

## Public Library - the Important Link between Rural Libraries and Successful Farmers

**Suzana Tanasijević**

Librarian,

Public Library “Radislav Nikčević”

Jagodina, Serbia

[suzanatanasijevic@gmail.com](mailto:suzanatanasijevic@gmail.com)



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### Abstract:

*This paper speaks of AgroLib-Ja (Agricultural Library in Jagodina), innovative project of Public Library of Jagodina, Serbia, which has “developed the idea of changing the libraries according to the changing of users’ needs<sup>1</sup>”*

*In the past, Public Library of Jagodina was a classic, traditional library devoted to readers. Today, Public Library of Jagodina is a modern library devoted to users and it is actively involved in solving problems in the local community.*

*In addition to its basic functions in sharing knowledge, Public Library of Jagodina is also devoted to provide support to socially underestimated groups of people. As the main Library for Pomoravlje region, Public Library in Jagodina supervises all libraries, among others rural libraries. Supervisions data indicated difficult situation in the villages and in the rural libraries.*

*Considering the possibilities for improving the lives of people in rural areas with the help of forming new services in rural libraries, Public Library of Jagodina in 2008 conducted a survey among farmers. The conducted survey showed the following: that about 90% of questioned farmers had no ICT skills; 88% of them wanted to attend ICT trainings; 84% wanted to attend agricultural lectures and 100% wanted to visit the library in order to find agricultural literature. Also, according to that research we found out that the farmers have no computers and Internet and they do not know how to use them and they are not familiar with the advantages of informing by the Ministry of Agriculture and other state institutions, so the important information were not available to them.*

*“Therefore, Public Library of Jagodina realized that in order to meet the needs of rural residents, village libraries had to be renovated and turned into information, communication and educational hubs of local communities<sup>2</sup>”*

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<sup>1</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013), *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , PDF (693kB).

<sup>2</sup> Jagodina Public Library&AgroLib Ja project, [http://jagodinalibrary.blogspot.com/2013\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://jagodinalibrary.blogspot.com/2013_12_01_archive.html).

*In response to that, an innovative project has been invented, titled AgroLib-Ja, addressed to the farmers as a marginalized group of people in the society and unreached library users. Before introduction of the AgroLib service in 2010, many village libraries in Serbia were devastated and farmers were struggling to access the information they needed to improve their farming methods. "The project, titled AgroLib-Ja, was aimed for revitalization of five rural libraries and creation a network of rural libraries that provide information and communication services especially for farmers<sup>3</sup>".*

*Today, in five rural libraries the following services are accessible to the farmers:*

*• Completely renovated and adapted library environment where farmers can meet, connect, learn and share experiences from best practices.*

*• Free Internet access and ICT training which helps farmers in sharing best practices, searching for useful information, such as the state subsidies, incentives and grants. Farmers' ICT literacy increases through using computers and the Internet in the libraries. According to data, over 200 farmers have attended ICT training and just from January to March 2013, there were 7 ICT trainings for 27 farmers.*

*• Agricultural lectures enhanced agricultural production through learning new information and applying it in practice. To this day, the libraries hosted 37 professional lectures with 23 recognized speakers attended by 1,791 farmers.*

*• Agricultural journals and literature, which help farmers in applying new farming methods. Farmers' agricultural production is enhanced by applying what they read in agricultural magazines and books and hear during agricultural lectures in the libraries; their awareness to available government subsidies and incentives increases with the help of the librarians and the project partners.*

*• The portal AgroLib offers automatic weather updates, news, digitalized magazines and books and within online marketplace [www.agrolib.rs/pijaca/](http://www.agrolib.rs/pijaca/) for free registration, advertising and selling, (marketing 2014) improving income and financial situation of farmers. Since 2010 when AgroLib was established, there have been more than 90,000 visitors. Only in 2013, until March 22 there were 16,559 visits, about 10% more than at the same time last year<sup>4</sup>"*

*The value of concept of the Agricultural Libraries in Jagodina, Serbia, was recognized by the public libraries in others countries. These are: Klintaine Public Library in Latvia, Pasvalys Marius Katiliskis Public Library in Lithuania and Regional public and University Library Goce Delchev in FYROM. They have successfully adapted the idea of Jagodina Public Library and incorporated it in their practice.*

