

The guest of the Library blog *Geros knygos* is Heikki Lahnaoja – the manager and the head of cultural department of Pyhäjoki Municipal Library (Finland).

Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library and Pyhäjoki Municipal Library connected in NAPLE Sister Libraries program. Librarians in Lithuania would be very interested to learn about their new partner – Finnish library. Could you briefly introduce the main activities, services and projects of your library?

Naturally we borrow books and other normal stuff, but also paintings for free which is rare in Finland. We have a different art exhibition in our gallery every month. We arrange a wide range of concerts and theatre and literary meetings, most popular being *Jazz on the Beach Spin Off* in our backyard under the birches. Clubs and organizations and political parties use our spaces for their own purposes. We work closely with kindergartens and schools as well. The new library building should be finished by autumn 2023 which enables us to do even more.

It is always interesting to learn about other libraries' experience during the pandemic. How has the Pyhäjoki Municipal Library adjusted to the unusual conditions and how do you reach your users in these days?

Gosh, we had to keep our doors locked for two and half months in the spring. At that time I started to tape YouTube videos because the childrens storytimes were not possible to held. Our concortion has a very good e-library services and we did our best to promote that. I double as the cultural chief as well and on that front is was very silent.

What are the benefits of reading?

Good reading skills are crucial! Otherwise you get hoaxed so badly in the world of misinformation.

Has a book ever changed your life?

I guess my enthusiasm of Tove Jansson lead me to a conversation first time with my wife!

What genre do you never read? Why?

I read war books very seldom because I just cannot bear the idea of the violence that has really happened.

Which book world would you like to live in?

I am very happy living in this very world I am.

What are your favourite Finnish authors or the books written by Finnish writers?

The aforementioned Tove Jansson who wrote not only the Moomin books but great adult fiction also. I like also very much Joel Haahtela who could be described as Finnish Patrick Modiano. We have great poets like Pentti Saarikoski and Sirkka Turkka. And childrens writers, too.

What books would come first to your mind if you were asked to name three favourite ones?

Samuel Beckett's *Mercier and Camier*, Timothy Findley's *Telling Lies* and Patrick Modiano's *Villa Triste*. If you asked tomorrow I would say something else.

You are very versatile regarding the world of books – you not only work in the library, not only read books for children (we had an opportunity to see the videos from your library on YouTube), but you also write poetry and mini-novels. The last mini-novel which is called *Raahe 1852 –1856*, was published in December 2020. It combines magical realism with a historical novel. Is it the genre which you usually choose as a writer? What inspired you to write this particular novel?

I like history but I would have guessed that I would write a detective story. This Raahe book I had to write because I had the vision of the main character hiding under the table.

Apart from mini-novels, you also write poetry and children books. What (or who) is your biggest source of inspiration? Beverly Cleary, the American writer of children's and young adult fiction said: „If you don't see the book you want on the shelf, write it“. Maybe we really lack attractive children books, interesting historical novels or good poetry?

It is true that I write books that I would like to read. Not that we lack those! (I have written three books of poetry and now this mini-novel. The first children's book is coming in the spring.)

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts. We hope that our libraries will develop a successful and fruitful cooperation. Would you like to say something to the librarians and readers of Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library?

I can't wait to get to know you all! Keep reading!

Photo from Heikki Lahnaoja's personal archive

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