkish serials collection of the National Library.

Interlending systems consist of several elements such as collections of documents, means of locating documents, procedures for requesting them, communications and so on. One of the most important prerequisites for an interlending network to function properly is the level of library development that a country has reached. Bibliographical control is also crucial. The existence of national bibliographies and union catalogues of serials have a great impact on the way in which interlending systems work. Standardization of library procedures (for example, the processing of serials in general, and of interlending procedures in particular) and adequate and effective means of transmission and communications are important for any interlending system.

In Turkey, the *Türkiye Bibliyografyası* (Turkish Bibliography of Books) and *Türkiye Makaleler Bibliyografyası* (Turkish Bibliography of Articles) have been published by the National Library since 1928 and 1952 respectively. The following union lists, among others, are used to locate interlending requests:

*HECDOC Union List of Serials*

*METU Library Alphabetical and Subject List of Serials*  
*University of Hacettepe Libraries Union List of Serials*  
*Union Catalog of Serials in Ankara Libraries*  
*Union Catalog of Serials in Izmir Libraries*  
*Union Catalog of Serials in Istanbul Libraries*

# Interlending for Turkish university libraries

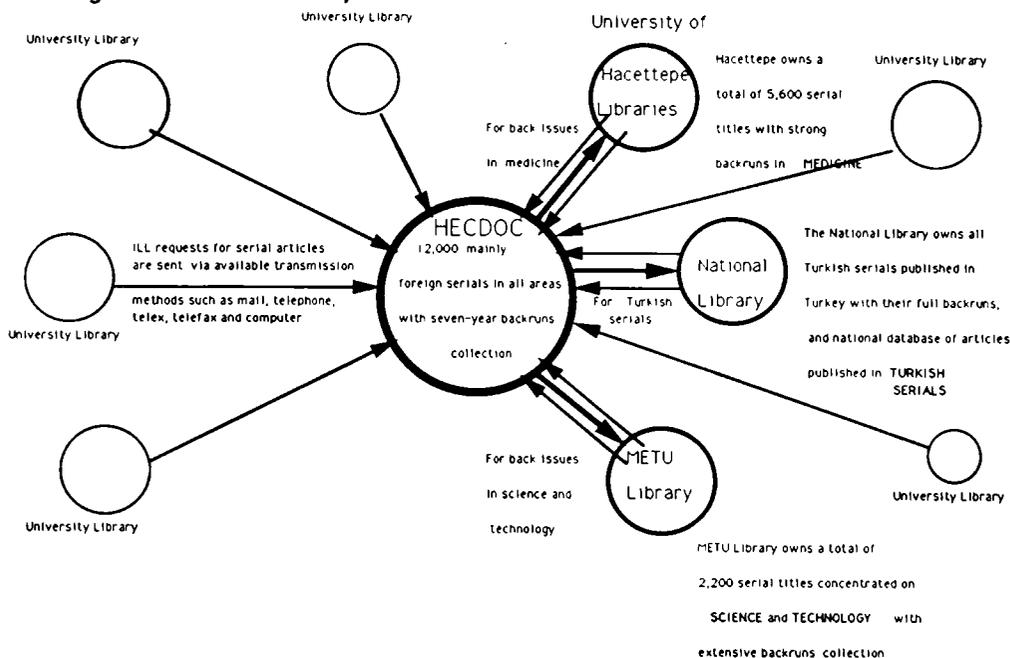


Figure 1

## Proposed Interlending Network for Sharing of Serials Collections Among University Libraries in Turkey

(Possible cross relationships between university libraries are not shown)

Most of the union lists, however, are not updated regularly.

A photocopy request form was developed by HECDOC as a means of requesting photocopies from HECDOC and from university libraries. Protocols for requesting and transmitting interlending transactions electronically have yet to be developed.

There has been enormous progress in telecommunications in Turkey in recent years. The first digital telephone exchange was put into service in 1984. Subscribers were allowed to transmit data over the automatic telephone network in 1986. The Turkish Network of University and Research Institutions (Türkiye Üniversitesi ve Araştırma Kurumları Ağı: TUVAKA) was also set up in 1986 and universities were able to connect to the European Academic and Research Network (EARN). More than half the universities are now connected to EARN and other networks such as BITNET and TELENET. An experimental packet switching data network became operational in 1987. A pilot project on the establishment of an Integrated Services Data Network was started two years ago, and it is believed that the infrastructure of the Turkish data communication network is capable of coping with the transformation (15).

