



Reading and literacy – a way to the social inclusive library

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Abstract:

Contemporary, information society affects libraries in both positive and negative ways. As a parallel process with computerization and technology growth, there is an ongoing process of inequalities, unemployment, social polarization, poverty and pauperization in both undeveloped and most developed countries as well. Public library activities in promoting and fostering reading and literacy/literacies among social marginalised groups of citizens could be strong tools in supporting their inclusion in the local community and society in general.

The aim of this paper is to present the practice of the Public Library in Koprivnica, Croatia in spreading equal opportunities in access to information and knowledge despite the handicaps and/or social position. The base of this concept lies in the library strategy expressed in slogans «Literacy for all» and «Library open to everyone», as well as cooperation, collaboration and partnership with numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations taking care about Roma people, the blind and the visually impaired, persons with mental or physical handicap, unemployed and elderly. The main feature of reading and literacy activities taking place in the library are an integrative approach that gather marginalised and non-marginalised, as well as raising local community awareness to the needs of socially marginalised.

Introduction

Structural and organizational transformations, which are characteristics for a contemporary, information society, affect today's libraries in both positive and negative ways. As a parallel process with computerization and technology growth, there is an ongoing process of

inequalities, unemployment, social polarization, poverty and pauperization in both developing and most developed countries as well. Libraries take new stance, new roles and strategies, concerning reading and literacy, in order to provide better education of higher quality to help people with growing competitiveness in labor market, their own need for lifelong learning and better quality of everyday lives.

One of the key problems in digital society is a gap between people with and without access to new, modern technologies and sources of knowledge (*digital gap*); also, there is a problem of weakening identity of local communities, which results in lesser social participation and lack of involvement in common problems and issues (Hansson, 2009, 3). In this context, shining potential of public libraries comes into focus, as public spaces for actual, physical presence of people, their gathering, meetings, primarily drawn to use programs and services offered in promotion of reading and literacy in the widest sense. Public libraries have special place in library systems of individual countries, as democracy institutions *par excellence*, because of their openness to the widest range of people and deep roots in the local communities. Now, there is a need to strengthen the role of public libraries in today's information society by improving social integration, cohesion, inclusion and the sense of belonging to a civil society.

The aim of this paper is to present the public library's reading and literacy activities as a way to social inclusion and integration. Providing equal opportunities to access the information and knowledge sources, despite the handicaps and/or social positions, will be shown on the case study of the Public Library in Koprivnica, Croatia.

1. Reading and literacy: Required competences in contemporary society

Today, literacy definition is much wider than it used to be, due to complexity of contemporary information society. The new, digital surrounding does not require literacy, but literacies in plural, as many new competencies are required- not only reading, writing, spoken language skills, calculation...but also use of computers, the worldwide web, and other forms of IT and communication technology. Due to heavy influence and importance of technology today, we now speak of *transliteracy* (ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media beyond and above written or printed) and of *transliteracy generation* (Andretta, 2008). We speak of *multimodal literacy*, closely tied to interactive web technologies, especially Web 2.0 and learning by participation (Horizons, 2008).

However, we speak of reading and literacy today also as the foundations for contemporary knowledge, skills and abilities required for integration into contemporary digital society. Capabilities to recognize quality information we can trust as authentic and credible, or interpretation of complex data we receive unfiltered, unstructured and unlimited form, is ultimately important, now more than ever, as tools for successful completion of a job or tasks set before us (Spiranec, Banek Zorica, 2008, 127). This is why information literacy¹,

¹ Social changes, namely, progressive growth of information and idea of lifelong learning in 1970s brought about the term *information literacy*. The term is attributed to Paul Zurkowski, who believed that individuals should acquire information literacy in order to survive in information society. Special knowledge and skills are required, such as finding information, access, evaluation, assessment and efficient use of information. These are

functional literacy² and computer literacy, as well as the number of other forms of literacy – family, multimedia, multicultural, etc. – are important preventive factors of social exclusion. Factors of this deprivation can be generational, or rooted in poor financial background, poverty, low quality education, as well as different physical or mental disabilities.