*The AgroLib started in 2010 with support of EIFL within PLIP and is still ongoing. The project is supported by the Local government, Agricultural agencies and The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia. For its accomplishments, the project has won three international awards:*

- In 2012 by American organization Beyond Access for its originality and innovation in the category Economic Opportunity;*
- WSIS 2013 Project Prize for excellence in the category Access to Knowledge and Information;*
- ERSTE Foundation Honorary Award for Social Integration 2013.*

*The aim of this paper is to show that the Public libraries such as the Library in Jagodina may be the initiators of social change not only locally but also wider. The AgroLib has revived and recovered the rural community in Jagodina municipality; AgroLib has caused positive changes in society on the social, economic and cultural level. It brought prosperity and wellness to the rural population. It contributes in changing farmers' attitude towards libraries. Now, farmers are committed to permanent learning,*

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<sup>3</sup> Public Library "Radislav Nikčević" Jagodina, Serbia, Impact Assessment Results, May 2011, <http://www.eifl.net/public-library-radislav-nikcevic-jagodina-serbia>, (taken on 7 August 2014).

<sup>4</sup> [http://jagodinalibrary.blogspot.com/2013\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](http://jagodinalibrary.blogspot.com/2013_08_01_archive.html) (Statistical data were taken from the accompanying flyer for the Poster sessions "Project AgroLib Ja – Fostering Cooperation Between the Library and Local Community" presented by Vesna Crnkovic at Poster Sessions, IFLA WLIC 2013 in Singapore, <http://conference.ifla.org/past-wlic/2013/poster-sessions.html>).

*accepting of new knowledge and improving ICT skills. Also, it contributes to changing attitude of local authorities towards libraries.*

**Keywords:** AgroLib-Ja (Agricultural Library in Jagodina) project, a new model of library ICT service for farmers, Public Library in Jagodina, Serbia

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## **Introduction:**

In the history of development of world librarianship more than four thousand years long, public libraries take relatively short period of only more than 150 years, whereby the public libraries have had changeable role and significance in the development of society (cultural, educational, recreational, and informational function).

During many centuries of tradition, the libraries have built their high position in the society and that is their capital. Today people have trust in libraries and they support them. The world is global place for living of people and they search for the feeling of belonging to local. Public libraries are the guardians of local traditions, and at the same time modern institutions that are developing in accordance with the development of the world and in accordance with the needs of local population.<sup>5</sup>

In the XXI century in era of accelerated technological development and digital revolution, public libraries have been put into the focus of social events again as learning organizations where as the imperative of modern society is imposed the need of people to train and to acquire new skills several times during their years of service.

Modern public libraries have an important role in building library-information system and strategic significance in economic and social development. “By providing free, equal and unlimited access to the heritage of culture and civilization, to knowledge, ideas, and information, public people’s libraries contribute constructively to the development of democratic public, quality of life in local community and practical realization of the concept of communication reality<sup>6</sup>”.

However, beside emphasized world's trend of decrease in borrowing in certain types of libraries, reexamination of professional and social justification and adjustment to new demands of information age, the researches have shown that public libraries are very popular and highly rated with the population in local communities. In XXI century, Piter Brofi remarks, “public library is one of the most used public services of local community<sup>7</sup>”.

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<sup>5</sup> The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society, [http://issuu.com/bibliotekogmedier/docs/the\\_public\\_libraries\\_in\\_the\\_knowledge\\_society\\_sum](http://issuu.com/bibliotekogmedier/docs/the_public_libraries_in_the_knowledge_society_sum) (taken on 10 April 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Public libraries and public knowledge / dr Zeljko Vuckovic; Novi Sad : Library of Matica Serbian: Futura Publications, 2003.- P. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Library in the twenty first century: new services for information age / Piter Brofi; [translated from English Tanja Tasic ]. - Belgrade: Clio, 2005. -P. 16.