It has for long been observed that factors such as geographical distribution of population and libraries, and the concentration of telecommunications facilities in certain areas, are relevant to the design and operation of interlending systems. An earlier study showed that the use of online search and interlending services in Turkey is concentrated on the big cities such as the capital, Ankara, and Istanbul. (16) Some 70 percent of the total student population of Turkey is located in universities in three big cities. Ankara has five universities, two of which are among the most developed in the country, as well as the National Library and HECDOC. Research and development activities are concentrated in these institutions. It therefore makes sense to locate the centre of the proposed network in Ankara.

The hub of the network is HECDOC, whose collection of 12,000 current serial titles and seven-year backruns is perfectly able to cope with most of the interlending requests from university libraries and for meeting more than 85 percent of the total interlending demand for serials. Since HECDOC is unable to satisfy the demand for back issues of both foreign and Turkish serials which are more than seven years old, the two specialized university libraries at Hacettepe and Middle East Technical

University, with their rich backruns on medicine, science and technology, and the National Library's full collection of Turkish serials, should also be used

In the long term it is likely that, as HECDOC's backruns gradually increase, the demand for material from the backruns of the Hacettepe and Middle East Technical University libraries will diminish. This is because, particularly in the fields of medicine, science and technology, the most frequently used and requested serials are ten years old or less. The use of older material in the social sciences and humanities persists over a longer period. The involvement in the network of the Turkish serials collections of the National Library will always be necessary because HECDOC has no intention of developing an extensive collection of Turkish serials. The literature needs of academics and researchers in Turkish universities are heavily concentrated on foreign scientific and technical serials.

It should also be stressed that the resources of the proposed network should be utilized within a Turkish national interlending system as its large foreign serials collection would serve not only university libraries but also other types of library within the country. It would be very wasteful not to do so, as HECDOC has, since 1987, satisfied some 80,000 photocopy requests for foreign serials. (17) This represents an overwhelming proportion of the total interlending demand for foreign serials, most of which comes from university researchers within Turkey.

It is reasonable to assume that the foreign serials collection of HECDOC can and should be utilized within a Turkish national interlending system, despite the fact that HECDOC was not established for this purpose.

HECDOC should be, not only a central supplier of materials from its own collections, but also a referral and switching centre for requests which it is unable to satisfy. HECDOC is eager to become a national centre for coordinating outgoing international requests, which it could redirect to appropriate international document supply centres such as BLDSC. These centres, in turn, could then supply the required items directly to the libraries requesting them.

A similar organization is already in operation in the German Democratic Republic, where the Institute for Interlibrary Lending and Union Catalogues of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek functions as a national coordinating centre for international interlending requests. (18) Krause and Rother conclude that this system

to a large extent guarantees compliance with IFLA recommendations that requests should be forwarded to a foreign country only if it has been confirmed that the required literature is not available in the home country. (19)

One of the basic requirements for developing HECDOC as a referral and switching centre is to develop the computerized database of its holdings in such a way that it can be more easily updated. Such a system had not yet been developed as of the beginning of 1989.

It may be that one of the commercial serials control systems which are on the market in developed countries would provide the best means of dealing with this problem. HECDOC and the other three major libraries in the network should cooperate in creating a union catalogue of serials which might later be developed into a common serials database. The ultimate aim should be to produce a union catalogue of serials covering all university libraries in the country. The national database of articles in Turkish periodicals which is to be prepared by the National Library will be an important tool for satisfying requests for such items.

In order to deal with the increased volume of requests arising from their special role as major cooperating centres, the libraries of the Hacettepe University Medical Center and the Middle East Technical University would have to establish special interlending units equipped with photocopying and communications facilities.

All libraries participating in the network should adopt common procedures and forms to facilitate the smooth operation of the system.

