

A Turkish treasure trove

Meral Alakuş

Meral Alakuş looks at the history of Turkey's archives, their organization and retrieval systems, and future prospects for information handling and indexing in Turkey.

Introduction

There have been intercultural exchanges and intercultural studies since the earliest of times, but they have become much more frequent and wider in scope and depth in recent decades, thanks to the rapid expansion of national and international travel, communications, publications, and now the Internet (Neelameghan, 2001). The more people study other cultures from original sources, the better their understanding of one another will be. However, information that is left unorganized and hidden in inaccessible archives, in files, boxes, or on closed shelves, is as good as lost, and the losers in the fight for understanding will be those nations that do not organize their own information and knowledge in a user-friendly and accessible fashion. Unfortunately many countries with valuable material in their libraries and archives (including, until recent years, Turkey) have given very little thought and effort to the organization of this material or to classification and retrieval problems, and many of these records remain either unavailable to scholars or else require a long struggle to find.

A world power almost from its foundation in 1299, the Ottoman Empire always attached as much importance to good record keeping as to military might, and maintained detailed population statistics, court and land registers as well as an almanac of key events. With a vast territory under its sway, and a well-established imperial bureaucracy, it needed these records for good administration. The *mecelle* (civil code), *tahrir defterleri* (surveys of provinces), *salname* (almanacs), *she'riyye sicil* (canonical registers), *kadi defterleri* (judges' notebooks) and other documents were kept safe in chests and on closed shelves. Turkish archives cover over 600 years of the Ottoman Empire's rule. When they are properly organized and indexes prepared, they will offer an immense resource for the study of the history of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (*İncalcık*).

The institutions

There are three major state institutions involved in the maintenance of these archives and the accumulation of new material: the Süleymaniye Library (*Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi*) (rare books and documents from the Ottoman era); the National Library (*Milli Kütüphane*) (responsible at the national level for books on general subjects, including in particular the social sciences, religion and the humanities); and ULAKBİM – TUBİTAK (the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey). Responsibility for the classification of materials, for the preparation of thesauri and for

standards, rules and regulations for the use of Turkish in thesaurus construction and as a retrieval language lies with these three institutions.

Süleymaniye Library (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi)

Starting in 1918, the various *Vakif* (Foundation) libraries that had been established during the Ottoman Empire were brought together to form the Süleymaniye Library. This library, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, holds all the main Turkish/Islamic manuscripts and printed works, providing a service to scholars at home and abroad. It continues to expand through gifts and donations.

The Süleymaniye Library holds over 130,000 works, including rare printed books, and some 71,125 manuscripts. The collection is classified by author, title and name of the collection to which the book or document belongs. In addition to the printed catalogues, electronic retrieval is possible from the library website using the name of the collection and/or the accession number (*Süleymaniye*). The three sets of Süleymaniye Library Catalogues of Manuscripts are:

Devr-i Hamidi Fihristleri (Hamidi period indexes). These indexes ('fihrist' in Ottoman Turkish) started in 1882–3 (Moslem year 1300) with the Sultan Abdülhamid I Library Collection and closed in 1895 (Moslem year 1312), and were intended as indexes to the various manuscript collections, organized in various ways such as by city, collection name or item number.

Türkiye Yazmaları Toplu Kataloğu (Turkish Manuscripts Union Catalogue), vols 1–7, in various parts. This second series of catalogues has seven sections published between 1980 and 1994. Each volume covers the manuscript collections from other libraries some of which are now kept in the Süleymaniye Library in İstanbul. Each collection from various cities makes up parts of that volume.

Türkiye Yazmaları Toplu Kataloğu Süleymaniye Kütüphanesinde bulunanlar dahil (Turkish manuscripts catalogue including those originally found in the Süleymaniye Library), vols 1–9. These catalogues of manuscript collections give bibliographies of works found in different city libraries, as well as those that have been transferred and are now all kept in the Süleymaniye Library. Each volume consists of various parts.

Milli Kütüphane (The National Library)

Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the libraries became more institutionalized and their structure changed. The Turkish National Library was

founded in 1946, in a small office in the Ministry of Education. Eight thousand works were quickly accumulated and the Library opened its doors in August 1948. The National Library Foundation Law was passed on 29 March 1950. Bibliographic studies began immediately, leading to the establishment of the Bibliographic Institute in 1952. The 1934 Legal Deposit Law required all publishers to send a copy of every publication to each of the five designated depositary libraries. This made it possible to compile bibliographies of books and of journal articles published in Turkey, and enabled the National Library to start two publications which are still the major publication databases in Turkey. Some of the bibliographies and catalogues prepared by the National Library are as follows.

