

Model of preparing podcasts as a contemporary strategy for encouraging reading literacy and reading culture

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The paper presents and analyses the preparation and application of a modern strategy promoting reading literacy and reading culture, its scope, responsiveness and usefulness the professional environment and the wider social environment. Action research with the method of observation (system diaries) and analytical research (survey method) were used, which were conducted as part of a case study - this is the first such example of the use of modern strategies the Slovenian library space. Data were obtained by observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of the selected modern strategy, i.e. podcasts. The phases of the action research are: 1. planning and creating podcasts, 2. implementing podcasts in practice, 3. determining the perception of podcasts in professional circles, 4. monitoring and determining the use of podcasts.

In the third phase, analytical research was used to determine the perceptions of podcasts among professionals. The result is a five-step model of preparing podcasts in the public library for the purpose of encouraging thinking about reading literacy and reading culture.

The results obtained in the third and fourth phases speak in favour of the use of such a strategy for this purpose. Research limitations are tied to one case study, which includes a large enough sample. Could be the starting point for a more extensive comparative study. The model highlights the importance of linking theory and practice and the use of modern strategies in the field of promoting reading literacy and reading culture.

Keywords: *reading literacy, reading culture, podcasts, influence, model, public libraries, Slovenia*

1. Introduction and literature survey

Reading literacy and reading culture are terms that are strongly present in the professional and scientific literature. They are dealt with in different contexts according to the addressee, recipient, social and geographical circumstances, also historical development, as the definitions of reading literacy as reading abilities and reading culture as attitudes towards reading have changed over different historical periods. In the last decade, these terms have increasingly been the subject of professional and scientific discussions, which point to the importance of reading in the context of development of cognitive abilities and the changing approaches to reading with the increasing presence of screen media and hyperlinks added to text. At this point of current social situation, the term reading literacy, which is understood as the ability of an individual to understand, critically evaluate and use written information (Nacionalna, 2019), perhaps given the historical presence of reading literacy in certain historical periods, profoundly influences the individual's daily life, affecting the quality of life on a personal, academic and social level. Reading literacy as an ability includes developed reading skills, (critical) reading comprehension and reading culture. We understand the latter as the individual's conception of reading as values and motivation for reading. In this paper, we do not want to determine whether the importance of the terms discussed in current social events is really the most important, given the presence of these concepts in the life of an individual in past historical periods. However, we would like to point out that it is necessary to thoughtfully and regularly raise awareness of the meaning of the concepts in question, ie reading literacy, which, according to our definition, also includes reading culture. The latter means that at this point in 2022, reading literacy, as an ability, and reading culture, as a relationship, are so important for the quality of an individual's daily life that their treatment in professional and scientific publications and circles alone is insufficient. This moment a key shift should be in the field of raising awareness of their meaning, based on a series of research and expert discussions that have highlighted the positive effects of reading over the last decade, most often in relation to screen technology. It is this that can bring about certain changes in reading motivation, but this is not the topic of our paper, so we will not deal with identifying the positive and negative effects of screen technology in relation to the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture.

Regardless of the different definitions of reading literacy and reading culture, in this article we start from the definition of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy of the Republic of Slovenia (Nacionalna, 2019) where we see that every day we find

confirmations that reading literacy is the most important area of human development. In the paper by Fras Popović and Vilar (2022b), we wrote: "Reading literacy is the ability not only of the individual but of the society as a whole to help articulate contents of life for progress, development, preservation of historical memory, and ultimately, survival. If we do not know how to read, understand, evaluate what is written and write something ourselves, we are lost in the modern age of too fast, too strong and too often false information. " Reading is not only important as a technique or way of spending free time, it is important for all human development, from text skills, imagination development, stimulating empathy, strengthening concentration and restoring or establishing many connections in the brain (Wolf, 2018).

At the heart of our interest is raising awareness of the importance of reading literacy and reading culture in various fields of social activity and with modern strategies. This is not only about raising awareness of the presence or perception of reading as a value on a principled level – we are also interested in whether we can penetrate deeper with the chosen modern strategy in shaping the attitude towards the concepts under consideration. First with the professionals working in this field, and then also in the wider environment, the ultimate goal of such efforts. With the chosen modern strategy we want to raise awareness of the importance of reading literacy and reading culture in the wider social space and encourage the construction of reading culture that not only understands reading as a value but also lives it in everyday life on personal, professional and academic level.

Strategies to promote reading literacy and reading culture are pathways, that encourage non-readers and readers to progress, and enable them to establish a positive attitude towards reading and books (Wolf, 2018). In the last decade, individual social networks (eg Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube) have become an important factor in promoting reading literacy and, above all, building reading culture (Carr, 2010; Wolf, 2018). Among them we also find podcasts. Their presence in the library world can be linked to 2012 (De Sarkar, 2012).