## AgroLib-Ja the Project of the Public Library in Jagodina, Serbia

The Public library in Jagodina is the oldest institution of culture in Pomoravlje region with tradition longer than 163 years in sharing knowledge and education of people. “By the foundation act – Decree of Peter I from April 27, 1909 – Public library in Jagodina was established<sup>8</sup>”.

Today, the library "Radislav Nikčević" in Jagodina is a modern institution that is equally dedicated to the exchange of knowledge and information as well as to “social integration of broad strata of people<sup>9</sup>” As a parent library, it represents the library-information hub of Pomoravski district. The Pomoravski region has 212.839<sup>10</sup> residents. The seat of the district is in Jagodina city. In the municipality of Jagodina there are 52 villages. About 70% of the total area is agricultural area. According to the 2011 census, demographic data shows that about half of the Jagodina’s population lives in the city, 36.092, and the other half in the villages, 35.103. These data indicate equal representation of the population living in the cities and in the villages. The most of the population that lives in the villages are farmers. This statistics also tells us that about a half of the population of Jagodina municipality that lives in rural area could not use the services of library till AgroLib-Ja appeared.

The Public library in Jagodina as the main library for the Pomoravski district covers and supervises all types of library, among the others rural libraries located in the municipality of Jagodina. Supervision’s data from the field in the Jagodina rural libraries, over many years, indicated a very alarming situation in the villages (bad economic situation, absence of financial resources for modernization of the production, and unawareness of new and different agricultural methods) and in the rural libraries, (bad financial situation, devastated infrastructure, ruined book funds).

Project of AgroLib-Ja (Agricultural libraries in Jagodina) was created as a response and possible solution for resolving the problem of rural population, through revitalization of five rural libraries<sup>11</sup> and creating a network of rural libraries that provide ICT services especially for farmers.

The farmers from 52 villages in Jagodina municipality are the main beneficiaries of the AgroLib project, to whom the new library services are available in five revitalized rural libraries (Bunar, Bagrdan, Glavinci, Glogovac, Majur). The objective of AgroLib -Ja is improving life of farmers, through revitalization of rural libraries to develop new services using information technology and the Internet. The ultimate goal is improving the social, economic and cultural status of rural population in the local community and beyond.

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<sup>8</sup> Librarianship of Jagodina (1851-2011) / dr Mila Stefanovic.-Jagodina: Public library „Radislav Nikcevic“, 2011. P. -95 (in Serbian).

<sup>9</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013), *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , [PDF \(693kB\)](#).

<sup>10</sup> <http://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-el/> (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.eifl.net/news/agrolib-ja-success-inspires-renovation-five-r> , (taken on 10 April 2014).

The AgroLib-Ja was initiated by the Public library in Jagodina in April 2010 and is still ongoing. The project started thanks to the support from the NGO EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) within PLIP (Public Library Innovative Program). The project is also supported by: the Local authorities of Jagodina municipality, Governmental agricultural agencies, The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, Local TV and Radio station. For its accomplishment, AgroLib-Ja has been awarded by: NGO Beyond Access for its originality and innovation in the category Economic Opportunity 2012, WSIS 2013 Project Prize for excellence in the category Access to Knowledge and Information and the ERSTE Foundation Honorary Award for Social Integration 2013 and ALA (American Library Association) award 2014, for innovative international project.

### **Before introduction of the AgroLib**

- **State in the villages of the municipality of Jagodina**

During difficult times in the country, absence of systematic support and investment in the agriculture by the state has led to full devastation of the village as the seat of agricultural production and the farmers. Ruined agricultural production led to the impoverishment of farmers that are fighting every day for survival. It has become obvious that it is necessary to create new models that would help in modernizing obsolete agricultural production and its improvement, and agricultural products to be placed to the market by means of modern technologies.

State of devastation in agriculture was followed by devastation of village libraries. At the same time, financial support to the village libraries by the local self-government lacked and that was the reason of their devastation (destroyed infrastructure, non-actual book funds and non-payment of wages to librarians).

During 1970s village libraries in the municipality of Jagodina were fully developed and invested in and they used to represent cultural centers and seats of social life of people in the villages. During 1980s and 1990s, most of village libraries stopped working (they exist only formally) and they became ruined and abandoned places in which nobody comes anymore.

