

Will you be our voice?

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Abstract -This study was carried out on the purpose of identifying the problems that visually handicapped students, who study at Ondokuz Mayıs University, encounter in the library during their education. For this aim, interview method from qualitative research methods was used. 32 blind students and students with poor vision studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University and using the department of handicapped were selected. As a result of the study, a meaningful result ($p < 0.05$) was obtained in favor of the students with poor vision studying in Ondokuz Mayıs University. Furthermore, in the light of these findings, the needs of handicapped students should be evaluated in a wide scope. In addition, holding seminars and meetings as to introduce the services of visually handicapped students that is carried out in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University will provide accessibility to all the volunteer students studying at the university.

Keywords-Visually handicapped library users, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Audio Book

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of current disabled people was detected in the light of the judgements of the Council of People with Disabilities in 2003. The percent of the disabled people in Turkey is 12.29 and this percentage corresponds to 8.5 million of Turkish population. The number of the visually handicapped people is approximately 410.000 and it corresponds to 0.60% of the general population [1,2].

Planning and implementation of library services for the visually handicapped people provides them with equal opportunities for access to information. This is one of the most important responsibilities of librarians. When library services for the visually

handicapped students in Turkey are examined, it can be said that Turkey has reached to a certain level in terms of library services. In recent years, audio books have been prepared for blind people and people with poor vision in the relevant departments of charity and state libraries. Audio books are presented to visually handicapped people. Furthermore, users are able to get access to online audio books in the websites of libraries. Audio books are any kind of books that are read out and recorded by volunteers. Although audio books do not substitute for print books completely, they are listened via any electronic device like an MP3 player or smartphones [3]. Audio copies of some books are concurrently put on the market for

visually handicapped people in our country [4]. Since embossed books printed in Braille alphabet are expensive, it is not possible for all books in the market to be printed with this method. Therefore, audio books are created for the visually handicapped people to gain access to all books. Audio books are created with the support of volunteer readers in state libraries. The central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) is striving for creating a different archive for the visually handicapped students. In the department of the visually handicapped in Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) audio books and digital books are created by volunteer students for the visually handicapped students with the campaign initiated with the slogan ‘Will you be our voice?’ There are 304 books in total in the collection of the visually handicapped that is provided by the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ), which has been serving since 2016. 104 of these books are composed of audio books and 200 of these books are digital books. Audio books are prepared specially for the visually handicapped students in sound recording rooms organized for the volunteer students in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University. Sound and noise isolation is ensured in these rooms. Furthermore, unlimited and accessible services are presented to visually handicapped students in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ). Ondokuz Mayıs University is among the leading universities developing projects and providing the handicapped with different kind of opportunities in order to increase the life quality of the handicapped. Both as a state library and in other departments, Ondokuz Mayıs University

offers a number of supporting activities for the handicapped individuals [5].

This study aims to determine the problems that visually handicapped individuals face while using the library and receiving information services as well as in other aspects. In addition to this, the study also aims to stress that the visually handicapped individuals have the right for access to information.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

In this study that is conducted to determine the problems faced by the visually handicapped students in Ondokuz Mayıs University, interview method that is one of the qualitative research methods has been used. ‘Semi-structured interview forms’ developed by the researcher were used in order to obtain data. The sample of the study is composed of 32 blind students and students with poor vision that use the department of the handicapped in Ondokuz Mayıs University.

III. RESULTS

When the satisfaction level of the visually handicapped students in Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) for the central library of the university is examined, it has been discovered that it is meaningful in favor of the students with poor vision ($p<0.05$).

When data are examined, it is seen that visually handicapped students participating in the research are generally satisfied with the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ). It was deduced from this satisfaction that as well as the support mechanisms and opportunities provided by the department of the handicapped, the contributions

of the volunteer students are also effective with the help of the ‘Will you be our voice?’ slogan.

The presence of a special department for the visually handicapped in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University and special personnel affect the quality of the services for the visually handicapped users. Visually handicapped students participating in the study stated that the personnel serving for them do not have enough knowledge.

Another striking point obtained from the data of the research is that the active use of technology accelerates the access of the visually handicapped students to information. Research data also draw attention to the importance of the use of the internet and technological developments in overcoming the obstacles and reaching the information fast.

IV. DISCUSSION

Considering the satisfaction level of the users using the department of the handicapped in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) for the purpose of decreasing the problems faced by the visually handicapped students while reaching information, increasing technical and physical feasibilities and enriching the collection is important.

When the activities in regards to the visually handicapped students and the services provided by the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) are examined, it is seen that in regards to disability, services for the visually handicapped students are offered. Since the visually handicapped individuals face the most obstacles for reaching information, this situation

may be considered normal. However, the number of students with physical, hearing and speaking disabilities except for vision impairment in Ondokuz Mayıs University is 76. Therefore, in regards to the studies that will be carried out in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University, the needs of students with other disabilities for library resources and documents should be taken into consideration. In this case, Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ) is expected to expand its services in a way that will address to all groups of disabilities.

For the introduction of services provided for visually handicapped students that are presented in the central library of Ondokuz Mayıs University(OMÜ), the presentation of services for handicapped students will be ensured with seminars and meetings. This way, the campaign launched with the slogan ‘Will you be our voice?’ will be announced to all students.

V. CONCLUSION

More actions and regulations should be made by considering all the handicapped students and individuals with disabilities in the university.

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