

READING IN RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRES. CASE STUDY of LBUS

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Abstract

The paper focuses of to open the minds of pupils and turn them to reading, teacher librarians must prepare pupils, bring them face to face with reading, situations, themes from each reading instance, so that they can analyze, describe, freely express themselves, using the right words to convey their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and compare the information they came across while reading with their own experiences, the situations they've lived through, thus anchoring them in daily reality.

Keywords: Teacher, Librarians, Information Centers, Research

1 Research and Information Centers - Spaces Dedicated to Reading

“When reading a book, I feel like a different person.”
(Henri James)

The major changes that have occurred in the information society, which most people see as a revolution, have given rise to a new concept, i.e. the Research and Information Centre, a place especially dedicated to documentation.

Therefore, according to article 1 of the Regulation regarding the Organizing and Functioning of the Research and Information Centre, the RIC is a multidisciplinary resource center providing pupils, teachers and the local community with a space dedicated to training, communication and information, a laboratory to experiment with new educational technologies, a space for culture, openness, meeting and integration.[14]

In other words, Research and Information Centers meet pupils, teachers, and the whole local community's needs for information, offering a work tool that supports their personal and professional development, the acquiring of new competences, such as: autonomy in research, comparing

sources and various supports, organizing their research work by selecting, exploiting and communicating information; besides, for teachers, the RIC makes available diverse documentary materials enabling them to adapt their work methods and techniques to the learning needs of 21st-century pupils.

Article 2 of the Order of the Ministry of Education and Research no. 3328/08.03.2002 on allowing Teaching Corps Houses to set up Research and Information Centre defines these structures as follows: multidisciplinary resource centers that provide pupils, teachers and communities information in various formats (book funds, magazines, audio and video tapes, CD-ROMs, computers, etc.), implement cultural animation projects, unfold pedagogical activities, as well as life-long learning actions for teachers and auxiliary teaching staff in the pre-university education system. [25]

Thus, RICs are considered a landmark of innovative processes in Romanian schools, addressing the entire educational community, which includes not only the pupils and the teachers in those schools that have RICs, but also public segments connected to the school: parents, members of the local community, pupil's associations and clubs, etc.

Françoise Chapron, honorary president of FABDEN (Fédération des associations des professeurs documentalistes de l'Éducation nationale, French Ministry of National Education)[26] and associate professor of Rouen University, claims that an important role performed by the RIC is that, through the activities organized here, users (especially pupils) are prepared to assimilate reading codes and strategies to use the new information available in the RIC, which turns this research center into a learning laboratory fit to train them to use other cultural structures, such as: municipal libraries, specialized research centers, communication networks.[27]

2 The role of teacher librarians in training reading for pleasure

As shown above, teacher librarians contribute to the pupil's cultural training, acting not only as mediators between books and readers, but also as animators of cultural life and information efforts.

From my point of view, the role of teacher librarians is to undertake, develop, implement new ways to bring pupils closer to books.

Teacher librarians have to adapt to the real needs of the pupils in today's generation, and especially to learn and get to know how to approach these needs, so that they can support pupils through interesting activities that draw them to books. In order to ensure that the activities conducted by teacher librarians are more attractive, these should include more than mere reading, but blend harmoniously with dance, drawing exhibitions, watching films.

Alongside specialized teachers, teacher librarians should guide pupils to develop competences, such as:

Identifying various types of resources available in a RIC;
Selecting the appropriate documents for their specific research topic;
Becoming familiar with and identifying various search tools (works of reference, clarification systems, indexes, etc.);
Understanding and extracting digital search information, etc.;
Communicating the results of their research in an organized manner.

Teacher librarians are reading consultants, the binder between school subjects and a psychopedagogue, always ready to answer readers' questions. That is why, teacher librarians must infer or even be familiar with the reader's knowledge level, their perception level and their capacity to assimilate information. The activity of teacher librarians revolves around the needs of RIC users.

Therefore, I believe that teacher librarians should be guided by the Latin proverb *timeo hominem unius libri*, meaning that, even those who have only read one book, but have gotten to know it thoroughly, are competent users and opponents to fear in a debate.

Professional and psycho-pedagogical training, communication skills, empathy, good humor, courteousness and availability, the talent to be close to pupils, a warm, welcoming smile are features of a true teacher librarian.