Türkiye Bibliyografyası (Turkish bibliography) has been published monthly since 1951. Since 1989 it has been prepared electronically, and since 2003 it has been available on CD-ROM.

Türkiye Makaleler Bibliyografyası (Bibliography of articles in Turkish periodicals) was first published in 1952; its aim was to cover the bibliographical records of articles from Turkish journals of scientific and cultural value. From 1952–64, it was published in Turkish and French as a bilingual journal. A retrospective version was also prepared to cover the years 1923–51, which included 670 journal titles. It now covers some 5,000 journals and is available in both print and electronic versions.

Unfortunately both *Türkiye Bibliyografyası* and *Türkiye Makaleler Bibliyografyası* are slow to make their appearance, with delays of a year or more.

Türkiye Yazmaları Toplu Kataloğu – TÜYATOK (Union catalogue of Turkish manuscripts) is a 32-volume series with bibliographies of 25,653 items previously recorded in various manuscript catalogues, together with bibliographies of 59,339 items not previously included in any printed catalogue, and including bibliographies of manuscripts held in both Turkish libraries and libraries abroad. Since 2004, these bibliographies have been available electronically.

Türkiye Basılmaları Toplu Kataloğu – TÜBATOK (Union catalogue of Turkish printed books) 1–2. This project, which started in 1990, covers printed books that had been included in earlier catalogues together with Turkish printed books in Arabic script to be found in the 157 city and town public libraries. Six volumes in this series have been published.

Milli Kütüphane Yazmalar Kataloğu (National Library Catalogue of Manuscripts) began publication in 1987 and covers works in the manuscripts collection of the National Library. So far eight volumes have been prepared covering 1) General subjects, metaphysics, mystical studies, 2) Psychology, logic, philosophy, 3) Koranic studies, commentaries on the Koran, 4) Tradition, words and deeds of the Prophet, 5) Doctrines and words in scriptures, 6) Classical poetry, 7) Folk poems, 8) Poetry journals. The catalogues include 3,316 manuscripts and 6,231 booklets/pamphlets arranged in 3,594 main divisions indicated by DDC numbers.

Milli Kütüphanede Mevcut Arap Harfli Eserler Muvakkat Kataloğu (National Library provisional catalogue of Turkish printed books in Arabic script). Work on this important catalogue began in 1946 with publication in two

volumes in 1956 and 1957. A second edition came out during 1964–8, and a final supplement in 1971, bringing the task to an end.

1957 Yılına Kadar Milli Kütüphane'ye Girmiş Arap Harfli Türkçe Süreli Yayınların Kataloğu is a printed catalogue of Turkish periodicals in Arabic script added to the Library collection before 1957.

ULAKBİM – TUBİTAK

TUBİTAK (the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey) was established in 1963 with the task of organizing and coordinating research and development activities at a national level, and assisting and supporting these activities financially. TUBİTAK has also made attempts to disseminate scientific and technical research at home and abroad with a *Monthly Alert Bulletin* which ran from 1974 until 1980. A database of Turkish journals was compiled during this period covering the following areas of interest: 1) medicine, 2) agriculture, veterinary and biological sciences, and 3) engineering and general sciences (TUBİTAK).

In 1996, a separate information service unit, ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Centre), was founded in association with TUBİTAK to serve researchers nationally and internationally. The aims of the centre are to provide support for information technology, information and document delivery services, and assistance for research in universities and research institutions. The Information Centre carries out all the indexing in the above-mentioned areas. Appropriate thesauri for each discipline are translated from other sources, such as MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) for medicine and JICST (Japan Information Centre of Science and Technology) thesaurus for science and engineering, with the addition of extra terms as necessary.

In 2002, a social sciences indexing project started in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, history, geography, international relations, education, philosophy, library and information sciences and so on. However this project faces a massive challenge before it can really get going.

In the fields of medicine and sciences, work on a controlled vocabulary has been completed with just the last phase, the preparation of thesauri, to be completed.

Organization of material

Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)

Historically, the most popular system, still in use in the National Library, in public libraries and in schools is the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) adapted for Turkey and Turkish studies. For example, the Turkish language (class numbers 410–419), not surprisingly, is dealt with in more detail for Turkish than in the standard DCC.