In 2022, the so called podcast, especially in the Anglo-American world, is a well-established and often used strategy for promoting the professional development of librarians, acquainting them with professional literature and also book novelties. (e.g. ALA New Professionals Section Podcast, 2022; Thomas, 2019). Libraries and podcasts – of course those that prepare library-related content – can often meet on the path of coexistence and complement each other more often than they contradict each other. Thomas (2019) highlights podcasts as a means of supporting library efforts to promote community. He believes that what is crucial is what seems to be exclusive at first glance. Although library users and podcast listeners generally do not meet in physical space and in physical form, which is a key feature of twenty-first-century citizens, Thomas points out, that, according to the laws of

current social action, they connect in a way that allows them to share their love to knowledge and the joy of discovery. A library with podcasts can thus reach those who do not yet use or do not know its services, and above all, it conveys the awakening of interest in the community much more widely and sometimes even outside the planned, especially geographical frameworks. Accessibility and reach, as pointed out by the ALA (Heninng, 2017), are features of this modern strategy, which largely speaks in favour of choosing podcasts as an appropriate modern strategy to promote reading literacy and reading culture, with special emphasis on raising awareness of the importance of these contents for everyday life. This was one of the two decisive reasons why we chose podcasts as an appropriate modern strategy for the implementation of two of the tasks of the Center for Promoted Reading Literacy of the Maribor Public Library¹, namely in influencing the competence of professionals and regular encouragement to raise awareness for the daily life of society and the individual.

Another decisive reason was the focus of podcasts on content and less on external appearance, if we compare the chosen strategy with another, such as. YouTube, which became one of the most commonly used strategies in the first wave of the Covid epidemic to transfer a variety of content into an individual's living space. Due to measures to limit the spread of the virus, it was physically severely limited to personal living space. In the continuation of the epidemic, certain measures reshaped the habits of individuals and society and thus greatly changed the ways of, for example, visiting libraries and public cultural events (such as literary evenings, fairy tale lessons, book talks, reading clubs). These forms have until now been established and can be considered the traditional strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture in the library environment. They had recognized positive effects (e.g. direct contact with the author) and were in use in a wide variety of library settings. However, in the changed social dynamics, the transformation of which was largely stimulated by the pandemic, these traditional strategies needed a response in the form of a different approach. In the field of healthcare, whether it is one of the organs (i.e. the eyes) or mental health (overload with external appearance), experts (paediatricians, neuroscientists, psychologists etc.) have increasingly warned (and still do) of excessive use of screen media. The transition from one strategy to another, e.g. from using a YouTube channel to a podcast, it also represents a transition from looks to content only.

The podcast and the library do not, however, have a common point only in individuals, their joint feature is the power of awakening curiosity and the desire to seek knowledge from the population. A traditional library can be limited to users who visit it in a physical space or

¹ The Slovenian Network, the Maribor Public Library as the central regional library, and the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy are presented in Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022a. In this paper, we highlight only those content orientations of the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy that are important for the model of preparing podcasts as a modern strategy for reading literacy and reading culture.

on a website (meaning that they need to know about it, know it and use it). By using podcasts the library can be included in the lives of residents who listen to podcasts and are not necessarily members of the library, nor at all interested in the libraries, they might even not know where their local library is. The library builds its identity, as well as its collection, from the relationship with the local community. It places different types of material in the library collection, both in terms of formats and content. The same goes for podcasts. From the different divisions of podcasts, we will focus on library podcasts and thus consider two divisions. In the first (Thomas, 2019) division, library podcasts fall into two categories: the first focuses on users, the second on the professional development of librarians. In the second (Henning, 2017), format is more important than content, as categorization is built on the definition that anything we can listen to in audio format (e.g. interviews, conversations, instructions, lecture recordings, narrations, etc.) can be formed into a series podcasts. At this point, the basic orientation found in both divisions of library podcasts stands out: the content orientation of the podcast series. It is possible to prepare podcasts, similarly to e.g. books, for practically anything that interests someone, it is important that they are designed to be listened to, because otherwise they share a similar fate with books on bookshelves that no one ever opens.

Libraries most often do podcasts that involve the use of traditional strategies to stimulate reading interest (Thomson, 2019). Most often, these are edited versions of live event recordings, such as e.g. live conversations with authors, or podcasts representing book production. Library podcasts address the young population to a greater extent than the older users. In the last decade, we are also seeing the rise of podcasts, which in the professional development of librarians have replaced the reading of professional articles and in various formats (eg. conversation, storytelling, presentation) bring professional content for librarians.

In our research, we examined the possibilities of preparing podcasts and placing them in the process of promoting reading literacy and reading culture among the adult population, with an emphasis on the target group of professionals. This is something we have not detected in the offer of different podcasts when analysing the available literature. It is a content innovation with which we wanted to determine whether one series of podcasts can be used for four separate purposes, which can, in turn, be achieved jointly, using this chosen strategy:

- Promotion of a professional event,
- Promotion of the chosen literary works,
- Raising awareness on the role and meaning of reading literacy, and
- Presenting the positive attitude towards reading.

As the chosen methodology, action research is central to this paper. Action research includes data obtained by observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of this modern strategy.

1.2. Definition of the basic terms and presentation of the baseline of the case study

With the help of professional and scientific literature, we will explain, in particular, the concept of podcast and its placement in the field of modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture. We also define the concept of impact, as we deal with the impact of modern strategies on the behaviour of professionals (Fras Popović, 2021; Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022a; Fras Popović, 2022a).

The definition of **impact** is summarized according to the international standard ISO 16439: 2015 Informatics and documentation - Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries (2015, p. 10), where impact is defined as "change or difference in behaviour of an individual or society resulting from contact with services libraries. A change can be tangible or intangible." From the standard we also take the definition of the term event, which is a previously agreed activity with cultural, educational, social, political, educational or any other purpose. Only events organized by the library itself or in collaboration with other institutions, indoors or outdoors, are included. Events that take place in the library, but are organized by external institutions without the participation of the library, are excluded" (ISO, 2015, p. 9).

