THE WORKSHOP ON THE "TURKISH LIS CURRICULA": A SUMMARY REPORT

by

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The Workshop on the "Turkish LIS Curricula" was organized by the IFLA's Section on Education and Training as part of its activities during the 61st IFLA Conference in Istanbul. Hosted by the Department of Library Science of the University of Istanbul, this workshop took place in the Faculty Board Room of the University on August 24, 1995. Some 50 educators and professionals attended the workshop.

Four papers were delivered during the workshop. Representatives of the three Turkish library schools provided some information about their respective programmes. In addition, a paper on intellectual freedom in Turkish library science curricula was also delivered.

The workshop was opened with a paper by Zafer Kizilkan of the Middle East Technical University Library on "Intellectual Freedom and the State of Library Science in Turkey." Kizilkan stated that "intellectual freedom is a prerequisite of all other kinds of freedoms" and the "freedom to express one's ideas, free access to such expressions by others without any restriction and facing no accusation or any punishment to any person for one's ideas and beliefs are basic issues of intellectual freedom." Kizilkan pointed out the relevant sections of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Human Rights Agreement, among others, with regards to intellectual freedom and argued that there are several laws, rules and regulations such as the Constitution of Turkey, the Press Act and the Anti-Terror Act which contain some clauses that conflict with intellectual freedom and freedom of the press. Kizilkan also drew attention to the relationship between intellectual freedom and the library. He provided some examples of censorship which restricts access to information by libraries.

More specifically, Kizilkan looked at if the issue of intellectual freedom is dealt with in the curricula of the Turkish library schools. In order to gather data, Kizilkan sent a questionnaire to library school graduates and interviewed the heads of departments of library science. He found out that a great majority of the respondents (88%) stated that they had not been educated for intellectual freedom and censorship and are in favor of a separate course on on this subject. More than half of the participants said they experienced censorship in the library where they worked. The heads of department and faculty also agreed that the subject should be dealt with within the curricula properly, although the majority of them (72%) did not think it as a separate course.

Kizilkan concluded that graduates of the Turkish library schools are not knowledgeable on the basic concepts, institutions and documents of intellectual freedom and censorship. He recommended that a separate course on intellectual freedom should be designed and the subject should be integrated with other courses.

In the rest of the workshop, speakers from three library schools (at Ankara, Hacettepe and Istanbul Universities) introduced their respective programmes.

Professor Aysel Yontar described the basic characteristics of the curriculum of the Department of Library Science of Istanbul University. She first summarized the university-level education system in Turkey and compared what she called classical universities (i.e., the ones modeled after the European universities) with the modern ones (i.e., the ones modeled after the US universities). She then presented some historical information about her Department and described the programmes.

The Department of Library Science of Istanbul University was founded by Professor Rudolf Juchhoff in 1964. It is the second oldest (after the one in Ankara University) library school in Turkey. Currently, the Department has two divisions: Librarianship and Documentation-Information. The former accepts

about 100 students while the latter does 25 every year. At present, the Department has a total of 12 faculty; two full-professors, one assistant professor, three lecturers and six research assistants.

The Department offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees. The undergraduate program usually takes four years (full-time) to complete. Most courses are required. (Prof. Yontar attached the curriculum of the undergraduate programmes to her paper which she handed out during the workshop.) Students complete three practica, each lasting one month, in different types of libraries during their undergraduate program. The master's program usually takes two years. Students are required to prepare a dissertation once they complete the class work. The doctoral program on the other hand takes about 4-5 years. Graduate students are accepted to the Department on the basis of a locally-administered entrance exams whereas undergraduate students shall pass the nation-wide university entrance exams. Graduates can get jobs at private and public sector libraries. Prof. Yontar emphasized that the Department lacks proper physical and technological facilities and needs more teaching staff. She also mentioned that students knowledge of foreign languages is not enough and suggested that an English language preparatory class lasting at least for a year should be established.

Professor Irfan Cakin, head of the Department of Library Science of the Hacettepe University, first summarized the history of the Department. The Department is the youngest one established in 1972 first as a graduate department offering M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. Later, in 1974, it began to offer bachelor's degree in librarianship as well. The objectives of the Department are (1) to educate and train students for the profession of library and information services; (2) to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of LIS; and (3) to provide services to library and information agencies and personnel.

The curriculum of the undergraduate program was developed with the help of Professor Thomas Minder of the Pittsburgh University and included courses on core subjects in librarianship such as cataloging and classification, reference services, research methods, library automation and systems analysis.