Knowing the problems of agricultural population in Serbia and especially the problems in the villages in the municipality of Jagodina, during “2008 Public Library in Jagodina conducted a survey in the rural population (among a sample of 100 subjects; subjects were between 30 and 50 years old; equal gender representation, 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female) with aim to identify the needs of farmers and the role of rural libraries in satisfying those needs. A sample consisted of respondents from several different villages in the municipality of Jagodina. Questions were related to the agricultural way of informing the rural population and the techniques and methods used to improve agricultural production. The offered answers were related to professional journals, agricultural literature, Internet or traditional methods and techniques to convey the experience and knowledge from generation to generation. Most of the respondents 82% said they did not have a computer and had no knowledge of the area, 90% had Internet at home, 72% used traditional methods of knowledge transfer, 88% wanted to attend a computer school, 84% wanted training through professional lectures, 100% would like to be in

the library to find literature in the field of agriculture, and 92% said that their biggest problem was the lack of organized markets for agricultural products<sup>12</sup>.

The conclusion was: rural community needed radical change; new pattern for revival and transformation of agricultural production and improving quality of life.

- **State in the rural libraries**

According to the report from 2008 made by National library of Serbia “library from Jagodina had no stationary or mobile branch, but only eight local – rural libraries worked on non-up-to-date literary funds and without access to distant places. Thus, around 50% of inhabitants of the municipality have not had a public library in the place of residence or any possibility to use remote resources<sup>13</sup>”. On the other side, “library standards, recommended that local branches of rural libraries should have funds and facilities to suit the needs of local populations<sup>14</sup>”.

The research from 2008 showed that in rural libraries in Jagodina municipality infrastructure and library equipment were destroyed and the fond of books was outdated and quite deteriorated. Primarily, before introduction of the AgroLib service, rural population could not use computers, nor in their household neither in rural libraries and did not understand the benefits of using ICT technologies. On the other hand, state institutions including the Ministry of Agriculture transferred its business to an electronic notification system. All important information for farmers such as incentives, subsidies, grants and others are published on the websites of the Governmental institutions of the Republic of Serbia. Farmers couldn't use the convenience of modern technology because they were IT illiterate without any ICT skills.

Considering the measures for revival of village libraries and improvement of life for people who live in the villages, in the Public Library in Jagodina was concluded that modernized and revitalized rural libraries could bring necessary changes in the villages and local community. In the conclusion, farmers were highlighted as socially vulnerable and marginalized group of people in the society that needs assistance of library in adopting new farming methods. Rural libraries are recognized as places that can bring changes and prosperity of the rural population through development of new services that provide education and learning of new ICT skills.

The results of the Library study were the initial point for designing the AgroLib-Ja project.

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<sup>12</sup> Vesna Crnkovic, [Agricultural rural libraries in Serbia in the era of Information Technology](#).

<sup>13</sup> Network of Serbian public libraries in period 2000 -2008 / Vladimir Sekularac; Beograd : Public Library of Serbia (in Serbian) [http://www.nb.rs/view\\_file.php?file\\_id=2623](http://www.nb.rs/view_file.php?file_id=2623) , (taken on 10 April 2014).

<sup>14</sup> [www.eifl.net/system/files/.../case\\_study\\_serbia.pdf](http://www.eifl.net/system/files/.../case_study_serbia.pdf) (taken on 7 August 2014).

## **After the implementation of AgroLib**

### **“New ICT services for farmers in five rural libraries:**

- **Agricultural books and magazines<sup>15</sup>”**

Revitalization of rural libraries beyond restitution has also included the enrichment of the existing library funds with current monographic and serial publications in various domains of agriculture. During the first year of project implementation, library funds of all village libraries were enriched (according to Library data) by 185 books and 10 encyclopedias in area of agriculture each. Annual subscriptions to nine professional journals in the field of agriculture were taken out. Agricultural literature was used in all rural libraries for 1.655 times<sup>16</sup>. This information speaks in favor of the fact that among others, this new service (current agricultural books and magazines) contributed in attracting rural population and bringing them back to the libraries. During the years of project realization, the number of books and magazines in area of agriculture increased in village libraries. According to the Library data, today every rural library has a total of 1014 professional books in various fields of agriculture and an annual subscription of 15 journals.

