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## **Bibliotherapy in Lithuanian Public Libraries: Service Identification and Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT:** The article presents contemporary conceptions of bibliotherapy elaborated by researchers in different countries (the USA, Great Britain, Israel, Russia, and Lithuania). On their basis, schematic coverage of library-provided bibliotherapeutic services was worked out that served as a framework for the analysis of the prevalence of bibliotherapy in Lithuanian public libraries. Main international experience of the bibliotherapy practice in public libraries is related to: 1) inter-institutional collaboration with healthcare institutions by providing access to medical professional-recommended texts; 2) organization of group (or individual) work with library users in terms of bibliotherapy; 3) compiling lists of recommended literature or creating full-text databases on the theme of bibliotherapy; 4) providing access to reading and target recommendations to groups of social exclusions; 5) providing the service of reading recommendations (mainly with the aim of emotional support) to readers.

On that basis, a brief semi-open questionnaire for Lithuanian libraries was worked out, followed by a request to answer whether the named bibliotherapeutic services were provided by the surveyed libraries and to comment on the way of their provision. The outcomes of the survey witnessed that 43% of the surveyed libraries were implementing joint activities with other local health care institutions. 28% of the surveyed Lithuanian public libraries organized group or individual bibliotherapeutic work with library users. 17% of the surveyed Lithuanian public libraries compiled lists of bibliotherapeutic literature and thus provided library users with access to bibliotherapeutic information. A vast majority of the surveyed libraries (62%) provided services of book delivery and mobile libraries in social institutions of different localities. Over 73% of the surveyed libraries agreed that they applied bibliotherapy and indicated different



schemas of doing it without using the term of bibliotherapy or using a different term.

**KEYWORDS:** bibliotherapy, library services, Lithuanian public libraries

Libraries as open access social institutions seek to update, upgrade, and extend the range of services they provide to their users. One of the most promising opportunities is the implementation of innovations in library activities by bringing together the efforts of several public social institutions. This way of bibliotherapy implementation is used in Great Britain. The article presents contemporary conceptions of bibliotherapy elaborated by researchers in different countries. On their basis, a schematic coverage of bibliotherapeutic services provided by libraries has been worked out and used as a framework for the analysis of bibliotherapy prevalence in Lithuanian public libraries.

**The aim of the research:** to form the conception of library-provided bibliotherapeutic services and their schematic coverage and to use it as a basis for analysis of the prevalence of bibliotherapy method-based services in Lithuanian public libraries.

## The conception

The essence of bibliotherapy is the provision of aid based on reading (or any other way of inquiring into content) of a recorded document. A number of authors who studied the roots of bibliotherapy related them to libraries or librarian-provided services (see Brian W. Sturm,<sup>1</sup> Paula S. McMillen and Dale E. Pehrsson,<sup>2</sup> Kenneth B.

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<sup>1</sup> B. W. Sturm, *Reader's Advisory and Bibliotherapy: Helping or Healing?* Journal of Educational Media and Library Science [on-line] December 2003, no. 41:2 [access: 30 November 2012]. Available in Internet: <http://research.dils.tku.edu.tw/joemls>.

<sup>2</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, *A Bibliotherapy Evaluation Tool: Grounding Counselors in the Therapeutic Use of Literature*. The Arts in Psychotherapy [on-line] 2005, vol. 32, iss. 1 [access: 30 November 2012]. Available in Internet: <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/433>.

Cronje,<sup>3</sup> Liz Brewster,<sup>4</sup> Юлия Николаевна Дрешер<sup>5</sup> and others) and noted the fact that the practice of bibliotherapy spread in the USA and Great Britain after World War 1. At that time, soldiers after war traumas, treated and provided with psychological counseling in hospitals, were given books or reading classes next to direct medical care. That made a positive impact on their general condition and recovery, and especially on their psychological adaptation. On the basis of that experience, in early 20th century, the American Library Association sought to legitimize bibliotherapy as a service of medical libraries. In 1939 the Committee on Bibliotherapy was established in the American Library Association and thus legitimized its official status in librarianship.<sup>6</sup> As witnessed by the research data of McMillen and Pehrsson<sup>7</sup> (2005), in the mid-20th century the USA librarianship educational institutions designed different professional development programs or courses to provide hospital librarians with the skills of rendering bibliotherapeutic services to patients. In the analysis of the fields of bibliotherapy application, researchers (P. S. McMillen and D. E. Pehrsson,<sup>8</sup> B.W. Sturm,<sup>9</sup> L. Brewster,<sup>10</sup> Ya-Ling Lu<sup>11</sup>) noted that bibliotherapy embraced several fields of cognitive and practical skills and was most frequently used by psychologists, librarians, nurses, and social workers.