The term **modern strategy** will also be used and explained in this paper with the help of a basic explanation of the concepts of both words, as we already explained in our previous paper (Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022a). The notion of the word **modern** will thus be tied to the present. So, one that is accessible in the present and responds to the characteristics of the present. In this article, the word **strategy** also denotes a way or procedure to achieve a certain goal. So, in the context of modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture, we are talking about procedures or methods that can be used to achieve a certain goal and meet the requirements of current social events. Our specific goal is to promote interest in reading literacy and reading culture and to raise awareness of the importance of reading literacy for individual performance in society.

It is also important for our paper to define the term **model**, as it is one of the key terms of our research. After reviewing various sources, we found that in this case, too, we need an unencumbered definition for our research that will offer a clear, unambiguous, and generally

accessible explanation. Web portal FRAN² (2022) defines the concept of model as “an established form of something, according to which something is done; pattern, shape”. The model offers solutions on how to do something and so we understand the model as a presentation of a system that brings the realization of general guidelines in a real environment.

The present time offers various strategies, most commonly known as social networks. Because we are also aware of the many negative effects of social networks on reading literacy and reading culture (e.g. Carr, 2010), we decided to use those modern strategies that put content before appearance and do not highlight the negative effects of screen media use. In our opinion, a modern strategy in promoting reading literacy and reading culture, that responds to the needs, requirements and habits of the individual in current, even epidemiologically coloured social circumstances, is a podcast.

The **podcast** is, according to various definitions, available mainly on the Internet, and the podcast is a collection or series of digital audio files that are made available for download or listening via the Internet. The origins of this form date back to early 2004, when Ben Hammersley first used the term podcast in an article in *The Guardian*, and the intense initial development dates back to the second half of 2004³. The use and proliferation of podcasts has also been particularly affected by the recent epidemic, which has brought with it a number of restrictions on physical contact and meeting people. In our previous paper (Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022a) we mention the development of podcasts and research of their usefulness in library environments, so we do not repeat this here.

The case study is related to a series of fifteen podcasts⁴, prepared by the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy of the Maribor Public Library as part of the promotion of a professional event entitled ABC of Reading Literacy III. The podcasts were primarily intended for professionals to promote the professional event, but were also prepared to encourage reflection on the importance of reading in the wider social environment, and to promote selected books.

² The portal *Fran* combines dictionaries, Slovene language sources and portals that have been created or still are being created at the Fran Ramovš Institute for the Slovene Language ZRC SAZU, and dictionaries that have been digitized as part of the work at this institute. It also enables searching in other selected Slovenian language corpora.

³ Overview of the historical development and naming of podcasts was presented in Fras Popović and Vilar (2022b).

⁴ RSS feed: <https://feeds.simplecast.com/bwsy7qJJ>

2. Research problem and methodology

The entire research on podcasts as a modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and reading culture is presented in two papers. The presentation of the framework of the entire research, ie the case study of ABC reading literacy podcasts and the results of analytical research of sources and attitudes of professionals towards podcasts, was presented in the first paper (Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022b). The analytical part of the research is based on a broader study (Fras Popović, 2021; Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022a, Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022b), which determined the impact of participation in a professional event on the competencies of professionals in the field of reading literacy. In this paper, we will also refer to the above-mentioned papers in presenting the findings within the individual phases of the action research.

The present paper presents the design and implementation of the action research – observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of podcasts as a modern strategy to promote reading literacy and reading culture – and the second part of analytical research on their accessibility, impact and usefulness. This was part of the two phases of the action research, namely the third phase, which determines the perception of podcasts in professional circles, and the fourth phase, which provides statistics on the use of podcasts.

2.1. Research questions

We formed four research questions:

1. What is the procedure of designing and executing podcasts in the case study?
2. What is the perception of the podcasts in the case study among professionals?
3. What reach and use of the podcasts in the case study can be identified?
4. Is it possible to form a model of podcasts design that would have practical implications, i.e. that can be transferred to a real library environment?

2.2. Methodology

Observational action research (system logs) and analytical research (survey method) were used as part of the case study of the creation and placement of podcasts in the process of promoting reading literacy and reading culture among the adult population. We focused on the target group of professionals. Action research deals with observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of the podcasts as the chosen modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and reading culture through the following phases: 1. designing and

creating podcasts, 2 implementing podcasts in practice, 3. following the perception of podcasts in professional circles, 4 monitoring and identifying the use and reach of podcasts. In the third phase, analytical research using the survey method was used. The survey was described in more detail in our previous paper (Fras Popović and Vilar, 2022b). The responses to the involvement of podcasts in the promotion of professional events and the attitude of professionals to podcasts were obtained with five closed-ended questions in the survey, which provided feedback on the impact of participation in professional events ABC of reading literacy III.

2.3. Samples

The sample in the action research is a series of fifteen podcasts entitled ABC of Reading Literacy⁵. These podcasts were prepared by the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy of the Maribor Public Library as part of the promotion of a professional event entitled ABC of Reading Literacy III. The podcasts were primarily aimed at professionals, but were also prepared with the aim of raising awareness and thinking about the importance of reading in the wider social environment. This is the first series of podcasts of its kind in the Slovenian library space, and was also the recipient of the national award for an innovative library project, which is awarded by the Association of Slovenian Public Libraries (Knjižnice.si, 2021b).

