DIGITIZATION OF LOCAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: STATE IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

With the development of the process of transition to information society that emerged as a result of globalization, against the threat of loss of societies' original identity, many local reflexes have developed. It became inevitable for many local institutions to take on responsibilities with these reflexes while saving cultural elements and values specific to the region, district and while transmitting them to the future. One of these institutions is the public libraries. This has become a necessity for public libraries, which are local cultural institutions, to take on important roles in the protection of their local culture and their provision of services as well as the mission of fulfilling the cultural and educational needs of the society in which they exist. Public libraries should stand against the cultural erosion caused by the information age, with the technology that again the information age offers. Digitization... This has become a necessity for Public Libraries, one of whose main functions is to support the cultural activities of the region in which they exist, to take on an important role in the transfer of their local cultural elements to the future and in the point of recording promptly by digitization.

This study is prepared to put forward the role and responsibilities of the public libraries in Digitization of their local cultural elements. In addition, this study comprises information about the Digitization studies directed towards protecting the local cultural elements in the public libraries in Turkey.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Digitization, Culture, Local Culture

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1. INTRODUCTION

All the material and spiritual values created in the process of the historical and social development and the concept of "culture" (Turkish Language Association Dictionary, 2012), which are used to transmit these to future generations and are used to create these; is defined as the whole set of tools that show the measure of man's domination of the natural and social environment; comprises the habits, beliefs, attitudes of human as a reflection of his psychological and social production and the tools and places constructed as a reflection of his material production. As can be seen from the definition, it is very difficult to determine the boundaries of culture that has a large size and is covering a large area. For example, an element of a culture comprises a feature that is recognized all over the world and has a universal value, on one hand; can show features specific to a certain geographical area or a particular community, on the other hand. Although it is not possible to determine the difference between the local and universal culture with precise lines, it is possible to say that the partnerships which are specific to mankind and are seen at different times and various geographical places of history, constitute the universal culture; while the observed differences according to the time and geographical space constitute the local culture.

Public libraries are the institutions having great responsibility of the collection, organization, preservation of the local culture and its transfer and introduction to the future generations. With the process of transition to information society, public libraries started to fulfill these responsibilities by the applications that they achieved using the information technology. One of these applications is the Digitization of the local elements of the culture. This is a fact that having been put into the service of the local culture by Digitization, will contribute to the development of the public libraries that are local cultural institutions.

2. DIGITIZATION AND LIBRARIES

From history to the present day, the clay tablets, parchment, papyrus, paper and so on, the information saved in different media, have started to be registered in electronic media today. In the current "digital era", the information is being digitized promptly for the reasons such as facilitating the control and access of the rapidly increasing information.

The Digitization, which is generally defined as the conversion process of the physical or analog materials such as paper, document, photo, or graphic materials into electronic media or the images stored in electronic media; or which is defined as the conversion of the information in unstructured form that is undetectable by electronic systems, into the structured form that can be detected by the electronic media (Quoted from Rieger Armsve; Yilmaz et al, 2012: 372) "is the conversion process

of the visual or auditory elements into numerical codes in order to be recognized, processed, or stored by the computers. (Deren, 2006: 28)

The main purpose and /or objectives of Digitization can be listed as follows:

- Recording and preservation of the national cultural heritage;

- The back-up of the information sources that are produced as a single copy in the printed media

- Providing multiple access to the single copy resources

- Reducing the costs of paper document and the storage

- The implementation of Coporate Content Management Solutions;

- Providing archival protection

- Maintaining the integrity of the digital object and providing the display, access, and use of the resources in the face of changing technology,

- Providing that the old computer systems can run on the computer systems that will be used in the future.

- Making millions of books available that are in the shelves or storages of libraries, archives and museums that cannot reach to the millions of users (Yılmaz, 2011: 118-119).

Looking at the objectives of Digitization, it is seen that they are in line with the objectives of the libraries. Like the objectives of Digitization, some of the purposes of libraries are protecting the original form of information, the dissemination and protection of information. In addition to these objectives of public libraries, which are thought to be responsible for protecting the cultural heritage of the community in which   they exist, have the responsibility to transfer the cultural heritage of the society that it serves to the future generations in the most accurate way. In accordance with this obligation, they have to follow the technological developments. It is extremely important that the cultural heritage is put into service by public libraries in order to be transferred to future generations in the rightest way by preserving. (Şahin,2010: 33-34).

There are basically three reasons of libraries to start digitization projects:

• Increasing the access

• Preservation of the original document.

