



New Approaches for Interlibrary Loan Operations in Turkey; KITS (Interlibrary Loan Tracking System)

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Abstract

In this study, we would like to introduce KITS (Interlibrary Loan Tracking System), which is an on-line system for resource sharing for the Turkish institutions. The academics of Turkish institutions and research centres from any region of Turkey can access the full-text and bibliographic scholarly e-resources on many different subjects through ANKOS (Anatolian University Libraries Consortium) since 2000 when ANKOS was established. Besides consortium activities there are many working and research groups under the ANKOS organisation. These working and research groups try to build up different kinds of professional librarianship activities. "National Resource Sharing Guideline" has been written by one of these groups named Collaboration Research Group. KITS has also been produced by the same group.

KITS is an application that centralises all ILL operations and processes in different formats. The participating institutions will manage all resource sharing activities on-line. KITS is a unique and first of its kind application for the on-line resource sharing operations in Turkey, we believe that all the institutions in the higher education system will participate to the KITS project because KITS is very user friendly and the institutions would like to get their own ILL statistics easily. KITS is available at <http://www.ankos.gen.tr/KITS/index.php>.

Keywords: ILL, Inter Library Loan, Resource Sharing, KITS, Turkish Interlibrary Loan Tracking System, Document delivery, ANKOS

Introduction

The last thirty years have witnessed an exponential increase in information and communication technologies. Combined with the wide-spread use of the Internet, digitisation of scholarly publications has been one of the most influential effects on libraries, librarianship, and access to knowledge. Libraries try to supply the requested knowledge to their users in the shortest time possible. Individual libraries are facing great difficulties in serving this aim by means of information technologies due to the rapid increase of information sources and the high costs associated with the access and usage of those sources. As a remedy for those problems, new models of collaboration, named consortiums, have been formed for shared electronic subscription to periodicals and databases. Consortiums have become widespread all over the world, especially in North America and Europe [1].

Consortiums provide significant advantages especially for libraries with insufficient budget and/or printed sources. Even though consortium activities started for more than 40 years ago in North America and Europe, the first attempt to form a consortium in Turkey occurred in 2000 by the collaboration of four libraries (a state university and three private universities) signing an agreement to subscribe to two databases offered by Ebsco [2]. This agreement has been the first step to form ANKOS (Anatolian University Libraries Consortium). As of today, ANKOS, with 102 member libraries, continues its activities with a total subscription to 63 databases. ANKOS has contributed significantly to the scientific performance of Turkey, as a huge number of users from many university and research libraries with limited budget and insufficient collections were able to access electronic resources through the ANKOS consortium. Besides its function to allow economic online access to knowledge by means of contemporary information technologies, ANKOS, also provides a forum for librarians to better know each other, and to allow professional communication. To support these aims, ANKOS pays attention to follow advances in information technologies and related activities over the world. With its several working and research groups, ANKOS attends to scientific events on national and international level [1].

One of the groups mentioned above, ANKOS Collaboration Research Group, has been founded in September 2006 to focus on the three subjects below:

1. Staff Exchange Program for ANKOS members
2. National Resource Sharing Guideline
3. Program to manage all interlibrary loan processes between university libraries

ILL Applications in Turkey

Nowadays, the vision of owning all information resources has been outdated by all the parties involved in the sector, and sharing has become mandatory. Sharing is gaining priority, especially in institutions and countries with limited sources. Collection development, organisation of information resources, and servicing information needs of users, are the areas in which collaboration is observed among institutions

providing information services. “Resource Sharing” with the widely used phrase of “ILL and document delivery services”, is observed to be the most common type of collaboration activity that is the main focus of this paper.

Both the Staff Exchange Program and the National Resource Sharing Guideline have been the first comprehensive instances of their kind in Turkey. Standards developed (IFLA, ALA, Canada, New Zealand, UK, Australia) so far, have been considered, and they have been adapted to local conditions as the National Resource Sharing Guideline was prepared.

Comparing resource sharing activities from abroad with local examples, it is evident that the collaboration is limited in Turkey because of several shortcomings:

- Lack of a national union catalog

Several projects have been carried out in Turkey for years with the aim of collaboration among libraries. Studies about union catalogs for periodicals, ILL and collaborative collection development, online library catalogs on the Internet, and various bibliographical databases are among them [3]. The online union catalog service of Bilkent University, Gazi University, Hacettepe University, Middle East Technical University (METU), and ULAKBİM (National Academic Network and Information Centre of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) is an example of a local union catalog [4]. There are also union catalogs developed by the pioneering work of commercial automation software, such as BLISS-CAT and Yordam-2001. Catalogs of 32 different libraries can be browsed by BLISS-CAT, whereas Yordam-2001 [5] allows access to 47 different library catalogs.

The most recent work on a central National Union Catalog in Turkey is the Integrated E-Library Project which is assigned to the responsibility of the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications. The project has been defined in the Action Plan for the Knowledge Society Strategy, published in 2006 in the Official Gazette. The implementation of the project is being carried out by ULAKBİM (National Academic Network and Information Centre). The beta version of National Union Catalog (TO-KAT abbreviated from the phrase TOplu KATalog) is opened to online access on 19 September 2008 with the contributions of five institutions (three of them are university libraries). Officially, TO-KAT has become operational during the week of Librarianship, on 3 April 2009. The web address of the union catalog is www.toplukatalog.gov.tr. Currently, records of 13 institutions are included in the system. Considering the fact that there are 148 institutions of higher education, 1162 public libraries, and several other libraries of information and research centres, it can be inferred that the national union catalog has a long path to proceed in order to reach the desired level.

- Organisation in most of the libraries/information centres is not sufficient for document delivery and loan services.
- Sustainability of proposed projects can not be established due to the insufficiency in funds, legal issues, and the infrastructure.