For the analytical research, the sample consisted of the participants of the professional event and in this case we have a purposive sample, as it included representatives of the population of professionals in the field of promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. The sample is described in detail in Fras Popović and Vilar (2022b), here we highlight the sample size: the invitation to participate in the survey and the link to the survey were sent to 427 e-mail addresses, which were obtained by online registration of participants. We sent out the invitation three times and after each submitted invitation we recorded an increased response rate. 330 respondents started the survey, 180 respondents finished it, and another 18 respondents partially finished it, therefore we have 198 answers of the participants of the professional event. The response rate was therefore 60%.

3. Results and discussion

The results of the action research are presented through the above mentioned four phases: 1. designing and creating podcasts, 2 implementing podcasts in practice, 3.

⁵ RSS feed: <https://feeds.simplecast.com/bwsy7qJJ>

following the perception of podcasts in professional circles, 4 monitoring and identifying the use and reach of podcasts.

3.1. Designing and creating the podcasts

The creation of the first podcasts in the Maribor Public Library required extremely close cooperation between the IT department and the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy. Podcasts were not offered by any Slovenian public library at the time of the decision to prepare podcasts in the Maribor Public Library (February 2021), neither in the form of a trailer for a professional or any other event, nor in the form of book recommendations.

When planning, the first decision was tied to the use of the term podcast. After analysing the professional literature and reviewing various terminological solutions, we decided to use the term podcast and not to use a Slovenian version (for example by writing the letter k instead of the letter c). The chosen term was therefore *podcast*.

We set up a series of podcasts by researching how to best execute content, which software to use (how to place content in an accessible place) and to use experiential learning: while learning, we learned from mistakes and corrected them. For example, one of the experiences was whether to have the text written while recording a podcast or to speak fluently and naturally without the pre-prepared text). Thus, the first and second phase were intertwined, complemented and upgraded. Regarding the content, key decisions in the phase of creating podcasts tackled 1) the thematic context or the thread linking the podcasts and 2) the use of the term podcast (whether we write the term podcast or podcast - we performed a resource analysis for this definition). The connection between the lecturer at the professional event ABC of Reading Literacy III and the book recommendation in the podcast was the personal choice of the podcast organizer - this was another decision in the podcast development phase. The creators of the professional event are presented through the personal prism of associations between their work and the selected, presented book, which represents a book recommendation for external listeners. We also prepared technical and content recommendations on how to prepare and carry out podcasts, which are available to the public online (YouTube channel of the Maribor Public Library). These are general instructions that require podcast designers to adapt to their own technical and financial capabilities, the amount of knowledge, the availability of professional staff and the development of access to users (website, social networks, etc.). The podcast creation and planning phase took place from January to June 2021.

3.2. Implementing the podcasts in practice

The phase of implementing podcasts in practice was intertwined with the phase of creating podcasts. In the first part of the podcast, we paid most attention to the realization of the idea of having or offering a podcast: discussion of the decision why to prepare podcasts, research on technical, content and financial possibilities and capabilities, decision on the content concept of a series of fifteen podcasts, terminological decision and decision on the time dynamics (fifteen Tuesdays before the start of the professional event) of podcasts. Through the phase of implementing podcasts in practice we re-entered the phase of creating podcasts five times: by realizing that we needed a graphic corporate image for the podcasts, when recording the podcasts, when placing the recordings on the clients, when replacing the use of free software with licensed software⁶ and when promoting podcasts. All these steps in the phase of implementation of podcasts in practice were carried out at certain events during the first phase, i.e. the creation of podcasts, which was mainly an intertwining of concept development and implementation planning, but in practice we came to different conclusions and either changed the original decision or direction or just added new solutions. The podcast implementation phase took place from May to October 2021.

In the stage of creating podcasts, we did not initially plan a special graphic image of this series of podcasts, but when placing the first podcast in this series, we found that each podcast needs three basic elements: graphic image, title and short description. These three fundamental elements⁷ are the ones that affect the accessibility and listenability of podcasts.

We recorded podcasts with selected computer equipment, ie software, computer and microphone. We did not use studio recording equipment that includes a professional microphone when recording through all the podcasts. Since we had a microphone built into a portable headset for smartphone use, post-production activity was key. The sound recording program was important; with that we were able to properly edit the recording (eg. remove disturbing sounds from the surroundings). This we found out while listening to the first podcast. To download podcasts to selected podcast clients, we used the appropriate software, at first this was free software, and then we leased the appropriate licenses. We therefore came to a realization that free equipment has certain limitations that are too difficult for us to overcome in the phase of implementing podcasts in practice.

The target group, ie professional colleagues and all those who work in the field of reading literacy and reading culture, was included through posts on social networks, as every week, when publishing an individual podcast, we also published information on the Instagram and Facebook profile of the Maribor Public Library. As part of the production of a comprehensive graphic image of the professional event, an image for each individual podcast was also created, and at the same time we prepared a publication about a series of podcasts on the portal Library News.

⁶ One of the reasons for replacing free software with licensed software was the availability of system data on the use and reach, as it is important for the library as a public institution to determine the impact and efficiency of services provided.

⁷ A very important element is the podcasts' title. Because these podcasts are entitled just like the professional event, i.e. ABC of reading literacy, and the title starts with the letter A, they have been placed at the top of the selected lists.