2. Terms and definitions of social exclusion

Although some scientists believe that exclusion is just a different name for poverty³, social exclusion has much more to it than just material dimension, or “the lack of resources”. This is exclusion from various forms of social life: job, education, housing, social ties, respect, etc. Exclusion from one area can lead to exclusion in another (so-called spiral of insecurity). Struggle against poverty aims at redistribution of resources, while social inclusion tends to provide something beyond plain redistribution of wealth, namely, to provide social integration and participation. Therefore, a conceptual transfer from poverty to social exclusion is meant to be a change of perspective – from static to dynamic approach; from single-dimensional to multi-dimensional approach; from distribution to relation matters; from individual, home resources to resources of local community; from continuum of inequality to social integration and participation (Sucur, 2004, 33).

The actual number of dimensions in social exclusion varies, from author to author; from one research to another. Some authors have more, some less of these dimensions or areas of social exclusion: economic, social, cultural, family dimension, etc. There are great differences among countries in defining content or approach to social exclusion. They reflect different theoretical, political and ideological perspectives and discourses (i.e. French republicanism, Anglo-Saxon liberalism, European social democracy). Each paradigm finds different causes of exclusion, having in mind different concept of society and desirable models of social integration. The term *social exclusion* is, thus, a convenient tool to thread across different paradigms. It enables an easy transition from one worldview to another. An advantage of social exclusion concept is in the fact that it draws together material and socio-psychological aspects of living standards. (Sucur, 2004, 34).

Social exclusion, as a term, appears in sociology literature in 1970s; from 1990s onwards, it is included in documents related to social politics of the EU and its member states. Although the term is relatively new, the problem it describes has been known for a long time. Each society has the weak, and the ones who need help: jobless, poor, homeless, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, impaired and with special needs, minority groups; particularly vulnerable are children with disabilities, deprived families’ children, single parent families

transgeneric and transdisciplinary competences, not necessarily tied to ICT, however, these skills provide a key to rebuilding and upgrade of own knowledge and skills, the right selection of valuable knowledge and its use and application (Spiranec, Banek Zorica, 2008, 21).

² According to the sociologist Manuel Castells, functional illiteracy puts into motion mechanisms of inability and disadvantage: failure to find a job, poverty and finally, to exclusion from society. It relies more and more on minimum capabilities of decoding a language. Functional deficiency is more widespread in developed societies than these societies care to admit. The ignorance and failure of writing, reading, calculation, receiving written instructions leads to functional illiteracy, which is the main obstacle to integration with the formal labor market, at any level, and in strong correlation with poorly paid jobs and poverty (Castells, 2003, 167).

³ Arguments that the term *social exclusion* is just an euphemism for poverty is linked to the fact that at the end of 20th and beginning of 21st century, many politicians and governments of developed countries avoid using the term *poverty*, as it represents a symbol of (their) incompetence, a failing governing and models of welfare state they support (Sucur, 2004, 33).

and the young. Age, gender, race, living area in a specific environment/specific circumstances...these all can be reasons for social exclusion (Horvat, 2004).

3. Social exclusion in information society

As a process, parallel with technology development, structural and organizational transformations, typical of information age and the network society, there is an ongoing growth of social injustice, polarization and poverty. According to the sociologist Castells, inequality, poverty and social exclusion could be deemed a probable structural product of trends incorporated in informational capitalism (Castells, 2003, 133). Social and other consequences of such informational capitalism happen not only in developing societies of Africa, South America, but also in most developed countries as well. Parallel studies show similar trends (but, with different levels) in poverty growth in Western Europe and the United States, and in the United Kingdom in particular. Castells says there is a harsh inequality between higher and lower classes of society as a general trend, but it is particularly rootless in the United States of America. A conglomerate of dominant tendencies of informational capitalism, inequality and poverty in the end leads to the process of social exclusion, transparently seen in the ghettos of the US cities, with growing discrimination and spatial segregation (Ibid. 142).

