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## LIBRARIES GOOD PRACTICE EXCHANGE

Librarians: Markéta Karpecká and Verónica Millas Rico

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The whole **Let's read again** initiative is targeted at students and pupils in the 12-15 age range, possibly a little below and above that. It is an international project created by 5 schools from various countries (Spain, Denmark, Germany, Bulgaria and Czechia) and their teachers and students. Its primary objective is to motivate, in a new way, students to reading, which is an activity that is very beneficial to personality and brain development and also to students' later life generally. All the activities must be conducted in English, because the students come from different countries. This also helps motivate them to study the foreign language and reinforces in them the belief that studying one is beneficial and important. Diversity of the participants also ensures that the whole project is strongly multicultural.

Given that the initiative is all about reading, librarians from the schools' home districts were also invited to participate. Specifically, Veronika Millas from Biblioteca Bon Pastor and Markéta Karpecká from **Library of Třinec** joined the project. Their contribution was to share the experience with working with children and young people, as well as their ability to motivate these people to read.

## MARKÉTA KARPECKÁ (Librarian from Library of Trinec)



I travelled to Barcelona as a Czech librarian along with a teacher from Nýdek elementary school (Vlasta Khabibulin) to attend a meeting about the whole project, which took place from 19th to 23rd of September 2017. I also visited the Bon Pastor library in Barcelona and met the employees, who shared with me the mission of the library and also the basic activities they, as a library, organize to encourage young people and children to read, be it in school or outside of it.

Seeing Czech and Spanish library side by side was extremely informative and inspiring. The Spanish one is more socially oriented. Social services office is in the same building and it shares its data with the library. The main objective of the library is social inclusion of local citizens and the effort to make their living standard better by offering them various services, courses and other educational opportunities. It offers a wide variety of services, especially for children, where lectures in schools as well as in the library itself are possible. The courses the children can attend include for example video editing or song lyrics composition.

The Třinec library also focuses on education of children and young people in the children's department and in Mklub - Club for young people. Both departments cooperate very tightly with elementary and high schools and they offer a wide variety of lectures. These focus on critical thinking, independence, text understanding, creativity and other useful skills.

There are of course other activities that the library offers.

The children's department organizes events for children under 15 years of age.

The MRKni - Máme Rádi Knížky (We Like Books) - club is for children under 6 years. Its members meet (of course with their parents) once a month and they take part in guided reading, working with text and follow-up creative activities.

The next stage is Čteme (si) spolu (We Read Together). This project also aims at children of preschool age and its objective, in cooperation with kindergartens in the town, is to encourage children to read and also parents to read to their children. We want to help building good and strong family relationships through reading together and reading

quality literature, similarly to the Whole Czechia Reads To Children project. Our project works through regular visits of librarians in the kindergartens. The children receive a paper with a story and a simple exercise. They should, together with their parents, read the story and do the exercise. They read their solutions, read the story again and talk about it during the next visit. The children receive books as a reward during a ceremony at the end of the year.

The club for children from 7 to 13 years is called Knihomolík (Little Bookworm) and its main objective is for the children to establish a positive relationship to reading, books and the library in a playful manner. At these meetings they read together, do all kinds of creative activities and talk with the librarians about all sorts of things that may interest them. However the main topic is always books.

We have a fantasy club for children aged 10 to 13 which introduces them to interesting books from the fantasy and science-fiction genre. This club includes also readers, at which the project Let's read again aims - students aged 12-15 years. These children belong to a boundary group of readers who can go to the Mklub - young people department.

Mklub is not only a library. It is a place where young people can spend their free time by reading, playing board games or meeting friends. This department specializes in fantasy and science fiction literature, but it also includes compulsory reading books, comic books and board games. It also organizes a wide variety of events, such as regular board games sessions, movie projections, thematic "overnighters" or three day small conventions such as TriCon or Bookcon, which focus on sci-fi or fantasy.

There are also volunteers - young people from 14 years who want to help the library, the city and their surroundings. A group of volunteers meets once a week, they organize their own events and help with many of the library's projects and events.

We can, among other projects, also mention Language coffee where people meet with volunteers from all around the world or Library Alive - meetings with inspiring personae.

The library also organizes meeting with travellers or Snowfilmfest, both of which can be interesting to many young people and lead them to the library.

We believe that a good role model close to a person or a positive influence of a friend can also be an incentive to start reading. If a young person belongs to a social group where many people read, it is quite likely that he or she will also start reading. When we allow young people to go to the library and just be in a place with many books, we give them an option to just pick one and start reading, to get used to the idea that reading is neither boring nor embarrassing and that it can, in fact, be quite cool. Commonplace here is also the friendliness and helpfulness of librarians and other library employees. Children know that they are welcome here as long as they follow the rules we set for

them. They also meet the librarians during the lectures in schools or the library, which helps them feel more comfortable and they don't have to be afraid of visiting the unknown, theoretically hostile environment of the library.

