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Library cooperation in Turkey: the results of a survey of ILL librarians in higher education

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to investigate library cooperation among the libraries of Turkish higher education institutions in the changing global environment.

Design/methodology/approach – This study has been carried out with ILL librarians working in state and foundation university libraries in Turkey. The survey was sent to 140 inter library loan (ILL) librarians who were asked to answer 35 questions both open and closed. There were 100 responses which is an excellent response rate of 72 per cent. It was conducted with VETI (Data Collection and Statistics), which is a web-based form application developed by Istanbul Technical University.

Findings – Turkish libraries are taking the opportunities offered by technical developments to serve their users with instant information by providing access to electronic resources and transferring their collections to electronic media. Reconstruction of ILL services to fulfill users' needs is inevitable because of the increasing expectations of users and emerging alternatives to access information.

Originality/value – This is the first systematic national investigation into the state of ILL in Turkish libraries.

Keywords Survey, Higher education, Turkey, Resource sharing, Document supply, ILL

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The concept of “cooperation” can be defined as individuals acting together by uniting their strengths for a common purpose. We see that mankind has realized cooperation as an obligation of communal living since the beginning of history. Cooperation has enabled individuals and institutions to accomplish their objectives more effectively.

In libraries, cooperation enables cheaper, faster and better services to users. The increase in electronic media and libraries obtaining data processing, storage and communication technologies have facilitated the sharing of electronic information resources (Tonta, 1999, p. 496).

The experiences, behaviors and expectations of users change in response to these developments. According to Dupuis (1999, p. 289), academic libraries are the primary institutions most affected by this change. The increasing expectations of users and new options emerging for access to knowledge make restructuring of the ILL service inevitable. In Turkey, these changes are followed and discussed in ILL circles.

In this paper, we aim to assess the status of ILL services in university libraries using the results of a survey conducted with ILL librarians in academic institutions. However, before this, we will give a brief overview of the current Turkish ILL system.

The document supply and interlibrary loan systems in Turkey

When we look at the history of sharing resources in Turkish libraries, we see that the first studies were conducted for public libraries in 1961 (Alkış and Yılmaz, 2008). Regulations governing the ILL of printed books were published in the official gazette in 1981. The legal regulation and standardization of all libraries was considered in 1988 but remained as a draft (GDLP, 1988, p. 25). In 2009, The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications prepared a cooperation protocol between Public and University libraries which was sent to all university rectors. However, this study remained as a project.

The foundations of sharing resources in academic institutions were laid at a meeting of University Library and Documentation Heads in 1985. Printed forms were created and began use in 1987. These forms provided standardization for the interlibrary loan system and were prepared in accordance with IFLA standards and used for many years.

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Many university libraries moved the forms into an electronic environment or started to accept requests in an electronic environment (Yörü, 2008, p. 164). In 2007, a Cooperation Working Group of ANKOS (Anatolia Libraries Consortium) developed and shared the Higher Education Institution Libraries Resource Sharing Directive (ANKOS, 2011). In 2008, KITS (Interlibrary Cooperation Tracking System) that they developed was implemented with a membership of seven universities. KITS covers all the academic resource-sharing processes and is free and available to the current 172 members. KITS centralizes all document supply operations and processes in different formats (print, postal, fax, e-mail, computer files, etc.). When institutions decide to participate in the KITS system, they no longer need to use customized document supply processes. Institutions can manage all resource-sharing activities online (Cimen *et al.*, 2010, p. 60). Three other systems should be noted:

- 1 A fee-based system – Turkey Document Supply and Loan System (TUBESS)[1] was formed in 2011 to facilitate resource sharing between academic libraries; its aim being to encourage resource sharing by photocopy, electronic and physical loans.
- 2 ULAKBIM (The National Academic Network and Information Centre)[2][3] was founded by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey – TUBITAK in 1996. This Centre provides nationwide information and document services both electronic and traditional to meet information needs and contribute to academic information production (CABİM, 2015).
- 3 UBSS (National Document Supply System) is a nationwide system which enables users to request documents online (article, book, project, standard, international thesis, etc.) both national and international. Users can obtain materials in our ULAKBIM database, international theses and e-book document supply services within Turkey (UBSS, 2015).

As well as these systems, there are university libraries using OCLC World Share, the British Library and IFLA vouchers for international ILL.

The survey conducted with ILL academic librarians

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the views and suggestions about the service that ILL librarians provide and to evaluate the results. The survey questionnaire can be found at the end of this article.