Castells calls it the Fourth World, existing literally in every country, as “numerous black holes of social exclusion”. Political breakdown of welfare state increases social exclusion. The rise of the Fourth World and the rise of computerized capitalism are inseparable. Many of these black holes have an ongoing reproduction of social exclusion and inflicting additional wounds to those, already excluded (Ibid. 166).

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens believes, that the term of social exclusion is now being used by sociologists to speak of new sources of inequality in contemporary society. Social exclusion refers to the ways individuals can become separated from the full participation in society in greater sense of the word. This is a wider, more complex term than a subclass. It is more precise, emphasizing *processes* – mechanisms of exclusion, that in Great Britain (engulfed in deprivation and exclusion on a massive scale) provides an efficient tool to explain problems of contemporary society. It distinguishes between economic, political and social exclusions (Giddens, 2007, 323).

With Croatia’s pre-accession processes before joining the European Union, this concept has growing popularity in theoretical debates, considerations and research, primarily under the influence of the Council of Europe and the European Union projects and documents.

According to the *Human Development Report Croatia 2006*, the most fragile groups in Croatian society are people with elementary school (graduates or dropouts), people aged 65+, women and jobless young people. The same report emphasizes that social exclusion in Croatia threatens the people with disabilities, long-term and permanently unemployed people, different problems in families- single parent and large families, families with small children, minority ethnic groups – Roma and Serbian returning exiles, institutionalized population and senior citizens without income. Based on this, the young are a group with multiple threats and

insecurities, with prolonged and building disadvantages (the young school dropouts have a hard time finding jobs; they are poor; hence, their worsened housing and living standards; hence, they are excluded from a number of cultural events, places, etc.). Due to complexity of these problems, it is extremely important to involve all sectors of society in resolving them. There is a need to improve subsidies for transport, decrease the cost of academic education, organizing free cultural events for the young, building easy access ramps for the handicapped in wheelchairs, etc. (Neumreženi: Lica socijalne isključenosti u Hrvatskoj: Izvješće o društvenom razvoju, Hrvatska 2006. /*Outside of Social Network: Faces of Social Exclusion in Croatia: Report on Social Development Croatia 2006*/.

4. Factors of social inclusion and concept of lifelong learning

Manuel Castells points out that education is the key, decisive resource, value added work in the new economy. However, groups with low income, immigrants and minorities have significantly fewer chances for a quality education at all levels of education, especially high school and university levels. Since higher education is key to job advancement, there's a better chance for increase of inequality (Castells, *ibid*, 138-139).

It is a fact, that social exclusion is a huge problem in contemporary society, threatening its very existence and safety. Social policies of the Western European countries, that used to have passive welfare are being replaced by active ones, aiming at including individuals into the society, if they educate themselves, keep themselves informed and if they participate.

The concept of lifelong learning is a key to new policy that wants to encourage inclusion into the society in the manner, suitable for individuals, and in the way and method they choose themselves. Lifelong learning enables people to re-training to obtain different qualifications, enables easier job mobility, strengthens and builds up self awareness, and increases activities of an individual in the community (Horvat, *ibid*, 101-102).

5. Libraries' potentials in social inclusion

In information science context, libraries are seen as places for storage, search and dissemination of data. Information science does not deal with social dimension of libraries and does not raise questions of correlation between library work (information gathering, selection, dissemination) and quality of life. Therefore, we should ask the following question: can a library become socially engaged by reacting to social issues in its surrounding – to unemployment, problems of the disabled and the elderly, to different types of discrimination and intolerance? Does the society recognize the influence of libraries in problems' prevention?