Work on standardisation in resource sharing in Turkey is very minimal, such that the existing attempts could not go further than preparation of regulations or drafts for law

bills. Among them, the regulation for “Interlibrary Loan of Printed Books” aims to govern ILL services of printed books among public libraries in Turkey [6]. Another work is specifically related to university libraries: One of the “Legal Regulations and Standardisation Committees” formed by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, namely the “Committee for Interlibrary Collaboration Law,” has prepared a draft for “Interlibrary Collaboration Law” in 1988 [7].

Printed forms designed by this committee have been used in ILL operations of academic institutions between 1998 and 2008. ILL operations have been carried out for a long time such that the requesting institution sends the printed forms via post or fax to the supplying institution. Later, forms have been sent to supplying institutions by e-mail attachments; however, whichever method is used to send the forms, forms could not create an efficient, fast, and easy ILL process although they have helped improve the flow a bit. On the other hand, advances in communication and computer technology allowed opportunities to develop new methods to be deployed instead of printed forms. KITS application has been started to be developed according to the demands of all higher education institutions of Turkey in order to meet existing needs with the possibilities of new technology.

Table 1 below shows ILL operations carried out using printed forms; the data belong to year 2007. One of the most important features of KITS is that ILL statistics can be obtained instantly.

Table 1. Number of materials lent to the libraries at home

A. Total B. Academic personnel C. Administrative personnel D. Students				
	Total number of demand	Total number of demand met	Number of materials lent	Number of demands (titles) met with copy material to take place of original material
Total	A 27576	24903	18076	5446
	B 22476	20815	17611	4079
	C 87	56	3	17
	D 5013	4032	462	1350
Public	A 18228	16337	11786	5215
	B 13184	12299	11324	3848
	C 48	21	1	17
	D 4996	4017	461	1350
Private	A 9348	8566	6290	231
	B 9292	8516	6287	231
	C 39	35	2	0
	D 17	15	1	0

The data above have been collected individually from institutions; there exists no online application that monitors all ILL processes on national level.

KITS (Interlibrary Loan Tracking System)

ANKOS Collaboration Research Group, as mentioned above, has prepared the Resource Sharing Regulations on National Level, and the online application, KITS, so as to invoke awareness in this area. The subject of this paper, KITS application, has been developed by the members of the Collaboration Research Group, working as a research group of ANKOS. All members of the group are individuals with a formation in librarianship.

According to the decision taken on the ANKOS workshop in October 2008, KITS has been opened to the use of all libraries/information centres of higher education institutions of Turkey for test purposes. Related statistical data, tables, etc. will constitute the remainder of this paper. Interlibrary Loan Tracking System, abbreviated as KITS, is a multi-user, online application to track processes related to resource sharing between libraries/information centres of higher education institutions. The application is being developed by the Expert Librarian Zeki Çelikbaş, employed at the ITÜ (Istanbul Technical University) library.

KITS is an application that centralises all ILL operations and processes in different formats (print, postal, fax, e-mail, computer files etc.). When the institutions decide to participate in the KITS system, they do not need to use custom ways for ILL activities any further. The participating institutions can manage all resource sharing activities on-line. KITS is software which is developed by the GPL license. General characteristics of KITS are given below:

- On-line filing system,
- Request monitoring screens for books and articles,
- Detailed statistics for book/article requests,
- Manual and/or copy-paste entry option for the MARC records of book requests,
- Ability to add special notes in any stage of the request, and if necessary, to send e-mails to librarian's mailboxes,
- Possibility to send detailed information about the requests to the requester users, when needed.

The outcomes of the KITS system can be summarised as follows:

- All the ILL operations and processes will be centralised,
- Standardisation of ILL procedures in Turkey,
- Getting detailed statistics on a national basis
- Production of data for the Libraries' acquisition policies.

KITS is a unique and first application for the on-line resource sharing operations in Turkey, we believe that in the near future all the institutions in the higher education system will be participating to the KITS project, because KITS is very user friendly, easy to use, and the institutions would like to get their own ILL statistics easily. KITS is available at <http://www.ankos.gen.tr/KITS/index.php> .

Infrastructure of KITS

KITS is an online database application. As in similar applications, it needs a web server, script processing language, and a database. KITS is coded using the PHP language. Apache is used for the web server software, and MySQL has been used as the database server. Conversion of the system into another database server software would be easy since standard SQL (Structured Query Language) queries have been used as much as possible. Similarly, the system can also be used on another web server software supporting PHP. It is possible to access and use KITS using all modern web browsing programmes. The Entity Relationship Diagram (ER Diagram) of KITS is given in Figure 1 that displays the database table structure of KITS.