Prof. Cakin stated that although the curriculum of the Department has been revised continuously within the last 20 years, the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1981 has seriously affected the curriculum as it imposed certain changes. For example, departments had to double their student intake and discontinue the English preparatory classes. In addition, all three departments were asked to standardize their curricula. In order to comply with HEA's standardization requirement, three departments came together and worked on a reorganization plan which was later submitted to, and approved by, the Higher Education Council (HEC). According to the plan, departments decided to reorganize themselves under three divisions: Librarianship, Documentation and Information, and Archives. It was not until 1991, however, that the Department of Library Science at Hacettepe University was allowed to implement its reorganization plan.

Starting from the academic year of 1993-1994, Department accepted its first students to three divisions. The old programme will cease next year (1995-1996) when all the students accepted to the old program graduate.

The duration of the undergraduate program is also four years at Hacettepe. However, before they start the programme, students are required, if needed, to attend a year-long English Preparatory Class. Courses offered in the first two years are common to all three divisions. The third and fourth years will include specialized courses on Librarianship, Documentation and Information, and Archives. Here are some of the joint courses offered in the first two years: Introduction to Information Science, Communications and Society, Information Resources, Introduction to Computers, Organization of Information, Reference Work, Research Methods and Professional English. Prof. Cakin said that they developed a tentative program for the third and fourth years and work is under way to further revise it during the academic year to determine the specific courses to be offered. The revised program will be submitted to the University Senate for approval.

Prof. Cakin emphasized the importance of grant money for library schools and briefly summarized the projects completed at the Department. He said that the Department earned some $300,000 within the last couple of years from the projects undertaken. A modern computer lab was set up for students and staff with this money.

As of 1994-1995 academic year, the department has 16 full-time and 2 part-time staff. Of the 16, 13 have Ph.D. degrees. Almost half of the full-time staff received their graduate degrees from Western universities. The academic posts occupied by the full-time staff are as follows: five full-professors, one associate professor,
five assistant professors and five research assistants.

The number of students enrolled was 156 in the 1994-1995 academic year. Of 156, 133 were registered in the undergraduate program while 23 were in the graduate program (18 master's and six doctoral students).

Prof. Cakin also pointed out some of the problems with regards to education for librarianship in Turkey. He thinks that these problems stem from (1) the society; (2) universities; and (3) departments of librarianship. He gave several examples. For instance, he cited the lack of a national library and information policy, prevailing concept of library institution, reading habits, etc. in the first category; shortage of academic posts, increasing number of students, decreasing funds, etc. in the second category; and qualifications of the teaching staff (mainly with library degrees), methods of teaching (i.e., lectures), etc. in the third category.

The final speaker of the workshop was Professor Mustafa Akbulut, Head of the Department of Library Science of Ankara University. Prof. Akbulut started his presentation by summarizing the history of education for librarianship in Turkey. The first training course in the field of librarianship was organized by Fehmi Edhem Karatay, a Turkish librarian with a degree from France, in 1925-1926 and attended by some 30 participants in Istanbul. Later, in 1936, an Austrian librarian Professor Joseph Stummvoll organized a training course in Ankara when he came to set up a library for the Graduate Institute of Agriculture. It was followed by a training course organized by Aziz Berker, the then Director of Libraries, in 1941. However, it was not until mid-1950s that the first university-level education for librarianship was started in Turkey. With the help of Emily Dean who was then the director of the American Library in Ankara, the American Library Association and the Ford Foundation, the Institute of Librarianship was established in Ankara within Ankara University in the academic year of 1954-1955. Professor Robert B. Downs of Illinois University became the first director of the Institute. Adnan Otuken, founder of the Turkish National Library, delivered most of the lectures. In 1960, the Institute of Librarianship became a department within the University. Well-known American professors continued to teach at the Department until 1964. Finally, the Turkish staff took over the teaching responsibilities and Professor Osman Ersoy became the head of the Department. The Department of Library Science was reorganized in 1989 and three divisions were formed: Librarianship, Documentation and Information, and Archives Management.

Undergraduate programmes takes four years to complete and the courses offered in the first two years are common to all three divisions. Specialization begins in the third year. Some of the courses offered are as follows: Cataloging and Classification, Library Management, Information Technology, Networks, Research Techniques, Records management and so on. Some 75 students enroll in the undergraduate programmes every year. The Department also offers M.A. and Ph.D. degrees and accepts nine master's and four doctoral students every year.

Currently, the Department has 15 staff members (three full professors, three assistant professors, one lecturer, three specialists and five research assistants).

Prof. Akbulut completed his presentation by summarizing the major problems confronted such as lack of sufficient physical premises and technology for teaching purposes, demand for more teaching staff, and lack of teaching materials in Turkish. He also mentioned briefly about the future plans of the Department and added that they are trying to increase the expertise of their junior faculty members by sending them abroad, secure sufficient resources, and invite guest professors from other countries to teach in the areas in which they feel they are not so strong (i.e., Archives Management).

The Workshop ended with a Q/A session.