

Methodology

Storytelling festival Latvia 2010

Living Library

General outline of the project

Aims

To get to know the life of the LGBT community To introduce it to wider society in an innovative way

Objectives

1. Collect evidence of local LGBT people in art stile using method – draw your story.
2. Find people capable and willing to participate in the living library and being "live books".
3. Organise living library for larger audience in Riga, including other activities for LGBT and wider community to meet each other, exchange of experience and present data collected before. Living library could cover some interesting events: wall of stories, black box/closet, music stage, short film/movies, story presentations and discussions, photo exhibition, theatre of improvisation etc...



Activities

1. Identify evidences of local LGBT community and people ready to add new stories;
2. Collect evidences
3. Organise living library
4. Manage living library
5. Summarize the results
6. Publish and spread postcards
7. Write methodology

Products

- Postcards
- Method description for GALE storytelling toolkit

Objectives and short description of how a living library works?

On 10th of December which is **UN Human Rights Protection Day** the event Living Library was held in the frame of Ars Tolerantia project Storytelling Festival Latvia 2010. The aim of the project was to get to know the life of the LGBT community and to introduce it to wider society in an innovative way - Living Library.

Living library works just like a real library - readers can borrow a book for a certain time and read it individually or in small groups. Book must be returned to the library after reading, and reader can pick the next book. There is only one difference from the real library: the books in living library are live people, and the book gets into the personal and informal dialogue with a reader. The offer of living books can vary, but generally the book is person or profession, which represents the groups that have received conflicting assessments, which are directed against stereotypes and prejudices, or which face discrimination or misunderstanding. Living book can also be an interesting, unusual personality. Living book not only tells, but it can respond to readers' questions or even ask their questions to readers. The reader in turn can be anyone who wants to talk about their stereotypes and prejudices, as well as spending time in a personal dialogue.

Our concept was to create space where people can go into dialogue with people who are considered belong to a social minority with the purpose of getting acquainted in a personal way, getting rid of prejudices and opening new human perspectives. And we linked sexual diversity with broader context of human rights.

The idea of the Living Library in Latvia 2010 was to invite people to think about the fact that the society is rainbow-colored, and also to invite public to dare to say: "Yes, I don't fit in the public general frames". To come out. So Living books must be a bit unusual and recognizable. And readers sometimes may find the similarities with them.

Living Library in Latvia engaged seven really bright personalities:

Eelste Abels launched the event by shortly presenting herself as the first book and also telling about the Netherlands organization The Global Alliance for LGBT Education (GALE). It was also the first come out for her in Latvia.

Evita Gosa, representing LGBT association Mozaika, shared her experiences and activities in "Mozaika", as well as her personal experience and the public reaction toward her, after she married her spouse Liga Klavina.



George Steel shared his work in active promotion of tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue and work against racism. George Steele is an example when people have no choice about coming out or not. Because of different skin color in Latvian society he is stranger, in spite of that he loves Latvia and his children are Latvians. George told about the Latvian attitude against 'different' and that Latvian society, above all, must learn to love itself and only then it will be able to accept "strangers".



Film director **Andris Gauja** was assigned as a book, because his latest scandalous film "Family instinct" had a great impact in Latvian society, reflecting family relations between sister and brother, and how the public are turning against the self-created products.



Seila Andersone is a talented fashion designer, bright personality and very interesting woman, who had a lot of fascinating stories about various topics not only about the fashion but also about being different, wanting to vary from the mainstream.



Muslim **Kaspars Gasuns** was really attractive book, who told about his life in Latvia, representing unusual religion. He told about his attitude toward Christ, relationships in society and family, muslim community in Latvia and other exciting stories from his daily life. Kaspars is person who fights for civil society, promoting mutual understanding and dialogue between those who think differently.



Kaspars Goba presented his view about the Pride action in Latvia. He has also produced a movie "Homo@lv", which provides an opportunity to learn the views of Pride supporters and deniers as well as Pride participant' life stories. The film raises a reflection of the manipulation of human ideals and political role in it asking the question, what is the price of Latvian democracy.



All of the Living books generated interest and active discussions.

During the evening and book presentations it was possible to look at the drawing from the new artist Marek Ruskulis, who has put a lot of ideas and stories in simple pencil drawings. People could also enjoy musical stories from group Momend, as well as couple of short films about LGBT issues. Also a folder of story drawings from Living Library participants was collected

At the end people participated in improvisational theater "Boats", which played different situations out of the households about issues connected with LGBT issues and more wider human rights.

Living Library was an informal meeting of people, which continued also after the official part in discussion over coffee.

How to find your living books with different backgrounds?

Security and success of the event is based on a clear vision of what this type of action seeks. And after the goals and targets are identified, organizers can look for action partners, potential books, and the planned venue.

One of the most significant factor for success “Living Library” is the attraction of fascinating and vivid personalities with different backgrounds, that later on can attract “readers”. I would like to stress that the personality of Living books is very crucial.