One of the answers to deepened social exclusion, as a problem of contemporary society, is pointing out the library's potential as a public service. The primary contribution of libraries in social inclusion of vulnerable social groups is based on the platform of human, equal right to information. Such a task is primarily founded on UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1997).

Beside equal inclusion in the local community and the society in general, public libraries try to act in accordance with international documents⁴, that have recognized changes within society since 1990s and those offering solutions to the problems. Changes in discourse are seen on terminology levels too – instead of *library*, commonly used phrase is *library services*.

Since 2003, in Croatian libraries there has been talk on the role of public libraries in social inclusion, highlighting the context of exclusion from information society⁵. However, unlike some other EU countries, like Great Britain, which in 1999 brought a national resolution titled *Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries* (1999), Croatian strategic documents do not mention library social inclusion potentials in helping citizens join and participating in the information society⁶.

Nevertheless, many Croatian public libraries have individual initiatives to promote libraries, especially the public libraries, as places of social inclusion.

Here is an example, a case study of the Public library “Fran Galovic” in Koprivnica.

6. Case study: Public library “Fran Galovic” in Koprivnica

Public library “Fran Galovic” in Koprivnica is a medium-sized Croatian library, serving the area of town Koprivnica with 32 thousand inhabitants and Koprivnica-Krizevci County with population of 122 thousand. It is situated in the northwestern, industrially most developed part of the country. The Library has 22 employees in total (14 of them being professional staff). The organizational structure includes departments and services for children, adults, science department, magazine and newspapers reading room, mobile library, purchase and processing, county development service and administrative/technical department. It has 8,5 thousand registered members, nearly 139 thousand media, 110 subscriptions to periodicals, and 125 thousand visits per year, about 170 reading and literacy programmes per year. Library space is 1058 m² (680 m² space for end users). Wireless Internet is free of charge and accessible everywhere within the Library. It has 37 PCs (17 of them for end users). It is the only public library in entire country with free membership for the town residents.

The Library’s moderate social inclusion is stated in preamble – its mission, its vision and the values. The Library acts as a local community’s cultural and information multimedia center that supports education, lifelong learning and creative leisure time activities. Its strategy has been expressed with the slogans “*Literacy for all*” and “*Libraries open to everyone*”. Its

⁴ Some of the documents are: UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, Council of Europe Guidelines for Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, Libraries and Intellectual Freedom, The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom, Public Library: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development.

⁵ Important role in highlighting Croatian public libraries and their role in social inclusion was helped by two symposiums: Public libraries and problem of social exclusion, held in Osijek in 2003; and Third roundtable on free access to information ‘Free access to information for all’, held in Zagreb in 2003.

⁶ It is Strategy in Information and Communication Technology – Croatia in the 21st Century, 2001.

basic values are reflected on the variety of library funds and materials, services and offered programs, as well as promotion of civil society values.

Public library of Koprivnica aims at continuous education of librarians, developing a wide network of quality partnership with individuals, institutions, local community, domestically and abroad.

It is well known for its reading and literacy activities devoted to all age groups – from newborn babies (donating them and their mothers in hospital with picture books and brochures about importance of pre-reading activities to the later reading and writing skills) to the oldest. The most important and most frequent activities are dedicated to children and youth, as reading habits and interests, needed throughout entire life, are created and imprinted in the youngest age. The reading and literacy activities taking place in the Public Library in Koprivnica have been performed at workshops, courses, lectures, panels, book presentation, consultations with experts, etc.

On practical level, social inclusion means that library service providers must identify the physical, sensory, cultural and psychological barriers that prevent or deter disabled or deprived from using the service and take appropriate steps to remove or reduce them. Such understanding needs to function at all levels, particularly management (Kavanagh, Christensen Skoeld, 2005, 61).

In the local community, the Public Library of Koprivnica has identified target groups that require special attention. Inclusion services and programs are organized for print disabled, persons with physical or mental disabilities, Roma people, elderly and unemployed. They are provided in collaboration and partnership with non-governmental and governmental organizations. Their main feature is an integrative approach that gathers disabled and non-disabled citizens, socially marginalized and non-marginalized as well as raising local community awareness to the needs of social marginalized.