The *Türkiye Bibliyografyası* (Turkish bibliography) and *Türkiye Makaleler Bibliyografyası* (Bibliography of articles in Turkish periodicals), published by the National Library, are also arranged by DDC numbers. The searching process can be done from printed versions of these bibliographies, as well as the electronic databases since 1990s, under DDC numbers which serve for subject searching. The search can

also be done under authors, titles, translator(s) and/or other contributors, publication place, and publication year. This is how journal indexing is solved at present, until the time comes for compiling subject heading for Turkish studies.

The full 'Turkish' version of DDC is as follows:

- 410 Turkish language
 - 410.5 Periodicals relating to Turkish language
 - 410.6 Organizations and societies related to Turkish Language
 - 410.9 According to history, geography and people
- 411 Writing and phonetics of standard Turkish
 - 411.2 Alphabet (the Letters)
 - 411.4 Turkish language teaching (standard Turkish)
 - 411.44 Turkish language teaching (to foreigners)
- 412 Etymology (standard Turkish)
- 413 Dictionaries (standard Turkish)
 - 413.1 Subject dictionaries
- 415 Grammar of Standard Turkish
- 417 Historical and geographical developments and transformations
- 418 Use of standard Turkish and practical regulations
- 419 Ottoman and other non-standard Turkish languages

So the Turkish language entries are firmly controlled, but assignment of headings for books and such items is done on an ad hoc basis. There is no Turkish thesaurus available for this, no controlled vocabulary and not even an in-house authority list. This certainly creates many problems for cataloguers and users alike. On the other hand, when Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are strictly applied, the structure of main and subheadings created is complex, impeding user access. Detailed headings also cause difficulty for librarians in filing arrangements.

Library of Congress Classification (LC) and Subject Headings (LCSH)

In contrast to the National Library, the better-equipped university libraries are now using the LC system and LCSH, with the latter now in use in almost all university libraries and research libraries for alphabetical subject catalogues. The headings have usually been translated into Turkish with appropriate adaptations and expansions, although in university libraries where the language of instruction is English, a modified version of the English language list of terms is used. In both cases, libraries prepare their own authority files (Baydur, 1995). It should be noted that the LCSH has less than two pages of headings for Turkey!

UNAK (University and Research Libraries website)

Eight universities contribute to the UNAK database. The headings, as can be seen below, are direct translations of the topics taken from LCSH; new divisions and subdivisions are added as necessary to show further details of subjects related to Turkish studies. However there is still a lack of appropriate terms for disciplines such as Turkish history, geography,

language and literature, arts and religion. Direct translation of main headings is simply not sufficient for the purpose, and adding new subdivisions does not solve the problem.

The problems

A lack of headings

Going through the UNAK database at random, there were no entries to be found under Turkey, history (*Türkiye, Tarih*); Turkish Republic (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*); Turkey, social life and customs (*Türkiye, Sosyal Hayat ve Gelenekler*) although there were many such entries relating to Great Britain and the United States. And while under the heading 'English language' there are over 50 subject entries, under *Türk Dili* (Turkish language) there are only 15 (see Table 1). It is important that headings such as Turkish literature, law, geography, Islam and Islamic Studies are developed independently of the original LCSH.

Inconsistency of term selection

Assignment of terms, whether for translations or new Turkey-specific terms, is haphazard. For example, the use of both the singular and plural versions of nouns *durum* and *durumlar* or *koşul* and *koşullar* for the term 'conditions' leads to scattering.

Economic conditions	<i>Ekonomik durumlar</i>
Economic conditions	<i>Ekonomik durum</i>
Economic conditions	<i>Ekonomik koşullar</i>
(see <i>Ekonomi tarihi</i>)	
	(bkz. <i>Ekonomi tarihi</i>)

Synonyms – New Turkish v. Ottoman Turkish

There is also inconsistency in the case of terms such as jurisprudence (*Hukuk Bilimi* or *Hukuk İlmi*), *bilim* and *ilim* both meaning 'science' or 'studies'; *tarihi/tarihsel* (historic); *siyaset/politika* (politics); *ziraat/tarım* (agriculture), with both the old Ottoman versions and the new Turkish being used indiscriminately.