It seems likely that the traditional mail system would remain the most used method of transmitting requests and documents for some time to come, since few of the participating libraries are in a position to benefit from new technologies such as telefacsimile at present. Even if they can obtain access to such facilities through their parent organizations, the cost of using them is a significant impediment. The unit cost per document transmitted is high, and even in developed countries such as the United States, telefacsimile is still not considered to be a cost-effective method of document supply in this context. Line points out that for cost-effective transmission the documents themselves need to be available in digital form, (20) which is rarely, if ever, the case where interlending requests are concerned. It is also necessary to consider whether document requests are sufficiently time-critical to justify the cost of using telefacsimile. In a telefax project (TALINET) carried out in the United States, it was found that about 28 percent of the requests submitted were time-critical. The rest could have been handled by conventional mail and still been delivered in time to be useful. (21) These considerations do not mean that telefacsimile cannot or should not be used at all. For the transmission of interlending requests, or of one-page documents in general, it is not only cost-effective but can also reduce the time required for the whole interlending procedure by about 50 percent, provided that

participating libraries already possess, or have ready access to, telefax facilities.

### CONCLUSION

The successful establishment of an interlending network for the sharing of serials collections among university libraries in Turkey will depend on a number of factors.

First, the ability of HECDOC to fulfil its role as the hub of the network is crucial. It appears at present, however, that HECDOC is not ready to assume the leadership of the network. Although it has an excellent serials collection of some 12,000 titles, it has been underutilized. As pointed out earlier, the total number of interlending requests made by university libraries is very low. The number of photocopy requests made by individual researchers in university libraries might have been much higher if the services of HECDOC had been better known by researchers, or better-publicized by HECDOC.

HECDOC's existing services need to be better promoted to reduce unit costs. The institution is also in desperate need of more financial resources. The number of personnel is not sufficient to handle the ever-increasing demand, and there is an urgent need to recruit more staff, both professional and para-professional, if the proposed network is to function effectively. The existing manual procedures need to be automated, if necessary by purchasing a ready-made serials control system.

Secondly, library processes and interlending procedures need to be standardized. This would help to develop an integrated communications environment for the sharing of serials among the network participants.

Finally, the best way of transmitting requests and documents should be studied and the mail system and other delivery systems used more effectively.

Better coordination and organization of existing information resources in Turkey would help foster the development of science and technology in general and interlibrary cooperation in particular. The proposed interlending network is but one way of starting this process.

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### Abstract

**Begins with a brief introduction to Turkish university libraries and goes on to outline the**

**principal interlending models. Proposes an interlibrary lending network model for sharing of serials collections among university libraries in Turkey. Discusses the various requirements of the proposed network.**

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## NEW PUBLICATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, all reviews and notices in this section are prepared by the editorial staff.

### ONLINE SOURCES.

Nicholas, David *and* Erbach, Gertrud **Online information sources for business and current affairs: an evaluation of Textline, NEXIS, Profile and DIALOG.** London, Mansell Publishing, 1989. 297p. diagrs. ISBN 0-7201-1878-6. £45.00.

As the authors state in their introduction, the intention behind this book is a simple one 'to raise online's profile, to draw media and people's attention to the great information opportunities that online systems present'. The book aims to provide a thorough understanding of the product.

The book is divided into six main sections, each of which analyzes the online systems—Textline, NEXIS, Profile, McCarthy Online and DIALOG—as information sources rather than bits of hardware and software. The authors believe that 'online systems are the libraries and reference works of the future and deserve to be seen in that light', and the comprehensiveness of their analyses supports their belief. The book provides stand-alone descriptions of hosts so that readers can view all the attributes of these systems (technical, financial, operational, retrieval and bibliographic) together. For ease of comparison and evaluation the same method of analysis is used for each host. A degree of prior knowledge is required but the authors think that although 'some elementary knowledge of reference works, postcoordinate searching, online systems and user needs' must be assumed, the book should not be beyond the motivated business person or journalist.

Each section of the book contains a number of tables and diagrams, analysis under the broad subject headings of introduction, organization of the database, coverage, database content, retrieval, displaying and printing data, costs, and conclusions and user evaluation. As well as references there is a list of the host's publications at the end of each section.

The idea for this publication arose from the authors' research project 'Information Seeking in an Information Society'—a major part of which surveyed the use of online systems by the media and the City of London finance houses. The book goes a long way towards its aim of explaining to such organizations how they could be getting more creative and innovative use from their online systems.

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