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Trendi knjižničnih zbir in storitev v hrvaških zaporih

*Recent trends in Croatian prisons library collections
and services*

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Izvleček

Namen: Članek prikazuje izsledke raziskave, ki je proučevala stanje knjižničnih zbir in storitev v hrvaških zaporih.

Metodologija: Študija je bila izvedena v aprilu 2019 z uporabo anonimne ankete. Vključena je bila celotna populacija (23 zavodov za prestajanje kazenskih sankcij) in pridobili smo veljavne rezultate od dvaindvajsetih.

Rezultati: Prikazani so najnovejši podatki o financiranju, izgradnji zbir, osebju, prostoru, programih itd. knjižnic hrvaških zaporov ter vpogled v percepcije zaporskega osebja o pomenu branja in zaporskih knjižnic.

Omejitve raziskave: Izhajajo iz omejenih možnosti osebnih stikov z respondenti ter iz značilnosti uporabljene kvantitativne metodologije.

Originalnost: Študija prikazuje pomembne ugotovitve o stanju knjižnic v hrvaških zaporih. Na podlagi primerjav s predhodno študijo ter smernicami IFLA za knjižnične storitve za zapornike so oblikovana priporočila za razvoj hrvaških zaporskih knjižnic, ki so v skladu z mednarodnimi trendi.

Ključne besede: zapor, zavodi za prestajanje kazenskih sankcij, zaporske knjižnice, knjižnične zbirke, knjižnične storitve, Hrvaška

Abstract

Purpose: The article presents findings from a study, which investigated the state of library collections and services in Croatian prisons.

Methodology: The study was conducted between April and June 2019, with the help of an anonymous survey. The whole population (23 correctional institutions) were included in the study. Valid responses were obtained from 22 institutions.

Findings: The paper presents the most recent data about library collections and services of Croatian prison libraries, the organization (funding, collection building, staff, space, programming etc.) and their use. Also, insight into prison staff's perception about the importance of reading and prison libraries in general, is given.

Research limitations: These are linked to the difficulties with personal contact with respondents and the limitations that are inherent to the quantitative methodology used.

Originality and value: The study presents important findings about the state of prison libraries in Croatia. Based on the comparisons with a previous study and IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners, recommendations are made for the development of Croatian prison libraries according to the international best practices.

Keywords: correctional institutions, prison libraries, library collections, library services, Croatia

1 Introduction

According to the Croatia's Imprisonment Act, the main purpose of the imprisonment is, in addition to humane treatment and respect for the dignity of persons serving a prison sentence, their training for life in freedom, in accordance with law and accepted social rules (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018). In this context, prison libraries are recognized worldwide as important agents, who provide prisoners with quality leisure time and access to information, culture and education (Lehmann and Locke, 2005; Austin and Jacobson, 2021; Bandaranayake, 2021), which is considered a fundamental human right (United Nations, 2015; Council of Europe, 2006). The right to read and access library services is considered particularly important in prisons, as persons staying in these institutions have limited mobility and, as a rule, have too much free time (The IFLA-UNESCO Public ..., 2022).

2 Literature review

Prison libraries have been in the focus of interest of both, practitioners and scholars, for many years. At the moment IFLA Guidelines for Library Services

to Prisoners (Lehmann and Locke, 2005) are undergoing yet another revision, under editorship of Jane Garner, in order to reflect recent changes in prison librarianship.

Critical examination of the topic indicates two basic questions in the professional literature: what is the task of a prison library (i.e. why should there be a library in prison), and how a prison library should be organized and managed. Although some countries have developed national standards for prison libraries, the practice shows that the existence of these documents does not guarantee that the prescribed minimum quality standards regarding professional staff, funding, space, collections and services will be implemented in all prisons in a given country (Australian Library and Information Association, 1992). Garner, for example, points out that the Australian Guidelines for Prison Libraries do not reflect the actual state of prison libraries in this country. She sees these guidelines rather as an inspirational document (Garner, 2017).

2.1 Management and organization of prison libraries

Krolak (2019) identifies different models of library services in individual countries, and points out that various approaches to the organization of prison libraries depend upon the tradition and local context (institutional, financial, professional, security, etc.). Prison libraries are often located within the education and / or rehabilitation departments of correctional institutions, or are closely related to them. Sometimes they are organized as separate organizational units. In Norway, for example, prison libraries are a part of the national library network and function as branches of local public libraries. They are financed by the Norwegian government on the basis of an agreement between the national library and the responsible city administration which regulates their mutual relationship and responsibilities. This practice is known as the »import model« because the institution responsible for these services in the local community, namely the public library, provides library services (Bolt and Ra, 2018). In general, it has been accepted that prison libraries should be based on the model of public libraries (Bowe, 2011; Finlay & Bates, 2018). Clark and McCreagh (2006) for example, clarify that public library services could be adapted and implemented in the prison libraries, since prison library users are structurally similar to public library users - a very heterogeneous group of users, diverse in age, education status, interests, etc. Also, information needs and reading habits of the prisoners are similar to those of free citizens. However, Krolak (2019) points out that cooperation between public and prison libraries is often unstable and limited, and occurs only in certain environments and in certain circumstances. In general, a partnership with a public library may include the

aforementioned comprehensive provision of library services to the prisoners by the local library, more or less regular interlibrary loan services (whether in the form of document delivery, mobile library visits or visits to the public libraries), donations of materials, training and professional support (Mfum, 2012; Sutter, 2015; Tsvetkova and Adrekova, 2016; Hanemann and Krolak, 2019). In cases where the prison library does not have a developed cooperation with the local public library, nor is it part of the national library system, library services to prisoners often depend on the goodwill of the prison administration, and rely solely on non-government organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and individuals who sporadically donate (often outdated and irrelevant) reading materials (Muñoz, 2009). In these circumstances, well-organized libraries in which the professional library staff meets the prisoners' needs and interests are rare. In such institutions we find the so-called "library-lockers", in which small, inadequate and often unorganized collections are housed in inappropriate spaces and cared for by untrained prison staff, often with the help of the prisoners themselves (Šimunić et al., 2016). As a rule, such a situation is the result of a professional failure of the library profession and the lack of appropriate national prison legislation that would prescribe the establishment of prison libraries and lay down the minimum standards of their operations, and sanctions for non-compliance with these provisions.

