

Advocacy through videos **Short movies on school libraries**

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Abstract:

The Portuguese School Libraries Network Program (SLNP) has commemorated its 20th anniversary in 2016. Several initiatives were prepared to mark this event, some of them involving students, the main patrons of school libraries.

“Short movies on school libraries” was a challenge presented to students. They would have to prove that their school library was the best through the production of a short movie, according to given rules. After that they could, during a certain period, publicize their video in the school communities through the school library YouTube Channel, blog and Facebook page. Finally, the videos were uploaded to the School Libraries Network (SLN) Facebook page, where people could like and comment them. The twenty videos that obtained a larger number of likes were the ones that got the right to be inserted in the SLN-20 years webpage. (20 years – 20 videos). Students had to mobilize their communities to like their movie and all the followers of SLN Facebook page were also invited to participate.

This initiative involved almost 130 school libraries and more than 1000 students. In each school the process was monitored and coordinated by the teacher librarian.

The critical thinking skills were exercised through this challenge. In fact, students had to brainstorm about what they consider relevant and most important in their school libraries and about the way to convey their idea to people who are not familiar with it.

Another important matter of discussion was the way social media reach people and influence their way of thinking. Students had an opportunity to take advantage of that influence for a positive cause.

It was an excellent way to advocate for school libraries by leading a lot of people that usually don't pay attention to them, to be aware of the value they have for their children and teens.

Keywords: school libraries, advocacy, video, social media, community

Introduction

According to the definition of AASL, advocacy is an “On-going process of building partnerships so that **others will act for and with you, turning passive support into educated action for the library program.**”

Although in many cases we can speak of passive support to Portuguese school libraries when we think of school communities, there are still many people who are quite unaware of the work of school libraries and, therefore, unable to value them properly. This was one of the premises that were in the origin of this initiative. The other one was the fact that young people are extremely open to communication through videos and in fact do it all the time. A lot of formal but mostly informal learning occurs for example through YouTube videos. According to YouTube statistics, 91% of 13-17 years old US Internet users use YouTube. The study does not specify Portugal, but our empirical perception leads us to the conclusion that we are dealing with a very high percentage.

Therefore this is the right context for the action we designed. Its pretext was to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Portuguese School Libraries Network in the widest possible way, involving school communities throughout the country and extending as much as possible the knowledge of the larger public about the work done by school libraries.

20 Years of School Libraries in Portugal

The School Library Network Program was launched in 1996 by the Portuguese Ministries of Education and Culture. Its mission was to create and develop school libraries in public K12 schools, providing their users with the necessary resources to reading and to the access, use and production of information in all media. It is managed by an Agency and articulates with other central and regional services of the Ministry of Education, with municipalities, public libraries, universities, etc..

The support and monitoring of school libraries and the transmission of the orientations from the SLN Agency is guaranteed by an intermediate structure: a group of regional coordinators who are responsible for a number of school libraries and provide technical support and training to teacher librarians.

Schools in Portugal are organized in groups or clusters. In each of these groups there may be several school libraries integrated in the SLN. Depending on the number of school libraries and on the number of students in each group of schools, there may be one, two or three teacher librarians who are in charge of the school libraries management and of the collaboration with the curriculum for the development of literacies. Teacher librarians also provide library services to all the schools that don't have a library.

There are around 2450 school libraries integrated in the SLN, which means a very good coverage of the territory. It took 20 years of a very sustainable program to reach this coverage and to place school libraries in the level of quality where they are now. The celebration of this anniversary was an important milestone in this journey and we wanted to implicate everyone: teacher librarians and regional coordinators, students, teachers, board directors, parents, community partners (public librarians, education boards of municipalities, mayors,...). We launched an online form to collect testimonials and we got around 3500 contributions. Several video testimonials were also registered and we challenged students to further participate with the production of a short video in which they were supposed to demonstrate why their school library is the best or, at least, why they appreciate it. To this challenge we called "*Short movies on school libraries*".