Teacher librarians will not show disapproval of or criticize pupils, for any child can succeed, the essential thing is to not push them to fail through exaggerated or premature requests[28], on the contrary, aim to stimulate pupils to achieve the best results they can, and guide them to secure results that can raise their self-confidence and creativity level.

At the same time, the role of teacher librarians is to organize activities in the RIC to develop pupil's competences, inform and train them, meet some of their curiosities, cultivate their taste for reading, educate them as citizens, develop them as autodidacts (searching, selecting, treating, communicating information), support them to interact better with those around them (by expressing and defending their opinions, accepting the opinions of others), etc.

Considering all the above-mentioned features of teacher librarians, it's safe to say that their role is to train pupils and help them develop certain competences, skills and abilities.

While in the education system, pupils' interaction with books cannot be replaced, and so it's very important for teachers (librarians or specialized) to join hands to consciously bring pupils closer to the world of books, so they can experience the joy of reading, as each book is a journey through souls, thoughts and beauties [4] (Mihail Sadoveanu).

Fundamentally, I believe that teacher librarians should be fascinating, as, according to Augusto Cury [29], *the highest skill of a fascinating teacher is to be able to permeate the minds of their pupils and to find special answers, different from those they are used to. Fascinating teachers turn information into knowledge and knowledge into experience.*

3 Case Study - Interest for Reading

This study aimed at determining the level of interest for reading. The methodology employed consisted of a survey (data gathering instrument) applied at the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu. The survey included a set of 20 questions. Following the distribution and filling in of the survey, the data was processed and interpreted. We interpreted the results of each question, as well as established correlations between questions. The survey was filled in by a total number of 38 readers.

Most respondents (19 people), i.e. half of the participants in the study, are 25 years old or under.

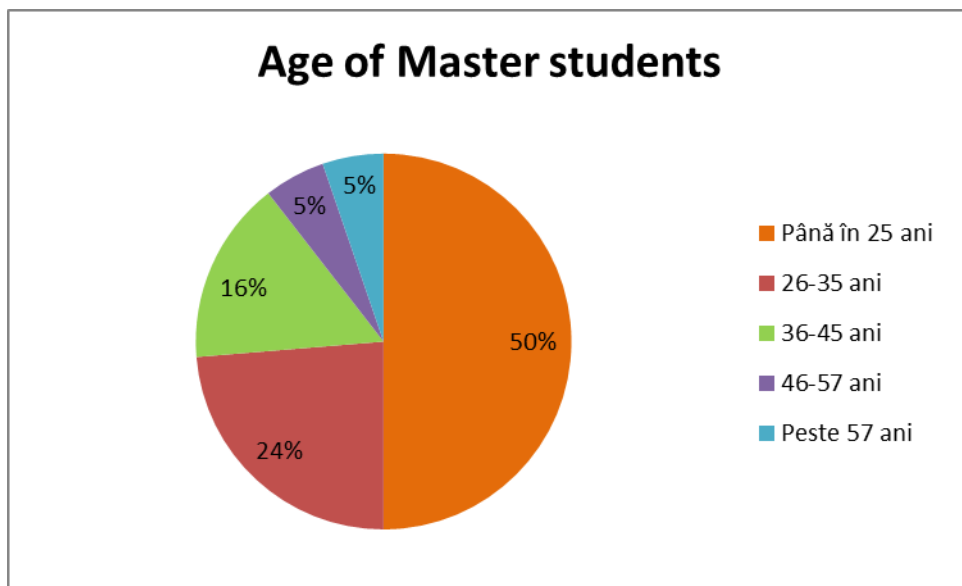


Figure 5 - Age of Master students

As to their gender, 27 are female, while only 11 are male. Moreover, 24 live in the urban environment, while the remaining 14 live in rural environments.