2.2 Purpose of prison libraries

In relation to the second issue dealt with in the professional literature, namely the importance of prison libraries, many authors agree that prison libraries make it easier for the prisoners to serve their sentences, help them better meet their information needs, pursue cultural and educational interests, and prepare for the return to life in freedom. For example, Krolak (2019) points out that time spent in prison, ideally, should help prisoners continue or begin their education, and give them the opportunity to feel the joy of reading for the purpose of education, contemplation or simply enjoyment. In this regard, prison libraries are described in professional literature as educational, informational and recreational centres, where various activities take place, from borrowing materials to staying in a relaxed and safe environment. They are identified as places where reading helps the prisoners escape boredom and daily worries, reduce stress and anxiety and generally contributes to maintaining mental health and achieving a sense of freedom in a strictly controlled prison environment (Clark and McCreaigh, 2006; Schillinger, 2009; Begum, 2011; Billington, 2011; Garner, 2017, 2019 and 2020; Canning and Buchanon, 2021; McNeil Capers et al., 2021; Faletar Tanacković et al., 2021;). It has recently been recognized that quality library collections and programs, that contribute to the literacy and educational

attainment of the prisoners, can significantly contribute to their employment and reintegration into society, consequently reducing recidivism and financial costs for society as a whole (Lehmann, 2000; Sweeney, 2010; Fuller, 2017; Finlay & Bates, 2018; Krolak, 2019)

Relevant international organizations (Council of Europe, 2006; United Nations, 2015) prescribe that each correctional institution must equip the library with sufficient materials for educational and recreational purposes, i.e. to organize the lending of books from the local public library, if there is no prison library. However, previous research (Horvat & Nebesny, 2004; De Villa, 2011; Šimunić et al., 2016; Faletar Tanacković et al., 2021) has shown that the situation in Croatian correctional institutions varies, and that there are large differences in the size and quality of available library collections and services. The aim of the research presented in this paper is to investigate the state of library collections and services in Croatian correctional institutions in 2019 and, based on a comparison with the results of the research conducted in 2013 (Šimunić et al., 2016), to determine the extent to which the situation has changed over the period of six years. Before presenting the results of the research, the prison system of the Republic of Croatia will be briefly described.

3 Prison system in the Republic of Croatia

3.1 General demographics

According to the most recent data at the time of the study, in 2017 in Croatia a total of 4,146 people served their sentences¹ in one of 23 correctional institutions: 6 penitentiaries, 12 prisons, the Zagreb Prison Hospital, and 2 juvenile correctional institutions.² Although correctional institutions in the country face numerous challenges such as overcapacity, lack of qualified staff and insufficient financial resources, according to the Report on the Status and Operation of Penitentiaries and Prisons for 2017, the situation in the Croatian prison system is stable (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018). Prisoners are regularly provided with the necessary care, a humane treatment and a safe environment, which prepares them to live a

¹ On 31 December 2017, there were 3,190 persons in all criminal bodies of the Croatian prison system. (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018)

² The term prison is used in the paper to denote any correctional institution or organizational unit of the Prison Administration (penitentiaries, prisons and juvenile educational centers). Also, authors use the term prisoners to denote all persons, deprived of their liberty, and residing in any correctional institution.

law-abiding life after release. Due to recent changes in legislation, related to pre-trial detention, alternative sentences, probation service and early release, since 2010 there has been a slight but continuous decline in the number of prisoners (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018). Estimate is that in 2017, the prison population rate in Croatia was 75 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, and in 2013 the rate was 102 (Eurostat, 2020).

3.2 Education and library services

The majority of prisoners in 2017 were male (95.39%), and almost half had secondary education (49.34%). Only 0.9% of prisoners did not know how to read and write or do basic arithmetic operations, 1.4% did not have any school education, while 10.13% did not complete primary school. The majority of prisoners were middle-aged, falling into the age group 30-40 (32.54%) and 40-50 (22.44%). One third of the prisoners (33.6%) were parents to 1325 children under 18. 7.1% of prisoners did not have Croatian citizenship. 16.39% were diagnosed with drug and 13.32% with alcohol abuse. A significant proportion of prisoners were recidivists: for 42.87% of prisoners this was not the first time they had been in prison. According to the structure of criminal offenses, the largest share in the total number of prisoners are prisoners who committed property crimes (35%) and crimes against life and body (35%), followed by crimes against values protected by international law (10%), against sexual freedom and sexual morality (6%), financial crimes (4%) and crimes against the general security of people and property (3%). On 31 December 2017, the largest group of prisoners was serving a prison sentence of between one and three years (32.45%). Approximately the same number of prisoners served three to five years in prison (16.71%) and five to ten years (16.43%) (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018).

In 2017, 465 inmates attended some kind of educational programs. Prisoner education refers to literacy and completion of primary school, regardless of the age of the prisoner, training for less complex work, secondary education for certain occupations, various courses and continuing education at the secondary, college and high school level. Training of prisoners is organized in most cases in cooperation with external and college educational institutions. In prisons, training is organized for certain occupations where the emphasis is on practical skills (e.g. a cook, carpenter, computer operator, house painter, assistant bricklayer). Approximately one third of prisoners were employed in 2017 in one of the following ways: technical, physical work (55%), work in a prison workshop (34%) and work outside the correctional institution - contract with the employer (11%) (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018).

In accordance with the expressed interests and possibilities of individual correctional institutions, in 2017 various sports, recreational, cultural and religious activities were organized. Cultural events included, for example, concerts, theatre performances, meetings with authors and famous public figures, lectures and discussions on current events. Numerous civil society organizations have been actively involved in the organization of prisoners' leisure activities. A mention should be made a successful event called »Book Night«, in which prisoners read excerpts from books, attend storytelling workshops, present their literary works, hold screenings of films based on literary templates etc. On this particular night prisons are allowed to stay up longer (with lights on so that they can read). Also, »the best readers« among prisoners are selected (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018).

4 Research

Although the Report on the Status and Work of Correctional Institutions in 2017 (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2018) stated that prisoners were allowed to borrow books from local public libraries or libraries in correctional institutions, no additional information about prison libraries is provided. Since previous research has shown that prison libraries in the Republic of Croatia and their practices differ greatly from institution to institution, and since six years have passed since the last study (Šimunić et al., 2016), a study, presented in this paper, was conducted in order to find out, whether the situation had changed in the meantime. The aim of the research was to examine the state of library collections and services in the Croatian correctional institutions and to answer the following research questions:

1. How are library collections organized in Croatian prisons (financing, space, equipment, staff)?
2. What library services are offered to prisoners (materials, programs)?
3. How and to what extent are library collections used in prisons?
4. How do prison staff perceive the importance of books, readings, and prison libraries?

