



Covid-19 Pandemic Process Experience of Izmir Kâtip Celebi University Library Through Key Statistics

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ABSTRACT

Information centers aim at meeting the information requirements of the society they serve, while they become active parts of all kinds of experiences within the society in this process. However, it is more important for information centers (which can become social institutions of culture in that way) to show their adaptation skills in extraordinary times. Thus, they contribute to the normalization of life within the identity of a public institution. In their quality as active and integral contributors of formal education provided in our country, the university libraries are among the most important information centers that are expected to turn this responsibility into a priority reflex. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to cause severe trauma and chaos globally has introduced an atmosphere in which university libraries are expected to show such a reaction. The present study aims to show how the university libraries in our country have been affected by the pandemic and the new conditions, and to what extent their services will adapt to the new normal, as will be exemplified by the case study of Izmir Katip Celebi University (IKCU) Library. To that effect, a comparison has been made between 2019 (the former "normal" for the libraries) and 2020 (when the pandemic broke out in March also in Turkey). As a result, an analysis based on specific keywords and on the comparison of qualitative data related to these keywords was made to understand how the library was affected by COVID-19 outbreak and how this effect reflected on the services of the library and on the users. The findings obtained after the comparison has shown that the pandemic has caused a significant setback both for the IKCU Library, which is still in its infancy, and for its efforts to prove itself. The study was concluded by making suggestions for the IKCU Library with regard to its efficient service delivery during the ongoing pandemic period. At this point, successful practice examples throughout the world provided inspiration. Contributing to the reduction of the negative impact of the pandemic on the library on the hand, and attracting the attention of other university libraries in our country on the other, will be the main successes of this study.

Keywords: COVID-19, Epidemic, University library, Izmir Katip Celebi University, Key statistics, New normal.

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I. Introduction

The social life skill of the human being, who adopts a social life form by its nature and creates a living space within this form, is associated with its competence to adapt to the rules of this life. These rules, turning the human being into an individual as well as a crowd of people into a society, and common life skills can only be achieved by communication. Based on accumulation, transferring what has been accumulated and transforming these into experience first and then into new inspirations, communication is the area where culture, which is an essential part of human being, starts. Generally defined as

all deeds employed by human being, culture is one of the complementary parts making the value of human mental faculties and social life skills meaningful (Akkaya, 2020, p. 114). These skills transform human being into a social creature.

Human is a social being as well as an individual. An individual is a citizen as well as a human being (Krishnamurti, 2013, p. 22). Being an individual refers to becoming unique in any grief and happiness, and the society exists for individual and for human being to achieve his goals. Being a citizen requires considering other people we live together, acting together with them and becoming an adaptable part of the society. In such a case, our griefs, happiness, concerns, hopes become

common, and this makes a social being. In this case, in the relationship between individual and society, while human being becomes the tool, society and the continuity of society based on welfare becomes the goal. Considering that an individual and a society continues a unique existence, a sharp boundary is drawn between the individual and social elements of human behavior and achievements. In fact, they do not need each other but they are two faces of a single and same phenomenon (Özügül, 2009).

Expressing communication types and developments in today's world without considering the relationship between individual and society is not likely in terms of understanding new phenomena, values and concepts (Aşkaroğlu, 2017, p. 72). The failure to render these incomprehensible innovations valuable in life will result in a society that is not beyond the crowds of people as well as individuals who are alone in the crowds and not to become an active part of the society. The developments especially in the field of information technology have altered the unique dynamics of change, which is one of the main catalysts of the relationship between individual and society, and have opened a new window in the interaction between individual and society (Crawford and Novak, 2018). This new aspect, which results in internalization problems in social harmony due to the speed of change, also undermines the borders of an individual's uniqueness and privacy.

In today's social life, which is considered to facilitate socialization and communication in the society while significantly criticized for isolating the individual, adaptation and togetherness are of paramount importance in terms of continuity. At this point, we see culture, acculturation and the factors creating culture. Information is undoubtedly the most important one of the tools forming culture, ensuring transmission and making it permanent. In this respect, information is one of the most significant tools and facilitators of social life and social partnership (Cassirer, 2005, p. 20). The main characteristic that provides information with the said privilege is its being transferable and its ability to be transformed into the collective memory of the society. Information centers melt information, transfer, culture and memory in the same pot.

Information centers specialized as university libraries in this study are social organizations collecting any and all kinds of information resources, organizing them with certain methods and techniques, aiming to obtain the highest level of benefit from these sources through information access systems and services based on the idea of establishing a link between those who need information and information sources (Akkaya and Odabaş, 2019, p. 8). The role of being social cultural institutions holds information centers responsible for providing social harmony and continuity. These responsibilities are concretized as the protection of common cultural language in the society, transformation of this language into a memory to be transferred to future and ensuring that the individuals forming the society consider themselves a part of the society in which they

live. The only capital of information centers in this responsibility, which aims to unite people around the same feelings, thoughts, expectations and goals that are valuable for the society, is information.

Taking a different responsibility in social harmony and partnership with their active role in formal education in addition to being the means for the transfer of the collective memory and cultural accumulation of the society, university libraries are also one of the information centers that are most known and taken into consideration in the society. Defined as "the bookcases responsible for supporting scientific research and development activities in a university and its immediate surroundings, following latest data of the science world that is enriched by new publications developing every passing day" (Baysal, 1987, p. 12; cited in Rogers;), the university libraries are enrichment spaces of the society with the values they will add to the knowledge world of young university students.

