



Creative Information Services at the Public Libraries of Istanbul

Ahmet Altay* and Ammar Tekin

Kırklareli University, Kırklareli, Turkey.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90-288-615-3303; fax: +90-288-615-3750; e-mail: ahmet.altay@klu.edu.tr

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ABSTRACT

Today, when the library using habits decrease day by day, public libraries need to adapt to daily shifting conditions in order to reach their aims and continue their existences. If public libraries could foresee the changes and start them, they would be the Avant-garde institutions of their societies. Within this context, it is very important for public library staff, particularly the executors and librarians, to generate innovation by uncovering their creative energies.

Defined as the producing originality in a field, creativity exists in every person and is a perfectible feature. It is possible to say that the individual, organization and society to be beneficial by treating the created innovations and converting them into society's benefit. Undoubtedly, it can be provided via public libraries' creative, innovative and entrepreneur organizational structure and operation.

In this study, creativity is analyzed by searching answers for the question why public libraries should canalize to creative services. Additionally, by addressing to Istanbul's situation, examples of the creative information services held at the public libraries of Istanbul is presented.

Keywords: Public libraries, Creativity, Innovation.

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I. Introduction

A society is called knowledge society not because that the people have more knowledge but they use the knowledge they have in an organized way to move the society forward. Creativity is the continually produced and accumulated information's usage for generating a new knowledge. Dizzying rapid changes in today's life conditions have made a breakthrough with the accelerating effect of the globalization which requires corporations to use creativity element effectively. Creativity, meaning generating new and proper ideas in every field of human activities from science to art, education and management, is an important prerequisite and one of the most wanted features for companies active in global competition and whose key element is human factor. Creativity should be promoted and better used in today's rapid changing atmosphere for corporations to achieve the targeted success. Therefore, creativity capacities should be unearthed and differences should be made with creative solutions. (Bakan, 2004, pp. 5-6)

In our day, as for other managements, creativity and creative services are essential for public libraries, too. Public libraries need to develop creative and innovator

services in order to keep up with the dizzying change of today and even to be the "Avant-garde" of it. It is obvious when public libraries transform the innovations they have created into everybody's favor; both they and society are going to be beneficial. Undoubtedly, public libraries can enable it by constituting a creative, innovative and entrepreneur organizational structure and operation.

In this study, creative service examples are to be presented from public libraries of Istanbul; Turkey's biggest metropolitan with its population, history, economical as well as social potential and cultural background. Firstly, "creativity" and "creative services" definitions will be studied and then a notional evaluation on creative services at public libraries is made. Finally, examples of creative information services from public libraries of Istanbul are made and inferences and proposals are given from the presented examples.

II. Creativity and Creative Services

From the Latin word "creare" meaning "produce, constitute, generate" (Kaya & Dusukcan from Whitehead; 2001, p. 202), creativity have been similarly defined though differently expressed. With its well accepted definition, creativity is defined as generation of new and

useful ideas in every field. With another similar definition, creativity is expressed as producing, conceptualizing or new and useful ideas, processes and procedures developed by individuals and groups working together (Amabile et al., Cicek from Eren, 2011, pp. 46-47). Creativity includes tendencies as the adoption of change and innovation, testing of idea and possibilities, looking at the events happening outside the organization with a different perspective (with flexibility on viewing the outer world) and developing the existing productions. Creativity is a process; creative people work hard on finding solutions for problems and change & develop their ideas and solutions with gradual alterations and amendments in these efforts (Gürol, 2006, p. 39). When creativity definition is investigated, emphasis on creating, generating “new” and “different” can be seen.

Samen (2008, pp. 365-366) summarizes the basic features of creativity by searching from the sources on creative thinking and creativity as below:

Creativity is:

- Initial. It frames what has not occurred before.
- Generating new product, new service.
- Formed with using intuition and imagination.
- The final form of what had existed before. It brings added value.
- Formed after curiosity and questioning. “What is it, how is it, why, how can it be different?” questions facilitates creative thinking.
- A necessity. Developments are experienced very rapidly in the world.
- A requirement. It is very likely to encounter with a new possible problem. When the existing solutions are not enough to solve the problems, creative ideas are needed.
- Educable.
- In need of free thinking and working environment.

Creativity has four dimensions which are fluency, flexibility, originality and detailing. Creativity has some processes. They are; determining the need, reviewing the present information, assimilating it, intuiting gleam and evaluating the deductions. When these five steps are conducted successfully, creative thinking can be developed.