A case of good cooperation between village librarians and farmers-users in relation to the recommending the appropriate professional literature was noted and recorded. A female librarian in the village library in Bagrdan helped the farmer Žarko Milic to choose and plant quality sort of nut in his orchard by selecting the appropriate literature. Serbian national TV published a report on that<sup>17</sup>.

Farmers' agricultural production is enhanced by applying new farming methods about what they read and learn in agricultural books and professional expert articles in the magazines.

- **Agricultural lectures and topics**

The library implements education of farmers by organizing professional agricultural lectures. The most recognized experts talk about important topics for farmers in the rural libraries. One of the biggest challenges is choosing topics that are relevant for improving farmers' production, selecting experts with academic and practical knowledge (with ability of transferring knowledge to the farmers) and suggesting profitable agribusiness.

The farmers have the opportunity to find out directly at the lectures held by agricultural experts about the innovations in agriculture, successful agricultural practice, new agro-technical measures, and profitable agro-businesses. Moreover, after completed lectures, the farmers have the possibility in an informal atmosphere and conversation with lecturers to state their problem from agricultural practice and to obtain professional advice and help. During implementation of the project, the farmers have been very interested in such kind of education and adoption of

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<sup>15</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013) *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , PDF (693kB).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.eifl.net/service-areas-replication-case-studies> (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVQaVE4RNZU> (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

knowledge from the most recognized experts. The selection of agricultural areas and topics for lectures was conducted according to the principle of questionnaire for farmers in village libraries. In accordance with interests and suggestions of farmers, the selection of topics and lecturers was performed (farmers from various villages deal with various types of agricultural production, so in accordance with that there were interests in concrete topics). Today, stimulated by new knowledge and recommendations obtained by the experts within the lectures, large number of farmers expanded the existing agricultural production, and some of them even started new profitable agro businesses. Agricultural lectures help farmers to enhance agricultural production through learning new information and application in practice.

- **ICT training and free Internet access**

Farmers can attend ICT training in all five revitalized rural libraries. In the school of computers within IT training, farmers learn basic computer skills, how to use the Internet, find and used useful agricultural information important for improving their production, how to use social networks and blogs to advertise their production. The most important, through the internet farmers learns to use government support services, how to apply for incentives, subsidies, start-up credits, grants.

Every IT course was based on an individual approach to the level of knowledge of farmers and their specific needs and interests. According to the latest library research, 87 percent of surveyed farmers, the respondents, answered that they use the Internet at the library to look for agricultural information. Farmers' ICT literacy increases through the IT training and using computers and Internet in the libraries.

- „AgroLib website ( [www.agrolib.rs](http://www.agrolib.rs) <sup>18</sup>):

1. **Online market ( [www.agrolib.rs/pijaca](http://www.agrolib.rs/pijaca) <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup>„**

AgroLib market as on line platform was established for the needs of farmers; so they can freely advertise their products, sell and via Internet without intermediates. Anyone being in agricultural business, within this market, can present his products and his agricultural household in the following way: to register for AgroLib market and after received verification that he was successfully registered to activate his registration and to access the web site. After that one can create his user profile and edit his personal data about his production and obtain important information which can include description of production and types of agricultural products. Moreover, active users can if needed ad and modify the information within their profile, and they can also include photos in various formats or promo films, etc. Every active user of the service on