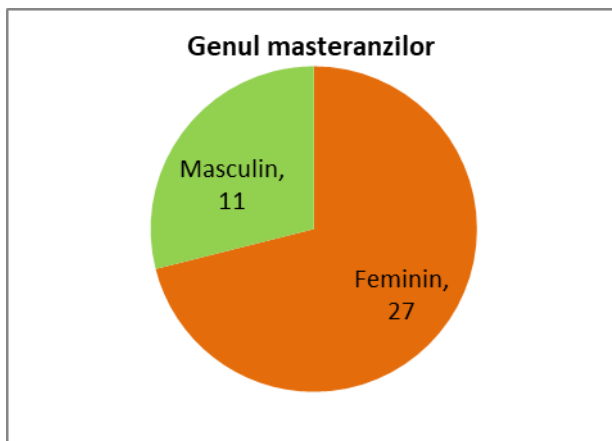


Figure 6 - Gender of Master students

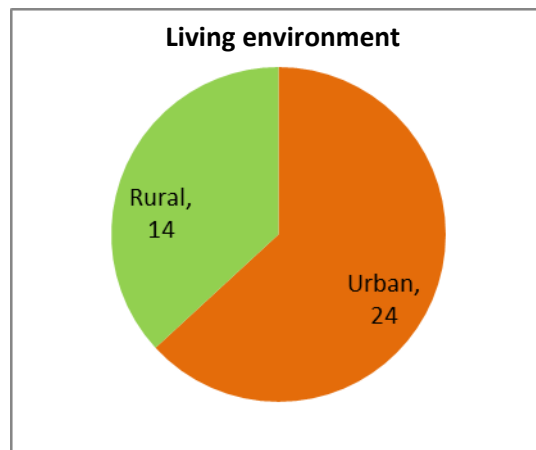


Figure 7 - Living environment

As mentioned above and according to the table below, the survey was distributed to Master students from all the Faculties within the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu. Most of the Master students (11) are enrolled in a master program at the Faculty of Engineering, 10 studying Quality management, and 1 the Management of Industrial Affairs. A similar number of respondents (11) are enrolled in a master program at the Faculty of Letters and Arts, 8 majoring as teacher librarians and 3 in Information and Research Sciences (Library sciences). The number of respondents from other Faculties was lower, as this study mainly aimed to compare the two Faculties that have very different fields of activity: Engineering - sciences, and Letters and Arts - focusing on humanities, with a view to discovering whether there was a difference between the two in what regards the interest for reading, how often they read, as well as other opinions on reading.

Table 7– Respondents’ Master Major

Faculty of Engineering	Quality management	10
	Management of Industrial Affairs	1
Faculty of Letters and Arts	Teacher librarian	8
	Library sciences	3
Faculty of Economics	Accounting expertise and audit	3
	Finance	1
Faculty of Law	Human rights	1
	European Law	1
Faculty of Sciences	Finance	1
	Applied Biology	1
Faculty of Social Sciences	Educational management	2
Faculty of theology	Practical theology	1
	Historical theology	1
Faculty of Medicine	Management of occupational healthcare	1
	Sanitary Management	1
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Food Industry and Environmental Protection	Management of modern food processing	1
	Quality assurance and food safety	1

Regarding the question “How often do you read?”, most (14) replied every day, followed by 12 people who indicated a weekly frequency, which is great. From the 14 who read daily, 9 go to the Faculty of Letters and Arts, 3 to the Faculty of Engineering, 1 to the Faculty of Sciences, and 1 to the Faculty of Social Sciences. Only 1 person answered that they did not read and it’s astonishing that they go to the Faculty of Letters and Arts.