7. Impacts of reading and literacy activities for the disadvantaged and socially marginalized groups in local community

7.1 Programs for Roma people

Unlike other ethnic minorities, already integrated into the local community, most of Roma people, living in Koprivnica area, have kept their traditional ways of life in suburban areas. Often, their life is poised with high unemployment, poverty and occasional migrations. Solving problems of Roma community has a high priority in the local Agenda 21 of the town of Koprivnica (2006), one of the rare towns and cities in Croatia to tackle the problem and set up the Local Agenda. This is a long-term program of sustainable development, aiming at improving quality of life in the local community in the next 10 to 20 years. This document is created as a tool for the town administration and the local government in running the affairs of the town of Koprivnica. Koprivnica Agenda was planned and created by various local experts of different profiles, including the librarians. Roma ethnic minority issues were placed among the priorities in the further development of Koprivnica, organizing cultural

events with intent to include Roma children, getting to know others and building tolerance toward diversity- the different, the others, as well as tearing down prejudice of Roma population. All these are primary goals and tasks of Local Agenda 21 of the town Koprivnica. Within town limits, there are some 300 Roma residents.

In 2000, Koprivnica Library began with public rising awareness of Roma people needs, their language and culture, organizing exhibitions of its collections. From 2003 onwards, the Library has been celebrating April 8, World Roma Day, on annual basis, organizing various library activities (workshops, literary meetings) of integration character; these events gather both Roma and non-Roma children and teenagers. This aims at development of mutual trust, understanding and tolerance. Participants come from Roma and non-Roma children, students of elementary school lower and higher grades. Topics of such events include children's rights and their abuse, learning of Roma history, anthem, language, music and dance, poetry readings both in Roma and Croatian languages, telling folk tales from Roma tradition, meetings with writers who write about Roma people and their way of life, introducing librarians, their work, library services and mobile library. So far, all these programs have attracted some 500 Roma and non-Roma children, and carried out in collaboration with Roma associations and local elementary schools from Koprivnica and its vicinity. In 2007, the Library formed its Roma corner, with collection of some 130 books for children and adults (fiction and non-fiction, that deals with Roma themes and topics on different expert levels; the books are written in Roma language and a few other languages as well). Since there are very few books published in Roma language, this collection is a precious contribution to promotion of Roma cultural identity, but also a solid contribution to appreciation of the local community and society in general, for its nurture of cultural differences.

The local kindergarten teachers, school teachers and librarians of this county, working on daily basis with economically and socially deprived Roma children, do not have a forum of their own to exchange their experiences, good practices or simply link together with themselves, with other individuals, with Roma associations, with local authorities and local government. Having that in mind, in 2010 the Library initiated round table and workshop, with some 30 expert participants. The main goal is to improve life chance to Roma children through formal and informal ways of education, helping them to get involved in the life of local community and society in general. Roma children, coming from hard social and impoverished backgrounds, are deprived from the start, being in inferior position to their peers in classrooms. The major obstacle is Roma children not speaking Croatian language; the next problems are their lack of such living habits, experiences or comprehensions, that the school system considers previously acquired for all children, prior to their starting school. Roma children are being exposed to prejudice, stereotypes and stigma. Their difficult position in classroom is best described by this: „It is hard to end up in unfamiliar environment, with school teacher that does not understand you and nobody at home to help you with homework“.

Impacts. Positive effects from these programs are not visible immediately, but they are part of the small step strategy, expecting impacts in the long run.

