

Latvia public libraries



Book reading flash mob in Rēzekne Library
(Photo: Anna Keirāne)

Active reading promoters



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Like in many libraries of the world also in Latvia the general picture is that loans from public libraries have been decreasing. To draw public attention to the library and keep interest in books and reading Latvian librarians are coming up with a variety of creative and original activities.

The library system in Latvia consists of 810 public libraries, 851 school libraries, 50 libraries of higher educational establishments, 36 specialized libraries and the National Library of Latvia, which is the advisory and professional support centre for all libraries of Latvia.

The Ministry of Culture of Latvia is responsible for developing the library policy in Latvia. The legal basis for the operation of libraries is the Library Act of Latvia that applies to all libraries. Public libraries are financially supported by local municipalities. The location of library network is subordinated to the administrative territorial division of the country for the inhabitants to receive services as close to their homes as possible.

Events, events

Most of the reading promotion activities are related to different events more and more organized by the libraries.

Events are held throughout the year and along with the traditional activities (library lessons, reading clubs, meetings with writers, artists etc.) time and again new forms of events are found: workshops, family festivals, book festivals, hikes, excursions, mind and erudition games, crossword championships, novuss tournaments, darts competitions etc.

Latvian librarians are very creative and their ingenuity in diversification the themes and forms of the events is immeasurable.

“The Beautiful Summer in the Library” – a reading promotion initiative in Latgale Central Library enables children and young people in Daugavpils to spend time during their summer holidays in the city

public libraries. All three months – June, July, August – a whole spectrum of events take place in the libraries. For example, in the summer of 2013, 87 events were arranged involving 410 children and young adults.

Games in the library

Poetry lovers are invited to poetry open mike in Dobeles library. During the event the microphone is positioned on the balcony of the library and anyone who does not lack courage may read poems, preferably self written.

Rēzekne library offers young people a night orientation game “Find in the Library!” Teams of young people aged 16 to

25 can apply for participation in the game. After the game the participants fill in the assessment questionnaire. The results of the survey show that the game helps the participants to get to know the library better and gain information seeking skills.

Libraries... in the streets

More and more libraries go out into the streets. Events are organized in a courtyard or on a terrace of a library. Libraries participate in city or municipality holiday programmes and other activities initiated by local municipalities or stakeholders.

Popular are book reading flash mobs when people gather and for 10-15 minutes read together the literature they have



Poetry open mike – author readings in Dobeles Library (Photo: Loreta Baltiņa)



"Poetry on the asphalt" in Jēkabpils
Photo Jēkabpils City Council



Poetry bus in the streets of Ventspils
Photo: Edgars Kūlmanis

brought along. To draw more public attention the reading flash mobs are held outside the library premises.

To popularize poetry Jēkabpils library organizes a campaign "Poetry on the asphalt". Everybody is encouraged to participate in the event and write poems on the asphalt.



Where to find the City Library?
Photo: Jelgava Library

The employees of Jelgava library also go into the streets, speak to people, deal in informative flyers and sweets. "Where is the nearest library? What else without reading

can you do there?" – with the following questions the librarians try to find out what people know about the services of the city library.

Several libraries of Latvia together with their stakeholders offer an activity called "Poetry bus". The participants of the event are poets, musicians and other volunteers who are reciting poems and singing and passengers and passers-by who are listening. Traditions are varied: in Ventspils the "Poetry bus" stops at definite stops to listen to poetry readings and musical performances, in Jēkabpils poems are recited also when the bus is in motion.

Support at national level

The implementation of the National reading promotion programme "Children and Young Adult Jury" was started in 2001. The author of the initiative is the Children's Literature Centre of the National Library of Latvia. The programme purposefully consolidates government and local municipality financial support

for reading promotion. The programme annually engages 17,000 readers from more than 600 libraries all over Latvia.

The idea of the programme: children aged 6 to 16 are encouraged to read and evaluate the newly published books for their age group. In 2011 the programme expanded to young people up to 18 years. To involve the whole family in the programme in 2012 Parents Jury was introduced.

Real interaction

"Meetings in the Libraries of Latvia Regions" is a project addressed to the adult audience. During its implementation the meetings of readers with writers, poets and translators will take place across the country. A writer's encounter with a reader is important for both sides – the author receives feedback and ideas for new works – the reader strengthens his/her interest in the author.

While reading the book, the relationship between the author and the reader is one-sided; real interaction can take place only in direct contact and both the reader and the author benefit from it.

Since April 1997 every year the Library Week is arranged in Latvia during which libraries offer a variety of activities and events, but since 1998 the libraries of Latvia have got involved in the Nordic Library Week and expect that one autumn a work by a Latvian author will be chosen for reading.



Participants of the activity "The sweet piece of joy – the chocolate" in Latgale Central Library Photo: Agris Gruntmanis

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