Alteration desires and necessities in societies are shaped with new management concepts which would increase organizations’ activities. Reaching organizations their aims like survival, growth, producing better service and supplying the customer needs includes not only the determination of creativity but also adequate benefiting of it.

Creativity and creative services are encountered as a very important element for all managements. Nowadays, managements that cleans their organizational structure from conventional and bureaucratic obstacles, generates continues new and authentic ideas, are able to canalize into new market structures and provide new management concepts are inevitably successful. Corporations increase value creation potentials to their organizational structures by promoting creativity and earn strategic superiority against their rivals. Additionally, they gain great advantage in up-to-date production and service development by eliciting creative potential of their human

resources. Corporations outscore their rivals by encouraging creativity and advancing creative services as well as raising awareness to people they provide services (Kapu & Basturk, 2013, p. 529).

Creativity’s occurrence in application processes of corporations depends on creative individuals and their creative thinking. Amabile states that individuals actualize an action due to some motivations and their performances’ to be regarded as technically good, enough or acceptable is related to them having essential ability and proficiency. However, it is said that if individuals do not have creative thinking, they cannot produce creative works even with high levels of ability and proficiency. Creative thinking ability includes a cognitive style which is convenient for producing new perspectives against problems and an application technique or a way of working which is required to investigate new cognitive ways. According to Amabile, creative thinking is an intellectual activity which develops depending on personality characteristics such as independence, self-discipline, tendency to risk taking, tolerance for ambiguity and patience against problems. Helpful skills can be increased with implementation techniques which develop cognitive flexibility and intellectual freedom with learning (Amabile, 1997, p. 43).

III. Public Libraries and Creativity

Undoubtedly, future requires the existence of libraries which will be based on information transfer and management, presenting the services that are suitable for environmental conditions and renewed demands varying according to the technological development at a universal scale. Creativity is one of the wanted features for information era’s libraries whose basic element is “knowledge”. In rapid change environment of knowledge society, it is inevitable for public libraries to promote creativity and creative services in order to adapt themselves to existing rapid change and even to be precursor to the change. Therefore, creative capacities at the public libraries should be revealed and difference should be made with creative solutions.

Resources increasing and diversifying parallel to the developments in information technology requires librarians to introduce new creative service. Large information masses presented electronically gradually reduces public library usage frequency. Librarians need to be guides for their users in this large information masses by placing public libraries into the heart of life. In this context, new and attractive services at information services need to be started trying as soon as possible at the public libraries. All new technological developments should create many new possibilities for public libraries. In the future, for the studies of the researchers, information filtering and choice will be needed importantly. At this stage, public librarians are going to be advisor for researchers by showing their expertise and creative thoughts (Helinsky, 2009, pp. 12-23).

Today, when knowledge is the prize possession, public libraries need to make constant innovations to bring more information source for more people and develop creative services. Within this scope, primarily, public libraries

need to recognize the people of their service areas. Public libraries should think children, young, old, adults, disabled and housewives as separate groups and develop creative projects to get in with them. Some of them may come to the library to read, to study or spend their free time. Incoming people should be aided and activities should be developed for attracting people who do not show up. Different groups should be determined and their expectations should be learned. Technological advancements have led to many opportunities for libraries; libraries should make the best of them and generate new services. Today's scientists and students take the lead in finding the information by themselves. For the next step, librarians could help them by asking appropriate questions, evaluating the sources and finding the information the user need from the mass (Bayter, 2012, pp. 74-75).

IV. Creative Activity Examples from Public Libraries in Istanbul

Many good implementations could be encountered when creative information services of Turkish public libraries are examined. The most important of them is the efforts of Mustafa Guzelgoz who is known as "librarian on donkey" in Turkey. Working in a public library in Urgup, Guzelgoz carried books to the villages on donkey. Additionally, conducting a series of activities like folklore studies, photographing, cinema, band, carpeting, etc at the library, Guzelgoz was the leader of cooperative system works at his region. Mr Guzelgoz received the Service to Humanity Award by American Peace Volunteers Foundation in 1963 (Ileri & Talipoglu, 2007, pp. 3-12).

Meetings, education programs, seminars, pilot schemes, etc conducted within Turkey implementations of PULMAN-XT Project starting in 2002 are important efforts encouraging creative and innovative activities at public libraries of Turkey (Yilmaz & Bayir, 2004, pp. 79-80). Another important work was "Regional Public Libraries Seminars" conducted by Turkish Librarians Association, Goethe Institute and Ministry of Culture and Tourism with the leadership of doyen academician of Turkish public libraries, Prof. Dr. Bulent Yilmaz (Yilmaz, 2008, pp. 107-121). PULMAN-XT Project Turkey implementations and regional public library seminars have important contributions to creative and innovative activities in Turkey which have gained momentum in recent years.