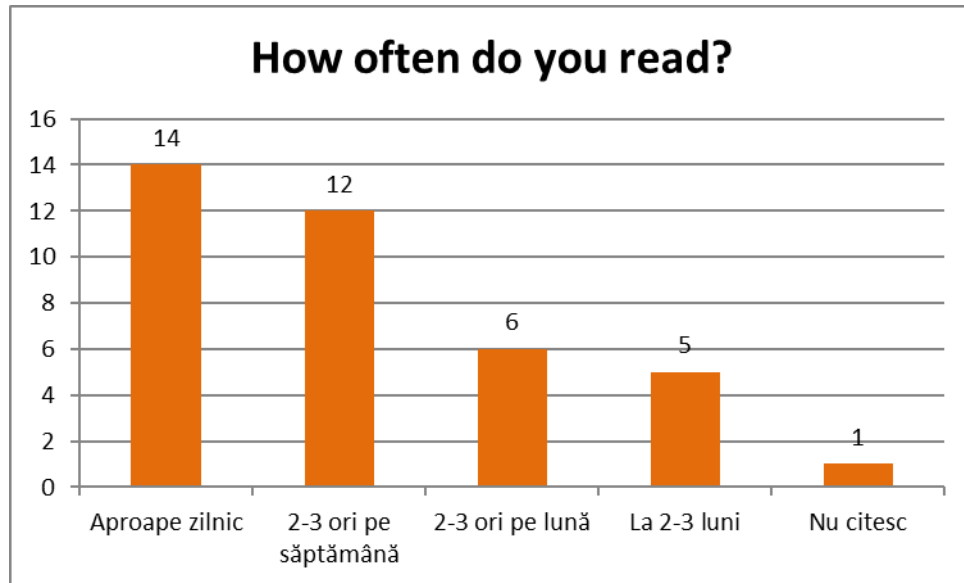


Figure 8 – How often do you read?

Regarding the last time they read a book, 17 people said that they had read during the week when they filled in the survey. To this question too, one person replied they had never read a book.

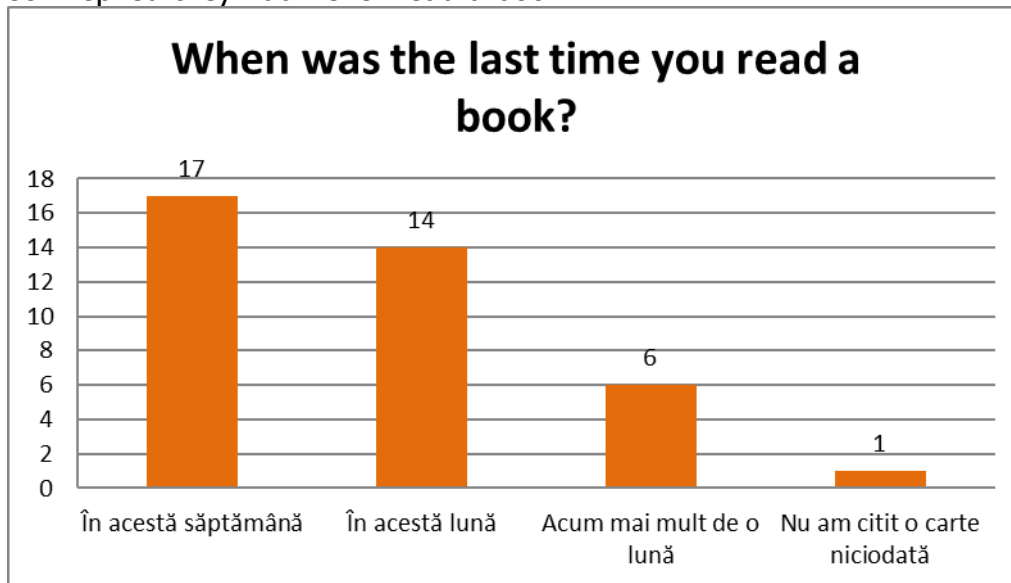


Figure 9 – When was the last time you read a book?

The following question asked respondents to rank the importance of reading from 1 to 5, with 1 being of little importance, and 5 very important. Twenty-nine MA students, i.e. 76.31%, chose 5. Nobody chose 1 and 2, which is gladdening, considering the times we are living.

