

# A University Museum: Istanbul Ex-libris Museum

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## Abstract

Museums are cultural institutions that pass the treasures they host on to the future generations. The mission of modern museology is to educate the community and to contribute to its sociocultural development.

Museums should not only be fostered by the state but all the segments of the society. Creating knowledge and carrying it on to the future generations, universities can be the leaders of museography. The communication and interaction of the museum and university with the public can be facilitated. There are only 38 university museums in Turkey. One of them is Istanbul Ex-libris Museum (IEM) in Işık University. Small but highly functional museum has a collection of great value.

Ex-libris are printmaking artwork affixed to the inside cover of books and contain the name of the owner of book. Istanbul Ex-Libris Society has organized three international competitions under the leadership of Hasip Pektaş and the collected pieces of ex-libris have found a venue within the premises of Işık University. IEM has 14,000 pieces of ex-libris. All students visit the museum and participate in workshops.

The goal of the museum is to remain for the future as an online museum. The purpose of this research is to share IEM's development.

**Keywords:** Education, University, Ex-libris

## **Museums and Museology**

Museums are cultural institutions that pass the treasures they host on to the future generations. They are venues where the world heritage is preserved. They enhance humanly values. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Statutes, “A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>

“Museums are institutions established to exhibit the works of science and art as well as underground and aboveground riches of communities; to illuminate both the day and the future by examining the societies who lived in ancient times in terms of science art; and to allow individuals to get to know the past times better.” (Kartal, 2015, 137).

The mission of modern museology is to educate the community and to contribute to its sociocultural development. If used effectively in education, museums develop imagination and creativity. (Önder, 2009)

Museums fueling curiosity and contributing to social development should not only be fostered by the state but all the segments of the society. Universities are institutions that contribute to scientific, artistic, and technological development and transfer the produced information to the community. Creating knowledge and carrying it on to future generations, universities can be the leaders of museography. For universities, besides being a field for education and practice, museums are a sign of institutional sophistication and cultural wealth. The communication and interaction of the museum and university with the public can be facilitated. (Tirrell, 2000)  
“Amidst the ever emerging international universalization and in intercultural pursuits, the human being passes through a process of change every day. Among this pursuits, the human being has initiated efforts to bring the past and the future together. The venues where these efforts are defined as semiotics are museums.” (Erbay, 2009, 11).

## **University Museums**

Universities support the scientific, cultural and economic development of the locations they are within while university museums contribute to the development of the cultural infrastructure. (Kelly, 2001)

The roots of university museums date back to educational collections in the schools founded in ancient times. Since their first existence, such museums

have assumed the three important missions of “education,” “research,” and “informing the public”. (Çolak, 2008)

The world’s first and oldest university museum is the Ashmolean Museum. Founded in England in 1683, this museum has been a resource for faculty and students of the University of Oxford since 300 years ago. (Boylan,1999)

The first Art and Sculpture Museum of Turkey was opened in 1937, with contributions and participation of Atatürk as well, at the Office of the Heir Apparent in the Dolmabahçe Palace that had been allocated to the Fine Arts Academy in order to showcase our developing arts of paintings and sculpture and to exhibit original pieces of art. However, the expansion of establishment of museums at universities began after the 1970s. University museums are considered within the status of private museums. The collections of the university art museums are constituted through donations and purchases. Collectors consider that they would perpetuate their names by making donations to the universities, which are the highest level educational institutions of the society.

University museums in Turkey can be collected in three groups namely those “with an art collection”, those “with a scientific collection”, and “other types”. Mimar Sinan University, Hacettepe University, Anadolu University, and Sabancı University Art Museums are some of the museums that own an “Art Collection”. The Middle East University Science and Technology Museum; Ankara University Agricultural Museum; and Istanbul University Cerrahpaşa History of Medicine Museum have “Scientific Collections”. Istanbul University has 21 museums. (Gülseven, 2014)

Organizing training activities for all ages and groups in the society is among the missions of university museums. In this way, universities also gain the opportunity to spread the knowledge they produce to the community. Although economic developments have negative effects on museology, ensuring their continued presence must be a task we embrace. (Stanbury, 2000)



Figure 1: Ashmolean Museum Oxford  
<http://heathrow-airport-our-guide.com/attractions/oxford-and-the-ashmolean/>



Figure 2: The Middle East University Science and Technology Museum  
<https://tbm.metu.edu.tr/bilim-ve-teknoloji-tarihi-sergisi>



Figure 3: Inside of the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum

“Thanks to young people visiting museums often, most of the time with their families and friends, their personal taste and aesthetic point of view may be improved so as to enhance their habit of visiting museums. These visits translate to the adoption of the idea that education and training do not stop after the closure of schools, which is then this training becomes “Lifelong Education”. (Pekgözlü Karakuş, 2012, 134)

There are 196 universities in Turkey. However, the number of university museums does not exceed 30. One of them is the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum established in the Işık University. Small but highly functional, this museum has a collection of great value and has undertaken the mission of ensuring the expansion and recognition of Ex-libris, which is a relatively new branch of art for Turkey.