Universities and university libraries are rendered tools for social adaptation and sensitization due to their indirect contribution to the cultural development of society and to the transformation of this development into a common set of values in addition to being an active part of formal education. In both ordinary and extraordinary periods, this function ensures the embodiment of reason for the existence of all information centers and university libraries and provide them with prestige. In extraordinary periods, such as pandemic, natural disaster and war, which interrupt not only many parts of daily life but also education system, universities and university libraries, which can distinguish with the support they can give to education under the conditions, as well as guiding the common behavior of the society, are significant tools of normalization in this regard. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused us to experience such an extraordinary period across the world, has led to such an expectation for universities and their libraries.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused a crisis across the world, broke out in China on 31 December 2019 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a), and then spread across the world in a short time. "As a kind of protection reflexion, people have isolated themselves or they have been put in quarantine by the sanctions imposed by states. It has become compulsory for all human being to wear a mask, countries have closed their borders, domestic and foreign travel have been cancelled. The pandemic has caused the factories to cease, affected the economy deeply - more in some sectors - disrupted education, and resulted in fatal consequences around the world. In a nutshell, this pandemic with destructive power has resulted in an environment in which social, economic and cultural orders have been disrupted by prioritizing the protection of human health" (Polat and Binici, 2021, p. 92).

One of the areas disrupted by the pandemic to a great extent is formal higher education system carried out across the world. In this study, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on university libraries, services, users and staff were discussed by the case study of Izmir Katip Celebi University Library, and it was tried to concretize

what was experienced by a comparison between the pandemic period ongoing for more than one year and the pre-epidemic period. Before the analysis and comparisons performed through selected key parameters/statistics, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic process on academic libraries was discussed in detail at the global and national level.

II. Academic Libraries and COVID-19

Undoubtedly, 2020 will be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 in the future. Causing millions of people to experience serious health problems across the world, closing the doors of schools and workplaces and making it common to wear masks in public places, the pandemic has also caused an increase in unemployment almost in all countries. According to the data reported by World Health Organization – WHO, 150,110,310 people have been infected with the COVID-19 disease, 3.158.792 people died and a total of 1.011.457.859 doses of vaccine were made as of 30 April 2021 (WHO, 2020b). Only these figures are sufficient to show the extent that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the world, while the effort shown by the world is insufficient.

The pandemic, which has caused an ongoing global crisis and worldwide extraordinary situation, has affected directly and/or indirectly all areas of human life at the individual and social level and is going on to affect. Formal education systems are one of the areas that have been influenced most by the pandemic process, which has changed the environment of the world in social, political, economic and cultural respects, and resulting isolation. The pandemic, enforcing all levels of this system, leading psychological disruptions for both instructors and students in terms of continuity, quality and commitment, has also influenced higher education systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed higher education to a difficulty that has not been experienced before. Referring a significant change in conventional higher education system and operation, this process has also taken academic libraries under its control. Because everybody and everything has exposed to a change, whether great or small, and libraries have not been exempted from these (Connell, Wallis and Comeaux, 2021).

In January 2020, when the pandemic cases began to appear outside of China, university libraries continued to function normally (Harmon, 2020). As of late February, colleges and universities started to impose travel restrictions for their students and staff, and to develop potential shut down plans in the USA and Europe (Fischer, 2020a). In early March, the education ministries of Western countries began to develop regulations on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on distance education and financial aid (Connell, Wallis Comeaux, 2021). The attitude shown in these regulation studies is also a guide for universities despite their autonomy, and inspired the COVID-19 reflex shown in universities.

In March 2020, when the first COVID-19 action plans in the field of education were implemented, scientific

publications, in which the impact of the pandemic on education was discussed and solutions were developed for what can be done, began to be shared with the public. At the end of March, all library types were closed first locally and regionally, then nationally due to the rapid spread of the pandemic especially in the USA and the risk potential of close contact in this spread (ALA, 2020a). The only good news at that time was the fact that libraries could provide online services. Online services covered live book readings, Storytime, educational programs, video games and many other programs (Harmon, 2021).

School libraries were among the first closed library types. After this attitude, which rapidly spread across the world and covering all library types and which was followed by a "wait-and-see" process approximately for the first month, the American Library Association [ALA] developed a survey in which every type of libraries participated in. Survey results reported that lost or expected to lose financing regarding staff, new recruitment, professional development, published collections, programs and services for the next year. Another significant issue in the survey was the participants' insistence on the need for the development of digital content, online learning and virtual programs as well as the emphasis on how important cooperation was at this point (ALA, 2020b). This attitude, which can be interpreted as a prediction for the fact that the pandemic can be taken under control in a long time and it will not be likely for libraries to continue their ordinary operation in the near future, is an indicator for all information centers, including university libraries, for a difficulty year.

Although libraries have not faced any global pandemic in modern times, it is clear that such an extraordinary situation will affect the universities with corporate identities negatively. The widespread experience of the losing connection between the library and its user, even after short-term closures due to compulsory circumstances, is the most important supporter of this interpretation (Connell, Wallis and Comeaux, 2021). Continuity between the library and its user is a more critical issue for university libraries due to their primary goal for direct contribution to education. For this reason, the university libraries in different countries were among the facilities closed last in campuses as they were considered necessary for students (Fischer, 2020b).

Some of the university libraries preferred to provide service in an electronic environment by stopping the circulation of their physical collections in March. This process, which was a very difficult time for libraries and librarians, also put serious pressure on users (Holland, 2021). Some user services that should be provided face-to-face, such as counselling were given in the electronic environment, while some services that could not be provided in the electronic environment were temporarily ceased. Academy libraries were affected less by the pandemic in terms of continuity of services until they were closed completely because of their electronic source utilization ability and competence by their long-established and developed electronic services (Connell, Wallis and Comeaux, 2021). In addition, another issue

that facilitated the process is the preparation of the guides by professional associations active in the USA and Europe on responding to many possible questions such as “what can be done, how to behave, what to consider during the COVID-19 pandemic”. A special effort was shown so that all universities, including university libraries, underwent this process with less difficulty by paying ensuring that these guides were adaptable according to the specific features of the libraries. Moreover, many university and public libraries developed library service guides and web pages for the COVID-19 pandemic by considering their own institutions and users. These guides and their web addresses were the most visited addresses in libraries during the pandemic period (Martzoukou, 2020).