4.1 Methodology

Based on the consent obtained from the Central Office of the Prison and Probation System of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, the research was conducted in the period from April to June 2019. The entire surveyed population was included in the research, i.e. all correctional institutions in the Republic of

Croatia (N=23). A questionnaire was sent to the e-mail addresses of all 7 penitentiaries, 14 prisons and 2 juvenile correctional institutions. Survey was previously reviewed and approved by the aforementioned Central Office. After two reminders, the questionnaire was filled out by respondents from 22 (out of 23) institutions: 7 penitentiaries, 13 prisons and 2 educational institutions. The response rate is 95.6%.

The research was conducted using an anonymous print questionnaire, consisting of 38 questions (multiple-choice and open-ended questions). These aimed to find out how many books and other library materials are owned by the surveyed institutions (number of library material by type, subject areas, etc.), how their libraries or collections are organized (financing, collection building and processing of materials, staff, equipment), and to learn about their services (activities, programs) and use. The research also sought to find out the opinion of respondents (who would preferably be people in charge of the prison library) about the role of reading, free access to books and information, and the role of libraries in prisons. The study employed a quantitative method, because the authors tried to obtain objective and measurable data which could be compared with the previous studies. Data was analyzed with the help of SPSS statistical package.

5 Findings

The results will be presented according to the research questions, following the general information about the respondents' demographics (Table 1). The majority of respondents were treatment officers and persons in charge of the library.

Table 1. Respondents

| | N | % |
|----------------------------------|----|------|
| treatment officer | 11 | 50 |
| persons in charge of the library | 8 | 36.4 |
| director of the institution | 1 | 4.5 |
| someone else | 1 | 4.5 |

5.1 Library organization and operation

Out of 22 institutions that completed the questionnaire, only 8 have a library for prisoners. A library has been defined, in the introductory part of the questionnaire, as an organizational unit within the correctional institution, that has its

own space and equipment (furniture, shelves, computer, printer), an organized collection of books and other reading materials, that are systematically updated, fixed working hours for users, regular funding, and employs a professional librarian. In 12 institutions, prisoners do not have at their disposal a proper library, only a collection of books and some other reading materials. A collection of books has previously been defined as any collection of books and other reading materials that are usually not located in a suitable space, with sporadic acquisition of reading material, without regular funding, where the materials are not systematically organized. In two institutions, the prisoners do not have any access to books or reading materials.³ Only in 11 surveyed institutions there is a reading room or a special space, equipped with appropriate furniture (tables and chairs), where prisoners can read.

As for library equipment, most libraries (N=10) have a computer (without Internet access) that can be used by prisoners. In only one library, the prisoners have access to the Internet, under supervision. In four libraries, the prisoners have access to a radio / CD player, and in two they can use a television, video recorder and projector. In only one library the prisoners can use a printer. The library staff also has a limited set of equipment at their disposal: a printer (N=7), a computer without Internet access (N=6), a telephone (N=5), a photocopier (N=4), a scanner (N=3) and a projector (N=3), a television (N=1), a radio / CD player (N=1) and a video recorder (N=1).

In most cases (N=10), the person in charge of the library has many other duties and is not responsible only or primarily for running the library. In only one institution the library is managed by the person as their primary responsibility. In two institutions, there is nobody in charge of the library by the person for whom library is their primary responsibility. In 9 institutions, the prisoners are in charge of the library. None of the people running the library has appropriate library education, and only four have received some short library training. None of the people in charge of the prison library has attended training courses organized by the Center for Continuing Professional Development of Librarians at the National and University Library, nor have they ever attended a professional library meeting or conference.

Although the cooperation of prison libraries with other libraries is poorly developed and sporadic, the findings show that the surveyed libraries cooperate more often with public libraries than with other prison libraries. Namely, only

³ In order to facilitate the discussion, the term libraries will be used in the paper to denote both libraries and library collections.

one respondent stated that the prison library cooperated with other prison library in the country. Regarding the cooperation with local public libraries, 12 respondents stated that local (public) libraries donate their discarded material. Prisoners in only five surveyed institutions can check out books from the local public library (either by themselves, in case they have a low-risk prison regime, or through the person in charge of the prison library). Mobile library services are organized in only one prison (Table 2).

Table 2. *Collaboration with other libraries*

| | No. of prisons | % |
|--|----------------|------|
| the local library donates discarded material | 12 | 54.5 |
| prison library does not cooperate with the local public library | 5 | 22.7 |
| checking out books from the local public library | 5 | 22.7 |
| the local library helps organize educational and cultural programs at the correctional institution | 2 | 9.1 |
| collaboration with another prison library | 1 | 4.5 |
| the correctional institution is visited by the mobile library | 1 | 4.5 |

Only three correctional institutions provide regular and adequate funding for the library. In 17 of the surveyed institutions, libraries receive no funding.

Since a well-organized library bases its operation on a series of carefully prepared documents, which regulate its work, in the next question the authors wanted to find out what strategic documents prison libraries have. The findings indicate that the work of most prison Croatian libraries is not structured in a serious manner, i.e. they do not have the documents needed for orderly and systematic work. For example, only three surveyed libraries have drafted some basic library rules, only one has a financial plan and another one produces an annual work report. Interestingly, only two libraries have acquired for their collection the 2005 IFLA Guidelines, which should be a key document for a prison library in a country where there are no national standards (Table 3).

Table 3. *Library documents*

| | No. of prisons | % |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------|
| library rules | 3 | 13.6 |
| annual report | 1 | 4.5 |
| financial plan | 1 | 4.5 |
| collection development policy | 0 | 0 |
| annual work plan | 0 | 0 |
| gift policy | 0 | 0 |

5.2 Library materials and services

In Croatian prison libraries, library material is not acquired systematically nor according to any plan. In most prison libraries, the library material is acquired sporadically, and in three libraries it is not acquired at all. In only two libraries the material is acquired regularly (either by purchase or through donations). Acquisition through donations is the dominant form of acquisition of library materials in all libraries, with 8 libraries building their collections exclusively through donations. Only 9 respondents state that their library (sometimes) buys material, but even in these institutions donations dominate and only a small share (approximately 10%) of library material is purchased.

