Libraries for Innovation: In the Preparation for Changes

Report on the Baseline Study

Libraries for Innovation

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Libraries for Innovation

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Towards Significant Changes

"A modern library does not only open the door to a fountain of wisdom of the world. It is also a place where a community gathers to participate in intellectual and cultural activities. Moreover, it offers one of the major preconditions to develop a creative personality. Therefore, by way of investing into libraries we create the future of a progressive country."

Jonas Jučas,
Minister for Culture

"Active participation in the creation of knowledge society in Lithuania is a significant part of our mission. Therefore, instead of following the changes and developments of society, we should determine these changes ourselves and be at their focal point."

Vytautas Gudaitis,
Director General of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

"Information technology can help more than ever before anyone facing daily challenges. Through the modernization of libraries we aim at creating favorable conditions for visitors to search for jobs, communicate and better learn about and understand the changing world. The objective of our project "Libraries for Innovation" is to ensure the accessibility of opportunities brought by the digital age to everyone, regardless of a person's age, gender, nationality, received income or place of residence."

Deborah Jacobs,
Deputy Director of the Global Libraries initiative,
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Towards Significant Changes

Today man's life is hardly imaginable without a computer or the Internet. Once being just an interesting toy or a luxurious item, now information technologies have become for many an important work tool and a means for the improvement, the source of knowledge and a channel of communication with the world. It has also turned into an instrument that helps people acquire necessary documents or make a doctor's appointment in a fast and convenient way.

The success of a modern society or state is predetermined not only by the available natural resources, and not even as much by the geopolitical situation, as by the creativity, openness to innovation and abilities to create and use the latest technologies by the population. It is vital that both, the urban and rural population of the country possess such abilities.

Thus, we are stating that the implementation of the "Libraries for Innovation" project is designed to give a significant impetus for Lithuania towards the creation of competent society in the sphere of information technologies.

The project is seeking a more efficient and widespread daily use of modern technologies by the Lithuanian population, in particular the rural population or socially disadvantaged groups, for the purpose of information retrieval or communication. State **PUBLIC LIBRARIES** better than anyone else could serve this purpose. It is a library that we go to in the search for information. Already now we can find public access Internet facilities in a library and be consulted as to the use of possibilities provided by the worldwide network. Therefore, we should ensure that libraries become fully prepared to develop society capable of using information technologies.

The aim of the "Libraries for Innovation" project is to strengthen the system of public libraries in the country and help a library become a significant institution that would encourage a more active participation of the local communities in the use of the IT possibilities.

In order to achieve the above, we should first and foremost learn about the current situation, i.e. what place is the Internet given in society's life, and what place is given to a library? How well is a library prepared to assume the role granted by the "Libraries for Innovation" project? Seeking to answer these and similar questions, a research was conducted, the results of which are discussed in this publication. Having interviewed the Lithuanian population, library users, staffs and the heads of libraries, we now have a clear picture as to where we stand and which direction we should move towards.

Kęstutis Juškevičius,
Manager of the "Libraries for Innovation" project

Society and the Internet

"Personal computers and the Internet have been one of the major discoveries of the past decades that have essentially changed our daily life. For example, one can receive e-mail from another country in a few seconds; if a person needs some information, he or she does not have to look through encyclopedia volumes, but instead they can search for the information online. Conventional maps are gradually becoming irrelevant, as one can even see a satellite picture of their own house on the Internet. Moreover, the influence of conventional newspapers and magazines is on decline, too. Some people do not even have to go to work if everything they need to complete the tasks is available online. The list of changes determined by the information technologies can go on forever. The good news is that these technologies are becoming more easily accessible to everyone. For example, as a result of the completion of the first stage of the rural area information technology broadband network RAIN this year, the broadband network is now available in all rural administrative units. The major problem, therefore, which not only Lithuania but also the entire world faces, does not lie in the inaccessibility of technologies. It is much more relevant that people know as much as possible about the opportunities brought by the information technologies, and use them widely, as well as create and develop the new ones."

Laimutis Telksnys,
Prof. Dr. Habil. in Informatics

Society and the Internet

The main characteristic of a statistical user of information technologies in Lithuania is an average level of computer literacy. Mostly the population of a younger age or a higher level of education uses the Internet at home for leisure, studies and work.

According to the conducted research, this is the most common relation of the majority of the Lithuanian population with the Internet. Now let's take a more detailed look at the habits of using the Internet amongst the population of the country.

Internet Users

According to the results of the representative survey, young people are the most active Internet users, namely high school and college students with the majority of them living in large cities. Almost **70 per cent** of Internet users browse the Web every day; additional **20 per cent** do it at least once a week.

