

The reward for two hundred years' labor: Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection

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Abstract

Historical collections are original resources and living witnesses which shed light on the history of a region, nation or subject. M. Seyfettin Özege is an important person who makes the collection, which sheds lights on nearly two last centuries of the Ottoman Empire and the first years of Turkish Republic, reach today as a whole. Thousands of resources, known as Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection, are among the most precious resources of Central Library of Atatürk University. Although the collection has been preserved as a whole, it cannot be presented to service in a modern structure due to various reasons. The resources have been kept waiting as being deprived of technological facilities. Users can make use of the collection, which has not even OPAC, in quite limited conditions. However, in spite of this, Özege collection has still remained a center of Turkish culture to which researchers have frequently applied.

Keywords: The Documentary Heritage, Rare Collection, University Libraries, M. Seyfettin Özege, Digitizing

Introduction

Since Gutenberg invented the printing machine which depended on movable letter technique in 1446, progresses which had not been seen till then were made in book publishing. This invention gave way to changes in most principles and applications used in book production and usage. For example, with spread of publishing, necessity of controlling publications and the legal deposit which meant collecting every publication published within borders of the country appeared. Discipline of bibliography also emerged in parallel with these progresses. The legal deposit was firstly applied in France in 1537 and then spread all over the Europe (Acaroğlu, 1966: 250; Zan, 2006: 1). The legal deposit efforts were carried out as depending on three basic purposes: Providing the security of state, recording personal rights and forming cultural heritage (Yaman, 1961: 129). In historical process, the legal deposit was sometimes formed for only one, two or all of these three purposes according to the country and conditions in which the application was made. And one of these purposes became superior to the others (Polat, 1999: 4).

The legal deposit is a kind of printed material collecting application and main purpose of it make available all publications in any state to its citizens. It guarantees preservation of the mentioned publications in order to transfer them to the next generations. This process has importance because of two basic reasons. The first one is the preservation of people's own cultural existence and second one is the documentation of contribution they made to culture of the world.

The first legal deposit application in the Ottoman Empire started with the desire to get new publications under control with the aim of regaining governmental authority. It is possible to see this in all laws made about printing and publishing since 1850 because, in all these laws there are rules on giving a certain number of copies of each published work to the government (Polat, 1999: 4). It is well known that, in Ottoman Empire there was no deep-rooted study on the legal deposit with cultural aims.

On the other hand, it was made only legal deposit applications with the purpose of security. However, the legal deposit application having cultural purpose started with Legal Deposit Law of Printed Materials and Pictures enacted in 1934, shortly after foundation of the Turkish Republic.

The efforts of collecting the publications published within two hundred years from 1728 to 1928 had been continued voluntarily. The most important example of this was realized by Seyfettin Özege and his Rare Resource Collection presented to service in the Central Library of Atatürk University today.

Progresses in publishing and printing have also caused the problem of getting publications under control bibliographically. Because there is a necessity for bibliographical control in order to transfer identical data of all resources, published in a particular time area, subject group or geographical region, in a systematical structure. Seyfettin Özege created another important study by filling the space in this field with the bibliography.

Seyfettin Özege

Özege, who was born in Istanbul in 1901, completed his law education in 1921. After his graduation, he had various duties in banking sector and he retired in 1950. Özege never got married and spent all his possibilities and income for books as a natural result of the life of a real bibliophil and biblioman (Utku, 2007: 50). He knew Arabic, Persian and French well (Mehmet, 1981: 117).

The most important hobby of Özege was reading books and living with them. One of the unknown characteristics of Özege, who also worked as a clock setter of Şehzâdepaşa Mosque, is his interest in inlaying mother of pearl and bookbinding arts (Utku, 2007: 51). However, the most important characteristics of Özege, which is known by everyone, are his devotion to books and perfection in bibliography field. Although his interest went back to his youth, his meeting with Nurullah Pertevoğlu became effective in transformation of this interest into a passion and even a life style for him.

Pertevoğlu is a famous Turkish bibliographer who was fond of examining and having every publication and spent all his material and spiritual powers for this purpose. After his death, the resources he had collected with great difficulties were bought by his friends and booksellers, and as a result of this situation his collection could not be preserved and spread (Özege, 1957: 92; Polat and Okuyucu, 2008: 661-662).

Özege bought a part of the collection of Pertevoğlu. Therefore, the core of Seyfettin Özege collection consists of the resources bought from Pertevoğlu. Like Özege, Pertevoğlu had an intention of creating a bibliography of Turkish publications in Arabic letters. For this, he spent forty years of his life, prepared a bibliography called 'Kitâbü'l-Kütüb' but he died before publishing it (Utku, 2007: 51). Özege bought drafts of Kitâbü'l-Kütüb from the inheritors of Pertevoğlu. For this reason, it is estimated that this resource formed the basis of bibliographical studies Özege carried out in later years. Pertevoğlu's efforts in collecting books and preparing bibliography became a life style for Özege.