To our first research question, we can answer that these two phases, i.e. the creation and implementation of podcasts, are intertwined and not strictly separated, neither in content, nor in time, nor organization. The whole model is characterized in each individual phase by the presence of the Deming PDCA circuit, which is characteristic of the processes of continuous improvement. It is characteristic of the PDCA round that the completion of one round continues with the beginning of the next (Fras Popović, 2007, p. 23). As part of the action research, we found that in the case study, the PDCA circle is mostly represented in the phases of creating and implementing podcasts.

3.3. Following the perception of the podcasts among professionals

The perception of podcasts in professional circles is the subject of Fras Popović and Vilar (2022b). Here we summarize only the general findings. We found that a significant proportion, ie a good two thirds of the participants in the ABC of Reading Literacy professional event, perceived the podcast series as a prelude to the professional event and a good half of the participants also listened to at least one of the podcasts in this series. Professionals have a positive attitude towards podcasts, as only one in ten podcast participants is not interested in presenting content in the field of promoting literacy and building a reading culture. Among the participants, two-fifths are those who regularly follow other podcasts in this field and other related fields. Almost all participants who listened to the reading podcasts from the case study felt that this provided them with information that made them more competent to promote reading and reading literacy and reading culture. Thus, we confirmed that podcasts can also be an important source for strengthening professional competencies.

During the phase of implementing podcasts in practice, we also monitored direct responses. There were no negative responses, only positive responses from professionals, as evidenced by the following statements:

- "Hi, congratulations on the podcast 😊 Really welcome!"
- "Podcast 3.8. was d'best 😊 (are you recording with professional equipment?)"
- "We have reached the finish line. Thanks for the 15 podcasts. I hope that this will open a new path or the possibility of new sub-podcasts that will address reading and similar topics (as mentioned)."
- "Bravo for the podcast. I really enjoy listening to you."
- "A colleague recommended the ABC podcast to me a few days ago ... I enjoy listening to it (thanks for the recommendation and thanks for doing it). My only request is: DON'T END IT AFTER 15 ROUNDS!"

Podcasts of the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy of the Maribor Library were highlighted as a model example at a national conference of the Slovene Reading

Association⁸ entitled *Seduction to Reading or How Reading Lives Online*. In any case, the result is also fifteen podcasts that seduce to reading.

The phase of identifying and monitoring the perception of podcasts among professionals took place from June 2021 to April 2022.

3.4. Monitoring and identifying the use and reach of the podcasts

Monitoring and determining the use of podcasts is presented with statistical data obtained from system logs, which refer to the podcasts downloads, in full and by individual episodes. When interpreting the data, it is important to take into account the fact that this is the first such use of podcasts in the field of promoting reading literacy and reading culture in Slovenia in order to promote a professional event among professionals. The usage monitoring phase took place from October 2021 to April 2022. Data on **the use (download) of all episodes and the use (download) of the podcast series in question and the use of the ten most frequently downloaded (used / listened to) individual podcast episodes** provide important insights (both seen in Table 1).

Table 1: Use (downloads) of podcasts ABC of reading literacy

Downloads of podcasts ABC of reading literacy	
All episodes	579
Ten most often downloaded episodes^{9,10}	
<i>Dobrodošli v svetu bralne pismenosti</i> (Welcome to the world of reading literacy)	97
<i>Zvezdica zaspanka, Samo domov me pelji</i> (Sleeping star; Just take me home)	56
<i>Pravljичno potovanje Hansa Christiana Andersena</i> (The fairytale journey of Hans Christian Andersen)	42
<i>Bralec, vrni se domov; Pravljичne poti brez meja</i> (Reader, return home; Fairytale trails without borders)	39
<i>Punce, glavo gor in slikanica Učiteljica</i> (Girls, head up and picture book Teacher)	28
<i>35 kg upanja; Čustva in izbira</i> (35 kg of hope; Emotions and Choice)	26
<i>Kaj misliš kdo; Kaj sploh je to; 50 abstraktnih izumov in Pot</i> (What do you think; What is it; 50 abstract inventions and the Path)	26
<i>Nepozabne</i> (Unforgettable)	26
<i>Klak la klasika; Repki in poezija</i> (Klak la classic; RapTails and poetry)	26
<i>Pozitivna psihologija za vrtce, šole in starše</i> (Positive psychology for kindergartens, schools and parents)	25

⁸ One of the more important providers of the contents for strengthening of professional competences in the area of reading literacy and reading culture. URL: <https://bralno-drustvo.si/>

⁹ Individual podcast episodes are called after the literary works that are presented in them, and are also linked to the presenters at the professional event ABC of reading literacy III.

¹⁰ Podcast titles are given in both languages: original Slovenian and translated to English.

Table 1 reveals that ABC of reading literacy podcasts were downloaded 579 times from the start of publication to the preparation of the final analysis, i.e. from 22 June 2021 to 31 March 2022. The first podcast was listened to¹¹ the most (97 times). At this point, we assume that listening to individual podcasts was influenced by two factors: 1) timing in the summer, and 2) the content design of the next podcasts in the series, as each subsequent podcast was invited to listen to the first podcast. The first podcast is the most general in terms of content, so we assume that this is the reason for the largest number of downloads. In the perception of podcasts in professional circles, we also recorded the direct responses of colleagues. From these we can conclude that in podcasts as well as in reading tips, the most important promotional factor is the personal encouragement¹² of a professional colleague or person who is related to us in thinking and feeling and we have a trusting attitude towards him and it has the greatest impact on use of this medium.