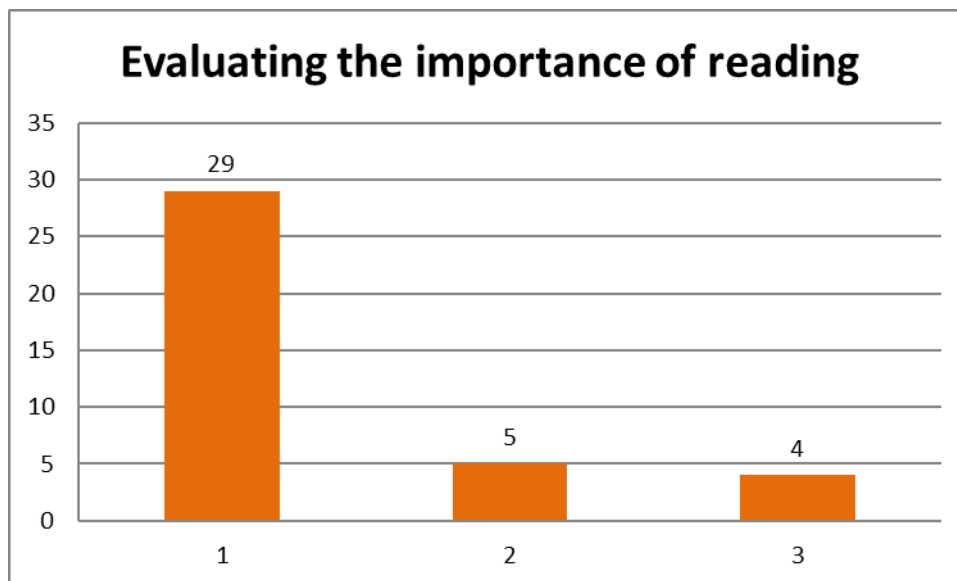


Figure 10 – Evaluating the importance of reading

In the next question, students chose the meaning of reading out of several options. This was a multiple-choice question, whose results are presented in the table below.

Table 8– Respondents’ Master Major

Is a way to forget one’s problems	20
Is essential in the life of all people	21
Is a means to discover new things	26
Is an ideal way to spend one’s free time	24
Has no benefits	0

The majority think that it is a way to acquire new information, followed by “it’s an ideal past time”; we should note that nobody chose the answer “reading has no benefits”.

This was followed by an open question, where respondents listed at least three reasons why reading was important. Their answers include:

It’s relaxing, is a means to develop one’s vocabulary, books are friends that never betray;

Personal development, finding inner peace, language improvement;

Develops one’s memory, improves one’s vocabulary and is a way to experience new things alongside each character;

Pleasure, balance, develops imagination;

Relaxation, personal development, initiation;

Improves general knowledge, develops vocabulary, relaxation;

Relaxes the mind, develops one’s imagination, helps keep one’s brain active, enriches the vocabulary of the reader.

Then, the MA students were asked whether reading “made one a richer person” or was “a waste of time”, and luckily the first option was picked by 36 of the 38 students, while the second by only two of them. Considering the availability of online libraries, MA students were asked to choose between this and the classic library. Thirty of them prefer the classic library, compared to eight who prefer the online.

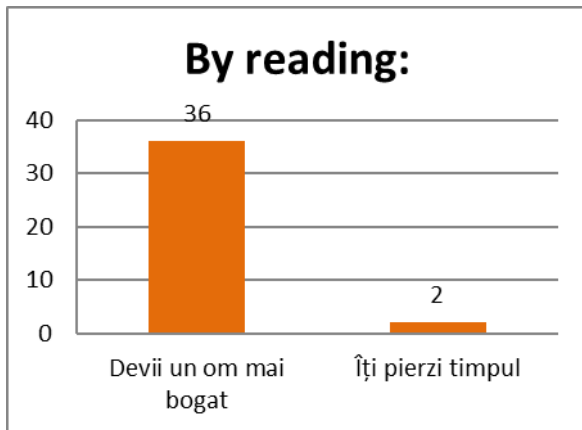


Figure 11 – By reading..

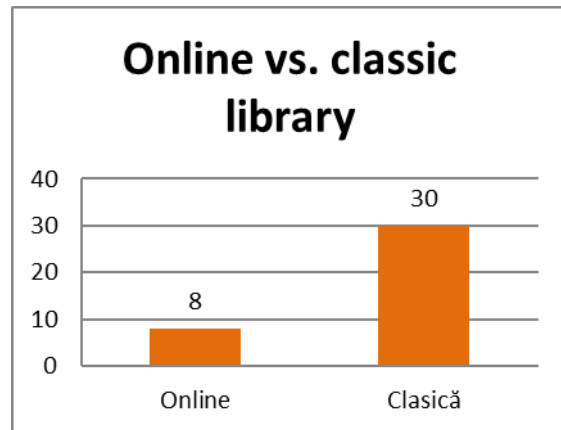


Figure 12 – Online vs. classic library

Regarding the importance of having a library at the work place, the results show that 19 MA students (50%) think it is important to have a library available at work, while 13 (34.3%) think it's very important. Nobody selected the option "not at all important", and two people (5.3%) said this aspect was of little importance.