Bibliotherapy as a service aims to provide clients with knowledge or emotional support by means of texts recommended for reading. The scientific-professional literature of the early 21st century discussed and analysed the experiences in order to identify in which situations and who

<sup>3</sup> K. B. Cronje, *Bibliotherapy in Seventh-Day Adventist Education Using the Information Media for Character Development* [on-line]. International Faith and Learning Seminar, Helderberg College, Somerset West, November/December 1993 [access: 30 November 2012]. Available in Internet: [http://www.aiias.edu/ict/vol\\_12/12cc\\_049-066.htm](http://www.aiias.edu/ict/vol_12/12cc_049-066.htm).

<sup>4</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription: Bibliotherapy in the United Kingdom*, "Journal of Hospital Librarianship" 2009, vol. 9, iss. 4, pp. 399–407.

<sup>5</sup> Ю. Н. Дрешер, *Библиотерапия: теория и практика* [Bibliotherapy: Therapy and Practice], Санкт-Петербург 2008.

<sup>6</sup> S. Baruchson-Arbib, *Bibliotherapy in School Libraries: An Israeli Experiment*. School Libraries Worldwide [on-line] 2000, vol. 6, iss. 2 [access: 30 November 2012]. Available in Internet: <http://www.iasl-online.org/pubs/slw/july00-baruchson-arbib.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> B. W. Sturm, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription...*

<sup>11</sup> Ya-Ling Lu, *Helping Children Cope: What Is Bibliotherapy?*, "Children and Libraries" 2008, vol 6, iss. 1, pp. 47–52.

could provide that kind of aid (B. W. Sturm,<sup>12</sup> P. S. McMillen,<sup>13</sup> Ya-Ling Lu<sup>14</sup>). In the publication on behalf of the Research Committee of the American Library Association, Ya Ling Lu<sup>15</sup> raised the issue of *What is bibliotherapy?* and debated whether the service could be appropriately provided by libraries. The debate supported the division between *healing* and *reading recommendations*. By looking for methods of improving services for their users, promoting reading and implementing their social function, libraries offered a number of best practice examples in bibliotherapy (e.g., an experiment in an Israel school library devoted to exhibitions of problematic (adolescent age group) bibliotherapeutic literature and other developments of library activities; the USA school initiatives to discuss the experiences of the September 11th tragedy; collaboration of public libraries with animal lovers clubs when dogs were used to assist children in overcoming psychological problems of reading, etc.). However, in all these cases, the focus was not on therapy, therefore, the researcher suggested to reconsider the use of the term of *bibliotherapy*.<sup>16</sup>

Liz Brewster, a researcher from the University of Sheffield (Great Britain), summarized a bibliotherapy project implemented in public libraries of England whose scheme of practical activities spread all over the country.<sup>17</sup> The conception of bibliotherapy, as reflected in her research, embraced the collaboration of the state medical and librarianship institutions in Great Britain based on the Books on Prescription scheme defined by professor of psychology Neil Frude.<sup>18</sup> In the collaboration of librarians and psychologist counselors, a list of self-help books was compiled (35 positions). The books covered solutions of the most widely spread psychological problems and feasible techniques of independent coping with these problems. On the basis of cognitive and behavioral psychology, the books were recommended to people experiencing problems of that kind (by addressing family doctors or libraries and asking them to recommend the books). As defined in cognitive and behavioral psychology, the basis of bibliotherapeutic aid is to provide alternative knowledge of correct behavior in a problematic situation.

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<sup>12</sup> B. W. Sturm, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Ya-Ling Lu, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription...*

<sup>18</sup> N. Frude, *Book Prescription scheme*, "Panlibus" 2008, iss. 9, p. 5.

