

The guest of the Library blog Geros knygos is our colleague Krista Visas (Estonia). Krista is the marketing manager at Pärnu Central Library and the vice president of Estonian Librarians Association.

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

During the first wave of virus in spring of 2020 the libraries in Estonia were closed from March 14th till May 18th. The libraries started to think how to offer services to the patrons. At the end of March Pärnu Central Library started to offer contactless services – in certain hours twice a week the readers got preordered books. From the last week of April we gave the book parcels 7 hours in every workday. We also answered the phone calls and carried out the inventory in our library. The patrons were very thankful for this opportunity. As we have the returning box, it was easy for readers to return the books. At this period we didn't take overdue fees.

Tallinn Central Library offered a lot of online services – the Skype club for seniors, storytelling and workshops for children etc.

After the first wave of virus we started to look for the possibilities and money for getting a „smart locker“. At the beginning of December we got it – it means that the reader orders the books to the smart locker and can get it 24/7. If the books are in the cupboard, the patron gets an SMS with the opening code and the books are kept there three days. It's a very popular service and for today a lot of Estonian public libraries have those cupboards.

This year the libraries were closed from March 11th, we hope that from April 25th we can reopen. During the second wave we offer the contactless services on the regular opening hours. The patrons have to preorder the books that they wish and they get them from the library or from the cupboard. The books can be preordered by phone, e-mail or through the e-catalogue. In one branch library those who need to use the computer, they can do it – they have to book the time and they can use the computer for 30 minutes.

Where does the value of a book lie? And what makes you love a book?

I think that the value of book is, that reading makes your to think. Books open the world, develop your imagination and make you smart 😊

What kind of reader are you?

I don't know, what kind of reader I am. I love to read, I have to have time for it – sometimes I don't read for a long time and then I may read three or four books per month. It depends.

What are your favourite Estonian authors or books of Estonian authors?

Oh, there are lot of them. I love August Gailit, Karl Ristikivi, Jaan Kross. From modern authors Andrus Kivirähk, Tõnu Õnnepalu. I like Estonian literature.

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

The first one comes from childhood: Astrid Lindgren and her „Cherry Time at Bullerby“. I love Emile Zola's books. Also Tommi Kinnunen „Where four roads meet“ (Finnish author); Haruki Murakami – all his books are good!

Favourite fictional character?

From Estonian literature Toomas Nipernaadi – he is a traveller and a dreamer and also a storyteller, who is seeking for adventures and inspiration in summertime, but in wintertime is a writer ☺

Most inspirational book you read during the pandemic?

Again Estonian author – „Not only about aunt Ellen“ written by Mudlum.

What's been your favorite book-to-movie adaptation?

It's very difficult to adapt the book into movie. Maybe „Gone with the Wind“ is the best one.

If you were going on a trip now, what book would you take with you?

Usually I don't take books to my trips. Maybe only the travel guide.

English writer Neil Gaiman said: “Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.” Do you agree with this wisdom?

Of course – the fairy tales and the books in general give us hope and wisdom and open our eyes to the possibilities.

Thank you for the interview!

*Photo from Krista Visas' personal archive
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