Rules and marketing

The first phase of the project was the elaboration of the rules. According to these rules each teacher librarian could invite students, individually or in small groups to produce a short video in which they would explain their ideas about the school library and show how they appreciated it. The teacher librarian was responsible to discuss the rules with students and to check if they followed them. Besides he/she would have to discuss the ways to publicize the videos in their school and to find a way of electing the best video to be presented to the SLN and publicized at the national level. All the rules concerning the necessary permissions to use personal images, music for soundtracks or pictures were made very clear, so that teacher librarians could discuss them with students. Instructions were given concerning the use of the SLN logo, references to image or music used in the video and technical datasheet.

At the school level the videos could be uploaded to the school library's YouTube channel or Facebook page. Finally, the chosen video would be sent to the SLN and, on a given date all

the received videos would be uploaded to the [SLN Facebook page](#). After that, each school library, each group of students, each school had to motivate their communities to visit SLN Facebook page and like the video of their school library.

The SLN Agency took care of the graphic materials: the logo and a flyer to motivate students.



Figure 1: Logo



Figure 2: Flyer

The process

The school libraries got enthusiastically involved in the process and 130 videos were sent to the SLN as the product of the choice that took place in schools. In the production of those selected videos more than 1000 students participated. In the case of primary schools the influence of teacher librarians is sometimes clearly visible, while older students presented their proposals more independently, tech-savvy as they mostly are. Nevertheless, teacher librarians were always there, first to guarantee that the whole process ran according to the rules and then to mobilize their communities to see the videos, to like them, to consider them

as their own. This happened both in the schools' YouTube channels and Facebook pages and, in the last phase, in the SLN Facebook page.

Between the reception of the videos by the SLN Agency and their publication in Facebook we had a two week period to verify if everything was working and, in some cases we had to ask teacher librarians to do some changes, mostly because the selected music, although found in sites of free music, was not free, after all, or not considered free by Facebook.

Finally, at the due date, the *short movies* were published. School libraries and students had a whole month to mobilize their communities to vote and the “competition” started. According to Facebook statistics there was a peak in visualizations immediately after the publication (50 000) but in the middle of the month the videos still generated a considerable amount of traffic (5000). (Figure 3)