Some of the COVID-19 efforts made by the libraries in different geographies across the world during the pandemic and its spread may be exemplified as follows (Harmon, 2021):

- Lubuto Library in Zambia, Lusaka continued its services outdoor after the library building was closed due to pandemic, and training was organized especially for children on the importance of hygiene and distance.
- The Ghana Library Authority [GhLA] managing 10 regional, 52 public libraries continued its literacy courses, given for the development of literacy skills of youths, on Facebook.
- In Lithuania, public libraries with 3D printers that were normally used for digital skills and creativity, and workshops for children and young people used these printers in fighting against the pandemic, and produced protective face masks. The healthcare professionals treating infected people also participated in this initiative.
- A significant increase was seen in the number of borrowed e-books and audiobooks in the libraries in the United Kingdom. It is estimated that a total of extra 3.5 million e-books were borrowed in this process. This increase corresponded to a 78% growth for the total e-book collections of libraries. 3 thousand new members were registered in libraries during the pandemic period. Moreover, the libraries in London held virtual IT training sessions on the zoom platform to help people at home.

During this process, another step that affected the university types, including university libraries, was taken regarding open-access databases. The International Coalition of Library Consortia [ICOLC] offered that sellers should remove most of the usual license restrictions, should provide 391 million students, affected by school and library closures, with open access by publishing a statement on March 13, 2020 (ICOLC, 2020). The publishers and sellers, who replied positively to this offer, began to quickly remove paywalls between users and their online collections for free or upon library request. Millions of information sources, especially the sources related to the pandemic, were made available to people almost all over the world as open-access. Although there was an increase in online collections, source use of libraries was interrupted. Because no matter how many

services were available online, many students and teachers were still using traditional tools such as printed books (Connell, Wallis and Comeaux, 2021). This also applied to university libraries in the same manner. Despite all efforts made during the COVID-19 pandemic, a distance, which is not known to end when and how, occurred among university libraries and their users. This distance, which is tried to be shortened by the opportunities offered by the electronic environment, still continues today.

The reflexion shown by university libraries and what has been experienced in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic may be summarized as above. The primary actor of the experience for our country in this respect and the guide of this process is naturally the Higher Education Institution (YÖK). Because the pandemic, spreading rapidly and having destructive consequences, has inevitably affected the education system in Turkey and has caused to give education distantly for more than one year. One of the most important sufferers of this process are universities and university students. At this point, it is not likely to exclude the university libraries from this process.

After the meeting chaired by the President that was held soon after 11 March 2020, when the first COVID-19 case was seen in Turkey, higher education was ceased for 3 weeks as of 16 March 2020 upon the statement made by the Higher Education Institution (YÖK). In the same statement, the decision on collecting requests and proposals from 120 universities with distance education research and application centers and universities providing distance education so that lessons could be given in digital environment was also included (YÖK, 2020a). This short break in face to face education was replaced by distance education in the following days and periods and, lessons are still provided by distance education.

In the press statement made on 18 March, it was announced that a "Roadmap for Distance Education Applications in Pandemic Period" was developed. It was indicated that the “YÖK-Courses” platform, which is available on the web, would be used to meet the content need of universities. “For this reason, the books in digital media in the course pools of Anadolu University, Atatürk University and Istanbul University were opened to access. In the announcement made on 23 March, it was firstly stated that the distance learning process would start officially at the universities with adequate distance learning capacity” (Polat and Binici, 2021, p. 94). In the same announcement, it was interestingly predicted that there would be much tendency towards asynchronous applications, and to prevent this, the preference of synchronous applications with more interaction was encouraged (YÖK, 2020b).

The short break given to face to face education was extended for the whole period with the statement made on 26 March. It was expressed that face to face education could not be given in spring term, education-training could be provided only by distance education, open education and digital teaching opportunities, and practice-

based lessons would be completed in summer term (YÖK, 2020c). In the announcement held by YÖK on 5 May, an expectation for normalization occurred. In this regard, it was stated that the universities could implement their normal academic calendar as of 15 June 2020 provided that the pandemic would be taken under control by referring to the decision taken in the cabinet meeting held on the day before yesterday (YÖK, 2020d). However, it was announced after a while that a decision was taken on 11 May on the fact that final exams and other exams in the spring term could not be made face to face (YÖK, 2020e). The extension of the pandemic process continued the uncertainty in the face-to-face education and training in the following fall period. Finally, universities were requested to plan their education calendar after 1 October 2020 with the statement on August 13. It was allowed to make different implementations on the basis of faculties and programs (YÖK, 2020f). Yet, as the pandemic continued, education was compulsorily given distantly.

In the pandemic period affecting a great number of areas, although alternative methods were tried by using technological opportunities in order to continue education and training, suffering could not be prevented. After it was acknowledged that many students could/would not continue their education, the university students were entitled to freeze and suspend their education only for spring term on 1 April. Thesis defense and proficiency exams for postgraduate education were also allowed to be made with digital possibilities such as video conferencing (YÖK, 2020g). Education is still provided by distance education, excluding rare exemptions and limited times, in our country today when the pandemic is ongoing for more than one year.

“In Turkish higher education, it is known that the distance education during the pandemic process is mostly carried out by lessons in which students are passive and without much interaction” (Polat and Binici, 2021, p. 97). This also refers to a physical and emotional distance between students and universities. In this regard, in the programs admitted students in the 2020-2021 academic year for the first time, teachers could not see their students physically, and students could not see their teachers and schools. This distance makes libraries, which is defined to be the heart of universities in the related literature, away from all current and potential users, especially students. Causing emotional, psychological and mental alienation in addition to physical distance, this case causes libraries to lose their all kinds of abilities and competencies.