The most obvious impact from these efforts is clearly visible in observing Roma children while they are at the Library; it was not the case before. From current 75 Roma children with membership card, a dozen of them stays at Children department of the Library on daily basis,

after the school is over for the day; here, in the Library, they wait for the bus to take them home; they spent the time off, playing on the computer, reading children's magazines, borrowing DVD movies, and sometimes the books too. The impact is visible in established connection between teachers who work with Roma children. Namely, it is not only deprived Roma children seeking help; it can be applied to professionals who care for them; they too have to make their own ways in finding out methods that work with Roma children, since these methods and techniques are not being systematically created or provided in regular curriculum. The effects and impacts are visible in acceptance of Roma children from their peers in kindergartens, schools and libraries. From initial gaps and avoidance, treatment of Roma children is changing in everyday situations, including the joint use of library resources. Besides, Roma children's coming to the Library is evidently helping them develop communication and social skills, as well as their self-confidence. These evident improvements perhaps come too slow, but remain visible for a longer period of time. The library is a stimulating place for informal learning. However, the Library is not staffed properly for a systematic approach to Roma children education. This remains a plan for the future, in close collaboration with experts and Roma associations.

7.2 Library service for the blind and visually impaired

Library service for the blind and visually impaired was implemented in 2006, thanks to a grant from European Union, as part of the program aimed at improving quality of social services in Croatia's local communities, through cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations (Sabolovic-Krajina, 2007). The Library has formed a special collection of library holdings (audio books on CD and audio tapes, tactile picture books, tactile toys, books on the blind, books in Braille, books with enlarged print, etc.), purchased special equipment – aids for the blind and visually impaired (PCs with additional equipment, Braille printer, electronic text enhancers for the visually impaired, MP3 players for talking books reproduction at the Library, transporter device for the multiple handicapped and/or people with walking disabilities). Other than enabling the visually impaired with access to the Library materials and computers with special devices (reading enhancers for those unable to read black print), the Library services are accompanied with numerous activities, especially in partnership with the local association of the blind and visually impaired. All age groups participate in the workshops – from pre-school children to the senior citizens with clear integration intent, as there are also participants with good eyesight. The programs include: meetings with notable writers, workshops to practice communication skills of the blind and visually impaired with people with perfect sight, introduction of specific library reading materials, ICT courses for the blind and visually impaired, Braille alphabet learning for the people who lost sight at later stage of life, the project *We are all different, yet alike* aiming to bring awareness of the needs of visually impaired and disadvantaged children at kindergartens to children with good eyesight, the project *Together in pursuit of knowledge* rising awareness of children in elementary school lower and higher grades to the needs of children with visual impairments and other disabilities, and finally, prevention of blindness. Coordinators of these education programs are external experts – rehabilitation experts, special educators, ophthalmologists, IT experts etc. The programs are being financed by the state and local governments through public tenders. Also, the Library organizes creative workshops for children and teenagers, sponsored by local companies. Library's co-participants include local kindergartens and elementary schools.

Impacts. Prior to introducing these services at the Library, print disabled individuals could not use their local public library, either because the Library had no materials, or technical equipment adapted to their special needs, or due to the isolated way of life they lived. The books in Braille alphabet and audio books were loaned from the Croatian library for the blind Zagreb, and were distributed via postal parcels. Since 2006, some thirty visually impaired and blind, from the Association of the blind and visually impaired (out of 200 members) have been regular members of the Library, active in talking book and other material loans, as well as in visits to workshops, forums, literary meetings with authors, together with sighted people. A research from 2007 revealed that Koprivnica citizens (both Library members and non-members) ranked the Library services and its social impact in the local community very highly, as No.3 in significance on the ranking list, out of 22 offered. Such a high ranking came right behind the other two most influential services – loans of the reading materials and free Internet access. This speaks highly of importance of this service in the local community. Besides, Koprivnica Public Library distributes talking books to other public libraries of Koprivnica-Krizevci county, as an inter-library lending, helping out the people in need of these materials right at the library in place they live. Also, Koprivnica libraries educate librarians from other Croatian libraries with interest in providing services for the blind and visually impaired within the National Center for professional education of librarians. Knowledge and competences acquired at these workshops have already gained practical results, as some libraries now have their own (either newly established or improved) library services for the blind and visually impaired. Koprivnica Public Library's experience has been presented at a number of professional conferences, of domestic and international importance, home and abroad. It all made the positive effects of it multifaceted and multiple in characters. In 2009, it helped the Public Library receive a special recognition for achievements in librarianship (Dr. Ljerka Markic-Cucukovic Trust Award for Contribution to Library Profession).

