The Impact of Consortial Purchasing on Library Acquisitions: The Turkish Experience
Tuba Akbaytürk*

Abstract

Turkish university and research libraries have been cooperating for 20 years for the primary purpose of sharing printed materials such as books and journal articles. This well-established effort had become insufficient in the changing environment, which is shifting more and more toward electronic resources. The need for better management of tight library budgets and for better site license negotiations appeared as two of the main motivating factors in the formation of the Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS). ANKOS was formed in 2000 with the participation of 12 university libraries. Over the past three years, the number of member libraries has increased to 70. While ANKOS is evolving into a national organization, the member libraries have started seeing ANKOS as a critical component of their acquisitions process. ANKOS today is leveraging what each library is trying to accomplish in terms of subscribing to more electronic resources for the lowest price.

This article studies how ANKOS is affecting individual libraries' decision-making regarding their investment in electronic resources. A survey was conducted among member libraries to answer questions such as have they experienced a change in the expenditure of their funds; are they getting better value for their money; is ANKOS helping them to sign more suitable contracts; is it helping them to overcome the language barrier with vendors; are the fair use principles understood better by librarians as well as users. The findings are analyzed and illustrated with statistical data.

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1. Introduction

The tradition of cooperation among libraries had its foundation as early as the 1880s. The American Library Association for instance published reports and formed committees while the Library of Congress launched its first cataloging projects in those years [1]. Examples of library cooperation in the UK started in 1930s with the setting up of 9 regional library systems for interlibrary loan services and shared catalogs [2]. These preliminary cooperation initiatives started evolving into library consortia in 1960s and 1970s [3]. The primary reasons for libraries to form consortia had been resource sharing and automation. Libraries who were interested in reducing cost were bringing their purchasing power together to form "buying clubs" as S. L. Bostick stated.

The accelerating change in the information technology and the development of the Internet as well as the World Wide Web caused the emergence of new trends in the world of library consortia [4]. Under the orientation of these trends, libraries started combining their purchasing power to access more electronic resources such as abstracting and indexing databases and e-journals over the Internet for better prices. However, library consortia are not just "buying clubs" anymore. Instead, today's consortia aim at helping their members in analyzing resources qualitatively, supporting them in their selection process, bargaining for better license terms, and sharing the expertise available from different members [5].

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The accomplishments of the individual consortia led to a higher level of cooperation and the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) established in 1997. ICOLC has been publishing guidelines and best practices for libraries to cope with the digital era and has been providing a platform for libraries and vendors to meet via its annual meetings.

Despite 20 years of experience in cooperation in Turkey in terms of document delivery services, any consortial access to electronic resources has not been gained until late 1998. Initial governmental initiatives conducted by the National Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBIM) in form of maintaining a national academic network and database as well as e-journal hosting services have been taken to a further step in the leadership of the director of the Middle Eastern University Library[6]. Upon his invitation to collaboration, university libraries and ULAKBIM agreed on examining the opportunities to establish the Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS). As a result of a series of meetings, late in1999, first three consortial contracts have been signed by ANKOS members. This initiative has been expanded beyond any expectation and ANKOS became a large, countrywide consortium of over 70 members in 2003.

Table.1 Number of members and subscribed databases by year

	ANKOS MEMBERS	SUBSCRIBED DATABASES
2000	12	5
2001	39	11
2002	56	16
2003	70	20

This significant expansion rate can be assumed primarily linked to the cost reduction made possible due to this collective action and to the successful policies conducted by the ANKOS Steering Committee.

This article is an attempt to respond to the need for research aimed at investigating the impact of ANKOS on acquisitions related decisions of individual libraries and the reasons of inclusive participation.

2. Statement of The Problem

While a number of presentations and papers discusses the history and the progress of ANKOS, very little has been studied how ANKOS is affecting individual libraries' decision-making regarding their investment in electronic resources. Some of the specific questions addressed by this study are:

- Do the language barrier with foreign vendors affect the member libraries' acquisitions decision? Is ANKOS supporting libraries in facilitating their correspondence with foreign vendors?
- Do member libraries' limit their purchasing options to the ANKOS established consortia or trials?
- Do State and Foundation universities differ significantly in their approach to ANKOS?
- Does ANKOS increase the awareness of member libraries and raise interest in
  - offering more user training
  - being careful about copyright infringements and fair use
  - being analytical in decision making (e.g. use of usage statistics)

It is expected that ANKOS will be taking a leading position in Turkey mentoring libraries in terms of electronic resources related issues based on the quick rise in the number of members.