In this part of the study, examples of creative and innovative services are presented conducted in recent years at public libraries of Istanbul which is the most important and biggest city of Turkey in terms of social, cultural and economic terms. In addition to public libraries servicing under central administration, municipality libraries giving public library services within Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and district municipalities are included in the study.

- Istanbul Orhan Kemal City Public Library conducts nice story reading competition for children every year. It is conducted for 31 years now and held on 23 April which is the Children's Day in Turkey.
- There are computer courses for visually challenged, Sahaja Yoga Performances and handicrafts courses

as well as exhibitions at Istanbul Bakirkoy Rifat Ilgaz District Public Library.

- There is a circulation system for inmates to choose two books to borrow two times in a month at Istanbul Uskudar District Public Library.
- There are computer and internet courses for people having adaptation problems to the technology and chess courses for children at Istanbul Celiktepe Mehmet Akif Ersoy Public Library.
- Istanbul Kadiköy Municipality Muhtar Ozkaya Library provides book lending services to home-dependent people.
- Istanbul Pendik Municipality Library organizes constant historical and touristic tours for its users.
- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Beykoz Osman Akfirat Library organizes traditional children games, story hours and reed concerts.
- Istanbul Beyoglu District Turabibaba Library offers free movie and documentary displays as well as courses like speed reading, creative drama, chess, theatre, folk dance, etc. courses for children and adults. Additionally, traditional Karagoz and Hacivat demonstrations, activities like story hours, story cottages for increasing reading habits and writer-reader meetings are held as well.

V. Conclusion

Creativity in knowledge services field can be described as original ideas generation ability or capacity with the aim of adaptation to the changing environmental conditions. It is a truth that libraries will keep their Avant-garde role for staying strong and providing information if librarians give importance to creative services.

It takes a long and comprehensive work for libraries to be creative and giving creative idea and services. Public libraries could only be creative if they arrange their organizational structures and operations as to facilitate creativity. Firstly librarians as well as library workers and managers are the ones who can enable the public libraries to be creative. Creativity is the product and activities presented by creative people. Therefore, human resources should be seen as a very important asset for public libraries.

Based on the creative service examples from Istanbul public libraries, the results below are deduced:

- Creative services held at public libraries of Istanbul are promising. But it is clear for a metropolitan city offering services with more than 100 public libraries in total these examples are not enough.
- It is observed that there are not any institutional incentives or cooperation. What has been done is thanks to the efforts of librarians and managers.
- Lack of coordination and cooperation is seen within the libraries in terms of creative works.

Suggestions below are made in order to increase the creative activities at public libraries with the results:

- Workplace environment which will enable the library workers to reveal and develop their creativity.
- Activities like panels, meetings, seminars, courses, etc. need to be organized in order to promote and motivate library workers to enhance creative

services.

- Creative and innovative services held at the public libraries should be supported with substantial opportunities of technological advancements.
- Cooperation possibilities with other public organizations, NGOs, foundations and associations need to be sought for the creative and innovative activities to be actualized.
- A platform which will enable the creative and innovative services and activities held at public libraries of Istanbul to be announced and also provide cooperation and coordination under the leadership of the two biggest libraries of Istanbul; Orhan Kemal City Public Library and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library as well as Turkish Librarians Association Istanbul Branch.
- Institutions and staff conducting socio-cultural activities should be honored and awarded.

As a result, if librarians and library staff want to prove that their libraries are not only a place where studied and home works are prepared yet an indispensable education – culture institution of knowledge society, change people’s opinion for libraries and their profession and increase their institutions as well as occupations’ prestige and popularity, they need to spend more effort and endeavor for creative and innovative activities regardless of all negatives and impossibilities. Efforts spent will certainly not be wasted; sooner or later, personally, institutionally and professionally will be rewarded.

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Ahmet Altay is a lecturer at Kırklareli University. Altay was born in 1979. He completed his Bachelor’s Degree at Istanbul University Librarianship Division. He worked as a librarian between 2002 and 2010. Since 2010 he has been working as a lecturer at Kırklareli University. Ahmet Altay completed his doctorate degree at State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies Bulgaria in 2015.



Ammar Tekin is a post-graduate student at the University of Edinburgh, UK. He has his BA in ELT department of Akdeniz University, Turkey and worked as an instructor at Kırklareli University, Turkey from 2011 to 2015.