Seyfettin Özege made this collection by buying from Istanbul Bazaar of Secondhand Booksellers, foreign people and booksellers and from some Turkish people coming from foreign countries. In progressive years, he donated his library which consists of fifty thousand valuable and rich resources to Atatürk University in 1961 (Mehmet, 1981: 117).

Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection

Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection is a collection an important part of which is made up of books published within the borders of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic between 1728-1928 and it consists of publications in Arabic letters. The collection was donated to Atatürk University by Özege himself in 1961. There are also resources published outside the Ottoman geography before 1728. There are even a few Turkish resources published by foreigners. With this characteristic, Özege collection is a collection which is collected with only personal efforts before beginning of the legal deposit application in Turkish Republic and it has indispensable importance for Turkish history and

culture. Since it includes an important part of the resources created in the last two centuries of the Ottoman Empire, it is an important collection reflecting personal and social life of that period. Moreover, there are resources shedding light on the past of fifty independent countries founded in the Ottoman geography.

Özege donated this collection to Atatürk University in return for the realization of some conditions. The first one of them was preservation of the collection as a whole in a separate unit. The second one was preparation of a printed catalogue of the resources in a short time. Özege explained why he had required these conditions in a letter¹ he wrote on 17 April, 1962. It is here expressed that in Turkey libraries usually do not have rich collections and that is possible with catalogue to know which resources there are in this collection for researchers. Özege also mentioned that researchers did not make use of the existent resources due to insufficient bibliographic studies and said that for this reason preparation of a printed catalogue of the collection was an important problem.

Although he was not a librarian, Özege sent many letters to Atatürk University showing how the catalogue and catalogue indexes were to be prepared. In one of his letters, he expressed that the collection consisted of every kind of printed materials, nearly 1/5 of which were Turkish books printed in Arabic letters, most of which were books, and some magazines, maps, hand advertisements, calendars, prospectuses, school books and catalogues. In the collection, there are many precious resources such as *Evlîya Çelebi Seyehatnâmesi* and *Devlet-i Âliye-i Osmaniye Tarihi*. One part of the collection consists of periodicals. The number of magazines published in the geography of the Ottoman and Turkish Republic in the period when the collection was collected is 2.526. In Özege collection, there are more than half of them (Duman, 2000). There are also maps and map books in the collection. Then manuscripts were added to the collection through buying. The number of these manuscripts that add a different richness to the collection is 1.900 (Polat and Okuyucu, 2008: 626).

In the letter Özege wrote in 1961, he expressed that there were nearly sixteen thousand resources in the first delivery of his donation. Since rare resources taken from different people and institutions were added to Özege collection later, it is not possible to obtain precise data about the amount of the collection. However, in all studies on this matter, the number of the collection is more than fifty thousand resources. Today, there are sixty eight thousand resources in Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection with the rare resources taken from different people and institutions.

Özege collection has the quality of being a world wide application center for scientific studies on Turkish-Islamic culture world. It is seen that there are resources published in Turkish-Islamic centers such as Cairo, Kazan, Baku, Aleppo, Baghdad, Beirut, Tehran and Kirkuk, and European cities such as Paris, Thessalonica, Malta, Berlin, London and Vienna in addition to the resources published in Istanbul and the other cities of Anatolia. The number of resources printed with lithography in the collection is considerable. Although most of them are printed resources, it is also known that most of them are as precious as manuscripts. Most of the resources are resources, which are not found even in the world famous libraries which have only one copy or whose copies have been reduced in time (Utku, 2007: 52).

Özege collection had been presented to service with an insufficient care until recent years. In a project started in 2006, digital copies of Özege collection began to be prepared, but a little part of the material has been digitized due to the lack of sufficient and able personnel. Moreover, OPAC of this unique collection has not been formed yet. Therefore, unfortunately there is not any other access device except from the catalogue formed with alphabetic work names, completed in the end of 1970s. But it is also not enough completely, because it is a simple alphabetic list formed with resource names.

Although this collection's digital copies are not completely ready, it is possible to have this collection in CD if users want. Main reason behind this application is that to protect these rare resources from damages caused by usage with great care. On the other hand, nothing has been done for these

¹ The letters expressed as written by M. Seyfettin Özege in the study are preserved in Library and Documentation Directorate of Atatürk University.

resources' protection and conservation against chemical and biological effects except making cabinets for preventing them from getting dust until today.