Living books must represent a particular group that constitutes the society. They should also be able to communicate freely with the audience and generate interest in themselves and their activities. It is important to find stories about various current issues in society that sometimes may be even conversely and also to collect different viewpoints to trigger discussion and to raise as much public interest as possible. Collision of opposing views will promote deeper understanding on the subject, as well as to seek a compromise.

It was very important **to speak in person** with the potential participants-books of Living Library in Latvia. Ars Tolerantia addressed people to whom we already were known before and also to some other potential candidates that we know as interesting and potential books. Each book always should understand its contribution to the event (library) and the positive outcomes that his participation can provide to the person or group of book readers which are represented. And living library always is a mutual trust between readers and books to share their experiences and stories openly. Only the true story has a value.

It was also very important for Ars Tolerantia to **arrange partnership** to find live books. We cooperated with different organizations like Mozaika, Afrolat, Marta, Papardes zieds, Red Cross Youth and some private companies like Dorian Gray and Golden club and others. Mozaika, which is an alliance of LGBT people and their friends in Latvia, did a lot of contribution to inform their members and also search for live books. Often you need a direct contact with a possible book to get loyalty and acceptance to participate. If you do not have a direct contact, than you should relay on your partners. In the Living Library in Latvia 2010 LGBT stories were linked to other stories of human rights, like Afroamerican rights, religious rights, after all rights to look different in outlook and other issues. And the mixture of all these various stories were successful and synergistic.

Large effort for the search of living books gives internet and internet **blogs** and bloggers with their texts. You can always find an interesting person inside the internet expanse.

Living Library not only contributes to public awareness, but also the books themselves acknowledges the importance of seeing the links and relationships. In daily life people concentrate on topics and issues that are important for themselves, but unfortunately they loose the context and regularities. Live books should accept that they can not only give, but also get and **benefit from their participation**, that book readers can share their experience, can help to understand each other and break stereotypes or be aware of common interests.

How to organize the event logistically?



One of the very important logistical factor in organizing the events is the choice of date. Living Library in Latvia was organized in the 10th of December, which is known worldwide as the UN Human Rights Protection Day. In our opinion, the date was very consistent with the topic and also harmonized with the idea of Living Library as a place to collect different stories of different issues.



Finding suitable accommodation was also very important. Space had to meet certain criteria - to create an informal and pleasant atmosphere, to be easy accessible (in our case situated in the center of Riga). Space should also have enough area for different activities if the event is like festival as in our case. Books and reader should have enough free area for dialogue both individually and for discussions in larger groups. It is comfortable if the space is equipped with few tables and smaller corners to get aside and talk, or make a wall of stories, or present a film or do other activity. Living Library in Latvia managed to find a very suitable place - Culture bar "Dreams and cocktails", where in the cozy premises two-staged Living Library was created, and had plenty opportunities for individual discussions and other activities.



Living Library in Latvia was organized as a small open Story telling festival, therefore some others creative ways to express stories were managed. It also made the event more attractive. Organizers decided that in addition to living books, stories can also be expressed through music, video and art. Musical group "Momend" was invited, which, with its sound quality, compelling vocals and powerful lyricism, is able to captivate everyone. Short movies were presented between live books. Talented artist's Marek Ruskuls drawings that can speak for themselves were displayed on the walls. Improvisational theater "Boats" performances which were shown at the end of the event, found entertaining and creative way to enjoy the arts and at the same time discuss current topics. Also the moderator of the event was special person not the project managers itself, because there are too much managing issues to solve during the event, that it is impossible to moderate at the same time also the event. The moderator should be attractive person, to entertain everyone.



Some snacks and drinks were provided for the participants both readers and books, because event was quite long and people need some refreshments between books to switch.



Live books in the Living Library were divided in two separate rooms and organized in different times. The book made a short presentation to reader, which was continued by further discussions and later on by individual dialogues. Readers had a chance to choose between 2 books, do some other activity or discuss individually if the book was available.

How to attract readers of the living books (PR)?

Few different strategies and information channels were used to attract readers of the living books and to promote its visibility. First of all cooperation partners helped with the dissemination of information, as well as the volunteer recruitment activities. Each of these organizations published up to date information on its website and sent out the message to its members. Ars Tolerantia also used a massive email campaign itself by sending private invitations for the Living Library. As already mentioned before, direct contact with the potential reader is very important, if you do not rely on accidental readers.

