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Tampere City Public Library
promotes books and supports
media literacy skills

CULTURE OF READING IS CHANGING

The way of how young people spend their leisure time has changed dramatically in the 21st century. Information technology is a self-evidently important part of their everyday life. The technologized life of young people is connected to a broader change in society. Technologized life also changes the ways of reading. According to leisure time studies in Finland, children's reading culture has changed in a radical way from 1960 to 2010.

From the point of view of libraries, the change of reading habits is significant. Supporting reading has always been one of the basic missions of libraries. Today, the role of the library is expanding from promoting reading and books to supporting also new literacies. Reading books and paper magazines is decreasing, and reading happens more and more on screens. Libraries still offer access to traditional media like books and magazines, but also make new media more accessible to library users. Media education and supporting media literacy skills are both new, demanding tasks in libraries.

Public libraries have a significant role in media education among children and young people: libraries aim to support their media and information literacy, as well as information management skills. Children and young people's media world is a part of the everyday work

in libraries. Libraries for instance organise controlled game nights for children and young people, and also offer console games (Wii, PS3 and Xbox) to loan.

In Finland, the role of libraries on the media education field is defined into five main subjects. Libraries support information literacy, media literacy, game literacy, social media skills and copyright knowledge.

STUDYING THE USE OF MEDIA AMONG CHILDREN IN FINLAND

Finnish Society on Media Education has recently published two important studies about children's media use. *Children's media barometer 2010* researched the usage of media among 0-8-year-olds in Finland. According to that study, the media use begins at very early age. One-year-old children and even younger ones played digital games and used internet and mobile phones. They were also in daily contact with TV and visual recordings. Of course children in that age used media in company of their parents.

The study also showed that the tradition of bedtime stories is still very strong in Finnish families. Out of 3-4 years-old, 80% read books daily and 98% weekly. The study shows that books and TV were still the most popular media among 5-6-year-olds but the gaming and internet use begins at the same age.

Specially families with small children should be provided more information on children's media cultures. The role of children's media use should be discussed for instance in day care centres.

The equivalent study made one year later, *Children's media barometer 2011* described the usage of media among 7-11 years-old in Finland. Children are using media diversely. Most of the respondents used TV, visual recordings and digital games weekly. Over 50% also read books, used internet and listened music at least once a week. Most of 7-years-old children know how to use mobile phones, dvd players, cameras and internet pages. In the age of 11, especially the ways of using me-

dia of girls are changing. In this age, the usage of media (contents and numbers) is coming closer to that of teenagers.

USING INTERNET FOR PROMOTING BOOKS

In Finland, Internet is widely used for promoting reading among children and youth. There are literature and children culture web sites produced on national level by public libraries. Okariino (<http://www.okariino.fi/>) is a web site for children, and Sivupiiri web site (www.sivupiiri.fi) is for the youth, both organized by Libraries.fi. On these sites children and youth can find book, movie and game tips, discuss with each other, make a book, movie or game reviews or write their own stories. Both sites are interactive, audiovisual, easy to use and visually beautiful.

Libraries.fi is a professional library service and a web library that provides access to Finnish Library Net Services under one user interface. Libraries.fi is produced in co-operation by Finnish libraries. The nationwide Media education (<http://www.mediakasvatus.fi/node/194>) website is available also for library professionals to use.

MEDIA EDUCATION LESSONS FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS

How the media education appears in every day life of the Tampere City Library? As well as the child obviously needs guidance in traffic, guidance is also needed in using media. Tampere City Library founds media literacy teaching one of its most important tasks. Library invites all pre-schoolers (6-year-olds) to media education lessons in the IT-classes of the library or in the internet bus Netti-Nysse owned by the library.

Pre-schoolers have quite good practical skills to handle computers, but guidance is needed in handling the various contents of media. During the library visits, pre-schoolers and a librarian play together internet based game which has been made in library. The game cal-

led *The Library Cat on the Media path* has been produced in Tampere especially for this purpose together with IT professionals, kindergarten teachers and librarians. The game describes the everyday life of children surrounded by different media. The aim of the game is to get children aware of different kinds of media tools, and to help children understand the difference between a story and a fact. The game also gives children tools to handle situations if they meet scary or otherwise confusing matters in media. The basics about a safe internet use and the netiquette are dealt during game playing. The game is suitable for children between the ages 5 and 8, and can be played alone and in groups, as well as together with adults.

PROMOTING READING

Tampere City library still promotes books and reading. This aim was included in the new strategy of the library, accepted in 2011. *Book talk* to children at the 3rd class (9 years-old) is our most popular product to schools. Each 3rd class teacher in Tampere gets an invitation to take her/his class to a *Book talk* event in the library. If the class can't come to the library, a librarian goes to school. The *Book talk* events have amazing influence on children's reading habits. 9 years-old become enthusiastic about reading, and really many of them start to use library more.

The *Book talk* concept has been extended to concern also music and video games. *Music and video game talk* has been successful concept for teenagers, and also accepted by teachers.

Librarians also visit youth festivals and other happenings promoting and borrowing books, music, movies and console games. It is easy to build a pop-up library with small collection of the most popular material and a possibility for customers to borrow, too.

Children aged 10 to 12 years are the most active customers of our library: 70-80% of this age group use library services.

Children make more than 30% of all book loans in Tampere City Library. Our library also tries to ease their library usage. Childrens'

material can be reserved without any costs. Also returning delayed children's loans is free of charge.

READING DIPLOMAS

Nationwide reading diplomas are widely used in Finnish primary schools. Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) has produced broadly used and high-qualified reading diplomas for all grades in both primary and secondary schools. New reading diploma books are chosen once a year by a group of teachers and librarians.

A student can perform a reading diploma every year by reading e.g. 10 books and watching one movie about the same subject. He also has to answer questions about concerned books. If a pupil achieves a diploma, it will be marked on the spring report and he will get a certificate of honour. The goal of the reading diploma is to improve the reading interest amongst children and youngsters, and thus produce them new experiences, feelings and insights.

Teachers promote the reading diploma web sites at their classes, and public libraries offer books for pupils to borrow.

LIBRARY DOG LISTENS – MODEL FOR DYSLLEXIC CHILDREN

A new area of supporting reading in Finnish libraries is to organize reading practice possibilities for dyslexic children. The idea is that a child can read without criticism or evaluation when the listener is a dog. Reading improves because the child is practicing the skill of reading, building self-esteem, and associating reading with something pleasant. The model *Library Dog listens to you* is now spreading in libraries all over Finland. In Tampere City library we are going to start this working form next autumn.

CONCLUSION

Because of the changing reading habits, also libraries and librarians have to change. Libraries have to call for new demands by offering various models for promoting reading, and librarians have to have courage to try new working methods. Traditional books still have their value in contributing reading skills especially with small children, and paper books will keep their high valued position for long time also with adult readers.

But the continuously technologizing environment puts pressures on libraries. We have to find ways to support also new literacies. In Finland, public libraries have taken their new role on the media education field very seriously. Supporting media literacy skills is part of public libraries' everyday action in Finland.

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