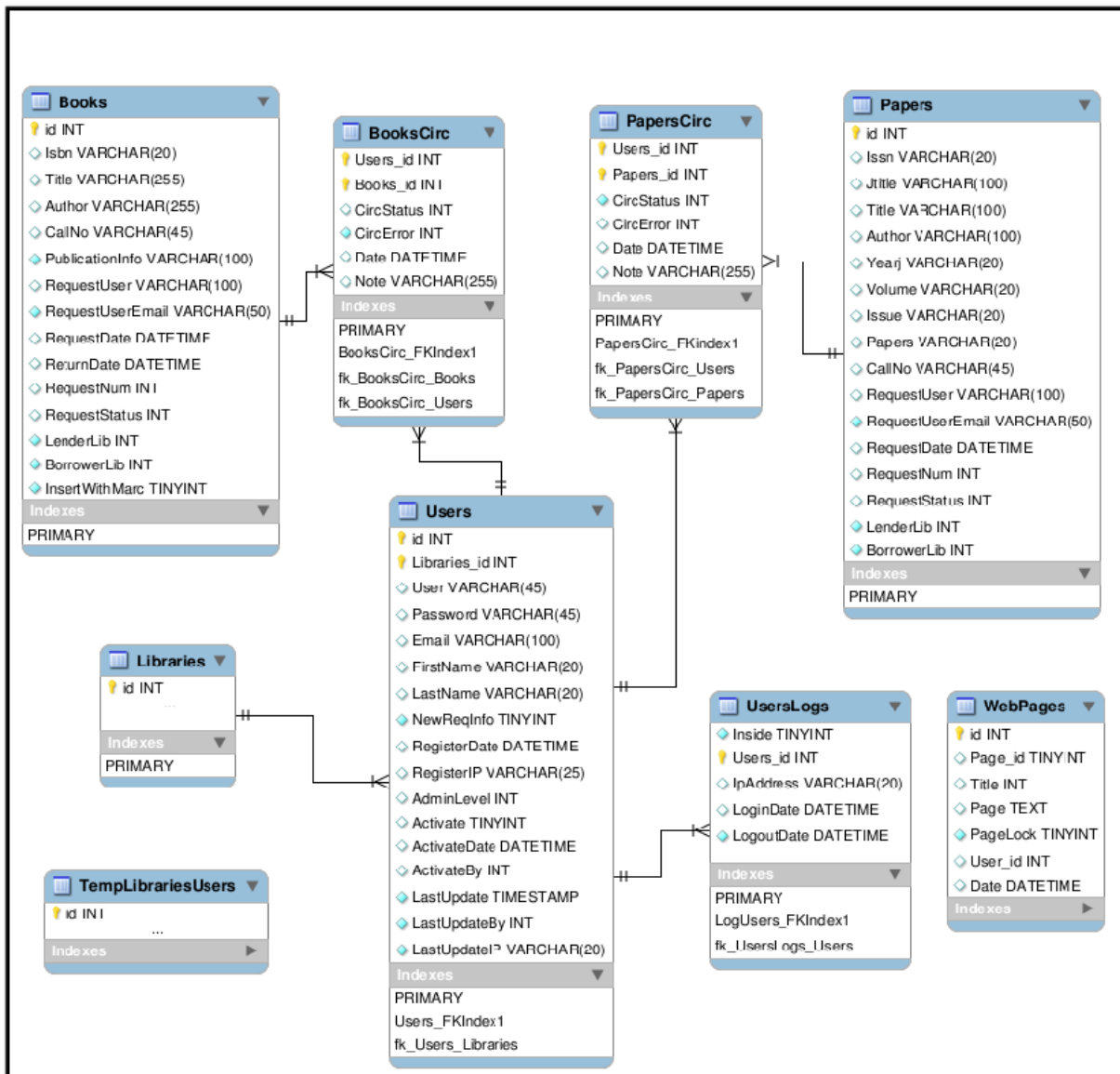
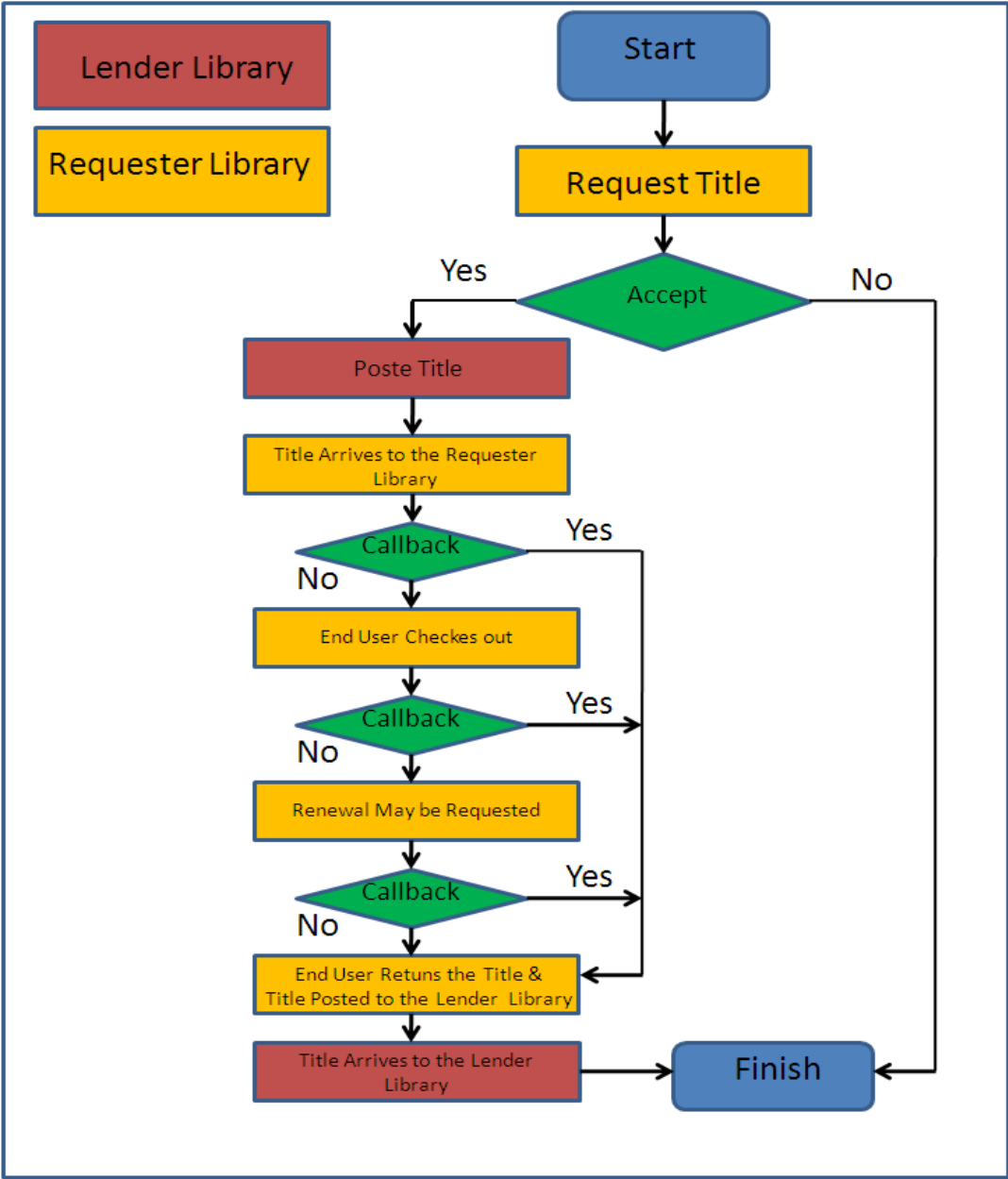