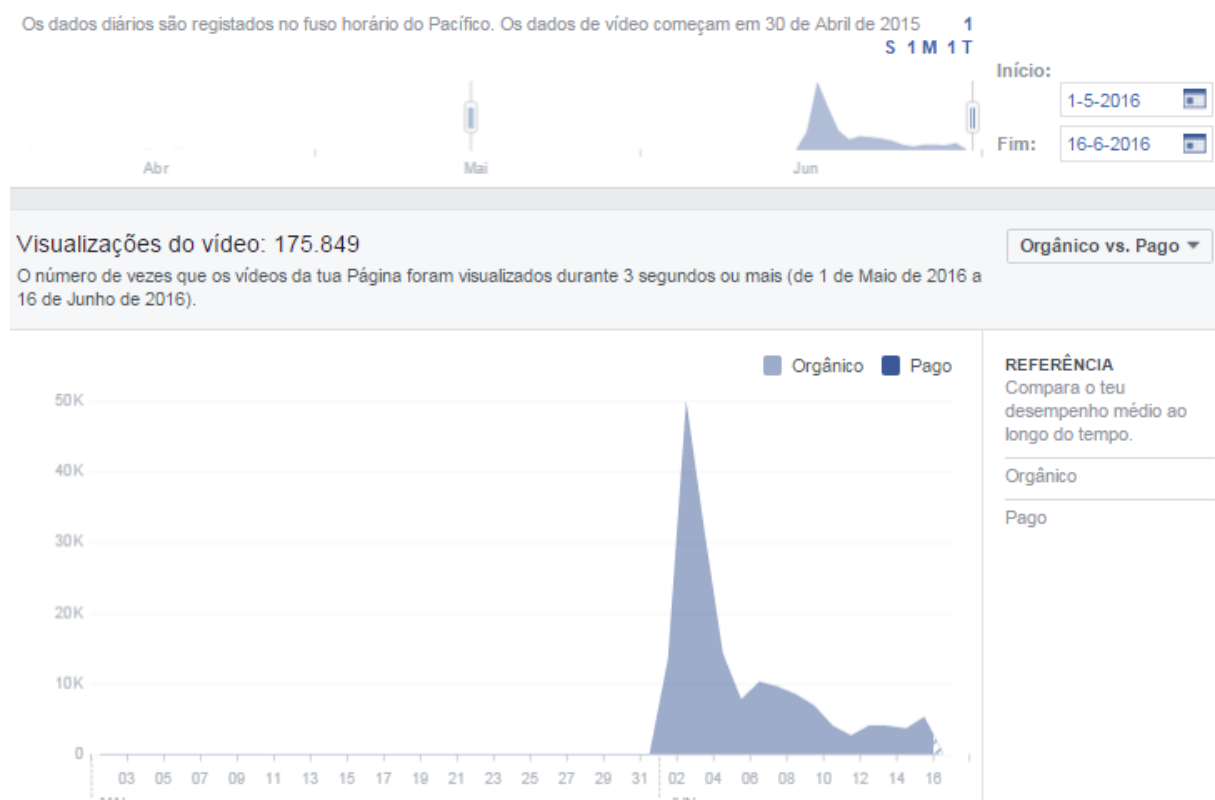


Figure 3: Number of video visualizations from May 1st to June 16th 2016

The chart concerning the publication outreach of the page confirms this tendency: almost 120 000 in the beginning of June and about 25 000 in mid-June. The same happens with the number of likes (Figure 4): from almost 1200 to 100.

