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Book Review

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The Public Library Services in Turkey and Bulgaria in the Transition Process to Information Society

by Ahmet Altay

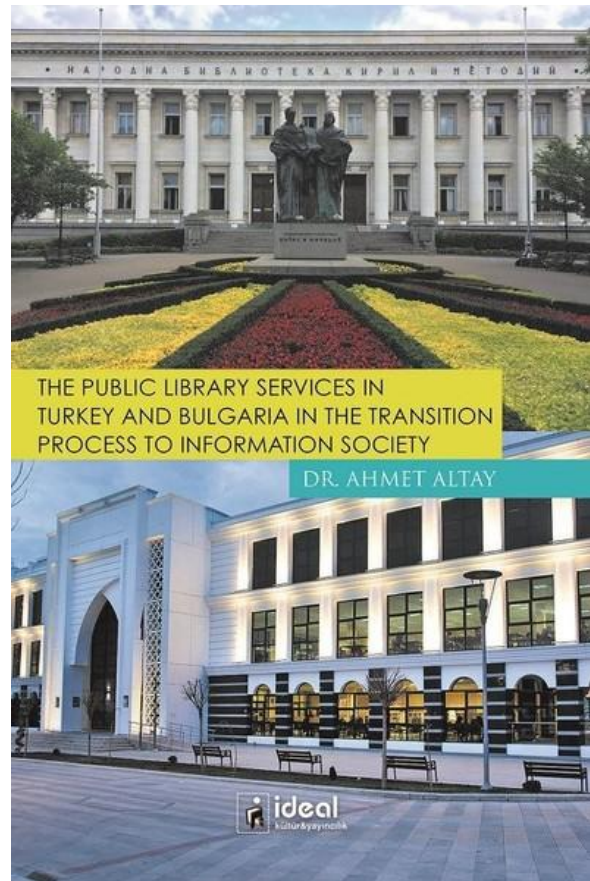
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410 pages

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The book named "The Public Library Services in Turkey and Bulgaria in the Transition Process to Information Society" written by Dr. Ahmet Altay, who is a lecturer in Kırklareli University Pınarhisar Vocational School Knowledge Management Program, is based on his doctoral study. Turkey and Bulgaria, two countries covered in the book, share common history and cultural heritage beyond being neighbors. There are similarities in the social development of both countries. Both countries experienced problems and difficulties during the transition from agriculture society to industrial society and faced the stage of information society before completing industrialization stage. In this book, Altay compares two countries' public libraries, Turkey and Bulgaria, which are in the process of transition to information society. In this work, aim was to determine the current state of the public libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria on the axis of information society. In the book, it was also aimed to determine the views of managers and librarians working in the Public Libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria about the fact of information society and effects information society have on public libraries.

This book is the first comprehensive study to address Public Libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria on the axis of Information Society. In the study, Information Society's effects on the elements of public library and services are discussed. In addition, this book is the first to address public library services in Bulgaria and Turkey comparatively. Even though we have common culture and history heritage of nearly six hundred years with our neighboring country Bulgaria, it is not possible to say that the number of sources written about Bulgaria in our country is sufficient. This applies to publications about libraries and librarianship. Altay's work also contains considerable information about the history of Bulgaria's



librarianship and the historical development of its libraries. This book, that evaluates the elements and services of public libraries in the context of information society which will play the key role in the creation of a society consisting of qualified individuals, will be a reference source for determining strategies about the development of public libraries and the work that will be done in this area.

The book consists of five sections.

First section is the introduction section. The aim of this section is to give information about purpose, importance, hypothesis, scope, method and resources.

Second section carries the titles "Public Library" and "Information Society". In this section, the conceptual framework of the public libraries and the information society is drawn, and the extent of the relationship between the information society and the public library is revealed. While revealing this relationship, important events, concepts and innovations that are carried to the agenda of the public libraries with the transition period is examined (Such as; "Life-long Learning", "Information Literacy", "Information Technologies", "Internet Digitalization", "Open Acces")

In the third section, public libraries of Turkey and Bulgaria are handled in a historical framework; the system and organization of the public library of both countries are examined in detail. The information on "Monastery Libraries" and "Chitalishte Libraries" in Bulgaria, which is not known in Turkey, is very interesting.

In the first part of the fourth section, comparing of public libraries in Turkey and regional public libraries in Bulgaria are made in terms of collection, user, human resources, service units, building, library services and usage of information technologies. In the second part, it was attempted to determine the opinions of the manager, assistant manager and librarians in Turkey's Public Libraries and Bulgaria's regional public libraries about the role and position of public libraries in the information society.

The fifth section forms the result and suggestions part. In this section, the author lists the inferred results of the study in 43 items. In addition, the 23-item suggestions developed by the author on the subject contribute to the literature.

The last two paragraphs of the conclusion and suggestions section are in fact a summary of the message the book is intended to give:

"As a result, it can be said that modernization and restructuring works for public libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria, which are experiencing the transition period to information society, have progressed rapidly since 2000's. It is possible to say that these works on public libraries give a promising future. However, it is not possible to say that the work done is sufficient. Both countries have a long way to go. In order to adapt to the changes in both their country and the world, public libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria must be configured according to the circumstances of the information society and must be integrated to this transformation process. In both countries, public libraries should re-define both service politics and basic elements according to the circumstances of the information society. In Turkey and Bulgaria, it is inevitable to make some changes in public libraries within the framework of new approaches such as; life-long learning, information literacy, digitalization, open access etc.

If the public libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria do not want to be alienated, they must constantly keep themselves open for innovation and development. Public libraries in both countries should evolve into a structure that is open to scientific and technological developments, innovative, which values their most important source; human resources and employees' self-realization. Information society is a community structure that represents rapid change, transformation. Public libraries in Turkey and Bulgaria will be able to adapt to the qualities of the information society as long as they can adapt to this transformation and change."

In this work, the influence of Prof. Dr. Bülent Yılmaz, the most prominent name in the field of public libraries, can be seen clearly. The most concrete indication of this effect is the presence of nearly 50 works belonging to Bülent Yılmaz in the references of the work. Finally, I think that despite some shortcomings of the book, it is an important source in terms of Turkey and Bulgaria librarianship. Because this book was the first written source in this field of work. The fact that the work is written in English can be seen as a disadvantage. Because most of the librarians working in the public libraries, which will most benefit from the book, will not be able to benefit from the book because of the language problem. In this respect, publication of the book in Turkish and Bulgarian would be very useful.