

The guest of the Library blog *Geros knygos* is our colleague **Anya Feltreuter** (Sweden). Anya is the director of Mjölby Public library. She also is the Chair of Management and Marketing section for IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions).

What measures were taken in response to the virus by public libraries in Sweden? What activities and services took place in Swedish libraries during the emergency of COVID-19? Are the libraries in Sweden fully reopening for their visitors now?

Most of the public libraries in Sweden never closed, neither did Mjölby Public libraries. We have, however, implemented a lot of restrictions to protect staff and visitors.

The general restrictions in Sweden are:

- Stay home if you have symptoms (even if they are mild).
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid visiting elderly (70+) or sick people. Visits at retirement homes are not allowed.
- Work from home if possible.
- Study from home (adult education, collages and university).
- Limit your social contacts if you are 70 or older.
- Do not travel abroad and do not travel domestic – if not necessary.
- Keep distance and avoid larger gatherings. Not more than 50 people are allowed.
- Restaurants, bars, gyms, shops, libraries... are open – but with special restrictions!

We made a risk analysis for risks at the libraries associated with COVID-19 and from that analysis these actions were taken:

- Staff with mild symptoms can work from home if they have assignments they can do for home (otherwise they have to call in sick).
- We cancelled most of our events for the spring. For the fall we are arranging event again, but with a lot of restrictions.
- We are only doing tutorials if they can be made keeping the distance.
- Gloves and hand disinfection for staff and for customers is provided. We clean the computers and ledning machines on a regular basis.
- Closed small study rooms, moved furniture to make it easier to keep distance. This was also made in the lunch room and in the offices.
- Customers with symptoms are asked to leave the library.
- High risk staff is taken out of reference service.
- Plexiglas to protect staff and customers.

- Trained staff in having skype-meetings.
- Changed our opening hours to "summer opening hours", which means closing earlier on evenings and not having open on Saturdays.

What about the Mjölby Public Library? How did the period of COVID-19 emergency affect it's services? How did you reach your users during that period?

- We started offering Take Away as a new service to visitors who don't want to go inside the libraries. The visitor calls the library and asks for a couple of books or other media and collects them outside the library.
- To secure that there was enough staff in the health care during a critic period staff from the libraries (and other parts of the organization) was temporary relocated. It was all voluntary and a lot of new ideas for future cooperations came out of this.
- Some of our events this fall will be digital. For our Pride Parade we are considering locating it to Minecraft. We already have a virtual Mjölby made by local kids.
- My co-workers used the skills they've learned to make films and share on facebook.
- My co-workers (finally!) learned how to have Skype-meetings ☺

You are the Chair of IFLA Management and Marketing section. Did you have any online discussions with your colleagues from Standing Committee regarding the unusual situation in the libraries during the pandemic?

Yes! Since most public libraries in the world was closed a period of time, Sweden was seen as an unusual example.

It is commonly believed that we discover the magical world of books in our childhood. Still, people are different. When did books become a significant part of your life?

My parents read a lot for me as a child and since I learned to read myself I have always been reading a lot from time to time, especially as a teenager and a young adult. As a mother I appreciate the evening when I read to my children. They can read by them self now, but I hope I will be allowed to read to them at least a couple of more years!

What kind of reader are you? Can you consider yourself a bookworm, a bibliophile?

Neither of those to be honest. I love reading, but I don't find enough time to read s much as I would have wanted to.

Do you have one favourite genre or probably you like reading books of different genres? What are your favourites?

I always love a thriller or why not a good love story.

Most inspirational book you read last year?

I recently read a book about *downshifting* that gave me in a way a new perspective and a lot of ideas. Unfortunately I think it is only available in Swedish, but the theme is popular so there is a wide range of books about this theme also in other languages.

What five books which have impressed you most of all, would you recommend to our readers?

I can recommend all books written by Astrid Lindgren. Her stories are an important part of both mine and my children's childhood, as well as most Swedish children's childhoods I believe. Two favourite books are *Most Beloved Sister* and *The Brothers Lionheart*.

Also I love the books written by Swedish author Maria Gripe (25 July 1923 – 5 April 2007). She wrote books for children and young adults, often written in magical and mystical tone. One of my favourites is *Agnes Cecilia*.

Maria Gripe was probably inspired by the works of for example Emily and Jane Brontë and me too am a big fan of classic books like *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*.

As an adult I've read a lot of books by the Swedish-Greek author Thodor Kallifatides. He's a master on describing feelings and perspectives in a poetic way, often with a lot of references to Greek mythology.

Are digital books competitors to printed books?

No they are a complement. Books are not about format, it's about the story! To me it's always about the story, whether you read a book, listen to a book, play a videogame or watch a movie.

A Chilean writer Isabel Allende said: "The library is inhabited by spirits that come out of the pages at night." What is the library for you? Who or what creates the spirit of the library today?

To me the library is about the people. About their dreams, their conversations and their meetings. The library is also about the stories of course, but the stories are made up by people.

Thank you very much for the interview!

Photo from Anya Feltreuter's personal archive

*Interviewed by Virginija Švedienė
virginija.svediene@pavb.lt*