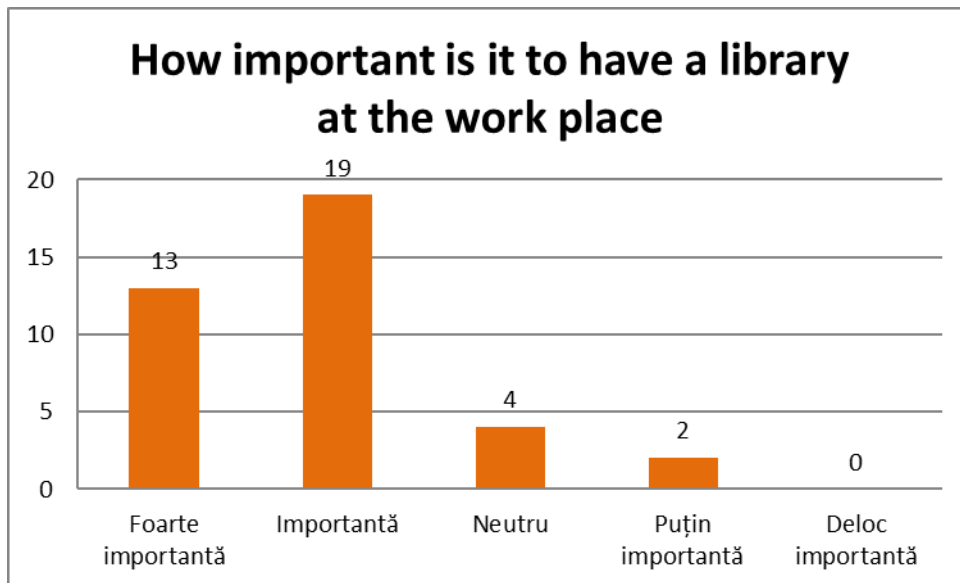


Figure 13 – How important is it to have a library at the work place

Moving on, the participants to the survey evaluated the relevance of six questions. The results illustrated in the table below show that most of them agreed with all the statements. These referred to the role of reading in developing one's vocabulary, to the time in one's life when their taste for reading develops, or to the preference for reading at night, before going to sleep.

Table 9– The benefits of reading

	Not at all important	Less important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Reading is important for developing one's vocabulary	0	1	1	7	29
Reading is a means of relaxation	0	2	3	9	24
Reading stories to children at an early age sparks their interest for reading	0	1	2	7	28
Children who have a bookcase in their home will have a bigger passion for reading	0	2	7	10	19
One's taste for reading starts developing in their childhood	0	3	3	9	23
I like to read at night, before falling asleep	2	1	5	12	18

The option Not at all important was only chosen by two students in connection to the statement: "I like to read at night, before falling asleep". Later on, the students were asked to note true or false the four statements by C.S. Lewis (British university professor and writer, whose works included fiction novels, works on medieval literature, etc.), V. Nabokov (who, among others, wrote "King, Queen, Knave", "The Eye", "Invitation of a Small Boat", "Pale Fire", etc.), E. Hemingway (who wrote novels, short stories, prose and worked as war reporter), and G. Keillor (American author, humorist, story-teller, radio personality).

Table 10– True or false

	True	False
"We read to know that we are not alone." C.S. Lewis	27	11
"Knowing you have something good to read before bed is among the most pleasurable of sensations." V. Nabokov	34	4
"There is no friend as loyal as a book" E. Hemingway	30	8
"A book is a gift you can open again and again." G. Keillor	37	1

Almost all students (37 out of 38) agreed with G. Keillor's statement: "A book is a gift you can open again and again." - G. Keillor. In the case of C.S. Lewis' statement, "We read to know that we are not alone", we find the biggest difference between answers (27 - true and 11 - false).

Between reading and watching TV, most respondents, 31 (81.6%), choose reading, and only seven watching TV. Moreover, 28 out of 38 MA students think reading a book is more absorbing than watching a movie about a book.