3. Methodology

The present study aims at assessing changes that ANKOS member libraries are experiencing regarding their electronic resources acquisitions decisions. For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire is developed as the method of data collection. The primary purpose of this questionnaire is two fold: to gather demographic data about the respondent institutions and to investigate how influential ANKOS is on them.

The survey consists of twenty and mostly closed-ended questions such as "Why did you join ANKOS?" or "Please prioritize the methods used in your institution to determine the products purchased/subscribed with 1 being the highest priority and 7 being the lowest priority".

The questionnaire accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study was sent to the representatives of 76 institutions subscribed to ANKOS listserv ankos-tr as an email attachment. Beside state and foundation universities, two governmental institutions and one military school were included. A two-week period was given to complete and return the questionnaire by email. A reminder was sent again by email and it positively affected the rate for return and a rate of 51% has been reached. 40 out of 76 institutions responded. 38 surveys have been received and 2 institutions have reported that the survey questions are not suitable for their institution.

Table.2 Response Rate

	Foundation University	State University	Special Libraries
Sent Survey	19	51	6
Received	13	24	1
% Response	68%	47%	17%

As Table.2 shows, special libraries are underrepresented in the sample and will be excluded from the rest of the analysis.

4. Analysis

4.1. Respondent Institutions:

Although the main demographical distinction among respondent institutions is being a state, a foundation, or a special library, in the questionnaire, ANKOS members were also asked to state their full-time equivalent (FTE) and the percentile of it, which is instructed in foreign languages, primarily in English.

Publishers are still experimenting with pricing of site licensed electronic resources. The use of number of concurrent users appears to be loosing favor. The trend is now toward basing the price for academic libraries on the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) faculty and

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students. Consequently, large institutions are paying large fees proportioned to their FTE in order to subscribe to the site licensed products.

In countries like Turkey where the academic use of English is lower, FTE, defined as the total number of faculty and students is misleading for estimating the potential use of a licensed product and in turn for pricing. This fact has been widely discussed in ANKOS and alternative definitions such as the total number of faculty plus students enrolled in departments where the medium of instruction is English have been suggested. Such definitions may eventually evolve into a new pricing model and get a wider acceptance.

Turkish state universities have generally large student bodies. The responses are presented in Table.3. The mean FTE for the state universities is 10,989.58 whereas the mean FTE for the foundation universities is only 2,500. The instruction in 61.53% of the foundation universities responding the survey is fully in English. This ratio falls to 8.33% for state universities. The need for finding a new pricing formula is further underlined by the significant variation between these two ratios.

Table.3 2002-2003 FTEs

Response	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.
Less than 2,500	9	5
Between 2,500 – 10,000	3	2
Between 10,000 – 20,000	1	9
More than 20,000	-	8

Table.4 is a cross-tabulation of electronic resources budgets of the respondent institutions against the size of the population served in FTE. In the absence of readily available data of a similar nature, it is impossible to make any generalization. However, on the basis of these findings one cautious observation can be made:

> 5 out of 13 foundation universities which are the least crowded ones have very small electronic resources budgets, whereas a medium size state library is one of the two libraries among 38 respondents which have a budget over $280,000. It seems to suggest that in opposite to the general assumption, foundation universities do not necessarily have larger budgets

Table.4 2002 e-Resources Budgets

	Less than 2,500		Between 2,500 – 10,000		Between 10,000 – 20,000		More than 20,000	
(in Thousand)	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.
Less than $28	5	2				2		2
Between $28 – $85	2	3	1	3		2		2

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Between $85 – $195			1	2		1	2
Between $195– $280	1				1	1	1
More than $280	1					1	

As well as asking the respondents about the amount allocated for electronic resources, the survey also asked them to state how the budgetary ratio between electronic and print resources changed in the last five years (1999-2002). A good majority of the respondents (66%) mentioned an increase in electronic over print ranging from 10% to 450%. 8 institutions stated a saving in their print due to the print journal cancellations. As far as the remaining 44% is concerned, these institutions are either recently established or have purchased electronic resources for the first time in 2002. Consequently, they were unable to provide retrospective comparison.