Electronic services and remote access facilities of university libraries, which are undoubtedly considered the most developed and adapted to today's conditions type of librarianship field, provide a better access network for their users that cannot be compared with other library types. However, most of the library users in Turkey, including university libraries, still prefer to benefit from library service by traditional ways and methods. Similarly, the published collections of libraries are still the first remembered information source group. Based on all these issues, the compulsory distance education in

universities, inability of users to come to libraries physically, even sometimes closure of libraries completely caused the COVID-19 process to have more negative effects on the quality and quantity of university libraries.

The dimensions of these effects may differ based on universities, the attention paid to the library by that university, related library's electronic source and service capacity, to what extent related library provided institutional tendency to adapt to the pandemic process, the strength and determination to convey the gains of this adaptation to its users. For example, while the libraries of some universities such as Bilkent University tries not to lose the control by sharing with their users the information, which can mitigate and reduce all negative effects of the pandemic process, under the title "Our Library and Information Services in the COVID-19 Process" (Bilkent University Library, 2021) on their web pages, most of university libraries, unfortunately, limited their sensitivity on this issue only by adding sources that have been made available by database providers and other business companies to open access during the COVID-19 pandemic. This results in different effects as well as difficulties and opportunities, caused by the pandemic, for each library. The difficulties and opportunities that occur/may occur with this approach are detailed in the next section.

III. The Effects of the COVID-19 Process on Academic Libraries (Difficulties and Opportunities)

The COVID-19 pandemic, which could not be predicted for higher education, has made online learning and learning practice that can be defined as blended or mixed service widespread across the world. It is clear that what we know and have learned so far about physical and virtual learning have been moved to a different point by the pandemic, and nothing will be same in the past as many other things. The most common scenario evoked by this change is that there will be fewer students on university campuses in the near future. It is certainly difficult to think and even to accept an educational institution without its physical students. On the other hand, the pandemic has shown us that every extraordinary time and event brings its own dynamics, order and functioning. This change has also difficulties, opportunities as well as strengths and weaknesses. We do not have the chance to choose what they promised us before, but we may then have the opportunity to change them for the benefit of society. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in similar difficulties and opportunities for university libraries. At this point, the important thing is whether we enable right to life for opportunities or difficulties, and the reflection we will show in this respect.

In the first days of the pandemic, the dreadful aspect of pandemic forced university libraries to make changes, which could not be planned completely, which were considered to become rapid and short term. It was considered that it was a temporary circumstance, and old

days would be brought by paying attention to mask, distance and hygiene. This way of thinking resulted in short-term and temporary action plans, which became unsuccessful and/or insufficient as the pandemic went on. All these mean that the difficulties caused by the pandemic are closer than its opportunities and more visible for library stakeholders. Each of the radical changes caused by the present crisis situation has brought some institutional advantages and disadvantages (Harmon, 2021). At this point, the real concern is to decide on which of them may distinguish and what we can do for distinguishing the choice we desire. This decision, which is quite important for university libraries, will also determine the new roles of libraries after the pandemic.

The first significant subject of the world of difficulties and opportunities awaiting university libraries is the electronic environment. Online education environment, which some universities does not have or which has changed for the universities having that, has created a user profile preferring to work remotely, to access sources only electronically and who is accessed only by electronically. This user profile, which may be an opportunity or a threat depending on the library's electronic service and source capabilities, provides a new equation of opportunity and threat for libraries, which may not be used physically in the future. If a complete communication can be established with online sources and services and the commitment of this individual's to the library can be maintained, the time, space and dialogue to be used by this user in the library can be reserved for new library users. This perspective, requiring the competence of the library in electronic media sources and services as a prerequisite, may employ the preferences, imposed by the pandemic process as obligations, as a tool of acceleration in the development of online sources and services (Martzoukou, 2020).

In many academic libraries, the access barriers experienced by librarians, students and even teachers in online education and source use have been identified as a priority area, and online education programs have been organized in this respect. This effort, increasing technical competence and awareness, refers to an advantage in long term regarding library service performance and source utilization prevalence. The university libraries, which have had a developed infrastructure and service philosophy at the beginning of the pandemic, will be able to make both their competitive advantage and their competencies as more distinctive features for the future.

The COVID-19 has also affected the university libraries regarding the fact that internet access opportunities and internet literacy skills of users to benefit from services remotely become more visible. This can ensure that the factors out of the institution, which determine the success of the change effort performed by all university libraries in line with the necessities of the age, are taken into consideration more. Showing the related difficulties and providing new opportunities for libraries by demonstrating the need for action plans to remove these difficulties, the importance of this aspect

has become a hot agenda for the libraries during the pandemic process.

Digital competencies are an umbrella concept that is related to the development of a number of competence related fields, including information and data literacy (Martzoukou, 2020). This field is directly associated with communication and cooperation, media literacy, online content creation, online security, and digital well-being, as well as problem solving, critical thinking, and online innovation tools and technologies. It has been paid more attention to this field, which is considered as the future of librarianship, many changes and innovations that were previously postponed have been quickly implemented.

Another issue that has gained importance during the pandemic period relates to acting and taking decision quickly. Radical changes have been observed in the higher education system during the pandemic process ongoing for more than one year. Some institutional actions, which would normally take years due to logistical, operational or bureaucratic barriers or simply managerial or high-level strategic resistance, have been resolved rapidly as a necessity for new normal, new way of thinking (Martzoukou, 2020). Referring to challenging established teaching and learning practices and very long-tested formulas and requiring a special adaptation skill, this change speed means new time management and time schedule applications for university libraries.

