

Adult Education: In Teaching Others We Teach Ourselves

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On any given week millions of adults around the world can be found gathering in libraries. These cultural institutions are often seen as a repositories of knowledge and collections of a community's cultural heritage. However, they are much more. Public libraries are becoming more and more popular among adults who want to learn and develop their skills with the help of librarians. According to research more than 70 percent of adults would like to learn, however accelerated lifestyle, lack of time and money are the main obstacles which suspend adults from improvement. Andragogy, non-formal education, lifelong learning are activities which are becoming more and more significant and important in today's society. And all of them can be easily reached in libraries. Vilnius County Adomas Mickevičius Public Library is implementing various projects and activities in adult education field. The aim of this presentation is to show the results of these projects and how they benefit our community.

Vilnius County Adomas Mickevičius Public Library is located in the heart of Vilnius old town. So that's why our library is very easy to reach for those who are working or living in the city center. Despite all traditional services which we provide, we are a methodology center for 5 Alytus municipalities' and 8 Vilnius municipalities' libraries. It means that specialists of our library are consulting other librarians, doing various researches, and trainings for other municipality libraries. Also we are organizing and implementing joint events and projects.

Since 2006, reconstruction work has been carried out on part of the library's premises (47 % of the entire area of the library). During those 12 years our library was closed for a short time. Despite that one of the most important goals is to provide high quality and innovative services for kids, youth and adults. During this presentation I will talk about projects and activities we carried out in order to strengthen and improve adult education situation in Vilnius region as well as in Lithuania.

Since 2015 Library has been implemented activity "Literary pharmacy". The aim of this activity is to show, that books can help to solve various issues in human life. Librarians have prepared special prescriptions for various books. Just like real prescriptions for medicine, these "literary prescriptions" have recommendations for usage and various side effects. For example Charles Baudelaire book "The Flowers of Evil" is recommended for cynics who conceal the fact that they really are romantics. But it can cause an increased interest in the 19th century and Paris, as well as inexplicable awakening at midnight. The primary idea of this activity was to prepare funny and appealing prescriptions in order to promote reading. But later we noticed that people are not only looking what to read in a free time, but also are looking for answers to serious problems. So we decided to include not only novels and other easy reading literature, but also "serious" books about issues like suicide prevention, depression, eating disorders and so on. So now we have a huge database of various prescriptions and we are ready to help our visitors to solve different kind of problems. "Literary pharmacy" is working not only in our library, we are visiting various events, book fairs, festivals. And also we have plans to make it digital so that everyone who is looking for interesting, useful book could find it without having to come to the library or some special event.

Together with "Literary pharmacy" our library started one more project called "Reading festival". It all started four years ago and today we are working on organizing 4th "Reading festival". Our library is located in the middle of Vilnius (which is capital of Lithuania) and we have one of the biggest inner

yard in all old town (19 hectares). During reconstruction half of the yard was closed, yet we still decided to do this "Reading festival" outside. Most of our reading rooms and other premises were not suitable for bigger events. In the beginning we planned to do this event only for young adults, but during the first reading festival we noticed, that also adults were interested in the most of the activities, and our target group is very wide. Reading festival is a two or three day's long event from the noon to the evening with more than 40 different events: meetings with authors, musicians, book welcoming, educational activities, open lectures. Since 2015 more than 9000 persons visited "Reading Festival". With the help of this event, we understood and learned one very important lesson - library can provide its services in different places and in various forms, which is inseparable from adult education.

Everyone knows that adult education is impossible without qualified and skilled librarians. You may ask, who teaches them? There is saying that in teaching others we teach ourselves. However, in order to teach somebody perfect knowledge of some topics is not enough. It is not about information from encyclopedia which everybody can read, it is about the communication with various target groups, the ability to speak in front of audience freely, bravely and comprehensively. It is also about shaking hands, dry mouth or fear control. Many of these features are usual in andragogues practice and frequently it discourages adults from teaching. So that's why our library is also implementing various project for improving librarians competencies. Our library is a regional library and that means that one of our main tasks is to organize lectures and training for other librarians in Vilnius regions. And one of the most effective way to do that is to implement various national and transnational projects. In 2015-2017 we carried out Erasmus+ project "Andragogy: Distance Learning System for Librarians". During this project with partners from Bulgaria and Latvia we have created distance learning system for persons who is working in the field of adult education. There are 7 different learning programs in andragogy and computer literacy fields. During project period more than 1000 users registered to this system and number is continuously growing. We are creating new learning programs and uploading them to this distance learning system. This project let us to provide quality training for those who can't come to trainings, as well persons from abroad can use it, because one of andragogy programs is in English.

Since 2017 we have started implementing two different project related to integration and education of migrants and refugees. Both projects are financed by Erasmus+ program. Aim of these projects are to improve libraries' services for migrants and refugees. During these two projects have already visited Denmark, Finland, Poland and Croatia and we are looking for to meet our colleagues in Spain in two weeks. Various training programs and job shadowing activities let us better understand how countries around the Europe is dealing with foreigners.

The need of adult education in libraries is obvious. However it takes time, money, and a combined effort on the part of many people. Organized, free and flexible services, such as various events, trainings and other non-formal education would help to engage adults in lifelong learning. Our experience shows that only the exit from your comfort zone and looking at yourself from another angle can help to provide services which are really needed and can't be accessible anywhere else. Perhaps you will agree with me that librarianship are one of the most creative professions in the world. Although funding for these institutions remains critical, we still have the ability not only to disseminate positive knowledge of ourselves, but also to attract, inspire and show that non-formal education can be accessed by any member of society. No matter how small a community you serve is, your library can provide vital, successful adult education opportunities for all users.