Respondents were then asked to estimate how many items (books, newspapers and magazines, games, CD / DVD) were purchased in their institution in the previous year (2018). The majority of respondents (N=15) stated that no books were purchased for their library. Only two institutions gave the number of books purchased in 2018: one library purchased 33 and the other 50 books. Furthermore, only 4 institutions indicated that they purchased newspapers and magazines in 2018: one was subscribed to one title, one to two, the third one to three, and the fourth one to eight titles. None of the respondents provided data on the number of purchased games and CDs / DVDs, so it can be assumed that in 2018 no library purchased this type of material.

In eight institutions, the library material is selected by the person in charge of the library, and in four the material to be acquired can be suggested by the prisoners. In 10 institutions, the material is selected by the staff from the treatment department, while in three libraries, the titles are proposed for purchase by someone else (donors, librarians from the local public library and members of the Advisory Board of the Prison Administration). The majority of respondents (N=14) pointed out that the materials were donated to them by religious organizations, followed by individuals (N=14), various non-governmental organizations (N=12), other libraries (N=11), and others - embassies, state institutions and various institutions, such as law schools (N = 11). More than half of the respondents (N=11) stated that they never refused donated material, and four libraries did so due to poor physical condition of the material and lack of space.

The library collections cover a variety of subject areas. Majority of institutions (N=20) possess general reference material, fiction, non-fiction and material of religious content. This is followed by legal literature (N=16), popular psychology and medicine (N=15) and picture books (N=12). In just over half of the libraries, there are also materials with community information (brochures, directories, manuals, etc. for planning the life outside of the correctional institution).

Comics and graphic novels (N=9) and professional literature such as textbooks and manuals for primary and secondary education (N=9) are least represented (Table 4). Respondents think that reading material inappropriate for prisoners is pornography (N=4), books about violence (N=4), intolerance (N=2), and in general, content that is not appropriate for children under 14 years of age.

Table 4. *Type of library material*

| Type of material | No. of prisons | % |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----|
| general reference | 20 | 100 |
| fiction | 20 | 100 |
| non-fiction | 20 | 100 |
| religious material | 20 | 100 |
| legal material | 16 | 80 |
| foreign language material | 16 | 80 |
| popular psychology and medicine | 15 | 75 |
| picture books | 12 | 60 |
| community information | 11 | 55 |
| comics and graphic novels | 9 | 45 |
| professional literature | 9 | 45 |

Although it is known that a large percentage of people in prisons have some reading and writing disorders, as confirmed by Čelić-Tica, Gabriel & Sabljak (2010), it is interesting that no institution (N=20) has acquired reading material adapted for people with reading difficulties (e.g. large print material, audio books). However, given the growing number of foreigners in prisons, it is worth mentioning that 16 (80%) libraries have materials in foreign languages.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the number of items for each type of material they possess. Based on the answers received,⁴ it was calculated that the minimum number of books, that libraries have, is 550, and the largest is 10,000. Considering the total number of prisoners (N=3,202), and the total number of books (N=43,901) in the institutions that answered these two questions, the number of books *per capita* in Croatian prisons on average is 13.7 (number of books *per capita* varies from 4.16 to 76). Only four institutions indicated the number of video cassettes / DVDs: the smallest collection is 10 items and the

⁴ Although it was pointed out that the approximate number of items could be given in this question in case they did not know the exact data, only 12 respondents answered this question. It can be assumed that the remaining institutions do not have data on the number of items in their collection.

largest 168. Only four libraries have board games: they have between 4 and 20 items.

In all institutions, the materials were catalogued or at least registered in some way. For example, three libraries have a card catalog and 16 libraries a MS Word or Excel document. In one institution, the materials were handwritten on a piece of paper. In 13 institutions, all library materials, and in one institution only a part of the materials, were entered in the inventory book. Six libraries did not have an inventory book.

Although eight institutions weed their collections periodically (from once a year to once in four years), most of the surveyed institutions (N=11) weed sporadically, when they think it is needed. In one institution, the collection has never been weeded.

Most of the surveyed libraries organize certain activities and programs for prisoners. In most cases they offer reading programs (N=6) and programs in which prisoners acquire knowledge and skills needed to return to the society and lead a normal life, such as workshops on writing a CV, preparing for a job interview, peaceful conflict resolution, parenting etc. (N=4). This is followed by computer literacy programs (N=3) and film screenings (N=3). An overview of all library programs and activities is shown in Table 5. In 12 libraries such programs are not implemented because they are organized in their institutions by the treatment department, civil society organizations, or schools.

Table 5. *Library programs and activities*

| | No. of prisons | % |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
| reading promotion | 6 | 30 |
| back -to-normal life skills and knowledge | 4 | 20 |
| computer literacy program | 3 | 15 |
| film screenings | 3 | 15 |
| holiday celebrations | 2 | 10 |
| vocational training program | 2 | 10 |
| literacy program (writing, reading, arithmetic) | 2 | 10 |
| art workshops and exhibitions | 2 | 10 |
| theatre plays | 1 | 5 |
| concerts | 1 | 5 |
| something else (journalist group, lectures) | 2 | 10 |
| the library does not run any programs | 12 | 60 |

5.3 Library use

In six surveyed institutions, the library is used by up to 25% of prisoners, in 10 institutions the library is used by between 26 and 50% of prisoners. In four institutions more than half of the prisoners use the library.

In terms of working hours, 11 libraries are opened less than 10 hours per week, four between 11 and 20 hours per week, and three more than 21 hours per week. Three respondents stated that libraries in their institutions were not accessible to the prisoners.⁵ In 16 institutions, the prisoners can check out all the materials that the library has. In four libraries, only books can be checked out, and in two videocassettes and CD-ROMs / DVDs. Only in one institution, the prisoners can check out board games.

In two institutions, the prisoners visit the library, i.e. a room where the materials are kept, individually or in small groups without supervision, while in seven they can do this under supervision. In 10 (50%) institutions, the prisoners cannot visit the library, but the materials are delivered to them, and in two surveyed institutions, only some prisoners visit the library and to the others the library materials are delivered (depending on their security level). In eight libraries, the check-out period is not set, so the prisoners can keep the books and other reading materials for as long as they want. In seven institutions, the prisoners can check out library materials for a maximum of 15 days, and in five libraries, the check-out period is 30 days.

Almost all surveyed institutions keep some kind of records about their library users and library use. Most institutions (N=16) record loan data (e.g. which titles are borrowed), and half (N=10) keep records of library membership. Only one library does not keep any records of its users, programs, etc.