• Digitization, being profitable in the long run (Quoted from Lee 2001: 4-6; Küçük and Soydal, 2003: 123).

Libraries collect and put into the service the information that is relevant to the types and purposes due to their functions. The growth of production of information in digital format day by day, has led to change and diversification of the library services in the course of time. Libraries are no longer just the "bricks and mortar" formed businesses. Internet and Web, by eliminating the barriers of

time and space, made it possible for access to information services 24 hours 7 days. Library collections and services are moved beyond the walls of the library through technological advances. For example, users do not have to go to the library now to take advantage of magazines. They can easily access the library web site and download article, music or images by using desktop or laptop computers or cell phones. Users can do these operations without changing their media (for example, the Web, a learning management system, or a social network). In other words, libraries nowadays are not only physical spaces, but they are the virtual media synthesized and embedded in social networks and the work environments of the users which provide mobile information services (Murray, 2006).

3. DIGITIZATION OF THE LOCAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

It is possible to define culture as a set of all kind of tangible and intangible products that people created in the social and historical development. The tangible products contain all the tools and materials that a society created to ensure the sovereignty to the nature. The intangible products on the other hand, are values, beliefs, information, codes of conduct, customs, traditions and so on which are composed of the mutual relations of people in a community. The cultural products that are created by the society are transmitted to the next generations by the oral or written language. The transmission efficiency of the library is caused by humanity that is keeping the recorded information related to the cultural products under control for the future usage. If we can reach and evaluate the written and printed information of the previous generations today and if we can be at the social stages by adding them the new ones, it is a fact that we owe this largely to the libraries that are the centers of the accumulation and transmission of information (Çakın, 1986: 11), particularly to the public libraries.

The primary objective of public libraries as well as in all types of libraries is to be the referral center for the information that is needed. However, the mass that the public libraries appeal are the organizations that have purposes beyond other types of libraries in terms of its collections and services. While the primary objective of the national library was to create a national memory, the public libraries aim to be the local memory of the region they are serving. While the research libraries have the purpose of enhancing the special collections and services for addressing the mass that they appeal, public libraries have the responsibility to enhance the collections towards the economic, technological, social, educational and cultural development of the place in which they are present. Thus, the purposes of public libraries are related to the other types of libraries on one hand, on the other hand they are related to the objectives of all organizations involved in cultural development of the society. (Keseroğlu, 2003: 32).

The necessity of transferring local culture to the future generations is very important for public libraries in fulfilling the cultural function. One of the reasons of existence of libraries is the transfer of the information to the future that is received from the past and today. Public libraries' fulfilling this function towards the community that it serves in a best way is thought to be very important in the way of protecting their presence. Public libraries are obliged to preserve the cultural heritage of the society for this purpose. Today, it is foreseen that this obligation could only be fulfilled with Digitization (Şahin, 2010: 18).

Public libraries are not required to serve within the framework of the concepts of protection, dissemination and the prevention of tear which aims Digitization of the knowledge; by digitizing their region's cultural heritage in order to avoid the loss of identity of their original identity that are rapidly changing. Providing the long-term stability, widespread and quick access of the local culture is among the contemporary functions of today's public library. Public libraries are the local culture institutions which take on important responsibilities in the subjects of the collection, organization, preservation and provision of the service of the local culture products through Digitization. In the same way, it is thought that the Digitization will create an opportunity for updating these resources. Digitization can create an equalizing effect in access of the information that eliminates the disadvantages in terms of the individuals. In addition, public libraries can put the local culture among universal culture elements by digitizing the local culture. Public libraries can undertake important functions in opening up access of local culture and in defining the local culture on the basis of the standards.

The Digitization of the local culture elements in public libraries is a cumbersome process in many ways. The Digitization process requires qualified labor and time. In addition, you have to separate a certain budget for the Digitization process. For these reasons the Digitization process must be planned very well. Before starting the digitization work, it is of great importance for determination of needs about this transaction. This worst case that can arise about this issue is that the products that will emerge as a result of the digitization process are not appropriate to the purpose. In order to avoid this, the following questions should be asked before starting the digitization work (Deren, 2006: 28):

- The obtained materials will be used for what purpose,
- Deciding on the appropriate quality of the project,
- This digital media will be used by whom
- What kind of possibilities will digitization offer to the people that will reach to this media,
- Digital media storage types,
- To whom the copyright of the digital media will belong to.