I, personally, found going to Spain and visiting the library, getting to know its concept, possibilities and management style very informative. I have gained a lot of inspiration and information. I was very excited by the Spanish and Catalan culture and am very grateful for this opportunity. It was also very interesting for me to meet teachers and students from other countries, for example Hungary, and I am very glad that I took part in this project.

### **Verónica Millas Rico (Librarian of Biblioteca Bon Pastor, Barcelona)**



**Bon Pastor Library**, in Barcelona, also participates in this European project, “Let’s read again”, of reading promotion amongst teenagers. The exchange experience has been very enriching and a good chance for the library, and also from a personal point of view, because it has been possible to share ways of working, to get to know other projects and initiatives that help promote reading.

As Markéta says, Bon Pastor Library has a strong social orientation. That’s why we have a socio-educational project since 2004. The geographical situation, surrounded by Industrial estates, a river and the rail ways, and a certain isolation (the subway station opened in 2011), turned it into a closed neighbourhood without much contact with the rest of the city. The town planning (small houses which were basically self-built), the so-called “Casas baratas” (Cheap houses), and high rates of immigration shape the character of the neighbourhood: interculturality (there is an important gipsy community), vindictive and associative tradition, impoverishment (there is a high rate of unemployment) and

diversity.

All these features have turned in a harsh reality for many citizens in the neighbourhood, especially for young and children. This is why there have been identified situations of exclusion and social difficulty like school absenteeism, dropout or children's poverty.

It's in this context where the **socio-educational project** of the library is born, making us the first library in Barcelona which incorporates the role of the educator in the staff. In the beginning, due to the conflicts generated by bad use and bad behaviour in the library when it opened in 2004, the educator had to work on the basic principles of peaceful coexistence and respect inside the library with some children, while providing the library staff with resources and tools to manage conflicts and be able thus to provide a quality service to the patrons.

Nowadays, more than a decade later, we are working to create opportunities, through education, for all those people in social and educational need. We have been creating a project, and still do, in cooperation and involvement with other territory agents. This socio-educational project aimed at children and young people received the first Public Library and Social Compromise Prize in 2015 awarded by the Fundación Biblioteca Social (Social Library Foundation).

But, how we carry out this project?

Our activities can be grouped in 3 basic lines of action:

**1) Reading promotion:** as a public library this is an essential goal, but in our case, we are aware that the future of our kids will be much more different if they achieve good levels of reading comprehension. Unfortunately we have no data to prove it but our experience tells us that a high number of young people over 16 suffer from functional literacy (for example in the magazine: they can't distinguish publicity from articles). That is why we focus on promoting reading from the earliest years.

**2) Networking:** the fact that there are many different associations in the neighbourhood is an advantage. We know that our goal: "create opportunities for children and young people" is an ambitious challenge, but it is shared by other agents (schools, social services, cultural associations...). We neither can nor want to do it alone.

**3) Socio-educational support:** the educator's role is essential to work hygiene habits, behaviour, etc. and to deal with conflictive situations that are likely to happen; but she has also a remarkable role to train the rest of library workers (giving us resources to face difficult situations). She does specially personalized work with children and young people to create the necessary ties to carry out the educational work.

Related with the reading promotion, we have an itinerary with several activities aimed at working the reading comprehension. This **reading itinerary** is formed by:

- **Llegim (Let's read).** For children from 7 to 9 years old. Starters' literacy activity. Aimed at children with literacy deficiencies. They meet once a week and they learn through game and talking. Sessions are run by a volunteer teacher.
- **A pas de lletra (Letter by letter).** For children from 8 to 12 years old. Children with reading comprehension difficulties. Weekly activity where children learn through didactic pieces and group dynamics.
- **Amics de lectura. (Reading friends).** Activity to promote reading and social cohesion. Aimed at all children.
- **Primeres lectures (First readings).** For children from 8 to 10 years old. Reading initiation activity. Aimed at children who are starting to read and comprehending what they read.
- **Lectures compartides (Shared readings).** For children from 8 to 10 years old. Reading promotion activity. Aimed at children who comprehend what they read.
- **School visits.** This is one of the most efficient actions to acquaint the little ones with the library and promote how to use it. Once a week all the children from the early stages come to the library with their teachers; we read them tales related to the topics they are working at school, we offer them workshops and, above all, we start to build a relationship of trust with them that years later will be essential to carry out the educational project in the library.