Table 6. *Required material*

| | No. of prisons | % |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| books | 19 | 95 |
| daily press | 6 | 30 |
| board games | 5 | 25 |
| magazines | 3 | 15 |
| video cassettes, CD-Roms, DVDs | 2 | 10 |
| laws and legal documents | 1 | 5 |

⁵ Given that some respondents (N=4) did not answer this question, it can be assumed that libraries in their institutions do not have prescribed working hours or are not open for prisoners at all.

In most libraries books are the most frequently (N=19) checked-out items,⁶ followed by the daily press⁷ (N=6) and board games (N=5). Magazines⁸ (N=3) and video cassettes, CD-ROMs (N=2) are relatively rarely checked-out. Only one respondent stated that the prison library users are looking for laws and legal documents. (Table 6)

In the surveyed institutions, the reading interests and information needs of prisoners are most often determined in passing, in casual conversations (N=17). Only one library conducts targeted research to find out the prisoners' reading interests. In another one this information is obtained through a prisoner who works in the library. Three respondents (15%) state that their libraries are not trying to find out the reading and information interests and needs of their users in any way.

If prisoners, on the other hand, want a book or any other reading material that their prison library does not have, they usually ask their family and friends to send it to them (N=20) or buy it with their own money in the prison shop (N=15). To a much lesser extent, the prisoners acquire such material from the local public library. (Table 7)

Table 7. *Acquisition of materials not owned by the prison library*

| | No. of prisons | % |
|--|-----------------------|----------|
| family and friends | 20 | 90.9 |
| personal purchase | 15 | 68.2 |
| interlibrary loan from other libraries | 6 | 27.3 |
| local library mobile service | 2 | 9.1 |

⁶ Among the most sought-after books in 2018 were the following authors and titles A. Nothomb (The Assassin's Hygiene), D. Bown (Angels and Demons, The Da Vinci Code); Bible, M. Puzo (Godfather, Omerta, Sicilian), D. Jelačić Bužimski (Balkan Mafia), L. Child (Man with Two Faces, Affair, 12 Signs), D. Icke (Stories from the Time of the Loop), L. Vegel (Promised Land), I. Oršanić (Vision of Freedom), FM Dostojevski (Crime and Punishment, Idiot), I. Andrić (Cursed Courtier, Bridge on the Drina), M. Kapor (Una), A. Šenoa (Beggar Luke), Z. Tomac (Conversion), J. Nesbo, D. Steele, P. Coehlo, S. King, J. Lapidus (Easy Hunt), B. Bogičević (People in Black), A. de la Motte (Game), K. Steiner (7000 Days in Siberia), T. Parsons (Family), S. Sheldon (The Other Side of Midnight), C. Iggulden (Conqueror), K. Rose (You Belong to Me), G. Kristian (Bloody Eye, Sons of Thunder), N. Gordon (Healer), M. Selimović (Fortress, Dervish and Death), J. Grisham (Chamber), V. Karlović (I survived Vukovar and Ovčara), A. Davidson (Vodoriga), P. Pavličić (Sad Rich Man), Ž. Senečić (Bottom).

⁷ The following daily newspapers were most in demand: Jutarnji list, Večernji list, 24 sata, Novi list, Sportske novosti.

⁸ The most frequently sought-after journals were: Drvo znanja, Meridijani, Auto i moto, Lovački vjesnik, Globus, Mak - Mali koncil, Vojna povijest, National Geographic, and a local magazine written by prisoners.

5.4 Perceived importance of books, reading and prison libraries

In the last part of the questionnaire, an attempt was made to determine how respondents perceive the importance of free access to information, reading and prisons libraries in general (on a scale 1 – fully disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – agree, 5 – fully agree).

Table 8. Perceived importance of books, reading and prison libraries

| | Mean | 1 – fully disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 – fully agree |
|--|------|--------------------|------|------|------|-----------------|
| The support of the prison management is needed for provision of quality library services. | 4.55 | - | - | - | 45.5 | 54.5 |
| Books and reading have a positive impact on prisoners. | 4.45 | - | - | - | 54.5 | 45.5 |
| Ensuring free Internet access for prisoners can be a threat to the security of the correctional institution. | 4.38 | - | 4.8 | 4.8 | 38.1 | 52.4 |
| Prisoners have the right to freely choose materials for (recreational) reading and quality leisure time. | 4.23 | - | - | 9.1 | 59.1 | 31.8 |
| Libraries have an important role to play in raising the educational and cultural level of prisoners. | 4.33 | - | - | 9.5 | 47.6 | 42.9 |
| Prisoners have the right to free access to information. | 4.19 | - | - | 14.3 | 52.4 | 33.3 |
| Library collections and services should meet the real needs and interests of prisoners. | 4.18 | - | - | 4.5 | 72.7 | 22.7 |
| Library can contribute to the resocialization and rehabilitation of prisoners. | 4.14 | - | - | 22.7 | 40.9 | 36.4 |
| Systematic and regular funding is needed to provide quality library services. | 4.09 | - | - | 22.7 | 45.5 | 31.8 |
| The provision of quality library services requires support from the professional library community. | 4.09 | - | - | 4.5 | 18.2 | 40.9 |
| Professional library staff is needed to provide quality library services. | 3.68 | - | 4.5 | 40.9 | 36.4 | 18.2 |
| Prisoners should be restricted or denied access to material on a particular topic. | 2.86 | 13.6 | 13.6 | 45.5 | 27.3 | - |
| Libraries are unnecessary in prisons. | 1.41 | 81.8 | 9.1 | - | 4.5 | 4.5 |

Table 8 shows that the respondents largely agree with the statements, i.e. they believe that reading and free access to information and libraries are extremely important for the prisoners. For example, all respondents (100%) agree or fully agree that books and reading have a positive impact on prisoners and that the support of the correctional institution management is needed to provide quality library services. Interestingly, only about half of respondents (54.6%) agree or fully agree with the statement »Professional library staff is needed to provide quality library services«, and almost a third (27.3%) believe that the prisoners should be restricted or denied access to material on a particular topic.

6 Discussion

The chapter *Discussion* offers a comparison of the findings obtained in the study, conducted in 2019, with the results of a similar survey conducted in 2013⁹ (Šimunić et al., 2016) in order to see whether there has been any progress in the management and services of Croatian prison libraries. In addition, the findings are compared with the provisions of the 2005 IFLA Guidelines.

