



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Technology service for youth inspires community Piekary Slaskie Municipal Public Library, Poland

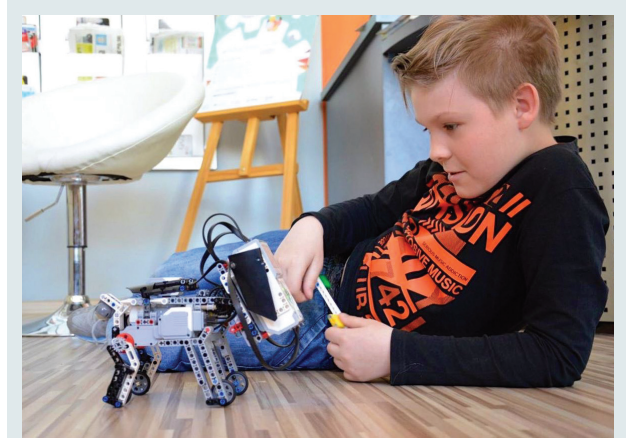
IMPACT CASE STUDY

The library's 'Programming of Curiosity' service uses the educational technique of 'gamification' and digital tools to stimulate young people's passion for technology. In just one year, the service –

- Created a space where children and youth can use information and communication technology (ICT) to express their creativity, try out ideas and learn new skills for the future.
- Taught over 400 young people digital technology skills – including making and programming robots; designing and writing code for computer games; graphic design and 3D modelling; how to use smart phones, and much more.
- Attracted new partners, volunteers and donations that will help sustain the service in future.
- Increased the number of young people using the library by 27%.
- Won international, national and local recognition for the library as a modern, well-resourced and dynamic institution.

In 2013/14 librarians conducted focus group research with high school students in Piekary Slaskie to learn about their technology skills needs and interests. The research found that the students were using computers and smart phones in limited ways, mostly to communicate with friends on Facebook and to play games. However, the students wanted to learn more – but “not in a boring school-like way”.

Guided by these findings, librarians developed the 'Programming of Curiosity' service. With a small grant (up to US\$20,000) from the EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-



In the library, young people learnt to make robots and write computer programmes to make them move.

“All of Europe, and the European Commission, are wondering how to motivate people to overcome barriers to using technology and to learn programming skills – and here, and at the library in Piekary Slaskie it is already happening! Let's invite them to visit the library, because there magic really happens!” – Barbara Dylus, Microsoft's Community Affairs Coordinator

PLIP), the library created a special ITLab where young people have free access to computers, a 3D printer, robotics kits and graphic design and computer coding software. They designed a training programme using the method of gamification, which draws on techniques like role-playing, competition and teamwork, to motivate young people to learn to use the new technology in creative ways.

In less than a year, working with partners in the higher education and technology sectors, the library –

Trained six librarians and eight volunteers to manage the service and facilitate technology training for young people;

- Hosted five ‘What your smart phone can do’ workshops; 41 robotics workshops during which young people learnt to build robots and programme them to move, and seven 3D modeling and printing workshops;
- Taught 109 young people to design and code their own computer games;
- Organized a city-wide Day of Information Technology in Piekary Slaskie, which included a conference on Web safety; a computer game tournament; an outdoor treasure hunt using digital technology, and a competition to test citizens’ technology knowledge;
- Presented the service at two international library events, and two national public library conferences, reaching hundreds of librarians;
- Were chosen to showcase the service in a special edition of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) newsletter: ‘MakerSpaces – more than just 3D printers’;
- Exhibited their ITLab activities at Piekary Slaskie’s outdoor science fair.

The future

The service has inspired and motivated interest in ICT across the city. Partners have all committed to continue to promote and support ITLab activities. Students from the Silesian University of Technology offer regular computer programming and robotics workshops; the technology company Piekary.net agreed to continue supporting smart phone workshops. The service attracted new partners who also want to be involved in future: Microsoft Poland donated Kinect scanners to the ITLab; Samsung Electronics Poland supported the launch of new training, ‘The Masters of Coding’, for younger children. The library’s volunteer team has been strengthened by the addition of a young computer programmer from Italy who will work in the ITLab for a year, and the whole team is eager to start new activities.

“I would have never imagined that you could do such things in a library – but it turns out to be a very good place for such things.” – Daniel Hałat, computer programmer and volunteer trainer at the library

“The robotics workshops are a hit. This is a fantastic initiative for young people, and all without fees.” – Zbigniew Mastalerz, young trainee.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in May 2014. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library’s impact assessment. For further information, contact library director, Aleksandra Zawalska-Hawel: dyrektor@biblioteka.piekary.pl

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to knowledge in developing and transition economy countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.