Data also show us the reach of podcasts (Table 2) for the period from June 22, 2021 to March 31, 2022. Reach is understood as the distance in which something is achieved. The distance represented the countries where podcast downloads were identified.

Table 2: Reach of the podcasts ABC of reading literacy according to the country of download

Reach of the podcasts ABC of reading literacy according to the country of download		
	N=579	100%
Slovenia	543	93,78
France	20	3,45
Switzerland	3	0,52
Canada	3	0,52
Germany	2	0,35
Croatia	2	0,35
USA	1	0,17
Australia	1	0,17
Sweden	1	0,17
Luxemburg	1	0,17

The data in Table 2 reveal that the most downloaded and listened to podcasts were in Slovenia (543), as the share of downloads represents 93.78 per cent of all downloads and listens. Thus, our basic purpose was achieved. Podcasts also reached across national borders and even continents, to France (20 downloads), Switzerland and Canada (3 downloads), Germany and Croatia (2 downloads), Australia, the United States, Sweden, and Luxemburg (1 download). The data in this table reveal the geographical limitations of the availability of

¹¹ We stem from the supposition that download is linked to listening – we therefore assume that if an episode was downloaded, it was listened to.

¹² Personal encouragement was also in this case confirmed as the most important aspect of the so called promotion communication channel.

podcasts and the realization that in the phase of creating and designing the podcasts we did not even consider that these podcasts would be in use across the globe, e.g. in Australia or Canada. Combining these data with those obtained from resource analysis (e.g. De Sarkar, 2012) in the podcast development phase when deciding on podcasts, the thesis of regional podcast preference was confirmed. In the mentioned source, the author pointed out that Australia is the country that uses podcasts the most, and USA is the country that creates podcasts the most.

According to our third research question, we can note that the analysis of the use and scope of podcasts confirmed the suitability of the use of podcasts as modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture. Podcasts, due to their characteristics, including automaticity and accessibility, exceed time and geographical limits. We point out that we did not focus on the language limitations, mainly due to the modern emigration of Slovenes to different countries. The range and use of podcasts in the case study confirmed that the range is unpredictable and that it is extremely powerful. The same is true for usefulness, which is permanent, as recordings, besides no geographical constraints, are also available without time constraints.

In addition to the number of downloads and the countries of downloads, we were also interested in the **most common tools** that the listeners used to download and listen to the podcasts in the case study (Table 3).

Table 3: Tools for downloading and listening to the podcasts ABC of reading literacy

Tools for downloading and listening to the podcasts according to the download frequency		
Crome	164	28,33 %
Google Podcasts	124	21,42 %
Spotify	86	14,85 %
Simplecast	59	10,19 %
Dreezer	42	7,25 %
Firefox	33	5,7 %
Microsoft Edge	26	4,49 %
Facebook	15	2,25 %
Mobile Safari	10	1,73 %
Chrome Mobile	7	1,21 %

Table 3 shows that the use of podcasts removes communication constraints. The ability for users to select, subscribe to, and listen to podcast content whenever they want and from a variety of tools is a major attraction in today's lifestyle. Although we selected specific clients to monitor podcasts in the case study, namely Google Podcast, Apple Podcast, Spotify, PocketCasts, and Deezer, Table 10 presents the ten most commonly used tools with which listeners monitored ABC reading literacy podcasts. The connection between the data in Tables

2 and 3 shows the accessibility of this modern strategy and thus also supports its usefulness regarding the content with which one would want to promote reading literacy and reading culture in different environments and between different target groups.

Through individual phases of action research, we obtained data with which we can answer the research questions. We found that the process of creating, designing and implementing podcasts in the case study is linked to experiential learning, which combines a research approach and direct verification of information obtained in practice and through this process forms new knowledge, which can then be passed on in the form of recommendations to the colleagues. In the phase of monitoring and determining the perception of podcasts in professional circles, we found that this perception is positive. Professionals are in favor of this modern strategy and are also emotionally positive about it. We also found that podcasts with selected content can, to a certain extent, replace the following of printed professional literature for professionals. Podcasts have two features that are key to exploring reach and usage, namely automaticity and accessibility. We have found that podcasts have an unlimited range, as they reach all those parts of the world where the internet is available, and the use is not limited in time (for example, only once at the announcement of the event or in a certain period of time planned by the content organizer). Within the phase of monitoring and determining the use of podcasts, in connection with their scope, we examined the possibilities of processing the podcast as an electronic source and its record or description in the library catalog. In doing so, we found that such a description is possible and so all fifteen podcasts are entered into the database¹³. Podcasts are publicly available indefinitely, which increases their usability.

From the data obtained in the four phases of action research, we were able to confirm research questions that basically presupposed the existence of a certain process of creating and implementing podcasts, the presence of perception in professional circles and the scope and applicability. Therefore, we were not interested in whether this is possible or not, but we were interested in the qualitative research aspect, to which we came with the research question (what) – which expresses the question of quality, properties, characteristics. We were also interested in whether we could use the acquired knowledge to design a model for planning, preparing and using podcasts for the needs of promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. This research question can be answered affirmatively. Therefore, the key result of our action research is an established five-step model, presented in the next chapter.

