

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF AHEPA THESSALONIKI UNIVERSITY GENERAL HOSPITAL'S MEDICAL LIBRARY: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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Abstract: *This study delves into a comparative analysis of two distinct time periods in which identical quantitative and qualitative research was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of the Medical Library at Thessaloniki General Hospital AHEPA in Greece. The research seeks to identify the library's capacity to serve its intended purposes and users effectively.*

Specialized libraries, particularly in the realm of medical and hospital libraries, play a pivotal role in providing access to essential information and scientific resources for healthcare professionals and individuals with an interest in medical science. Moreover, they extend support to those who may lack direct access to computers, facilitating both work-related tasks and internet usage.

The survey comprises two major sections: the first section is dedicated to collecting demographic data from the participants, while the second section encompasses inquiries related to the utilization of the Hospital Medical Library and the perspectives of its users.

The research was conducted by disseminating questionnaires to users of the Hospital Library, authorized by the Hospital Scientific Council, spanning a period of approximately two academic semesters. During the first semester, questionnaires were administered to 102 Medical Library users, and during the subsequent semester, the sample size consisted of 100 users, amounting to a total of 202 respondents.

Keywords: *Medical Library, Hospital Library, User Perspectives, Access to Information, Comparative Analysis*

1.1 Introduction

The present study aims to explore similarities and differences between two time periods in which the same quantitative and qualitative research was conducted, regarding the possibilities of the Medical Library of the Thessaloniki General Hospital AHEPA (Greece) to serve the purposes and purposes operates.

A key objective of a Special Library, such as a Medical / Hospital Library, is to provide access to information and scientific resources to the Hospital Scientific Staff and to anyone interested in Medical Science. At the same time, it supports the use of computers for people who cannot directly access computers, either for work or for the use of the Internet.

The first section of the questions concerns the demographics of the sample, while the second section contains the questions about the use of the Hospital Medical Library and the views of its users about it. The entirety of the research relied upon the distribution of questionnaires to users of the Hospital Library, with the approval of the Hospital Scientific Council, and lasted approximately two (2) semesters, with the distribution of questionnaires during the first semester to 102 users of the Medical Library, while the second semester the sample consisted of 100 users, totaling 202 people.

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It should be mentioned that no funds were spent by the AHEPA University Hospital for this research, while the study participants' personal data were protected as their participation was voluntary and their data remained anonymous.

1.2 Demographics

Sex_1.1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Men	18	18,2	18,2	18,2
Women	81	81,8	81,8	100,0
Total	99	100,0	100,0	

The library users are 80% female and 20% male. This percentage remains the same from the previous count, indicating that there is a consistency as far as the gender that prefers to use the library for its research is concerned.

Age_1.2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Private College (IEK)	7	7,1	7,1	7,1
Technical School	47	47,5	47,5	54,5
BA	27	27,3	27,3	81,8
MA/PHD	18	18,2	18,2	100,0
Total	99	100,0	100,0	

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-25	30	30,3	30,3	30,3
26-35	13	13,1	13,1	43,4
36-45	26	26,3	26,3	69,7
46-55	24	24,2	24,2	93,9

56-65	6	6,1	6,1	100,0
Total	99	100,0	100,0	

The age groups mostly comprising the library's users are 18 - 25 (30%), 36 - 45 (26%) and 46 - 55 (24%). In this case, we can clearly see that younger people and especially students who have started their academic year and need resources for their lessons and work consist the larger part of the individuals utilizing the library.

Level of Education 1.3

The majority of library users have graduated or are in the process of obtaining a degree from a university or a Technical School (TEI) at 47%. The percentage is slightly down from the previous time (52%) while postgraduate degree holders have increased from 18% to 27%.

Occupation 1.4

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Doctors	16	16,2	16,2	16,2
Non Medical Staff	8	8,1	8,1	24,2
Nurses	39	39,4	39,4	63,6
Teaching Staff	3	3,0	3,0	66,7
Scientific Partners	3	3,0	3,0	69,7
Students	30	30,3	30,3	100,0
Total	99	100,0	100,0	

The two main categories of occupations using the library are nurses at 39% and students at 30%. This paints a different picture from the previous time as, although nurses remained in first place in terms of library use, students at the beginning of the academic year began coming to the library and using its services.

