

## Project Green Library in Croatia

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### Abstract:

*The aim of this paper is to show how small and locally oriented projects like the Green library project can grow and expand to a national level. The Green Library project was first initiated in 2011. by the Librarian Association of Istria, with the goal of educating the public and raising awareness about sustainable development and the necessity for environmental protection. The project was received exceptionally well in the County of Istria, and its activities were well attended.*

*Since the beginning of 2013. Public library Fran Galović in Koprivnica implements this idea and integrates “green” topics into its regular programs. Most of the programmes were oriented on small practical steps and advices on what we can do in our everyday lives to contribute and participate in sustainable development and environmental protection.*

*During National assembly of Croatian Library Association in October 2014. Project Green library has expanded on a national librarian level by establishing the Working group for Green libraries. The aim of this Group is to establish a network of libraries ready to be involved in an existing form of the project and to participate in the education of general public and raising the awareness about the importance of a sustainable society as well as to advocate for the environmental protection through libraries and library associations.*

**Keywords:** *Green library project, Croatia, Public libraries, sustainable development, environmental protection*

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## **Introduction**

Since the middle of the 20th century we are witnessing extremely adverse environmental changes caused by the increase of human population, industrialisation and agrarization. Economy is mostly based on an unethical and long-term unsustainable production which piles up waste, pollutes and endangers the life on the Earth. Private interest is better protected than the public one and that causes problems on a planetary scale. A number of species are considered endangered. Human health is in jeopardy but also the health of society as such. Human beings with their own profit oriented activities and unsustainable conformism have endangered their own future and the future of their posterity. In order to recover the damage immediate and wise actions are required. Our primary goal needs to be an education that will change the patterns of human relationship towards nature from a parasitical to symbiotal one i.e. from an unsustainable to sustainable one. Every one of us can make a difference and libraries, as usual, have to be the lighthouses and nurseries of knowledge that will sow the seed of ideas for a sustainable and healthy society – the society that will take care of our only habitat – planet Earth.

## **History of Green libraries in Croatia**

The idea to start a Green library project originated in Istria County in 2011. as a project of Istria library association. From the beginning libraries in Pazin, Pula, Umag, Novigrad, Labin, Poreč, Buzet, Rovinj and The University library of Juraj Dobrila Pula were involved in a project with many other local organisations/institutions. Main goal of the project is educating the public, spreading the awareness of a sustainable society and necessity of nature protection through: Green library web page, documentary projections, lectures, public discussions and book promotions with ecological topics. Since 2011. until the end of 2014 . 112 activities have been organised with 5 194 visitors. This means that there were, on average, around two to three activities per month.

After the presentation of the project on 38th Croatian Library Association General Conference and Assembly in Osijek in 2012. Public library Juraj Šižgorić in Šibenik organised its first green activity in the same year.

In 2013. Public library Fran Galović in Koprivnica started a Green library project under the slogan „Together in caring for the environment“ in cooperation with Organization for sustainable development in Croatia (UZOR HRVATSKE) and later with the Non-governmental association Kopriva. The activities are aimed at people of all ages – from babies to the eldest. Ecological issues have been integrated in book telling for babies and toddlers, book telling for preschool children, creative workshops for children and young adults, movie projections, lectures and public discussions for adults and exhibitions in storefronts of the library. Public education is also being carried out with info materials – stickers with ecological advices on books and the books about ecological and sustainable development are specially marked on all departments.

In 2013. Public library Vukovar started a project “Branch Sotin – Eco library: for friendship with nature” with the main aim of spreading the environmental awareness between children with practical work. Branch Sotin formed a garden on its premises and by doing that it became the first public library in Croatia that teaches children practical knowledge of ecological gardening and provides books and lectures on ecological topics and sustainable development. In one space knowledge and informations on different media and theory with

practice has been merged. The most relevant thing is that this project can be carried out through the whole year and that theory and practice have been merged in one place.