The digital competencies, which have become more important during the pandemic period, are directly associated with not only electronic information but also communication tools and technologies as well as their safety, ethical appropriateness and learning practice. This importance and association status have created a climate, in which users are paid attention as much as university libraries and librarians, and by which they have seen more clearly that education life is not only a necessity but also a means of social and communal life. The biggest obstacle before obtaining desired outputs from this climate created is the fact that a significant percent of the world's population does not yet have a complete qualification in terms of digital competencies (UK Department for Education, 2019). It will be an opportunity for university libraries to make service planning by considering the aforementioned climate. On the other hand, the lack of adequate infrastructure and awareness on this issue will refer to difficulties with long and lasting effects for the library, and will become unwanted legacies left to university libraries during the pandemic period.

The libraries that currently have online students and staff may have already a good infrastructure, which is accustomed to operating remotely before the COVID-19 and can provide a service in a proper range (Connell, Wallis and Comeaux, 2021). The pandemic has forced these libraries to have a stronger institutional structure in online services, more advanced service packages and which can adapt to digital transformation more rapidly, and has made this change a necessity with the opportunities and risks it offers. Because this compulsory change will provide the libraries with significant opportunities to become ready if the pandemic extends or

any other extraordinary circumstance occurs.

As the libraries have increased such sources in order to support students and academics in the online environment, and have converted the sources temporarily provided free of charge by commercial companies and providers into sources that are believed to be regularly accessible, the expectations of users will increase in this regard. When considering the general financial structures of the libraries in our country, it is not likely to meet such an expectation after conditions are normalized. At this point, the loss of comfort in accessing information may create a break between the library and its user.

The university libraries may help produce the publications that will provide people with correct information by actively giving additional services to its researchers regarding the selection of sources related to the COVID-19 pandemic during the pandemic process. This contribution, which will be determinant in information pollution regarding the pandemic and in preventing the problems to be caused by this pollution, is an important element of universal protective mechanism to be developed against the pandemic. Some of the practices performed in this respect are as follows: Free access to research guides, clinical care and patient information sources, relevant literature reviews, and the COVID-19 sources developed by University of Vermont Libraries; The guide prepared by Yale University Library staff for those wishing to explore the impact of the COVID-19 on social sciences; Reading lists produced by University College London Library, which includes official guidance, evidence updates, UK Medical organizations and e-learning education courses, open-access research collections, and medical library sources (Martzoukou, 2020). Academic libraries and librarians were in a good position before the COVID-19 pandemic to provide guidance and institutional information for academic researchers publishing via open access. However, as the changing life habits due to the pandemic have altered the approach towards information, this has necessitated a reevaluation even in the fields where libraries have been very powerful. For example, changing education environment with the COVID-19 as well as difficulties and opportunities in online education practice in particular have resulted in a group of people working remotely, accessing sources only electronically and beginning to live online in every respect. These types of users, who are also among the users of the university libraries, are the clients that need to be understood and positioned from the beginning even for the libraries and librarians who are quite ready for change.

Other generalizations that can be urged regarding the impact of the pandemic process on the university libraries are as follows: the pandemic has affected all universities and libraries. This impact has been felt less in relatively big libraries while it has been felt more in relatively small libraries, depending on institutional readiness. The extension of the pandemic process and the increase in the knowledge of people due to the experiences in this regard and the necessity to use digital information have resulted in an irregular temperature map in the use of university

libraries' web pages, discovery tools, online catalogs and databases. There has been a quantitative and qualitative increase in the virtual communication performed by university libraries with their users.

Libraries and their users have restarted to know each other under different conditions and experiences. As can be seen in every new introduction, there may sometimes be misunderstandings and prejudices during this period. At this point, the important thing is to turn this new acquaintance into a long-term and interactive communication. In the establishment of this communication referring to the benefits of all stakeholders, all stakeholders will have duties and responsibilities.

IV. Goal, Scope and Method

In this section, the goal, scope and method of the study are described. The goal of the study, inspired by the dominant role of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all aspects of life, as well as our attitudes and perceptions towards information, is to present the experiences of academic libraries during the COVID-19 process by qualitative data and to make suggestions for increasing their service competences in the ongoing pandemic process by the case study of Izmir Katip Celebi University (IKCU) Library.

The scope of the study covers the Central Library providing service at Balatcik Campus of Izmir Katip Celebi University. In this regard, in order to make a correct analysis of how the library was affected by the pandemic and its change due to statistical data during the COVID-19 process, the ongoing pandemic process was compared with the pre-pandemic period. Considering that the pandemic has been the most important agenda topic in the world for more than one year, it was considered adequate to make a comparison covering one year. The data related to January-December 2019 and January-December 2020 were used in the comparison.

The institutional part of the study was written in descriptive method. In the organization of this section, a special literature review was made in accordance with the goal of the study, and general information was included with regard to the scope of the study. In the selection of the data used in the findings section of the study, the key parameters in library services were taken into consideration, and the data set was created accordingly. The data regarding library were obtained from IKCU Head of University Library and Department of Information Technologies.

V. Findings

Some keywords were initially specified according to the goal of the study, and the statistical data of the Izmir Katip Celebi University Library were compared through these selected words. Related data were obtained from the Department of Information Technologies, which was making institutional monitoring of some of the selected words, and the Head of University Library, storing and processing original data group, and commercial

companies with which the library cooperates in the use of electronic sources.

The selected keywords were specified as follows: number of members, borrowing process, catalog browsing, library use, mobile applications, number of sources and activities, and a statistical comparison was carried out through these words based on the aforementioned years.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS*

	2019	2020
<i>Total number of users</i>	14.864	19.005
<i>Total number of active users</i>	11.202	15.333
<i>Registered new members</i>	3.944	4.141
<i>Number of active users among new members</i>	3.932	4.132

All students, administrative and academic staff are considered natural users.