Use of Library 2.1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	84	84,8	87,5	87,5
No	12	12,1	12,5	100,0
Total	96	97,0	100,0	
Missing System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

85% of respondents said they regularly use the library and its services. The rate is very high compared to the previous period which was close to 60%. This shows that regular library users have increased compared to the summer period

Reasons of not using the Library 2.1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of time	9	9,1	9,4	96,9
Unawareness of its existence	3	3,0	3,1	100,0
Total	96	97,0	100,0	
Missing System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

The main reasons why people did not visit the library were lack of time due to work and unawareness of its existence. Lack of time was also the main reason for not visiting the library in the previous period.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Minimal	2	2,0	2,1	2,1
Adequate	14	14,1	14,4	16,5
Large	40	40,4	41,2	57,7
Very large	41	41,4	42,3	100,0
Total	97	98,0	100,0	
Valid Missing System	2	2,0		
Total	99	100,0		

Library users find that the library provides documented information to a large extent or to a very large extent at 83%. The percentage is higher than the previous time (close to 70%) indicating that library services have improved in this area.

To what extent does it provide specialized bibliography?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Minimal	3	3,0	3,1	3,1
Adequate	20	20,2	20,6	23,7
Large	50	50,5	51,5	75,3
Very large	24	24,2	24,7	100,0
Total	97	98,0	100,0	
Valid Missing System	2	2,0		
Total	99	100,0		

Library users find that the library provides specialized bibliography on medical issues to a large extent or to a very large extent 75%. The percentage is higher than last time (close to 65%) indicating that library services have improved in this area.

Should it be linked to Continuing Education?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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No	2	2,0	2,1	2,1
Yes	95	96,0	97,9	100,0
Valid Total	97	98,0	100,0	
Missing System	2	2,0		
Total	99	100,0		

The overwhelming percentage of respondents (96%) believe that Continuing Education should be linked to the library's goals and services. The rate remained the same as it did the previous time, showing the public's consistent view of continuing education.

How modern do you consider the technological equipment to be?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Minimally	4	4,0	4,2	4,2
Moderately	21	21,2	21,9	26,0
Quite	53	53,5	55,2	81,3
Highly	18	18,2	18,8	100,0
Valid Total	96	97,0	100,0	
Missing System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

The percentage of the question about the adequacy of the library's technological equipment is that it is quite modern at 53%. The percentage has increased compared to the previous investigation, which was 44% in the same class. A similar increase is also seen in the "Highly" class from 11% to 18%.

Has the choice of source material met your needs?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	1	1,0	1,1	1,1
Minimally	1	1,0	1,1	2,1
Moderately	17	17,2	17,9	20,0
Valid Adequately	45	45,5	47,4	67,4
Considerably	31	31,3	32,6	100,0
Total Missin	95	96,0	100,0	
System g Total	4	4,0		
	99	100,0		

76% of the Library's users found that the selection of sources satisfied their research needs. The rate is slightly higher than the previous period which was close to 68%.

To what extent is library user education necessary?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	1	1,0	1,0	1,0
Minimal	6	6,1	6,2	7,2
Moderate	6	6,1	6,2	13,4
Large	37	37,4	38,1	51,5
Very large	47	47,5	48,5	100,0
Valid Total	97	98,0	100,0	
Missing System	2	2,0		
Total	99	100,0		

Library users find that the library provides documented information to a large extent or to a very large extent, reaching up to 84%. The percentage is higher than last time (close to 76%) indicating that the library's training services for its users have improved.

To what extent is participation in AHEPA educational activities necessary?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Minimally	4	4,0	4,1	4,1
Moderately	8	8,1	8,2	12,4
Valid Sufficien	33	33,3	34,0	46,4
tly	52	52,5	53,6	100,0
Very large	97	98,0	100,0	
Total	2	2,0		
Missing System				
Total	99	100,0		

The users of the library consider that the library should be involved in the various activities of AHEPA in relation to education to a sufficiently large extent or to a very large extent at 85%. The percentage is equal to the previous time (close to 84%) indicating that users have a concise opinion as far as education is concerned.