What concerns the habits of using the Internet, the Lithuanian population can be classified into three groups.

- Persons of working age (24–64 years of age), who have obtained a firm ground in their lives, i.e. educated, working and receiving permanent income. The representatives of this group can be called **professionals.** The Internet for them is first and foremost a work tool. Approximately **one third** of the respondents can be designated to this group.

- The youngest participants of the survey – high school and college students – fall under the group of **growing** users, who will eventually join the "professional" group. Approximately **20 per cent** of the respondents could be designated to this group, which primarily uses the Internet for entertainment, communication and the creation of virtual communities. It is expected that in the future the current representatives of the young generation will be much more versatile than the "professionals."

- **Minimal** Internet users are considered a group of the population that has no wish or interest to learn something new and use modern technologies. Mostly this group consists of the elderly, unemployed or the retired population of rural areas or small towns. **One tenth** of the respondents can be designated to this group.

Additional **40 per cent** of the respondents did not provide any information on their habits of using information technologies; however, they claimed to be interested in innovation. This largest part of the population may become active Internet users as a result of the successful implementation of the project "Libraries for Innovation", by attracting the representatives of this group with the development of and education on the public access Internet facilities.

Computer Literacy

The Lithuanian population evaluated their computer literacy skills as more or less average. The respondents evaluated their skills on a four-point scale; on average, the evaluation was 2.4 points. It is worth noting that the younger the person, the better the evaluation of skills he or she tends to give themselves. The same correlation applies to computer literacy and the education of the population (the higher the education, the better the skills), income (the bigger the income, the better the literacy), and the place of residence (urban population, in particular those that live in larger cities, possess better skills). Almost half of the rural population evaluates their computer literacy as completely insufficient, while those, who do not know how to use a computer at all accounted for over **43 per cent** of the respondents from the rural areas. Almost every third interviewed rural resident claimed that no one from their family members know how to use a computer.

It should be emphasized that children evaluated their computer literacy as more or less satisfactory, in particular general skills of computer use, Web browsing as well as browsing in search engines (on average – 3.4 points). Children living in urban areas tend to better evaluate their computer skills than children living in rural areas.

At Home and at Work

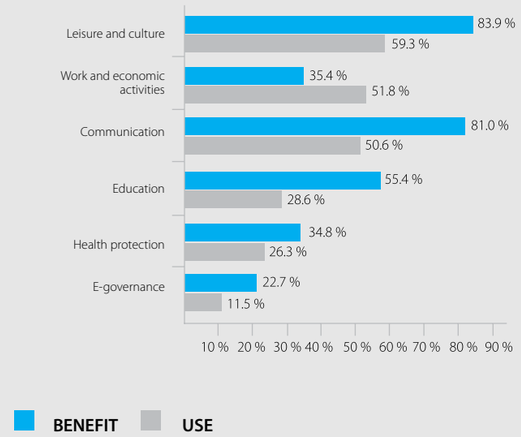
The most popular places of using the Internet amongst the population are home and work. This is where respectively **51per cent and 25 per cent** of the respondents browse in the world wide information net, while another **14 per cent** of the population uses the Internet in libraries.

Mostly young respondents, those living in larger cities, high school and college students, as well as house wives use the Internet at home. The larger the city, the more of its residents own a computer.

40 per cent of the respondents do not use the Internet, while in rural areas more than half of the population does not use the Internet. A computer with access to the Internet is available at home to one third of the rural population and two thirds of the urban population.

The representative survey of Lithuanian children (aged 12–14) shows that children have a number of opportunities to use the Internet: **91 per cent** of the respondents have access to a computer and the Internet at school, while **74 per cent** – at home. Children living in urban areas have better possibilities of using the Internet at home, whereas children living in rural areas more often mention libraries and schools. Only **2 per cent** of children do not have access to the Internet either at school, or at home.

Main spheres of using the Internet by population and the benefits provided by them



Leisure, communication, and work

What concerns the most useful purpose of the Internet, the respondents first of all indicated leisure and culture, while to the question, in which sphere the Internet is most useful, almost **84 per cent** of the respondents named leisure. A slightly smaller proportion of the respondents claimed that the Internet served them as a tool for communication or education.

The importance of the Internet as a work tool was primarily highlighted by the population of higher education and receiving larger income – **35 per cent** of the respondents claimed that the Internet is useful for work. Young respondents – college and high school students – stated that the Internet is an important study tool – **56 per cent** of the respondents indicated that the Internet is useful for studies.

