

The guest of the Library blog Geros knygos is our colleague Michaela Töröková (Slovakia). Michaela is the Head of Fund Replenishment and Processing, Acquisition Department in State Scientific Library in Banská Bystrica.

After the challenging and tiresome year libraries emerge from the pandemic period, and reopen little by little. How does the Banská Bystrica Library help it's community to get back to the normal regime of life? What services and activities do you offer to your visitors today?

The pandemic situation significantly affected the operation of the State Scientific Library in Banská Bystrica. The library was closed to the public in several stages. We stayed in touch with readers electronically. Employees dealt with phone calls, e-mails, requests via LiveChat, and questions on social networks on a daily basis. The electronic environment was also used by those interested in research services via electronic requests. Colleagues diligently saturated the requirements of readers, who even in this difficult period devoted themselves to the preparation of final theses and studies. Readers were also informed about the possibility of using online foreign databases. The library provided the service of supplying digital copies of articles from magazines and articles from monographs. On Facebook, we tried to depict what is happening behind closed doors in the library, as well as in the world of literature.

This year, the library opened its gates on January 27, 2021, but services were provided to a limited extent. The books were returned through the bibliobox, only absentee loans, registration and re-registration of readers were provided. The study rooms were reopened to the public on April 26, 2021, with several restrictions that still persist. Libraries are still not allowed to organize events. We believe that the situation will gradually change with the easing of measures, and with the arrival of summer, the library will be filled with visitors again. We are currently preparing the program of the Summer Reading Room, which is located in the green atrium of the library. There will be several book presentations, interviews with authors and events dedicated to literature, learning about foreign languages and cultures. Seniors will have the opportunity to meet again in a memory training event after a long time. In the summer months, we prepare Holiday Wednesdays in the library, during which children can spend the whole day in the library with their parents, grandparents or other relatives. From literature, music, fine arts, games, quizzes and other ingredients, we prepared a cocktail of fun, knowledge, creativity and good mood.

What books were your library visitors most interested in during the pandemic? Maybe you noticed any tendencies?

Readers of the State Scientific Library were borrowing apart from fiction also professional literature, especially in the field of law, economics and management, medicine, pedagogy and psychology. There was also interest in foreign language literature.

In addition to absentee borrowing of books, library users (especially college and university students) have expressed interest in supplying digital documents - scans of articles and articles from monographs. Most of the articles were from the fields of politics, political science, nursing, psychology, addiction, law, history, literary science and pedagogy.

What was the most inspirational book during the pandemic personally for you?

I read many books during pandemic, I tried to find an escape from reality in the books, from the current situation... I love this series, read from December 2020 to March 2021.

„The Chronicles of Hugh de Singleton, Surgeon“ by Melvin R. Starr. Main character Hugh de Singleton solves crimes in 14th century in Britain, time passes slowly, the seasons change and I enjoy the overall atmosphere ... also the food, the landscape, the clothes, the individual powers ... it's a really interesting story.

„The Broken Earth“ by N.K. Jemisin – concept of this books are unique – it is kind of a post-apocalyptic *high-fantasy* with a lot of original elements.

„Stein and Barbarič“ by Juraj Červenák – Historical detective novels about cases of Captain Stein and notary Barbarič, who are on the trail of crime in the Habsburg Empire during the reign of Rudolf II (16th Century).

„The Winternight“ Trilogy by Katherine Arden – fantasy trilogy about Russian mythical characters, slavic paganism and its roots, expansion of christianity in 14th Century in medieval Russia. Extremely interesting novels that had me totally engrossed in this magical and mystical tale.

„Romantic Escapes“ by Julie Caplin – just an ordinary modern romantic story, not very original, but with a happy ending.

Or single books:

„Convenience Store Woman“ by Sayaka Murata – I am fascinated by the different perceptions of conformity, but also by the prejudices that a single woman encounters. Although it is a Japanese society, some phenomena seem to know no borders.

„Le cahier de recettes“ by Jacky Durand. The son remembers his childhood and adolescence, he visits his father, who is already dying. It is a story of love, abandonment and forgiveness. French cuisine is extremely fascinating to me, I completely enjoyed reading, all those smells and colors and tastes ... And I would like to feel them live. It is a story of fulfilling your dreams and duties at the same time. It describes the fragility of their relationship, unexpressed words and feelings.

Has a book ever changed your life?

After reading the book „Agony and Ecstasy“ by Irving Stone, I decided to study of history.

Has a book you like ever been turned into a movie or TV series, and you hated that adaptation?

I don't like *Discworld* films (not used potential of books that are funny and multi-layered, but films are boring and I easily forgot about them).

„The Dark Tower“ (by S. King) – the film is sooo different. That's a pity...

1995's „Sense and Sensibility“ – no, no, no...

„Eragon“ (film), „Mortal Instruments“, „The Golden Compass“ (all adaptations are bad), „Dune“...

What are your favourite Slovak writers or favourite books of Slovak authors?

All fantasy and historical crime series by Juraj Červenák:
(https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3363276.Juraj_erven_k)

What books would you mention first of all if we asked you to name three favourite ones?

Just 3? It is sooo difficult...

„Anna of Green Gables“ (L. M. Montgomery), „Guards! Guards!“ by Terry Pratchett (all *Discworld* books), „Pride and Prejudice“ (J. Austen), „Tobias Lolness“ by Timothée de Fombelle, „The Lord of the Rings“ (J.R.R. Tolkien).

Have you ever had a crush on a book character?

Everytime. ☺ Last one was Mathew Clairmont from „All souls“ trilogy by Deborah Harkness (but not the TV series actor, just a person from the book). And Geralt from „The Witcher“ by Andrzej Sapkowski.

How long is your TBR (To Be Read) list?

More than 2000 books... and still increasing. ☺

Do you agree with Mark Twain's words about classic: „Classic – a book which people praise and don't read“?

I just read the classic literature once, I like to compare contemporary literature with classical.

Thank you for the interview!

Photo from Michaela Töröková's personal archive

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