**Collaborations between School Librarians and School Teachers in Croatian Primary Schools**

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School librarians have no choice but to collaborate with teachers if they are to fulfill their responsibilities to “equip students with life-long learning skills and help them develop imagination, and enable them to live as responsible citizens.” As the information environment is changing and becoming more complex, the concept of information literacy is evolving, and the role of the school library is becoming more important for successful teaching and learning. School librarians in Croatia strive to integrate the Library and Information Program into the school curriculum.

**Library and Information Program**

Collaboration between teachers and librarians can be on various levels – from superficial, when the library supports learning by providing learning resources and/or technology, to profound collaboration, when teachers and librarians plan, teach and assess learning and teaching together.

School librarians’ competencies and readiness to participate in teaching are evident in the Library and Information Program, which is a part of the Croatian National Education Standards. The document comprises fifteen topics essential for teaching and learning in all segments of the school curriculum. The program is realized in the field of reading, all kinds of literacies, as well as the cultural and public activities of the school library. Library and Information topics are distributed from the first to the eighth grade of primary school and can be taught in modules, in correlation with all school subjects, adjusting to the type of the instruction and according to the capacities and needs of the students. A school librarian does not have his own subject, but rather advocates for correlations of subjects and designs interdisciplinary workshops. A school librarian is, therefore, a desirable partner in the teaching and learning process.

**Library in the Center of STEM Subjects**

Due to the interdisciplinary character of STEM education, many topics in the field of technology or mathematics can easily be connected with the topic of *Searching Library E-catalogue.* Such is the case in the following example from Primary School Dubovac in the city of Karlovac, which has been carried out in the seventh grade for several generations now.

The initial stage is realized in Mathematics while the students are revising *Statistics: Data Presentation and Analysis.* The librarian demonstrates search criteria and possibilities of school library e-catalog to the students. Afterwards, they independently search and solve tasks prepared by the teacher and the librarian together with the purpose to evaluate knowledge from both fields.

<Image1: Data analysis and presentation of results of e-catalog search at Mathematics class>

Expansion of this topic continues later in the school year, as well as in the seventh grade, in correlation with the Informatics topic *Spreadsheets.* The task for the students is to search both the school library and public library e-catalog, and present results in Microsoft Excel.

< Image2: Using MSExcel to present the results of e-catalogue searching>

Benefits of this correlation are manifold: students learn how to use the e-catalog; they apply their knowledge of Mathematics and Informatics; and the teacher gets feedback, which enables him or her to evaluate the acquisition of defined outcomes. We should mention that during both periods the students are working with computers or their smartphones, which motivates them even more.

On the other hand, for younger students, print material is still the primary and most credible source of information. In the third grade, students learn to use reference literature and continue developing their skills and knowledge about it each year by solving problems that are more complex. In the sixth grade, the librarian designs a workshop on the usage of lexicons and encyclopedia in collaboration with the English language teacher in a unit called *Search for Superlatives.* Here, students browse reference literature to find an interesting fact stated in a superlative. Then they translate the sentence into English and rephrase it as a question, citing the source of information where they found it. The questions are gathered in a hat, and each student draws one and tries to answer it with the help of the same book. The teacher checks both questions and answers for grammar and spelling mistakes, and the librarian prepares a quiz to check if the answers are correct. This unit connects English and Croatian language study with Information literacy, but other subjects can also be included because the chosen facts can cover various areas.

< Image3: Students searching for facts in superlatives in the school library >

**Collaboration of Teachers and a Librarian through Guided Inquiry Design**

Five years ago, the librarian at the Ivan Goran Kovacic Primary School, located in the town of Duga Resa, took first steps in introducing Guided Inquiry Design to her school. The librarian chose GID because the leading experts in information science in Croatia, as well as the world’s distinguished experts in the field of school librarianship, recommended it. Furthermore, it is a perfect framework to implement the library program from the National Standards. After several lectures and workshops for teachers on the topic of Guided Inquiry Design, a few teachers were willing to give it a try. After the delivery of first units, and more discussions and planning, GID became recognized in the school. Each school year there are more teachers who are ready to collaborate with the librarian and integrate information literacy into their subjects. We will give two examples of GID units. The first one integrates the Science topic *Energy* with information literacy for 6th graders, and the second is an interdisciplinary project entitled *Children in Wartime* for 8th-grade students.

The science teacher and the librarian collaborated and planned a unit on energy in a series of ten school periods. They prepared learning materials, exercises, and evaluation charts together. During the delivery of the unit, they modified the materials and exercises according to the students' needs. Learning was planned in eight phases, following the guided inquiry design: *open, immerse, explore, identify, gather, create, share* and *evaluate*. Information literacy is present in each of these phases. However, for the purpose of this article we will take a closer look at the third phase in which the students, after they get enthusiastic about the subject in *open*, and gather background knowledge and find exciting questions about the topic in *immerse*, get to *explore* by looking around the library in search of interesting ideas and information in a variety of sources and formats carefully chosen for them by the teacher and the librarian. The sources are grouped according to their format at various “stations” and presented in the library. Students look around, find what seems interesting, and jot down in their inquiry journals. Each station includes an example of how to cite the source in a particular format (books, magazines, websites). It also provides an opportunity for the librarian to give a mini-lesson on the importance of the ethical use of information. The task for the students is to investigate at least two stations and find some sources they deem interesting. The period closes with pair share and after that a whole-class discussion about the topic. This is the preparation for the students to identify their research question and deeper investigation in subsequent periods.

< Image4: 6th graders in the school library>

*Children in Wartime* was the GID integration of a unit on Literature, History, Civic Education and Information Literacy. The unit was inspired by Karl Bruckner’s novel *Sadako Wants to Live*, which is mandatory literature in the 8th grade. As they read the book, the students also learn about the ending of World War II. The librarian, the literature teacher, and the history teacher collaborated to design a GID unit that would integrate all this into a research project for students, ending with a mock trial in which all the students took part either as characters from the novel or as court officials. The librarian introduced different searching strategies in various stages of the unit, rich with all sorts of sources of information, including posters, video material, expert talks, reference books, and online articles. During the early phase of the unit, students browsed a range of materials in the library and online. They monitored for new stories of children suffering in war-inflected parts of the world, linking, and looking for other books on the topic in *explore* and *gather* phases of the inquiry process, as well as differentiating and extracting in the later phases of the unit.

The benefits of collaboration between teachers and school librarians are obvious for the students as well as the teachers and librarians. Students develop a deeper understanding of the curriculum topic, and enhance their language and social skills, independence, and self-confidence in research and learning process. They are more motivated for learning, and they acquire information literacy in the meaningful context. Teachers and librarians share the responsibility and expertise and have the satisfaction of contributing to the enhancement of students’ skills and knowledge. Collaborations of teachers and librarians can always be an opportunity to promote library resources and activities, in a physical as well as virtual sense.