¹³ Example: <https://plus.cobiss.net/cobiss/si/sl/bib/90002691>

4. Five-step Model of Establishing Podcasts as a Modern Strategy for Promoting Reading Literacy and Building a Reading Culture

We understand the model as an established form of something and an established way of doing something following this form. The model is essentially a pattern and brings solutions on how to do something. It shows the concrete application of general guidelines. Thus, in the case of a case study of podcasts through action research and experiential learning, we combined the findings into a five-step model of establishing podcasts in a public library environment. It is therefore a "Five-step Model of Establishing Podcasts as a Modern Strategy for Promoting Reading Literacy and Building a Reading Culture".

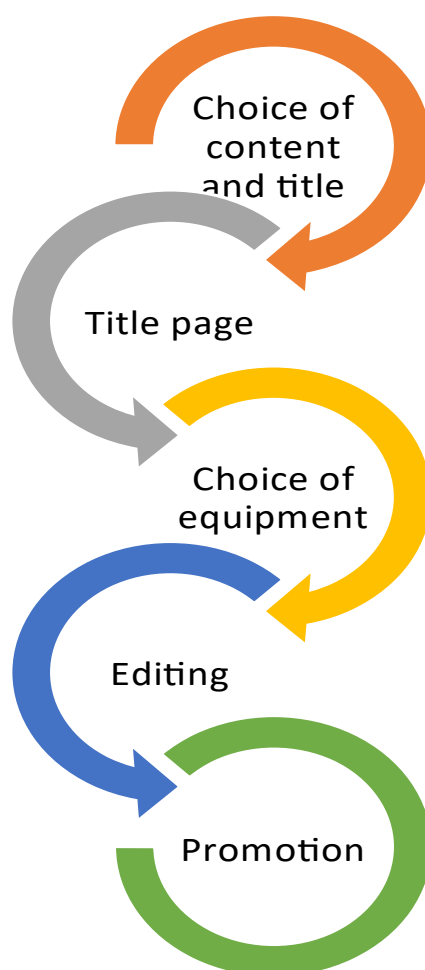
In addition to practical empirical findings, the model is based on the recommendations examined in the planning and development phase of podcasts, and considered the following three directions of the relationship between the public library and podcasts, namely:

- Podcasts are an appropriate support for the library's efforts to establish contacts in its community in a changed form of socializing, typical of the 21st century, as it no longer presupposes primary encounters in physical space, and physical contact. As a rule, library users and podcast listeners do not meet at all, much less meet in physical form in physical space, so podcasts allow the library to connect in a way that best shares the enthusiasm for reading, knowledge and books and strengthens the connection with the library.
- Podcasts can be used by the library to reach the residents, who do not yet use or know of its services, as the traditionally perceived public library is limited to users who visit it in a physical space or on a website (so they need to know about it, know and use it), but due to the nature of podcasts, their use can reach the lives of residents, who listen to podcasts, but do not have to be members of the library, interested in libraries, or know where the library is in their area.
- There are several types of podcasts: the library can prepare podcasts that provide reading tips, but it can also use podcasts to present the value and importance of the library profession and library role in the community. The library can also prepare podcasts to strengthen the professional competencies of library employees, as the podcast as a conversational form can bring together content that is more difficult to capture in the form of a professional paper due to the dynamics of time.

The result of the action research is a model of five steps that shows the preparation and use of podcasts as a modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. The model is useful for different libraries and is transferable to different content

areas. As part of the action research, we examined whether such a model could be established. We found that this possibility exists, it is feasible and, after the analysis, we upgraded it with research findings and adjusted it accordingly. Due to the introduction of podcasts at the professional event, we did not abandon certain established procedures in the library, i.e. notification of the event via e-mail, publication on the website, on individual portals (e.g. National Month of Joint Reading or Knjižnice.si), but we upgraded the established invitation to the event and the promotion of the event itself. What follows is a description of each of the five steps of this model, which is presented in Figure 1, describes our experiences, gives advice on how to approach each of the phases, and also shows the connection and integration of each phase with the next.

Figure 1: Five-step Model of Establishing Podcasts as a Modern Strategy for Promoting Reading Literacy and Building a Reading Culture.



- **Step one: Choice of content and title**

The first podcasts we prepared at the Maribor Library were titled ABC of Reading Literacy. It makes sense to choose the name of the podcast according to the system of connectivity with certain content that the library provides. We found that it is important that the content comes from the purpose of the podcast and the name of the podcast is linked to it. We have found that it is possible to combine several purposes into certain podcasts. In the case study, we combined four purposes, namely the promotion of a professional event, the promotion of selected literary works, raising awareness of the importance of reading literacy and presenting a positive attitude towards reading. When choosing content, it is also important that there is enough material available, as a certain consistency is important in podcasts. We also choose a title for each individual podcast in the podcast series (a "subtitle"), as we are already anticipated more than one podcast in this step. We designed podcasts as personal thinking about reading, reading literacy, book tips, and more. They were primarily intended for professionals, but they also have elements that appeal to the general public.

- **Step two: Title page**

For the title page, a design was used that was dedicated to the ABC of Reading Literacy III event and has a recognizable look for the third year in a row (as two of these events had already unfolded in the previous years, as presented by Fras Popovič and Vilar 2022a, 2022b). The overall graphic image is also important when preparing podcasts. The title page is important, because the podcast is also presented to clients with a graphic image (corporate image), so the visual effect is one of the most important factors in choosing and subscribing. In this segment, a certain consistency in presentation is also important, as each time a new graphic image can be disturbing or even misleading.