To summarize the studies of researchers from different countries (K. B. Cronje,<sup>19</sup> L. Brewster,<sup>20</sup> B. W. Sturm,<sup>21</sup> P. S. McMillen and D. E. Pehrsson,<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Stanley,<sup>23</sup> Shirfra Baruchson-Arbib,<sup>24</sup> Ю. Н. Дрешер,<sup>25</sup> Zinaida Manžuch,<sup>26</sup> Jūratė Sučylaite<sup>27</sup> and other), the following trends in bibliotherapy can be identified:

- Clinical; applied exclusively by medical professionals or a healing team as a supplementary method of healing, with the aim of healing a disease (mainly mental);
- Supportive; applied in the adaptation process after a severe disease to give patients hope for recovery and/or to encourage them to accept the changes in their physical condition, as well as to identify, get familiar with, and accept their own emotions. Support therapy aims to provide client with the necessary support and/or aid;
- Developmental; it is applied not only to patients or recovering people, as it is aimed at the personality development, problem identification, and/or prevention of potential illnesses (or problems). It aims at personality development.

The types of bibliotherapy are identified by:

- Different aims of the bibliotherapy process (to heal – to provide necessary support/ aid in rehabilitation – to develop personality);
- Places of application (institutions where bibliotherapy is applied, i.e. hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, psychological services, libraries, social services, social care institutions, and other);
- Specialists able to apply the method (medical professionals, social workers, librarians, psychologists, teachers, and other).

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<sup>19</sup> K. B. Cronje, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> L. Brewster, *Reader Development and Mental Wellbeing: the Accidental Bibliotherapist*, "Aplis" 2009, vol. 22, iss.1, pp. 13–16.

<sup>21</sup> B. W. Sturm, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> J. Stanley, *Reading to Heal*, Boston 1999.

<sup>24</sup> S. Baruchson-Arbib, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ю. Н. Дрешер, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Z. Manžuch, *Biblioterapija*, [in:] *Bibliotekininkystės ir informacijos studijų vadovas*, Vilnius 2009.

<sup>27</sup> J. Sučylaitė, *Ugdomoji poetikos terapija, kaip priemonė suaugusiųjų, sergančių šizofrenija ar depresija, įgalinimui: daktaro disertacija* [manuscript], Vilnius 2011 [access: 30 November 2012]. Available in Internet: [http://vddb.library.lt/fedora/get/LT-eLABa-0001:E.02~2011~D\\_20110610\\_120446-61787/DS.005.0.01.ETD](http://vddb.library.lt/fedora/get/LT-eLABa-0001:E.02~2011~D_20110610_120446-61787/DS.005.0.01.ETD).

Some researchers (P. S. McMillen and D. E. Pehrsson,<sup>28</sup> L. Brewster,<sup>29</sup> S. Baruchson-Arbib,<sup>30</sup> J. Sučylaitė<sup>31</sup>) identified two fields of bibliotherapy application in accordance with the type of recommended literature. In the *reading* bibliotherapy, the client was recommended self-help psychological (popular science) literature written by professionals. In the *interactive* bibliotherapy, fiction was recommended. After reading a text, the plot-caused experiences, thoughts, and emotions were discussed, and in response to the situations emerging in the discussion, the client was provided emotional support or psychological aid.

Brewster presented three bibliotherapeutic practices used in libraries: those of self-help, creative methods, and non-formal. The self-help bibliotherapy recommended texts of non-fiction literature. The creative methods bibliotherapy included reading fiction and additional creative methods (such as diary keeping, plot re-writing, and other) that helped the client to relax and feel better. Non-formal (accidental case bibliography) was the library practice of serving an individual or a group of library users who consequently got emotional aid or psychological support.<sup>32</sup>

Researchers who studied the kinds of bibliotherapy noted the multiple aspects of the method that contributed to its interpretation and efficient use in different fields (L. Brewster,<sup>33</sup> P. S. McMillen and D. E. Pehrsson<sup>34</sup>). However, simultaneously, the multi-plan use of the method raised discussions on the indefiniteness of the spheres of application, its questionable professionalism, and the boundaries of application (Ya-Ling Lu,<sup>35</sup> B. W. Sturm<sup>36</sup>).