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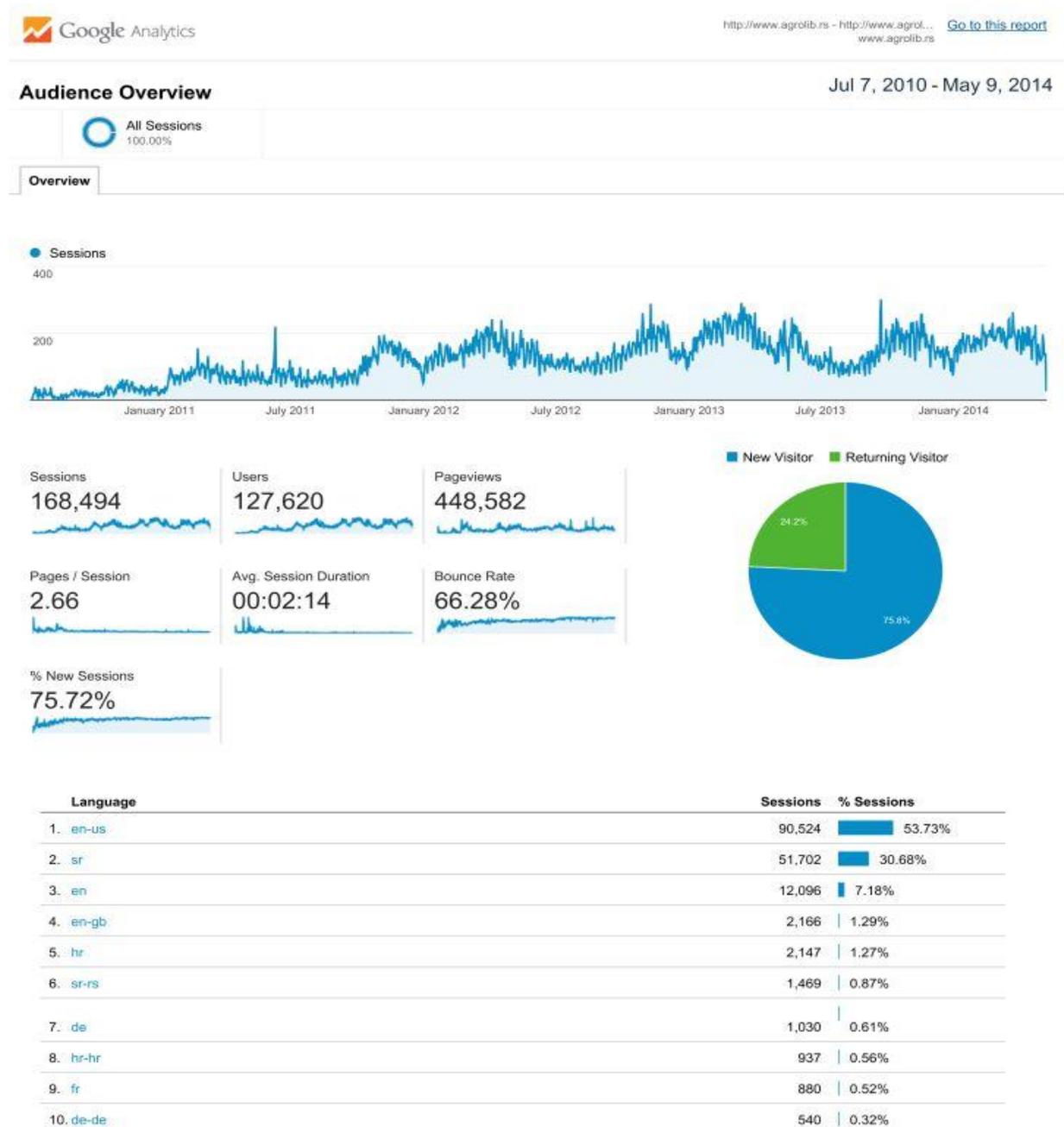
<sup>18</sup> [www.agrolib.rs](http://www.agrolib.rs) , (taken on 10 April 2014).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.agrolib.rs/pijaca/> , (taken on 10 April 2014).

<sup>20</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013) *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , [PDF \(693kB\)](#).

AgroLib market possesses a private folder. All site users (including non-registered users) can search the product database and the database of registered users, and view their profiles.

The Library data of 127.620 total number of users of the sites [www.agrolib.rs](http://www.agrolib.rs) and [www.agrolib/pijaca](http://www.agrolib/pijaca) (since their creation on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 up to 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2014) and 448.582 page views, show that the site met its goal in promoting farmers (see graph below).