Leisure or culture is not only a sphere that is mostly influenced by the Internet, according to the population, but it is also a sphere for which the Internet is most widely used. As many as **53 per cent** of the population read newspapers, news portals and magazines on the Internet on a permanent basis, while another **33 per cent** of the respondents occasionally use the Internet for these purposes. More than half of the respondents, i.e. **64 per cent** of the population regularly or constantly play games, download films and music on the Internet (the majority of them consists of young males receiving lower income and living in larger cities); **60 per cent** of the respondents use the Internet for community activities, publish the information about events or search for such information on the Internet. Population of larger cities and earning higher income are more active in this sphere. More than half of the respondents listen to the radio on the Internet.

More than half of the respondents, i.e. **52 per cent** use the Internet for **work and economic activities.** The majority of them, i.e. **75 per cent** browse the Web in search for the information on goods and services, while a little smaller proportion – over **67 per cent** of the respondents – use the Internet for the performance of work related tasks and functions. Slightly more than half of the respondents use e-banking services, look for a job or job seekers on the Internet.

Communication is another equally important sphere for the population. For example, as many as **87 per cent** of the respondents use email, while a little smaller proportion – approximately **70 per cent** – make telephone calls on the Internet. Half of the population of the country participate in discussion forums and email conferences; and only participation in the activities of Internet social networks, blogs or the creation of personal websites still remains less popular activities on the Internet – respectively, **30 and 22 per cent** of the respondents are involved in them. It is worth noting that the younger the person, the more often he or she communicates on the Internet. The urban population tends to use the Internet for that purpose more often than the rural population.

The research data show that **EDUCATION** is not a particularly popular sphere of Internet activities. As many as **76 PER CENT** of the population never took a distance learning course online. Only **19 PER CENT** of the respondents constantly or occasionally watch educational video broadcasting on the Internet, while approximately **37 PER CENT** of the population browse the Web in the search for information on the possibilities of informal learning and education. The majority, i.e. **48 PER CENT** of the population use the Internet for educational purposes in order to download freely transmitted software required for their studies. The use of the Internet for science and education is neither popular in urban areas, nor in rural areas.

HEALTH is yet another sphere that the Internet can be used for. More than half of the population constantly or occasionally search for information on health online, however, a possibility of registering for a doctor's appointment online is not widely used yet – **80 PER CENT** of the respondents have never used it yet. The Internet as a means for improving once health is more widely used by the better educated, receiving higher income and living in larger cities population, although in general, the search for information on health online is neither popular amongst urban, nor amongst rural population.

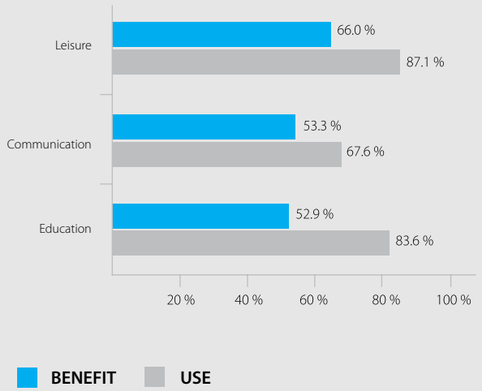
Arrangement of various matters and the reception of public services online are not popular activities either: as few as **2 PER CENT** of the population submit applications to the police or to authorities granting construction permits online, while over **6 PER CENT** order personal documents online. The respondents slightly more frequently use the Internet when applying for social benefits and compensation; **3 PER CENT** of the respondents use these services, while **16 PER CENT** use them occasionally. Most probably the most popular service of e-governance is the electronic declaration of income and assets. Approximately **37 PER CENT** of the respondents use this service. **E-GOVERNANCE** services are more often used by the population that is educated and receiving higher income.

WHAT ARE CHILDREN SEARCHING FOR?

Habits of using the Internet by children and adults are rather different. Like adults, the representatives of the young generation usually use the Internet for leisure – **87 PER CENT** of the interviewed children named this sphere. However, almost equally frequently the Internet is used for studies – nearly **84 PER CENT** of children mentioned this purpose of using the Internet. Almost **68 PER CENT** of the interviewed children use the Internet for communication.

Children not only most often use the Internet for activities relating to the spheres such as leisure, communication and education, but, according to the young respondents, the Internet is also the most useful means for such purposes. Understandably, economic benefits provided by the Internet were least frequently mentioned by children.

