

THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS IN FIELD OF INFORMATION AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The non-governmental organizations are societal organizations that stem from various societal groups' and units' prompts to act together to achieve common goals. The non-governmental organizations create an important mechanism that reflects the degree of activities of societal groups (especially the professional groups) and this mechanism should be decisive in the decisions and practices of the profession. Professional associations have a great role in the development of a profession, the imposition of this profession on the society, the creation of professional standards and the participation in the provision of top-level decisions.

Information and Document Management is a discipline, based on the teaching of theories, methods and the techniques which provide the flow of registered information in all societal fields and which ensure the provision of information services, within the process of this flow, in libraries and information centers by the help of contemporary standards. The non-governmental organizations and associations founded in the field of Information and Document Management in Turkey aim at creating solutions to the problems of the profession, introducing all segments of the society to the profession, imposing the profession on the society, and to make this field of profession really professional and really expert.

The aim of this study is to examine the development processes and present situations of the non-governmental organizations and the professional associations which have been founded in the field of librarianship in Turkey. Within this context, firstly the basic concepts related to the subject and the concepts related to the non-governmental society will be evaluated. And secondly, the professional associations which provide services in the field of librarianship in Turkey will be taken into consideration. To achieve the aim of this study; Turkish Librarians' Association, Association of University and Research Librarians, Turkish Association of School Libraries and Balkan Libraries Union, which are important non-governmental organizations in the field of librarianship will be examined in terms of their establishment processes, their goals and their missions, their activity fields and the difficulties they encounter.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Although there are different definitions of the civil society concept, the concept has been put forward to have three common dimensions. The first of them is the “public space” which depends on the pluralism of the institutions, organizations and the thoughts. The second is the “privacy” which tells the autonomous individual moral choice. As the third dimension, there is a legal system which includes a number of basic rights that are required to protect and to develop the social space. In this connection, actualisation of the rights system in a legal and institutional order and attaining balance to this system have a central importance for the formation of civil society. Thus, the rights system makes the civil society an autonomous space in relation with the state. While the state is a precondition, the rights system creates a social space in order for the individual to realize himself/herself and restricts the scope of the action of the state in unison with continuing the presence of this social space. The state is responsible for protecting and watching these rights (Gençkaya, 1998: 103).

Non-governmental organizations are identified to be legal and democratic mechanisms which the individuals generate by coming together and by building an organized structure. The individuals create these organizations in order to reach solidarity in an individual-centered society (Yerasimos, 2001: 13).

One of the most important features of a profession is the members' coming together to combine their efforts and to help themselves in order to solve the problems. In any profession, the efforts for providing the internal cohesion and the integration of the members of the profession are seen. As well gaining status in front of the community or legitimization by continuous efforts are considered as a determining purpose. Briefly, the individuals who have a particular formation of expertise try to create a market for these expertise fields and to control these fields (Tanık, 1984: 1581). The professional associations have important tasks of developing a profession, making the society accept this profession and providing participation in provision of top-level decisions.

Information and Document Management is a discipline which examines, researches and develops the methods and the processes that provide the transmission of information to all segments of the society in free, uninterrupted, true, fast and neutral manners. This discipline depends on teaching theories, methods and techniques that enable the flow of registered information through all social fields and that enable delivering the information services within this process of flow by modern standards in libraries and information centers. In this context, Information and Document Management discipline aims to make the society adopt the profession of librarianship as a form of contemporary systems; to find solutions to the problems of the profession; to introduce the profession to the all segments of the society and to make the society accept the profession. Therefore any types of associations and non-governmental organizations which will move the profession to a real

professionalization and a specialization have a great importance in relation with the future of the profession of librarianship.

The ideal purposes and the targets of an association which is to operate in the field of Information and Document Management are considered to be aligned as below (Tonta, 1985: 31):

- To bring all the individuals who work in the field of Information and Document Management or who have an interest in the field together.
- To raise the status of the profession.
- To promote the profession by bookstalls, conferences and meetings.
- To arrange seminars and conferences in the field of Information and Document Management.
- To work to develop the professional dignity and the working conditions in the field of Information and Document Management.
- To try to make laws of librarianship.
- To create and to publish a professional literature.
- To study and to investigate for the development of the discipline of Information and Document Management
- To improve vocational training by establishing suitable training institutions.
- To improve the bibliographic researches and to publish them.
- To study on the latest innovations in the field of Information and Document Management.
- To make the members build a close relationship with themselves, top management, the important experts in other fields and the members of the other national and international associations.
- To work for the standardization of the applications in the field of Information and Document Management.
- To work for the standardization of the equipment in the Information and Document Centers.
- To find solutions to the professional problems.

In western countries, the associations in the field of Information and Document Management are socially effective and also they make decisions that affect the profession and the members of the profession directly. These associations which reflect Western Civilization's understanding of the civil society aim to handle the profession in a professional manner, to improve the specialization of the profession and to develop the profession (Akay, 2007: 1). The best example of these associations is the American Library Association (ALA) which was founded in 1876. ALA is the most powerful library association all over the world and it controls all the activities in the field of Information and Document Management; makes decisions about the professional issues and applies these decisions.

2. THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS THAT OPERATE IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT IN TURKEY

The first efforts to establish associations in the field of librarianship in Turkey started when the understanding of modern library began to develop in the country. The first attempt to establish a librarianship association in Turkey was the establishment of the National Library in 1948. Adnan Ötüken, the founder of the National Library, had an important role in these first efforts. As a result of these efforts, the Turkish Librarians' Association (TLA) was established.

In 1953, the librarians who lived in İstanbul, established The İstanbul Librarians Association. This association continued its work until 1960. But in 1961 Turkish Librarians' Association (TLA) got organized as a branch, and as a result The İstanbul Librarians Association dissolved itself, after continuing to work for a short while. On 21 January 1967 Turkey Libraries Librarians, Officers and Employees' Union was established. The aims of this union were to preserve the librarians in terms of cultural and economic aspects and to develop the profession of librarianship. This union continued its work until 1971 by efforts of a limited number of members and thereafter stopped its activities. The Alumni Association of the University Department of Librarianship which was established on 28 April 1970 made several studies on the subject of librarianship. This association dissolved itself after 12 September 1980 (Tonta, 1985: 33).

In the following sections, the establishment processes, purposes and missions and the activity fields of The Turkish Librarians' Association, The Association of University and Research Librarians, The Turkish Association of School Libraries and The Balkan Libraries Union are going to be explained. All of these associations are still continuing to operate; have corporate identities and are important non-governmental organizations in the field of librarianship in Turkey.

2.1. The Turkish Librarians' Association

The Turkish Librarians' Association (TLA) which is the oldest and the most fundamental non-governmental organization in the field of librarianship in Turkey was founded under the leadership of Adnan Ötüken on 19 November 1949 in Ankara. The purposes of this association have been to gather the librarians in Turkey under the umbrella of a professional organization, and to create an environment where these librarians can make their voices heard, can discuss their problems and can find solutions to their problems. By the establishment of The Turkish Librarians' Association, an important step has been taken on improving the perception of the librarianship as a profession in Turkey.

In the early years of the TLA, the activities of the association were limited to Ankara. After the charter changes in 1961, the TLA got the opportunity to open branches in the provinces and districts of Turkey. Today, TLA has 21 branches and 1822 members. Also continuously working groups which study on the various fields of the profession operate under the umbrella of TLA. The center and the branches of the TLA have been arranging various professional organizations and activities, such as conferences, panels, training seminars and workshops.

One of the most important services of the TLA in the field of librarianship profession is the publication of The Journal of Turkish Librarianship. The journal started broadcasting in 1952 under the name of "Bulletin of the Turkish Librarians' Association" in order to make scientific and professional publications in the fields of librarianship, information, science and archives. Since 1987 the journal has been issued quarterly under the name of "Turkish Librarianship". Taking place among the oldest 30 journals which have been published under the world standards in the field of Information and Document Management, The Turkish Librarianship resumes broadcasting as a respectable periodical at the international platform.

The Turkish Librarians' Association, whose mission is to increase the society's awareness of the librarianship profession by creating a participative and a sharing understanding and solidarity in the field of information services, has been closely following the developments in the world and has been sustaining its studies under a modern, rational and progressive viewpoint and by the help of its fast-spreading branches across the country and of its increasing number of members (<http://www.kutuphaneci.org.tr>, 2013).

2.2. The Association of University and Research Librarians

The Association of University and Research Librarians (ÜNAK) was established on 9 August 1991 in Ankara by the regulation prepared by 14 founding members from university and research libraries, documentations and information centers and private libraries. The purposes of this association are to follow the researches, studies and developments in the field of Information and Document Management; to help develop the quality of the services in the field so that these services' qualities meet contemporary standards; to examine and to find solutions to the problems of the field; to contribute to the professional development of the individuals working in this field; and to support the social and the cultural improvement of Turkey.

The Association of University and Research Librarians has produced various services and has implemented several activities since it was founded and these services and activities are as below:

- To arrange activities for training and co-operation, such as conferences, seminars, panels, symposiums, in order to support the professional development of the personnel working in the information centers,
- To edit and to publish original and translated books, journals and bulletins which have been written on professional subjects and which have especially depended on contemporary developments,
- To encourage and to support the original researches on professional subjects,
- To provide and to support professional solidarity, to contribute to the solutions of the problems and to advise and to arbitrate when required.
- To accept and carry out projects for the institutions that require this help on professional subjects,
- To cooperate with similar organizations,
- To create solutions to meet the requirements in relation with the use of information and communication technologies in the professional field,

- To arrange social organizations,
- To buy, sell, or rent real estate in order to finance its purposes.