Besides, before starting to digitization; what will be the positive, measurable and achievable objectives, reasons, user group, the quality of the digitized material, the restrictions applied on access, distribution, replication, and the rights of use should be determined. In digitization, the first step should be planning. For work of digitization of local cultural elements to be successful, the following issues should be clarified:

- What work needs to be done,
- How will be completed, (which standards, specifications and practices to be used)
- Who will carry out the work
- Duration of the study
- What will be the cost (Quoted from Charlottesville by Şahin, 2010: 35).

Which materials will be digitized is determined right after starting the study of digitization of the local cultural elements. Then, the selected resources are prepared and digitized; in other they are being scanned. The digitized files are reviewed and corrected according to the purpose of the project and then they are delivered to the target user, for example through the Web. In addition to these processes, in order to ensure continuous access, additional support about information technologies is required. The subject should also go through the hands of various experts such as experts of the subject, conservation experts, digital and film photographers, catalogers, information technology specialists, and administrators in order to be completed in a healthy manner (Küçük and Soydal, 2003: 124).

It is possible to state the stages of the digitization studies as follows:

1 - Selection,

2 - Conversion / Creation,

3 - Quality control,

4 – Meta-data,

5 - Technical infrastructure,

6 - Distribution / presentation,

7 - Storage / Digital Protection (Ergun, 2007: 2).

Digitization will also create significant opportunities in terms of update and access to the local culture in terms of both the librarian and the user. The public libraries will be able to offer the local cultural studies to the user's access when they digitize them. Considering that the most important service principle is the timeliness, digitization will also offer new possibilities in this respect. Digitization will also reduce the disadvantages of some users in access to information. Digitization

will also be able contribute to the realization of the principle of public libraries of equal service to everyone without any discrimination because of its "equalizing" effect in the access of information. Providing access to local culture by public libraries and its digitization means providing possibility of the usage of the local culture also outside of the country's borders. In other words, it is thought that digitization will have an important contribution in the universalization of the local culture. Public libraries will add the local culture to the universal culture by digitizing. The digitization of the local culture by public libraries will provide possibility in its identification, in other words in its creation of bibliographic records and its conduct on the basis of international professional standards. The definitions which are realized on the basis of international standards will contribute both to the formation of more healthy data in terms of access and also to the international exchange of these data. Considering the fact that the aforementioned standards are related to both technique and identification, the role of the public libraries in the digitization of local culture in a right way will be understood. In short, the public institutions should be the institutions which take on important functions in digitization of the local culture. (Şahin, 2010: 49-50)

4. SITUATION IN TURKEY

Before looking at the situation in Turkey towards the digitization of the elements of the Local Cultural elements in Public, it will be useful to briefly mention the approaches and practices in the world. It is possible to come across the sentences in international declarations and texts which are pointing to the responsibility of public libraries as local culture institutions in the provision of services of local culture by digitization. In UNESCO Public Library Declaration, considering public libraries as local gateway and emphasizing the responsibilities of public libraries such as developing intercultural dialogue, supporting cultural diversity, supporting oral tradition (UNESCO, 1995: 67-144); in Pulman Principles Handbook (2002) : "Public libraries are a force in the public interest". They are the access points that are open to anyone who needs information in order to cope with difficulties they encounter in their lives. Public libraries particularly address the groups showing the property according to their gender and those with special needs by defending and encouraging democratic participation. The statement of "they can encourage social and cultural import by cooperation with museums and archives, for example, by providing materials of cultural heritage and family history,"; and the statement in Calimera Guide Principles " Public libraries should know how they can be helpful to their users in a best way in their discovery and access of the information that they need in digital media. In digital world, the resources cannot be limited with physical places. In this way they can be connected in many different ways and they can be used over and over again for every purpose that is necessary. Public libraries, too, should cope with this increased information for their users in the electronic media. Digital multi-media are the combination of text,

graphic, sound, animation and video transmitted with computer hardware. In the event that the users have control over it becomes interactive multi-media. The resources such as e-books, e-magazines, music, movies, and so on will be in the condition that can be delivered to user's computer without directly visiting the library. "Public libraries, too, should take their place in delivering the content via modern channels" (Calimera, 2005: 42) and "Museums, libraries and archives, traditionally, collect, preserve and organize the materials in case of physical objects. IST (Information Society Technologies) allows the creation of digital innovations that can be organized in different shapes, such as a society's cultural heritage, books, articles, photographs, documents, oral history recordings, films, video recording and so on can be recorded in case of a cumulative collection that can be investigated with keyword, subject, or query screening. "This method can be a kind of service towards social inclusion because it provides people to use these collections towards their own histories and conditions and thus, increases their sense of belonging to the community." (Calimera, 2005: 15) this phrase is important in terms of calling attention to the responsibility of the public libraries in its provision of service of local culture by digitizing.

