

Services of the Maribor Public Library for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

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The Maribor Public Library

- **One of 10 central regional libraries.**
- **The Library system:**
 - ✓ 12 municipalities: approx. 182.000 inhabitants
 - ✓ 19 branches with a mobile library
 - ✓ mobile library: 45 stops, 9 deposit collections
- **Services:**
 - ✓ home and hospital library services
- **Library – a cultural and information centre, lifelong learning centre, education, quality leisure time**
- **Equal access to all information resources and library services for every member of the community.**



Activities for people with special needs

General objectives/starting points

- cooperation with the members of disability organizations
- cooperation with the professionals in the field of disability issues
- inclusion in the regular library programmes, e.g.:
 - ✓ information literacy
 - ✓ the use of library
 - ✓ workshops, storytelling, etc.
- adaptation of library services (by agreement),
- continuing professional education of library staff/acquisition of new skills and knowledge
- free of charge library services, EU disability card, etc.

Working with the deaf and hard of hearing people

The beginnings

- **Cooperation with the Centre for Hearing and Speech Maribor, Slovenia: since 1980s**
 - ✓ the central institution for working with the deaf and hard of hearing children in NE Slovenia (the lip reading method)
- **equal inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing preschool and school children into bibliopedagogical library programmes**
- **appreciation of recommendations for qualitative communication**
 - ✓ calm atmosphere, slow and clear speech

Development and improvement of activities

- **„Internal“ changes – proactive operation:**
 - ✓ a working group for users with special needs in the Library (2009)
 - ✓ the care and support for persons with special needs integrated in the tasks of all departments and services
 - ✓ analysis of the Library environment: a register of institutions

- **„External“ changes: Council of People with Disabilities (since 2009): advisory body of the Mayor of the Municipality of Maribor: united disability organizations**
 - ✓ the Library is an active member of the Council
 - ✓ at the Council meetings, in the Culture Working Group, etc.
 - ✓ by the preparation of strategic municipal plans, social integration programmes, e.g. the project – Maribor, the European Capital of Culture 2012, etc.

Key institutions – local level

- **Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing People Podravje Maribor - approx. 800 members**
 - ✓ deaf/hard of hearing/deaf blind persons in NE Slovenia
 - ✓ a well organized association, 85 years of operation
 - ✓ willingness to participate in social inclusion programmes

- **The Centre for Hearing and Speech Maribor**
 - ✓ medical unit (diagnostics, therapy)
 - ✓ primary school and kindergarten

Key institutions – national level

- **The Slovenian Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association - approx. 6.500 members**
 - ✓ an association in the public interest in the field of social welfare
 - ✓ 13 regional associations
 - ✓ promotes and supports equal status and the rights of deaf/hard of hearing people

- **School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ljubljana**
 - ✓ adapted programmes for primary and secondary schools

Systematic work with the deaf and hard of hearing persons: since 2010

- Collecting additional information, knowledge, materials on:
 - ✓ deafness/hard of hearing, types of disabilities
 - ✓ the way of operation and organization of the associations

- Initial difficulties :
 - ✓ how to communicate with deaf/hard of hearing people?
 - ✓ how to acquire additional competences, overcome fear?

Training of library staff (2011)

- ^c ■ **Arrangement with the Association: courses/workshops on :**
 - ✓ deafness/hard of hearing, rights of deaf people
 - ✓ Association's organization
 - ✓ ways of communication
 - ✓ basics of sign language
 - ✓ duration: 2 x 4 hours, participation of sign language interpreter
 - ✓ 60 librarians: 4 groups
 - ✓ deaf and hard of hearing people participated in the workshop
 - ✓ after training: together defined the forms of cooperation and the ways of involving the deaf and hard of hearing people to use library services



Training of library staff





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Training of library staff



After training

- **Collecting impressions, ideas, suggestions :**
 - ✓ training passed in a positive, relaxed atmosphere
 - ✓ acquired knowledge - essential for further cooperation
 - ✓ less fear and discomfort in communication
 - ✓ jointly drafting the plan for further cooperation – goal: to increase the number of the deaf and hard of hearing people in the library
 - ✓ 2 librarians - basic and advanced courses in the Slovenian sign language
 - ✓ informing the public about the projects



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Ways of cooperation

- **adaptation to the Association's organization and members' needs: sign language, communication channels:**
 - ✓ the Association's meetings (Wednesday afternoons), the portal of the Council of the Persons with Disabilities
 - ✓ web site, the journal Our Voice, web TV contributions
 - ✓ easy-to-read information materials
 - ✓ integrating the proposals into work plans: web site upgrade, a plan to purchase induction loop...
- **inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing people in regular library programmes (different locations)**
- **library services free of charge**

Enhanced care

- **systematic acquisition and subject cataloguing of materials for the deaf and hard of hearing people :**
 - ✓ the journals World of Persons with Disabilities, Our Voice, the Association's publications: video news for the deaf and hard of hearing people, sign language manuals, easy-to-read materials, etc.