All IKCU students, administrative and academic staff were considered natural users. The number of active users refers to those visiting the library physically and electronically, making any information request or coming just for visit purposes. In this respect, Table 1 number of active users is the essential group of people having main information about the number of users. In 2020, the beginning and spreading process of the pandemic in our country, the number of active users of the library increased by 36.9%. The rate of increase in the registered new members, which refers to the users borrowing sources from the library, is 2,5%. When assessing these two statistics together, it can be argued that the library did not show sufficient performance in both making natural members active members and gaining continuity for active members to access information from the library during the pandemic period. Particularly in the periods with increasing pandemic spread, the fact that doors of the library were completely closed to the users may be an excuse for this table to a certain extent. Yet, this finding is a reflection that the library could not, unfortunately, show required reflexion in the pandemic period.

TABLE II
PRINTED AND VISUAL SOURCES IN THE COLLECTION

<i>Publication Type</i>	2019	2020
<i>Book</i>	37.000	37.650
<i>Periodical Publication</i>	148	152
<i>Thesis</i>	533	633
<i>CD/DVD</i>	696	696
<i>Total</i>	38.377	39.131

The library did not quantitatively make a significant increase in the printed and visual sources with regard to pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods. The library increased the number of books by 1.8%, the number of periodical publications by 2.7% and the number of theses by 18.8%, while the CD/DVD collection and number did not change. When considering all printed and visual sources, this change, referring to an increase of only 2%, is far below the ideal growth rate in source development policies of information centers. The fact that the physical use of the library was restricted in the pandemic process may be a limited excuse for a future trauma to be caused by this growth rate. When considering in terms of the

development of traditional collection, the pandemic was observed with the difficulties in the IKCU library.

TABLE III
ELECTRONIC SOURCES IN THE COLLECTION

Type	2019		2020	
	Subscription Type Ekual*	Institutional**	Subscription Type Ekual *	Institutional **
Database	17	18	17	18
E-Journal	25.916	21.926	35.015	12.827
E-Book	...	394.952	...	507004
E-Thesis	above 4,5 million	...	above 4,5 million	...
Other (Software, Program etc.)	5	3	5	3

* provided by national licensing through TUBITAK-EKUAL.

** provided by purchasing

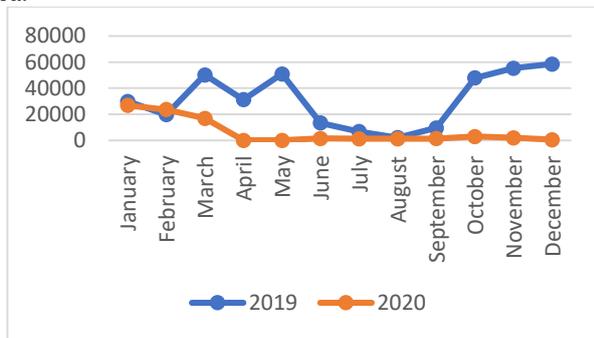
When examining Table 4 giving information about electronic sources in the library with regard to the two years specified before, the first significant detail is that there is no change in the number of databases subscribed to as institutional and consortium. However, the tendency expected in the COVID-19 pandemic-library is placing more importance on databases and access, which are the most active actors of electronic source access and use. When comparing 2019 and 2020, while the number of e-journals accessed by national licensing increased, the number of e-journals with institutional subscription reduced. The basic significant statistics is the 28.4% increase in the number of e-books offered to users with an institutional subscription. This change, which is one of the fields that the library has progressed during the pandemic process, is undoubtedly related to the increasing access of databases that the institution has access to in the information world. In addition, if this achievement can be used for restrengthening individual-institution commitment, damaged by the pandemic, it may be an opportunity to turn the pandemic and its consequences into gains in the long term. The library management has the biggest responsibility in realizing this opportunity.

Another development that is related to almost all university types across the world after the pandemic is providing databases especially related to the COVID-19 with free access by commercial companies. In this regard, some databases have been provided with free access in the IKCU Library. Elsevier COVID-19 Resource Center and OpenAIRE are the databases opened for use by free access.

TABLE IV
BORROWING PROCESSES

<i>General Information</i>	2019	2020
<i>Student</i>	2.931	1.580
Number of People		
Number of Processes	13.093	4.550
<i>Academic and Administrative Staff</i>	134	110
Number of People		
Number of Processes	858	561
<i>Total number of people</i>	3.065	1.690
<i>Total number of processes</i>	13.951	5.111

As seen in Table 4, the number of borrowed sources in the library reduced dramatically in 2020, which passed under the effect of the pandemic. Both the number of borrowing source requests and the number of borrowed sources by students as well as academic and administrative staff were also affected by this negative table. The decrease, which is almost 50% in the number of people and more than 60% in the number of processes in terms of students, is 17.9% and 28.9%, respectively for the academic and administrative staff that constitute a smaller user group of the library. When making an assessment over the general total, the decreases in the number of people and processes between 2019 and 2020 are 44.9% regarding people, 63.4% related to processes. Referring that nearly half of the abilities and competencies were temporarily lost with regard to borrowing processes, this table shows that the difficulties caused by the pandemic in 2020 in the IKCU Library are greater and more effective than the opportunities it caused. The reason for 37% decrease in the number of books borrowed with the Interlibrary Loan System (ILL) may be explained by the ability of users to access the sources they need electronically as well as the reflection of the distance created by the pandemic period in this area.