7.3 Programs for people with mental or physical disabilities

Partnership with associations of the persons with mental and physical disabilities of Koprivnica-Krizevci county dates back to year 2002. It began with removal of physical barriers and obstacles for the disabled to enter the library building. However, the Library had no spatial possibilities to install an elevator, providing a wheelchair access to the first and second floors of the library building. This lack of space is being alleviated by staircase transporter for the physical disabled. Despite this predicament, the library building is used for various programs, such as recitals, poetry readings by association members and their guests, forums for a wide audience, with topics like autism, Down syndrome, multiple sclerosis etc. The Library jointly participates in acquiring and purchase of library reading materials on certain handicaps. Their associations participated in providing special chair for small, disabled children for the Library's children department. In summertime, the Library organizes workshops in arts and crafts under outdoor parasols (painting in silk, glass, etc.) led by leaders and young adults members of Association for help to mental disabled. They are for all population, citizens, children and adults alike. At the same time, reading materials from the Library collections are being presented at these workshops. On regular basis, preschool children with mental difficulties are included, together with their teachers, in promotional reading campaigns organized by the Library on the town's main square, to celebrate September 8 International Literacy Day and promote reading. The campaign has an

integration character, as all preschools and kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools participate, together with local retirement home, literary societies, etc.

Special education teachers use the Library's children department for the children in their care to participate, too. The Library has collaboration with the librarian at the local school rehabilitation center.

Impacts. Despite the efforts by the Library and dedicated efforts by the local associations of the mental or physical disabled, their regular use of the Library's services is not too impressive. Only a few of them use the service of door-to-door delivery, provided by mobile library crew and a few volunteers, that delivers library materials to their homes in places without a resident library. Although the Library, at least once a year, organize round tables with associations' leaders, to encourage them to use the Library's potentials and tools for social inclusion, the obstacles and barriers prove to be not only physical-but psychological and social as well – years of isolated life, frequent cases of destitution and poverty, fear of rejection, low education level, lack of reading habits and interests, public stigma, distrust in public attempts to improve their quality of life, etc. It is seldom that the disabled children's parents that use library services themselves, let alone act as positive role in reading. Positive shifts are scarce and slow; however, it is a lengthy process that takes years of systematic, planned and well-thought of program of collaboration between the Library, these associations and the entire local community.

7.4 Programs for the elderly

Collaboration with the local retirement home has been an ongoing process, dating back to 1991. For twenty years now, the Library has an established stationary repository of books; a few years later it acquired a mobile library for regular service to some twenty users. Now, the retirement home elderly residents meet with preschool children at the Library's children department. This aims at establishing inter-generational gatherings and transfer of memories from the elderly to the youngest population. Grandmas and children meet at the Library, and have fun, telling stories and reciting nursery rhymes and children's poetry. Also, grandmas are also instructors to children, teaching them various skills, how to make paper toys, for example. These workshops are open to general public as well. Elderly population stops reading, due to vision problems, so the collaboration continues via talking books and text enhancers at the Library.

