

CONFERENCE „Libraries of Today“

9 – 11 September, Jihlava, Czech Republic

What role do libraries play in a dynamically changing world? This year's conference will focus on the key challenges and opportunities that are shaping their future.

We will discuss democratic education and its contribution to libraries as centres of critical thinking and open debate. We will explore how artificial intelligence is changing literature, libraries and culture, and whether it represents an inspiration or a threat to traditional values.

We will reflect on how libraries can effectively defend their interests and strengthen their role in society through advocacy. We will look at opportunities for closer cooperation between libraries and schools, which can enrich the educational process and offer students new ways of working with information.

We will also focus on the power of central services, which can ease the administrative and operational burden on libraries and allow them to focus on their main mission – providing quality services to readers. We will not forget the key milestones and values on which libraries are based and which determine their direction for the future.

We invite you to the largest library event in the country – a space where tradition meets innovation, where experiences are shared and new ideas are born. Come and discuss, be inspired and discover new ways to develop libraries as open and vibrant institutions.

Tuesday September 9

12:00 Registration

13:00 Opening, welcoming participants

13:30 Z. V. Tobolka Medal

14:00 Marek Kowalkiewicz

14:30 Panel discussion

15:00 Break

15:30 Bibliotheca inspirans

16:00 Martin Memet Könick

16:30 Vladimir Kosarevskiy

17:00 Erna Winters

17:30 End

Wednesday September 10

Five programme blocks, seminars, workshops:

Vote for animals! Or democratic education in libraries

The library as a place for dialogue, citizenship and democratic education. A block full of inspiration, questions and examples of how reading and libraries can help build a cultured society – from Statenice to Saxony. From research data to the voices of young people.

A sense of belonging is the foundation of a healthy civic culture. At a time when society is not made up of hostile camps, but rather isolated individuals, it is increasingly important to connect people, involve them in what is happening around them, and help them find their place within the community in which they live.

Muse or menace? AI in literature, libraries and culture in general

Annotation? Create your own! As librarians and information workers, you can certainly master one of the AI tools. Describe the scope (e.g. number of characters), provide context (e.g. conference focus), form and tone. It is good to offer your AI counterpart a role (e.g. 'you are a great copywriter'). Don't forget to add the main idea of the block: the initial enthusiasm/dismay about artificial intelligence (AI) is behind us, so with hindsight we can see how AI is actually transforming literary creation, authorship and how it is being applied in libraries. (We would be delighted if you shared the annotation in the conference app.)

Advocacy for libraries

Libraries are a key part of educational, cultural and community life, yet their role is not always taken for granted. They face budget cuts, underestimation and the need to constantly defend their contribution. They are indispensable for the public and for the development of towns and cities, yet librarians must fight again and again for their existence and funding. Can we even imagine a society without libraries – and would we want to live in one?

How to effectively connect libraries with schools?

Public libraries and schools share a common goal – to create conditions for lifelong learning. It is important to offer attractive library services for children, pupils, students and teachers so that they are interested in discovering and using the information resources and other services that libraries offer them. The first step is to build relationships with parents and teachers in your community. Ongoing and active cooperation on events and programmes that are important for both schools and libraries – promoting reading, media and digital literacy – must be a matter of course. In the area of reading literacy, it is necessary to build long-term relationships with parents and find ways to reach them and involve them in library activities. Let's look for ways and examples of good practice to link formal and informal education.

One library is not enough: discover the power of central services

Central library services such as Knihovny.cz, Ptejte se knihovny, Získej, and Česká digitální knihovna facilitate access to resources, information, and cooperation between institutions. But do they really create a connected ecosystem, or do libraries still function as separate islands, with participation in these projects limited to active individuals among positively-minded librarians? This block will focus on the possibilities, challenges and future of national library services. We will discuss user-friendliness, operational efficiency, implementation barriers, promotion to the public and libraries, and other issues will certainly be raised as well. What is the path to truly functional cooperation and how can we avoid parallel solutions? Are we, as a community, even ready to cooperate so intensively, share our data, and not be afraid of losing our 'home' solutions? Come and join the debate on the future of library services in the Czech Republic!