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1. Introduction

Ukraine is emerging from a culturally isolated past and straining to integrate itself with today's global society. Widespread access to the internet and other media provide students a wealth of information. However, does that information really connect young people to others very different from themselves, on a personal and emotional level?

Cultural constraints and prevailing attitudes are extremely difficult to change - isolation does not automatically disappear with increased and unfettered access to information about the rest of the world. "Living Libraries" are designed to address this situation, to enrich student's personal interest in and understanding of people different from themselves.

2. Description of Event

Living Libraries are events where people of different backgrounds act as books, and students "read" these books in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Such events have been shown to be excellent instruments for breaking stereotypes, eliminating prejudices, and increasing student confidence in dealing with a multidimensional society.

Living Libraries provide an opportunity for students to connect personally with people of widely differing nationalities, life histories, traditions and social situations. Participants are able to recognize how much all of us are similar, and challenged to understand each other as people rather than only as statistics or images from the media.

3. Why Living Libraries Are Good Secondary Projects

Living Libraries are excellent secondary projects for Peace Corps Volunteers. They are mostly an organizational effort that involves a volunteer's site, counterpart, fellow workers, community acquaintances and students. Living Libraries require very little financial support, as long as facility needs can be met with little or no cost at the volunteer's site. Organizing a Living Library increases your integration within the community, and a successful event is a highly visible affair that illustrates a broad-minded approach to society consistent with Peace Corps goals.



4. Outcomes

Organizers must appreciate the subtle impact Living Libraries have on both students and books. These events are not classes, and are intentionally designed to be different from the typical Ukrainian educational framework. The overriding goal is to subtly change participant perceptions about other people and other situations.

Each event conducted last year in Zaporizhzhya included 35-50 students, and 10-25 books. At the end of each event students were enthusiastically seeking further contact information from books, as well as asking when the next event would be held. Books were actively engaging students and each other, expressing their delight at being able to address Ukrainian young people in a safe, supportive and relaxing manner. Attitudes and perceptions were definitely affected by participation in these events.



5. Nuts and Bolts

Facilities:

- Select the most relaxed, comfortable, light and airy room available at your site.
- The room should be furnished with tables and chairs, seating only four or five people at each table.
- Do not use a typical classroom - such a room and its furnishings will have a very detrimental effect on the event outcome. More appropriate spaces will be cafeterias, libraries, or meeting spaces with comfortable small group furnishings.

Number of people:

- Fifty is a maximum number of students for a large event. Smaller events are equally possible - suit the capacity of the facility.
- Try to maintain a ratio of three or four students to each book.
- Two librarians are sufficient to facilitate and monitor the event.
- Depending on your situation, you may need interpreters. Our events have been conducted in English, and the need for interpreters has been minimal.
- Ensure you have sufficient committed assistance for your facility and student management situation.



Attendance:

- Living Libraries can be conducted for a wide range of ages and types of people. Our experience is limited to 10th form through university age students.
- It can be useful for teachers to require attendance, or offer extra credit, to ensure participation. However, we have been successful simply by relying on the unique experience of the Living Library as its own attraction.



Preparation:

- Both the books and the participants must be prepared for what to expect from the event.
- Assess the age and composition of the participants. Some may require more preparation than others.
- All preparation needs to be as general as possible, to avoid triggering a lack of participation due to pre-existing attitudes.
- Encourage books to bring props.
- For an event in a distant place, it is best to prepare books the day before and to verify the venue.
- Some kind of book identification will be needed - hats, badges, tee shirts.
- Provide some sort of simple identification of sponsors and donors, and place a notice thanking these parties at each table. This kind of recognition will create goodwill and will make any subsequent projects easier to launch.