6.1 Library organization

The number of library collections and libraries in Croatian prisons remained the same. This means that, out of 22 institutions that completed the questionnaire, in 8 there is a library for the prisoners, in 12 institutions there are some books and other reading materials for the prisoners (but this cannot be qualified as a proper library), and in 2 institutions the prisoners do not have any access to books. However, there has been an increase in the number of reading rooms for prisoners: in 2013, there was only one reading room, and in 2019, there were 11 (Table 9). The 2005 IFLA Guidelines specifically elaborate in the *Physical Facility and Equipment* section on spatial conditions and stipulate that the users' seating area and learning space must be large enough to accommodate at least 5% of the prison population (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 8). In the next study, the size of the library reading rooms should be included in the survey in order to see if they meet the minimum requirement.

⁹ In 2013 study the questionnaire was completed by 21 out of 23 correctional institutions in Croatia.

Table 9. *Library facilities – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| number of correctional institutions | 23 | 23 |
| number of responding institutions | 21 | 22 |
| number of libraries | 8 | 8 |
| number of institutions without a proper library | 12 | 12 |
| no access to books or any reading material | 1 | 2 |
| reading room | 1 | 11 |

According to the 2005 IFLA Guidelines, the *Information Technology* chapter specifically recommends that the users have access to library equipment that includes computers with multimedia software for access to information, education, or entertainment (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 9). In this sense, there was a significant increase in the availability of computers, because in the 2013 survey computers (without the Internet) were available to prisoners in 5 libraries, and in 2019 in twice as many (N=10).

In respect to the staff, the situation has remained unchanged: there are still no professional librarians employed in Croatian prisons. Likewise, both studies found that no person in charge of the prison library attended any form of library training. However, there was a decrease in the number of persons whose primary responsibility is the prison library (from two in 2013 to one in 2019), and increase of the prisoners in charge of the library (seven in 2013 and nine in 2019). This practice in the prison libraries is contrary to 2005 IFLA Guidelines, which explicitly state the need to hire professional librarians, regardless of the size of prison libraries, and suggest hiring prisoners and volunteers from the local community as additional library staff (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 9). (Table 10)

Table 10. *Library staff – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| professional librarians | 0 | 0 |
| person whose primary responsibility is the prison library | 2 | 1 |
| person who is not responsible only for the library (e.g. security officer, treatment staff) | 12 | 10 |
| prisoners | 7 | 9 |
| nobody | - | 2 |

Several chapters of the 2005 IFLA Guidelines, discussing the cooperation of prison libraries with the local community (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 14-15),

recommend the availability of interlibrary loan services as a complement to the existing library collection, and participation in the local or national interlibrary loan system. They further state that prison libraries should follow the model of public libraries and at the same time offer resources for prison education and rehabilitation programs and for other needs of prisoners, such as ensuring the availability of a legal collection. If prisoners are allowed to leave the prison for work or study, they should also be allowed to come to the local (public or school) library. This should be regulated by an appropriate agreement that determines the level of service provision. According to both surveys, the cooperation of prison libraries with other libraries is stagnant: five responding institutions have no cooperation with the local public library. Public libraries in most cases donate their discarded material. Only one prison is visited by the mobile library service. In addition, cooperation at the level of interlibrary loan with the public library shows a negative trend: the cooperation has slightly decreased from six in 2013 to five libraries in 2019 (Table 11).

Table 11. *Library collaboration – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| no cooperation with public library | 5 | 5 |
| mobile service operated by public library | 1 | 1 |
| ILL | 6 | 5 |
| book donations | 11 | 12 |

In 2013, four prison libraries were regularly funded, and in 2019 only three. This indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of prisons that provide regular and adequate funding for the library. The 2005 IFLA Guidelines, in the *Budget chapter* (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 11), clearly define that correctional institutions should provide funding for prison libraries, thus ensuring the acquisition of library materials, database subscriptions, equipment, information technology, interlibrary loan, contract library services, salary for a professional librarian and their education, etc. The practice of Croatian correctional institutions regarding the funding of prison libraries is contrary to this provision because in majority of prisons, the libraries do not have any budget, or it is only occasional. (Table 12)

Table 12. *Library funding – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| no funding | 0 | 17 |
| occasional funding | 16 | 0 |
| regular funding | 4 | 3 |

According to the 2005 IFLA Guidelines, written programs for the provision of library services must be developed by state or local prison authorities based on appropriate library legislation. It is also recommended that prison libraries develop a long-term library plan (3 to 5 years), which must be approved by the prison administration and serve as the basis for the annual budget (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 6). In this respect, the data collected in the 2019 survey show partial stagnation, but also a negative trend, compared to the data collected in the 2013 survey (Table 13). There has been no change in terms of library rules on the operation and use of libraries, which are still in place in three libraries. The negative trend is reflected in relation to the preparation of the annual report on the work of the library (one in 2019, and four in 2013). In addition, in 2013, two libraries had developed their work plan, while in 2019 only one. In general, it can be concluded that the library documents, required for the efficient operation of the prison library, are rare in Croatian correctional institutions.

Table 13. *Library documents – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| library rules | 3 | 3 |
| annual report | 4 | 1 |
| financial plan | 0 | 1 |
| collection development policy | 0 | 0 |
| annual work plan | 2 | 0 |
| gift policy | 0 | 0 |
| no documents | 11 | 17 |

6.2 Library materials and services

The 2005 IFLA Guidelines, in their *Library Materials* section (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 11-14), indicate that the new material should be regularly purchased for the library collection. The library materials should be selected by a professional librarian and donations should be accepted only if donated titles meet the needs of the library users. The findings indicate that the acquisition of materials in Croatian prison libraries is not planned and in most libraries, the materials are purchased only sporadically. Half of the libraries develop their collections exclusively through donations. The downward trend was shown by the fact that in 2019 three libraries did not purchase any material, while in 2013 this was the case in only one library. Also, acquisition through donations was the dominant form of acquisition of the library materials in libraries in both studies,

with 8 libraries building their collections exclusively through donations in 2019, and ten in 2013. Only 9 respondents stated that their library (sometimes) bought material, but even in these institutions donations dominated and only a small share (approximately 10%) of library material was purchased. Newspapers and magazines were purchased very rarely, as both studies found. In 2013, seven prisons purchased newspapers and five purchased magazines. In 2019 these numbers were even lower: only four prisons purchased either newspapers or magazines. (Table 14)