- **Step three: Choice of equipment**

We used the equipment we currently have available in the library. The recording took place on a laptop using the free Audacity program. During the recording, we found that we would urgently need a proper professional microphone. The sound of a recording in audio podcasts is, in addition to the content, the most important component. Also important when choosing equipment is software that allows you to monitor data on the use and range of podcasts. As a rule, such software is not free.

- **Step four: Editing**

We uploaded the recordings to the Simplecast platform for storing audio and video content. We selected those clients that we believed are monitored by our potential users. Listeners can choose the client of their choice and subscribe to the RSS feed if

that client allows it. When editing podcasts, the ability to catalogue podcasts in the library database is also important when placing them on clients. In this case study, podcasts were catalogued as an electronic resource and are thus available through the Slovenian cooperative bibliographic database COBIB.SI (i.e. findable in the cooperative catalogue COBISS/OPAC).

- **Step five: Promotion**

It regards the process of informing about the podcast offer. We inform users about the offer of our podcasts through the website, social networks and promotion at our events. From monitoring and determining the perception of podcasts in professional circles, we found that personal recommendation has the greatest impact on promotion.

The reason for our decision to build a podcast model as a modern strategy lies in the accessibility and frequency and simplicity of podcasts. The model, of course, also has a practical purpose: to serve as an aid to libraries and librarians wishing to undertake this service, and to facilitate their decisions at all stages of the process.

5. Conclusions

Podcasts have been around for almost two decades, since 2004, and have been the subject of analysis in libraries for more than a decade, with one of the first major scientific papers in 2012 reviewing podcast use in academic and public libraries and shows the level of podcast acceptance in different types of libraries across continents. From then until 2022, there are a number of publications of different typologies. These are not only papers – especially after the epidemic, there are also recordings and podcasts themselves, which help us look at the usefulness of podcasts, learn their characteristics and embark on the path of preparing podcasts.

There are several types of podcasts. From interviews, conversations, recorded live arrangements, telling fairy tales, reading books or personal reflections on just about anything we can think about. It's the same with a podcast as it is with a book. If the latter has no readers, it is dead on the shelf. And if a podcast doesn't reach listeners, it's just like a book that doesn't have readers. It is for this reason that we have shaped the findings of action research and experiential learning into the presented five-step model. The model is designed from various publicly available recommendations, is adapted to the capabilities of the Maribor Public Library, and, we believe, is also a useful model for other libraries. Therefore, in this research, we validated the model of establishing podcasts as a modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and building reading culture.

Through individual phases of action research, we found that the process of creating, designing and implementing podcasts from a case study is linked to experiential learning, which combines a research approach and direct verification of information in practice and through this process forms new knowledge, which can then be provided in the form of recommendations professional colleagues. In the phase of monitoring and determining the perception of podcasts in professional circles, we found that the perception is positive. Professionals are in favour of this modern strategy and are also emotionally positive about it. A good two-thirds of the participants in the ABC of Reading Literacy III professional event perceived a series of podcasts as a prelude to the professional event. A good half of the participants also listened to one of the podcasts in this series. Experts expressed a positive attitude towards podcasts, as only one in ten podcasts is not interested in presenting content in the field of promoting literacy and building reading culture. Among the participants, two-fifths were those who regularly follow other podcasts in this field and other related fields. Almost all participants who listened to ABC reading literacy podcasts felt that listening gave them information that makes them more competent to promote reading. In this context, we also found that podcasts with selected content can, to a certain extent, replace the monitoring of professional literature in printed form for professionals.

Podcasts have two features that are key to exploring reach and usage, namely automaticity and accessibility. We have found that podcasts have an unlimited geographical range, as they reach all those parts of the world where Internet is available, and the use is not limited in time. Within the phase of monitoring and determining the use of podcasts, in connection with the scope of podcasts, we examined the possibilities of processing the podcast as an electronic source and its entry or description in the library catalogue. In doing so, we found that such a description is possible and so all fifteen podcasts are entered into the library catalogue.

Podcasts are publicly available indefinitely, increasing their usability. From the data obtained in the four phases of action research, we were able to confirm research questions that basically presupposed the existence of a certain process of creating and implementing podcasts, the presence of perception in professional circles and the scope and applicability. Therefore, we were not interested in whether this is possible or not, but we were interested in the qualitative research aspect, which we came to with the research question (what), which expresses the question of quality, properties, characteristics. We were also interested in whether we could use the acquired knowledge to design a model for planning, preparing and using podcasts for the needs of promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. This research question can be answered in the affirmative. Our five-step model is the key result of action research.

With the present research, which has certain limitations, but also provides a number of starting points for further research, we try to highlight the thoughtful use of modern strategies in promoting reading literacy and reading culture. The presentation of content on the topic of reading culture and reading literacy is thus more modern, more accessible and intervenes outside the walls of the library or narrow professional circles. The limitations of the research were identified at the following points:

- We did not check the availability of different library podcasts in a particular geographic environment.
- We did not check the availability of library podcasts on this topic outside Slovenia.

At the same time, these limitations are the starting point for further research in determining the impact of modern strategy in promoting reading literacy and building reading culture.

As this is a case study, covering a smaller sample, the presented survey and its results are an introduction to a possibly more extensive research on the topic of our research question. Reading literacy and reading culture are such very important contents that it makes sense to use various modern strategies to spread them. We were convinced by the podcasts and on this basis we believe that the model of preparation we have presented can be used both in the field of culture or education.

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