Figure 1. KITS Entity Relationship Diagram

Interlibrary loan process (Figure 2) is initiated by the request of a library. The resource sharing system deployed in KITS is designed to conform to the rules enforced in the National Resource Sharing Regulations. The ILL process starts with a request, as with all interlibrary loan operations. If the library to which the request is sent, will meet this request, then the request will be approved, otherwise it will be denied. The requester library will be informed about the approval of the request. After

this step, three different work flows may be happening between the libraries that will be fully supported by KITS. Firstly, the ILL process continues in the usual, normal way, and it terminates. In the second case, the lending library may recall the material (without the need to supply any reason). Thirdly, the requester library may demand for a renewal of the loan for a further period. There are mechanisms for dealing with any kind of special cases in these steps and for sending messages in KITS. Every ILL request initiated and terminated within this process is logged instantaneously by the KITS system.

Figure 2. KITS Workflow



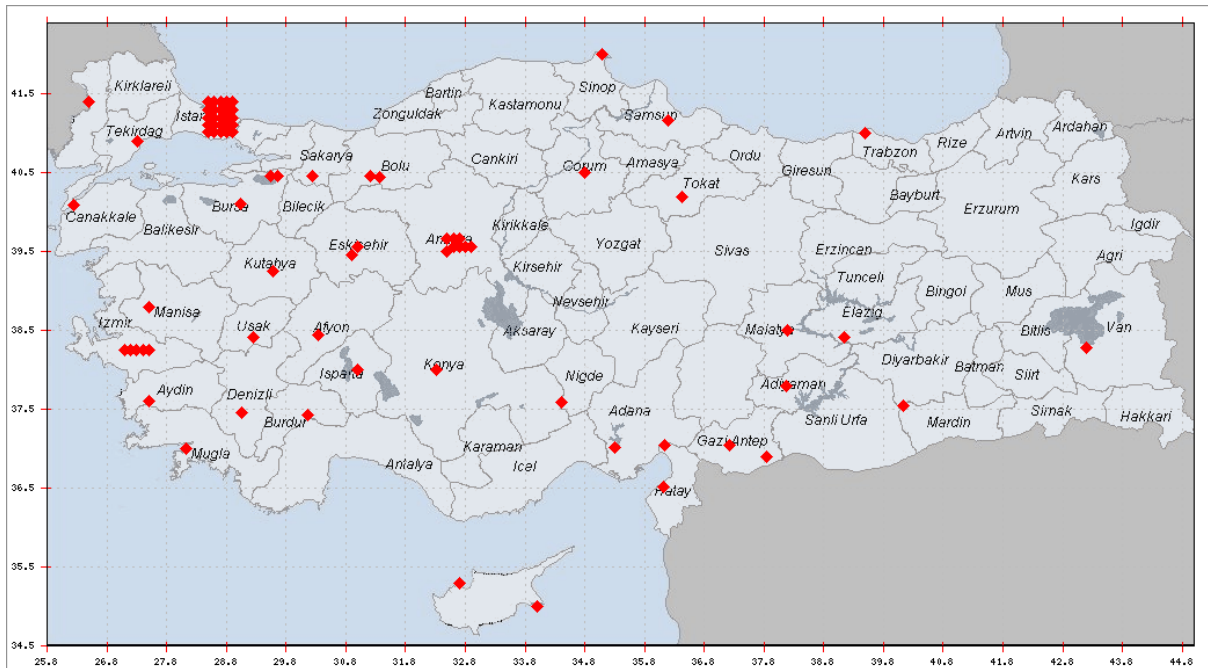


Figure 3. Current State of KITS, Distribution of Members over Turkey

As of April 2009, there are 148 higher education institutions in Turkey. They are classified as follows: 101 state universities, 43 private (foundation) universities, and 4 private higher vocational schools. Among those higher education institutions, the regional distribution of KITS members is displayed on the map in Figure 3. An investigation of the map and the distribution reveals that there is regional clustering but there is at least one member institution in nearly every city of Turkey, In other words, KITS has reached the target of a wide national participation, substantially.