In Lithuania, it was balneologists V. Meška and A. Juozulynas who became initiators of bibliotherapy; in their monograph *Balneological Medicine*,<sup>37</sup> they named bibliotherapy among other means of non-traditional rehabilitation. In the Soviet period, services of bibliotherapy were

<sup>28</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription...*; eadem, *Reader Development and Mental Well-being...*

<sup>30</sup> S. Baruchson-Arbib, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> J. Sučylaitė, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription...*, p. 400.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Ya-Ling Lu, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> B. W. Sturm, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> V. Meška, A. Juozulynas, *Kurortinė medicina* [Balneological Medicine], Vilnius 1999.

provided by several sanatoria libraries in Lithuanian resorts. In psychiatry, the method of bibliotherapy was applied by A. Alekseičikas.<sup>38</sup> Psychiatrist dr. Jūrate Sučylaite was the initiator of poetry therapy in Lithuania; in her doctoral thesis in the area of social sciences,<sup>39</sup> she justified the usefulness of creative methods (including biblio- and poetry therapy) for the improvement of the general condition of mentally handicapped patients.

The professional librarian press and Lithuanian media offer publications on bibliotherapy services provided in public libraries (in Naujoji Akmene, Radviliškis, and Mažeikiai) and on implemented projects (in Birštonas, Mažeikiai, and Naujoji Vilnia libraries). The academic subject of *Bibliotherapy* is taught at two Lithuanian universities: at Vilnius University, as a specialty elective for the students of the study program of *Libraries and Information*, and at Klaipeda University as a compulsory subject in the study program of *Informology*. However, the official inclusion of the service of bibliotherapy in the list of library-provided services is extremely rare. Libraries in Lithuania undergo changes and modernization, and the issues of extension of the range of their services and innovation development is topical for them. The service of bibliotherapy might become one of the innovations in the libraries. Therefore, the present research seeks to establish the prevalence of the service of bibliotherapy in Lithuanian public libraries.

## The methodology of the research

After naming the principal conceptions of bibliotherapy defined on the international scale, one can state that the international experience of the practice of bibliotherapy in public libraries is to be related to (cf. L. Brewster,<sup>40</sup> B. W. Sturm,<sup>41</sup> P. S. McMillen and D. E. Pehrsson,<sup>42</sup> S. Baruch-

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<sup>38</sup> *Gydyti gyvenimu: Aleksandro Alekseičiko intensyvus terapinis gyvenimas* (To Heal by Life: Intensive Therapeutic Life by Aleksandras Alekseicikas), compiled by R. Kočiūnas, Vilnius 2008.

<sup>39</sup> J. Sučylaitė, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> L. Brewster, *Books An Prescription...*; eadem, *Reader Development and Mental Well-being...*

<sup>41</sup> B. W. Sturm, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> D. E. Pehrsson, P. S. McMillen, op. cit.

son-Arbib,<sup>43</sup> Ю. Н. Дремер,<sup>44</sup> Z. Manžuch,<sup>45</sup> and Ya-Ling Lu<sup>46</sup>):

- inter-institutional collaboration with health care institutions by providing access to medical professionals-recommended texts;
- organization of group (or individual) work with library users in terms of bibliotherapy;
- compiling lists of recommended literature or creating full-text databases on the theme of bibliotherapy;
- providing access to reading and target recommendations to groups of social exclusion (old people's homes, patients, etc.);
- providing the service of reading recommendations (mainly with the aim of support (usually emotional)) to readers willing to get that kind of help.

The list presents a schematic coverage of the principal bibliotherapy method-based list of services provided by public libraries. On that basis, a brief semi-open questionnaire for libraries was worked out, with a request to answer whether the specific library provided the named bibliotherapeutic services and to comment on how it was done.

**The sample:** the questionnaire was e-mailed to all Lithuanian public libraries. 65 questionnaires were e-mailed, and 53 were returned. An individual talk took place with the representatives of 3 Lithuanian public libraries that did not fill in the questionnaire.

**The time:** the survey took place in March-April 2011. The outcomes of the research were presented in the conference *Communication and Information Sciences in Network Society: Experience and Insights* of the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University, in May 2011, and in the conference *Creative Methods in Rehabilitation* of the Department of Rehabilitation, Faculty of Health, Klaipeda University in September 2011. Additional talks with representatives of the public libraries that failed to fill in the questionnaire took place in May to November, 2011.