4.2 ANKOS Membership:

The questionnaire asked respondents to state when they joined ANKOS. The answers are presented in Figure.1. Five state universities' answers were 1999 while some of the founding universities answered it as 2000. These controversial answers could be due to a problem of semantics.
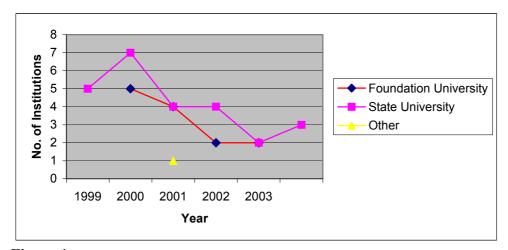

Figure.1

In addition to when they joined ANKOS, the respondents have been asked about the reasons why they joined ANKOS. As tabulated in Table.5, the survey shows that the main motivations for joining ANKOS are benefiting lower subscription prices to access more resources under more suitable licenses favoring member institutions. The only "Other" reason added to the given list by one single institution is supporting universities, which have limited resources.

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Table.5 Reasons for joining ANKOS

Response	Foundation University		State University	
Lower subscription prices	10	77%	23	96%
More subscriptions	10	77%	20	83%
Better license agreements that favor the Libraries	10	77%	19	79%
To avoid one-to-one dialog with vendors	6	46%	18	75%
Faster resolution of technical problems	3	23%	12	50%
Minimizing the duplication in print journal subscriptions in Turkey	6	46%	12	50%
Because everybody has joined	1	8%		
Other	1	8%		

4.3 Product selection and English

Turkey being a country where English or other western languages are not as widely used as in some other countries, the communication problems may arise between libraries and foreign vendors who do business in Turkey. Under the same assumption, one may say that libraries with no fluent English (or other western language) speaking acquisitions librarian(s) may tend to work with local distributors or with vendors who have Turkish Sales Representative to avoid any kinds of communication problems. This tendency may cause an excessive interest for a group of products while some others may not even be considered.

Table.7 Is language a barrier?

Response	1 or more English-speaking Acq. Librarian		No English-speaking Acquisitions Librarian	
	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.	Foundation Univ.	State Univ.
Prefer products with local distributors	1	4	1	7
Prefer products with Turkish Sales Representative		2		4
Did not matter	7	3	2	6
Other	1	1		
Missing			1	

Table. 7 is a cross-tabulation of vendor preferences of libraries against the availability of fluent English-speaking acquisitions librarian(s) in the staff before joining ANKOS. In case of the foundation universities, 64% of the respondents were not limiting their product selections to products with local distributors or with Turkish Sales Representative. This percentile drops to 13% for the state universities. It also did not matter for 18% of foundation and 25% of the

state universities with no English-speaking acquisitions librarian. However, one of these institutions noted that the director of the library is facilitating the communication with foreign vendors on behalf of his library. This is very likely to be true for many libraries, state or foundation, which marked "did not matter" on the survey although they don't have a qualified acquisitions librarian. As a supportive argument, one state university mentioned that their acquisitions staff is not a librarian, but as he is fluent in English, it does not matter to them whether the product has been marketed by a Turkish-speaking person. This response raises the likelihood of another semantic problem with the way the survey question was phrased. As a final footnote on this, some of the institutions who had no e-resources before 2003 marked "did not matter" option too, although they were allowed to state any case peculiar to their institution under "other".

In addition, a significant majority of all respondents (69%) stated that they joined ANKOS because they would like to avoid one-to-one dialog with vendors, as illustrated in Table. 5.

4.4 Product Selection and methods used

The respondents were asked to prioritize the methods that they use in determining products to subscribe to. The mean and the median are calculated separately for each given method (Table. 8). The prioritized list of these methods by computed means is as follows:

1. Faculty members' suggestions
2. ANKOS' announcements
3. Library staff recommendations
4. Vendors' visits
5. Stands at conferences
6. Library listservs

Table. 8 Selection Methods

Methods/Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	MEAN	MEDIAN
Library staff recommendations	1	11	5	4	7	4	1	3.64	3
Faculty members' suggestions	28	6	2		1			1.38	1
ANKOS' announcements	7	7	15	4	1			2.56	3
Vendors' visits		3	3	9	10	7		4.47	5
Stands at conferences		3	4	8	5	10	2	4.66	5
Library listservs		1	3	6	8	9	2	4.7	5
Other	1	1				1	1	-	-

One explanation for this list is that libraries rely highly on faculty members' suggestions and try to respond their research needs primarily. On the other hand, ANKOS has a significant impact on the product selection of its members. This impact is beyond the staff recommendations and more conventional methods just like vendors' visits to the libraries and vendor stands opened at conferences.

