

Vesna Čopič



Dr Vesna Čopič first received a Bachelor's Degree in law with a completed bar exam, but she transferred to sociology and culturology soon thereafter and completed her PhD at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2006. Her thesis covered the issues of transition and collective benefits. In international circles, she is well-known as an expert in cultural policies and cultural management. She is a participant in multiple expert groups and institutions (Council of Europe, Mosaic, ECF, Compendium, etc.). Prior to her career in higher education she worked for the Ministry of Culture and contributed considerably to the systematization in the field of culture and now she is employed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. She is the person responsible for school libraries in the Education Development Office. Her bibliographies in the COBISS system include approx. 150 items of scientific and expert contribution.

Her work in the field of school libraries began with the critical observation of the illogic behind the fact that the country owns a successful library information system COBISS, which does not include most of the school libraries.

On the path to the Slovene version of implementing IFLA school library guidelines

The School Library Manifesto adopted by UNESCO and IFLA in 1999 is unquestionably a turning point in understanding the role and the direction of the development of school libraries around the world. Its concretization is represented by the School Library Guidelines first published by IFLA in 2002 followed by the updated version in 2015. As this is an important document, it represents a reference source for a strategic discussion about the development of school librarianship in Slovenia. However, its global reach requires local conceptualization, as is underlined in the document itself, in our example this is the Slovene path to its realization.

The guidelines, as the goal of the school library, specify an efficient support for forming information literate students with the purpose of developing responsible, creative, innovative, critical, independent and ethical members of the society, where the school library is defined as the driving force behind the education and is being set in the epicentre of improving learning and teaching. It is assumed in the guidelines that the entire curriculum is focused in such a way. To achieve this goal, adequate staff must be provided, as well as facilities, collections, services, programmes, etc. Justification for ensuring these conditions is based on a regular evaluation, which should not ignore the evidence about the impact the school library activities have on a successful learning.

So, how is Slovenia's path toward realizing IFLA's school library guidelines looking? Considering that the magna carta of Slovene education, the so called White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, has 520 pages, none of which even mentions school libraries, and considering that the last strategic discussion, which did not pass the phase of a background document (i.e. Outline plan of Slovenia's school libraries development) all the way back in 1995, one can understand just how ground breaking the amendment of the

Librarianship Act actually is. This is because, it imposes the inclusion of school libraries into the COBISS system and hereby strengthens the status of school libraries in the national library information system, and at the same time it integrated school libraries into the education system at a substantially higher degree, and therefore forced the country into a strategical discussion, and forced the schools into a developmental planning of school libraries.

However, this is only the beginning and a basis for the following actions: ensuring quality statistical measurements of school libraries, inclusion of school libraries into the COBISS system, enactment of a new Rulebook on the conditions for school library operation, adoption of the Development strategy of school librarianship and preparing development plans for school libraries, as a part of development plans of schools. Many steps have been made related to the aforementioned actions – some are already in progress, and we are still waiting on the others. But it is important, that we formed a strong coalition led by National Education Institute, Institute of Information Science, National and University Library, Faculty of Arts and Slovenian Library Association in coordination with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. With a great measure of mutual trust, we open all current dilemmas and questions pointed out in the Guidelines and look for the Slovene path to their realization. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport formed two work groups comprised of librarians and adopted the coordination methodology with all other key actors with the goal to achieve political decisions supported by experts, which will be binding as well as executable. This raises the question: are the wishes actually on the level of modern pedagogical concepts in the digital environment and are the possibilities only limited by funds? Information literacy assumes the inclusion of the school library into the global systems of exchanging library information, which is guaranteed with the inclusion in the COBISS system, and now these options also need to be sufficiently harnessed while observing all others developmental challenges.