The scope of the research

This study has been carried out with ILL librarians working in state and foundation university libraries in Turkey. The survey with 35 open and closed questions was sent to 140 ILL librarians. There were 100 responses which is an excellent response rate of 72 per cent. It was conducted with VETI (Data Collection and Statistics), which is a web-based form application developed by Istanbul Technical University.

Findings and comment

Participants were asked questions about the library, ILL staff and service, as well as ILL requests within the country and from abroad and new developments.

Questions about libraries and ILL librarians

The first seven questions concerned their job description, vocational training and their institutions. In all, 67 per cent of those responding worked at a state university, while 33 per cent were at a foundation university. In all, 48 per cent worked in small libraries with collections of up to 10,000 books, 21 per cent were at medium-sized libraries with 50,000-100,000 books, 19 per cent with 100,000-500,000 and 8 per cent with over 500,000. Of all, 89 per cent have at least an undergraduate or post graduate degree in librarianship, so it is pleasing that a high number of staff is trained. 72 per cent of participants were solely responsible for all ILL activities in their institution. *One person may be sufficient for the institutions where the number of people working in the library is 1-10 (55 per cent); however, it will be insufficient for the institutions with 30 or above (11 per cent) library staff. That one person manages the ILL service in large institutions with a high number of staff might negatively affect the quality of service.* The percentage of people answering “yes” to “Is ILL service your only area of responsibility in the library?” is quite low (4 per cent); 96 per cent of the participants work at different services besides ILL service. *These percentages suggest that large-scale libraries are understaffed with ILL librarians.*

Questions about the ILL service

The majority of the participants received ILL requests from users via e-mail (48 per cent). The percentage of the participants receiving requests through an integrated ILL module is 27 per cent. Only 10 per cent receive printed ILL requests. The majority of requests (66 per cent) are met within a good time of 1-3 days (Figure 1). Most institutions charge for ILL requests made from both their own users and other universities although a minority does not charge anything to the user (17 per cent). The criteria in choosing a supplier are determined first by the collection content, then by the speed of meeting the request, the proximity and, finally, the payment policy (Figure 2).

Questions about domestic ILL requests

The institutions participating in the survey mostly use KITS for domestic ILL requests (54 per cent). KITS is preferable because of its simple user interface; it is free of charge and has a high number of members (172). The second most used system is TUBESS at 35 per cent (Figure 3). A clear majority of institutions share e-articles through ILL (67 per cent) but a

Figure 1 What is your average turnaround time?

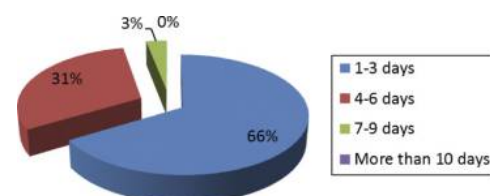


Figure 2 How do you decide on the supplier institution when making a request?

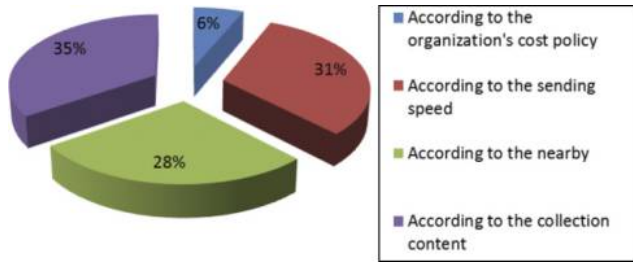
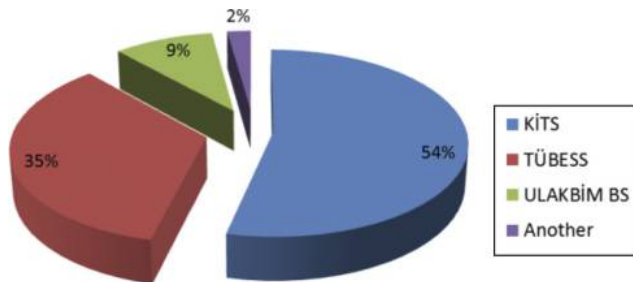