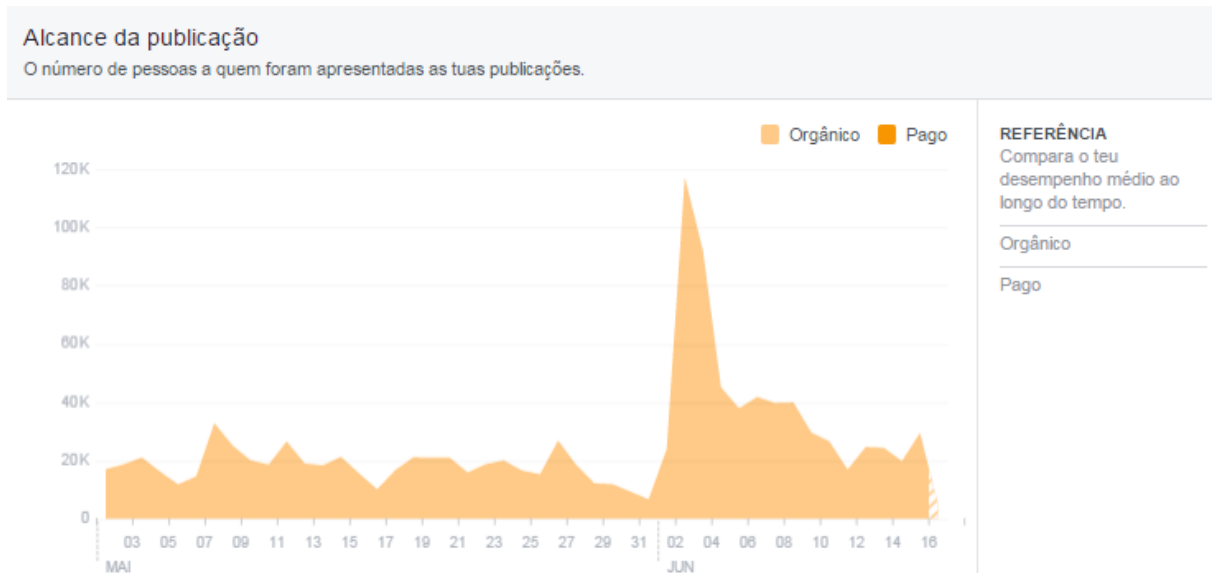


Figure 4: Publication outreach from May 1st to June 16th 2016



Figure 5: Number of likes from May 1st to June 16th 2016

Vídeos principais						▶ Video Library
Os vídeos mais vistos na Página que foram visualizados durante 3 segundos ou mais (para vídeos publicados entre 1 de Maio de 2016 e 16 de Junho de 2016).						
Publicado	Vídeo	Definição do público-alvo	Alcance	Visualizações	Conclusão média	
01-06-2016 18:00	 32. EB Ferreira de Almeida; AE de Santa		26,6K 	9,3K 	26% 0:31 / 2:00	
01-06-2016 18:00	 1. EB das Naus, AE Gil Eanes; Lagos		26,5K 	7,7K 	31% 0:37 / 2:00	
01-06-2016 18:00	 21. EB General Serpa Pinto; AE General		14,2K 	6,6K 	28% 0:29 / 1:47	
01-06-2016 18:00	 126. ES de Barcelinhos;		14,3K 	6,2K 	35% 0:23 / 1:05	
01-06-2016 18:00	 56. EB Viso; AE Viso; Viseu.		9,9K 	4K 	25% 0:25 / 1:44	

Figure 6: Outreach and visualizations of the top 5 videos

Each week we published the ranking in Facebook and in the SLN blog.



Figure 7: Extract of Facebook page

This clearly motivated school libraries to enhance their promotion work and in the last week the competition grew really strong, until the announcement of the 20 short movies that got the largest number of likes and thus had a place in the [SLN 20th anniversary webpage](#) (Figures 8 and 9):

retratos

Perspetivas e ângulos de visão de intervenientes e parceiros desta rede permitem uma imagem multifacetada do que é a RBE.

Curtas sobre as bibliotecas, apresentações sobre redes concelhias, testemunhos escritos e em vídeo, contribuem para construir a imagem do que somos.



curtas na biblioteca



testemunhos



redes na rede



mídia

Figure 8: SLN 20th anniversary webpage – Retratos (Portraits)