**The process of research:** the research consisted of several stages. The first request to fill in the questionnaire resulted in receiving data from 36 libraries. On the second stage, additional request was e-mailed to the libraries that had failed to respond; they were also asked to fill in

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<sup>43</sup> S. Baruchson-Arbib, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Ю. Н. Дремер, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> Z. Manžuch, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Ya-Ling Lu, op. cit.

a short questionnaire about the reasons of failing to provide the data. During the analysis of the received questionnaire data and the structuring of the research outcomes, additional discussions took place with the librarians from the public libraries of Klaipeda County that gave negative answers or failed to respond to all the items in the questionnaire with the aim of making research outcomes more precise.

In the analysis of the research outcomes, public libraries were named after their geographical locations, however, their precise names were not provided.

### **The analysis of the research outcomes**

The first item of the questionnaire sought to find out whether Lithuanian public libraries collaborated with the local health care institutions and thus provided access to medical professionals-recommended texts.

The same item sought to establish whether the collaboration was based on oral mutual agreement or formalized by signed agreements.

As witnessed by Figure 1, over 43% of the surveyed libraries collaborated with the local health care institutions, however, only a few of them (in Kėdainiai and Pasvalys) had agreements of collaboration; several public libraries (those in Panevėžys, Rokiškis, and Birštonas) were implementing projects with the local health care institutions.

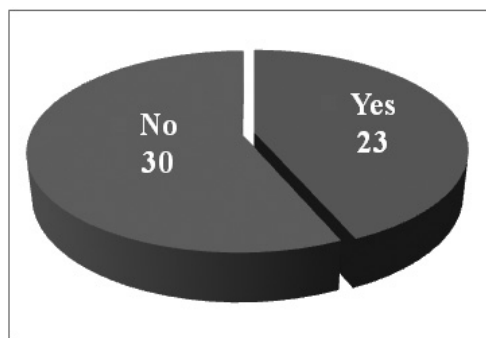


Figure 1. Collaboration of the surveyed libraries with the local health care institutions that resulted in access to the information promoting healthy lifestyle

Source: author's own research.

In most cases, collaboration meant either lectures given by mutual agreement or joint event organization. The libraries held events to which lecturers from health care institutions were invited to give lectures or talks on the subject of healthy lifestyle. In the implementation of the national project *Libraries for Innovation*, most libraries offered their users healthy lifestyle websites and invited representatives of health care institutions to their presentation.

The most progressive practical bibliotherapeutic experience was represented by a joint project *Bibliotherapy: New Spaces and Huge Possibilities* of Birštonas Public Library and psychologists of the *Tulpe* sanatorium. During her visit to Birštonas, Dalia Grybauskaite, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was interested in the activity.

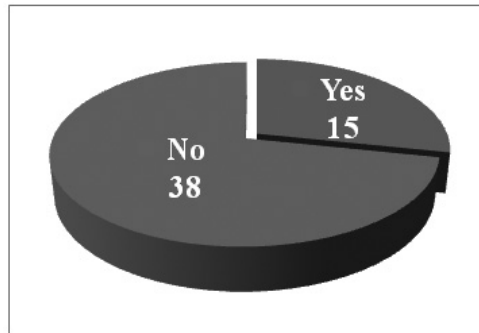


Figure 2. Prevalence of bibliotherapeutic classes given in the surveyed public libraries of Lithuania

Source: author's own research.

The second item (Figure 2) was to find out whether public libraries were giving group (individual) bibliotherapeutic classes to library users. This aspect of bibliotherapeutic activity asked for exclusive professionalism and direct responsibility. Therefore, it was not surprising that, as proved by the data of our research, the service was provided by merely 28% of the surveyed public libraries of Lithuania.

A number of libraries had accumulated experience in the organization of bibliotherapeutic services: the above mentioned Birštonas Public Library, public libraries in Akmene, Radviliškis, and Pagėgiai, and branches of Šiauliai City and Kretinga district public libraries. In most cases, bibliotherapeutic services were organized in the framework of de-

velopmental bibliotherapy: target audiences belonged to different age groups (adolescents, senior citizens, etc.), and the activities were organized as creative classes for library user clubs or in collaboration with psychologists.