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All of the state universities and 8 out of 11 foundation universities stated that they announce all of the ANKOS trials to their users with no exception in the course of the year. One of the three foundation universities, which are not announcing all of the trials, mentioned that they announce only those they are likely to subscribe. This finding can also be explained as high reliability of the Turkish universities on ANKOS announcements as a method for determining the products subscribed.

Not surprisingly, except two state and two foundation universities, none of the other institutions carry any institutional subscription in 2003 for any product that ANKOS tried to establish a consortium in 2002, but could not achieve for various reasons. Even less surprisingly, these two foundation universities are the same with those, which are not announcing all of the trials. This should not be a simple coincidence.

With a high percentage of 83%, the respondents reported that they collect and analyze user feedback about the trials. On the other hand, few respondents commented that they unfortunately receive very little user feedback. These comments may give some idea about how responsive the library users are for library's feedback demand. It is anticipated that there is a need for a user awareness program to make sure that users know that their feedback is a key element in libraries' decision-making process.
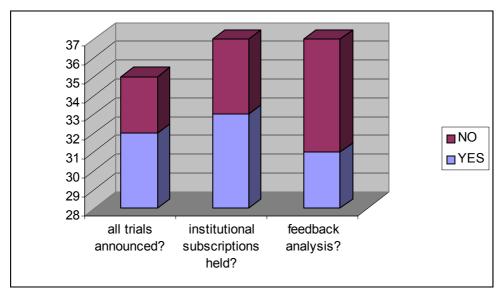

Figure.2

4.5 Miscellaneous

In addition to the product selection related issues discussed above, there are various other areas that ANKOS either already started playing an important role or may consider taking a leadership position in the coming days.

Copyright and fair use awareness: The respondents were first asked to state whether they have a notice on their web page for their users addressing the copyright and fair use issues, since when if the answer is "yes". As shown in the Figure.3, still only one third of the respondents have such a notice and give instruction on this particular area. The earliest notice has been placed in 2001. But the instructions have been started as early as 1999. The instructions may not necessarily pertain to e-resources since the books and print

journals are copyrighted and subject to fair use as well. This may be an explanation why the instructions have been launched before notices placed on the Web along with the fact that some of the recently established universities had their web sites and their first subscriptions to electronic resources lately.
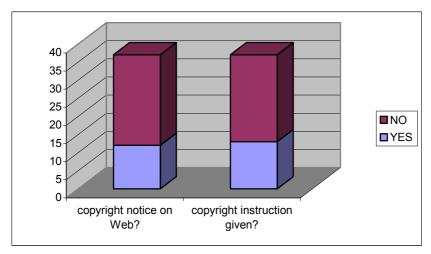

Figure. 3

Usage statistics: Libraries have an old tradition of evaluating their collections and their services quantitatively. Most of the electronic resources today provide very detailed usage statistics. The availability of such statistics opens new frontiers for libraries to incorporate qualitative analysis into daily library business. As Figure. 4 illustrates, 92% of the respondents utilize usage statistics for decision-making about database subscriptions and renewals. And, even 10 respondent institutions made cancellation decisions based on the usage statistics. This concrete finding points out the timeliness of the initiative taken by ANKOS to establish a team to work on a qualitative model analysis of the usage statistics to be shared by ANKOS members.
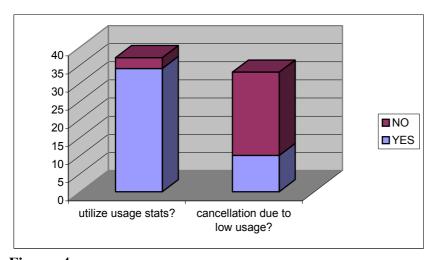

Figure. 4

Licensing: License agreements with their difficult legal English, used to be documents to be signed by all parties without questioning any of the clauses. Only three respondents have asked a database supplier for an amendment to the license agreement before they signed, before ANKOS Steering Committee prepared a model Turkish national site

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license and started comparing the suppliers' agreements against the model license and asking for amendments, if necessary.

User Training: Libraries invest a lot on electronic resources. These investments must pay the libraries back in terms of high usage. These resources can be promoted via outreaching programs or by formal user training. 81% of the respondent institutions provide training for their subscribed databases. ANKOS' another ongoing initiative about preparing user manuals and database fact sheets may increase this percentage and may bring some standardization to user training programs.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

ANKOS, although it has initially found acceptance as an entity, which brings purchasing power of many institutions together, made a jump start with supporting its members in easing the communication with foreign vendors, in evaluating license agreements, in analyzing usage statistics, in providing user training, etc.

