



The Boys as Minority in Libraries and Reading Promotion Activities

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Abstract: Libraries statistics and IEA PIRLS shows that boys in Latvia are minority of library users and their reading skills are lower than girls. This facts leaves influence on education and shows that boys are not so able as girls. That's one of reason why 2010 in Latvia is reading year with motto – more than one life. In this year hapens many activities specially for boys to show them that reading is fun, easy and great free time activity.

Key words: childrens literature, boys, reading promotion.

Libraries statistic in Latvia shows that boys are minority of library users: they are more likely to read for a purpose and they must see the point in it'; they often prefer non-fiction, illustrated books and 'fun facts' materials; they frequently choose books 'because they feel they have to', but may be more susceptible than girls to recommendations from librarians and teachers; boys are drawn to fiction related to out of school interests – sport, computers, music; they enjoy fast-paced stories, with plenty of action; boys may have more difficulty identifying themselves in stories; they visit libraries, but to meet, browse, and play games, far fewer of them take books out.

Nine years ago the National Library of Latvia Children's Literature Centre with financial support of the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia was originated the first reading promotion project "Children's Jury". Very fats the project acquired status of the national target programme, and implementation of it thousand children, at the first project year when it was only tested in two libraries approximately 30 children taked part, now, after nine year work, in 2009 commenced in 480 libraries all over Latvia, by involving 15 000 children as assessors and experts of the latest books. It was the urge to involve wider audience of young readers into exchange of opinions on newly published books; to get to know opinion of country-children by providing the same opportunities for them as for town-children as regards access to new books still smelling of print-shop. Project's organizers wanted to arouse minds of Latvian writers for new ideas, to assist in establishment of closer ties and dialogue with the most demanding readers who were



sincerely named as Experts of the Children's Jury in libraries involved in the project. Unfortunately all this years only one third part of project participants were boys. More boys were in first two groups (from first till fourth class) but in other two groups (from fifth till ninth class) only twenty per cent.

Even IEA (The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) organized reading promotion research PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) in 2001 and 2006 shows that girls read more, oftener and better than boys. In 2006 IEA PIRLS research Latvia where one of six countries was found big literacy difference between boys and girls. This fact indicates inequality in education between gender and shows that boys are not so able as girls. This reading promotion research proves that the same factors affect the various boys and girls. That's why, teachers, parents and other education practitioners should be aware of this fact, to most effectively organize literary literacy learning of both sexes.

IEA PIRLS results is one of reasons why 2010 in Latvia is a reading year with motto – more than one life. The aim of this year is to create a desire in people to read books. Reading encouragement will also be a book clubs forming and visiting the bookstores and libraries. Especially will focus on boy's reading promotion.

Education and Science Minister Tatjana Kože in opening ceremony of this year pointed that the interest in reading and literacy is necessary to promote from an early age, because getting to know the book world is a solid basis for all life.

One of the major reading promotion programs of the reading year is "Guys read!". All summer in twenty nine Riga's city public libraries will happen different activities: "Aircraft Modelling": videocourse, practical lesson; "My favorite book": poll for boys; "Profession – a hero" (for the firefighter job). Excursion to the Northern District State Fire and Rescue Service; "Superboy": contest; "Pirates" – readers write pirate story, illustrated and presented in the book. Recipes will be fictional in the pirate style. Books about pirates have hidden references which follow, will be able to find the great mystery box. 30th for the "Party in pirate style" in the branch library; "I for you, you for me!": exhibition, where readers recommend to other readers of an interesting book; "The book



of knights and princess": action, which can become a knight or a princess, where will recommend one book to others and yourself will read other suggested books. This and many other activities is with one goal to show boys that reading is fun, easy and great free time activity.

This and other reading promotion activities bring's very many positive aspects. I would mention just some of them: boys interest about the latest literature will increase; scope of pupils' knowledge expanded; popularity of library increased; new readers involved in work of the experts' groups who took an active part in organisation of library undertakings; boys became more unconstrained and independent in their decisions; library offered one more way how to express oneself, how to go on one's own to children; many boys who had read unwillingly by the present involved in the project. For many boys it was their first travel to literature.

