

The library minestrone

An example of a good diversity practise

The Public Library of Izola, Slovenia

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Izola

Izola is an old fishing town and a municipality in south-western Slovenia on the Adriatic coast of the Istrian peninsula. Its name originates from the Italian word "isola", which means "island". The municipality has near 16,000 inhabitants and is officially bilingual, with both Slovene and Italian as official languages.

The public library of Izola

The public library of Izola is an independent public institution founded by the City of Izola and acts as an informational, cultural, educational and social centre for the town and the surrounding region.

In the Public library of Izola we host different activities in order to promote, motivate and integrate all groups of society into non-formal education and lifelong learning processes.

Centre for organised self-directed learning

The target audiences of the Slovenian centres for organized self-directed learning are adult participants in general:

- unemployed,
- employed,
- older adults,
- young adults.

At the moment there are 38 active centres for self-directed learning in Slovenia, only 2 of them are in public libraries.

At the Public Library of Izola, in the centre for self-directed learning, we have suitable computer equipment, audio and video appliances, and we provide Internet access. Assistance is provided by our staff, and also by counsellors/mentors, while participants have access to various programmes for self-directed learning, often using multimedia.

The centre is open daily. The learners can adapt the time and rhythm of learning to their own interests, abilities and commitments. The learning in the centre is free of charge.

From 1998 to 2018 1.701 participants completed 89.621 hours of learning or on average 21 hours of learning per day.

The learning exchange

The Learning Exchange collects and transmits information about those who seek specific types of knowledge and about those who offer these types of

knowledge. The supply and demand in the Learning Exchange is formed from various fields of knowledge, wisdom, skills, crafts, and information.

Apart from offering tuition in several subjects (such as mathematics or foreign languages) users also offer specific knowledge that cannot be found in any other educational institution.

From 1998 to 2018 we've had 3205 participants at the learning exchange:

- 796 participants were offering 1456 different types of knowledge
- 2820 participants were seeking 5182 different types of knowledge

Examples of the most interesting learning exchange knowledge on offer:

- underwater photography;
- nature protection in the Strunjan Landscape Park;
- Istrian music and musical instruments;
- Istrian cuisine;
- medical use of clay;
- Istrian dry stone construction;
- storytelling;
- lace making;
- information on biodiversity in Istria.

Study circles

Study circles are small groups of adults for non-formal learning, where they gather, learn, and socialize. The participants themselves choose the content, the course and the level of difficulty of learning.

They spread all over Slovenia and are an opportunity for learning and socializing, especially for those whose standardized forms of education are difficult to access or for any reason uninteresting.

The activity contains educational action goals: exhibitions, educational and fairytale paths, storytelling... There are 300 study circles in Slovenia; the library has 5 circles operating in 2018.

The study circle is free of charge for the participants; it is managed by a mentor, and is carried out within the framework of an organization that acquires funds for the functioning of the circle. Some of the most visited study circles at the Public Library of Izola:

The world in the palm of your hands - through other cultures we become aware of ourselves

The travellers or immigrants, telling us stories from everyday life, telling us myths and showing us photographic material, they bring different cultures and countries a bit closer to us.

- Live now

The participants gain knowledge that improves their quality of life and gain a positive attitude. The purpose of the study circle is to teach the participants to live in the present.

- Reading with parents

Informing parents and grandparents about the importance of reading, the language of children's drawings, children's creativity and education.

- Reading at home for the elderly and visually impaired

Reading at home and in the retirement home in Izola for people with special needs, the elderly, blind, visually impaired, and physically impaired. The visits were conducted with the help of students volunteers. The purpose was to preserve the love for reading by older people who cannot access the library.

- Talking trees

The circle raises awareness of books and materials that promote the importance of trees that grow in the Mediterranean region. Trees are living beings that are important for nature and people.

The Centre for organised self-directed learning, the learning exchange and study circles are coordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education with the financial support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

The evening chats with interesting citizens of Izola

In 2004, the Municipality of Izola accepted the library's idea to present interesting, creative citizens of Izola or interesting groups from various fields of life and work, for example a local postman, a teacher, a physician or a local priest.

The purpose of these evening chats is to present these people, get acquainted with their profession, life experiences with which they shape our town. We can learn a lot from them; learn more about their profession, creativity, way of life and of thinking.

We have asked the journalist Nataša Benčič to conduct these events. She is also one of the interesting people living in Izola and she successfully leads these interviews. Up till now 85 interesting citizens of Izola were presented,

among others also Vasilij Žbogar, winner of a bronze and two silver medals at the Olympic Games and Srdjan Živulović, who received the Pulitzer Prize for photography in 2016.

The Primorska region reads

»Primorci beremo« or »the Primorska region reads« is the reading project for adults promoting the reading of Slovenian authors. It runs from April to November each year in ten Littoral Libraries for the twelfth season now. Two Slovenian libraries in Italy, in Trieste and Gorizia, also participate.

The inspiring data is that in 11 years 9,062 readers read 70,135 books of Slovene authors. A rich selection of genres and authors from the reading list does not only allow reading pleasure and entertainment, but offers a broad insight into domestic, quality literature and the excellence of the Slovene language.

The collection of old toys

In the Public Library of Izola, we store a collection of about one thousand and five hundred old and newer toys, property of two collectors of antiquities, Janez and Marija Janežič. The collection is placed in glass cabinets. There are bears, dolls, kitchens, trains, cars, irons, bins, stoves, mice, soldiers, trolleys, dwarfs, jewels, Miki Mouse, scissors and wooden ducks, carts, cribs and many different toys delighting children. They bring back memories and games from childhood.

The digitized collection is being prepared for publication on the web portal Kamra and Europeana with the accompanying metadata for research purposes.

The music of plants

Until now we could plant plants, smell them, see them, but we could not hear them. Since 2017, the Public Library of Izola and its garden have been richer for something almost unbelievable: the music produced by plants. With the help of a small synthesizer, we change the electromagnetic pulses of the plants into music and we can hear their signals.