Further research is needed to investigate these points in more details using focus group technique, which will provide a more interactive environment and chance of instant follow-up. Additional areas that ANKOS may assist its members in can be also identified in the course of these focus group sessions as a result of this research.

Once such areas are identified, programs more geared to remedy the gaps can be designed using the expertise available from its various members.

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Appendices

1. **The cover letter**

2. **The questionnaire**

17/02/2003

Dear Respondent,

For my research paper that I will be presenting in June 2003 in 24th IATUL conference hosted by METU in Ankara, I am conducting a study of the way consortial purchasing impact library acquisitions.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your institution, its acquisitions behavior and its relations with ANKOS.

I would appreciate your filling and emailing the questionnaire at takbayturk@ku.edu.tr by March 01, 2003.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and support,

_____
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1. Is your institution a
   - ☐ Foundation University
   - ☐ State University
   - ☐ Other ....

2. Please mark the range your 2002-2003 FTE falls into:
   - ☐ Less than 2,500
   - ☐ Between 2,500 – 10,000
   - ☐ Between 10,000 – 20,000
   - ☐ More than 20,000

3. What is the medium of instruction at your institution? What percentage of the 2002-2003 FTE is made up of students enrolled in programs taught in foreign languages?
   ……………………………………………………………………

4. Please mark the range your 2002 e-resources budget falls into:
   - ☐ Less than 50,000,000,000TL
   - ☐ Between 50,000,000,000TL – 150,000,000,000TL
   - ☐ Between 150,000,000,000TL – 350,000,000,000TL
   - ☐ Between 350,000,000,000TL – 500,000,000,000TL
   - ☐ More than 500,000,000,000TL

5. In the last 5 years (1999-2003), how has the budgetary ratio between electronic and print resources changed?
   - ☐ ... % of increase
   - ☐ ... % of decrease

6. When did your institution join ANKOS?
   ....

7. Why did you join ANKOS? (Multiple options may be marked)
   - ☐ Lower subscription prices
   - ☐ More subscriptions
   - ☐ Better license agreements that favor the Libraries
   - ☐ To avoid one-to-one dialog with vendors
   - ☐ Faster resolution of technical problems
   - ☐ Minimizing the duplication in print journal subscriptions in Turkey
   - ☐ Because everybody has joined
   - ☐ Other...

8. Please fill the table below:

	No of databases subscribed	No. of databases subscribed through ANKOS	No of e-journals subscribed	No of e-journals subscribed through ANKOS
2000				
2001				
2002				
2003				

9. Before joining ANKOS, when selecting products for your Library, did you
   - ☐ prefer products with local distributors
   - ☐ prefer products with Turkish Sales Representative
   - ☐ Did not matter
   - ☐ Other ....

10. In your Library, do you have a fluent English-speaking acquisitions librarian who handles correspondence with foreign vendors?
    - ☐ Yes, ... Librarian(s)
    - ☐ No

11. Do you carry any institutional subscription in 2003 for any product that ANKOS tried to establish a consortium in 2002 but could not achieve for various reasons (e.g. IEEE)?
    ....

12. Please prioritize the methods used in your institution to determine the products purchased/subscribed with "1" being the highest priority and "7" being the lowest priority:
    - ☐ Library staff recommendations
    - ☐ Faculty members' suggestions (..)
    - ☐ ANKOS' announcements (..)
    - ☐ Vendors' visits (..)
    - ☐ Stands at conferences (..)
    - ☐ Library listservs (..)
    - ☐ Other .... (..)

13. Do you announce ALL ANKOS trial notices to your users?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

14. Do you collect and analyze user feedback about the trials?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

15. Do you have a notice on your Web page for your users addressing the copyright and fair use issues?
    - ☐ Yes, since ....
    - ☐ No

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16. Do you provide user instruction about copyright and fair use?
    - ☐ Yes, since ....
    - ☐ No

17. Prior to TRNLS prepared by ANKOS' Steering Committee, have you ever asked a database supplier for an amendment to the license agreement before you signed?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

18. Do you provide user training for your subscribed databases?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

19. Do you utilize usage statistics to decide which database to subscribe or renew?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

20. Have you ever cancelled a database subscription due to low usage statistics?
    - ☐ Yes   ☐ No

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