



Reading Stimulating Initiatives in the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

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1. Introduction

The book is an ingenious invention of thinking man. It stimulates the spiritual activity of the people. The book helps us to keep our identity and to recognize the identity of others. The book may be used as a reaction against the dehumanization in the globalized reality.

The International survey was conducted in 2009 by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) found that Bulgarian students are not able to reflect and evaluate the information provided to them well and it's difficult for them to read graphs and charts. They read mainly magazines; with 21% of them consider reading is a "waste of time" [1].

One reason for illiteracy is that young people are reading fewer books nowadays. Thus the Bulgarian traditional "book-love" is different today. From the survey conducted by L. Parijkova among 250 respondents—58% believe that Bulgarian people love books and read, and 39%—on the contrary think that it is rather a myth [2]. Throughout this context it is necessary to establish practices for reading stimulating and to initiate events regaining the book love in our country.

The State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies always had an engagement to achieve the construction of complex creative and innovative environment, including relevant supporting communication infrastructures, and deploy heterogeneous by nature social capital. As scientific educational and cultural institution our university has a mission to stimulate spiritual activities of young people.

2. Our initiatives

The SULSIT started many initiatives in 2011, which have the purpose to develop a policy for reading and increasing the prestige of the book. On the event of the 23th April—The World Book and Copyright Day, we organized a week with events. This April we're going to enrich the program with a web seminar, film and etc. At the end of the year we started a new project—"New policies for stimulating the reading. Research of bookcrossing practices in Bulgaria". We wish to present our successful experience namely in this thematic area "Innovative Teaching and Learning Methodologies".

2.1 Week, dedicated to the World Book and Copyright Day (23th April) /18-23 April, 2011/

At the University, whose mission is to develop spirituality, the idea of the World Book and Copyright Day celebration, initiated by UNESCO back in 1996, came naturally. We've considered that by organizing the "Week" may contribute to the recognition of the crucial role of book reading and education as key factors for the development of personality. Copyright protection is also our urgent commitment. The leader of the team is Prof. Stoyan Dentchev, Rector of the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, the project coordinator is Lubomira Parijkova, PhD.

The project allows the formation of an academic community that continuously improves its competence and provides interaction with publishers, book distributors, associations and contributes to a full dialogue, openness, tolerance and awareness. The celebration draft is in the context of developing a policy for reading and increasing the prestige of the book and the latest trends in the copyright protection. This project aimed at provoking dialog field for questions about the Book and Copyright. The participants are young scientists, PhD-candidates and students. They might show their own views of current problems, related to the Book.

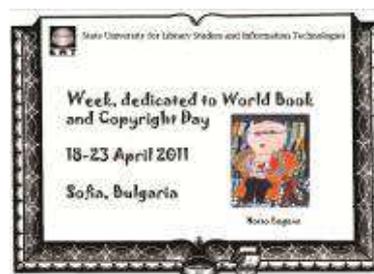


Fig.1. The Project poster

The initiatives were highly varied: our students read American poetry, rhetoric students read stories to kids, a Round Table, where Bulgarian writers and famous directors discussed issues related to Book and Reading,



contests for essays and posters on theme "The Book of my life", an Exhibition of antique, rare and valuable books and etc. Our workshop was very creative, where students made their own hand-made books. The SULSIT has awarded prizes for achievements in the field of bookprotection and raising it as a spiritual companion to the modern human. As a modern university we created a Bookcrossing-zone. We printed off a book collection with scientific reports.



Fig.2. "The Book – our more sensual present"

2.2 Days of the Book and Copyright in SULSIT (23-25 April 2012)

This project carries out cultural and educational activities such as:

- Scientific conference on the book and copyright involving students, teachers, publishers, booksellers, journalists and specialists;
- Presentations by authors of books-games;
- Website;
- Workshop—students make their own book;
- Student's forum about the books and the copyright;
- Presentation of a film-portrait of Prof. Peter Parijkov - an example of the boundless love for books;
- Competitions for essay and poster dedicated to the World Book and Copyright Day;
- Exhibitions;
- Students read to children;
- Web conference.

2.3 New policies for stimulating the reading. Research of the bookcrossing practices in Bulgaria (December 2011-December 2013)

We present the project, which has being done at the period December 2011–December 2013 in the SULSIT and is funded by Fund "Scientific research". The leader of the team is Asst. Prof. Lubomira Parijkova, PhD.

"New policies for stimulating the reading. Research of the bookcrossing practices in Bulgaria" aims at the current phenomenon—bookcrossing, sites and blogs about books and similar initiatives. The project has aimed to search new initiatives for reading and for the raising of the book prestige in Bulgarian higher education and society as whole.

The mission of the project "New policies for stimulating the reading. Research of bookcrossing practices in Bulgaria" is to stimulate dialogue about the place of books and reading in our life and academic community. The project aims to offer options for policy development of reading and its recovery as a resource for spiritual revival of the Bulgarian society.

It is focused at exploring contemporary phenomenon which expresses book-love in Bulgaria. Thus the objects of study become bookcrossing, sites and blogs about books, book-cafes and etc.