**Other projects related also with children and reading promotion:**

- **Descobrim (Let's discover).** This is an initiative of the library to approach reading to children. It is aimed at children from 9 to 12 years old. It is held from January till May. Every month it is dedicated to a different issue, an attractive one, with the possibility to do a small workshop or an exhibition of objects related with it. The sessions are run by a professional artist who shows the books of the monthly issue while doing related actions, readings, play rolling or games.
- **Joc de llibres (Game of books).** ) It is a reading promotion project that tries to familiarise kids with the reading experience, to help them improve their writing skills, and stimulating social cohesion amongst infants. Each group has to take part in 6 workshops with a different theme in each session; every kid will start a correspondence with another child from other school/groups and there is a final meeting where they can get to know each other.  
We detected a serious problem of functional illiteracy in our children and young

people; that is why in the recent years we have made a great effort to improve this situation. We consider this as a social problem, beyond reading promotion, since their risk of exclusion and vulnerability increases. We therefore think it's essential to work together with educational centres, social services and other agents related with this line of action.

- **Menjallibres (Book eaters).** It is a reading promotion project organized by the public Barcelona Library Consortium and the public Education Consortium of the city. Two times a week, children from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of neighbourhood's primary schools come to the library accompanied by their families and with specialized trainers they do workshops and reading activities (individual readings, storytelling, booktrailers...). It is an activity that takes place outside the school timetable.

We also do activities to **promote reading amongst young and teenagers:**

- **Lectures dibuixades / Lectures animades / Ficció Jove** (Drawn readings / Animated readings / Young fiction): These are three regular workshops to promote reading, run by the library staff and aimed at children and teenagers from the community centre for children in the neighbourhood. The books and readings are adapted to each group according to their needs and hobbies. Drawn readings: for children ages 5 to 8 / Animated readings: ages 8 to 12 / Young fiction: From 12 years of age. In the Young fiction activity the library staff show books and new arrivals to the participants and they comment and share their impressions.
- **Protagonista Jove (Young protagonist).** It is a prize organized by a reading promotion entity in Catalonia, the Catalan Council for Children's and Young People Books. They suggest eight books in Catalan, four per each age group, that are presented in all high schools and libraries in Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Valencia Country. The goal is that as many kids as possible read the selected books, that the students themselves form a jury at each school or library and that they show and expose the stories they have enjoyed so they choose what they think it is the best book. This is a project to try and give voice to young people and teenagers by allowing them the opportunity to play as a jury. This action tries to go beyond the school, the library or the reading club.
- **Debat a bat. Llegir i llegir-se (Let's debate. Read and read ourselves).** It is an activity for all the public libraries in the province of Barcelona created to discover issues and authors based on the use of illustrated albums and several activities in each session. There are three sessions per year at each library. The goals are to

use the illustrated albums as tools to create new ways of reading and writing, to develop the entrepreneur spirit, the participation and critical spirit amongst the young ones. And this activity also tries to create a community of practice for professionals so we can explore new strategies, tools and methods focused on the young public.

- **School visits for secondary school.** These school visits are organized in collaboration with those teachers that rely on the library as another teaching and learning resource for them. But not just with all teachers and secondary groups.

**Regarding the young people and teenagers, we are in process to improve the reading promotion activities aimed at this group.**

Other experiences of reading promotion for young ones in the public libraries of Barcelona city are:

- **Booktubers.** These are young people who create and upload videos on Youtube to recommend books. It is a new prescriptive task, new and more collaborative, that has on its basis the use of technologies and social media, so widespread these days amongst this audience.
- **Reading guide about comic.** The Vallcarca-Penitents library has created a guide on social comic where this kind of books are suggested as resources for the teachers to work on complex issues like wars, conflicts, movements and social struggles...
- **Youthful reading club.** They are held in two libraries in the city: Les Roquetes and Xavier Benguerel. They are organized to approach reading to young people in an informal and relaxed way.
- **Easy reading club.** In Zona Nord library. It is a club with books with short stories and texts adapted for people with reading difficulties. It is aimed at users with learning disorders, poor schooling, people who has recently come to the country, people with senility or with mental or sensory disorders. But everyone is welcome too.
- **American Space.** It is a collaboration project between the United States of America Consulate, the libraries in Barcelona and the Sant Andreu district in the city. It is a physical space in the hall of Ignasi Iglésias – Can Fabra library with technological equipment, such as Apple computer equipment, laptops, 3D printer or Lego Mindstrom. In this space activities are carried out to promote technology and informal and personal learning. Especially aimed at secondary or

high school students and university students, but also to anyone interested in this field.

Finally, I would like to say that for me it has been a very positive and rewarding experience to have the chance to participate in this European project to promote reading amongst teenagers, "Let's read again". It has been a gift to be able to live together with Markéta, first some days at my home in Barcelona and later on at her place in Trinec (Czech Republic). And to be able to get to know a public library like the one in Trinec, the professionals and the work they do, so close and focused on their community. I got some ideas and inspirations.

And I feel very thankful for the chance to share some days with the group of teenagers and the teachers from the Bon Pastor School in Barcelona. And I also feel thankful for the opportunity to get to know the school at Nydek (Czech Republic), their pupils and the teachers, so warming. I feel lucky for the experience. Thank you very much for counting on us for this project.