<http://cobiss6.izum.si/scripts/cobiss?command=DISPLAY&base=50304&dept=00&rid=7718686&fmt=11&lani=si>

- **systematic acquisition and subject cataloguing of materials on deafness and other types of disabilities**
- **selective dissemination of information:** via the portal Council of Persons with Disabilities, web site, social media (fb, etc.)

Programmes for the deaf and hard of hearing people I.

- **Organised and guided library visits:**
 - ✓ training of the deaf and hard of hearing people on library services, collections
 - ✓ information literacy programmes: online catalogue, independent searching and finding library materials and information
 - ✓ workshops for developing and improving information literacy: use of digital information databases
 - ✓ presentation of new offers in the Library: digitized local studies materials on the portal Kamra
 - ✓ a visit to and presentation of mobile library services
 - ✓ presentation of bookbinding, preservation of library materials, etc.



Visiting the game collection

Information literacy programme



Programmes for the deaf and hard of hearing people II.

- **Library Reading Groups:**
 - ✓ first, collecting information about the relevant subjects for the deaf and hard of hearing people (e.g. healthy lifestyle, etc.)
 - ✓ the librarian presents the selected material
 - ✓ discussion on a particular topic
 - ✓ the presence of a permanent sign language interpreter
- **The Maribor Public Library Day: simultaneous translation of the contents into sign language**
- **workshops, storytelling for children and adults**
- **performances of hearing-impaired artists in the Library**



The Maribor Public Library Day



Visit to a mobile library



Active participation at the Maribor Public Library Day





Sign language storytelling

Deaf artist's pantomime performance





Library Reading Group

Exhibition "Live in the World of Silence"
in the Library: on the occasion of the
80th anniversary of the Association of
the Deaf and Hard of Hearing People



Joint promotion activities

- **joint presentation of the Library's programmes for the deaf and hard of hearing people at the Cultural Bazaar**
- **interviews, articles in the journal Our Voice, on the portal Council of Persons with Disabilities**
- **recording a TV show Listen to Silence**
- **joint presentations at professional conferences on the projects of inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing people, e.g. at the round table "Access to libraries for persons with disabilities", etc.**

Conclusion

How to contact the deaf and hard of hearing people? : the main concern of the Library

- **Collaboration with the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing People:**
 - ✓ easier contact with the deaf and hard of hearing people
 - ✓ harder to get in contact with the deaf and hard of hearing people who are not members of the Association (e.g. younger people, etc.)
- **Deposit collections for the elderly and disabled in long-term care facilities:**
 - ✓ to care for the older people with impaired hearing in the area of Maribor and surrounding municipalities (easy-to-read materials)

Our observations and past experience

- **Before training:**
 - ✓ the deaf and hard of hearing people were poorly acquainted with the Library and its services
 - ✓ they rarely visited the Library on their own
 - ✓ library materials were borrowed through other people

- **After training:**
 - ✓ the deaf and hard of hearing people visit the Library in their local community more often
 - ✓ they prefer to visit the Library in organised groups
 - ✓ they like to participate as performers at the Library events



mariborska knjižnica



Becoming a library member



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The process of inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing people into library use

- **complex, long term process**
- **depends on many facts:**
 - ✓ staff potential
 - ✓ professionalism and engagement of all participants
 - ✓ diversity and continuity of the programme
 - ✓ well-informed deaf and hard of hearing people, etc.

Plans for the future I.

- **the care and support for the deaf and hard of hearing people - an integral part of the strategic plans of the Library and the local community**
- **further development of the current programmes**
- **strengthening the role of the Library /information points:**
 - ✓ acquisition/cataloguing/dissemination of library resources and information on:
 - deafness and the rights of the deaf and hard of hearing persons
 - institutions that take care of the deaf and hard of hearing persons
 - sign language
 - technical equipment, etc.

Plans for the future II.

Strengthening the social role of the Library in the local/wider community to:

- **learn about diversity**
- **encourage tolerance**

Aim

- ✓ The deaf and hard of hearing people recognize and accept the Library as an institution worthy of trust that helps them to live as independantly as possible in their environment and to equally use library services to achieve their goals.



For the end ... the impressions of the librarians at the end of the training at the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

"Sometimes, we wish for silence in the noise of everyday life. However, we cannot imagine how it is to live in silence until we meet people who have experienced it and are willing to share it."

librarian Lidija Gačnik Gombač

„It was not just language learning. It was getting to know the foreign world that revealed that we should never stop spreading our knowledge. At the same time, the training gave us an insight into the need to look at the world from different angles and to accept with open hands what someone might call diversity. "

librarian Igor Černe