Our team is entirely of young scientists and graduate students with different academic and discipline profiles - philosopher, historian, philologist, linguist, psychologist, and pedagogue. We rely on the potential of young people for heuristic thinking. Namely heuristic methods and techniques will be used when the team's work and of foundation of the results among students. We also rely on the creative thinking's methods of Eduard de Bono. Our team research the basic world practices for stimulating the reading.

The first stage of the project started in December, 2011 and we composed questionnaires, which will identify attitudes and students' expectations of our university in respect of reading habits, bookcrossing and the idea of forming an environment for meetings with authors.

The "bookcrossing" is a network for free books which may exchange its readers. The philosophy of this project is clear: not to own, only to read a book. This is the main worth of the online community - a reading society. The word "bookcrossing" has been added to Oxford dictionary and means: the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be taken and read by someone who then left her again.

The "bookcrossing" works like this: each book is marked by gluing a special sticker that carries information about the initiative.

The bookcrossers (people who play this amusing game) register books online – www.bookcrossing.com and may see where the book was. The bookcrossing area or zone means the place where the books cross their roads and where you may release a book. In big towns of Bulgaria there are zones like these.



The "bookcrossing" is a global phenomenon, with members from over 130 countries. The books are as mobile as modern man in a globalized world - a book, started from Bulgaria can get across Europe and even to be found on another continent. Bulgaria has 251 registered fans (to March 2012).

The phenomenon "bookcrossing" was born in March 2001, when Ron Hornbaker, computer specialist decided to leave his own book to unknown readers. He created the website: www.bookcrossing.com on 17th April in the same year. Ten years later in this site were registered 998 240 people of different ages and demographic characteristics and 8 479 471 books.

We started analyzing the accumulated information from existing sites, which promote books and researching the topic of bookcrossing in foreign literature (such in Bulgaria are not made). The project's slogan is "Read! Share! Be a step ahead!". We bought books, registered them in www.bookcrossing.com, marked them with bookcrossing's labels and released them. Our purpose is to keep track of book's movement.

We organized a bookcrossing zone in our university. There are more than 150 released books. Some students and I registered books in the world's site: www.bookcrossing.com. We made labels for books. Many students and lecturers have borrowed these books and read them.

Our project relies on the assumption that the research as a contemporary phenomenon, born of book love, would provide an opportunity for many initiatives, which will stimulate the reading. We hope that we suggest to our university and Bulgarian educational institutions, new strategies and policies regarding the reading. The investigation of the site www.bookcrossing.com as an environment for online communication of the reader's community would allow us to go by the reading preferences, mobility of books and etc.

UNESCO announced the year 2012 in Bulgaria as the year of the book "Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya" by Paisij de Hilendar which was written in 1762. The book was the first attempt of writing a complete Bulgarian history and to awake and strengthen the Bulgarian national consciences. This 250th anniversary is a reason to start an experiment with the book of the forefather of the Bulgarian National Revival—Paisius of Hilendar. We bought 20 books and gave them to students to read and after that they should write an essay on the presence of the Paisius' ideas.

Another experiment that our team have started is about "Bulgarian Novel of 2010". We bought the first 10 nominated novels, marked them with BCID number and released them in our university's bookcrossing zone. Now we can study which book is preferred. This is the way we may provoke real situations where the readers may choose the best book. After the experiment we may identify trends in relation to literary preferences and habits of our students.

Other incentives for stimulating reading and book love in higher education have been conducting a series of students' meetings with Bulgarian authors. The project's goal is to create a "Book café" in SULTSIT where can be implemented discussions of books, readings, courses on creative thinking and etc.

The project implements also two documentaries—the first—a documentary portrait of Bulgarian research-worker in the field of Book and the second—describing bookcrossing practices in Bulgaria.

3. Results

3.1 Scientific and theoretical results

- Analysis and synthesis of scientific literature and information;
- Detailed study of Bulgarian sites and blogs, related to books and reading.
- The expected effect is to achieve a complete picture of the phenomenon "bookcrossing" in Bulgaria and compared with some countries in Europe.
- Recommendations for new strategies and policies to promote reading;
- Dissemination of new knowledge by organizing web seminars, lectures and presentations;
- Expanding knowledge and acquaintance of new trends in books and reading;
- Reports' publication on the topic;
- Enhancing the culture of reading in the university environment.

3.2 Scientifically applied results

- The Materials will become the basis for a textbook;
- The captured video during meetings with authors will become an integral part of the seminars and lectures;
- PhD students from the team could use the results for their dissertation theses;
- Building a solid partnership between educational institutions, unions and representatives of organizations associated with the book;
- Participation of our university in the development of educational policies that promote reading;
- Working in interdisciplinary teams will lay the background for future partnerships and projects and will be in line with European science policy;
- Integration of students to the scientific achievements.



4. Conclusion

The State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies creates conditions of searching new initiatives for reading and we hope that our policies could contribute a recognition of the crucial role of book reading and education as key factors for the development of personality.

References

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