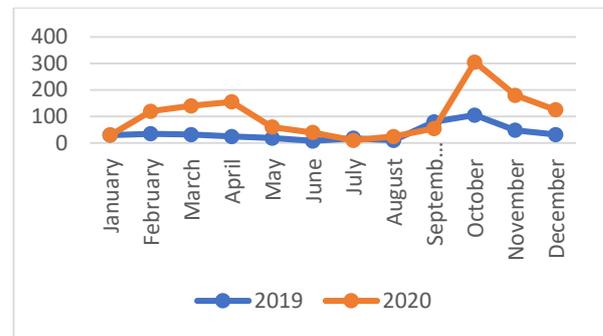
Graphic 1: Annual Number of Visitors

As demonstrated in Graphic 1, the user number of the library is one of the areas affected most negatively by the pandemic process. The most significant dynamic of the graphic is that the library started to serve on a 24/7 basis as of the beginning of 2019, and this service was ended in March 2020 with the beginning of the pandemic period. Another factor increasing the number of visitors that is approximately 400 thousand is the fact that there is a student dormitory on the campus where the library is located. The library with a total of 375.157 thousand visitor number in 2019 has a loss of 83,5% in 2020 with 77.955 thousand visitor number. One of the factors that will determine the extent of the impact caused/to be caused by this loss is the number of catalog browsing made over the library. While 25,168 catalog browsing were made in the library in 2019, this number remained at 14,298 in 2020. It is not likely to explain an approximately 43% decrease in the total number of catalog browsing carried out electronically in 2020 compared to the previous year only by the psycho-social disruption and isolation created by the pandemic process. These figures also clearly indicate that the library management and the services provided are inadequate and unconvincing in overcoming the attitude of the library

users, who did not consider using library among their primary purposes.

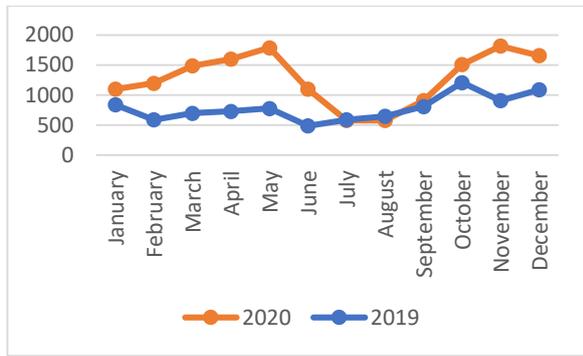
168 of a total of 929 "My Mobile Library" applications, which can be monitored through the university's data processing system, were activated in 2019. On the other hand, this number is only 15 in 2020, when the pandemic process deeply affected all works and operations in the university. The insufficient interest shown to this application, which can be highly efficient and effective in monitoring the electronic and online services offered by the library and being informed about these services, may be interpreted as one of the important lacks of both the library and users in the pandemic period.

The number of the activities such as education seminars, conferences, introductory programs, orientation training hosted and/or announced by the library in 2019 is indicated to be 6, and the number of participants of these programs is demonstrated as 412 in the activity reports. However, only 5 activities, all of which were online, were carried out in 2020 in most of which pandemic was effective, and no participant number was reported. These figures indicate to what extent the IKCU Library was influenced regarding the activities performed and/or contributed, and its performance decreased.



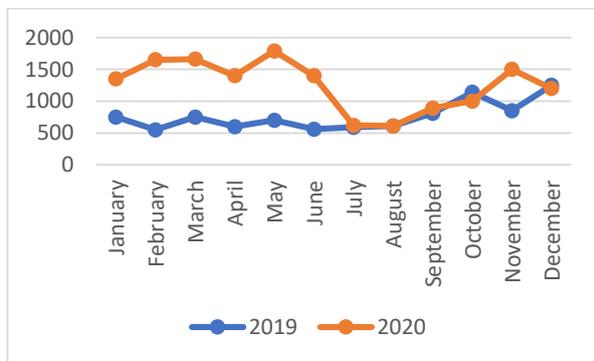
Graphic 2: Monthly Total Records of Remote Access

When examining the visual on library's remote access records for the relevant years (Graphic 2), the number of people accessing the library remotely in 2020 is higher than in 2019 in all months except July and September. The low figures in both years between June-August, which is considered a holiday period and traditionally library use decreases, is understandable. The high increase in the figures since October 2020 is undoubtedly associated with the distance education decision taken for universities. Whereas a total of 416 active members used distance education in 2019, this increased to 1.228 in 2020, which was affected by providing education distantly in universities and the association of distance education for academics and students with remote access to the library.



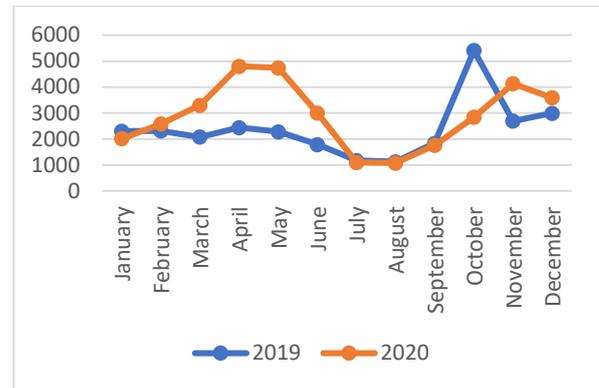
Graphic 3: Total user logins

When examining the distribution of the number of logins of the library users (successful login at IKCU e-library portal) by years regarding the years covered by the study (Graphic 3), it is seen that 2020 March-May are the months with most logins, when the pandemic started in Turkey and put on the agenda. It would not be wrong to predict that the searches regarding the pandemic were effective at this intensity. The user login increase seen in October-December period in the same year was undoubtedly affected by the distance education started again. When making a comparison between years, it is seen that the numbers in July and August 2019 are higher than the statistics of 2020, with more user logins in 2020 on the basis of all other months. According to general total number distribution of this table, total successful login number in 2019 is 9.266, while this number is 15.270 in 2020. This refers to an increase of 39.3% on a yearly basis.