Beyond the above examples, today it is also possible to talk about many projects in international level within the framework digitizing applications. Europeana that is put into service in November 2008, under 2010 Digital Libraries Initiative (http://www.europeana.eu/portal), Library of Congress of UNESCO, and the World Digital Library that is launched in April 2009 with other participants (http:// www.wdl.org), can be shown as most comprehensive examples (Özbağ, 2010:3). These are the examples of other projects that are developed to protect the cultural heritage and to make it accessible through the network: CALIMERA (Cultural Applications: Local Institutions Mediating Electronic Resources), COINE (Cultural Objects in Networked Environments), ERPANET (Electronic Resources Preservation and Access Network), NEDLIB (Networked European Digital Library), Minerva Europe, Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN), CLIR (Council on Libraries and Information Resources), European Cultural Heritage Online (ECHO) and Online Archive of California (OAC), are only a few of these projects (Tonta, 2008: 7; Deren, 2006: 8).

It is possible to say that there are important developments about digitization work in recent years in Turkey. There are studies such as the digitization of archival documents by General Directorate of State Archives in particular, the virtual applications of some museums, the audio-visual archive studies of TRT and contribution of some non-governmental organizations to the cultural inventory. However, it is observed that these studies are conducted towards institutions' own initiatives which are generally independent of each other without any legal basis. These are the indispensible requirements in terms of protection: The data obtained as a result of information and documentation activities belonging to the assets within the scope of cultural heritage and the inventory studies that

are done for the protection of cultural heritage which gained momentum in the last few years, and the conversion of the data belonging to the materials having different formats such as printed, visual, audio formats into applicable information. The collection of data in different features, bringing them together, their structuring, processing, and evaluation and the process of information management about the cultural assets that are composed of accessing these data constitute the basis for digital preservation studies. (Ozbay,2010:10-11)

Libraries in Turkey contain a lot of digital materials within the scope of cultural heritage or do digitization studies. 14 manuscript libraries, foremost the Süleymaniye manuscript library, adding momentum to the digitization efforts in recent years. (Turkish Libraries in Transition..., 2008). In addition, the National Library, too, carries on the studies of transferring the handwritten manuscripts in their collection into digital media since 2004. As a result of the digitization studies conducted, the transfer of nearly 25.200 volumes of 26.700 written manuscripts in National Library collection into digital media is completed (National Library Presidency, 2012). The National Library Sound and Vision Bank Project (http://www.mkutup.gov.tr/) which is carried out by the National Library: it is aimed to transfer many audio and video materials in the collection of National Library into electronic media, their publication on CD media and putting into service of researchers via Internet. Other than these libraries, it is known that studies are carried on towards digitizing also in Islamic History, Art and Culture Research Center (IRCICA) Library and the Center for Islamic Studies Library (ISAM). In addition to these, there are digital collections in some university libraries within the scope of cultural heritage. The study that put manuscripts into service by digitizing and categorizing them and which is carried out by Bahçeşehir University Faculty of Communication Turkish Cinema Archive (http://www.iletisim.bahcesehir.edu.tr/arsiv), Bilkent University Video Archive (http://video.bilkent.edu.tr), and Ankara University; its catalogue that can be reached via web (http://yazmalardtcf.ankara.edu.tr) and these collections can be given as examples. (Özbay, 2010: 62)

The most important legal basis in digitizing the local cultural elements in public libraries in Turkey is the Turkish Public Libraries Regulation. The following statements in the 12th and 13th articles of the related regulation about the functions and duties of public libraries point out to the relationship of public libraries with local cultural elements: " Provides support to the cultural and socio-economic development of the society and firstly the region where they are present", "create consciousness in the society towards cultural heritage, art and science and maintain the development of this consciousness", " contributes to the collection, arrangement, preservation, make others use of the intangible local cultural heritage and its transfer to the future and supports the oral tradition" , "Contributes to the development of intercultural dialogue" and " "Creates a local

collection about the region's cultural, social, historical and economic structure where they reside and put into service" (http://www.kulturturizm.gov.tr, 2013).

The principle in the 12th article of the Public Libraries Declaration which is written by Turkish Librarians' Association Istanbul Branch as: "The efforts of public libraries to create numeric (digital) cultural heritage in Turkey should be supported." (http://www.kutuphaneci.org.tr , 2013) is important in terms of our topic. By proceeding from these statements, it is possible to say that public libraries in Turkey are seen as institutions which especially protect the heritage of the local culture and and put it into service and therefore contributes to the realization of the cultural diversity.

