

Digital Publishing for Children in the Public Library - the Success and Challenges

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Abstract:

Publishing model of the Public library "Fran Galović" Koprivnica, Croatia attracted an interest of professionals at the IFLA Congress 2016 (the article version of author's presentation is available at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/jjep/3336451.0020.207?view=text;rgn=main>).

The newest practice of the same library in digital publishing for children will be presented. The Library has launched a pilot project in 2018 to attract interest of children to the library and reading in digital environment.

Successes were: more than 50 children between the age of 5 and 12 came to the Library to research and learn about local history, myths and legends; they developed their creativity in writing and illustrating picture books, and increased their ICT skills by digitizing fairy tales. Results have been 8 digital picture books, as an innovative approach to reading by combining the world of fairy tales (the history, legends, cultural heritage) and the digital world (tools for their internet availability) (available at <http://www.knjiznica-koprivnica.hr/knjiznica/defaultcont.asp?id=504&n=2>). Special font was used and audio format was produced to make picture books accessible to children with reading difficulties.

Challenges were: in the lack of digital picture books in Croatia librarians as mentors to children had to find their own model of publishing; they had to discover the most optimal online format for digital publishing; they were not able to produce picture books alone, but in finding partners in local writer and volunteers; there is a question visibility and availability of digital picture books to children and parents (digital format on internet and smartphones vs analogue format on book shelves).

Keywords: digital picture books, publishing, Public Library “Fran Galović” Koprivnica, reading in digital environment, mythology

1. Introduction

Public Library "Fran Galović" Koprivnica is a local library located in Croatian medium-sized medieval town Koprivnica. Library is awarded national and international for its innovative services in promoting reading and literacy. One of its goals is to preserve the local tradition and cultural heritage. In this sense, it is important to work with the youngest users. There is a lack of literature intended for children about local history, myths and legends. Modern generations do not know local legends that have been preserved for generations. Although today's children love stories about dragons, fairies, wizards, they do not know that there is a whole spectrum of mythological creatures with various abilities that people retold in the past to explain unknown natural wonders. That is why we started a project in the library where children, librarians and local artists will participate in consultation with experts. From this collaboration, digital picture books were created, and children now can learn about long forgotten myths and legends.

2. Previous experience in digital publishing

Public Library "Fran Galović" Koprivnica appeared as a publisher of digital publications in 2008 through the digitization of local newspapers. It was a project of pioneering character in the Republic of Croatia, which continued in the following years (continuation of digitization of local newspapers, works of Fran Galovic, postcards of the city of Koprivnica, virtual exhibition devoted to the First World War).¹ In 2013, the first digital publication for children and adults was published - virtual exhibition "Looking for the oldest picture book in Koprivnica".² A picture book about the town of Koprivnica, illustrated and written by children, was published in 2014.³ The digital book of traditional recipes named "Grandma's Cookbook" was published in 2016.⁴ This is a collection of recipes written by grandmothers and in cooperation with House for Senior Citizens Koprivnica. Illustrations for the publication were made by children in a workshop. Creative workshop "Princess at the End of the World" mentored by local writer and educator Ivana Kranzelić was held in the summer of 2017. The workshop inspired her to write a fairytale about the characters created by the children. The result was a new digital picture book.⁵ This picture book encouraged librarians to initiate a new project for publishing eight digital picture books.

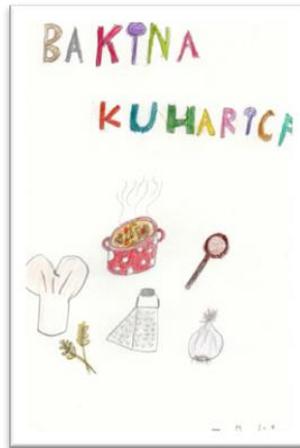
¹ Sabolović-Krajina, Dijana. Small Public Libraries as Publishers // The Journal of Electronic Publishing, Volume 20, Issue 2 (Summer 2017). Retrived from: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jep/3336451.0020.207/--small-public-libraries-as-publishers?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

² Available on-line: [link](#)

³ Available on-line: [link](#)

⁴ Available on-line: [link](#)

⁵ Available on-line: [link](#)



Digital book of traditional recipes "Grandma`s Cookbook”⁶

3. About the new project and its goals

To answer the question how to attract children to the library and reading, Library launched a pilot project "*The Princess at the End of the World - an innovative and creative project to encourage children reading in the digital environment*". Project was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. The main goals were encouraging children to read by using digital technology, encouraging their creativity and innovation through multidisciplinary experiential learning. Some of the specific goals were developing the skills and ability to actively listen and retelling, enrichment of vocabulary, developing of imagination and creative imagination, developing digital competencies, connecting the world of fairytale (cultural heritage) with the world of digital technology, using technology in the service of encouraging reading, in a useful, creative and innovative way, encourage children to recycle materials in creation and nurturing ecological lifestyle and promoting volunteering.

4. Implementation

The project started in May 2018 and finished in November 2018. Picture books were created on the basis of creative workshops that combined the literary and artistic expression of children. Children researched and learned about local history and mythology and then create a new stories through the free interpretation, but also adopting the basic elements of a fairytale (supernatural creatures, tempting heroes, moral lessons, happy ending). In the second part of the workshop, children learned how to design, create and publish picture books in digital format.

⁶ Available on-line: [link](#)



Researching and creating a new story in a workshop



Children are learning how to scan.