### **The Work group for Green libraries**

At the 39th Croatian Library Association General Conference and Assembly in Split in 2014. the Work group for green libraries was formed with next members: Edita Bačić (Chief Librarian Faculty of Law, University of Split ), Melinda Grubišić Reiter (Public library Juraj Šižgorić in Šibenik), Dijana Sabolović Krajina and Petar Lukačić (Public library Fran Galović in Koprivnica) and Ivan Kraljević as the Group president (University library of Pula). The Work group has set a goal to create a network of libraries that are willing to participate in a created pattern of Green library project. By creating that network librarians will connect ecology with librarianship and educate the public by raising the awareness about sustainable development and the necessity of environmental protection through libraries and library associations. Besides that, the group will address the issues of energy efficiency in libraries.

The goals for 2015. set by the Group are:

1. Making a survey among Croatian librarians in order to define willing participants in the project
2. Holding Green library project lectures
3. Creating a network of interested libraries through social networks

### **Survey**

In February 2015. a survey has been sent to all Development departments in Croatia who proceeded the survey to all libraries in Croatia and which was completed in April. The Main aim of this survey was to determine if librarians in Croatia are interested in networking in the present Green library project in Croatia.

The survey was consisted of two parts – the first part was oriented at collecting general data about libraries and the second part were questions. The survey has been filled out by 174 librarians from different libraries which means that this survey has been answered by 10% of Croatian libraries. The survey has been filled out by librarians from School libraries (59%), Public libraries (29%), Academic libraries (10%) and Special libraries (3%). So far Public libraries have been the most represented libraries in the project – out of 249 of them 51 answered what makes 20% of all public libraries in Croatia. In the text below we will present the answers to questions.

- On the question „*Are you familiar with the Green library project in Croatia?*“ – 23% of librarians answered that they are familiar with the project, 37% are partially familiar with the project and 36% don't know anything about it – with 4% unanswered.
- On the question „*Are you familiar with similar projects in Croatia?*“ 57% of librarians answered that they are not familiar with similar projects, 30% are partially familiar and only 10% are familiar – with 3% unanswered.
- On the question „*Are you familiar with similar projects outside of Croatia?*“ 86% of librarians have answered that they are not familiar with similar projects, 10% are partially familiar and only 3% are familiar – with 1% unanswered.
- On the question “*Do you think that libraries should be involved in public education and raising awareness of ecological problems?*” great majority of librarians

concluded that they should be involved 93% and only 6% are not sure should libraries be involved in these topics – with 1% unanswered.

- Through the survey we tried to find out in what measure are libraries currently involved in similar projects and at the question „*Are you already involved in some project that connects librarianship and ecology?*” 30% of librarians answered that they have involved “green topics” in their regular programs, 66% have not – with 4% unanswered.
- The question “*If you still haven’t do you wish to start Green library project in your library?*” reveals that most of the librarians are interested in starting the project, 73%, and only 14% are not interested – with 13% unanswered.
- On the question “*Do you have a special website for your project?*” 4% of librarians said that they have a special website and 90% doesn’t have one – with 6% unanswered.
- On the question „*Does your library website have links to websites with ecological topics?*“ 5% of librarians answered positive, and 85% negative – with 10% unanswered.

After analyzing these results we can conclude that librarians are interested in networking in the present Green library project in Croatia and that environmental protection awareness is already developed between librarians with the need to participate in developing and offering environmental topics for their patrons. Therefore, in their future work, the Work group for Green libraries will continue to offer information and tutoring for librarians. Information will consist of lectures and workshops as well as promotion of sustainable development in society.

## **Conclusion**

The Lyon declaration emphasise that increased access to information and knowledge, underpinned by universal literacy, is an essential pillar of sustainable development. The Green library project provides access to “green” information and critical view on “green” topics. Today we are creating the future of our children. How are we going to explain to them what was economically cost effective if there will be no workable piece of land, clean air and water? There is a real danger that this scenario could come to life and that is why this project is important.

Dr. sc. Dražen Šimleša, still in 2012. after his lecture in Pula, as a part of Green library project, has wondered why something like this is not organised elsewhere in Croatia?, and the same question has been asked by many other lecturers and users of the Green library project. We live in a crucial moment when the system is not doing enough to raise awareness and take measures that would at least mitigate the damage that we do on a planetary scale. It is an indisputable fact that we have only one planet for life and work, and it is our priority and duty, but also a matter of survival, to change the current harmful paradigm and start learning how to live sustainably and globally responsibly. The contribution to this change should become every libraries mission and Croatian libraries are on a good path of doing that by creating a network of green libraries.

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