The third item meant to find out whether Lithuanian public libraries were compiling bibliotherapeutic lists of recommended literature and/or were creating open access e-databases as a form of bibliotherapeutic aid to clients.

The data presented in Figure 3 witnessed that only a minor part (17%) of the surveyed public libraries exploited an opportunity of providing bibliotherapeutic information to clients.

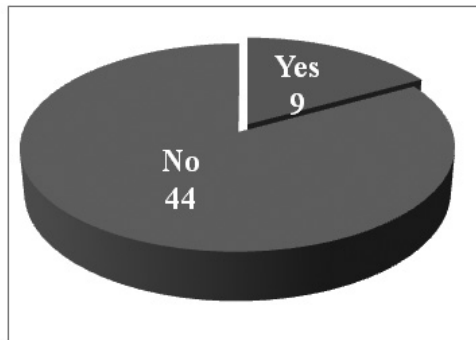


Figure 3. Lithuanian public libraries that compile lists of bibliotherapeutic literature

Source: author's own research.

Public libraries in Birštonas, Akmenė, Radviliškis, and Mažeikiai which practiced bibliotherapeutic activities had compiled lists of bibliotherapeutic literature and made them public (*How to Overcome Depression; Bibliotherapy: Books Can Help You; and Bibliotherapy for Everybody*). Some of the libraries had open access collections of bibliotherapeutic literature (Kaišiadorys and Mažeikiai) or held stationary exhibitions of healthy lifestyle literature (*Let's Be Young and Healthy; The Power of Herbs; Herbs for Healthy Lifestyle*, etc.). The staff of Visaginas public library compiled lists of bibliotherapeutic literature after an open access list of bibliotherapeutic literature of Mažeikiai public library (and with the reference to it on their website) in Russian (given the needs of the local population).

The next item sought to find out whether Lithuanian public libraries collaborated with local psychological services, social workers, or other stakeholders (such as old people's homes, day care centres, etc.) and provided joint reading-related services outside libraries.

The data presented in Figure 4 witnessed that most of the surveyed libraries (62%) provided services of delivering books to readers' homes or organizing mobile libraries in different local social institutions (old people's homes, centres for the handicapped, children care homes, and children day care centres).

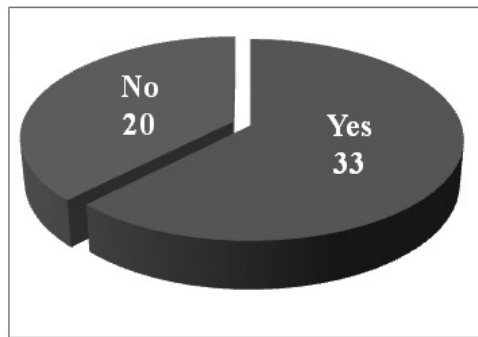


Figure 4. Collaboration of public libraries with other local stakeholders in providing reading-related services

Source: author's own research.

Simultaneously, some respondents spoke of problems arising due to the absence of transparent collaboration schemas (agreements); thus, e.g., books were delivered on a voluntary basis, and with the change in the staff, the practice stopped; or the route of the lent book was followed reluctantly, the book was re-borrowed by other people, and finally it got lost. Best practices in Kazlų Rūda, Kėdainiai, and Kaišiadorys public libraries should be noted when the responsibility for the lent books was clearly defined, volunteers were registered, and collaboration agreements were concluded.

Quite a few libraries (those of Kupiškis, Kretinga, Akmene, Jonava, Joniškis, Marijampole, Šiauliai, Telšiai, etc.) stated that their services were not limited to book delivery; librarians simultaneously provided recommendations for reading, discussed the books read by library users, or organized group discussions of books. The facts noted by the respondents represented progressive bibliotherapeutic experience.

The fifth item was to find out whether Lithuanian public libraries practiced *unnamed, accidental cases of bibliotherapy*, with librarians recommending pieces of literature that provided reader with the necessary aid (mainly emotional support).