Names

There are no standards or rules for handling surnames, and confusion arises as a result of using different versions at different times and in different libraries, especially for the period prior to the 1934 Surnames Law. The same is also true for foreign names (Alakuş):

Sinan, Koca, Mimar, 1490–1588
Mimar Sinan, 1490–1588
Fatih Sultan Mehmet, 1432 –1481
Mehmet II, Osmanlı padişahı, 1432 –1481

Authority files are also needed for corporate names such as BOTAŞ, ASELSAN and for names of state institutions, such as TC Emekli Sandığı (TR Old Age Security Foundation) and different versions of the acronym TC (TR) as it is often used in all state organizations. For example, variants appear such as the Turkish Republic Central Bank (*Türkiye*

Table I UNAK database terms related to the Turkish language

Türk dili	Turkish language
Türk dili – Etimoloji	Turkish language – etymology
Türk dili – Gramer	Turkish language – grammar
Türk dili – Lehçeler	Turkish language – dialects
Türk dili – Yazım	Turkish language – writing
Türk dili – Yeni kelimeler	Turkish language – new words
Türk dili – Yardımcı fiiller	Turkish language – auxiliary verbs
Türk dili – Yabancı öğeler	Turkish language – foreign elements
Slavic Türk dili – Yabancı Öğeler–Slavca	Turkish language – foreign elements – Slavic
Türk dili – Yabancı sözcükler, vb.–Slavca	Turkish language – foreign words and phrases – Slavic
Türk dili – Sesbilim	Turkish language – phonology
Türk dili – Okuma kitapları	Turkish language – readers
Türk dili – Sesleme	Turkish language – syllabication
Türk dili – Değişkenler	Turkish language – variations
Türk dili – Şiir yazma	Turkish language – versification
Türk dili – Ölçü	Turkish language – versification

Cumhuriyet Merkez Bankası), or TR Central Bank (TC Merkez Bankası), or TR Central Bank (TC Merkez Bankası). Private and state corporations and institutions should be listed with their standard versions and their variants in both Turkish and English, together with 'see' references with a view to establishing a standard format.

Authority files are also needed for fictitious characters, public buildings, as well as geographic names, diseases, flora and fauna and so on. The Library of Congress has its own authority records for these headings online which can be referred to by librarians, indexers or even researchers and users. Turkey needs them too.

Spelling, combined words, etc.

Turkish spelling is phonetic and simple, but the rules should always be checked with *Yazım Kılavuzu* (Guide to Spelling), the *Dictionary of Names* and various subject dictionaries prepared by TDK (the Turkish Language Association). Special attention should be given to combined words and proper names, words and names borrowed from other languages, Arabic and Roman numbers, and special rules relating to controlled vocabularies, subject headings and thesauri.

Translation costs

Translation is labour-intensive and costly, particularly given the fact that the same translation work is repeated in different libraries (Baydur, 1995).

Use of thesauri

Until recently (2002) ULAKBİM was involved only in the indexing of medical, veterinarian and biological sciences and engineering, creating different databases for these subjects.

For indexing purposes in these areas, both subject thesauri and a controlled vocabulary system are used: MeSH, JICST and the CABI thesaurus for veterinary sciences (Yıldızeli).

The ULAKBİM National Databases are (ULAKBİM):

- National Medical Index (1996–current)
- TÜBİTAK Supported Projects Database (1966–current)
- National Science and Engineering Database (1992–current)
- National Agriculture, Veterinary and Biology Database (1992–current).

Free indexing is applied for terms that are specific to Turkey. However, problems arise in the translation of keywords and subject headings into Turkish, as the Turkish terminology is not standardized. For example, 'cardiology' can appear in the transliterated Latin version as *Kardiyoloji* or in the Turkish version *Kalp Hastalıkları*; geology can be *Jeoloji* or *Yer Bilimleri*. All terms are given both in English and Turkish as these databases are bilingual and retrieval can be in either language. Titles of articles and their abstracts are also given in both languages in the database.

ULAKBİM's hopes and expectations in compiling a list of controlled vocabularies drawn from free indexing terms and use of thesauri terms are that (ULAKBİM):

- academicians, researchers and subject specialists will go through these terms and will suggest standard terms eventually to be used as main descriptors in a Turkish scientific and technical thesaurus
- these accepted terms will then be used widely by them for research and retrieval purposes
- the list of controlled terms will be available to help other centres in indexing their collections
- and the list will be an aid in the training of indexers to use thesauri in their indexing activities (Yıldızeli).