Figure 3 Which systems do you use to supply domestic ILL requests

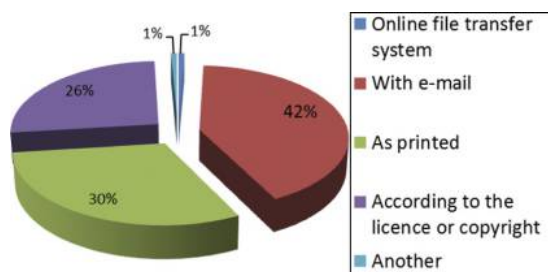


third do not. Users are mostly not charged for e-articles (91 per cent), and the speed of meeting domestic requests is quite high with just over half within 1-3 days (Table D). Articles are mostly sent to users through the file transfer system of KiTS, but 25 per cent are via e-mail. Sending through e-mail is the most preferred way to send the article to the user (42 per cent), but 30 per cent prefer to give users the printed article and 26 per cent deliver in accordance with the license and copyright constraints. Thus, while ILL librarians choose the fastest methods to meet the needs of their users, they also pay attention to license and copyright issues (Figure 4). The vast

Table I How many days does it take to supply requests for Turkey?

Categories	(%)
1-3 days	51
4-6 days	44
7-10 days	5
More than 10 days	0

Figure 4 How do you submit the article requests you have met from other institutions to the user in your institution?



majority of libraries receive and send less than 500 ILL requests annually (Table II).

Questions about ILL requests from abroad

A clear majority of the participants in the survey do not provide their users with publications from abroad (73 per cent), the reasons being expense, discouraging requests from patrons, lack of staff knowledge and commitment. Those that provide this service do so through OCLC World Share, IFLA Vouchers and the British Library (Figure 5). Conversely, the majority (72 per cent) of respondents do not send publications abroad (Table III). Those that do send via e-mail (16 per cent) and 5 per cent use OCLC's Article Exchange. This finding shows us that article exchange systems which are quite user-friendly and secure are not commonly used in Turkey compared to e mail. While 10 per cent of the institutions sending publications abroad through ILL do not charge a fee 12 per cent of them do charge a standard fee for shipment, photocopying, etc. The time taken to receive requested items from abroad is shown in Table V. However, the number of publications sent and provided from abroad is fairly low (Table IV).

Table II How many requests do you "Receive" and "Send" within Turkey annually?

No. of requests categories	% of libraries that receive		% of libraries that send	
	For books	For articles	For books	For articles
Less than 100	62	83	75	91
100-500	34	14	17	7
500-1,000	5	3	4	2
1,000-3,000	0	0	2	0
More than 3,000	0	0	1	0

Figure 5 Which supplier do you use for international requests?

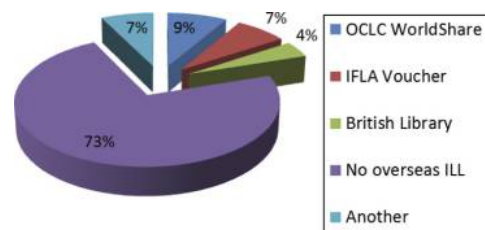


Table III Which method do you mainly use for international requests?

Categories	Receive (%)	Send (%)
Article exchange	5	5
Ariel, Odyssey, etc.	1	0
E-mail	15	16
Fax	2	1
Post-office	6	4
No overseas ILL	67	72
Another	3	2

Table IV How many international requests do you "Receive" and "Send" annually?

No. of requests	Receive (%)		Send (%)	
	Books	Articles	Books	Articles
Less than 100	86	79	87	94
100-500	14	14	13	6
500-1,000	0	0	0	0
1,000-3,000	0	7	0	0
3,000+	0	0	0	0

Table V How many days to receive international requests?

Days	Books (%)	Articles (%)
1-3	13	20
4-6	13	30
7-9	13	30
10+	60	20

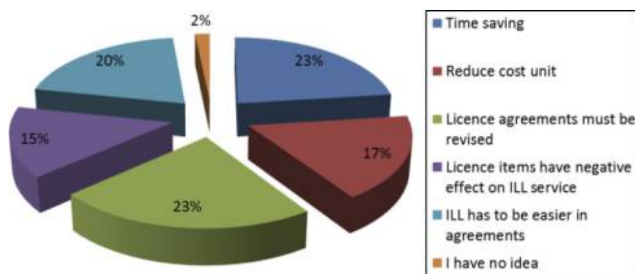
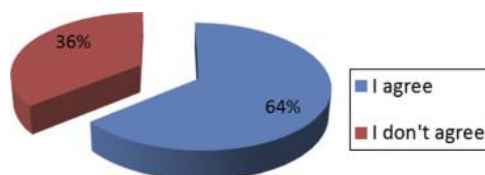
Questions about the new trends in ILL services

E-resources

The respondents felt that e-resources have improved the service by reducing the processing time and the cost of document supply, but the ILL terms in licensing agreements are restrictive and need to be revised. In particular, the frequent need to print from e-resources is detrimental to the ILL service (Figure 6). When purchasing e-resources, library managers and consortia should negotiate clauses in the contracts that allow for e-ILL.