Table 14. *Library materials – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| acquired no material in previous year | 1 | 3 |
| regular acquisition (through purchase or donation) | 2 | 2 |
| acquisition through donations only | 10 | 8 |

The collections of prison libraries cover a variety of subject areas. All responding prison libraries have general reference material, fiction, non-fiction and material of religious content. The comparison with the results from the 2013 survey shows that in 2019 there was a significant increase in the share of most types of library material: general reference, non-fiction, religious material, legal material, foreign language material, popular psychology, picture books, community information and graphic novels. (Table 15)

Table 15. *Type of library material – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| general reference | 13 | 20 |
| fiction | 20 | 20 |
| non-fiction | 14 | 20 |
| religious material | 17 | 20 |
| legal material | 10 | 16 |
| foreign language material | 7 | 16 |
| popular psychology and medicine | 12 | 15 |
| picture books | 8 | 12 |
| community information | 6 | 11 |
| comics and graphic novels | 4 | 9 |
| professional literature | 12 | 9 |
| board games | 6 | 4 |

The size of the prison libraries collections ranges from 550 to 10,000 books. According to the 2013 survey, the smallest collection of books had 450 items, and the largest 6,122. This indicates a positive trend and a growth of library collections in Croatian correctional institutions. Considering the total number of prisoners (3,202) in the country and the reported number of books (43,901) in prison libraries, the number of books per prisoner in Croatian prisoners can be estimated at 13.7 books per prisoner (ranging from 4.16 to 76). The 2005 IFLA Guidelines, in the *Collection Management* section (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 23), indicate that prison library should have ten titles per prisoner. In this respect, 12 prison libraries in Croatia have, on average, a sufficient number of books per prisoner. In the 2013 survey, this question was not asked, but in the 2003 survey (Horvat and Nebesny, 2004), the number of books per capita was 1.9 to 40. Based on these numbers, it can be said that the size of collections in Croatian prisons is increasing. However, the quality of these books is another question.

As a positive fact, it should be pointed out that in all institutions the material was catalogued or listed in some way. Although 2005 IFLA Guidelines recommend the use of an automated cataloging and lending system, no prison library in Croatia currently has a library software.

The 2005 IFLA Guidelines, in the *Services and Programs* chapter (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 14-15), require libraries to organize a variety of activities and programs that promote reading, writing and cultural interests of prisoners, enable creative pastime, improve quality of their life, and promote social skills and confidence. In 12 prison libraries in Croatia, activities and programs are not organized because they are organized by treatment departments and civil society organizations. The other prison libraries organize various types of activities for the prisoners, from reading programs (N=6) and programs to acquire knowledge and skills needed to return to society and normal life (N=4), to computer literacy programs (N=3) and film screenings (N=3). Findings from the 2013 were almost identical. A novelty, that represents a positive change in 2019, are library programs, that provide prisoners with knowledge and skills needed to return to freedom (e.g. writing a resume, preparing for a job interview, workshops on peaceful conflict resolution, parenting etc.). These are organized in four libraries. A novelty are also cultural programs (concerts and theater performances) that are organized in one library. Such programs were not reported in the 2013 study.

6.3 Use of library and library materials

The 2005 IFLA Guidelines, in the *Access section* (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 7), require that all prisoners be given access to the prison library regardless of their security level within the prison. In 2019, in half of the libraries, prisoners could not visit the library but the material was delivered to them. In 2013, this was the case only in three prison libraries. Approximately the same number of institutions in both surveys organized the use of the prison library without supervision (N=3) and under supervision (N=7).

According to 2005 IFLA Guidelines (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 7), the library should be open and accessible to prisoners every day of the week. The working hours of the library should not prevent the use of the library due to the overlap of the working hours of the library with the development of educational programs and the schedule of work tasks for prisoners. The 2019 survey showed that in 11 prisons the libraries were open less than 10 hours per week. This is a slight increase compared to 2013, when only seven libraries were open up to 10 hours per week. This increase in the opening hours could be one of the reasons why there has been a positive increase in the share of prisoners using prison libraries. In 2013, prison libraries were used by 26% to 50% of prisoners in 8 institutions. In 2019, the libraries were used by 25% to 50% of prisoners in 10 institutions. In 2013, more than 51% of prisoners used libraries in 3 prisons, and in 4 prisons in 2019. In the other correctional institutions, prison libraries were used by up to 25% of prisoners (Table 16).

Table 16. *Library use – comparison (2013 vs. 2019 study)*

| | 2013 (No. of libraries) | 2019 (No. of libraries) |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| up to 25% prisoners | 10 | 8 |
| 26% to 50% prisoners | 8 | 10 |
| over 51% prisoners | 3 | 4 |

It can be said that the data from the 2019 survey indicate that supply depends on demand. For example, findings show that the prisoners do not ask frequently for periodicals, because libraries do not have them. This is confirmed by recent research, which has found that there is a difference between materials the prisoners read, and the materials they would really like to read. Faletar Tanacković et al. (2021) found that the prisoners would like to read comics, graphic novels, poetry, books on sports, health, travel, computers and hobbies, the daily press, and specialized magazines. However, no respondents in their study had indicated that they read this type of material (because they were not available in their prison library).

Although 2005 IFLA Guidelines clearly require library collections to be built in accordance with the information needs and reading interests of prisoners (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p. 11-12), the data from both surveys do not support this. In the 2019 survey, the interests and needs of the prisoners are most often identified only through informal conversations with the prisoners (N=17), while only one library conducted targeted research to find out what prisoners are interested in and what they want to read. When prisoners want to read something that their prison library does not have, they can buy it in the prison shop (N=15) or ask their family and friends to send it to them (91%).

6.4 Perceived importance of books, readings and prison libraries

In the last part of the questionnaire, the authors tried to identify how persons in charge of prison libraries perceive the importance of libraries, books and reading in prisons. Most respondents consider reading and libraries to be extremely important for the prisoners. All respondents agree that books and reading have a positive impact on the prisoners and that the provision of quality library services requires substantial support from the correctional institution. Interestingly, only about half of the respondents (54.6%) think that professional library staff is needed to provide quality library services. The results of the 2013 survey largely coincide with the 2019 results, and it can be concluded that there is no change in the perception of the importance of books, readings and prison libraries in Croatian correctional institutions.

