**Creating library environment designed to stimulate young adults**

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One of the most important factors having positive impact on informational and media literacy among young people is a learning environment where young customers can interact freely with information and gadgets – on their own initiative, without any external assistance, taking into consideration their background and needs.

Russian State Library for Young Adults is the biggest specialized federal library in Russia, mostly designed for young people from 14 to 30 years old. This library is the informational, consulting and coordinating centre for the whole network of public libraries for young adults in Russia. The library is situated on the ground floor of the 9-storeyed apartment house and possesses premises of about 4.000 square meters. The library has two branch offices, one of them is situated in the unique wooden mansion of the art nouveau style dated of 1903, designed by Lev Kekushev, the famous Russian architect. Now there is a historical and cultural centre of the library there. The total collection of the library is about 800 000 items. During the last years the main library building has been reconstructed and modernized that has impacted all spheres of the library activities. One of the main goals of such a modernization was to create a library environment stimulating the highest possible level of self-service for young customers.

Russian State Library for Young Adults highlights the importance of stimulating young customers’ interest in the library facilities, which enable them to improve their informational and media competence themselves. This seems to be important because the computer competence, being the significant part of informational competence as a whole, is apprehended faster by young customers then by librarians.

The computer-aided environment in the library is one of the key elements of improvement of informational skills. This environment includes library services based on RFID technologies, which let customers avoid any assistance as to seeking information about a book in the catalogue on the information booth, printing the list of the needed items with their places on the shelves, getting or returning books (including the outdoor option). In practice these services let a young customer cut a library visit to a few minutes if necessary and make librarians more available for the complicated situations, for example to consult on the library collection or to help visitors in case of a complex requirement when a competent informational-bibliographical search is needed. I’m proud to note that Russian State Library for Young Adults is one of the few libraries in the country using RFID technologies in corpore.

Wi-Fi free of charge affords young people an opportunity to use their own laptops in any library zone where they feel themselves comfortable. For the moment we can state that about a half of the library visitors bring their own laptops or mobile devices for reading. The fact that one can use its own learning materials in the library gives customers the possibility to prepare their homework alone or with friends.

The use of e-books (e-readers) and other devices for reading electronic books also contributes to the self-education of young customers who used to deal with all kind of mobile gadgets in order to get, store and send information. And here we consider the librarian’s mission to be to provide the access to all electronic libraries, to afford his or her help to purchase electronic editions and to install them on a customer’s reader or other mobile device.

One of the important library tasks is to provide access to remote data bases for its customers and to help them to work with such data bases. Having regard to the fact that young people prefer to deal with electronic information, Russian State Library for Young Adults gives them the opportunity to use free of charge several remote and local data bases including the full-text ones of Russian and foreign periodicals. This kind of option being offered to the customers along with traditional printed, multimedia and audio items, increases the importance of the library collection. The total volume of the remote data bases offered in our library is about 2 million items. Our young customers have a choice to deal with such bases using either their own laptops or the library computers.

To raise the **culture of seeking information in order to be able to formulate properly a request** is another serious goal librarians are trying to reach. Very often librarians face the situation when a customer can hardly explain what exactly he or she is seeking to prepare a homework, a research, a diploma or a thesis. In this case a library specialist offers the professional assistance to help a customer to improve his or her own skills of seeking information using all the available tools and means.

For example, the operators of the *Virtual Informational Service* often give soft recommendations to their customers how to put a question properly, so the search of information to be the most effective. (The *Virtual Informational Service* is a service created and administrated by the specialists of the Russian State Library for Young Adults ten years ago. This service gathers 32 public libraries of Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.)

In our library customers are provided with e-catalogs of remote and local data bases. Sometimes searching in these data bases might be complicated, especially for beginners. That’s why our trained bibliographers are ready to help them.

One of the main means of developing young customers’ information and computer literacy is the Computer Library. There is an extensive collection of computer and IT materials as well as workplaces with the access to the Internet. These options help young people interested in this subject to get knowledge and practical skills. However, sometimes young people drop in at the Computer Library to chat with friends in social networks while waiting for the meeting with a girlfriend or just hiding from the bad weather.

A special emphasis should be made on improvement of information and media skills among young disabled persons. For instance, providing visually impaired customers with alternative ways of getting information is considered to be effective. It means special equipment for book scanning with a function of speech synthesis in Russian, English and other languages (reading machines), audio response units for unassisted screen reading and electronic loupe for reading. There are extensive collections of audiobooks for visually impaired customers, feature and documentary films with subtitles for hearing-impaired customers. Besides, there is a special collection for parents of disabled children, which helps them to conform with special needs of their kids, to educate and prepare them for social environment.

The Computer History Museum, which is permanently enlarging by donations, improves customers’ knowledge of computer and information technologies. Ordinary and on-line lectures for students are hold there. All kind of lectures, real and online workshops for students usually take place there. At the moment our librarians together with young customers are searching exhibits for a new museum exposition of e-book history (“From rock paintings to e-readers”).

Generally, young adults barely associate rare and old books with modern digital media. Meanwhile, **a successful combination of antiquity and modernity arouses young adults’ interest in paper books.** Thus, one of the options of using iPads in the library work is placing digitized copies of old books on them in the Rare Book Hall. The process of scanning (with planetary scanner) and cataloging old books is open there for the customers, and they even can scan several pages of a rear document by themselves. In e-catalog each rear book of 17-19th century has not only bibliographical information, but links to theatrical performances, screenings, audiobooks, translations, e-versions of the book from different libraries. It helps readers to see a book in a wide context and expand their cultural horizons.

An important component of a comfortable learning environment is a responsible balance of printed, electronic, multimedia resources as well as video materials, music issues, vinyl music and literary records (the latter are very popular among young adults).

For instance, our customers suggested adding vinyl records of the foreign singers of the 1950-70s to the Foreign Languages Hall. Besides, the play list was made by them. You may listen to the records of radio plays and poetry performed by authors in the Fiction Hall. There is also an electronic piano with the collection of popular music and headphones. Young people can play music there without disturbing those who read, work on their laptops or watch films. Young adults are also interested in postal stamps. The library stamp collection consists of more than 30 000 items. It hasn’t been in demand for ages until the stamps were classified by themes and displayed at the thematic halls for open access. Here sharp-witted young adults use the electronic loupe for having a look at small images in stamps or elements of ex-librises. The extensive collections of transparencies and slides are next in turn. They haven’t been in demand for two decades, but after proper editing and digitization they will be offered young adults as a medium of unique visual information.

Thus, the whole system of working with customers develops their knowledge and skills required for doing defined tasks and solving problems, for finding and analysing information and, finally, for practicing interpersonal communication.

All this helps to create among young adults the image of the library as a comfortable intellectual environment for working with information in all its dimensions.