Statistics about KITS

Number of Universities, ANKOS Members, and KITS Members

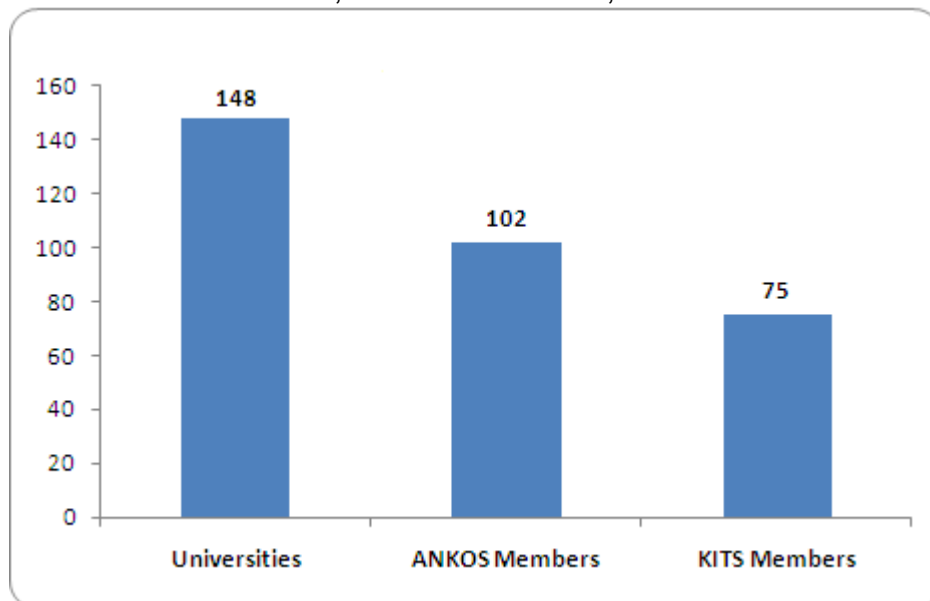


Figure 4.KITS Members

Out of the 148 higher education institutions in Turkey, 102 are members of ANKOS. All non-member institutions have been constituted within the last one year; they are in the phase of organisation, hence, a large proportion of these institutions could not complete or even start the formation of their libraries. Henceforth, those newly formed institutions are not using any electronic resource supplied by ANKOS. Out of the 102 members of ANKOS, 75 institutions are members of KITS where 60 institutions are using KITS actively, and where 15 institutions have not carried out any ILL operation using KITS after their registration as a member.

Categories of KITS members: State-Foundation

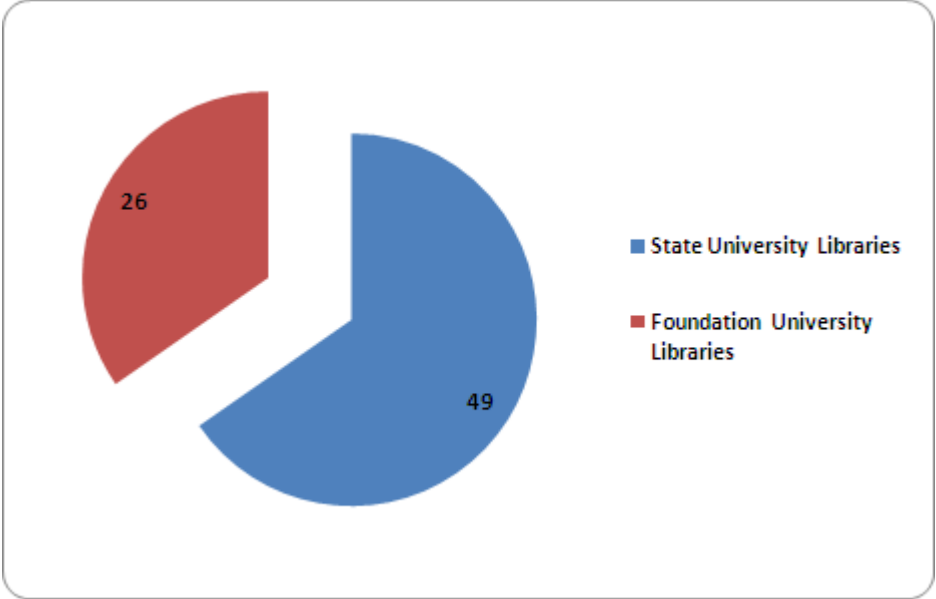


Figure 5. Categories of KITS Member Libraries

Development of KITS Members

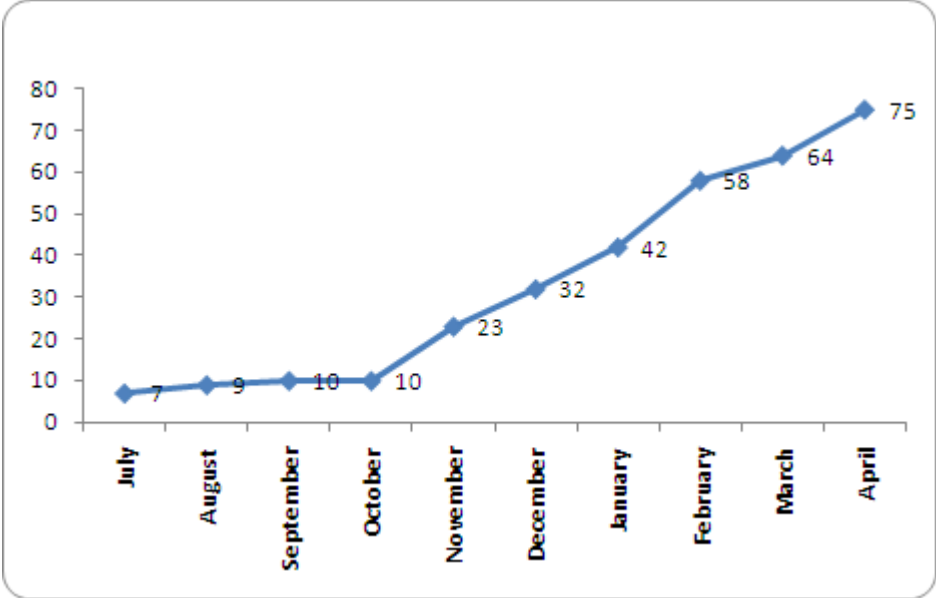


Figure 6. Number of KITS Members

KITS has started to be tested in July 2008 by a group of seven institutions where four of them are members of the Collaboration Research Group. KITS had reached a member size of 11 when regional tests were started in August and September 2008.

Pilot applications on a national level commenced in October 2008 with the collaboration of 24 members. Figure 6 displays monthly changes in the member count of KITS.

