

GO FOR READING WITH BARCELONA LIBRARIES is the name that includes the reading promotion activities of Barcelona Libraries.

Before starting to explain the programs that we specifically work with educational centres, I will introduce you our institution In a nutshell.

The Barcelona Libraries Consortium is a municipal entity has managed the public libraries of the city of Barcelona since 2001. We are a **network of 40 libraries and the** different work areas are coordinated by a Central services office. We serve a population of around 1.6 million inhabitants.

Last year we received 5.5 million visits, and lent 3.4 million documents. Three thousand three hundred cultural activities were held with a total of eighty thousand attendees. Related to book clubs, one thousand two hundred and fifty sessions were held with more than seventeen thousand attendees.

If you are interested in more detail the work lines of our Master Plan and the Barcelona City of the Literature of the Unesco creative cities network you can check all the information online.

We therefore focus on how we have worked on the reading promotion programs that we offer to educational centres. We start from the fact that the library has to position itself as a support service for lifelong learning, in network with the surroundings and the educational community.

This is why the link between public libraries and the education system is essential for working on all learning processes, both during and after school time, and strengthening the view of the city as an educational institution itself.

In this sense, Barcelona Libraries have always had a strong link with educational centres. We offer them guided tours adapted to the different educational cycles and to each territory conditions. The visits begin promoting the pleasure of reading among the younger children, and gradually transformed to information literacy visits and to access truthful information and learn to distinguish fake news for the older students.

Three thousand three hundred visits were made during 2023, with a total of seventy three thousand students. We also offer to the schools the loan of batches of documents on various topics that teachers can request, as well as tailored advice.

In order to renew our commitment to schools and to the promotion of reading, and thanks to the agreement with the Barcelona City of Literature Municipal Office, we knew that, beyond the local work we already do, it was necessary to guarantee the access to new activities to every school that wishes to work the area of reading.

This is why we worked also with the Education Consortium of Barcelona, which works with other cultural agents in the city, and makes a large catalog of activities available to schools.

Our proposals aim children and young people to create a meaningful experience through enriched, expanded readings. In other words, proposing actions that go beyond the text and traditional reading spaces: proposals for reading clubs with various itineraries, led by professionals that invite students to play an active role and get out of the classroom.

I will explain very briefly some of our proposals, ordered by the age of students.

Let's start with **THE THIRD DEGREE INTERROGATION**

This activity is for students aged eight to twelve. Based on the book club format, it allows primary school students to question the authors and characters of the black genre works they have read. This is a proposal to promote reading linked to the BCNegra, the annual black novel Festival in Barcelona.

It is based on the possibilities that the dynamics of reading clubs offer in the framework of learning processes, with a particular focus on reading comprehension, the significance of the narrative text, the promotion of debate, the enjoyment of books and the ability to raise questions about what has been read.

The project consists of three sessions:

- in the first one, the group - class visits the nearest library, where the driver introduces the work to be read and the students borrow the books;
- in the second session the students discuss the book in the classroom with the driver following the usual book club format,
- and in the third one the students subject to an interrogation the author and one of the book's characters, played by an actor. The interrogation is not only about the plot of the book, but also about the process of creating the work.

EXPLOSIVE READINGS is a proposal for the young people between 12 and 16 years old.

In addition to the usual dynamics of a reading club, there are proposals for increase reading, such as meetings with the authors, routes through significant spaces in the city related to the works, visits to literary festivals or workshops.

- As in the previous case, the starting point is the library closest to the school. Here, in addition to handing out the book to be read, the session is used to create a first link with the library through a guided visit.
- The second session takes place at the school four weeks later, where a conductor discusses the book with the students.
- The meeting with the author, the third session, whenever possible, takes place in a space related to the work that has been read.
- If this is not possible, there is a fourth session in which is visited a significant space in the city related to the book.

As an example, an itinerary offered based on the book *Germanet* (Little brother) stands out: a story that narrates the odyssey of a young Guinean migrant to reach Europe through an inhumane route through Africa and the Mediterranean, where many people dies. The participants were able to talk to the writer, Ibrahima Balde, at the National Art Museum of Catalonia. The students were also able to learn about the experience and work of an Ukrainian artist who emigrated to Barcelona after the Russian invasion.

Another of the itineraries proposed by Explosive reading is related to literary festivals that take place in the city, like the Festival 42 of Fantastic Genres in Barcelona.

Another proposal is **THE TROJAN EFFECT. Let's explode the language!** To the secondary school students whose aim is to expand the frame of reference of what we usually know as literature. So, it shows a wide range of new formats that also allow literary creation and that, therefore, make possible to read in a different way. And it does so by showing young people the vitality of creation in Catalan from a broader perspective, but always linked to text, writing and reading.

The starting point of this proposal is a traveling exhibition that, like a Trojan horse, visits the participating centres. A sample that collects heterogeneous reading recommendations from young creators from different fields, such as musicians, dancers, performing artists, podcasters, YouTubers or writers, referents of the new generations who work with language in different formats than the traditional ones.

The proposal concludes with a guided visit to the exhibition with one of these young creators to share with the students their reading experiences and explain to them how they create their works.

And finally the **VIRTUAL READING CLUB** that we share with the Cervantes Institute in London.

In the wake of the 2020 pandemic and the physical restrictions it brought, Barcelona Libraries organized virtual reading clubs through an instant messaging platform adapted for this use, the digital loan service and a platform for video conferences

With this format we started the collaboration with the Instituto Cervantes in London, and since then every year we organize a virtual reading club between students from an educational centre in Barcelona and another in London. This proposal allows for an expanded reading of the works, promotes dialogue between participants and makes possible to overcome the physical and time barriers inherent in face-to-face clubs.

The proposal is divided in two parts, lasting one month each: one in English as the vehicular language and the other in Spanish. In both cases all students read a work and comment on it in two ways: first, during the reading period through the instant messaging app; and then, through a video conference, always with a driver. Regarding the reading format, there is the possibility of combining the two models: paper and digital format.

Here I give you some of the **general statistics** that I have been talking about.

In addition to the programs for educational centres we work on more projects to promote reading, for children and families with the general title Llettra Petita (Small Letter), and of course for adults and elderly people.

The overall assessment of this Reading Action proposal is very positive: both from the educational centres and the teachers and from the students.

So for next year we have more requests than we can handle with the resources we currently have.

Surely this is the most important challenge we face in the future: to obtain more resources to be able to carry the proposals to more educational centres.

Thank you very much for your attention!