Turkish Resources Catalogue Printed in Arabic Letters

It can be said that there are three people who carried out bibliography preparing studies of Turkish publications before Özege. They are Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1656) in the 17th century, Burdalı Mehmet Tahir (1861-1925) and Osman Nuri Ergin (1883-1961). The first one of the rich and irreplaceable bibliographic resources of the Ottoman Empire is *Kesf'üz-Zünûn* prepared by Kâtip Çelebi. In this resource, Kâtip Çelebi gives information about fifteen thousand books with three hundred different themes of nearly ten thousand writers (Kâtip, 2007: II). After, Kâtip Çelebi, Bursalı Mehmet Tahir is the second person gaining fame in the field of bibliography with his work called *Osmanlı Müellifleri*. In *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, which was created with a thirty years work, there is information on resources of one thousand and six hundred Ottoman researchers and writers (Bursalı, 1917, 2). *Mecelle-i Umur-i Belediye* written by Osman Nuri Ergin in 1922, is a resource in which there is information about the business of governing a city, and many subjects like development of municipality organization in the West and Islam world, municipality foundations and legal arrangements. The resource is also a bibliography including rich resources in this field (Osman, 1914: 3).

The second success of Özege was on bibliographical studies. Özege also enabled his name to be called with respect by researchers of Turkish History and Culture with his bibliography called Turkish Resources Catalogue Printed in Arabic Letters. The catalogue includes bibliographic data of every work printed in Arabic letters published inside and outside of the geography of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. He prepared all bibliographic data he had collected throughout all his life as fascicles and than these fascicles were published in five volumes (Mehmet, 1981: 117). The first of these volumes was published in 1971 and the last one was published in 1979. The second chapter of the fifth volume is the appendix of the resource. The resources obtained within the eight years between the publication of the first and the last volumes are written in this chapter (Özege, 1971: I, Özege, 1979).

The most important feature of the catalogue is that the books and periodicals in the resource were seen and registered by the writer himself. Özege did not register the resources he had not examined in the catalogue. The catalogue, which forms the basis of many bibliographies published later, attracts attentions with its order of bibliographic identification tags. In addition to his care in obeying the rules about bibliography, Özege separated resources according to Dewey Decimal Classification System and created indexes in order to provide researchers with using the resource more effective. Considering the conditions of the period, it is possible to regard this bibliography that was prepared with great care as an irreplaceable resource.

Conclusion

Each rare work is a witness to the past and its geography. Each rare work has a feature strengthening the tie between the past and today and shedding light on the history of the society of which it is the symbol. Rare resources also show the level aesthetic values of a society are besides historical ties of the society. Protection of rare resources means preserving history and aesthetic identity of a society. Therefore, it is necessary to regard rare resources as intersocietal existences, not in a national axis. For this reason, protecting and putting rare resources into service is also a service for humanity culture.

In sum, Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection is among the irreplaceable important collections of History of Turkish Culture due to its rich and unique content. For this reason, rearrangement of the catalogue in all ways from cataloguing, classification and protection to digitizing is a responsibility which should be fulfilled by individuals, society and government in Turkey. Özege Collection is preserved in the hall called Seyfettin Özege in the Central Library of Atatürk University. However, the

collection is presented to the service of researchers in primitive conditions due to lack of budget and qualified personnel and indifference of the administration.

In sum, it is seen that there are problems especially on four points in the examination relating the present state of Seyfettin Özege Rare Resource Collection. These are as follows:

- Problems stemming from bibliographic access through printed and limited catalogue
- Insufficient superficial indexes that are prepared for bibliographic identities in access
- Problems in using resources a few parts of which has been digitized yet
- Lack of necessary protection and upkeep of resources

However, in Turkey some libraries having rare resource collections like Özege Collection digitized them in a short time and succeeded in putting them into service for users through a dynamic web portal. For example, researchers can reach them the whole texts of some manuscripts of some libraries of Ministry of Culture and National Library through web. Similarly, manuscripts on astronomy in Kandilli Observatory and Avicenna Collection in Süleymaniye Library were regarded as documentary heritage of the world and taken under protection, their catalogues were prepared and they were digitized by UNESCO (Nominations, 2005). At the same time, catalogues of manuscripts in the Library of Ankara University Faculty of Letters were prepared with a project started in 1999 and the resources were put into service in 2008 through an OPAC in which the whole texts of resources can be reached (Ankara, 2008).

Making use of all these applications, the steps which should be taken about Özege Collection and the suggestions which should be considered can be offered as following:

- Özege Collection is a special collection including sixty eight thousand rare resources. Because of the amount and also rareness, the collection's cataloguing, classification, digitizing, putting into service through an appropriate OPAC, upkeep and protection should be carried out with a systematical project created by a team of qualified experts. Because of the language, history and artistic features of the resources, there should be experts on Turkish bibliographies, book arts, Ottoman writing language, digitizing, and applications of informatics, cataloguing and classification in the project.
- Cataloguing and classification of the collection should be completed before digitizing and bibliographic data should be put into service through an appropriate OPAC. In cataloguing and classification process and OPAC choice, the standards making data share possible should not be ignored.
- In the previous project, two developed scanners were bought for digitizing of Özege Collection. The process should be accelerated by making use of these devices and international standards of digitizing process should be taken into consideration.
- An important part of the collection is physically damaged since it has not been included into any upkeep and protection program. Upkeep and protection program should be carried out by experts. Because keeping this documentary heritage, whose newest resource has an eighty-year-history, alive depends on how it is preserved.

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