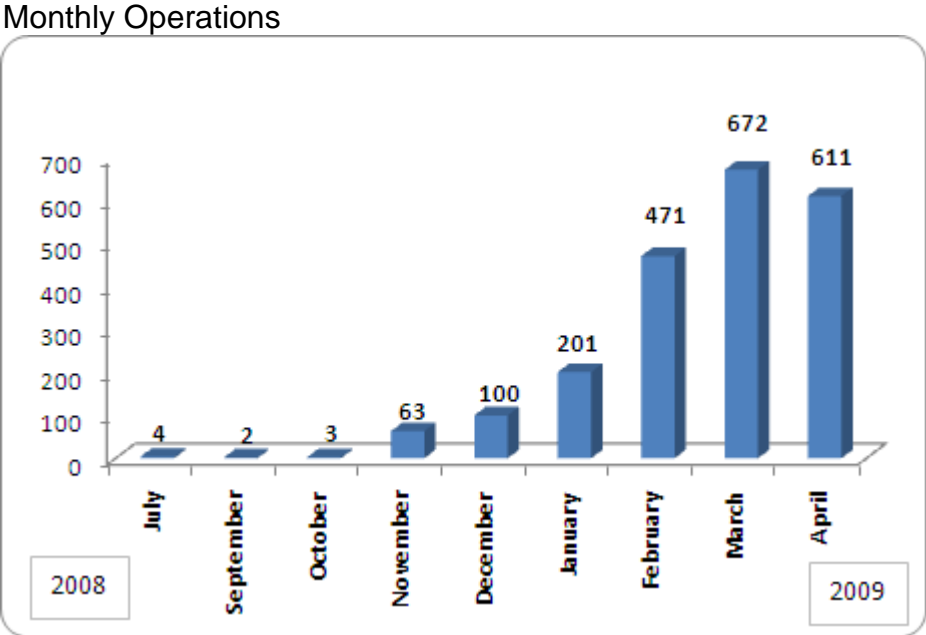


Figure 7. Number of Monthly Operations in KITS

Figure 7 displays the distribution of operations carried out in KITS over months. It is evident that the count of ILL operations increases as the member count of KITS increases. However, the rapid increase of operations starting with February (even though there is no huge increase in member count) indicates that KITS has started to be adopted by the members because the operations can be carried out much more easily using KITS.

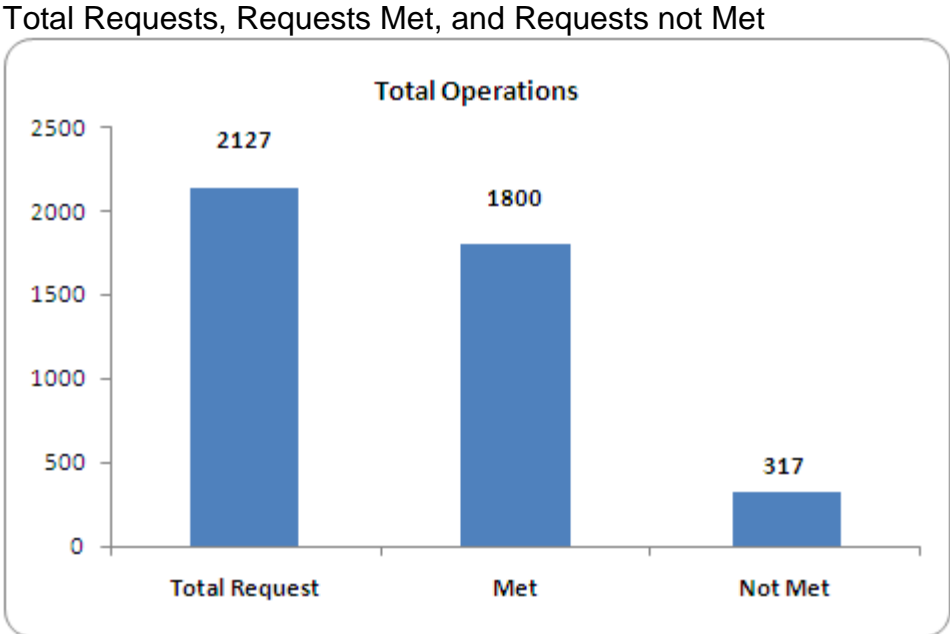


Figure 8. Total Operations

During the period of the pilot application of KITS, 2127 titles have been requested in total (Figure 8). Out of this, 1800 titles have been sent to the requester institutions.

On the other hand, 317 of requests could not be met due to several reasons (the title has been lent to a user, or the title is not allowed to be lent, etc.)

Request and Loan Statistics (Top requesters and lenders)

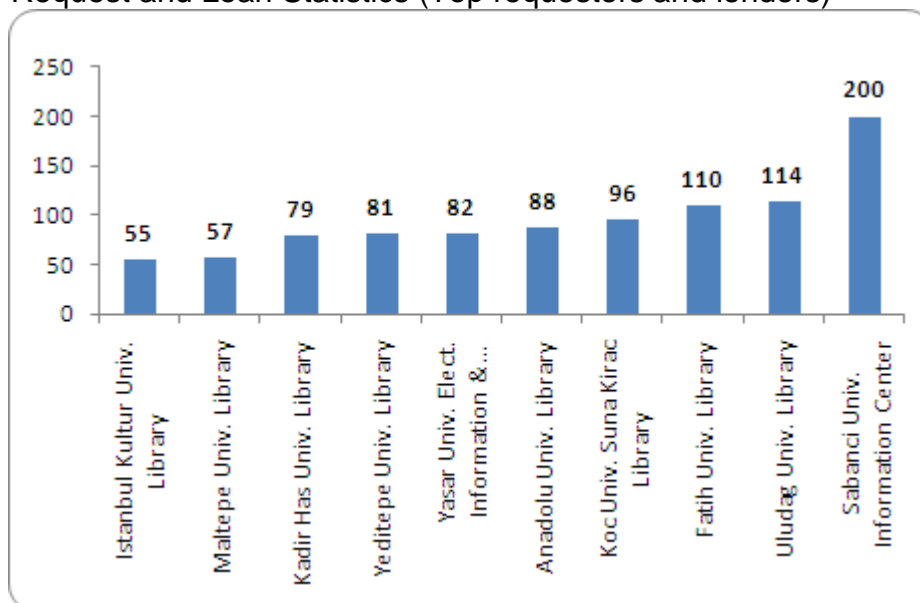


Figure 9. Top 10 Requester Libraries

Figure 9 shows the top 10 institutions that request titles for ILL using KITS. These top 10 institutions have requested 963 titles out of the total of 2127, in other words, 45% of the requests have been done by 13% of the institutions.