### What is Ex-libris?

Ex-libris are printmaking artwork affixed to the inside cover of books and contain the name of the owner of the book. It can also be termed the title-deed of a book. This Latin word literally means “from the books of...”. (Pektaş. 2014)

Ex-libris are custom made on order for living people or institutions and reflect the properties of their owners. Ex-libris can be reproduced with engraving, wood, linoleum, lithography, screen printing, offset, and photography techniques and they can be designed with computer aid. Ex-libris is a piece of art form that everyone can own, touch, carry, and share.

The first ex-libris on paper was made in the name of a German Priest, Knabenberg, known with the nickname “hedgehog seller”. Dürer, Klee, Picasso, and Klimt made ex-libris, too, in their lifetimes. Some contemporary artists of ex-libris include Julian Jordanov, Yuri Nozdrin, Oleg Denisenko, and Martin Baeyens. It is estimated that approximately more than 3 million



Figure 4: An ex-libris inside of book cover

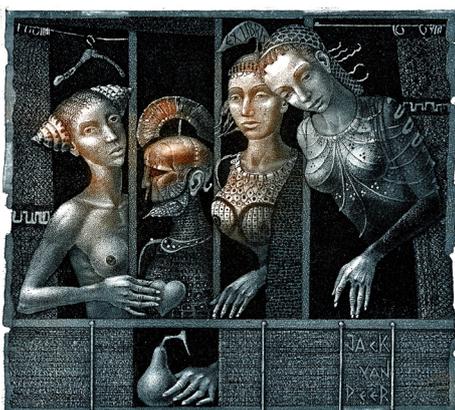


Figure 5: An ex-libris of Eduard Penkov (Bulgaria), C3+C5, 110x95 mm, 2006

pieces of ex-libris have been made so far and there are more than 2 thousand ex-libris collections.

Turkey was introduced to ex-libris through books with ex-libris that come from Europe. When the owners of the books died, their relatives donated such books to libraries. Since the 2000s, there has been growing attention, particularly among the youth, in ex-libris in fine arts education institutions thanks to encouragement by faculty in these institutions.

### Ex-libris Museums

The most important ex-libris museums are Frederikshavn, the Gutenberg Museum, the Sint Niklaas Museum, the Moscow Museum, the Museo Ex-libris Mediterraneo in Italy, the Shanghai Fuxihanzhai Ex-libris Museum, the Nancy Library in France, the Ex-libris Centre in Bulgaria and the Lewych Museum in Odessa. The Frederikshavn has over 1 million ex-libris covering the whole history of the art; Gutenberg and Sint Niklaas have about 800,000; Moscow has about the same but with accent on Russian ex-libris.

However, to these museums, it would be necessary to add the many very important collections which are in public institutions (libraries, graphic collections and museums) which are open to the public and works can be consulted. There are maybe 15 in Britain (of which the celebrated Franks Collection in the British Museum), close to 20 in Germany, about 5 in France, the same in the USA and in Austria (including the famous National Library collection which Claudia Karoly deals with). In Russia, both the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg have very important collections.



Figure 6: An ex-libris by Hasip Pektaş (Turkey), CGD, 85x120 mm, 2006

Figure 7: A presentation in the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum



Figure 8: A workshop in the Istanbul Ex-libris  
Museum

### Istanbul Ex-libris Museum

Having founded in 1997, the Ex-libris Society has organized three international competitions under the leadership of Hasip Pektas and the collected pieces of ex-libris has found a venue within the premises of Isik University. The Istanbul Ex-libris Museum adds new works of ex-libris art every day to its collection of over 14,000 pieces that appeals to people of all ages. Students from educational institutions at all levels visit the museum and participate in workshops and some of them become the new representatives of this art.

The Istanbul Ex-libris Museum has given seminars to educational institutions at all levels and conducted workshops for students and teachers to achieve its purpose of reaching young talents since it was established. In 2012, the Museum organized the First National Student Ex-libris Competition with support from the Işık University. This ex-libris exhibition opened within this contest was carried to the galleries of other schools as well. In 2014, the Museum held the first National Ex-libris Congress for professional artists. A national ex-libris exhibition and an Ex-libris Researches Conference were held under the convention. Apart from the missions of the museum to exhibit and train, considering the obligation of the museum for promoting research studies, the publication of the “EX-LIBRIST”, an Online International Peer-reviewed Journal of Ex-libris, has been initiated. ([www.exlibrist.net](http://www.exlibrist.net))

As is the collection of the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum that is open to examination, its library is also open to the utilization of visitors. The library has many national and international journals, books, and catalogs in the field of ex-libris.

The goal of the museum is to appeal not only to the country but also to the world. It also aims to stay for the future as an online museum using modern technologies as well. To this end, the efforts to transfer the museum collections to digitized environments are continuing. In the very near future, the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum will share its collections with its visitors online, too.

### Conclusion

In this study, along with the successful university museums and ex-libris museums around the world and in Turkey, the place of the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum among these museums was investigated. What needs to be done to ensure the development and continuity of the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum, which is a yet new university museum, were examined.

Aiming to become an educational institution museum, the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum should keep the museum alive to ensure arrival of visitors instead of waiting for them to come and visit the museum spontaneously. For this purpose, arranging for temporary exhibitions as well as panels and conferences, and workshops are among its targets. Announcing the activities of the museum with an effective promotional campaign and through social media channels will increase awareness and interest.

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