SBVT (Social Sciences Database) which started in 2002 indexes journal articles as a separate database covering journals in the fields of administrative sciences, anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art history, city and regional planning, communications, education, economics and management, geography, history, international relations, languages, library and information sciences, philosophy, psychology and social sciences. No thesauri are used in the indexing process, and to date no controlled vocabulary system has been prepared. Indexing is done ad hoc on the basis of free indexing terms selected from titles and abstracts of articles indexed.

Book indexing

Serial indexing of ongoing journals, periodicals and publications is rather different from back-of-the-book indexing. (Newspaper indexes are almost nonexistent.) A book is intended for a specific group of readers or researchers, with a style and terminology quite often peculiar to that book, and cross-references providing links between subjects and between synonyms and variations of terminology appearing in that particular book or to guide the user from his or her assumed term to the one the author has actually chosen to use. A thesaurus for back-of-the-book indexing would be inappropriate as the indexer must be guided primarily by the author's preferred usage. However the basic principles of indexing are the same for both journals and books – the material must be read, understood and analysed, and headings must be assigned (Weaver, 2002).

So book indexing in Turkey has all the same problems as the serial and archive indexing discussed above, and possibly to an even greater extent as very little attention has been given to the matter. To the extent that Turkish books do have indexes, these tend just to be indexes of personal and place names. There are very few subject indexes, there are no cross-references, and descriptors are often vague, not to say absurd. Just as with archive indexing, names (personal, corporate or geographic places) may have several variants. An authority list is needed of Turkish authors, corporate names and geographical names for places in Turkey as well as translations and transliterations of foreign names. There may be no need for a thesaurus for back-of-the-book indexing, but basic rules and principles of indexing are essential if indexers are to be helped to achieve consistency in their choice of headings. It is hoped that if rules and standards are agreed for thesaurus construction, these will assist those who do book indexing.

Attention should also be given to the fact that back-of-the-book indexes are almost invariably prepared by the author or by a kind friend or somebody in the publishing house. Not a professional indexer amongst them! The concept of professional back-of-the-book indexing does not exist in Turkey, and by the same token, there is no appreciation of the possibility of or need for professional training. There can be no real progress in this field until the need for professional standards is acknowledged. For anyone aspiring to become an indexer, much is to be gained by becoming a member of one of the various national indexing societies

(see the inside front cover of this journal). At least two of them (the British and American societies) offer distance learning, and there are other correspondence courses on offer. Even a nodding acquaintance (for example through membership of an indexing society online discussion group) would open up a new understanding of the challenges and opportunities good indexing offers.

Conclusion

To sum up, whether we are talking about archive indexing, the serial indexing of ongoing publications, or back of the book indexing, Turkey still has a long way to go. A major problem is the inadequacy of systems in use in Turkish libraries for the organization of their material and the heavy dependence on foreign subject heading and classification lists. This leads to major gaps in terminology and structure, inconsistencies, and duplication of expensive translation work.

IRANDOC, the Iranian Documentation Centre, was founded in 1968, five years after TURDOC, the Turkish Documentation Centre; to date IRANDOC has compiled 12 Persian thesauri, with others in the course of preparation. Generally accepted procedures were used for compiling thesauri, such as preparation of lists of terms in the native language (Persian), translation of thesauri from English or French into the native language, and compilation of the thesauri in the native language (Bagheri, 2006). Progress has been made too in China (see Liqun Dai's article in this issue of *The Indexer*). As yet there has been no such attempt to construct special thesauri for sciences and technology, or relating to Turkish studies, in Turkey. And proper indexing of individual journals, cumulative indexes, databases, book indexing and web indexing scarcely exists.

Turkey needs to form a national information policy and define knowledge management activities. The most urgent and immediate needs are:

- a general periodical index database
- special thesauri covering all fields of science, social sciences, economics, history, archaeology, arts and literature, as well as a general thesaurus on Turkey, which would encourage the development of a standard union catalogue and also help determine the principles of back of the book indexing
- a citation index for articles published in Turkish journals
- dissertation abstracts for theses prepared in Turkish universities
- a new look at the need for professionalism in the preparation of back-of-the-book indexes.

Turkey has a long way to go yet, but the challenge is one well worth tackling. As I said at the beginning, the losers in the fight for understanding will be those who fail to organize information in a way that is honest, user-friendly and accessible.

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