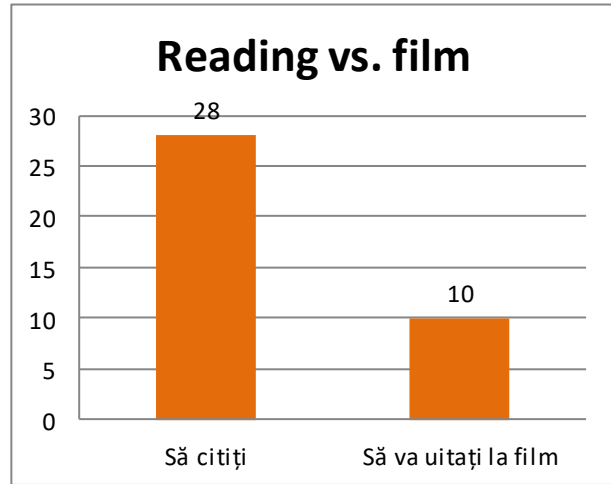
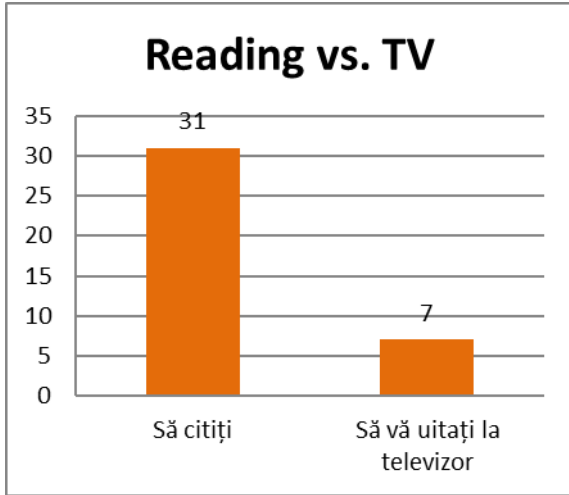


Figure 14 – Reading vs. TV

Figure 15 – Reading vs. Film

Regarding the need to include a reading class in the school curriculum, most respondents (36) agreed. The two MA students who didn't are going to a master's program at the Faculty of Engineering, i.e. Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Food Industry and Environmental Protection.

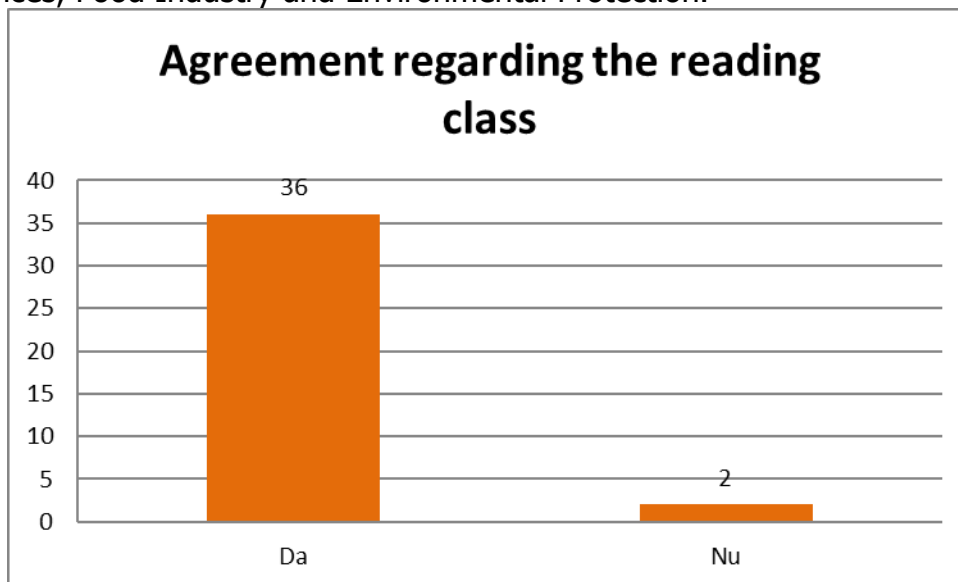


Figure 16 – Introducing a reading class in the school curriculum

Moreover, 24 students think it is very useful, and 10 that it is useful for children to take part in a reading circle. Three students are neutral, one thinks it is of little importance, and none thinks it's not at all useful.