Based on the approaches in the Regulation of Public Libraries and the Declaration of Public Libraries, it is seen that the public libraries in Turkey should serve for the collection, organization, dedication and the protection of the local cultural heritage of the region they serve. Given that a person who explores the cultural aspects of a region first will go to a public library, public libraries should include the local cultural elements into their collection for the user who conduct research remotely or for the user who comes to the public library personally.

Looking at the digitization practices in public libraries in Turkey, it attracts attention that rare publications are concentrated in the studies. 147 thousand 206 units of 165 thousand 405 manuscripts in 28 public library in Turkey that have written manuscript in their compilation are transferred to digital media (Yılmaz, 2011: 121). The studies of digitization of scarce publicaitons such as books, periodicals, maps and so on are carried on in Atatürk Library which is serving as a public library affiliated to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. A study towards providing open access of these digitized publications is near completion.

It is observed that there are significant deficiencies in standardization, co-ordination and co-ordination issues in the digitization studies of public libraries. There is no concrete step in the point of elimination of these deficiencies. The studies that the Ministry of Culture will conduct in this regard are of utmost importance.

One other important issue is; the digitization activities in public libraries in Turkey remain limited with only the scarce publications. The rare publications in public libraries are important sources that can be characterized as local culture elements. However the following is a fact that there are a lot of cultural elements that reflect the local culture other than the scarce publications and the public libraries should play an important role in the protection and provison of these elements. However, as a result of research, no study towards digitizing the local cultural elements in public libraries is observed other than the digitization of scarce publications.

In public libraries in Turkey, the digitization of materials such as movies, music, photography, sound record, etc that have cultural value is required as well as the digitization of printed resources or hand written manuscripts. When the public libraries in Turkey will digitize the local cultural elements in the society that they reside, they will eliminate the danger of extinction of the local culture, and they will be met with a much more great interest by the users.

5. CONCLUSION

The information gained from this study show that digitization activities are carried out by various institutions in Turkey in order to transfer the cultural heritage to future generations and these studies are increasing in recent years. However, the studies conducted are insufficient. The studies carried out in this area, the processes experienced by other countries or consortia often do not coincide with the models or standards, nevertheless, there is no study across the country towards digitizing the local cultural elements. It is possible to say that the digitization activities in public libraries are usually done towards scarce publications. A study towards the digitization of visual and audio materials related to the local cultural elements is not observed other than the digitization of scarce publications with the library.

Another important result that emerged in this study is the problems caused by the lack of standardization and co-ordination in digitization activities realized in public libraries. These issues constitute a significant obstacle to healthy and systematic digitization efforts. In the solution of these problems, it is important that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Libraries and Publications undertake leadership and responsibility.

Within the framework of the results obtained in the study, the following recommendations have been developed:

- Elements of the local culture are constantly changing by with the impact of today's globalization and information age. Against the threat of loss of the original identity of the societies, the public libraries have a responsibility to protect and transfer the local culture of the society in which it exists to the future. Public libraries are digitizing their responsibilities to fulfill the elements of the local culture.

- Public libraries should keep track of the technology of the time in which they are present in the studies they conduct in order to protect local cultural elements and to transfer them to tomorrow. For example, the digitized cultural materials in public libraries must be open to remote access. For this reason, as a priority, a web page should be designed and presented for all public libraries.

- The principles and standards determined in international study and projects that are carried out for digitization of the local culture can be taken as a model in the digitization applications that public libraries in Turkey will achieve.

- Digitization process consists of complex and technical processes. Public libraries should be in cooperation with the subject experts, organizations and institutions in their region in digitizing applications.

- It seems as a requirement of the Culture and Tourism Ministry General Directorate of Libraries and Publications to take on responsibility for development of technique and standards and policy-strategy formulation at the national level about digitization of local culture. General Directorate of Libraries and Publications should be aware of this responsibility and must act quickly in this direction. General Management should take on a function that is providing guidance to public libraries and providing them infrastructure by implementing co-ordination on the subject of digitization.

It is clearly seen that the activities towards the provision of open access for digitized material and towards digitization of the local cultural elements will broaden the use of public libraries and will strengthen the locality property of the public libraries. The phenomenon of digitization emerged today which is also referred to as the digital age is forcing public libraries to reposition themselves and imposing new and modern functions. Turkey's public libraries must be aware of these changes and transformation. Because this change and transformation are effective in an extent as to determine their future and existence.

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