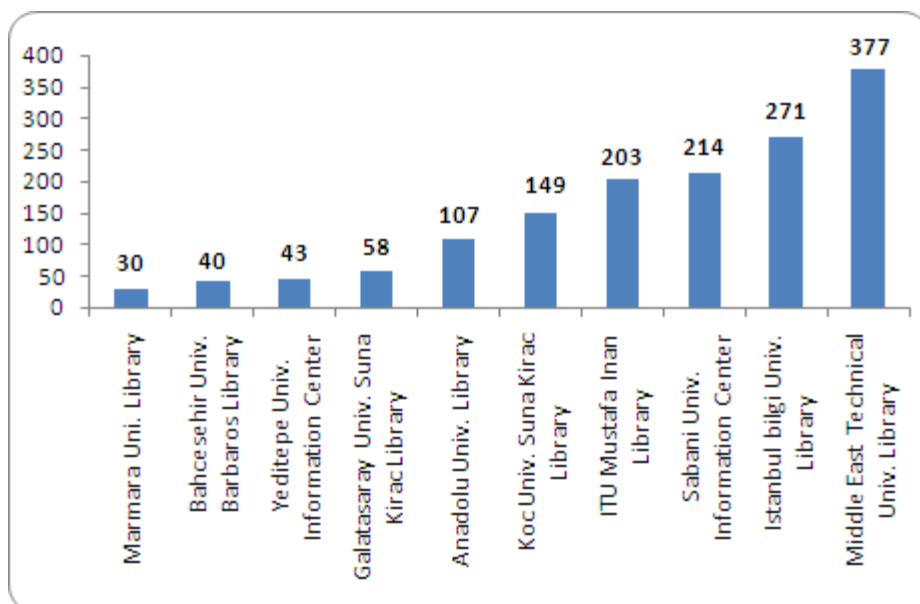


Figure 10. Top 10 Lender Libraries

Top 10 lending institutions are displayed in figure 10. A total of 1800 titles have been sent to the requester libraries, out of that, 1507 titles (83%) have been supplied by the top 10 suppliers. It is evident that those 10 institutions are the main lenders.

Net Lending

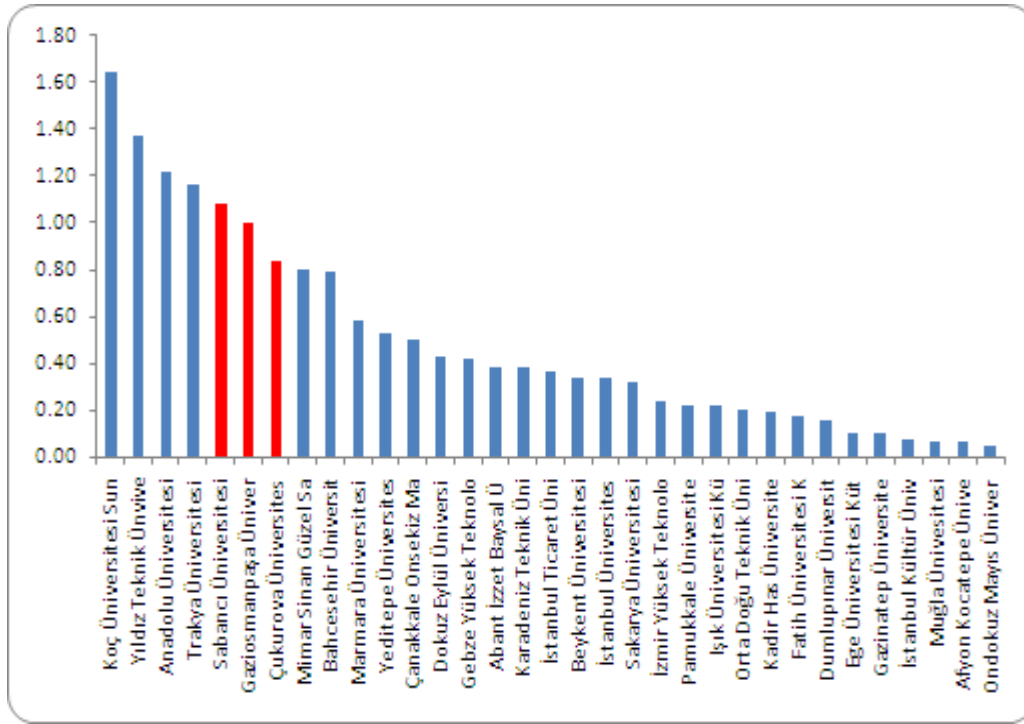


Figure 11. Net Lending of Member Institutions

Figure 11 shows the ratio of the number of titles lent to the number of titles borrowed by the institutions, i.e. the graph displays how many titles are lent for one title borrowed. Ideally, this ratio should be around one. Three institutions, namely, Gaziosmanpaşa University Library (1.0), Sabancı University Information Centre (1.07), and Çukurova University Library (0.84) seem to be closer to the ideal ratio. The graph only includes institutions that have a ratio between 0.5 and 2.0 so as to remove those with less activity. Even though, three institutions may have a net lending ratio around one, Sabancı University Information Centre has the closest position to the ideal if the total number of ILL operations are taken into account: Gaziosmanpaşa University Library has a very low level of activity (3 lending / 3 borrowing = 1.0) whereas Sabancı University Information Centre obtains the ratio of 1.07 by 214 lent over 200 borrowed.