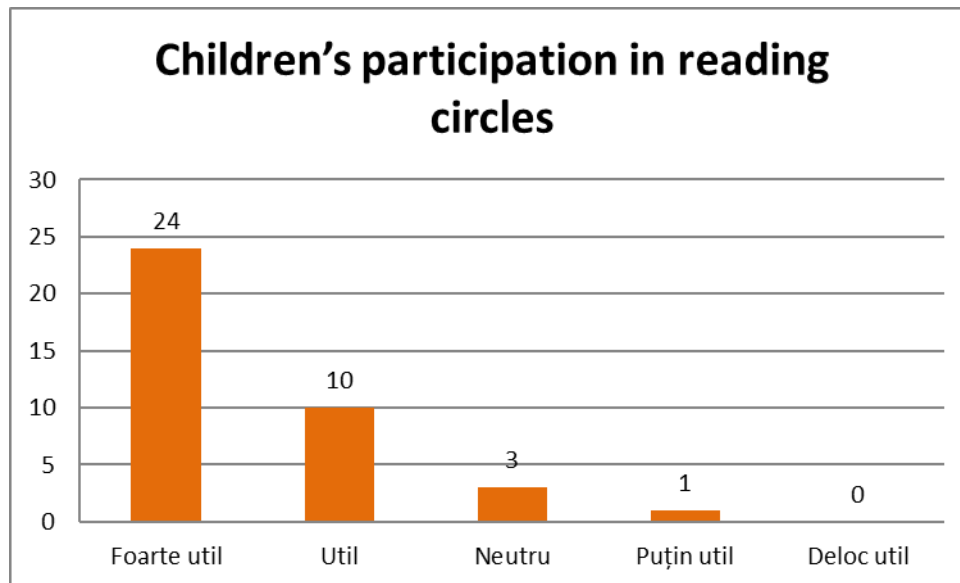


Figure 17 – Children's participation in reading circles

The last question invited students to present their opinions on stimulating children to read more. A complex answer was: "Offering interesting books for each age, offering books/stories topical for the times we're living and that are understandable at their age, and interpreting the knowledge and the symbols in that book/story in their own way, which also results in their desire to read more than one story/book", with which I completely agree. Another interesting answer was: "Through school challenges presented as games. They are assigned a book and the child who tells the most interesting things from the book receives an honorary title/a high mark/some kind of attention, like a diploma for instance. Or the teacher can assign words/key syntagms from that book and they are challenged to find them. This way, they will see reading like a journey." Other answers included:

Organizing attractive literary circles, with various relaxation and information activities;

Rewarding games;

See their parents read, too;

Introducing a reading programme in schools.

To conclude, it's clear that, regardless of the master's programme they go to, whether it's a humanities or a technical school, students still read and see reading as a useful, beneficial act. Despite the fact that, nowadays, technology is extremely advanced, that there are a plethora of ways to spend one's free time, reading is still preferred by young people, which confers hope that future generations will read too, whether classic or electronic books.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The impact of new technologies on the contemporary society has created a need to adapt to the changes that have engulfed all the fields of knowledge, especially reading.

In this sense, in conducting this work, we thought it was useful to approach this topic, in an attempt to dissipate, or at least mitigate one of the major problems facing the new generation, i.e. the decline in their interest in reading, to exploit the major importance of the Research and Information Centre in promoting reading and, at the same time, prove that it's absolutely necessary for all educational factors, in general, and for teachers, especially, to try to continuously look for and develop new methods to instill the joy of reading to youngsters.

We thus captured the importance of reading, noticed that pupil's declining interest in reading can be worrisome, yet at the same time, the situation can improve if efforts in this sense are organized with a sense of professionalism, responsibility, and enthusiasm.

Consequently, we believe that our objective, i.e. revealing *how* and *if* it is possible to educate pupil's reading taste, was accomplished, both by approaching certain necessary aspects in this sense, and by showing the activities within the targeted RICs.

We tend to believe that the information in our work will be useful to all the readers with an interest in our topic, and the activities discussed will be a real, positive example of the influence of reading on pupils.

We hope that, in the future, reading will hold a higher and higher share in school curriculums, regardless of the age level, as reading must be, for both present and future generations, the foundation on which, in time, they will build further options of methods to expand their cultural horizon.

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