Simplicity, creativity and serious approach to children's views - technical and theoretical basis of digitalized collection's for children and young adults of interactive interface www.lasamkoks.lv.

Silvija Tretjakova
Children's and School Libraries section, Library Association of Latvia, Riga, Latvia.
Children's Literature Centre, National Library of Latvia, Riga, Latvia
silvija.tretjakova@lnb.lv

Helga Tormane
Children's Literature Centre, National Library of Latvia, Riga, Latvia.
helga.tormane@lnb.lv

Abstract:

Latvian National Library Children's Literature Centre specialists, in collaboration with the children's book illustration artist Reinis Pētersons (visual concept), created the interactive children's interface www.lasamkoks.lv - known as the reading-tree. The interface gives information about children's literature in general - authors' biographies, books, current events, there is also a possibility to play games and read digitalized book collection, which is represented with various genres of children's literature.

Project during which the interface was developed took place from year 2006 till 2012 and its name was „Development of Digital Library services". It was funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Projects main goal was to offer digital library for children as part of the Digital Library services.

The young readers like "The reading-tree". The children's digital library antique children's book collection is the most popular. The children's interface has been tested by professionals and the main conclusion is that it needs even more interactivity.

During the first three months of 2013 „The reading tree" Digital Library for children has been visited 8250 times which is the highest number of visits from all of the Latvian National Library's digital collections.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is vital for early childhood development. Today you need to be creative to focus children's and youngster's attention on reading. Young readers should be able to have an access to books, which are no longer easily available such as stories and fairytales from the beginning of the 20th century for example. The values of fairytales and stories never gets old, on the contrary, their message survive despite the changes brought by time.

Digital Library for children "The reading-tree" has been developed during the last six years using the funding from European Regional Development Fund. Information is divided into 4 age groups : preschool, young school age children, teenagers and adults. For every age group, the website's design is created differently and also the information given on the website will vary with the user's interests. Moreover, the collection of digital library is differentiated by reader's age.

The children books, in which the parent is interested, are not always accepted by the children, that's why Children's Literature Centre specialists accomplish research about actual children's as young reader's expectations and views in the field of children's literature (in a framework with the Children and Youth Jury reading promotion program).

BACGROUND

[Type text]

The accessibility of nowadays libraries and information can be described shortly: Information is oil / information is soil / information is currency. **Information is oil**, oil is energy, those who work with oil administer important resources, those who own oil are rich. **Information is soil;** that's how David McCandlles, journalist and acknowledged creator of info graphics, changes this phrase emphasising that information has to be easily accessible and understandable for everyone. **Information is capital;** architect Karl Chu talking about changes brought by digitalization points out: Pursuit of knowledge is based on the organization provided by certain device, tool or mode. Such visual organizations represent well-defined sequences of operations instead of data systematically mapped into visual images.

Thinking long term it has to be pointed out that children are important as readers as they are future adults and it is crucial to help them orientate themselves in the abundant stores of information that exists nowadays. Following a certain path is important for every reader. It is the responsibility of librarian and person, who works with the interface, to sum up the information, classify it, organize it in hierarchic divisions, emphasise most important and discard unnecessary.

That is how the idea was born to create an easily accessible, attractive, visually organized interactive interface for children to encourage their interest in reading, good books, exchanging their ideas both digitally and face to face.

The reading tree" is reading books from digital library that are suitable for specific age group, learning about authors and illustrators and finding out the latest news in children's literature.

VISUAL CONCEPT

The tree metaphor is ancient, it is a metaphor that is found in many cultures and symbolizes the cycle of life. Tree converts the carbon dioxide that is in the air into oxygen. Similarly on the interface "The reading tree" information is processed and presented in a way suitable for each age group. For example the author biographies for preschoolers are written in easily

[Type text]

understandable language and using a lot of visual material. Also the books on offer on Digital Library are suitable for this particular age group.

Each age group has a different visual design created by children book illustrator Reinis Pētersons.

The tree methapor is used to join together the differetn levels of world order. Tree unites 3 world levels- underworld-roots, earth-trunk, sky- leafage. On "The Reading tree" roots are adults and past (it symbolizes stability and development, new leaves and fruits are obtaining energy from roots). The parts of a tree can be compared with ties between generations. There is a reason why there is a term "family tree".