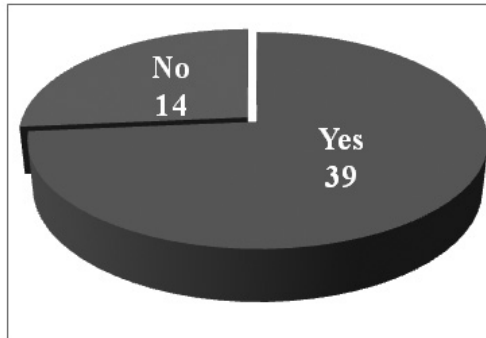


Figure 5. The prevalence of “accidental cases bibliotherapy” in the surveyed Lithuanian public libraries

Source: author’s own research.

The data presented in Figure 5 proved that over 73% of the surveyed libraries considered the accidental cases bibliotherapy to be a regular practice and presented different schemas of libraries providing bibliotherapy without naming it. The general schema seems to be the following: public libraries are open social institutions attended by numbers of people. When communicating with librarians, they frequently name their problems and expectations. The librarian, as a professional connoisseur of the document collection of the library, is able to recommend the client a piece of reading or to discuss the recommended book. To quote a representative of Šilute public library, bibliotherapeutic aid is provided by recommending literature to people facing different emotional and psychological problems caused by the loss of a job or failing communication with family members or other people; to parents who have problems in raising children or adolescents or in communicating with them; to people who retired recently; and to senior and handicapped library users by helping them to find a book that would meet their needs. A number of them frequently just needs communication with the librarian to discuss a recommended book they have read. The librarians’ responses to item 5 of the questionnaire illustrated the situation by cases of practical

experience and simultaneously revealed arising problems: insufficiency of psychological knowledge, a shortage of time for individual services to library users, etc. The accumulated experience in the field was different for towns and villages and specific for different regions. On having systematized the information, practical seminars on experience sharing would be useful.

The last item in the questionnaire asked the library representatives to name activities that were not included in the questionnaire, but were implemented by them and considered to be of bibliotherapeutic character. The answers contained quite a lot of interesting observations (Vilnius County library: the library had reader clubs whose members mainly sought to have a good talk; Telšiai district library: they would consider all the library-organized poetry festivals in non-traditional spaces, such as blooming orchards or the foot of the mound, as bibliotherapeutic events – their participants had a good rest and elevated their souls; a representative of Varėna public library named cases when library users brought a list of books recommended by a doctor and simultaneously regretted the fact that, due to the insufficiency of the funds, the activity was not going to be developed; a representative of Visaginas public library named collaboration with local children and youth theatre group which, on the request of the library, made drama therapy projects: small performances on “sore everyday subjects”. The performances took place in the library, and afterwards library users and actors discussed the plot of the performance, the response of the audience to the performance, and occasional life lessons and their consequences. Some libraries of Klaipėda Region talked of student work with library users during student practices or writing the Bachelor’s final theses; they organized group classes, read fairy tales, and discussed them from the bibliotherapeutic point of view: e.g., how fairy tales could help to overcome fears).

Figure 6 presents the percentage of all bibliotherapeutic services (in all conceptions) provided by Lithuanian public services. Almost a half of the surveyed Lithuanian public libraries provided at least one bibliotherapeutic service. However, the majority of the opportunities in the field (55%) were not exploited.

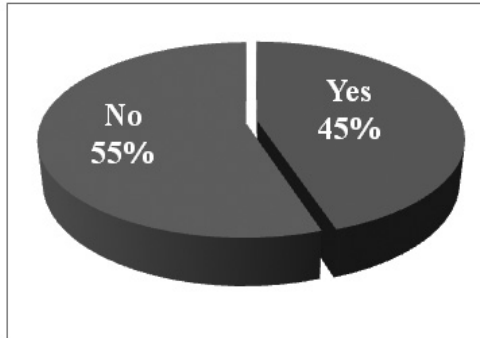


Figure 6. The prevalence of bibliotherapy in the surveyed Lithuanian public libraries

Source: author's own research.

Supplementary discussions with the representatives of the libraries that had failed to answer the survey questions proved that the libraries were not ready to recognize the topicality of bibliotherapeutic services, or the representatives of the libraries found the term of bibliotherapy unacceptable. Another reason was related to library modernization, implementation of new technologies, and related problems that tended to move aside other newly emerging aspects of library activities.