7 Conclusion

The right to access to information, which includes the right to literacy, reading and access to cultural content, is a fundamental human right, guaranteed by national legislation and international regulations. In this context, prison libraries are extremely important social institutions that provide free access to relevant resources and activities, necessary for the personal development and education of prisoners, the preservation of their mental health and successful rehabilitation. According to generally accepted international and national regulations and professional recommendations, the prisoners should have access to library materials and services, regardless of the size of the institution in which they are located, and they should be of the same quality as those offered to citizens at large. In light of their effects, prison libraries as educational, informational, cultural and recreational centers, can have far-reaching consequences for the society, in terms of raising the educational level of prisoners,

facilitating their reintegration into society, reducing recidivism and, ultimately, saving public money.

Several authors have been researching prison libraries in Croatia for some time now, and the research presented in this paper presents the findings of the most recent research, conducted in 2019. In addition to presenting the findings from the 2019 study, the paper compares them, whenever possible, with findings from the study conducted in 2013. This approach provides insight into the continuity of research on prison libraries in Croatia, which indicates that, although there are some sporadic developments, the situation in general is not changing. As a result, most prisoners in Croatia do not have access to relevant information and books. This situation may be partly due to the lack of national guidelines for prison libraries and the lack of application of IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoner, which could, in principle, provide direction for their development.

The findings, described in this study, were initially presented in September 2019 at the 16th Roundtable of the Croatian Library Association Section for Library Services to Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs entitled *Libraries in Prisons as Partners in Rehabilitation and Educational and Cultural Life of Prisoners*.¹⁰ For the first time, the librarians from the country and abroad (Norway and Germany) and the representatives of civil society organizations (Croatian Reading Association and the Association for the Promotion of Literature and Culture »Skribonauti«), together with the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Central Office for the Prison System and the Directorate for the Prison System and Probation, met to join forces in sensitizing the decision-makers in the correctional institutions on the importance of prison libraries, and to make public librarians aware of the need to cooperate with prison libraries.

At this meeting, a new legal framework for the establishment and operation of prison libraries was discussed. According to the new Library Act, prison library collections are intended for a narrow circle of users (prisoners), and therefore they belong to special libraries, regardless of the fact that the content of their collections is similar to that of public libraries (Hrvatski sabor, 2019). Furthermore, special libraries should meet the provisions of the national Standard for Special Libraries (Ministarstvo kulture i medija, 2021), that prescribes the requirements for the establishment and operation of special libraries, which allows them to

¹⁰ More information about the Roundtable is available at <https://www.hkdrustvo.hr/hr/skupovi/skup/403/>

be registered in the Register of Libraries in the Republic of Croatia.¹¹ This registration is an extremely important formal step, because only after this registration, prison libraries can be formally supervised and supported by the national library development service, which oversees the work of all libraries in the Republic of Croatia, and supports their standardization and uniform development across the country.¹² The findings of this research show that prison libraries in Croatia do not meet the minimum requirements, needed for their registration (as special libraries), in accordance with the Standards (Article 7).¹³ Since it is also very unlikely that they will meet them in the near future, the question of prison libraries in Croatia becomes *circulus vitiosus*.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the existing legal framework in the Republic of Croatia is not a suitable solution for the establishment and operation of prison libraries as independent organizational units within the prisons. In the near future correctional institutions and public libraries will need to work intensively together in order to come up with alternative solutions to provide quality library services to the prisoners. Foreign experience, such as the Norwegian »import« model, according to which Norwegian prison libraries are included in the network of public libraries, and function as their branches, shows that such an approach can be extremely successful. For this reason, the cooperation, established at the Roundtable, between public libraries and representatives of the Ministry of Justice and correctional institutions, is extremely important.

It should also be noted that after the Roundtable, joint conclusions were prepared¹⁴ that reflect the current situation in Croatian prison libraries. These

¹¹ Interestingly, the *Standard for Special Libraries* does not explicitly mention prison libraries in Article 3, which lists the types of special libraries (libraries in scientific institutes, libraries in hospitals and health institutions, libraries in museums, galleries and archives, libraries in religious communities, libraries in public and state bodies, libraries in companies, libraries in associations and societies and other libraries). They are implicitly 'hidden' in the category of libraries in public and state bodies. The Register is available at <http://upisnik.nsk.hr/upisnik-book/>

¹² Since not one prison library is registered in this Register, national library development service does not have any official records of prison libraries in the country and it does not collect any data on prison libraries (their collection, services, staff, space, etc.) in its annual statistical reports. Statistical data is, on the other hand, collected regularly for hospital libraries, museum libraries etc.

¹³ *Standard for special libraries* states the following minimum conditions for establishing a special library: one full-time librarian, 50 m² of space, 2,500 items of library materials, one desk and chair, one computer with Internet access for librarians, library software, one computer with Internet access for users, a printer, scanner and telephone. Furthermore, the founder of the special library must prove that the funding for library budget is secured, in accordance with Article 29, paragraph 1 of the Library Act.

¹⁴ Conclusions from the Round table are available at <https://www.hkdrustvo.hr/hr/skupovi/skup/403/>

conclusions represent a starting point for the gradual improvement of prison library services. Firstly, it was recognized that establishment of the libraries as independent organizational units is possible only in some, ie. larger correctional institutions, which can provide adequate space. In most prisons, library services could be provided in close cooperation with local public libraries through their services, such as delivery of materials, visits of the mobile library and the organization of smaller library collections in prisons (under public library supervision). It was also noted that the improvement of cooperation between public libraries and prisons is possible through various programs such as:

- programs for lifelong learning and training, since, according to statistics, the prisoners' age structure in the Republic of Croatia is on average 28-39 years (95% men and 5% women),
- intensifying the cooperation of public libraries with the probation service (aimed at reintegration and resocialization of prisoners) by using alternative sanctions,
- strengthening the cooperation of libraries, prisons and civil society organizations in creating and implementing programs,
- intensifying the cooperation with public libraries, in order to acquire materials for learning the Croatian language and materials in foreign languages, and
- systematic supervision of the population in correctional institutions in order to determine the existence of various reading difficulties and dyslexia, which should result with the acquisition of library materials, adapted to persons with these difficulties.

Although the findings, presented in this paper, show that some public libraries in Croatia successfully participate in social rehabilitation, and educational, cultural and recreational life of prisoners, it is necessary to strategically design permanent and functional cooperation between prisons and public libraries. Only then will the Republic of Croatia finally begin to truly proactively work on achieving the goals, set out in international documents, such as the European Prison Rules of the Council of Europe and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

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