Service Time for Requests

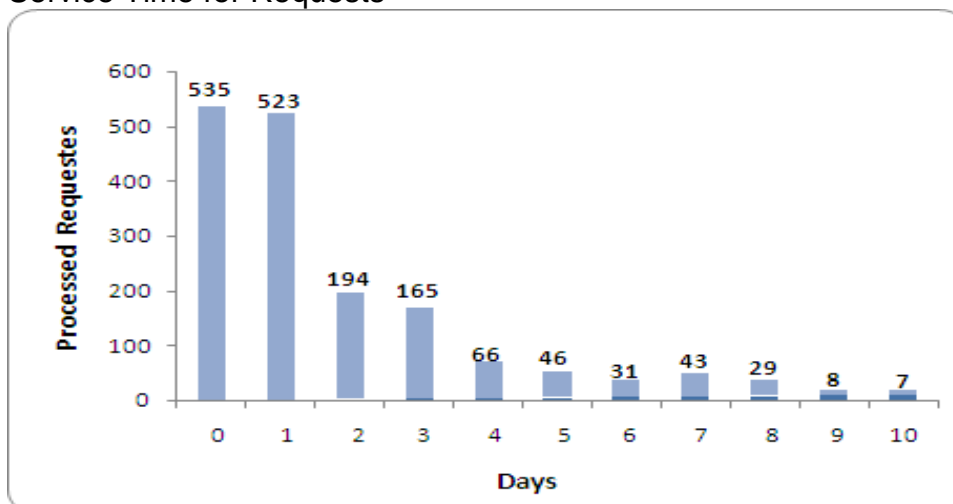


Figure 12. Turnaround Time

Figure 12 displays the histogram of turnaround times for requests in KITS. Requests supplied in over 10 days are not included in the graph. An investigation reveals that 25% of requests have been met in less than one day. Another 25% of requests have been met in one day. In other words, more than 50% of requests have been met within one day, hence it can be said that member institutions and librarians have taken ILL services seriously, and that they have behaved carefully in these manners.

Conclusion – Problems, Suggestions and Future Outlook

The intention of collaboration is to supply services to users in a better, faster, and economical manner. One of the most important factors hindering interlibrary collaboration is that the inclination is not sufficient for working together and producing joint projects. Collaboration is easy to talk about, but its realisation requires a hard struggle of joint efforts! Usually, almost all parties are in favour of collaboration, however, it can easily be given up when it comes to carrying out the necessary work for collaboration. Collaborating libraries are expected to conform to certain standards, and to maintain the common level of quality. However, many people get disturbed by the announcement of the statement that the work can be done in a way different than the conventional methods. They think that their solution is the best one, even in circumstances where a compromise is easy to achieve.

KITS is being developed by a group of dedicated volunteers that have started their journey for team work, instead of individual efforts. Use of KITS by 75 member institutions during the pilot application, has given great pleasure to the developers. The ideal goal is to carry out interlibrary resource sharing operations through the national union catalog. It is the hope of the developers that integration of KITS with the national union catalog will be the topic of the near future.

KITS, and similar applications succeed with utilisation and support at national level; KITS has reached a member count of 75 during the pilot application, and an important level of support has been observed. Some of the key institutions among the main suppliers (that also have an important place for their collection among the libraries in Turkey) did not participate to the KITS application; this has been one of the principal problems experienced during the project. According to bilateral

interviews and general investigation, “adherence to traditions” arises to be the main reason for those main suppliers not to participate to the KITS application. Those institutions either use the ILL modules that are part of the automation program already operated, and they consider the KITS platform as an extra load. Or, they are using in-house semi-manual ILL systems, and they exhibit a distant position towards KITS and other similar new applications. They also have another reason for not being part of the KITS application: they fear that their already heavy work load will increase when they will participate to the KITS application.

It has been observed during the pilot application of KITS, that, especially managers of state university libraries (who are supposed to carry out all the operations according to formal laws and regulations) are expecting a legal basis for such applications. On the contrary, the developers of KITS think that there is no need for such a legal basis because KITS aims to carry the existing applications into electronic environment. Hence, there is no need for a new legal regulation.

The aims of the KITS application can be summarised as to emphasize the importance of ILL operations, to create an awareness in this subject, to provide standardisation, to shorten the duration of processes, to record the processes, and to increase the service quality in ILL operations. During this study, we observed that the KITS application has achieved the abovementioned goals considerably: Processes are recorded, service quality has been improved, and a standard application has been implemented. Furthermore, the most important goal achieved is the creation of an awareness, indicated by the fact that some of the institutions out of the 75 KITS members, have carried out their first ILL operation over the KITS platform. On the other hand, the KITS project continues on national level by the participation of new members after the pilot application was completed on April the 30th, 2009. This strengthens the idea that the project will gain continuousness.

KITS project aims to carry out all ILL operations within standards, online, and logged centrally in Turkey. It is expected that previously used manual systems will be totally abandoned. Future activities planned are listed below that will transform KITS project to a nationwide application.

- Use of KITS by all university libraries in Turkey
- Permanency of KITS
- Support for union catalog
- International collaboration
- National conference for dissemination and evaluation
- Filing an application for a Turkish standard (TSE, Institute for Turkish Standards)
- User feedback and suggestions for improvement
- Agreement with Shipment Companies

“Taking responsibility, common understanding, developing a consensus, and patience” are the topics emphasized by Mr. Tonta about collaboration [3].

We want to conclude our paper with a quotation from the talk of Jordan M. Scepanski as it correctly exhibits our approach in starting the KITS application: “... All of these are topics, to be overcome by all of us in the library world in order to advance to the

upper level stated by Kittay, I suggest to you the following, in order to advance to upper level together:

Continuity. Never give up, keep trying.

Talk to each other. Expression of inner feelings and discussion of thoughts are important.

Listen to others. Listening is important. All of us want to be heard.

Great dreams give birth to great works. You should have great dreams in order to spend a good life.

And, lastly: Action gives results! Change requires action.”

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