MAIN SPHERES OF USING THE INTERNET BY POPULATION AND THE BENEFITS PROVIDED BY THEM



The Internet and Libraries

"I started working for the library fourteen years ago, which coincided with the introduction of the Internet. This offered me an opportunity to become a close observer of the changes that were brought to libraries by information technologies. First of all, the library by means of the Internet created its new electronic "face", i.e. it became much more visible, acquired more possibilities of introducing itself to the world and the users. Secondly, the accessibility of library services has considerably improved. For example, now a reader does not have to come to a library and look for a book he or she needs, but instead they can search for it on the electronic catalogue without even leaving their house. Thirdly, the library extended the list of its services, e.g. readers can now subscribe to electronic publications, and with the use of data bases they can read various articles on their own computer. I have noticed that these and other novelties were gladly received by both, library staff and library users."

Aušra Vaškevičienė,
Head of the Electronic Information Department,
Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

The Internet and Libraries

Currently there are nearly **3 000** work stations equipped with computers in public libraries in the country, with an average of four computers per library. According to the heads of libraries, it is the fast development of technical base that has reflected one of the major changes in the material base of Lithuanian libraries in recent years.

Public access Internet facilities are available for users in every second library of the country, while every tenth library offers wireless Internet connection for its users. All municipal central libraries have created their websites; however, only one in ten branches has its own website too.

When evaluating the relation of libraries with the Internet, not only the availability of computers, Internet connection and software for libraries must be observed, but it is equally important to take into consideration the preparation of librarians to use information technologies, as well as the level of their computer literacy. The carried out survey of librarians and the heads of libraries once again highlighted the divide between urban and rural areas.

Basic Skills

As the research revealed, nearly **80 per cent** of libraries providing public Internet access facilities use information technologies at work. Librarians of a younger age and living in urban areas are more active users of the Internet.

According to librarians, they are well familiar with general possibilities offered by the Internet and electronic means of communication. However, they are less familiar with Internet novelties as well as means for the creation of consumer content, such as blogs and social networks. It is evident that Internet knowledge and skills of urban librarians are in many cases considerably better than those of their colleagues living in rural areas.

The opinions of librarians regarding their level of computer literacy are also reflected in the views of the heads of libraries. Both, heads of rural and urban libraries are of an opinion that their staff is mostly familiar with general Internet resources, and not with the recent Internet technologies. The competence of urban librarians in the sphere of information technologies traditionally is better evaluated than that of rural librarians.

Nevertheless, librarians are actively seeking to improve their knowledge and develop skills in this sphere; in 2007 more than half of the interviewed librarians participated in information technology training. On average one librarian spent 43 hours for the Internet and computer literacy training.

Public Internet Access Network in Libraries

Presently, more than half of public libraries – **53 per cent** – provide Internet access to their users. It is considerably less available in rural libraries; based on the number of public Internet access facilities, rural branches are lagging behind central urban libraries in almost twice the number.

The heads of libraries indicate that the provision of this service is hindered by limited resources for the acquisition of technical equipment **(43 per cent)**, shortage of space or premises required for the installation of the access **(42 per cent)**, and shortage of telecommunications **(37 per cent).**

Mostly traditional services are available to library users, such as writing emails, communicating, searching for jobs, searching for information on leisure, cultural or community activities, as well as the using services of and gathering information on e-governance, education and health. Whereas interactive services relating to Internet content creation, such as news feed programs (RSS), latest Internet developments (Web 2.0) and social networks are considerably less frequently available.

Dual Development

Both, urban and rural libraries are planning a speedy development of public Internet access points. However, in order to meet different urban and rural demands, this development will be different in urban and rural areas.

As the survey data show, branches of urban libraries are "full"; therefore, **70 per cent** of urban libraries are planning to develop the access only in larger branches, with a bigger attention placed on the upgrading of technical equipment and the improvement of the provided services. Whereas rural libraries are in the preparation for a quantitative development; twice as many branches of rural libraries are planning to install public Internet access facilities than urban libraries. The most intense development is planned in those branches of rural libraries that have the smallest number of librarians.
The development of public Internet access network in rural and urban libraries is hindered by the same obstacles, which primarily are the lack of premises and financial resources for the installment and maintenance of the Internet access. Moreover, rural libraries with smaller numbers of librarians indicate the shortage of staff as an obstacle to the development.