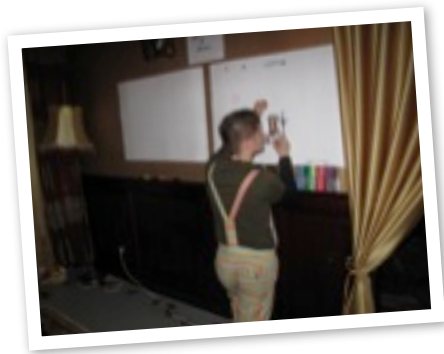
Very important PR activities of the project was managed through internet communications. Ars Tolerantia improved its homepage with current actions, project activities, competitions, event program, pictures, basic information of the concept of Living Library and other information. We also developed project web page under largest internet social networks of Latvia (draugiem.lv), which is like facebook in Europe. The portal contains updated information on the project, participants, followers, competitions. People were able to put themselves as followers that made like a small community, which resulted in additional interest on the measure. Information about the project was republished also in different news portals, for example, studentnet.lv (internet portal for students), hc.lv (culture portal), viriesiem.lv (web for men), openart.lv, oyo.lv, nekur.lv, easyget.lv, mediji.lv, satori.lv (internet news portals) and some others. More than 16 web media republished the information about the Living Library in Latvia 2010. The list of PR web links is attached under. Internet is one of the most effective PR channel, because it is easy, fast and reaches most active and contemporary people, including youth, which is one of the largest target audience.

Ars Tolerantia also designed a large poster for the event with a crucial information, which was not only published electronically, but also distributed among universities and NGOs.

A month before the event a drawing competition in which people were invited to express, design and draw personal stories was announced. Author of the best drawings got a prize and the best drawing was published in a format of postcards. Information about the drawing contest, with a small description of the project was sent to major media and posted on both web sites and distributed on television and radio. This activity attracted more attention to the event itself.

And always organizers should remind people of the event some days before it. For the Living Library in Latvia 2010 press release were again re-sent to media 3 days before the event.





Evaluation. How do you know it was a success?

In our opinion, the event was realized with great success, which is evidenced by the number of visitors and positive comments from participants, as well as from live books. One of the evidence is that each Live Book managed to gather around him a considerable crowd of listeners/readers, as well as extensive discussion on the subject. Discussion indicated that the visitors had an interest in the books and issues, and there were no passive or negative participant. After the official program large part of the visitors and books did not leave the club premises, but created small groups and continued to engage in further discussions of the most pressing issues important to them.

Significant evidence of the success is that the project doesn't stop and will have continuous activities. Following discussion evenings and movie nights will be organized in other parts in countryside and in Latvian University, covering wider issues and attractive activities. This will be managed by Ars Tolerantia and other partner organisations and live books of Living Library. Although methodology of Living Library is new in Latvia, it already attracted a lot of attention and was evaluated as perspective method for organizing events.



At the end of the project postcards of the best drawn stories were printed and distributed during the Living Library event and among partner organizations. These postcards will make attention to the project, Living Library methodology and question about being different or similar.

Finally, movie about the Living Library in Latvia was taken and will be published in Ars Tolerantia web page and used for learnings and promotion purposes in the future.

In our opinion the project was really valuable and the touched topics were relevant to the public. Ars Tolerantia believes that the project should not be stopped, that follow-up activities should be organized, and concept of Living Library should be continued to introduce in society.

Sincerely, Ars Tolerantia



PR report

Biedrība Ars Tolerantia

<http://www.tolerantia.org/?cat=10>

Interneta portāls Draugiem.lv

<http://www.draugiem.lv/Livinglibrary/news/item/195828/>

Interneta portāls studentiem.

<http://www.studentnet.lv/radosi/article.php?id=260355>

Biedrība Mozaīka

<http://www2.mozaika.lv/>

Interneta portāls Jarnika.lv

<http://www.jarnika.lv/?lp=zina&fid=-dziva-biblioteka-kulturas-bara--sapni-un-kokteili->

Jauniešu kultūras portāls Hc.lv

<http://www.hc.lv/dzivesveids/iniciativa/zinas/ars-tolerantia-izsludina-zimejumu-konkursu-11975/>

Rīgas Tehniskās universitātes studējoši pašpārvaldes mājas lapa.

<http://www.rtusp.lv/?p=4872>

Pirmā Doma

<http://twitter.com/pirmadoma/status/12526692031537152>

Ziņu portāls Oyo.lv

<http://oyo.lv/posts/viriesi-2010-dec-08-dziva-biblioteka-10-decembri>

Interneta portāls Viriesi.lv

<http://www.viriesi.lv/>

Interneta portāls Openart.lv

<http://www.openart.lv/tag/latvia/>

Interneta portāls Nekor.lv

<http://nekur.lv/archive/1243>

Interneta portāls Easyget.lv

<http://easyget.lv/kultura/?page=11>

Interneta portāls mediji.lv

<http://www.mediji.lv/2010/12/kulturas-bara-%E2%80%9Eesapni-un-kokteili-gadama-dziva-biblioteka-3/>

Mareka Ruskuļa mājas lapa

<http://briic.lv/>

Interneta portāls Satori.lv

http://www.satori.lv/notikums/1457/Dziva_biblioteka_projekta_%22Storytelling_Festival_Latvia_2010%22_ietvaros

