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THE COMMUNITY PORTAL AS AN ELECTRONIC SERVICE OF THE LIBRARY

Утенская публичная библиотека, основана в 1931 году, до 1995 года была традиционным центром культуры. 1995 год – это черта в жизни библиотеки, потому что именно с этой даты началась ее модернизация. Основное направление деятельности библиотеки в это время - создание информационной системы общины. Технологии интернета используется не только для быстрого получения нужной информации, но и как замечательная возможность привлекательной формой представить информацию о себе, рекламировать услуги, а также обогатить содержание национального интернета публикуя самые ценные материалы собранные в библиотеке. С этой целью в 2002 году осущевстлен проект "Через библиотеку в виртуальную общину". Идея проекта – создать портал Утенского края в интернете, который помог бы неопытному пользователю ориентироватся, быстро найти нужную ему информацию. Сейчас через портал доступна самая разнообразная информация общины, виртуальные услуги. Важный компонент портала – электронная енциклопедия Утенского края. Для жителей региона портал – это хорошая возможность не только получить ценные знания, но и объединится в виртуальную общину, расширить ее границы, делая ее информацию доступной неограниченому числу людей.

Utena County is situated in the Northeast of Lithuania and includes territories of 5 districts. It makes 11% of the whole Lithuania. Utena is an administrative centre with well-developed industry. The key industries in the town are foods, beverages, textiles and knitwear. The exceptional feature of this region's economy is the largest power producer in the East Europe - Angelina Nuclear Power Plant. It is about 70 km from Utena town. Maybe it seems a little curious, but our region is also famous for its recreational zones and well – developed tourism system. There are 1005 lakes in the county and even 186 of them in Utena District.

Utena is not only the centre of industry but also a centre of education and culture. The Utena A. and M. Miskiniai Public Library is one of the most advanced institutions of this kind. Modernisation of public libraries and use of electronic information in Lithuanian public libraries were started in 1997 and it is happening till now. During the period many of them already became the modern information centres, they created a new model of activity, intended for the wide users' circle, that allows to ensure a fast spread of information and equal accessibility of new technologies for all citizens. Utena A. and M. Miskiniai Public Library is one of the first among the Lithuanian public libraries that started modernisation of its services. At present it is one of the leaders in the Republic, its covered way and stages of activity are typical for all Lithuanian public libraries, which

decided to modernise their activity - there is a search of supplementary finance sources, adaptation of the structure to the changing users' needs, development of services for the community, education of users information culture, digital publishing, publication of the relevant regional information on the Internet, expansion of virtual services, intensification of the relations with other community's institutions. In 2001 Open Society Institute recognised the library as a Model Library for the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and empowered to spread its achievements to other libraries.

Needs and problems of served community determine activity of the library. Development of open and democratic community is important task today. The main condition of strong community is information and communication, because it helps to decrease an isolation of people, to know and to perceive problems. Information is an important mean of social integration and the library, as an information centre, can help it.

Taking into consideration society's need for the information Utena Public Library became an information centre, providing the community with all sorts of information. In period of several years the library was modernised, the structure was rearranged and adapted to the expanding needs of the users.

Few successful projects provided the library with the good opportunities for activities, for the improvement of resources, professional development of the staff, and extension of user services.

The main stages of library modernisation are:

- Beginning of computerisation 1995-1998;

- Development of new services 1998 -2000;

- Creation of community's information system 2001 -2004.

After modernisation the library consolidated already as a mediator of information and communication expanding its services and using non-traditional forms of activity. The most important goal of the library for the present is to provide the population of the region with all kinds of knowledge and information using the modern technologies also the sources of electronic media. Main directions of Library's information activity in this field are:

1. Creation of community's information system;

2. Development of services to the inhabitants;

3. Contacts and partnership with other organisations and institutions of the region.

Presently the information system of the community is framed. This is a new model of library's activity, based on the digital information and designed for the large number of users. The point of this information system is to ensure the equal accessibility

of digital information, to make new technologies available for every citizen, to inform them, to develop their skills, which they need to temporise and to act in the new atmosphere of information technologies.

The main library's policies are following:

1. Equal accessibility of digital information;

2. Development of information culture;

3. Digital publishing.

It's very important to give the possibility for the inhabitants to use information technologies - to create network of computerised workplaces in the public libraries of the town and villages. At present it involves the Main library and its 12 branches.

New technologies changed the types of information search. Our library aims to become not only a user of ICT, but also to teach the readers to use the products of these technologies. In this purpose there are organised the courses of information literacy for the general public. Three levels Internet training program is prepared for adults and children.

On purpose to spread the information about the library and its services the library's web site (http://www.uvb.lt) was created, but we think that it isn't enough.

In 2002, with the help of Open Society Fund Lithuania, we started our new project "Through the library to the virtual community". The point of this project is to create community's web site assigned for the wide range of the users and to ensure public access to the information of different local institutions. The main result of the project is web site of local community "The Utena Land" (http://www.utena-on.lt).

This web site includes the information of many institutions. The information from the library, municipality, county administration, job-centre, local press, European information centre, NGO, schools, local lore museum and other institutions is available for everybody. The Internet portal helps the users to orient themselves in the sources of information and it serves as a local gate to the Internet. PHP, mySQL technologies make interaction possible and let to create new content-comments, questioning and annotations. Visitors of this web site also are able to use some virtual facilities such as e-mail requests, news review, photo and video gallery, video reportages from cultural

events and exhibitions, virtual billboard, advertisement on the internet, discussions and voting, personal messages.

Digital publication "Encyclopedia of Utena Land" is a component of this web site. It gives valuable information about the history, geography, nature, culture, heritage, local arts and handicrafts, famous people and places of Utena region - more then 600 printed pages and 350 illustrations are available for all Internet users.

Important element of the portal is the web site for children "Infohouse" (http://www.utena-on.lt/infonamas). Children can find here all necessary information for their studies and leisure: they can read the articles about books, music and films, to play games, to participate in different competitions, exhibitions.

Considering to everything, what was mentioned before, it is important to say, that our library seeks to extend the field of activities of the library as a community information centre on purpose to ensure the possibility for citizens to join the community life. We think that the best way to do it and to achieve positive results is to co-operate with other organisations and institutions in the region. Co-operation is purposive in order to share the information, resources and experience also to use them more effectively. Our partners in service delivery and creation of local Internet content are local government, local press, non-governmental organisations, enterprisers and private persons.

To conclude it is necessary to say, that success of the project proved that our library has already got a potential to meet the requirements of all visitors. We are happy to see such a big increasing of our working index. More than 245 thousand users have visited the Internet portal "The Utena Land" since the September of 2002 till now. It is obviously that our new services are very needful to the community public - people are not restricted in their time or place. The project gives a new possibility to enlarge community's geographical bounds using a new technology because the local community's information now is accessible to unlimited number of people through the internet. It prompts a publicity, democracy, comprehension and network inside the community.