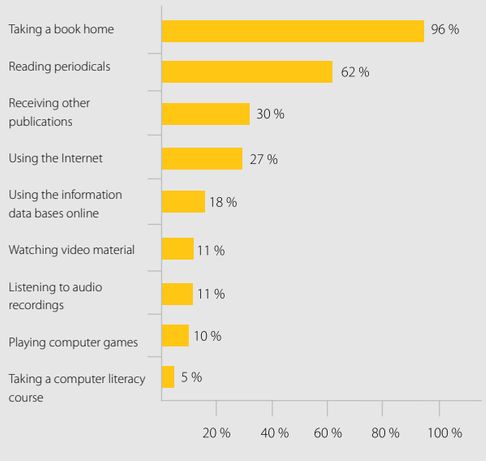
LIBRARIES AND SOCIETY

Libraries and Society

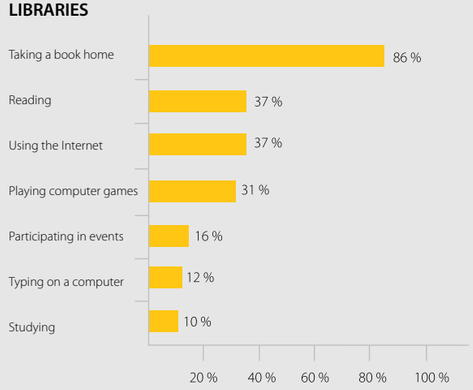
"In these times of information technologies, public libraries remain to be significant to lives of ordinary people for various reasons. Libraries offer a possibility of using the Internet to their users. Moreover, a well functioning public library becomes a guide in the world of information. It is worth noting that a library performs one more important function, i.e. the building-up of a community. It is not the same to use the Internet at home and in a library where you can see another person from behind your monitor. Therefore, if a library can be more than just a book storage and become a place of attraction for a community, the centre of various intellectual activities, it can be expected that the significance of a public library to people's lives will constantly grow."

Dr. Irena Vaišvilaitė, assoc. prof.
Advisor to the President of the Republic of Lithuania
In the field of culture, science and education

Most common activities of adults in public libraries



Most common activities of children in public libraries



Within the past year, **37 per cent** of the population visited a public library, and almost the same proportion claimed that they had visited it more than a year ago. The most common library visitors are women, persons of younger age group (15–24) and better education, specialists and servants. Slightly more than one fifth of the population has never been to a library; mostly these are men and workers. The respondents said that they did not visit libraries because of the lack of time or due to other activities that they were occupied with. One fifth of the population pointed out that they did not need to go to a library.

According to the survey children are much more active visitors of libraries – as many as **83 per cent** of the respondents aged 12–14 visited a public library at least once. Children living in rural areas, small towns as well as large cities are more frequent library visitors. Like adults, children who did not visit public libraries said that they were not interested in books, did not have enough time or a need to go to a library, and were busy with other activities.

Now let's take a closer look at library visitors who use the Internet in a library.

How do Libraries Attract their Visitors?

The respondents visit public libraries first and foremost to take books home – **96 per cent** of visitors use this service. They also like reading the press **(62 per cent)** and receiving other kinds of publications, such as language learning programs, compact discs and video discs **(30 per cent)** in a library. 27 per cent of the respondents come to public libraries to use the free Internet, while **18 per cent** of the respondents come to libraries to use data bases on the Internet.

Usually children come to a public library to take books home; less frequently they read books and magazines, use the Internet and play computer games in a library.

When They Need the Internet They Go to a Library

The survey of users of public access reveals that the Internet in libraries is mostly used by the population of a younger age, specialists and civil servants, as well as those living in larger cities. Unlike other parts of the population of the country, a library for the user of public access is the most popular place to use the Internet; **79 per cent** of the respondents choose it to browse the world wide network. Less popular places for them to use the Internet are home **(43 per cent)** and work **(23 per cent). 9 per cent** of visitors of public access use the Internet in a library on a daily basis, **27 per cent** use it several times a week, and **17 per cent** use it at least once a week.

Still, for the majority of public access users – as many as **72 PER CENT** – a public library is not the only place where they can use the Internet. However, residents of smaller towns have a limited choice of using the Internet elsewhere.

Children and adults use computers and the Internet in a library for various reasons. According to the data of the survey, a library attracts the visitors by the fact that they can use the Internet free of charge, receive other services of public libraries, and be assisted by the staff. Many library users find it convenient to have public Internet access in a library. While children often mentioned that public access helped them be occupied in their free time.

A human factor is also important for the users of the Internet in libraries; approximately one third of the respondents ask librarians for the assistance. Usually elderly people or residents of rural areas need such assistance. It is important to highlight the fact that the received assistance satisfied the absolute majority of the respondents.