To what extent is providing guidance necessary for the completion of a scientific work?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	1	1,0	1,0	1,0
Minimal	2	2,0	2,1	3,1
Valid Moderate	13	13,1	13,5	16,7
Missing Large	45	45,5	46,9	63,5

Very large	35	35,4	36,5	100,0
Total	96	97,0	100,0	
System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

Library users find that they need to be instructed in order to be able to complete a scientific work to a sufficiently large or very large extent at 80%. The percentage is equal to the previous time (close to 82%) indicating that users retained a concise opinion on the completion of scientific work.

Priority of needs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	8	8,1	8,2	8,2
Basic functions	45	45,5	46,4	54,6
Access to	13	13,1	13,4	68,0
databases	16	16,2	16,5	84,5
Use, Internet	15	15,2	15,5	100,0
browsing Valid	97	98,0	100,0	
Electronic magazines	2	2,0		
Use of the	99	100,0		
catalog Total				
Missing System				
Total				

The main reason users visit the library is access to databases at 45%. This is because a lot of information in the databases requires payment to be accessed, whose pricing can be prohibitive for an individual. In the previous survey, the rate of access to databases was 35% and the use of the automated library catalog was up to 29%. **How sufficient is the library staff ?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	1	1,0	1,0	1,0
Moderately	7	7,1	7,3	8,3
Valid Very	38	38,4	39,6	47,9
much	50	50,5	52,1	100,0
Greatly	96	97,0	100,0	
Total	3	3,0		
Missing System	99	100,0		
Total				

Library users find that the library staff is sufficient at meeting the needs of its users to a large extent or to a very large extent 88%. The percentage is higher than the previous time (close to 72%) indicating that users have been more satisfied with the library staff.

Did the library staff reduce your time searching for information;

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	16	16,2	16,7	16,7
Minimally	6	6,1	6,3	22,9
Moderately	9	9,1	9,4	32,3
Valid Quite	27	27,3	28,1	60,4
Very much	38	38,4	39,6	100,0
Total	96	97,0	100,0	
Missing System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

Library users consider the help they received from staff to complete their work to a large extent or to a very large extent up to 65%. The percentage is higher than the previous time (close to 55%) indicating that users consider the staff well-trained and ready to assist with their needs. However, it should be noted that there is also a declining percentage (from 20% to 16%) who feel that the staff is not helpful at all in aiding individuals on their work. **How effective is the Library's use?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Moderate	9	9,1	9,4	9,4
Enough	36	36,4	37,5	46,9
Valid Very much	51	51,5	53,1	100,0
Total	96	97,0	100,0	
Missing System	3	3,0		
Total	99	100,0		

In the penultimate question, library users consider the library to be effective and fulfill its objectives to a sufficiently large extent or at a very large extent amounting to 87%. The percentage is higher than the previous time (close to 70%) indicating that users view the library as a strong ally aiding them in completing their tasks.

In the last question, participants were given the opportunity to express their views on improving the library and its services. Some of the most interesting suggestions were:

- Creation of a mobile library for patients with fixed hours and informing patients about its operation - Creation an reading room
- Creation of a larger library space
- Purchase and installation of more PCs
- Frequent renewal of subscriptions to scientific journals
- Extension of opening hours to late afternoon
- Signage in various parts of the hospital informing individuals about the existence of the library
- Enhancement of the database with current conferences around the world
- Creation of a separate section in the library containing old Medicine books

1. 3 Conclusions

The present study is mainly an evolution of a previous one conducted throughout the summer. Compared to the previous study, the sample used for the extraction of results was different. This sample also included a number of young people, mainly students, who began visiting the library at the beginning of the academic year to study and prepare papers for their school.

Students, being a regular portion of the visiting public of the library can form a more coherent view of how the library operates and how it is evaluated. The evaluation exhibited that library visitors were more satisfied with the sources found and the adequate information in the bibliography. At the same time, the Library Staff is proven to be helpful and aid users in completing their tasks productively and in a more time-efficient manner.

As far as the disadvantages of the library are concerned, small spaces, the lack of reading rooms, the limited number of computers as well as the limited hours of operation have been stated as the main issues. These disadvantages can be overcome by increasing the funds for upgrading the library.