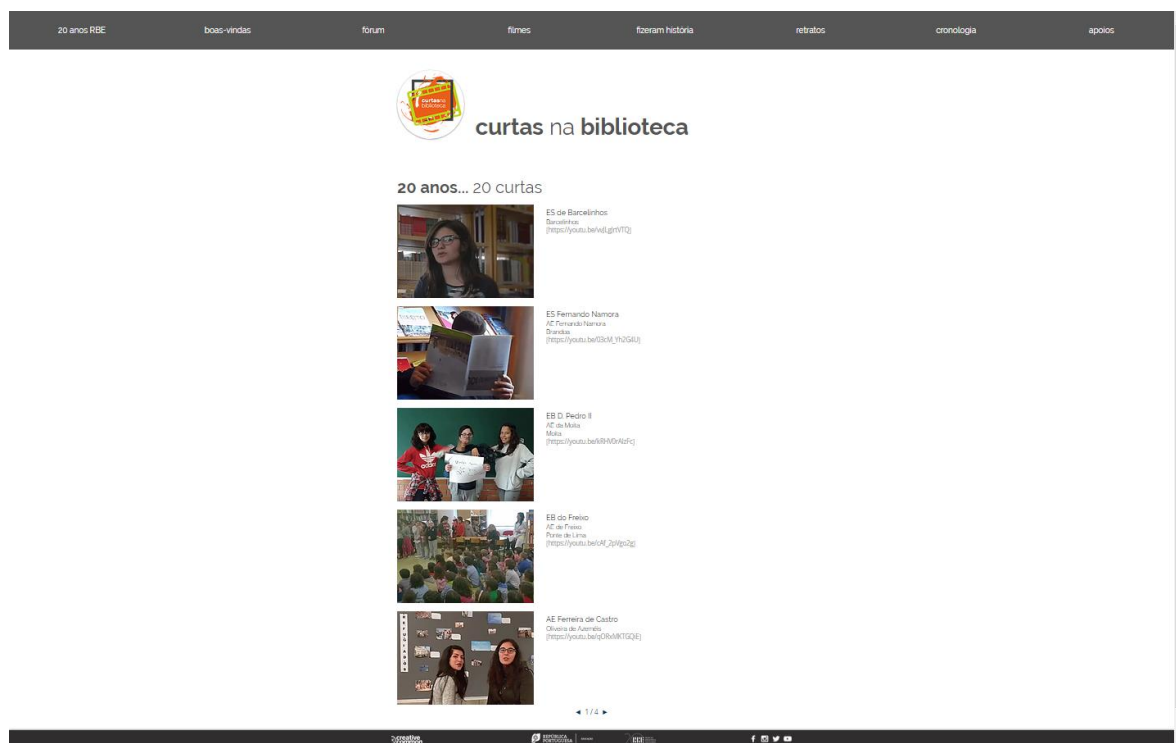


Figure 9: Short movies on school libraries: 20 years ...20 movies

An overview of the short movies

The twenty chosen short movies were not always the best ones, technically or creatively speaking. There was no jury to analyse them. It all depended on the library's and the students' efforts and capacity to mobilize their community, that is to say, to achieve the main objective of this initiative: to advocate for the school library by making it as widely known in the community as possible.

To illustrate the creativity and the variety of angles from which school libraries are looked at in these videos, we will shortly describe some of the ones that drew our attention:

- When the school bell rings, the students feel a magical appeal coming from the library and they go there. Inside the library, where they are looking for books and information, they appear disguised as for instance, the character of a book, a ballerina, a football player, an astronaut, ... each of them finding his/her favourite matters in the library. Then, the bell rings again and the spell is broken.
- Students perform a rap they composed about the library and, as their school has a significant number of deaf students who are integrated in regular classes, one of those students takes part in the rap using sign language.
- The school library is presented in its several areas by a plasticine ball that transforms in a tiny character climbing to bookcases, tables, computers, while the narration explains all one can do in the library.
- The video is a replica of a TV ad of a bank, but it is all about the library. A pretty girl asks questions and answers them herself, while moving through the library zones: "Where can you find all the information you need? In the school library, of course!...". "In the school library, of course!" is the answer to all the questions.

Conclusions

This challenge was very much appreciated by students and teacher librarians who gave their best to advocate for their school libraries and worked hard to involve their communities. Some were more successful than others, which is natural, but, as a whole, all considered it a very rewarding experience through which they developed different skills and learning.

Critical thinking skills were exercised through this challenge. In fact, students had to brainstorm about what they consider relevant and most important in their school libraries and about the way to convey their idea to people who are not familiar with them. In many cases they were, first of all, led to watch other promotional films and to criticize them. Then, they made their script and discussed it and finally they captured the images and produced the short movies.

In most cases all was done through collaborative work and students had to listen to the ideas of others, discuss them and agree on a final design for their short movie.

Another important matter of discussion was the way social media reach people and influence their way of thinking. Students had an opportunity to take advantage of that influence for a positive cause.

This was not a contest. What worked like a prize was to have a place in the SLN website and the ones who could influence the result were the members of the school communities. It was an excellent way to advocate for school libraries by leading a lot of people that usually don't pay attention to them, to be aware of the value they have for their children and teens. We believe that, through this initiative support to the school libraries became very active in that period of time and that, together with all the actions the SLN 20th anniversary involved, will have a very positive influence in the fostering of an "educated action for the library program".

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