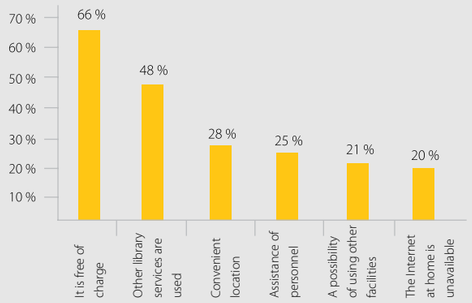
Even though a large proportion of high school and college students have computers and the Internet at home, they nevertheless are considered the users who spend the biggest amount of time in public Internet access facilities in libraries. Only a part of them use other library services, too; however, the majority of them come to a library only to use a computer and the Internet. The rural population more frequently uses the Internet in a library than the urban population.

The Internet is Mostly Used for Leisure and Culture

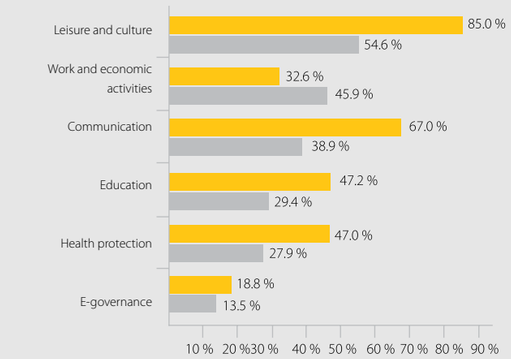
It can be observed that spheres, that are most popular for the use of the Internet amongst the population, are similar. Visitors of public access usually use the Internet for leisure and culture. This sphere was mentioned by more than half of the interviewed public access users. Slightly more remarkable differences are marked in the sphere of education; users of public access in libraries more actively than the rest of the population use electronic data bases, electronic catalogues of libraries, watch educational video broadcasts online and take a distance learning course.

Health and e-governance services are equally unpopular amongst public Internet access users and the rest of the population. Nevertheless, library visitors use the Internet for such purposes more often than those who do not use public Internet access. For example, nearly twice as many of the respondents claimed to have submitted various declarations, applications requesting to be granted documents or permits online in libraries.

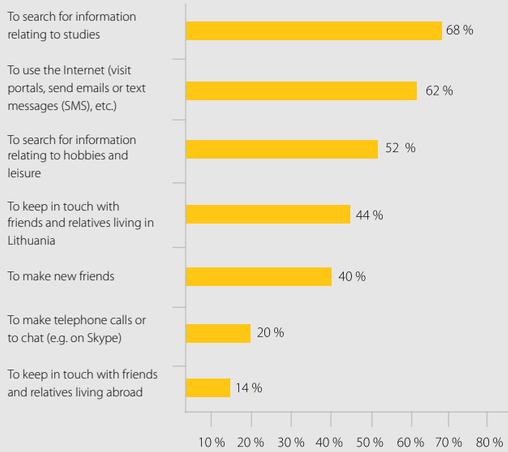
Reasons for using public Internet access in libraries



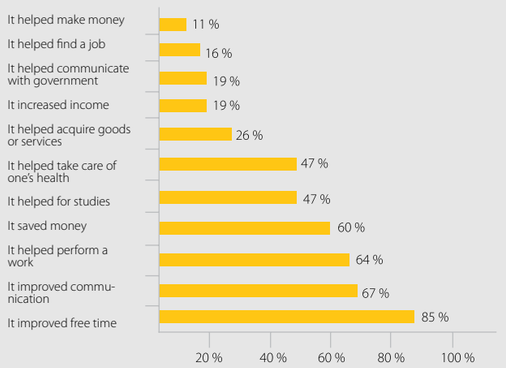
Main spheres of using the Internet by users of public Internet access in libraries, and their benefits



Why do children use public Internet access in public libraries?



Opinion of users (adults) concerning the impact of public Internet access in public libraries



Children are attracted to the services of public Internet access by similar reasons as adults. The majority of them searches for the information relating to their studies or leisure, browses the Web, writes emails to friends or makes new friends online in libraries.

Various Benefits Are Received

How does the population benefit from public Internet access? The evaluation of these benefits by librarians and the population differs.

According to librarians, public Internet access helps the visitors learn how to use a computer and the Internet, find a job and information useful for education and studies. Urban librarians most often indicate a possibility of using educational sources, while rural librarians emphasize better possibilities for job seekers.

The heads of libraries named similar benefits provided by public Internet access to communities: according to them the development of computer and Internet skills, accessibility of educational sources and data bases, and information for job seekers are the key spheres for which the Internet available free of charge in libraries can be useful to the population.

Librarians also highlighted the fact that populations of smaller towns and villages can be provided with office services in public access locations, such as scanning, printing and photocopying of necessary documents. Librarians believe that these services help attract visitors to a library and familiarize themselves with other services provided by that library.