Children create picture books using the online publishing tool

5. Successes

Library organized 8 workshops with a total of 115 participants. More than 50 children between the age of 5 and 12 came to the Library to research and learn about local history, myths and legends. This was very important for children to create something new for themselves and for other children. They developed their creativity in writing and illustrating picture books. The children learned a lot of forgotten stories, poems, customs and natural sights like Drava River, homeland forests, mountain Kalnik. The children used different techniques (wooden crayons, markers, water colors) to draw story characters. They increased their ICT skills by digitizing fairytale learning how to scanning, using software tools for editing text and images and using Internet publishing tools. To make picture books accessible to children with reading difficulties, special font was used and audio format was produced. Final results are 8 digital picture books:

Wizard Gordon

In this fairytale we follow the adventures of wizard Gordon who meets the mythological creature, Mrakula. He lives in the dark. Together they go to the Drava River to admire the beauties of their region. There they meet another mythological creature - the Drava fairy, which with its beauty attracts the boys and wants to drown them. Mrakula saved him and Gordon learned that appearance doesn't define goodness.⁷



Wizard Gordon promo material

Nettle City

This is a story about city Koprivnica and mythological creatures Glođani – creatures from underground world. For illustration, the children used well known city sights and inspiration for Glođani they found in a Croatian mhytology⁸ and in illustrations of South American artist Patricio Agüero Mariño.⁹



Nettle City promo material

⁷ Available on-line: [link](#)

⁸ Balog, Vid. Hrvatska bajoslovlja. Zagreb: AGM, 2011.

⁹ Available on-line: [link](#)

Aquarius of Drava River

Aquarius of Drava River is the most powerful and most dangerous of all Aquarius who get angry on children. Children try to hide from him and they get help from other mythological creature like Grabar who lives in swamp.¹⁰



Aquarius of Drava River promo material

Slavko at the Knight's Tournament

Koprivnica is a medieval city where the Renaissance Festival is held. That was the inspiration for the story about a knight Slavko fighting for the princess. As he is a good man in his help comes a powerful dragon Pozoj. It is a mythological creature with four heads and a mace tail.¹¹



Slavko at the Knight's Tournament promo material

Forest at the End of the World

This is a story with an ecological theme. It is about mythological creature Pesoglavac - a forest spirit with a dog head that destroys the forest. Forest fairies, unicorn, black knight Markulesa and Kačji Caesar (the mythical king of the snakes) trying to save the forest.¹²



Forest at the End of the World promo material

¹⁰ Available on-line: [link](#)

¹¹ Available on-line: [link](#)

¹² Available on-line: [link](#)

Knight Slavko in the Library

The knight Slavko became bored in the past and he jumped into the time machine and arrived at the Public Library „Fran Galovic“. There he meets the children and books they love to read, and finally he joins the Library.¹³



Knight Slavko in the Library promo material

Postcards from the Future

In the story "Postcards from the future", the great wizard looked at his crystal ball and discovered what the kids are doing from the "Princess at the End of the World" project. He was delighted and he confirmed the sentence of famous writer Arthur C. Clark that there was no difference between advanced technology and magic.¹⁴



Postcards from the Future promo material

Giant Leđan

This is a story about little wizards, the beauties of Mount Kalnik, the legend about the Black Queen and the angry giant.¹⁵



Giant Leđan promo material

¹³ Available on-line: [link](#)

¹⁴ Available on-line: [link](#)

¹⁵ Available on-line: [link](#)

6. Challenges

One of the biggest challenges was to design a personal model for publishing digital picture books. In Croatia there is a lack of e-books for children in their native language. On the other hand, we see that today's children love reading by using new technologies. The library has accepted the challenge. We created a project that offer children interesting stories about cultural heritage in an interesting way and make them attractive through digital content. We had to discover the most optimal online format for digital publishing. We used free available tool for publishing picture books "Book Creator". This tool has the ability to record sound and use the font for dyslexic persons. All picture books are sounded so they can be tracked by children with reading difficulties and children who are still unable to read. We were not able to produce picture books alone. We could do it only with partnership with local writer Ivana Kranželić, children and their parents. The project involved team of librarians who organized and promoted workshops, prepared materials, photographed, cared about administration, searched information, digitized content, edited text, graphically edited books, recorded the sound, edited and published picture books. One of the challenges that we are still facing is a question of visibility and availability of digital picture books. That is why we invest great efforts in promotion.

7. Promotion

Promotional materials for children, kindergartens and schools were made to popularize reading on other media. The design of the promo material was made by the company 2che from Koprivnica. They designed a logo, a slogan, promotional invitations, posters with qr code which leads to digital picture books, 8 bookmarks with cover pages and qr codes, backpacks for children. We organize storytelling hours in kindergartens and in Community Assistance Center for Children, we read digital picture books in a mobile library and during the group visits kindergartens and schools.



Poster with slogan „Mythical creatures in a digital story“

8. Plans for the future

In the summer of 2019 we are planning to open a digital story tune. The library's children's department will be equipped with a tent, computer, and Bluetooth speaker. Our wish is to make an attractive place for children where they can read and listen to digital stories. We are planning to make existing stories interactive so that children can learn more about the myths and we would like to publish a traditional book.

8. Conclusion

Public Library "Fran Galović" Koprivnica has been appearing for more than 10 years as a publisher encouraging new and positive trends in publishing not only in the city Koprivnica but also in Croatia and beyond. With this example, we can conclude that Library publishing is continuous and sustainable and that libraries should get involved in publishing. It is challenging but it is also a success.

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