Examples of farmers who have improved their sales or sold larger quantities of goods after advertising on the on line market - [www.agrolib.rs/pijaca](http://www.agrolib.rs/pijaca) were recorded:

- “Dejan Stankovic, a young farmer from the village of Staro Laniste, till joining the AgroLib project used to sell his products only on the green market. After opening the profile on AgroLib marked Dejan has improved its sales<sup>21</sup>
- Zoran Milosevic, a graduate engineer of agriculture and quince orchard owner, user of AgroLib market, after placing his article about quince on the AgroLib website, made contacts with a farmer near Kragujevac, who deals with brandy production and sold 1.500 kg of quince<sup>22</sup>.
- Thanks to the advertising on the site [www.agrolib.rs/pijaca](http://www.agrolib.rs/pijaca) Ms Ljiljana Vulic gets orders from all over Serbia and has expanded mat-maker business<sup>23</sup>
- Members of the Association, after presentation on AgroLib market and forum of the Association of beekeeper’s organizations of Serbia, increased the sale of their products<sup>24</sup>. Users of the site are also various associations like the Association of beekeepers from the village of Bagrdan<sup>25</sup> „

## 2. Weather forecast

The aim of establishing Weather forecast option within AgroLib site is to provide the farmers with accurate weather forecast which is of a great importance for the agricultural production especially in the season of field works. “*Weather forecast* is updated several times a day with data from the service <http://www.weather.com>, which offers up-to-date data on weather for the most part of the world<sup>26</sup>“.

## 3. Digital agricultural collection

During creation and development of AgroLib website a part Digital was foreseen which aims to enhance the farmers the access to professional information by means of network, without coming to the Library. The farmers are during most of the year busy with agricultural works (especially during the season of field works when they work the whole day) and they have no much free time to visit the Library.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pVLYaurqfE> , (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWbGt54pXTw&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWbGt54pXTw&feature=player_embedded) , (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYocJ8ND7BM> , (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UkbimYT0zc> , (downloaded on 10 April 2014).

<sup>25</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013) *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , [PDF \(693kB\)](#).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

The first Agricultural Digital collection <http://www.agrolib.rs/digital/zbirka/index><sup>27</sup> was created and published on AgroLib digital section and contains: old numbers (all of the numbers from January 2009 to December 2009) of agricultural magazine Dobro jutro (Good Morning - one of our oldest and most prestigious magazines for agriculture) and old and rare books talking about the genealogy of the population of the Pomoravski region.

New digital agricultural collections (<http://jabooka.org.rs/digital><sup>28</sup>, see the image below)

The screenshot shows the website interface for the 'Народна библиотека "Радислав Никчевић" у Јагодини'. The main content area is titled 'Дигитална библиотека' and 'Пољопривреда'. It includes a search bar with a 'Постави филтер' button and a 'Редослед:' dropdown menu. A grid of 20 book covers is displayed, each with a magnifying glass icon and a title. The sidebar on the right contains a 'Збирке' section with a list of categories like 'Књиге', 'Завичајне књиге', and 'Стручне књиге'. Below that is a 'Кључне речи' section listing various agricultural terms and their counts. At the bottom, there is a 'Дигиталне библиотеке у Србији' section with logos of various libraries.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.agrolib.rs/digital/zbirka/index>, (taken on 10 April 2014).

<sup>28</sup> <http://jabooka.org.rs/digital>, (taken on 10 April 2014).

During previous years of project implementation, the number of information literate farmers has increased which resulted in modified need for the access to information. So far, a large number of farmers successfully completed IT training and they are capable of using computers and the Internet. That is why the farmers, users of AgroLib service, expressed their need for expansion of digital collection in area of agriculture in order to be able to access to larger number of professional publications from their homes by means of Internet.

Within AgroLib service the farmers adopt new computer knowledge and skills, learn how to use social networks and forums, to search useful information in agricultural area and in which way to advertise and sell their products via the Internet.

The education of farmers was also helped by professional lectures organized in village libraries in different scopes of agriculture, as well as by the possibility to use actual agricultural professional publications, books and magazines, in paper and digital form. Knowledge and information acquired in such way by the farmers influenced the increase of productivity and stimulated initiation of numerous successful agro businesses. In such way the economic and social status of farmers, users of new AgroLib service was improved.

By improvement of software for digitalization in Public Library in Jagodina better visibility, easier searching and united collection of all the volumes at one place were enabled. Due to that a new collection of agricultural books and magazines was joined to the new web site of Public Library in Jagodina <http://jabooka.org.rs/digital> for displaying digital collections.