Conducting the Event:

- Basic rules:
 - Readers can ask books anything not offensive.
 - Participants who are uncomfortable for any reason should raise their hands, and they will be helped by one of the librarians.
 - Participants may raise their hands at any time to access an interpreter. Experience has shown interpreters generally are not needed.
- Keep it fun.
- Ensure you acknowledge sponsors, and thank books, participants and all people involved with the event.
- Ask the books to briefly introduce themselves to the participants.
- Keep in mind this is not a scripted event, and there is no specific predetermined subject matter. Books and participants are free to follow their own interests during the reading sessions.
- Rotate books from table to table, at a ten-fifteen minute interval. The process of having participants interact with a number of books, each for a brief period of time, is critical to moving people beyond superficial conversation while still maintaining the momentum of the event.
- You can be flexible and double-round a particular book/group if appropriate.
- If you have more books than necessary, rotate them into and out of the event.
- Rotate disinterested or uninteresting books out of the event.
- Read books for 60-90 minutes.
- Follow reading of books with an exercise to reinforce the day's experience. For example, you may discuss or debate cross-cultural issues, ask students to address prepared questions, etc.
- If required, teachers observing the event can be a very effective control mechanism.



- m. A questionnaire at the end of the event is important in assessing participants' reactions and reinforcing their experiences.
- n. Encourage the development of relationships that extend beyond the Living Library event, but do not construe that as a requirement.

After the event:

- a. Book debriefing is important following the event. Offering coffee and tea provides an opportunity to acknowledge the critical importance of books, encourage their participation again, and gather reactions beneficial to future events.
- b. Send formal thanks to all sponsors and key individuals.
- c. Maintain a database of books for future invitation.
- d. Maintain a database of students. This record will allow you to manipulate attendance at future events, giving priority to new participants. It will also provide you a ready source of information for direct invitation and to advertise for future events.

6. Links

Zaporizka Oblast Living Libraries

<http://www.raffety.net/zieit/library.html>

Zaporizhzhya Institute of Economics and Information Technologies

<http://www.econom.zp.ua:81/en>

United States Peace Corps

<http://www.peacecorps.gov>

International Organization for Migration Diversity Initiative

<http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/what-we-do/migrant-integration/the-diversity-initiative-fostering-cult.html>

7. Credits

Living Library efforts in Eastern Ukraine are a secondary project of PCV Larry Raffety TEFL Group 35. Primary support is provided by Zaporizhzhya Institute of Economics and Information Technologies:

Rector: Dr. Gennadiy Turovtsev

First Vice-Rector: Dr. Alla Dvignun

Vice-Rector: Dr. Anatoly Sytko

The following have made significant contributions to this project:

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Zaporizka Oblast Partners:

Zaporizhzhya National University

Zaporizhzhya National Technical University

Zaporizhzhya State Engineering Academy



Zaporizhzhya Institute of Economics and Information Technologies (ZIEIT) is a private educational institution, started in 1994. Over the years it has proven to be one of the most advanced and progressive schools in the fields of Economics and Infotech in Ukraine.

ZIEIT applies a complex approach to instruction. The educational framework of ZIEIT consists of the Lyceum, College, and Institute.

The Institute is accredited by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and ZIEIT graduates obtain a state diploma. The Institute is also accredited by the International Educational Society of London, and cooperates internationally with the University of Bradford (England), Almamer High School of Economics in Warsaw, University of Economics and Computer Science in Warsaw, Fulbright Scholarships Fund (USA), European Program for Senior Experts (Germany), and Peace Corps (USA).

A fully developed studies program with qualified teachers and an effective administration, modern educational facilities with light and spacious classrooms, and a friendly atmosphere all make ZIEIT one of the most attractive educational establishments in Ukraine. The Institute also provides a flexible tuition discount policy for school graduates with excellent results, winners of Institute olympiads, and accomplished sports athletes.

ZIEIT has hosted lecturing professors from Great Britain, Germany, Poland, the USA, Russian and other regions of Ukraine. Many students are fluent in English, as they major in International Economics, Electronic Commerce, Information Technologies and Foreign Languages, and all of them have regular classes in advanced English provided by native speakers who work on a regular basis at the Institute. Students have also participated in Masters Programs at Bradford University for ten years and at Almamer High School of Economics for two years.



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