What concerns the users, they claimed that the Internet in a library first and foremost improved their leisure time and communication with relatives and friends. They slightly less frequently mentioned the fact that the Internet in a library helped better perform their work or save money. As the research showed, public Internet access in libraries provide a direct economic benefit, too; **16 PER CENT** of the respondents claimed to have found a job, while **11 PER CENT** said they earned some money.

Children said that due to the Internet in a library, they could spend their free time in a better and more productive way; almost **80 PER CENT** of young library visitors mentioned such benefits. A slightly smaller proportion of children – almost **64 PER CENT** – said that the Internet helped them make new friends and improved their communication with relatives and friends (almost **57 PER CENT**). Only a small proportion of children – approximately **3 PER CENT** – were able to make money online in a library.

Impact on Socially Disadvantaged Groups

Qualitative research, focused group discussions and interviews revealed that representatives of socially disadvantaged groups were the ones who first and foremost benefited from the use of public Internet access points.

It has been observed that a possibility of using the Internet free of charge in public libraries changed the behavior of high school students; instead of spending their time on the streets, they come to a library and stay here. **Children** are supervised by a librarian in a library, who makes sure that they follow the established rules of behavior; therefore, computers and the Internet help children socialize and become a part of society.

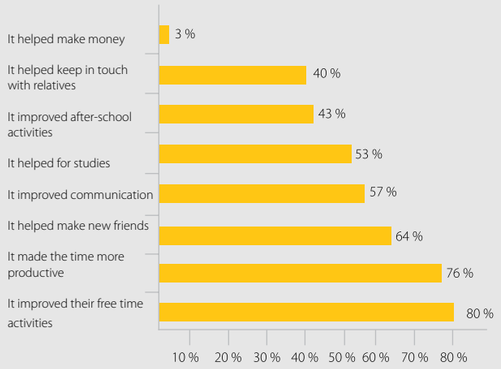
The unemployed persons usually use the Internet in a library to look for a job. They choose public Internet access because, unlike labor exchange offices that also provide free access services, in a library unemployed persons can look for information not only in the data base of labor exchange office but also in other data bases online. Moreover, in a library they can read newspapers that also have job advertisements. Some of the respondents indicated that they enjoy a less formal atmosphere in a library which is more encouraging than the one at a labor exchange office; therefore, it can be concluded that the Internet in a library offers more opportunities for representatives of this group to look for a job.

The rural population sees even more benefits provided by a library. Here they can not only acquire books, use computers and the Internet but also participate in public activities. Many rural libraries organize literature, ethnographic, historical or other kinds of events or courses, as well as possibilities of joining various clubs and classes.

Senior citizens least frequently use computers and the Internet; they come to a library to read books, the press, to communicate and find out the news of their community. It is them who are most eager to learn how to use information technologies with the help of a librarian; however, most of the times a librarian would rather perform an action than teach an elderly visitor how to do it by himself/herself. Librarians explain that senior citizens themselves are not interested in searching for any information; moreover, according to those librarians, they respect their old age.

It is important to highlight that **visitors with physical disabilities** have almost the same interests as other library visitors of the same age. Physical conditions are necessary for them to be able to use the Internet and computers in a library. The majority of the population who participated in the research agreed that libraries and public Internet access facilities could play a big role in helping the disabled integrate into society. It is evident that presently this potential is not fully used; therefore, it could be concluded that it is necessary to create educational activities that would encourage more positive attitudes of librarians and society at large towards people with disabilities.

Opinion of users (children) concerning the impact of public Internet access in public libraries



Evaluation of public Internet access in public libraries by the users



Librarian Brings the Biggest Value

When evaluating the current image of librarians, users of public Internet access and the Lithuanian population have different opinions. The users consider a library a fun and modern place, as libraries constantly upgrade their facilities, introduce innovations, and provide various services. The library has become the center of the community life.

What concerns the survey of the population, it clearly reflects the stereotypes about libraries that dominate in society, i.e. it is an old-fashioned and boring place to be alone and secluded. The infrastructure of libraries, technical equipment and provided services are evaluated more or less negatively. Moreover, the population does not consider a library to be able to bring a community together.

Although the interviewed representatives of various groups of society have different views as to the current image of a library, it can be concluded that presently a librarian brings the biggest value to a library. Librarians are considered to be great assistants to a visitor, they are cheerful and polite. When asked to evaluate the quality of public Internet access services, the users first and foremost indicated the helpfulness and qualification of library staff; these qualities were on average given 3.6 and 3.5 points in a four-point scale. Young visitors of public libraries also favorably evaluated library staffs: more than **95 per cent** of children positively evaluated the helpfulness of librarians, and almost **94 per cent** of the respondents positively evaluated the qualification of librarians.