New digital collection in area of agriculture contains:

1. Books in area of fruit growing.
2. Books in area of growing snails.
3. Books in area of truck farming.
4. Books in area of bee growing.

Selection of books that will be included into the new digital collection of agricultural professional literature was conditioned by concrete demands of farmers – users of AgroLib service and their need for improvement in activities they have already dealt with in agricultural practice.

During implementation of AgroLib project, equipping the rural libraries with professional agricultural publications has been performed according to the principle of selecting topics by questioning farmers (monographic and serial).

Besides that farmers in the villages of the municipality have need for literature by which they would improve already present production, a need occurred with them for agricultural literature that deals with agricultural areas which are currently very up-to-date (e.g. books on snails, truffle, hazelnut, nut, raspberry, blueberry etc.), in order to improve and expand their agricultural business in such way. Improvement of the existing and initiation of new (more profitable) production have been basic criteria for selecting publications that would be represented in new digital collection.

## Replication

Universality of AgroLib-Ja concept allowed the model of Agricultural libraries in Jagodina, Serbia, to be repeated and successfully adapted to their cultural environment and socio-economic conditions by three public libraries in the following countries: Klintaine Public Library in Latvia, Pasvalys Marius Katiliskis Public Library in Lithuania and Regional public and University Library Goce Delchev in FYROM. EIFL's PLIP (Public Library Innovation Programme) supported financially their efforts about implementation of projects.

### Key achievements for a three-year period of project implementation

“Public Library „Radislav Nikcevic“ has revitalized five village libraries, in Bunar, Bagrdan, Glavinci, Glogovac (supported by EIFL- PLIP, 2010) and Majur (supported by Beyond Access 2013), transforming them into information centres for rural communities, where people can meet, exchange experiences, learn and find information<sup>29</sup>”. Completely renovated and adapted libraries provides pleasant environment where farmers can gather to share useful information and gain new knowledge. Educated and IT trained librarians provide assistance and support to the farmers.

“Today, over 900 farmers regularly visit the rural libraries and use the AgroLib-Ja services:

- **Agricultural journals and literature**

Agricultural journals and literature help farmers in applying new farming methods and their production has been enhanced.

- **Agricultural professional lectures**

In three years, over 1.000 farmers attended panel discussions and agricultural lectures which affected agricultural production to be enhanced. So far, the libraries hosted 37 professional lectures with 23 recognized speakers attended by 1,791 farmers.

- **ICT training and Internet**

Farmers' ICT literacy increases through IT training, using computers and the Internet in the libraries. Free Internet and ICT training helps farmers in sharing best practices and searching for

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<sup>29</sup> TANASIJEVIĆ, Suzana (2013) *New model of library marketing for farmers and promotional creativity in action*. Paper presented at: [IFLA WLIC 2013 — Singapore — "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities"](#) in Session 86 - Management and Marketing, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/153> , [PDF \(693kB\)](#).

useful information. Till now, over 200 farmers have attended ICT training. From January to March 2013, there were 7 ICT trainings for 27 farmers<sup>30</sup>.

- **AgroLib Market**

The portal AgroLib offers to the farmers, automatic weather updates, news, digitized magazines and books and within online marketplace [www.agroli.rs/pijaca/](http://www.agroli.rs/pijaca/) for free registration, advertising and selling of agricultural products. During the three years, the AgroLib website had more than 90.000 visitors. According to the latest Library data of 2014, the number of total users to the site is 127.620. The financial situation of farmers improves through advertising on the online marketplace for farmers.

## **Conclusion**

Rural libraries became places that encourage and professionally empower farmers through ICT education and training. Thanks to that, farmers have changed and adopted a new pattern of living that is now based on information and media literacy and lifelong learning. That is one of the most significant achievements of AgroLib – Ja project. AgroLib has also had impact on the change of attitude of local community and authorities towards libraries.

The case of AgroLib-Ja project and the Public library in Jagodina show that today, modern public libraries are relevant entities and creators of change in society that lead to improvement of the lives of people in the local community and beyond.

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