Since it was founded, The Association of University and Research Libraries has performed scientific activities, has published reports and has made studies; and thus has undertaken an important task of announcing the improvements and the problems in the field of librarianship and information science in Turkey to large masses.

In April 2000, "Information World", a scientific peer-reviewed journal, started broadcasting as the official periodical of The Association of University and Research Libraries. As well, the association published the UNAK Newsletter in June 1997 and created a list of discussion which is referred to ÜNAK-List in 2001. By creating this list, the association contributed to improve the effectiveness of the professional communication. Today the association has over than 700 members (www.unak.org.tr, 2013).

2.3. Turkish Association of School Libraries

Turkish Association of School Libraries was founded in 2000. In 2000, the school librarians participated in the INET-TR meeting and created a communications platform for school librarians. Under the umbrella of this platform, cooperation and sharing increased and significant successes were achieved. Thus, this platform made a significant contribution to actualise School Libraries Regulation which was broadcasted in Official Gazette on 22 August 2001.

As a result of the requirement for activating the information accumulation and the studies that developed over time, the school librarians held a meeting and founded the Istanbul Group of School Librarians in 2002. The group has come together twice a year since 2002 and the members have shared their experiences and knowledge, as well as looking for solutions to the professional problems. The most important activities performed by this group are three national conferences, which are explained below:

- I. National Conference of School Librarians which was performed on 5 July 2003 under the hospitality of Robert College.
- II. National Conference of School Librarians: From Information Literacy to Lifelong Learning, which was performed on 27 June 2009 under the hospitality of Robert College.
- III. National Conference of School Librarians: Advanced Applications in School Libraries which was performed on 3 July 2010 under the hospitality of Robert Private Bilkent Primary School.

After the III. National Conference of School Librarians, the efforts to establish a school librarians association started and as a result Turkish Association of School Libraries was founded on 17 December 2010.

The basic purpose of Turkish Association of School Libraries is to contribute to democratization of the society and to socially, culturally and economically development of the country, by ensuring the qualitatively and quantitatively development of workers and services in libraries, information and media centers. In this context, Turkish Association of School Libraries have been arranging collaborative organizations, such as conferences, seminars, panels, symposiums and workshops to ensure the professional development of librarians.

The missions of Turkish Association of School Libraries are to make librarians nationally take part in lifelong learning activities and to arrange various activities in order for students to learn learning and to take advantage of modern library services. In spite of being a young association, Turkish Association of School Libraries gives hope for the future (<http://www.okulkutuphanecileri.org>, 2013).

2.4. Balkan Libraries Union

Balkan Libraries Union was founded on 29 July 2009 in Edirne by the participation of 10 institutions from 6 Balkan countries. The purposes of the union are to increase the communication and cooperation between the state, public, university, research and private libraries which operate in Balkans; to preserve the cultural heritage in Balkans; to provide common access to resources in order to share the collections in libraries in Balkan countries; and to increase the quality of activities in relation with Information and Document Management and archives.

The activities, which Balkan Libraries Union aim to perform in order to realise its purposes are explained below:

- To carry out works to determine the common desires, purposes and problems of libraries in Balkan countries.
- To realise cooperations with other national and international associations, organizations and government agencies.
- To arrange activities as meetings, seminars, workshops and projects.
- To publish periodicals.
- To carry out professional works not only for increasing the cooperation between the libraries in Balkan countries, also for increasing the cooperation with the other European libraries.
- To lead the coordination and cooperation efforts in order to ensure the mutual share of experiences of knowledge professionals, who work in information centers in Balkan countries.

The Union has 49 member institutions from 9 countries. Within the union there are 24 institutions from Turkey; 8 institutions from Bulgaria; 1 institution from Albania; 1 institution from Bosnia and Herzegovina; 1 institution from Kosovo; 3 institutions from Macedonia; 1 institution from Moldova; 7 institutions from Romania and 2 institutions from Serbia.

CONCLUSION

The associations and non-governmental organizations that operate in the field of Information and Document Management in Turkey, have been stronger day by day and have performed important professional activities. The activities performed by these institutions give hope for the future. But, it is a fact that there are serious problems in field of Information and Document Management. The non-governmental organizations in the field of librarianship have been performing activities to control information services, to develop contemporary professional applications and standards, but these efforts are inadequate.

The common problems that the associations in the field of Information and Document Management in Turkey encounter are explained below:

- The individuals work in the field of Information and Document Management in Turkey don't claim the professional associations.
- There are financial inabilities.
- There are problems in relation with operation and control.
- The associations have a lack of coordination and cooperation within and between themselves.

The last problem has a great importance in term of the future of non-governmental organizations that operate in the field of Information and Document Management in Turkey. In fact, the cooperation and coordination between these associations will make them stronger. A presence of a strong civil society platform is very important in terms of the librarianship profession and the society. A possible strong cooperation will make the associations come together under the umbrella of a federation and thus the effectiveness of these association will increase.

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