Challenge – to Eliminate the Divide

Challenge – to Eliminate the Divide

It can be stated that in these days, from the point of view of information technologies, there are differences within Lithuania: as the research revealed, there still exists a huge divide between the rural and urban population in respect to the accessibility of these technologies and the abilities to use a computer and the Internet.

Another divide is evident between generations: children use technologies much more consistently than adults, and they equally successfully apply them to their studies, leisure and communication. Whereas adults tend to use information technologies for receiving information on culture, leisure and communication, but they much less frequently use them for education, health or e-governance services.

Public libraries, by providing the population with free Internet service and helping visitors develop their computer literacy, could play an ultimate role in bridging this gap and encouraging the population to use information technologies in a wide variety of spheres. They assumed this mission back in 2003 by becoming involved in the Library Renovation and Modernization Program for 2003–2013 approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which is today strengthened by the "Libraries for Innovation" project.

For one third of the users **(28 per cent)** a public library remains to be the only place where they can use the Internet. Thus, it is important to improve the accessibility of the Internet in library branches located in rural areas, in particular.

The development of society's computer and information literacy skills, with the major focus placed on socially disadvantaged groups is another objective of libraries. However, library staffs should also be provided with conditions enabling them to constantly update their knowledge, be always prepared to consult visitors, and encourage them to use and understand a wide spectrum of possibilities provided by the Internet.

It is librarians who have the most significant role in the creation of network of innovative, modern and attractive public libraries. According to the population, an active and competent librarian is a key component of a library image. Therefore, it will ultimately depend on librarians, whether for the Lithuanian population libraries will remain to be only a "book storages", or they will become a centre for comprehensive intellectual and community activities.

The project "Libraries for Innovation" will help achieve this result.

About the Research

In May-June 2008 a complex research "Information Technologies in the Public Libraries of Lithuania" was carried out by the market analysis and research group RAIT Ltd, which was commissioned by Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The purpose of the research was to examine the current situation on the public Internet access in libraries and to assess the benefits received by the population that uses information technologies. During the research the following was carried out:

- the representative survey of the Lithuanian population was conducted (aged 15 to 74);
- 1 055 respondents were interviewed;
- the representative survey of Lithuanian children was conducted (aged 12 to14);
- 592 respondents were interviewed;
- visitors of the public libraries of the country that used public Internet access were interviewed; 1 246 respondents;
- staffs of public libraries that were providing public Internet access or will provide it in the future, were interviewed; 609 respondents;
- 65 heads of the Lithuanian public libraries were interviewed;
- factual data was gathered about 1 225 libraries.

The data was collected from the questionnaires of the representative surveys, the organized focused group discussions, and more detailed interviews that included the following:

- children from social risk families, as well as children from families in which both or one of the parents have left for another country,
- rural population,
- retired people,
- people with disabilities,
- unemployed,
- library staff,
- heads of libraries,
- representatives of various stakeholders.

The promoters of the "Libraries for Innovation" project will also conduct similar research in 2009–2011. The results will be employed for the comparative analysis and the impact assessment of the project.

Detailed results of the research are available on the website:
www.bibliotekospazangai.lt/ImpactAssessment

For further information on the research you can contact Ugnė Rutkauskienė, Impact Assessment Specialist of the "Libraries for Innovation" project by email: ugne.rutkauskiene@bibliotekospazangai.lt.

About the Project "Libraries for Innovation"

More than 1 200 public libraries, branches and subdivisions are participating in the project "Libraries for Innovation". As a result of this project they will be provided with computers and the Internet connection, and library staffs will improve their computer literacy skills so that later they can transfer this knowledge to others. During the implementation of the project approximately 50 000 Lithuanian population will receive the training in computer literacy, and 11training centers will be set up. It is expected that the developed network of public Internet access points in libraries will attract population, in particular the elderly, disabled and other representatives of social risk groups, who will much more actively use modern technologies and thus improve their daily activities and the quality of life.

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania together with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania is implementing the project which will last until 2011. Funds for the implementation of the project are provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (LTL 35.7 million), the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (LTL 14.7 million) and the Microsoft Company that provided the latest software worth LTL 31 million. The contributions of local authorities (LTL 10.7 million) are equally significant, as they help libraries prepare for the provision of public Internet access and other activities carried out under the project, and they will ensure the continuity of these activities in the future.

Similar projects funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have already been implemented in the USA, Chile, Mexico, and Latvia. Many other European, Asian and African countries are also planning to start the implementation of these projects under the initiative of the Foundation.

For more information about the project visit www.bibliotekospazangai.lt.