Two-thirds of the participants (64 per cent) agree that the present copyright laws and licensing agreements have a negative impact on the ILL service (Figure 7).

The participants who felt that license agreements and copyright law were too restrictive were asked for possible

Figure 6 How does the increase in e-resources in the library collections affect the document supply service?**Figure 7** Do Copyright Laws and Licensing Agreements influence ILL service negatively?

solutions. (Q 30) Here are some of the more relevant suggestions:

1 Nowadays, the environment where we have access to knowledge has changed; there has been a fast transition from printed resources to electronic media. However, the present copyright laws and licensing agreements have not changed in parallel with this, which is a conflict. Copyright laws and licensing agreements restrict the sharing of e-sources. Rearranging licensing agreements in order to facilitate ILL service will improve the effectiveness of the ILL service. This is the view mentioned most frequently along with:

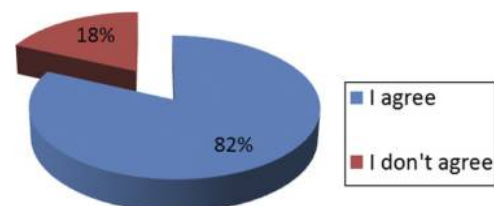
- Different licensing models need to be developed for ILL.
- That academic articles and associated material are downloaded into open and available repositories is important in terms of an ILL service.
- There should be privileges facilitating ILL service in electronic databases; it should be compulsory to use free tokens for ILL.
- The purpose of libraries is to enable the sharing of knowledge. Obstacles posed for ILL should be removed from the contracts negotiated with the firms providing e-resources. University libraries should adopt a clear position with these decisions taken collectively with other institutions.

Open access

A great majority (82 per cent) of the respondents agree that open access is important for the ILL service (Figure 8).

Question 31 asks if open access is important for the ILL service (Figure 8) and Question 32 asks for their reasons for thinking so. Here are some of them:

- The essence of open access in an ILL service is resource sharing. Saving on time and money is achieved while providing a service for the user.
- As it is possible to reach the resource needed speedily, open access is important.
- The duty of ILL librarians is to find any resource which our user wants. Sharing information available to everyone facilitates our job.
- ILL only provides information in a certain format through a system and affects a limited user group, while open access is intended for a global group.
- When there is no legal risk with open access, we find no obstacle to supplying a request. We search for the article or the book requested from us in open access environments. If it is available in open access, then we supply it from there. This is important in terms of reducing the workload of ILL.

Figure 8 Is open access important for the ILL service?

Although Turkish ILL librarians agree that open access is important for the ILL service, the number of requests met by open access in recent years is not all that high; 47 per cent of the participants have never satisfied a request from open access (Figure 9). Based on this finding, we can say that it is necessary to emphasize the importance of open access more and raise awareness about it.

Supplying difficulties

Rare materials (29 per cent) are seen as difficult to supply followed by theses (23 per cent), but electronic resources at 43 per cent are the most difficult to supply (Table VI).

Further comments

We asked the participants to state their further comments on electronic document supply and the ILL service as practiced within the framework of traditional document supply in the "Further Comments" part of our survey. A summary appears below:

- The participants consider that there is no common standard for the ILL service provided within Turkish universities and that institutional policies are not clear; different charging policies for shipment create problems; some universities charge very high shipment prices which is the biggest problem with resource sharing.
- When an institution's policies and licensing agreements affect e-resource sharing (e-articles, theses etc.) as distinct from printed resource sharing, it should define these policies clearly.
- Some librarians think that an integrated national system like OCLC in USA with a broader scope needs to be developed rather than systems like KITS and TUBESS
- Some participants believe that ILL librarians need to focus and work on the service to make it more productive and user-friendly by abandoning the idea that it is a peripheral service.

Figure 9 How many requests have you obtained via open access in recent years?