Impacts. The elderly, most of them retired people, are frequent visitors to the Library; most often, they come to reading rooms to read newspapers and magazines; they participate in forums, literary meetings and soirées, attend lectures by visiting guests of the Library, etc. Usually, it is elderly with well-formed reading habits in their life prior to their retirement. Most of them are now among the most deprived citizens, living on too small retirement checks, an income too small due to privatization scams, unfavorable processes and economic crisis. Free library services are of great help to them so they keep the quality of life at least in their intellectual needs. However, when they lose vision, they have hard time accepting talking books and magnifying glass instead of *proper reading*. Some of them use computers and free access to the Internet, as well as free instructions how to use it, given by librarians. A more intense promotion of library resources in helping out the elderly with problems of

deteriorating vision, health etc. (i.e. dementia, Alzheimer) is yet to come. These concerns are ever-growing issues, with general trends of gerontification, increasing the aging population numbers over the newborn. The Library's strategy, coinciding with Koprivnica Local Agenda 21 goals, in part is an intensified care for the elderly population.

7.5 Programs for the unemployed

Since 2006, the Library organizes workshops for the unemployed and those in search for a job; the program is called *How to increase employment prospects and how the Library can help?*. The aim is to educate participants on the printed and electronic media, as sources of information, and current trends on the labor market. After initial positive reactions, in 2008 the Library organized an ICT literacy seminar for unemployed women over 40, with zero or little computer skills. Attending women learned basics of PC, e-mail, Internet browsing, with focus on the most visited web pages of employment agencies, web resources on professional biography and curriculum drafts, and job applications. The purpose of this education was to help women to present themselves on labor market better, to increase their chances in getting a job. Education was led by librarian in a form of informal education course.

Impacts. Turbulent times and turmoil in macro and micro environments reflect a lot on the structure of Library membership. An increase of jobless numbers has been a worrisome trend in the past two years; in comparison to 2009, an increase of 193 jobless members of the Library makes today's figure a sum of 581 or 6,8% of the total membership. Current programs to help the unemployed to actively participate (using the Library's resources) in search for jobs, in retraining or gaining different, more useful qualifications have been well accepted. However, the Library yet has to establish a systematic, continuous ongoing service for the unemployed.

This is why in 2011 the Library has joined county cluster for lifelong learning, with aim to consolidate parallel efforts of the government and NGOs in fighting unemployment and promoting business initiatives to create new jobs.

Conclusion

Public library activities in promoting and fostering reading and literacy/literacies among socially marginalized groups could serve as important tools in supporting their inclusion in the local community and society in general. A case study of Koprivnica Public Library shows that a library can have an active role in protection and championing the rights of certain groups, enabling them with more quality sources of knowledge and information to be used in enhanced, further education and final graduation, acquiring professional degrees and diplomas, finding jobs in labor market and better quality of life in local community and society in general. Besides, these activities are linked to efforts of local community to participate in information and rising awareness to the needs of the marginalized and discriminated. The main characteristics are: (1) integration approach, gathering and participation on voluntary basis of the marginalized and deprived, as well as the ones who are not, participating in various programs; (2) partnership and collaboration with the government

and non-governmental organizations and nonaffiliated individuals; (3) the “small steps” strategy, with positive effects shown in the long run. The Library aims to provide support in betterment of everyday life and inclusion of wider range of people into the life of local community and society in general.

Literature

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Information literacy is a social practice that facilitates knowing about the information landscapes within which a person is situated. As with many phenomena this practice cannot be described adequately as a context-independent entity, it needs to be situated within a context for us to understand its nature and shape, how it is made manifest, how it is experienced, and how it is "played out" between people interacting within an environment. Because it occurs within a setting, this phenomenon is subject to the social values and processes that structure a setting and influences the organization

5 Predicting Reading Literacy in Primary School: The Contribution of Various Language Indicators in Preschool . 93 Susanne Ebert and Sabine Weinert. 6 Social and Immigration-Specific Differences in the Development of Reading Comprehension: A Longitudinal Analysis of Primary School Students in Germany. 151 Thorsten Schneider and Maximilian Pfohl. The results are discussed within the broader debate of how and in which ways language skills are related to reading literacy development. The second empirical section, comprising Chapters 6 to 9, focuses on the development of children's reading literacy during the transition from primary to secondary school.