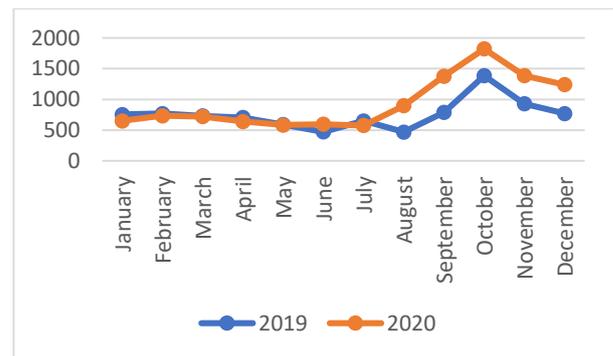
Graphic 4: Monthly View Number with Remote Access

In Graphic 4, monthly view number of the library with remote access is provided. The increase in the view number in the first half of 2020 is remarkable. Because the statistics in this period are quite high when compared to the same months of 2019 and the second half of 2020. It is difficult to associate this process, starting just before the pandemic is seen in our country and then continuing with the first respond period, with the COVID-19. On the basis of months, the 2020 figures are lower than the 2019 figures only in October and December months. The total number of collection views by years is reported to be 9,095 for 2019 and 14,947 for 2020. This change rate, which refers to a 39.2% increase, is very close to the change rate in the number of user logins (39.3%) and the total numbers.



Graphic 5: EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) Total View (full paper and abstract) Number

According to the data of “EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS)”, which is the most important electronic source utilization tool of the IKCU Library, the number of full paper and abstract sources viewed over the library is shown in Graphic 5. Accordingly, more viewing was made in 2019 October, when the education and training started, when compared to the rest of the year, and this is significant in itself. In 2020, the months in which most source viewing made are March through June, when the pandemic was put on the country’s agenda and certain measures were taken. Unfortunately, we could not obtain any detail on to what extent pandemic related views and source access efforts were effective in this period, when education was started to be given by distant education. However, it will not be wrong to state that the efforts to access the COVID-19 themed sources are determinative in these statistics, with the effect of emotions such as curiosity, fear and anxiety. February-June and November and December periods are the months, when total electronic source view numbers are higher in 2020 compared to 2019. In annual general total, while 28,429 views were specified in 2019, this number was 34,939 in 2020. These data refer to 18,6% increase.



Graphic 6: Number of Entries to the Library Web Page

One of the key statistics selected in this study is the web page visits. The related data is shown in Graphic 6. The period of September-December 2020, in which a new period was initiated with new rules during the pandemic process and the distance education decision for the 2020-2021 academic year was implemented, are the months in which entries were made to the university library. In the same statistics, the number of entries in 2020 June and August were higher than the same months in 2019. In other words, more entries were made to the library

website in the first half of 2019 and in the second half of 2020. In general total, while a total of 9.021 web page entries were reported in 2019, this number was 11.226 in 2020. It is not likely to predict to what extent the conditions caused by the pandemic are effective on this change, referring to a 19,6% increase. Another detail in the graphic is that the number of web page entries is less than the number of remote access to the library. This evokes that some users prefer different platforms and shortcuts in remote access to the library.

VI. Conclusion and Evaluation

Remaining as the most important agenda topic in the world today and bringing many questions and problems along regarding this process, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected the works and operations of individuals but also institutions, organizations and even states. The pandemic, which has broken the taboos with its disruptive effect which cannot be fought off let alone be taken under control for a long time, forces the world for a new world order. In addition to its damaging effects in economical, political, social and communal areas, the COVID-19 has deeply influenced the cultural climate of the world and the channels nurturing the continuity of common culture. One of the areas in which this effect manifests itself the most is the formal education systems of almost all countries, which have been forced to use "distance education", a different teaching-learning method. Another factor that renders this obligation all the more difficult is the compulsion to use distance education at all education levels. And one such levels is the higher education.

Distance education, which has been compulsorily used in our country as it has been across the world with minor differences (such as limited face-to-face education in some applied sciences, lessons with diluted participants, etc.), has affected not only students and teachers but also all university units, each of which plays a highly important role for the continuity and success of the education system. One of these units is the university libraries, which are described as the "heart of a university" in a developed university culture. The libraries, which are the best prepared units thanks to their remote service experience and competencies for the "distance" obligation caused by the pandemic period, have nevertheless been exposed to the negative effects and difficulties of the process for the most part.

In this study, the aim was to gain a national insight into the interaction between the COVID-19 and university libraries by analyzing the effect of the pandemic on the library and services through the selected key statistics by the case study of Izmir Katip Celebi University Library. The data obtained have been put into use to compare the pandemic period that created its "new normal" with the pre-pandemic period, thus, it has been tried to interpret the effects of the process accurately. Based on the data and the comparisons made, it has been concluded that the IKCU Library, which is still in its formative period and in need of further development in many respects, has been affected negatively in this process from every aspect, has attempted to mitigate this impact by trying to increase remote access service competence and adequacy.

However, this effort has not met the expectations. It is not correct to interpret this conclusion only by referring to the facilities of the library and the insufficiency of these facilities. Other factors causing the pandemic-university library integration to remain incomplete are that all university staff, including students, and academics, are not ready for the requirements and conditions of the concept of "distance" imposed by the pandemic. Furthermore, the relationship between "distance education" system and library could not be identified adequately, while the confusion caused by the "new normal" on people could still not be overcome, either. Despite these, libraries should become the most promising units of universities because it is only possible to control the pandemic and the process it caused by information. And the information specialists are information centers, including university libraries, and information professionals.

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