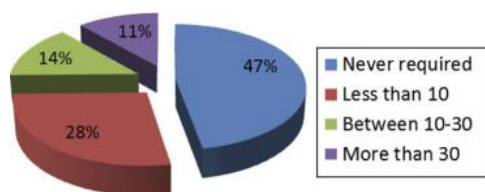


Table VI What kind of resources do you have most difficulty in supplying?

Type	Replies	(%)
E-books	43	26
E-papers	27	17
Rare materials	48	29
Theses	38	23
Printed resources	6	4
Another	1	1

Recommendations and conclusion

In today's world where information and information resources are increasing rapidly, it does not seem possible for libraries to buy whatever publication they want especially with their limited budget. Though ILL has been declining in some countries, in the case of Turkey, it is becoming increasingly important to use the service effectively, as libraries need to manage their resources carefully while supplying their users efficiently and effectively.

When we look at the historical development, we noted many examples of interlibrary cooperation that were started in our country. While some of them achieved their aims, some remained a theory or were short-lived. Even though consortia formations and resource sharing were unsatisfactory, there were some positive improvements after a national union catalogue helped to facilitate the ILL service, especially after the 2000s.

The ILL service in Turkey has started to compare favorably with other countries thanks to these improvements. However, there is work to do to provide a more efficient and successful service:

- The service should be provided by personnel who enjoy their job, are qualified and only responsible for this service. According to the survey, only a small number of librarians have ILL as their sole duty. That they work on the ILL service as secondary to their basic responsibilities is detrimental to the quality of the service. For a good ILL service, experienced and dedicated librarians are needed. Having managers committed to these issues is important.
- There is no official national resource sharing policy in our country. The only study on that is the Resource Sharing Instruction prepared by the ANKOS cooperation group. Institutions should determine their policies on document supply more clearly, especially given the complexities of e-document supply. ILL librarians still have difficulty in providing rare collection, e-books, theses and e-articles.
- There needs to be an allocation for ILL in the library budgets.
- The importance of a union catalogue for ILL is known. The available collective catalogue is inadequate and needs to be revised.
- The ILL service should be based on standards rather than an institution's own rules. There is a view that we must have a common system that processes ILL requests more effectively.
- E-document supply is a new concept in Turkey as it is in other countries. That is why we need to develop and improve this service which will differ from traditional methods. We have not yet come up with creative solutions, but these can be developed through workshops and committees.

Notes

- 1 Available at: www.tubess.gov.tr/
- 2 Available at: <http://ulakbim.tubitak.gov.tr/tr/hizmetlerimiz/ulusal-belge-saglama-sistemi>

- 3 Available at: <http://ulakbim.tubitak.gov.tr/tr/hizmetlerimiz/cabim-bilgi-belge-hizmetleri-0>

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Further reading

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Appendix 1. Survey questions

Dear ILL librarian

This questionnaire will be the data source for the research titled "Collaboration between Libraries in Turkey from the Perspective of ILL Librarians of the Higher Education Institutions".

Your involvement by thoroughly answering the questionnaire has a great importance for the success of the survey and the work. Your answers to the questionnaires will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purpose. Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sema Çelikbas (Istanbul technical university)

Filiz ekingen flores mamondi (Bogazici university)

Questions about the library and ILL

- 1 What is the type of the university you work at?
 - Foundation University; and
 - State University.
- 2 How many people work in your library?
 - 1-10;

- 11-20;
 - 21-30; and
 - 30 and up.
- 3 What is the total number of books in your library?
 - Smaller than 10,000;
 - 10,000-50,000;
 - 50,001-100,000;
 - 100,001-500,000; and
 - Bigger than 500,000
 - 4 What is your degree in?
 - Librarianship graduate/undergraduate; and
 - Another.
 - 5 Is ILL your only area of responsibility in the library?
 - Yes; and
 - No.
 - 6 Please state how many years you have worked as an ILL attendant.
 - Less than 2 years;
 - 2-5 years;
 - 5-10 years;
 - 10-20 years; and
 - More than 20 years.
 - 7 How many people work at ILL department in your library?
 - 1;
 - 2; and
 - More than 3.