Symbolic tree is used for visually organizing information- tree shaped diagrams have been used already since middle ages.

A tree and reading are close connected terms. Japanese artist Tosa Mitsuoki /1671- 1691/ shows it in his work **"Autumn maples with poem slips"** /1675/.
Writing poetry on tree leaves is an old Japanese tradition.

A tree has been a place of gathering from ancient times. Following ancient Japanese traditions people used to hang curtains in tree brunches creating separate rooms where they read and wrote poetry and had picnics. Under the shade of a tree people held idea exchange forums, discussed latest news or simply spent time thinking and reminiscing. In Japan it is still happening today when hanami- cherry trees are blooming.

A tree is sound and lasting but in the same time growing and changeable. Using poetic comparison interface "The reading- tree" has rooted itself and started growing.

The imagination of artist Reinis Pētersons most likely has been inspired by English writer Alan Alexander Milne book "Winnie the Pooh".

„The reading tree" successfully represents the idea of Digital library- that it has to be accessible from distance. "The reading tree" is like a map that helps to orientate oneself in a
[Type text]

huge territory of books and people are confident that they have chosen the right brunch- book. "The reading tree" gives visual summary about the knowledge, not only about the books, and in the same time creates lucidity that is very important. Interactivity –people are using the tree to communicate- not only downloads the information but also leaves commentaries.

DISCUSSION

„The reading tree" is being discussed in every seminar that is organized for librarians, teachers or parents. The most suggestions are given for the section for the youngest readers. How to tell authors biography in an interactive way- by emphasizing his hobbies, his home life, childhood, by finding objects that are associated with him, attaching authors voice recording.

In the illustrator section many professionals have suggested that the main character from a certain book takes reader on the journey through different sections- for example Sprīdītis, ladybug, rabit etc.

Interactivity has been set as a goal for games section and allowing the user of "The reading tree" upload his own games about books such as crosswords for example, that are very popular in Latvia.

We should let children participate in the development process with their input- let them organize competitions, forums, discussion groups. And there has to be connection with other digital resources.

In the section for teenagers options to participate in disscusions and leave commnets about books should be added as well as links to other social networks provided.

Following sections would be interesting for this age group:
- Book Top
- Book collections about different topics (relationships, fantasy), search using key words- adventure, fishing, miracles, girls, princesses, countries etc.
- Advertisements for biggest and most unusual events for the age group

[Type text]

- Competitions
- Music section

In adult section the concept of "The reading tree" has to be explained. Adults also would like:
- Book Top
- Search option by genre- prose or poetry, by emphasising literature movements- romanticism, realism etc., by authors origin country- American, German etc., by topic- adventure, fantasy etc., by format- audio books, e-books.
- Contacts- institutions, contact information for authors and illustrators, organizations that work with reading promotion and access to their files and data.

Is "the reading-tree"- "the favourite example of marketing libraries to children" like Ned Potter from University of York Library in his "The Library marketing toolkit" said? http://www.librarymarketingtoolkit.com/2012/05/fantastic-example-of-marketing.html

CONCLUSIONS

Digital Library for children "The reading-tree" is one of the most successful digital products that have been created in Latvia. Content wise it still is in very early stage but it has already gained publicity and its name is well known.

The design of artist Reinis Pētersons is rich with metaphors. An oak tree for Latvians is a symbol of power, profoundness, sacredness, longevity that is shown also on our national currency lat. In the same time tree symbol is internationally recognized and it is the "most preferable territory for living" in children literature, as it's said in A.A. Milne work about Winnie Pooh.

Differential approach to structuring information develops "map" that is easy to read and that is made attractive by animated characters and unique design. Small children get colorful animation with little animals that move but teenagers and young adults get graffiti and little figures that are sketched on the edge of school notebook. So users can easily identify with the "packaging" of particular information.

To successfully market a digital product it is necessary to have regular testing and work with children and young adult groups that could point out things that need improvement. We

[Type text]

already know some of the products faults- links with other electronic resources- music records, author voice records, cartoons, computer games, e-books etc.