### **Summary and discussion for the continuity of the research**

After forming the conception of bibliotherapeutic services provided by libraries and the schematic coverage of the bibliotherapy method-based services in Lithuanian public libraries, the aim of the research was attained, and its program was exhausted.

To sum up the outcomes of the research, it can be stated that the roots of the application of the bibliotherapy method (providing aid to clients who experienced war traumas) are to be related to the supportive kind of bibliotherapy; bibliotherapeutic services based on a similar conception presently prevail in Great Britain. After the legitimizing of bibliotherapy in libraries and its becoming a library service, it moved from medical libraries to public and school ones, and the very conception of bibliother-

apy expanded. The analysis of scientific publications witnesses that the bibliotherapy method took root in libraries as a field of reading recommendations in public libraries.

The research into Lithuanian public libraries based on the conceptions of different researchers proved that the libraries accumulated significant experience of bibliotherapy application in libraries. Bibliotherapy is mainly used as an intuitive method of serving library users, “an accidental case”, without designing general schemas or activity generalizing strategies. Given the research outcomes, it is evident that bibliotherapy took root in libraries; it is used in different forms; and its manifestations are different in different regions, in cities and villages. After systematizing the experience of the best practices, it would be useful to organize practical experience sharing seminars, especially because previous research (D. Janavičienė, 2010) proves the need for the bibliotherapy service, and the main obstacle preventing librarians from providing similar services is a shortage of knowledge and skills, as well as distrust.

The research disclosed the need to form a general favourable opinion of providing bibliotherapeutic services in public libraries, as well as a strategic policy to promote the collaboration of social institutions in different social areas (healthcare institutions, social care institutions, and libraries under the Ministry of Culture). Interdepartmental collaboration would contribute to the introduction of innovations in the field of providing bibliotherapeutic services, the improvement of services to library users, and the expansion of the circle of potential service users.

The research covered the prevalence of bibliotherapy in Lithuanian public libraries, however, the situation in medical and healthcare institutions and school libraries was not studied. In a complex analysis of the problem, it would be useful to analyze reading-related services provided by rehabilitation and social care institutions. In the planning of innovations related to the implementation of bibliotherapeutic services, qualitative research into the body of service users would be appropriate as it would disclose the potential benefit and effectiveness of the service.



## **Bibliotherapy in Lithuanian Public Libraries: Service Identification and Analysis** [Biblioterapia w litewskich bibliotekach publicznych: koncepcje i formy realizacji]

**STRESZCZENIE:** W artykule przedstawiono współczesne koncepcje biblioterapii opracowane przez badaczy w różnych krajach (USA, Wielka Brytania, Izrael, Rosja i Litwa). Na ich podstawie opracowano schemat działań biblioterapeutycznych możliwych do zastosowania w bibliotekach. W oparciu o międzynarodowe doświadczenia w zakresie biblioterapii opracowano krótki kwestionariusz ankietowy, który następnie rozesłano do bibliotek litewskich z prośbą o wypowiedź, czy i w jaki sposób usługi biblioterapeutyczne są świadczone przez badane biblioteki. W efekcie przeprowadzonych badań stwierdzono, że 43% badanych bibliotek realizowało wspólne działania z innymi lokalnymi instytucjami opieki zdrowotnej. Indywidualne lub grupowe zajęcia biblioterapeutyczne z użytkownikami bibliotek prowadziło 28% badanych litewskich bibliotek publicznych. Wykazy tekstów biblioterapeutycznych opracowuje 17% badanych bibliotek, a tym samym zapewnia użytkownikom dostęp do informacji biblioterapeutycznej. Zdecydowana większość badanych bibliotek (62%) oferuje dostarczanie książek do domów użytkowników oraz dysponuje bibliobusami obsługującymi instytucje opieki społecznej w różnych miejscowościach. Ponad 73% badanych bibliotek potwierdziło stosowanie biblioterapii i wskazało inne możliwości jej realizowania – nie zawsze określając podejmowane działania mianem biblioterapeutycznych.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** biblioterapia, litewskie biblioteki publiczne, usługi biblioteczne