Questions about ILL service

- 8 How do you receive ILL requests from users?
 - Integrated module to ILL;
 - By e-mail;
 - Case-specific software;
 - Printed ILL form;
 - By fax; and
 - Another
- 9 What is your average turnaround time?
 - 1-3 days;
 - 4-6 days;
 - 7-9 days; and
 - More than 10 days.
- 10 Do you charge any fee to users for the ILL service?
 - Charge for all requests;
 - Charge for only papers;
 - Shipping fee for book requests; and
 - No charge from user.
- 11 Do you charge a fee for the ILL requests from the other universities?
 - Fee for photocopy and scanning;
 - Just for posting expenses; and
 - Papers are free.
- 12 How do you decide on the supplier institution while making a request?
 - According to the organization's cost policy;
 - According to the sending speed;
 - According to the near by; and
 - According to the collection content.

Questions about domestic ILL requests

- 13 Which systems do you use to supply domestic ILL requests?
- KITS;
 - TUBESS;
 - ULAKBIM BS; and
 - Another.
- 14 Which is the most preferred transfer method for the articles (e-paper, printed) requested domestically
- KITS Secure file transfer;
 - TUBESS;
 - ULAKBIM BS;
 - E-mail;
 - Mail; and
 - Fax.
- 15 How do you submit the article requests you have met from other institutions to the user in your institution?
- Online file transfer system;
 - With e-mail;
 - As printed;
 - According to the license or copyright; and
 - Another.
- 16 Do you share e-articles through ILL?
- Yes, we share; and
 - No, we do not share.
- 17 Do you charge a fee for sharing e-articles?
- Yes; and
 - No.
- 18 How many days does it take to supply the requests you make within the country?
- 1-3 days;
 - 4-6 days;
 - 7-9 days; and
 - More than 10 days.
- 19 What is the approximate number of the requests you get within the country in a year? Books and articles
- Less than 100;
 - 100-500;
 - 500-1,000;
 - 1,000-3,000; and
 - More than 3,000.
- 20 What is the approximate number of requests you send within the country in a year? Books and Articles
- Less than 100;
 - 100-500;
 - 500-1,000;
 - 1,000-3,000; and
 - More than 3,000.

Questions about ILL requests from abroad

- 21 Which systems do you use for the requests from abroad?
- OCLC World Share;
 - IFLA Voucher;
 - British Library Document Supply Service;
 - No overseas ILL; and
 - Another.
- 22 For the articles (e-paper / printed) requested from abroad which is the most preferred transfer method?
- Article exchange;
 - Ariel, odyssey, etc.;

- E-mail;
 - Fax;
 - Mail;
 - No Overseas ILL; and
 - Another.
- 23 Through which way do you mostly send the article requests (e-article/printed articles) abroad?
- Article exchange;
 - Ariel, odyssey, etc.;
 - E-mail;
 - Fax;
 - Mail;
 - No Overseas ILL; and
 - Another.
- 24 In how many days do you obtain the requests you make from abroad? Books and articles
- 1-3 days;
 - 4-6 days;
 - 7-9 days; and
 - More than 10.
- 25 What is the approximate number of requests you get from abroad in a year? Books and articles
- Less than 100;
 - 100-500;
 - 500-1,000;
 - 1,000-3,000; and
 - More than 3,000.
- 26 What is the approximate number of requests you send abroad in a year? Books and articles
- Less than 100;
 - 100-500;
 - 500-1,000;
 - 1,000-3,000; and
 - More than 3,000.
- 27 Do you charge a fee for the ILL requests you send abroad?
- No. We do not charge;
 - We charge a standard fee;
 - We charge for the cost of photocopying, shipping, etc., fees; and
 - We do not send any items to abroad.

Questions about the new trends in ILL services

- 28 How does the increase in the e-resources in the library collections affect document supply service?
- Time saving;
 - Reduce cost unit;
 - License agreements must be revised;
 - License [inodot]terms have negative effect on ILL service;
 - ILL has to be easier in agreements; and
 - I have no idea.
- 29 Copyright Laws and Licensing Agreements influence ILL service negatively.
- I agree; and
 - I do not agree.
- 30 If your answer to Question 29 was “I agree”, what could be your proposed solutions? Please specify.
Comment
- 31 Open access is important for ILL service.

- I agree; and
 - I do not agree.
- 32 Please specify your reason to agree or disagree to the question 31.
Comment]
- 33 What is the number of requests you have obtained from open access in the recent year?
- Never required;
 - Less than 10;
 - Between 10-30; and
 - More than 30.
- 34 What kind of resources do you have difficulty in supplying the most?
- E-books;

- E-papers;
- Rare materials;
- Theses;
- Printed resource; and
- Another.

Further comments

- 35 Please specify your thoughts about electronic and traditional document supply services in Turkey.

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