

## Library as a “Point of Grow” in Sustainable Development Society

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### Abstract:

*This paper emphasize the role of public libraries in sustainable development and extensive partnership on the example of an environmental project, which involved more than 1,500 participants across Russia. Citing two out of 17 main goals declared in the United Nations document “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” the authors believe that achieving of these goals will require creation of new technologies - informational and social – and the new forms of cooperation.*

*The authors describe how the Russian State Library for Young Adults in Moscow with two other partners prepared and held the nation-wide event entitled The Day of Environmental Knowledge. It took place on April 15, 2017, in the year, which was declared in Russia as the Year of the Environment. They outline all stages of the project starting from inviting the potential participants, processing the applications, inviting press, and describing the events at the places to the follow-up events and its impact on cooperation between the libraries-participants and local communities.*

*The authors believe that modern libraries have the authority and means to promote "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development".*

**Keywords:** library collaboration, large-scale project, environment, education, contest.

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The outcome document of the United Nations “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” contains 17 main goals, including the following: “Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development” and “Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.” Achieving these goals implies the emergence of new social and information technologies. Libraries present an integral part of this process and have an obligation to foster sustainable development of the society.

For over 35 years, Russian public libraries have been actively and purposefully engaging in the environmental education of local communities. Small town and rural libraries often serve as grassroots level initiators of environmental actions and activities.

The Russian State Library for Young Adults (RSLYA)<sup>1</sup> is an initiator and leader of environmental education activities in libraries in Russia. Being the main and biggest library in the country which serve young patrons of 14-25 years of age, the library also is an important analytical, methodological, and coordinating center for all Russian libraries serving this age group.

This joint endeavor has resulted in turning many libraries into leading environmental information access points in their cities. Their activities contribute to the development of environmental awareness and assist in developing skills on rational treatment of natural resources.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992 along with the discussion on the global environmental issues highlighted the importance of environmental knowledge. Since then, many countries celebrate the Day of Environmental Knowledge on April 15. Russia started to participate in this activity in 1996 on the initiative of non-government environmental organizations.

The year of 2017 in Russia was officially declared as the Year of the Environment. The main event of the professional library community that year was the All-Russian Library Day of Environmental Knowledge, which took place across the country on April 15, 2017. The initiator and organizer of the action was the RSLYA with two partnering organizations - the Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology and the Vladimir Vernadsky Non-government Environmental Foundation. The Association of Environmental Journalists and many non-government youth environmental groups also participated at the event. The Ministry of Culture of Russia and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia supported the event.

All Russian libraries have been invited to participate in the Day of Environmental Knowledge by organizing the various environmental events for the public. Different forms and possibilities, audiences and creativity of the librarians demonstrated the great potential of the Russian libraries as a gateway for environmental information.

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<sup>1</sup> Library website: <http://www.rgub.ru/> (English version: <http://www.rgub.ru/en/>).

The following are the main objectives of participating librarians:

- promoting the possibilities of libraries and their current effective methods of conducting public educational events on the environment;
- sharing experience of different libraries in environmental education;
- evaluating the level of environmental literacy and interest in environmental topics among the different groups of people;
- attracting the people's attention to environmental issues and their interest in receiving information on this topic.

In total, 1,520 libraries in 75 regions of Russia celebrated the Day of Environmental Knowledge by arranging lectures, workshops, flash mobs, scientific talks, theatrical performances, and other activities. Some libraries hosted up to a thousand visitors at their venues; the geography of the events spread from Khabarovsk region on the very East of the country to the city of Kaliningrad on the very West of it.

The central event entitled "Share Your Idea with the Minister" took place in the RSLYA with the participation of Sergei Donskoy, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia. During this event, young scholars presented their innovative ideas on how to improve the environment. Their projects were aimed on solving different problems: from local to global ones. One of the local urban projects would create a network of points for pumping bicycle tires operating on solar batteries. A sample of the large technological projects could be a project related to the use and conservation of natural resources in the estuarine areas of the Russian arctic rivers.

After the event, Minister Donskoy recorded a radio address for library visitors around Russia that was later aired on the library radio network.

Participation in the project of such a large number of libraries and carrying out large-scale events aimed at the forming of an environmental culture showed the relevance of the subject matter and the large potential of Russian libraries for environmental education.

To promote the Day of Environmental Knowledge and to find the partners, the organizers undertook a massive amount of work. They determined target audiences throughout the country and invited them to participate. The list of possible participants included federal government institutions, major media outlets, and non-government organizations. To spread the word about the planned activities the organizers used all possible informational means: social networks, traditional media, and environmental forums and platforms. More than 1,500 organizations from the big libraries in big cities and the small ones in little villages responded.

It was evident that managing such a big number of participants required developing of a special system for collecting and processing the application forms. To facilitate this process, the organizers created an interactive map of Russia on the website of the RSLYA<sup>2</sup>. It provided visual information on the location and details about the library; a program of planned events visually showed the real scale of the project.

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<sup>2</sup> The interactive map is available on the RSLYA website:  
[http://www.rgub.ru/projects/eco\\_knowledge\\_day/index.php](http://www.rgub.ru/projects/eco_knowledge_day/index.php)

The logical continuation of this large-scale project was the All-Russian competition for the best event held during the Day of Environmental Knowledge. About 1000 applications from 68 regions of the country were submitted the contest. The materials contained both narrative reports and visual material: photos, video clips, and press coverage in print and electronic media.

As a result of the project, the Russian libraries united their environmental and other informational resources and demonstrated their potential in engaging local communities to solve actual social problems. In some places the activities organized by libraries reached an entire city and brought together a large number of people of different ages and social backgrounds and fostered the establishing of constructive dialogues among different organizations.

All library participants were able to demonstrate awareness of their patrons' informational needs and of the local environmental situation. They showed a wide range of forms and methods for conducting the environmental education work, a variety of organizational and educational resources, and an awareness of environmental tendencies and initiatives.

## **References**

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 2015;  
[https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution\\_A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution_A_RES_70_1_EN.pdf)