

School libraries in Iceland

In 1974 the Icelandic Parliament passed a law which states that in every school there should be a library. That is quite early compared with many other countries and we are all very proud of this

Then in 2008 all of a sudden school libraries were no longer mentioned in the laws. Since then it's been a struggle for many of the libraries, not just because of this, but also because of the economic crisis Iceland went through. The budget is very low in most schools and the libraries suffer from that. In some schools employment rate of the school librarians has gone down from 100% to as low as 25%.

But thankfully again last year a new law was passed that again secured libraries in every school. This is, largely due to our professional Associations continued effort. A woman by the name of Siggerður was president of the Association while all this took place, so thank you Siggerður. Now we hope that down-cutting in school libraries will soon be a part of the past.

Currently the National Curriculum Guide is being revised. A lot of work has been done on behalf our professional Association to make the most of our subject and to update the curriculum as possible. This work is nearly over and we will hopefully have a new and a better guide when we start preparing next year's syllabus in the fall.

Another issue we have to think about is safety in libraries, and we are not talking about thieves or thugs, no we are talking about our Nature. Earthquakes and Volcanic eruptions occur regularly so those of us who live in areas affected need to deal with that.

As in many other countries every school in Iceland is unique which means that every school library is different, but there are a few things that binds us together e.g. our Union catalog for Icelandic libraries Gegnir.is. In this system every book, in nearly every library in Iceland is registered. That means that if I don't have a certain book in my library I can see who does and if it's available to borrow it through interlibrary loan.

Most school libraries participate in the Teddy Bear Day on the 27th of October (the month dedicated to school libraries) every year. This day every child may take their favorite teddy bear to school, and then they come to the library and listen to a "teddy stories". In some schools students and staff have a cozy day and wear their pajamas to school.

The Library Day is held once a year, this year it will be the 17.th of April. In Iceland we do many things involving books f.e. : International Day of the

Children's Books (2nd of April), the Day of the Book, the Week of the Book and so on.

We are very proud of our cooperation regarding the International Day of the Children's Book. Our professional Association (Félag fagfólks á skólasöfnum), works with IBBY International in Iceland and our national radio. That day one author of children's books reads a story he or she wrote especially for this day on the national radio. The story is supposed to appeal to children from 6 years to 16 years old. And afterwards there are some discussion about understanding the text. Quite a task! The broadcast is during school time so every teacher in the country is urged to tune in and give the children opportunity to listen.

The school librarians all over the country help each other, share ideas and often work together, having refreshing courses, conferences etc. All over the country we have some visits for authors. The student like to meet the authors, listen to their stories and be able to ask them questions. Schools f.e. in Akureyri participate in a game called Hometown Scavenger hunt, where students receive a riddle every week and try to find a trophy which is hidden somewhere in town. They have to search for hint in books in the school library so they can go out with a keyword and find the trophy while they learn a lot about their hometowns story.

A last but not least we have a reading and articulate national competition where children at 12 year take part. This builds up their self esteem and enables them to stand up in front of a crowd. In the end there are two winners.

Thank you